

# The Metaphysical Review 24/25

December 1995

100 pages

TRAVEL Wal Robinson Catherine Hoffmann Doug Barbour

100 FAVOURITE WRITERS

Peter Nicholls Jane Carnall Yvonne Rousseau Bruce Gillespie Elaine Cochrane

YET MORE LISTOMANIA The usual gang of listomaniacs

REVIEWS Adrian Rawlins Jo-Ann Stubbings

WORLD'S LONGEST LETTER COLUMN

THE SLOW GLASS LISTS



# The Metaphysical Review 24/25

December 1995

100 pages

**THE METAPHYSICAL REVIEW** No. 24/25, December 1995, is edited and published by Bruce Gillespie, 59 Keele Street, Collingwood, Victoria 3066, Australia (ph: (03) 9419-4797). Printed by Copy Place, Melbourne.

Available for subscriptions (\$A25 within Australia, equivalent of \$A35 (airmail) overseas, written or graphic contributions, traded publications, or donations. All cheques to 'Bruce Gillespie'.)

## ART

**Cover graphic** by Ditmar Jenssen. **All cartoons** by Ian Gunn. **Photographs** by Anna and Wal Robinson (pages 17-26), Catherine Hoffmann (pages 29, 31 and 33), Hocking, Vigo and Gerrand (page 49).

---

## 100 FAVOURITE WRITERS

### 3 THE BOOKS WE REALLY READ

Peter Nicholls  
Jane Callan  
Yvonne Rousseau  
Bruce Gillespie  
Elaine Cochrane

## EDITORIAL AND LETTERS

### 13 I MUST BE TALKING TO MY FRIENDS

Bruce Gillespie  
Julian Friedin  
Buck Coulson  
Leigh Edmonds  
Andy Sawyer  
Ralph Ashbrook  
Walt Willis  
Cy Chauvin  
Mae Strelkov  
Patrick McGuire  
Craig Hilton  
Jeanne Mealy  
Ned Brooks  
Syd Bounds  
Paul Voermans  
John Berry  
Jerry Davis  
Joseph Nicholas  
Skel  
Andrew Weiner  
Ed Meskys  
We Also Heard From

## TRAVEL

- 17 **THE BIRDSVILLE RUN**  
Wal Robinson  
29 **A TRAVELLER'S PRAYER TO HERMES**  
Catherine Hoffmann  
34 **JOURNEYING/JOURNALING:  
AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND,  
APRIL-MAY 1992**  
Doug Barbour

## PERFORMANCE

- 48 **OLÉ, FLAMENCO!  
RUMINATIONS INSPIRED  
BY THE MELBOURNE SEASON  
OF PACO PEÑA'S 'FLAMENCO FIRE'**  
Adrian Rawlins

## FILM

- 50 **HEADY THOUGHTS ON 'BASIC INSTINCT'**  
Jo-Ann Stubbings

## LISTOMANIA

- 52 **ANOTHER BOUT OF LISTOMANIA**  
Bruce Gillespie  
Robert James Mapson  
Carey Handfield  
Jerry Kaufman  
Doug Barbour  
Tim Jones  
Michael Clark  
Robert Day  
Paul Anderson  
Don Ashby  
99 **THE SLOW GLASS 'BEST BOOKS READ' LISTS**

**PETER NICHOLLS** is best known for co-editing the Hugo-winning *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* with John Clute. The CD-ROM version is expected just as soon as we can find an agent to buy it from. Peter, who lives in an eastern suburb of Melbourne with his wife Clare and two children, was editor of *Foundation* (the only magazine I value as highly as *ASFR* and *SFC*) during the 1970s, and edited books such as *Science Fiction at Large (Explorations of the Marvellous)* and *The Science in Science Fiction*.

This article, prepared first for another magazine, stirred great interest when Peter presented it to the November 1995 meeting of the Nova Mob.

---

## THE BOOKS WE REALLY READ

---

by Peter Nicholls

---

It began when I read the most recent number of Yvonne Rousseau's *Pursued by Oysters, Armed with Oyster Knives*, No. 8, an apazine she produces for the Acnestis group. Here (responding to someone else) she lists 100 favourite writers for an isolated island. I was much struck not so much by her specific choices, or by the fact that only 20 names proved to appear in my own Top 100 list (see below), as by the whimsicality and marvellous arbitrariness of what she — probably like all of us — really loves in books.

My own list is less respectable than Yvonne's by a big margin. But before descending to the sordid details, let's muse a little about the sort of statistics involved here. I mean, before I pick my *favourite* 100 writers (which is a very different list from what my more dispassionate *best* 100 writers would be), let's look at the kind of sampling involved. How many writers have I actually read?

I made some rules. I'm fond of poetry, drama, biography, history, science and lots of other stuff, but to restrict the range to manageable proportions, and to avoid comparing apples with oranges more than I have to, I decided to include only writers who (1) wrote fiction in prose, and (2) have written at least three books that I really like. Books read only in translation are allowed. When I had a bit of trouble making up my Top 100 I instantly broke these rules, because the fellow who makes the rules, unlike you people out there, is *allowed* to break them: I included poets Homer, Chaucer, Dante and Milton as sorts of proto-novelist (but no other poets), and I promoted some one-or-two book authors that I like a lot to the top list. These latter, I've marked with asterisks (\*). I've included no dramatists, even though, otherwise, Shakespeare would be my first choice.

All right, let's start with how many books of fiction I've read. Up to the age of 15, I calculate, I read about

750 in all: two a week or more aged 9–15, one a week or less earlier on. Over the forty years between 16 and my present age it gets more complicated. I do read a lot, for pleasure and because it has been part of my various jobs for much of adulthood. What joy to be allowed to read *professionally!* I probably peaked in the 1970s, reading a book a day most years. I'm down again to two or three a week now, partly because watching movies on video and playing on my computer are time-consuming. Also, I don't read as fast as I used to, though I've never technically been a speed reader.

To average it out correctly I have to calculate the vagaries of a mixed lifetime: living alone or without children for 18 of the 40 years, in family situations with kids for 22; schoolboy one year, university student 7.25 years, going out to work regular hours for 16.25 years, living the less structured life of a freelance for 15.5 years. It's probably fair to say that I spent ten years reading a book a day, another ten years at four books a week, and the other twenty years at 2.5 books a week. That makes around 8300, plus the 750 in childhood makes near enough to 9000. If anything, that figure might be a bit high. At least 1000 of these would be non-fiction, and another 1200 would be re-reading books I've already read. That leaves us with 6800. I'm pretty sure the order of magnitude is right, though obviously the true figure could be as much as plus or minus 20 per cent, which would mean I've read something between 5440 and 8160 books of fiction.

I don't need to be told that there's a lot of statistically shaky guesswork going on here, but my guess would be that if I've read 5440–8160 books, then I've read far fewer than half that many fiction writers — maybe 40 per cent — since a few of these guys have written up to 30 or 40 books. That would be, say, 2175–3250 writers; I'd incline to the lower figure. The three main lists name 235 writers *in toto*, so very approximately, I'm naming 10

per cent of all fiction writers I've read as favourites. That seems statistically OK by me. I would reckon, however, that anyone who had read fewer than 400 writers would produce a Top 100 list that was visibly insecure. But I'm really not sure at what point you can say that there's no statistical basis to work with. Arguably, if you've read just 100 writers it would be perfectly proper (but how meaningful?) to name them as your 100 favourites, though more probably such a neophyte would sensibly produce a list of only, say, 25 writers. There would seem something unethical about claiming more than a quarter of the writers you've read as favourites.

Anyway, what flabbergasted me is that 5440-8160 books isn't nearly as much as I expected. I know that I read more books, much more, than most people. In our street, several people chosen at random said they got through around 15 books a year. But I'm a professional, for God's sake! I'm supposed to be some sort of world expert on sf, and maybe fantasy and horror too. Yet on these figures, I can't have read any more than 4500 science fiction books at the outside. (I read lots of stuff that isn't sf.) And since I believe similar patterns would emerge (readers, please respond) for most people in our sort of business, that would mean (I haven't asked them) that John Clute and Brian Stableford have probably read fewer than 4500 sf books too. Stableford probably reads a good bit more than me, but is also nine years younger, so he's had less time to do it in. This means that even if Clute, Stableford and I had miraculously read a *completely different* 4500 books from each other, between us we could not conceivably have read as much as half of the sf books written. So how did we have the *chutzpah* to write the *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*? Beats me. This explains why sometimes we get plot details wrong. The miracle is that we didn't (as far as we know) get them wrong most of the time.

I mean, 5440-8160 are not huge numbers! Embarrassingly, I probably own more books (8000 plus) than I've read in my whole life. I already knew, of course, that I'd not read all the books that I own, but until I undertook this exercise, I had supposed that I would have read the equivalent of a library at least twice the size of mine. Not so.

Many further embarrassments occur in making one's own list. There's so much trivia in there! Lots of children's authors I still at the age of 56 can't bear to relinquish, spy-story writers, popular romances for God's sake, sea stories — it goes on and on. You'd never guess from my list (which I've truly tried to be honest about) that I was once a respected academic. Where is Proust? Where is Dostoyevsky? The fact is that I read them dutifully but never fell in love. The writers I fell in love with were often, so to speak, sluts or bimbos, not respectable. (Disconcertingly, most of them aren't women at all, but more of that below.)

I very soon realised that I needed more than one list. In fact there are four. These are, in order, the Top 100, the Second Division (88 of those), and one-or-two bookers (this is a list of 47 notable writers who wrote only one or two books that I much enjoy, though around 15 of them have actually written five more books altogether) — and Nicholls's Shame. This last category is so injudicious that I cannot bring myself to say anything further

about it here, except to guess that *everybody* who reads at all could make a substantial shame list of their own. I needed a second division, of course, before I could properly make up my mind about the first, but looking at it, further mortifications occur.

Why, for example, is J. G. Ballard, one of the finest writers of our time, in the second division, when Philip José Farmer is in the first? Well, it's because Farmer used once upon a time (but not for 20 years) to pass the Excitement Test, and Ballard didn't ever. The Excitement Test is what sometimes happens when you have a new unread but much-anticipated book in your hands. Everybody knows the feeling — it's the literary equivalent of engorgement. You can't wait to get into it. I used to have this feeling (God, I'm so ashamed!) with each new World of Tiers book from Farmer, but I've never had it with Ballard. So my Top 100 has a large component of nostalgia; it's a list not so much of what is my favourite now, as of what has at some other time been my favourite. I recently re-read a couple of books by Alfie Bester, and they were much closer to pulp fiction than I had remembered. The Peter Nicholls of 1995 would probably not put Bester in the Top 100 any more, except that he remembers the Peter Nicholls of 1960 who thought Bester was the tops, the Colosseum, the Louvre Museum. So Bester stays in. So, for a quite different example, does Richmal Crompton, an Englishwoman who wrote, in the twenties I think, a series of books about a bad boy called William. I thought they were wonderful at the age of 13, and I doubt if I've re-read more than one in adulthood, but remembered pleasures are strong. Re-reading, however, is often an important criterion in selecting one's true loves. A good part of my Top 100 I've re-read a lot. My wife and I, for example, both customarily re-read Georgette Heyer when we are in bed sick with the flu.

The example of Crompton brings up another issue, the particular cultures in which we read. While we are all, no doubt, citizens of the world, we also have affinities closer to home. Probably very few Americans have ever read Crompton, just as I've never read Pinkwater, although I've heard great things of him. But he's not widely known outside his own country, unlike, say L. Frank Baum, who gets into my second division. I've included (in subsidiary lists) Henry Handel Richardson, Henry Lawson and Tom Collins, Australian writers Americans probably never heard of. And what about Margery Allingham, Edmund Crispin and Michael Innes? There is an age component that comes in here: the age of the list-maker. I would be amazed if any of these three (who all wrote detective stories in the 1940s, one of them starting way back in the 1920s) appeared on the lists of anybody under 40. Though my wife, who is 39, tells me I'm wrong.

There's a lot of stuff whose absence you may note with contempt. For example, my list is light on mainstream fiction 1980-95; in this period I read few novels by South American magic realists — indeed, not many contemporary mainstream novels of any kind — so they're ill represented.

The other important issue, brought up by Yvonne Rousseau, whose Top 100 includes 48 female writers (though by fudging she turns it into 50), is sexism. I'm

alarmed at how sexist a reader I turn out to be. Although I'm not consciously gender biased when I read, there must be a large unconscious bias: to be precise, I have listed 235 favourites, and only 35 are women, which makes an embarrassingly low 15 per cent. I have a sexist theory to explain this, which in its full form is rather complex, and insofar as it smacks of biological determinism, may be seen (even by me) as displeasing. In essence, I argue that fiction by men tends to be narrative-driven, and fiction by women tends to be ambience-driven. My personal weakness, according to this theory, would be an addiction to narrative-driven fiction. One would also need to know what percentage of fiction is written by men and what percentage by women, but I have no reason to suppose that men and women are not equally represented overall, though there are differences from genre to genre. In science fiction and horror, there are many more male writers than female, though in fantasy and detective fiction the sexes are probably about equal, and in children's fiction I suspect there are slightly more women writers.

I'm absolutely certain I've left a few people out accidentally (I just thought of Stendahl, Naomi Mitchison, George MacDonald Fraser, but never mind). I've been toying with these lists for two weeks now, and I'm still adding names and occasionally subtracting them. Nitpickers will no doubt seize with glee upon certain prominent absences, but the absences are more likely on balance to be deliberate than accidental, because I went through both bookshelves and reference works quite carefully. I said there's bound to be something arbitrary and whimsical about the whole exercise. So if I choose to omit, say, Harlan Ellison, that's my business, right?

As to what's in, I suppose the main thing is that the three main lists are both eclectic and largely disreputable. Statistical breakdown according to genre is difficult, especially since many of my favourites wrote in as many as four genres, but because they're revealing, it's worth giving some rough results anyway. Even the Nicholls's Shame List is revealing of my weaknesses: pornography 2, children's fiction 1, horror 3, series fantasy 6. The top three lists look like this, with the first, second and third list results separated by back slashes:

- Pre-1990 'Classic' writers: 16 writers/9 writers/9 writers: 13.8% of the whole.
  - Post-1990 Mainstream writers: 10/19/6: 14.2%.
  - Historical fiction: 3/1/3: 2.8%.
  - Primarily children's fiction: 10/10/8 (over a third of these wrote for adults too): 11.4%.
  - Detective Fiction, Spy Fiction and Thrillers: 12/5/1: 7.3%.
  - Fairly pure Science Fiction: 19/19/7: 18.3%.
  - Fairly pure Horror: 6/7/5: 7.3%.
  - Fairly pure Fantasy: 8/8/6: 8.9%.
  - Writers primarily of SF who also write Fantasy, Horror or Mainstream: 16/13/3: 13%.
  - Pre-1920 pulp Scientific Romancers: 3/0/0: 1.2%.
- That leaves only four writers unaccounted for: one Popular Romancer (Heyer) and three Humorists (Thurber, Perelman and Wodehouse): 1.6%.

Nitpickers may observe that I count 246 appearances when there are only 235 names. This will be where I've not been able to allocate someone confidently to one category, and he or she appears twice. The percentages are got by adding the numbers in each category, dividing by 246, and multiplying by 100.

Approaching the names from another viewpoint, and noting which writers were included primarily for their short fiction, I found more than I expected. The results were 9/13/10, about 13% of the whole.

I hope the results are not too tedious. They are rather surprising to me. Even though I was first editor and later co-editor of *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, only 31.3 per cent of my favourites (taking the two relevant categories together) are sf writers. Oh dear, I feel that I've come out of the ghetto closet. Taking classic and mainstream writers together, we get 28 per cent of the names mildly respectable, a bit more than I'd expected, because basically I'm a genre freak. If we add sf, fantasy, horror, scientific romance, fantastic classic and children's fantasy together we get, approximately, 57.5 per cent pure fantastic genre stuff: what some librarians would call escapist material. I *knew* that I wasn't a normal person. I feel vindicated.

OK, here we go.

---

## Peter Nicholls's 100 Favourite Writers

(This is not a list of 'best' writers)

---

Only fifteen are women, including Emma Lathen as one person (actually, she's two).

- Robert Aickman
- Margery Allingham
- Jane Austen
- Brian W. Aldiss
- Kingsley Amis
- Clive Barker (but mainly for the short fiction)
- Greg Bear
- Alfred Bester
- James Blish
- Algis Budrys
- Edgar Rice Burroughs
- A. S. Byatt
- James Branch Cabell

- Lewis Carroll
- Geoffrey Chaucer
- G. K. Chesterton
- John Christopher
- Arthur C. Clarke
- John Collier
- Joseph Conrad
- Susan Cooper
- Edmund Crispin
- Richmal Crompton
- John Crowley
- Dante Alighieri
- Len Deighton
- Samuel R. Delany
- Philip K. Dick
- Charles Dickens
- Thomas M. Disch
- Arthur Conan Doyle
- Alfred Duggan
- George Eliot
- James Ellroy
- Philip José Farmer
- C. S. Forester
- \* Karen Joy Fowler
- John Fowles
- Dick Francis
- Alan Garner
- William Gibson
- William Golding
- Graham Greene
- H. Rider Haggard
- Thomas Hardy
- Robert Heinlein
- \* Joseph Heller
- Frank Herbert
- Georgette Heyer
- Russell Hoban
- Homer
- Michael Innes
- Henry James
- M. R. James
- Samuel Johnson (yes, he wrote fiction too)
- Diana Wynne Jones
- Stephen King
- Emma Lathen
- D. H. Lawrence
- John Le Carré
- J. Sheridan Le Fanu
- Ursula K. Le Guin
- Fritz Leiber
- C. S. Lewis
- John D. MacDonald
- Patricia McKillip
- William Mayne
- Walter M. Miller
- John Milton
- E. Nesbit
- Mervyn Peake
- Frederik Pohl (especially his collaborations with C. M. Kornbluth)
- Anthony Powell
- Tim Powers
- Terry Pratchett
- \* Geoff Ryman
- Saki
- Robert Sheckley
- Dan Simmons
- Cordwainer Smith
- \* Neal Stephenson
- Robert Louis Stevenson
- Peter Straub
- Jonathan Swift
- Sheri S. Tepper
- James Tiptree Jr
- J. R. R. Tolkien
- Leo Tolstoy
- Anthony Trollope
- Mark Twain
- Jack Vance
- A. E. van Vogt
- Kurt Vonnegut Jr
- Evelyn Waugh
- H. G. Wells
- T. H. White
- P. G. Wodehouse
- Gene Wolfe
- John Wyndham
- Roger Zelazny

## Peter Nicholls's Second Division

(88 Names)

(And only fifteen are women.)

- Joan Aiken
- Lloyd Alexander
- Isaac Asimov
- J. G. Ballard
- Iain Banks (and Iain M. Banks)
- Julian Barnes (and his pseudonym Dan Kavanaugh)
- L. Frank Baum
- Saul Bellow
- John Blackburn
- Algernon Blackwood
- James P. Blaylock
- Jorge Luis Borges
- Ray Bradbury
- Charlotte Brontë

- Frances Hodgson Burnett
- Orson Scott Card
- John Dickson Carr
- Jonathan Carroll
- C. J. Cherryh
- Richard Condon
- Richard Cowper
- Avram Davidson
- Guy de Maupassant
- Peter Dickinson
- William Faulkner
- Raymond E. Feist
- Jack Finney
- E. M. Forster
- Daniel Galouye
- Joe Haldeman
- Barbara Hambly
- L. P. Hartley
- E. T. A. Hoffmann
- Robert E. Howard
- Fred Hoyle
- Aldous Huxley
- Howard Jacobson
- Franz Kafka
- Katharine Kerr
- Rudyard Kipling
- Henry Lawson
- Penelope Lively
- David Lodge
- H. P. Lovecraft
- Thomas Malory
- Thomas Mann
- R. A. MacAvoy
- Michael McDowell
- Richard Matheson
- Herman Melville
- John Metcalfe
- Michael Moorcock
- C. L. Moore
- Larry Niven
- Andre Norton
- George Orwell
- Thomas Love Peacock
- S. J. Perelman
- Edgar Allan Poe
- Anthony Price
- Arthur Ransome
- Henry Handel Richardson
- Kim Stanley Robinson
- Bob Shaw
- Robert Silverberg
- Clifford D. Simak
- Thorne Smith
- Laurence Sterne
- George R. Stewart
- Theodore Sturgeon
- Rosemary Sutcliff
- Michael Swanwick
- William Tenn
- Gwyn Thomas
- James Thurber
- Henry Treece
- John Updike
- John Varley
- Jules Verne
- Vernor Vinge
- Voltaire
- Howard Waldrop
- Ian Watson
- Edlith Wharton
- Laura Ingalls Wilder
- Connie Willis
- Angus Wilson
- Robert Anton Wilson (including collaborations with Robert Shea)

---

## 47 writers with only one or two books I really like, but these I like a lot

---

(This list will include new writers with only one or two books out)

(Only five are women.)

- Peter Ackroyd
- Michael Ayrton
- Max Beerbohm
- Emily Brontë
- Hal Clement
- Tom Collins
- D. G. Compton
- Umberto Eco
- John Farris
- John Gordon
- Kenneth Grahame
- J. B. S. Haldane
- Thomas Harris
- Paul Hazel
- Lafcadio Hearn
- James Hogg
- Robert Holdstock
- Shirley Jackson
- James Joyce
- Charles Kingsley
- David Lindsay
- Arthur Machen
- John Masefield
- Richard M. McKenna

- A. A. Milne
- Ward Moore
- Beverly Nichols
- Flann O'Brien
- Robert O'Brien
- Philippa Pearce
- Jan Potocki
- Thomas Pynchon
- Jean Ray
- Keith Roberts
- Sarban
- Hilbert Schenck

- Mary Shelley
- E. C. Somerville and Martin Ross
- Bram Stoker
- William Makepeace Thackeray
- Walter Wangerin
- Manly Wade Wellman
- Nathaniel West
- Oscar Wilde
- Tad Williams
- Walter Jon Williams
- David Zindell

## Nicholls's Shame

This is a very incomplete list of writers I continue to read, or have in the past continued to read, while usually more or less feeling ashamed of myself. They are not favourite writers, but they have at times been addictions. (Four women in this lot.):

- Anonymous authors of Victorian-age pornography, especially the authors of *The Pearl*
- Enid Blyton
- Marion Zimmer Bradley
- Poppy Z. Brite

- Akbar del Piombo
- David Eddings
- David Gemmell
- James Herbert
- Robert Jordan
- Melanie Rawn
- Eric van Lustbader
- Dennis Wheatley.

— Peter Nicholls, October 1995

## Where it all started: 100 Favourite Writers: JANE CARNALL's list

Some desert island games ask you to choose just one book, or even eight books — but how could anyone limit themselves to so few? Suppose you were to be banished for life to an isolated island, but you could choose 100 writers; you could have everything they'd ever written, and furthermore all biographies, literary criticism and spinoffs from them and their works. Which hundred writers would you choose to make a library?

I wrote down a hundred names very much as they occurred to me, and went back and forth over the list a few times, discarding some, choosing

others, deciding against some new choices . . .

Some of the alternate names are in the list below the main list. But here, for what it's worth, are my chosen century:

- |                      |                          |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 Dorothy L. Sayers  | 13 Hendrik van Loon      |
| 2 Georgette Heyer    | 14 Isaac Asimov          |
| 3 Lynne Reid Banks   | 15 Spider Robinson       |
| 4 Diana Wynne Jones  | 16 Robert Heinlein       |
| 5 Mary Renault       | 17 Rumer Godden          |
| 6 Samuel R. Delany   | 18 Han Suyin             |
| 7 Charlotte Brontë   | 19 Joanna Russ           |
| 8 Emily Brontë       | 20 J. R. R. Tolkien      |
| 9 E. Nesbit          | 21 T. H. White           |
| 10 Elizabeth Gaskell | 22 Barbara Hambly        |
| 11 Jane Austen       | 23 Anne Rice etc.        |
| 12 Marcia Davenport  | 24 Diane Duane           |
|                      | 25 Dick Francis          |
|                      | 26 Norah Lofts           |
|                      | 27 Mary Stewart          |
|                      | 28 Marion Zimmer Bradley |
|                      | 29 James Herriot         |

(Continued next page)

- |                                   |                            |                                             |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| 30 Elizabeth Goudge               | 63 Lewis Carroll           | 97 Frances Hodgson Burnett                  |
| 31 Gerald Durrell                 | 64 Sheri S. Tepper         | 98 S. E. Hinton                             |
| 32 Octavia E. Butler              | 65 Ellen Galford           | 99 Jenny Jones                              |
| 33 M. F. K. Fisher                | 66 Margaret Elphinstone    | 100 Josephine Tey                           |
| 34 Amanda Cross etc.              | 67 P. G. Wodehouse         |                                             |
| 35 Marilyn Hacker                 | 68 Agatha Christie         | ● 63 women, 37 men.                         |
| 36 Rainer Maria Rilke (Eng. trs.) | 69 Roger Lancelyn Green    | ● 42 sf/fantasy writers.                    |
| 37 Ursula K. Le Guin              | 70 Margery Sharp           | ● 37 children's writers.                    |
| 38 C. S. Lewis                    | 71 Paul Gallico            | ● 20 historians/historical romance writers. |
| 39 Tanith Lee                     | 72 George MacDonald Fraser | ● 15 poets.                                 |
| 40 Armistead Maupin               | 73 Neil Gaiman             | ● 7 detective writers.                      |
| 41 Vonda M. McIntyre              | 74 Gillian Bradshaw        | ● 6 animal writers.                         |
| 42 Keri Hulme                     | 75 Pearl S. Buck           | ● 5 writers in the Greek mythos.            |
| 43 Helene Hanff                   | 76 Thomas Disch            | ● 4 writers of the Matter of Britain.       |
| 44 John M. Ford                   | 77 John Brunner            | ● 3 pornographers.                          |
| 45 George Bernard Shaw            | 78 Naomi Mitchison         | ● 3 playwrights.                            |
| 46 C. J. Cherryh                  | 79 Erich Kastner           | ● 3 artists.                                |
| 47 William Shakespeare            | 80 L. M. Alcott            |                                             |
| 48 Antonia Forest                 | 81 Jean Ure                | <b>Other writers:</b>                       |
| 49 C. S. Forester                 | 82 Dorothy Dunnett         | ● Roger Zelazny                             |
| 50 Lisa Tuttle                    | 83 A. E. Housman           | ● James Thurber                             |
| 51 Laura Ingalls Wilder           | 84 Orson Scott Card        | ● Anne Brontë                               |
| 52 Anne Fine                      | 85 Marge Piercy            | ● Thomas Hughes                             |
| 53 Beatrix Potter                 | 86 Cynthia Voigt           | ● George R. R. Martin                       |
| 54 E. M. Almedingen               | 87 Robin McKinley          | ● Judy Grahn                                |
| 55 Rudyard Kipling                | 88 Nigel Tranter           | ● Nicholas Monsarrat                        |
| 56 L. M. Montgomery               | 89 Robert Westall          | ● Annie Dalton                              |
| 57 Alison Bechdel                 | 90 John Wyndham            | etc.                                        |
| 58 Terry Pratchett                | 91 Joan D. Vinge           |                                             |
| 59 Rosemary Sutcliffe             | 92 Ellis Peters etc.       |                                             |
| 60 Jill Paton Walsh               | 93 Arthur Conan Doyle      |                                             |
| 61 Tove Jansson                   | 94 Eileen Dunlop           |                                             |
| 62 George Orwell                  | 95 John Preston            |                                             |
|                                   | 96 Pat Califia             |                                             |

— Jane Carnall, July 1995

## 100 Favourite Writers: YVONNE ROUSSEAU's list

Of Jane Carnall's 100 writers for an isolated island, 24 would definitely appear on my own list:

- Jane Austen (to quote the words of the despicable villain in Edmund Crispin's *The Moving Toyshop*: 'I have read all of her novels many, many times').
- Emily Brontë
- Frances Hodgson Burnett
- Lewis Carroll
- Agatha Christie
- Amanda Cross

- Arthur Conan Doyle
- M. F. K. Fisher
- Antonia Forest
- Elizabeth Gaskell
- Georgette Heyer
- Tove Jansson
- Diana Wynne Jones
- Rudyard Kipling
- Ursula K. Le Guin
- E. Nesbit
- George Orwell
- Terry Pratchett
- Joanna Russ
- Dorothy L. Sayers (Jane's

- everything-these-authors-ever-wrote rule allows me to cheat here and smuggle in the Sayers translation of Dante's *Divine Comedy*)
- William Shakespeare
  - George Bernard Shaw
  - Cynthia Voigt (for *Homecoming* and *Dacey's Song* and *A Solitary Blue*)
  - P. G. Wodehouse.
- Moreover, from Jane's list of

(Continued next page)

'Other writers', I promote (for my 25th author):

- James Thurber (I couldn't do without *The White Deer* — *The Thirteen Clocks* — *The Wonderful O* — 'The Macbeth Murder Mystery').

On my own initiative I'd then add 75 authors I'm often re-reading:

- Joan Aiken (especially for the 'Arabel and Mortimer' stories, and *A Small Pinch of Weather*)
- Margery Allingham
- Margaret Atwood (especially for *The Robber Bride*)
- Marjorie Barnard (including her collaborations with Flora Eldershaw)
- Max Beerbohm
- The Translators of the King James Bible (I class this as a unified collaborative author — about whose labours Patrick Merrick (a Roman Catholic) comments lightly to Rowan Marlow in Antonia Forest's *End of Term*: 'It isn't fair you have such a much better translation than us, low heretics that you are')
- William Blake
- Caryl Brahms (for her collaborations with S. J. Simon)
- Ernest Bramah (for the Kai Lung stories)
- Vera Brittain
- D. K. Broster
- Thomas Browne (for *Religio Medici*)
- A. S. Byatt (whose *Possession* I esteem above all other novels by still-living novelists) (a declaration inviting brickbats . . .)
- Angela Carter (especially for *The Passion of New Eve* and *The Bloody Chamber*)
- G. K. Chesterton
- Samuel Taylor Coleridge
- Wilkie Collins
- Noël Coward
- Edmund Crispin
- John Crowley
- Walter de la Mare (for poetry, such as 'The Listeners', and short stories, such as 'A Revenant')
- Thomas de Quincey (especially for *Recollections of the*

*Lakes and the Lake Poets* — despite his reputation for unreliability — and for 'On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts')

- Charles Dickens
- Benjamin Disraeli
- George Eliot
- Ronald Firbank
- Miles Franklin
- Stella Gibbons
- Anthony Hope (for *The Prisoner of Zenda* and *Rupert of Hentzau*)
- Gerard Manley Hopkins
- Arthur Horner (for the comic-strip adventures of Colonel Pewter)
- Henry James
- John Keats
- David Langford
- Stephen Leacock
- Edward Lear
- Vernon Lee
- J. S. Le Fanu
- Malcolm Lowry
- Alison Lurie
- Thomas Malory
- Joyce Carol Oates
- Mrs Oliphant
- Sara Paretsky
- Thomas Love Peacock
- Sylvia Plath
- Edgar Allan Poe (especially for 'The Raven' — and for the essay explaining it)
- Marcel Proust
- Henry Handel Richardson
- Yvonne Rousseau (a specialist interest for me)
- Bertrand Russell (not forgetting *Nightmares of Eminent Persons*)
- Vita Sackville-West
- Sir Walter Scott
- R. B. Sheridan
- Carol Shields
- Helen Simpson (the Australian one, 1897–1940: not the modern British writer)
- Osbert Sitwell
- Dodie Smith (for *I Capture the Castle*)
- Susan Sontag
- J. I. M. Stewart (including his 'Michael Innes' books)
- Robert Louis Stevenson
- Rex Stout
- Algernon Swinburne (curses! — morbid taste revealed)

- Edward Thomas
- P. L. Travers
- Violet Trefusis
- John Verney (for *Friday's Tunnel*, most of all — and *February's Road* a little)
- Sylvia Townsend Warner
- Fay Weldon (especially for *Puffball*)
- Donald E. Westlake (especially for *Drowned Hopes*)
- Edith Wharton
- Oscar Wilde
- Cherry Wilder
- Charles Williams (the friend of C. S. Lewis, not the thriller-writer)
- Virginia Woolf.

I see that there are 48 female and 52 male authors here (if the King-James-Bible collaboration is counted as Man's Work) — in contrast to Jane's 63 women and 37 men. Finding equality so close, I'm prepared to remove Rex Stout and John Verney and replace them with Mary Grant Bruce and Catherine Helen Spence — incidentally raising the number of Australian authors from 7 to 9. But other people's lists will doubtless include names I'll be amazed to have neglected, even in haste. (Meanwhile, my 'Other writers' supplement would include Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky (alas! — in my youth, I would have deemed him essential, whereas now I'm not sure he's re-readable) but I have excluded writers whose work I acknowledge to be 'great' but whom I dislike: Tolstoy and Joyce, for example.)

Because Jane specified that the hundred-authors list is designed for a Desert Island, I tended towards comforting writers (hence, the absence of certain esteemed Australian sf writers, and also of Winifred Holtby and Jean Rhys — both of whom I admire). But how discontenting to make do with a mere one hundred authors!

— Yvonne Rousseau,  
August 1995

## BRUCE GILLESPIE's Favourite 100 Writers

No ifs and buts here; here are my favourite 100 writers, as judged by Peter Nicholls's Excitement Test. Some authors who have been long-time favourites have been dropped from the list because I no longer look forward to their next books.

No limits here. I've included my favourite poets and essayists (including fan writers) as well as novelists and short story writers.

It's difficult to apply the one-book-success rule. For example, I've bought lots of Diana Wynne Jones's books on the basis of reading one of her novels, but I haven't got around to reading those books. She might make the list eventually. But Elias Canetti's *Auto Da Fé* is enough to drag its author into the list. Likewise, *The Recognitions* brings in William Gaddis, although I haven't read his other work.

I must admit that the Top 100 includes only 23 women.

- Robert Aickman
- Brian Aldiss
- Eric Ambler
- J. G. Ballard
- John Bangsund
- Alfred Bester (short stories only)
- Michael Bishop (short fiction)
- Martin Boyd
- Emily Brontë
- Frederic Brown
- Italo Calvino
- Elias Canetti
- Jonathan Carroll
- Alejo Carpentier
- Lewis Carroll
- Raymond Carver
- John Cheever (short stories)
- D. G. Compton
- Patricia Cornwell
- Philip K. Dick
- Thomas M. Disch
- Garry Disher
- John Donne
- Greg Egan
- T. S. Eliot
- Stanley Elkin
- M. J. Engh
- Frederick Exley
- F. Scott Fitzgerald
- Gustave Flaubert
- E. M. Forster
- Leanne Frahm
- Janet Frame
- Terry Frost
- William Gaddis
- Alan Garner
- Elizabeth George
- William Goyen
- Graham Greene
- Martha Grimes
- James Hanley
- Xavier Herbert
- Hermann Hesse
- Russell Hoban
- Philip Hodgins
- Robert Holdstock
- Victor Hugo
- Henry James
- James Joyce (earlier the better)
- C. G. Jung
- Damon Knight (criticism and short fiction)
- Dave Langford
- Philip Larkin
- Halldor Laxness
- John Le Carré
- Ursula Le Guin
- Fritz Leiber
- Stanislaw Lem
- Philippa C. Maddern
- Thomas Mann
- Katherine Mansfield
- William Mayne
- Arthur Miller
- James Morrow
- Alice Munro
- Gerald Murnane
- Robert Musil
- Vladimir Nabokov
- Flannery O'Connor
- Edgar Pangborn
- Christopher Priest
- Marcel Proust
- Ruth Rendell/Barbara Vine
- Henry Handel Richardson
- Keith Roberts
- Yvonne Rousseau
- Dorothy L. Sayers
- William Shakespeare
- Robert Sheckley
- Cordwainer Smith
- Petrina Smith
- Josephine Tey
- Wilson Tucker
- George Turner
- Anne Tyler
- John Updike
- Gore Vidal (essays only)
- Kurt Vonnegut Jr
- Evelyn Waugh
- H. G. Wells
- Eudora Welty
- Edith Wharton
- James White
- Patrick White
- Cherry Wilder
- Connie Willis
- Walter A. Willis
- Edmund Wilson
- Gene Wolfe
- Emile Zola

### Shame list

- The perpetual item on my Shame List is Ayn Rand (an adolescent fancy), especially when I see, to my horror, our society turning into an Ayn Rand world.
- Enid Blyton? Haven't read her since I was twelve. I suspect she knew everything any writer needs to know about story-telling. I can't be bothered re-reading her to find out if I was right all along.

— Bruce Gillespie,  
November 1995

## ELAINE COCHRANE: Struggling to make 100

My list was compiled in a hurry, in response to Bruce's plea for something to help fill a blank page, and I am sure to have overlooked some favourites in my quick scan of the shelves. I don't think that matters. What I found interesting in making up the list is the number of authors I sort of enjoyed but who failed the Nicholls excitement test: yes, I'd enjoyed their work, and yes, I'd probably read more of them, but no, there's no sense of eager anticipation. So Asimov isn't on my list, or Proust, or Aldiss, or Balzac, or Clifford Simak, or Graham Greene. And Enid Blyton doesn't make my shame list: as a kid I read and enjoyed all the Famous Fives, but even then I would have classed them as always readable but never exciting.

Also interesting (to me) was the number of authors I had read once and enjoyed greatly, but whose other books remain unread on the shelves. This is partly because, until recently, I would go to each section of the bookshelves in turn and pick out the first book that I had not read. As one circuit of the shelves (i.e. one book from each segment) takes me several years, I don't get back to any particular author very often. I abandoned this scheme some months back when, wanting to read something I'd really enjoy, I pulled a Henry James off the shelf and discovered I had forgotten how to read fiction. The only part of my system remaining is that I still read one book in French for every five in English. This skews my list somewhat, because French-language books aren't that easy to come by,

and because my appreciation of the ones I do find is limited by my limited French.

On the following list, one-book authors (one read or one written) are indicated by (1); authors read only or mainly in French by (F). Shame-list authors are indicated by (s).

So here is my list, somewhat less than 100 authors.

- Aeschylus
- Jane Austen
- Mary Elizabeth Braddon (1)
- Elias Canetti (1)
- Alejo Carpentier
- Jonathan Carroll (1)
- Blaise Cendrars (1)
- Tom Collins (1)
- Philip K. Dick
- Charles Dickens
- Thomas M. Disch
- Fyodor Dostoevsky
- George Eliot
- Henry Fielding
- F. Scott Fitzgerald
- William Gaddis (1)
- Romain Gary (1, F)
- Jean Genet
- Edward Gibbon
- Maxim Gorky
- Elizabeth Goudge (1)
- Han Suyin
- Thomas Hardy
- Robert Heinlein (for the juveniles)
- Ernest Hemingway
- Barry Hughart (1)
- Victor Hugo (F)
- Henry James
- W. E. Johns (s)
- Maxine Hong Kingston
- Franz Kafka
- R. A. Lafferty
- John Le Carré
- Fritz Leiber
- Stanislaw Lem
- Etienne Leroux (1)
- C. S. Lewis (for the SF trilogy)
- Pierre Loti (1, F)
- Katherine Mansfield
- Gabriel Garcia Marquez
- Guy de Maupassant (F)
- Hermann Melville (1)
- Elyne Mitchell (1)
- Vladimir Nabokov
- Flann O'Brien (1)
- Baroness Orczy (s)
- Guy de Pourtales (1, F)
- Terry Pratchett
- Jean Rhys (1)
- Henry Handel Richardson (1)
- Joanna Russ
- Lady Saroshina (1)
- William Saroyan
- Olive Schreiner (1)
- André Schwartz-Bart
- Robert Sheckley
- Mary Shelley (1)
- Murasaki Shikibu (1)
- Cordwainer Smith
- Ivan Southall (for the Simon Black books, s)
- Dale Spender
- Junichiro Tanazaki (1)
- Wilson Tucker
- Mark Twain
- Kurt Vonnegut Jr
- James White
- Patrick White
- Virginia Woolf
- Marguerite Yourcenar (F)
- Emile Zola (F)

What, not Emily Brontë? Haven't read her. Ursula Le Guin? Ditto. And Thackeray and Homer and . . . Maybe my shame list should be 100 Authors I Should Have Read.

— Elaine Cochrane,  
November 1995

# I Must Be Talking to My Friends

**BRUCE GILLESPIE  
JULIAN FRIEDIN  
BUCK COULSON  
LEIGH EDMONDS  
ANDY SAWYER  
RALPH ASHBROOK  
WALT WILLIS  
CY CHAUVIN  
MAE STRELKOV  
PATRICK McGUIRE  
CRAIG HILTON  
JEANNE MEALY  
NED BROOKS  
SYD BOUNDS  
PAUL VOERMANS  
JOHN BERRY  
JERRY DAVIS  
JOSEPH NICHOLAS  
SKEL  
ANDREW WEINER  
ED MESKYS  
and  
We Also Heard From**

---

## The Excitement Test

---

**P**eter Nicholls's talk to the Nova Mob on 1 November 1995 (see Page 3) could well prove the major event of the nineties for me.

Let's not exaggerate Peter's talent for oratory, impressive though that can be. It was a good talk, and drew a fair bit of discussion. The power of the talk was not so much in its delivery, or even entirely in its content, but the fact that it struck me at the right time. And my life is hardly littered with major events.

Picture the inside of our house. We have almost no bookcases in the kitchen (but it does contain the small bookcase that houses the 1962 *Encyclopedia Britannica*), but in every other room of the house, every available

wall is covered from ceiling to floor in bookshelves. All of them are full. Some are full of CDs, but even those CDs are covered in books.

I don't know how many thousand books there are on the wall shelves. Add to them many hundred others that are still in boxes, because there is no room for them on shelves.

This is a familiar problem among fans, but in our house it has reached the stage beyond which *Something Must Be Done*. Nothing had been done until now.

In his talk Peter Nicholls, without meaning to, sounded the Call to Action. He worked out that he has probably read somewhere between 5000 and 8000 books in his life. And he's a fast reader.

Compared to many people I know, I'm a slow reader. I always have been. The one time I tried to speed up my reading, I found I was missing most of the meaning of good fiction. I can still skim through junk or journalism, but I deliberately slow my speed to enjoy good prose or poetry.

Which means that for many years I've been lucky to read more than four or five books a month. The only time I read about three books a week was when I was commuting, between 1965 and 1973. Since then I rarely find time to read much before 10.30 p.m., unless a good mystery novel or a real masterpiece grabs me.

While my reading rate has remained at a rate of about 60 substantial books per year, my book-buying rate has remained at a high rate — it's a lot faster than my reading rate. When we moved into Keele Street, more than half the shelves we had had built were empty. They've been long since filled, and several more walls of shelves built. *And* I've sold quite a few books I didn't think were worth keeping. *And* I've stored all the science fiction original anthologies in boxes.

Peter Nicholls's talk on 1 November led me to make some startling calculations about *Life*, *Destiny* and *Book Collecting*. According to the side of the family I take after, and assuming a continued existence that doesn't threaten my reading rate, I can hope to read *at the very most* somewhere between 1200 and 1800 books during the rest of my life. That's about a quarter of the books that we already have in the house.

When Elaine and I last made a calculation, about ten years ago, we found that I had read about a quarter of the books in the house, and she had read about a seventh. And that was before a huge expansion of shelves and numbers of books.

I've been brought slap bang up against the fact that I have no hope of reading more than quarter of the unread books that are in the house at the moment.

What to do? Stop buying books? Don't be ridiculous. To stop buying books altogether is to close down one's brain.

Get rid of books? But how? Upon what criteria?

I looked at the shelves of books that we had already marked as 'Doubtfuls'. No book could be sold until both of us had read at least 50 pages of it.

This arrangement wasn't working. There are too many delectable books lying around for us to pay much attention to the 'doubtfuls'.

I decided to use the same criterion that I use when I'm cruising bookshops. It's what Peter Nicholls calls the Excitement Test. Pick up a book. Skim the first four or five pages of it. If there is something there that must be read, if I feel anticipation and excitement when I peruse the prose, I buy the book. I put back most of them.

I realise this criterion can be very unfair. We all know of books that don't come to life until page 100. But we also know that if a book is pretty dull at the start, it is not likely to turn into a masterpiece later on.

I began looking through our 'Doubtfuls'. Within a few hours, I had discarded a large pile of books whose first few pages I had looked at, because there was no excitement in them. No matter how long those books stayed in the house, I would always find an excuse not to read them.

I don't get paid much for the books at the local secondhand book shop. Secondhand dealers don't really want hardback books. But the throw-outs create lovely shelf space after they're carted off in the shopping jeep. And the small amount of money they bring in is always useful.

After the 'doubtful' hardbacks, what next? The 'doubtful' paperbacks, of course. The secondhand shops welcome these. Then onto the science fiction review books that I really should have reviewed. These are the books that nobody else wanted to review, either.

After that, I'll plunge into the boxes of unshelved books. I probably won't get rid of much there, since they are the most recent purchases.

But wait until Elaine and I get stuck into the general shelves. This throwing out of old books could get obsessional. Fling a book there! Throw one out here! The lascivious joy of it all!

Which books have gone and which have stayed? To my surprise, I kept only one of the many Angela Carter books I've bought. She really was the English queen of clotted prose. To my great relief, I can finally admit to myself that I will never read Samuel Delany's novels, although I've owned some of them for twenty-five years. Out they go!

The best first paragraph I discovered is that of James A. Cain's *The Root of His Evil* in a battered old library edition. I've never read the James Cain books I've bought, but now I'll catch up. The other most impressive first page was that of *Through the Doll's House Door*, a children's book by Jane Gardam.

I discovered that the very first pages of most novels are disappointing. Usually I had to read to about page 10 before I knew whether I was being fair to a book or not. I suspect that few authors know quite what they are doing until they are well into a book, but they won't allow the editor to cut the beginning. Some writers of fiction read this magazine. Take it from a reader: when in doubt, cut; then cut some more.

Peter Nicholls will probably be appalled to know that he has had this strange effect on at least one reader. It

just shows that the canny Melbourne sf reader should never miss a meeting of the Nova Mob . . . or miss an opportunity to cull the book collection.

---

## Who's in whose world?

---

**JULIAN FRIEDIN**  
8 Tantram Avenue  
East St Kilda VIC 3183

*Metaphysical Review* 18 has been quite a surprise. I flicked through it and was startled to see my photo illustrating the article on your garden party. It seemed like it was part of another world. Let me try to explain.

When I was about fifteen, 1973, science fiction held a great deal of meaning and substance, and maybe the reading of it connected to my adolescent sense of identity. I remember finding out about Melbourne fandom through an old American magazine, possibly *If* or *Fantastic* with a column written, I think, by Ted White. Somehow this led me to you and your fanzines. It was a bit like finding other dwellers in a space that had always felt both foreign and home. To me, I suspect you were like an elder statesman who knew all about the world I was discovering. Your autobiographical writings carried a special meaning for me that I cannot identify, but I remember as important.

I think we first met at Aussiecon in 1975. The memory is surprisingly clear of approaching you in the main room; I recall you were sitting on the central aisle. I remember telling you who I was and that I had voted for you in the fan Hugo. You told me that would make two votes. Why do I remember? I think I was in awe that I was in the presence of someone who seemed to hold a central place in this sf world, even though you may not have felt this way yourself. I wonder now if you in fact were feeling some apprehension and anxiety about the award, an anxiety I could not allow myself to see.

The following year I went to Melbourne University and joined MUSFA, where I think you occasionally joined in. The first meeting, in March 1976, was where I met Justin, Roger, Alan, Charles, Dennis, Kevin and others — the exact details of who was at MUSFA when is a little vague. At that meeting Roger asked for my 'List of Four Favourite Sf Novels', and so I was introduced to another great sf tradition. (The list included Brunner's *Stand on Zanzibar* and Tucker's *The Year of the Quiet Sun*.) I felt like I had discovered a group to which I could belong, which revolved around science fiction.

I do not know where the idea came from, but in retrospect I think I held the belief that to be part of this world I had to remain immersed in sf. It may have been a consequence of the importance people like yourself and MUSFA originally held for me. In time, as I became interested in other things as well, I didn't lose interest in fans but rather came to see myself as not really

belonging, a fringe dweller. Because to belong I thought you had to be a true believer, I came to see myself as external.

I continue to read the stuff, although much less than before, and am about two years behind in reading what Justin tells me that I have to buy. Because of other interests, of the shortage of time, I stopped reading fanzines much too. Not really because I lost interest but I suspect because I felt I did not belong in the world they occupied; they were part of something separate. I particularly recall your fanzine describing a dream (*TMR9*) and requesting commentary or interpretation. I always intended to say something but never did, and never understood where the ambivalence came from. It may have been that some of the dream images struck me as so different to what I imagined of you, at least in my understanding of the content with strong sexual themes, that I could not attend to the dream and maintain the same view of the world which I saw you placed centrally in.

So I was very pleased to be invited to the garden party in May 1992, and saw it to catch up with old friends, part of the past, a world that had held much meaning for me once but that now I was on the periphery of. A year later I see *The Metaphysical Review* and find that of all the people who attended and were photographed, you have chosen (I presume the photo was your choice, but really it does not matter) to put a photo of me in a central place. This may have an entirely different meaning for you, but to me the shock was to see myself placed at the centre of something I felt that was no longer an important part of me, and that I was not an important part of. It has made me realise that my belief that to belong everyone had to maintain a passion for sf was incorrect, and that I may exist in others' minds differently to where I see myself. Similarly the image of you I held in my mind, such as at Aussiecon, was probably quite different from how you see yourself.

Interestingly I know all about this theoretically. Freud, Klein and many others have written extensively on what is called 'object-relations theory'. We all live in our own worlds, created from infantile fantasy and structured in a way that feels most comfortable. As part of this we build up images internally of other people who we are in contact with, and then relate to the person not as they themselves are, but as we believe them to be. Knowing this is different from experiencing it, and so my surprise at the photo. I have had for many years a belief that I was on the periphery, was not part of that group of people any more because I was less interested in sf. The idea was never questioned, because I was not aware of it until I saw the photo and felt the surprise.

I am not trying to suggest in any manner the place I might occupy in your mind or within this group, only that the photo triggered a significant chain of thoughts and feelings for me about what it means to belong, to any group, and how we might come to believe what space we occupy and what relationship we have with another.

I have great pleasure in renewing my subscription.  
(4 May 1993)

\* And I had great pleasure in accepting it. And great

pleasure in reading this letter, of course.

You are one of the few people to tell me of an incident from the past that features me, but which I do not remember.

I have always assumed that other people think of me very little. I see myself as an outsider in fandom (for instance, someone who is almost never asked to furnish weddings). I scout around the periphery, reporting on the scene. The only group of people who welcomed me socially were the 'ASFR team' of 1968, the MUSFA crowd from the mid-1970s, the Nova Mob in recent years and another small group that I've become part of. During the 1985 Worldcon, however, it was made plain that my help was not wanted, and almost no overseas visitors rang me during the week after the convention.

Occasionally people such as you do treat me as a Big Name Fan, and I'm bemused. I've always assumed that it's because when I crouch over the keyboard to produce a fanzine, I become a different person — the sort of outgoing, whizzbang personality that I would like to be when you meet me.

The idea that one's position in fandom is in any way related to one's consumption or enjoyment of science fiction seems most peculiar. The accepted notion is that the real fan is someone who has outgrown science fiction altogether, never reads it or writes about it, and publishes only 'fannish' fanzines, which are about other fans.

I could never come at this either. I always wanted to publish fanzines that covered all the things in which I was interested. At various times, such as the beginning of the 1980s, I almost stopped reading sf, and I've read little during the last two years. I stay in the field in order to keep publishing fanzines, which is in itself sufficient satisfaction and justification.

How do I see you, Julian?

As a witty, highly intelligent bloke who contributed much to MUSFA fandom while you had time and opportunity, but whose capacity for making a career for yourself in psychiatric medicine necessarily cut you off from most of your hobbies.

As someone with whom I wish I had the time and opportunity to talk to at length, but someone whose path rarely crosses mine.

As someone, most importantly, who was so obviously having a great time at the garden party that Jane Tisell took your picture, and that picture best summed up the spirit of the party. \*

---

## No welcome back?

---

**BUCK COULSON**  
2677W-500N  
Hartford City  
Indiana 47348  
USA

(Re. *TMR* 18:) I admire your courage in inviting 150 people to a garden party, but then there aren't over a dozen people that I ever worked with that I'd have on

the property. As for the Grade 6 reunion: our high school has a reunion every year for everyone who ever graduated from the school. Just got a notice about this year's, but I'm not going. I went to our class's fortieth anniversary a few years back; one member of the class was dead, but seven of the remaining twelve members showed up. I might go back for the fiftieth in 1996, or I might not.

I think Lesleigh has cut her fannish connections. Last time Juanita and I saw her was at a Wiscon several years ago. She lives in Madison, but didn't come to the convention; she made arrangements to meet us at a local restaurant, and introduced her fiancé. (Her mother told us last fall that she's now married, and doing well.) Hank, of course, owns a bookstore in Madison these days and we see him at every Wiscon.

As for the other specific people you mention: I have no idea why they didn't keep in touch with you. 'Did I insult you people?' I have no idea whether you insulted those particular people or not, but let's say you would not be welcomed back by some of the people you met on your US trip all those years ago. I had no objection to your behaviour on the afternoon's visit, but I *did* hear comments about 'Ugly Australian' directed your way by several of the people you visited and I corresponded with. I didn't pass them on at the time; you were back home and not likely to come again, so there was no reason to do so. But since you asked . . .

\* One part of me likes to say 'That trip was 22 years ago when I was a callow youth', but another part of me knows that I would be a much worse traveller now than I was then. This explains why I haven't travelled interstate, let alone overseas, since 1981. Much of the problem on my 1974-74 trip was that I was committed, because of a tight budget, to staying at people's houses rather than in hotels. And anyone, let alone me, can quickly overstay a welcome in someone's house. I regret that there are people with whom I might have remained in correspondence ever since who simply didn't write to me after the mid-1970s. I still have no idea why Jackie Causgrove did not write after 1975. I remember her as one of the most pleasant people I met in 1973 — my rescuer at O'Hare Airport! — and I remember all the people with whom I stayed with nothing but affection for their kindness and helpfulness.

But 'Ugly Australian'. Buck? Unkindest cut of all. Ugly Gillespie, perhaps, but hardly *Ugly Australian*. I hardly ever say 'cobber'. I didn't even drink beer in those days, I don't throw prawns on the barbie, and I've never been known to chunder over hotel balconies. \*

Jennifer Bryce's trip report was reasonably interesting. The only time Juanita and I flew into Los Angeles at night, Juanita looked at the lights stretching all the way to the horizon and said, 'Trantor'. (Not being much of an Asimov fan, I wouldn't have made that connection, but it seemed appropriate.)

Bryce didn't explain 'Della, the nanny' very well. Regular employee of Bruce and Jinny? Temporary help? Nannies are very rare in this country; much more typical is taking the kids to a day nursery. (I sympathise with Jennifer's dislike of Los Angeles; I don't like it much

myself, though I like some of the people who live in the area.)

Dirk Strasser made the error of going to LA; tips are much scarcer — and smaller — in the small-town mid-west. The big-city types expect big tips. I once left a couple of dollars on the bed for the maid in a smaller hotel and when I got back the money had been replaced with a hand-drawn happy face and the words 'Thank You! I don't really know why anyone wants to visit LA anyway.'

(5 May 1993)

(Re TMR 19/20/21): I have a vote for your idea that writers start out by emulating their favourite authors. The stuff Gene DeWeese and I did for fanzines started out as a direct emulation of the style of Will Cuppy, who put most of his humour into his footnotes. By the time we graduated — or descended — into professional writing, the footnotes had disappeared but the humour hadn't. (It eventually did, in Gene's case; *Star Trek* readers don't like authors who poke fun at their characters. In my case, serious writing hasn't sold well, except as articles and filksongs.)

Very interesting article by Martin Bridgstock. Partly, I suppose, because the rural US, where we live, is the major home of fundamentalists. Who are, by and large, perfectly nice people, unlike Martin's politicians, as long as one doesn't argue religion with them.

\* I come from a fundamentalist background, but my people were hardly Bridgstock's fundamentalists. Few of the people I knew at various Churches of Christ would bother getting militant about an issue like Creationism. In fact, they were opposed to getting militant about anything. (Not quite true; it was a C. of C. minister, the formidable W. W. Saunders, who led the successful campaign in Victoria in the mid-1960s to keep the pubs shut at 6 p.m. instead of allowing them to open till 10 p.m. In the short run, he won. In the long run, he lost. These days we have moderately civilised licensing laws.) \*

We did buy a CD player last month. Haven't used it yet, though I used the tape-copying part of it once. I listen mostly to folk music. A few weeks ago I actually bought some lp records — Ian Tyson, John Renbourn, and two by Paul Robeson. I'll be surprised if more than one or two of your readers ever heard of Robeson, and if any have heard of the others. I also bought a biography of Lee Hays today; your readers can wonder who the hell he is.

\* It would be amazing if any Australian of my age hadn't heard of Paul Robeson. Since the 1940s his records have been as popular here as those of Crosby and Sinatra, and he's always had a strong following among lovers of opera and classical song. His virtual exile from McCarthyist USA in the early 1950s made him a folk hero for many Australians.

Having recently taped a whole lot of the Weavers for Gerald Murnane (from their four-CD boxed set *Wasn't That a Tune*), of course I know who Lee Hays is. Ronnie Gilbert has toured Australia within the last ten years. Pete Seeger hasn't made a new CD for

(Continued on Page 75)

**WAL ROBINSON** was one of the organisers of the Oakleigh Primary School Grade 6 Reunion that I described in No. 19/20/21. He has taken part in a number of ventures since I last saw him last at high school, including a number of years selling secondhand cars. Driving MGs is one of his hobbies. Somehow he's retained the same energy and enthusiasm that he had as a kid. He is married to Anna.

TRAVEL

## THE BIRDSVILLE RUN

by Wal Robinson

For several years I've wondered what it would be like to pull up at the Birdsville Pub in the MGA, together with about half a dozen other MGs, and astound the locals.

I first got the idea a few years ago when we were camped on the banks of the Murray River with a few other MG people. While sitting around the campfire one night discussing our previous adventures, Ralph Munro from MGCC South Australia asked what was the next crazy thing we could do. Just as a joke I said, 'Why don't we all drive our MGs to the Birdsville Pub for a counter lunch?' Much to my surprise everyone thought this was a great idea, and the plan was born.

Anna and I had planned to organise and carry out

this unusual journey about two weeks after the Brisbane National Meeting in 1990, but very heavy rains caused floods throughout central and eastern Australia and the countryside suffered badly. That was the year that Nyngan went underwater, along with the plans for our trip. And perhaps we weren't quite ready then, anyway.

In 1993 we were much more organised. When three MGBs, two MGAs and two TFs pulled up at the Birdsville Hotel in the late afternoon of the Saturday following the National Meeting of Easter 1993, I thought to myself that my dream had come true and the locals in the pub would indeed be astounded. With the noise of seven MGs revving and parking, car doors slamming, lots of



Rugged panorama of the Flinders Ranges.

laughing and joking and back-slapping, and photos being taken, I sauntered across the verandah of the pub to the open window to judge the reaction of the locals. Two of the drinkers had left the bar and walked to the open window to investigate the noise. They looked out at us, one mumbled to the other 'Huhl MGs', then they returned to the bar to resume their drinking. *What a bloody let-down!* Well anyway, we had made it.

Anna and I had left Adelaide the previous Tuesday, soon after the National Meeting Farewell Breakfast. We arrived at the caravan park just north of Hawker in the southern Flinders Ranges on Wednesday night. This was our prearranged rendezvous with the others — the others being Matthew Magilton in his TF, the same TF he drove on that epic journey around Australia three years ago, and the Queensland mob comprising Peter and Delia Rayment in an MGB, Alwyn and Barbara White in MGA and TF, John and Dominique Crane in an MGB and Colin and Delma West, also in an MGB. Unfortunately Ralph and Judy Munro, two of the original team members, were unable to join us.

The following morning, after a quick walk into Wilpena Pound we commenced the real journey, into the outback. The smart-looking black TF driven by Barbara, with Delma as navigator, led us through the very spectacular Aroona Valley and Bunyeruo Gorge and then down into picturesque Brachina Gorge where we encountered our first water crossing. We had great fun taking photos of each other as each car ploughed through the creek, creating bow-waves in the water.

Our MGA stalled in one particularly deep section, so with water lapping at the sills and the camper-trailer beginning to bob around behind, I stepped out and opened the bonnet so Peter Rayment could spray the leads with WD40. Just as he did this, some egghead in a 4WD charged into the creek with the object of offering to tow me out. In his eagerness to assist he created the biggest bow-wave of all. As this wall of water surged towards the MGA I slammed the bonnet, flung the driver's door shut very quickly so the inside wouldn't fill up with water, leapt over the door into the car, started it and drove out of the creek while Anna yelled 'You stupid idiot' to him from the other side.

We all thought it was a bit of a challenge and a lot of fun wending our way through Brachina Gorge that day, and the other tourists in their 4WDs were certainly most surprised to see so many MGs indulging in a bit of 'off-roading'.

That night we stayed at the Leigh Creek Caravan Park (the others carried tents with them to sleep in) and by mid-day the next day we reached Marree, the start of the Birdsville Track. We all enjoyed a beaut lunch in the Marree Pub. Then, in the early afternoon, we set off 'up the Track'.

We discovered quite early that we were inclined to spread out as we drove, some choosing to drive faster and take the rough going a little better, while others like us tended to be a bit slower and consequently drop to the back of the field. This seemed to be a good idea anyway, because by creating fairly lengthy gaps between each vehicle, we allowed the dust that swirled up from the wheels of the cars to clear away from the road. Most

of us had CB radios so we were still able to communicate up and down the line. Barbara and Delma, in the black TF, and Alwyn, whose MGA was suffering some overheating problems, seemed quite content to travel at roughly our pace as we loitered at the rear of the field. Welcome stops for morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea allowed us to regroup before setting off again.

The road could be best described as rocky, corrugated, sandy, bumpy, hot, dry and dusty. Boy, was it dusty. After only a couple of hours on the road each day, Anna and I looked as though we had been in a flour fight using wholemeal flour as ammo. The bulldust went up our noses, in our ears and eyes, and down our necks, as well as all through the car. It was worse when a 4WD went flying past as happened occasionally — some were in so much of a hurry and so darned inconsiderate that they didn't even slow down. Dust and rocks flew everywhere.

Worse still were the road trains, as we found during the afternoon. We were overtaken by two of them — fortunately they slowed considerably, but we were still forced to stop as we couldn't see where we were going. Anna brought along some of those paper industrial face masks which I said I wouldn't wear because they were too wimpish but we took to wearing them. They were a great help in filtering the dust from our noses and mouths. Glass goggles would have added to our general comfort as well, but we hadn't taken any.

You may think that all this discomfort turned the journey into a horror trip. It didn't. Naturally we expected the travelling to be rough and the terrain harsh. If the journey had proved to be too easy, many would have done it in MGs already.

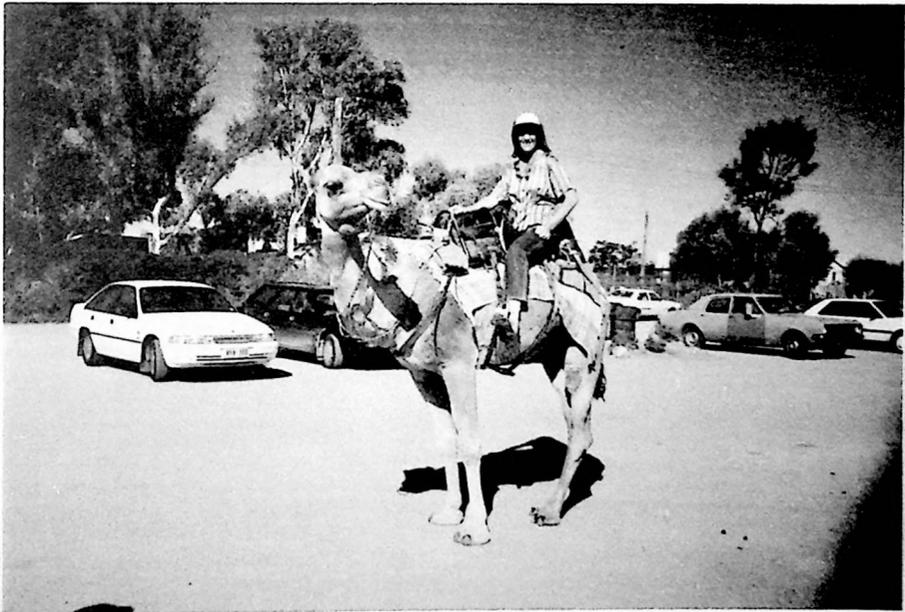
The landscape we travelled across was barren and desolate — not flat as you might expect, but gently undulating. Every so often a small line of trees could be seen way off in the distance. This usually indicated a dry creek bed which the road would eventually reach and we would drive across, the deep dry sand pulling at our wheels and trying to bring us to a stop. Very little water is to be found in this arid section of Australia — we saw only one bore by the roadside. Because its subterranean water was pumped from deep within the earth, it was near boiling in temperature and much too hot to drink or wash in.

The surface of this desolate countryside is mainly made up of gibbers, which are rounded weather-worn rocks varying in size from a fifty-cent piece to about the size of a football. These gibbers seemed to cover the ground for thousands of square kilometres and were the main reason the road was so bumpy and rocky. Gibbers are brown in appearance but if the sun strikes the ground at a certain angle they appear as a kind of strange purple colour.

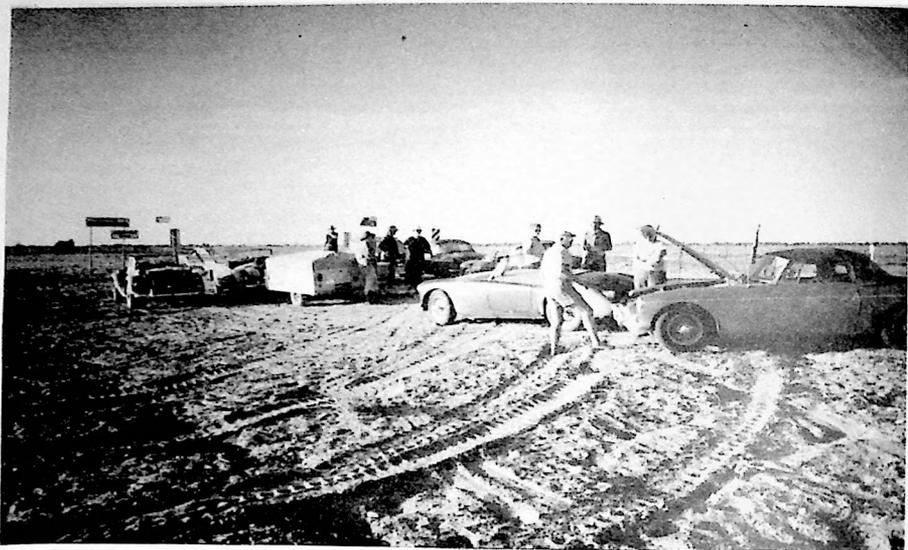
On the way to Birdsville we encountered the Natterannie Sandhills. The track winds its way through these sandhills for about 15 kilometres, and we saw many interesting side-tracks branching off through the mulga trees and creek beds. These would have been worth exploring, but we were running out of time. It was late afternoon and we planned to stop overnight at Mungerannie Homestead which is roughly the halfway



Sturt Stony Desert — not a tree or blade of grass in sight.



Anna and her lumpy friend.



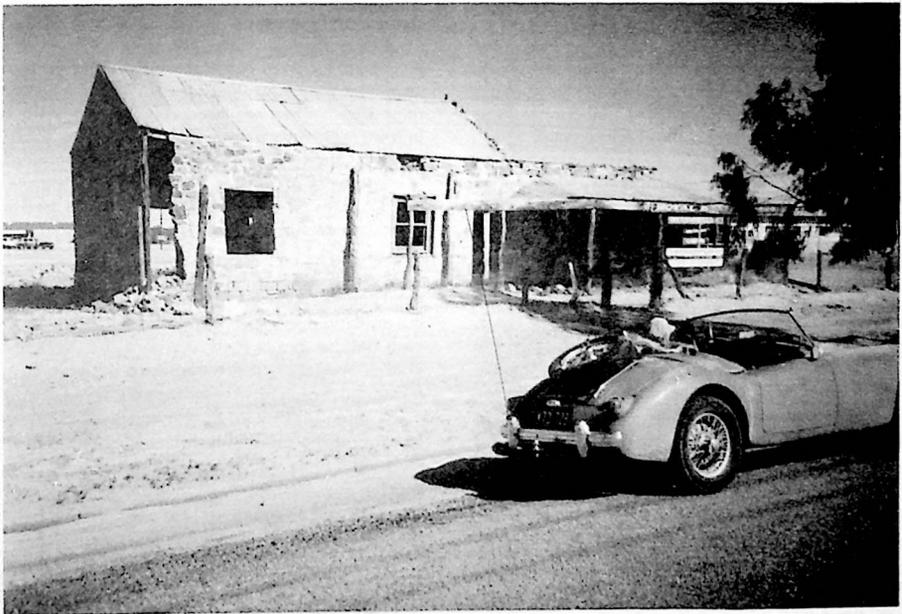
Brief stop at Queensland border — we are hot, dry and dusty.



Late-afternoon shadows point to our goal — the Birdsville Hotel.



On top of Big Red. Our MGs are parked below.



The ruin of the old Inland Mission Hospital in Birdsville's main street.

mark and the only fuel depot between Marree and Birdsville.

The next morning, as we gleefully filled our fuel tanks, we spotted a Range Rover from NSW that had obviously rolled over and been severely damaged. The homestead owner told us that it happened just the previous day when the vehicle hit a patch of soft sand while travelling too fast, and flipped end-over-end several times. The four adults in the vehicle were seriously injured and flown to Adelaide for treatment. The fellow went on to say that up around those parts they call the tourist season the 'rollover season' because tourists from the cities and towns drive along the bush tracks much too fast and get into all sorts of trouble. He said they regard their four-wheel drives as tanks and themselves as invincible. They find, tragically sometimes, that they are not. Fortunately our convoy travelled much too slowly and cautiously to be of any great danger to ourselves or anyone else.

We filled our tanks and set off once again. At \$1 a litre, that was the dearest price we paid for petrol for the whole trip. We were told that we would pay about 92c per litre just over the border in Queensland as there was no state levy there. When we arrived in Birdsville we found this to be correct.

The 540 kilometres of the Birdsville Track traverse three deserts, the Tirari Desert, Sturt's Stony Desert and also a section of the Strzelecki Desert, then skirts around the south-east corner of the Simpson Desert for about the last 100 kilometres into Birdsville. With just 15 kilometres to go to reach our objective, we crossed the border into Queensland. It was an excited group of travellers that stopped to regroup and take photos of the MGs positioned in front of the border sign, and a mere 30 minutes later we pulled up at the Birdsville Pub — mission accomplished.

After about an hour of exchanging our money for liquid refreshments, we drove down to the caravan park, which is situated on a very picturesque billabong of the Diamantina River, to set up camp and have a most welcome shower. Bore water never felt so good.

Birdsville is in the the Shire of Diamantina, which covers an area of 95,000 square kilometres, with a total population of 260 people. Of the 1683 kilometres of roads in the Shire, only seven are sealed.

Contrary to popular belief, there is plenty to see and do in and around Birdsville. During the couple of days we were there, Anna and I saw the Birdsville Race Track, the working museum, the airport, the cemetery, the Burke and Wills Tree, and Big Red, which is a very big sandhill about 50 kilometres north-west of Birdsville. We also saw the wadi trees, a very rare species of wattle that grow very slowly, about one metre every 20 years. This is one of only three small stands known within Australia.

For two nights in a row and for only \$20 per head we enjoyed a fabulous three-course meal at the Birdsville Pub. The friendly publicans, a husband and wife team, made us feel extremely welcome, and their hospitality was appreciated by all us intrepid travellers.

All too soon it was time to farewell our Queensland friends as they headed off to Brisbane along the most direct easterly route through Charleville and Roma. As

Matthew and Anna and I waved goodbye to them, we knew that the next part of our adventure was about to begin — the journey to Innamincka and then down the Strzelecki Track.

#### Down the Strzelecki Track

If we thought that the journey from Birdsville to Innamincka would be more trying and difficult than the relatively easy Birdsville Track, we were right. The track would become much more challenging. Getting bogged in dry creek beds would become a regular feature of our journey.

After we had farewelled the others when they headed off to Brisbane, we packed up camp and said goodbye to Birdsville by driving around the town once more. This didn't take long, and pretty soon we were heading east bound for the unknown — just Matthew Magilton in his trusty TF and Anna and I in the equally trusty MGA with the camper-trailer following obediently behind.

After 123 kilometres of fairly slow rough going, we reached a road junction and turned south, now heading towards the Sturt Stony Desert and Innamincka. This is where the real fun began. Until now the roads for the whole trip had been rough and corrugated but fairly well formed. From this point on, the road resembled a goat track. This was the adventure I had been waiting for. The last fatherly advice we received from Peter Rayment over the CB radio that morning as he motored out of Birdsville was 'Take it easy and you'll be right.'

We hadn't travelled more than three or four kilometres on this new 'road' when Anna, who was driving, got bogged in a patch of deep dry sand. She almost made it through to the other side but when she put her foot on the clutch to change down to second gear, the car just stopped dead, and then the rear wheels spun and dug us deeper into the sand. Out came the fence palings for the first time. Matthew and I scooped the loose sand away from the front of the rear tyres using the folding army-type shovels we had brought along specially for this purpose. Then we placed a fence paling in the sand in front of the rear wheels, selected first gear, then very gently let out the clutch so that the wheels mounted the palings. In this manner we were able to slowly make our way out of the sand trap. This procedure was used many times and was most successful in extricating the car from the dry creek beds.

In all the times we got bogged, not once did we ever need another vehicle to tow us out. The MG always got out under its own steam. Naturally the camera came out each time we got bogged to record the incident as a graphic reminder of the hardships we were encountering and the fun we were having getting out of trouble.

At about midday we stopped under the only large tree for miles around to have lunch, but we shared the shade with every wild animal within 100 miles. It was a very hot day. After lunch we motored across a large dry lake bed, and although we kept our car fairly much to the track, Matthew would head off across the lake in the TF and then come flying back beside us, then head off again. He really enjoyed the freedom of the outback, and come to think of it, so did we.

During the afternoon we came to the ruins of the old Cadelga homestead. What a magnificent house it must



Are we having fun yet?

have been in its day. The stone walls are at least two feet thick, and even most of the outbuildings were quite substantial, in that they were made from solid rock and clay. Naturally the roof timbers had all caved in. What had been once a very impressive place now looked forlorn and neglected.

As a stark contrast we found a bore near by, pumping water from the ground into a large concrete tank to provide drinking water for the cattle, with the electric motor driving the pump for this bore powered by several large solar panels.

Because we were hot and dusty and needed to cool off, I jokingly said at lunch time that we would only stop to camp that night where there was a running creek or river. I said it tongue in cheek, of course, because I believed there was no water within hundreds of kilometres. At about 5.30 p.m., and about the time we needed to stop and set up camp, we came across an oasis in the desert. Bull Hole Creek, a watering-hole for cattle with a few healthy-looking trees growing along its banks, was a perfect place to stop for the night. We drove off the track and along its bank until we found a great spot to stop and set up camp. The water looked irresistible, so without further ado we threw off all our clothes (well almost) and jumped into the water. Pure heaven. The people of the outback request travellers do not use soap when bathing in these waterholes as the cattle then refuse to drink the water, but we still had a great time washing the dust from our bodies. After consuming a big plate of Anna's pasta and my fair share of De Bortoli Spumante around Matthew's campfire that night, I slept the best I had slept for the trip so far.

We set off early the next morning because progress had not been particularly quick along this track. About

mid-morning we reached Cordillo Downs Homestead. As we approached the large front gate, a light plane landed at the station airstrip and a car set off to collect the occupants of the plane. We had intended to go into this homestead to inspect the huge shearing shed there, but we decided to continue on our way.

Shortly afterwards the track led us down into a creek bed, where we were confronted with our first real water hazard. The water was about five metres across and seemed to be about one metre deep — okay for 4WDs perhaps, but not for MGs. We had to find another place to cross. Matthew set off on foot heading down the creek. Pretty soon he returned and jumped into his car and told us to follow him. We drove off the track and across country for about half a kilometre where we found a much shallower section and made our way across, then rejoined the main track.

Later we stopped to chat to some people in a 4WD. Aware of the water crossing, they asked us how we managed to get across. They were very impressed with our efforts and amazed that we would attempt this journey in an MG. Anna later mentioned to Matthew and me that these were the first people we had seen for 24 hours, since about midday the previous day. We were learning the meaning of isolation.

We pressed on slowly towards Innamincka along our goat track, with the dust and the heat and the flies for company, and the rough road and sandy creek crossings combining to keep our speed down to about 10–15 mph. It was hard going sometimes, but we wouldn't have missed it for the world.

We doubted whether we would reach Innamincka by nightfall but we encountered a bonus in the form of graded road for the last 30 kilometres and were able to



Innamincka — our camp on the bank of Cooper Creek.

hit top gear and pull up at the Innamincka Pub at 5.30 p.m. just as the sun was going down. We had travelled 429 kilometres in two days of hard driving and we deserved a beer.

Innamincka is too small to be regarded as a town — it consists of the hotel, a general store and three or four other houses. It is quite isolated, and it is from here that the Strzelecki Track starts (or finishes, if you are coming from the Lyndhurst end). There is no caravan park, just shady trees on the banks of Cooper Creek, so after food and drink, this is where we headed to set up camp for another well-deserved night's sleep.

The blackboard sign on the front of the general store the next morning informed tourists that 132 years ago to the day Burke, Wills and King returned to the Dig Tree from the Gulf of Carpentaria, only to find that their base party had left just nine hours earlier. Burke and Wills both died nine weeks later, while King was cared for by the local natives and was rescued by a search party sent from Brisbane about three months after that. Here we were 132 years later setting out to visit the Dig Tree which is situated beside Cooper Creek, about 53 km by road upriver from Innamincka.

The road was rough, but within two hours we reached the creek crossing with only three kilometres to go. Cooper Creek at this point was about 40 metres wide and flowing, so Matthew and I walked across and back tossing big rocks aside as we went. The water was no more than about 18 inches deep. Matthew went across first, and we followed safely behind.

When we arrived at the Dig Tree, which is roped off

and well marked with signs, we saw that the original message carved in the trunk of the tree was all but obscured by the slow but sure encroachment of the bark. Several letters and numbers are still legible.

After taking the obligatory photos, we returned to the creek crossing, cautiously recrossed the creek and stopped in the shade of a large tree for lunch. It was another very hot day so we had a very refreshing swim in the creek. While driving back to Innamincka we encountered three 4WDs coming towards us. The vehicles stopped and the people jumped out and videoed us as we tooted and waved and drove past. Undoubtedly they were extremely surprised to come across two MGs way out there in the middle of nowhere. We treated ourselves to a couple of beers and some dinner that night, then headed for bed.

Our early start the next morning was delayed when I discovered that the dashboard on the MGA had come loose because of all the vibrations. Matthew crawled underneath and wired it up temporarily — well enough to get us back to Melbourne, as it turned out.

This next leg of our journey was marked as a dotted line on our map with the notation 'track, four wheel drive only'. This is the historic Strzelecki Track. With a deep breath and a lump in the tummy we set off on the 240 kilometres of sandy, uninhabited country to Cameron Corner. This took us the whole day, and there were two interesting features of this section of the journey.

The first was when we passed through a field of oil wells stretching for about 20–30 kilometres. Altogether we reckon we saw about 35 of them, all unattended and



Crossing Cooper Creek near the Dig Tree.

most dutifully pumping away, the diesel motors disturbing the desert peace and the black rubber hoses carrying the oil went snaking out across the ground to disappear over the distant sand ridges. These oil wells were obviously a small part of the much bigger operation being carried out at Moomba oil and gas fields situated about 50 kilometres to the west.

The second memorable feature occurred after we departed from the Strzelecki Track and turned eastwards once again. Instead of travelling parallel with the sand ridges we were crossing them at right angles. Within a distance of about 60 kilometres we crossed, according to our map, 123 of these sandridges, most of them with an average height of about 15 metres. It was great fun attacking each sand ridge with a bit of speed up, cresting the hill and flying down the other side while at the same time keeping a sharp lookout for treacherous bulldust holes or wild animals that might be just over the hill, not to mention oncoming traffic. It was incredibly exhilarating and at times hair-raising, but great fun too.

By late afternoon we pulled in at Cameron Corner, which is where the borders of South Australia, Queensland and New South Wales intersect. Although a major geographical feature on our maps, Cameron Corner is very much in the middle of nowhere. A small hut that serves as a hotel and general store has only recently opened here. The fellow who built and operates it named his establishment The Corner Store.

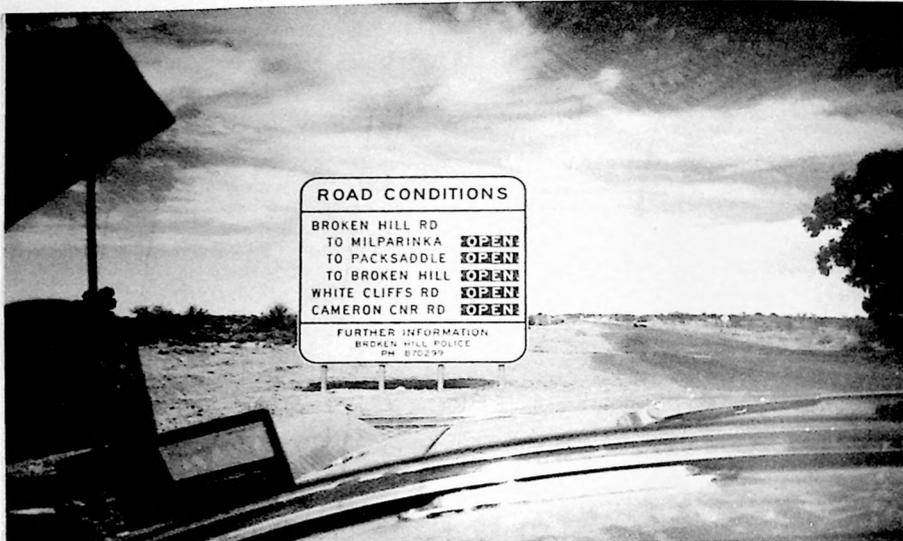
After filling up with petrol, beer and hot scones with jam and cream, we drove our cars through the large gate of the dingo fence. This fence runs the full length of the Queensland border and the sign on the gate says 'Penalty \$5000 for not shutting the gate'. Another 30

kilometres and nightfall saw us turn into the well-appointed camping area at Fort Grey. We were now in the very north-west corner of New South Wales.

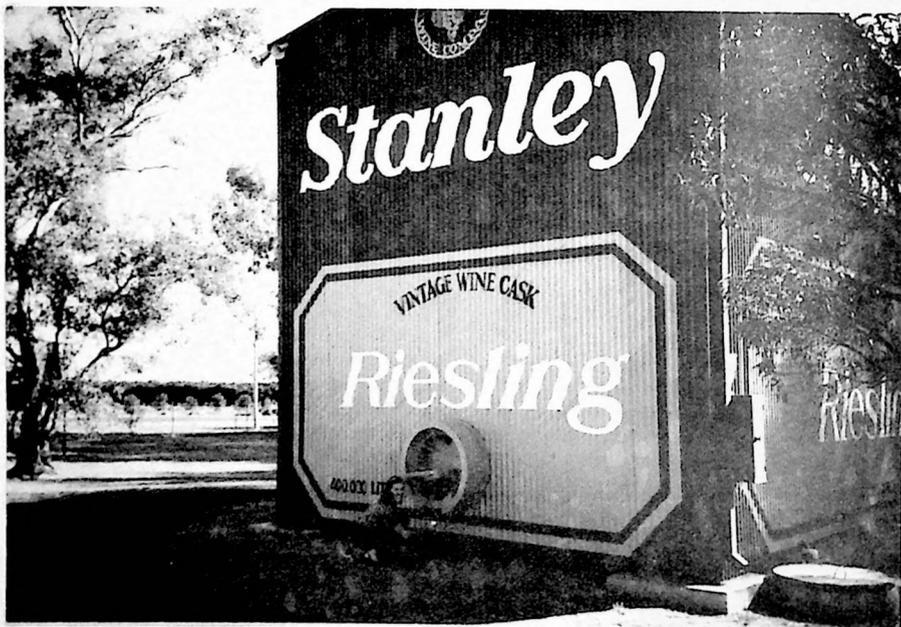
Matthew was up early the next morning as he had decided to drive to Canberra to visit friends. After seeing him off, we packed up our camp and headed towards Tibooburra, 110 kilometres away. As we drove into Tibooburra we felt we were back in civilisation again, despite still being 300 kilometres west of Bourke — 'Back o' Bourke'. We felt we had left the deserts and the outback behind because the arid and sandy landscape had been replaced by softer rolling hills and more productive grazing country. We had a mid-morning beer at the Tibooburra Hotel and took a look at the School of the Air, then turned the MGA south to Broken Hill.

Although it is called the Silver City Highway, the road is unsealed, with very rough sections which slowed us down. Therefore it took us the rest of the day to cover the 210 kilometres to Broken Hill. About 20 kilometres out of town we hit the bitumen again. At last, after about 2500 kilometres of unmade roads and bush tracks we were back on sealed roads.

We spent the next two days de-dusting ourselves, the car and trailer and all our luggage, as well as a bit of sight-seeing around the town. Then we drove down to Mildura, where we relaxed by the Murray River for a couple of days, then on to Melbourne and home. Thereby we had successfully completed the journey in a little over two weeks and covered a total distance of 3221 miles (5184 kilometres) with an average fuel consumption of just over 25 mpg.



We are in luck — rain can close the roads for weeks.



A small drink to celebrate a successful journey.

### Preparation

Preparation for the trip was fairly minimal, although certain precautions had to be taken, both modifications to the MGA as well as certain essential provisions necessary for a safe trip.

The MGA first. I knew ground clearance was a problem that had to be addressed, so I began by fitting longer coil springs to the front suspension, a fairly simple task. Next I obtained a pair of secondhand rear leaf springs which were sent off for an extra leaf to be added and to be reset higher. When fitted to the car, this achieved an overall increase in ground clearance of just over three inches. Perfect. I subsequently modified the suspension of the camper-trailer as well, to maintain a ride height level with the MGA.

Next I had some strips of quarry conveyor belt fitted over the sump and over the fuel tank too. These were to protect those two vital components from destructive flying rocks, and were designed to be detachable in case I needed access for any reason. As it happened I didn't, and they worked very well by protecting the underside of the car.

I then gave the MGA a complete going over, checking all mechanical components and replacing a few items such as wheel bearings and splines, brake linings, strengthening the battery carriers as well as removing all the U clamps from the exhaust system and welding every joint. This worked well because the muffler and exhaust system gave no problems at all even though we bottomed out many times.

A tune-up and replacing my foam Uni-Filter air cleaners with paper element ones completed the preparation. Just before departure I heard on the news of a grasshopper plague in South Australia. I made up a full-width insect screen and fitted it to the front of the car. The last thing I wanted was for the radiator core to get all gummed up with a waxy impenetrable mush and cause overheating problems out in the desert. MGAs

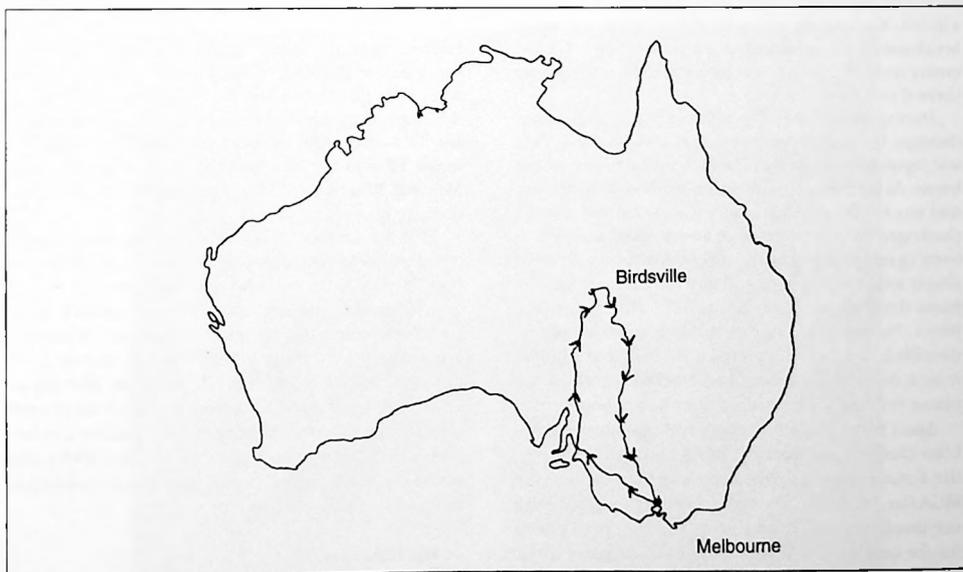
run hot enough as it is. As it happens we didn't strike any grasshopper plague, but the screen was still useful in stopping the odd grasshopper, butterfly or dragonfly from entering the radiator as well as protecting the front of the car from stones thrown up by passing or overtaking 4WDs.

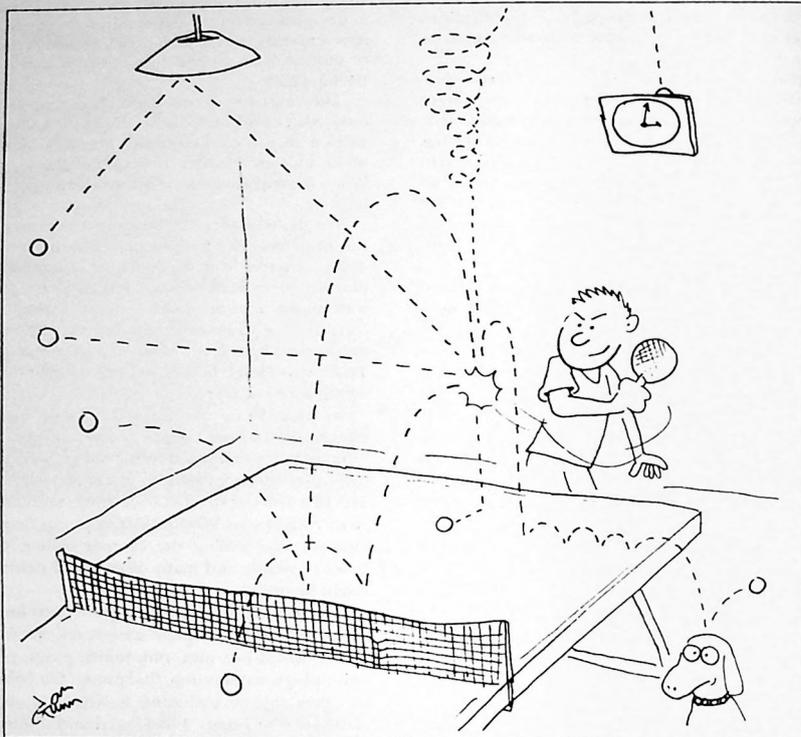
The most important items in our provisions were food, water and fuel, and of these we took plenty. We carried in the camper-trailer 80 litres of Melbourne water in four 20 litre collapsible plastic containers. When the trip was completed, we had half of the last one left.

We also took three 20-litre jerry cans and one 10-litre can of petrol. The longest stretch without fuel was the 430 kilometres from Birdsville to Innamincka, and on that leg we used about half our reserve supply. Faced with more adverse conditions we could have been forced to use a lot more fuel so it pays to be oversupplied rather than run short. Most of the tourists we met had 4WDs with diesel motors, so borrowing petrol is a bit of a long shot out there.

In addition to our normal cooking and camping equipment and our own personal requirements, I also took along my tool box carefully sorted beforehand, and two other boxes containing various emergency items. The first box was stocked with things such as tow ropes, jacks, rolls of wire, WD40, 12V tyre pump, fuses, masking tape for dust-sealing the camper trailer, tyre levers, tubes of silastic and many other small items I thought might be useful.

The second box was full of spare parts for the MGA, items such as a complete gasket set, including head gasket, wheel bearings, uni. joints, plugs, points, coil, welsh plugs, water pump, fuel pump, fan belts, plus lots of other things, including a complete secondhand distributor and shaft. I had listed and numbered each individual item on a sheet of paper so I had a ready reference of what was in the box without having to





unpack. Fortunately for us we didn't suffer any major breakdowns so we didn't need to use any of these emergency bits, but it was reassuring to know they were there if required.

During the journey the MGA suffered only minor damage. We had two tyres with slow leaks in them. One was repaired in Broken Hill and the other when we got home. As mentioned before, the dashboard came loose and was wired up. About halfway through the trip the passenger door jammed shut and refused to open. It wasn't a real problem on the trip, as the passenger would simply step over the door and into the car as we had the hood down all the time. It was fixed after we arrived home. We nearly lost one of the air cleaner cannisters near Birdsville, but I discovered it just in time and bolted it back on. And the towbar had cracked slightly in two places and had to be repaired after we got home.

Apart from a few stone chips in the paintwork and a horn that stopped working, that's about the extent of the damage. I guess I expected more than that but the MGA fared very well. The only other spares we took were our usual spare wheel for the car and two spare wheels for the camper, but we didn't need to use any of them.

Looking back on the trip, we are surprised we travelled the roads we did. Our timing for dry weather was luck more than good planning. It's exciting to think that of the original group that reached Birdsville, Barbara in her TF won the Golden Gudgeon Award and Matthew in his TF won the New Zealand Plate at the National Meeting. What a thrill for them and then to go on and do the trip.

MGs are certainly more versatile than most people imagine. I was recently speaking to Len Beadell who lives in Adelaide and who was instrumental in the surveying and construction of several outback bush tracks including the famous 'Gunbarrel Highway'. When I told Len of our recent trip and that we were driving the MGA to Perth for the National Meeting in 1995, he suggested we come back on one of his graded tracks from Laverton in Western Australia to Coober Pedy in South Australia, a distance of about 1000 miles across central Australia. Len assures me we could do it in an MG. I think we'll give it a try.

— Wal Robinson, 1994

CATHERINE HOFFMANN has had a number of short stories and essays published in *Overland*, *The Bulletin*, *Mattoid*, *Nation Review*, *The Age*, and *Quadrant*, and three books by Greenhouse Pty Ltd: *Perilous Journey* (1981), *Crystal* (1987) and *Forms of Bliss* (1988).

TRAVEL

## A traveller's prayer to Hermes

by Catherine Hoffmann

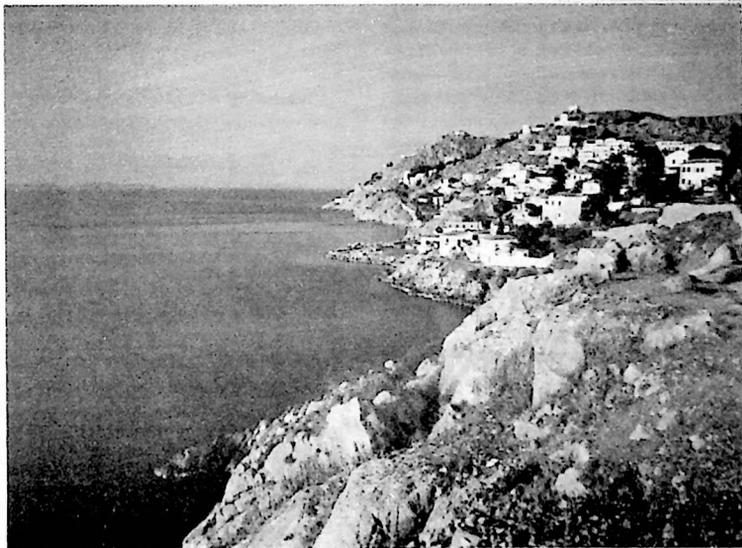
### April 15. Off to Piraeus.

On a mauve Athenian dawn, left the Hotel Phaedra. Slogged, footsore (already?) through a ghost-blue Plaka to Monastiraki. In the train there was a raggle-taggle man with the visage of a king. He started playing a tambourine. Greeks on their way to work rooted in their pockets. Each gave him money. What would have happened to the tambourine king in Ozzie land at 6.20 a.m.? People would have looked the other way.

Adrenalin's down. Energy ebb. No drive for the going. Is this where the past's false moves catch up? Get steady. Jettison self-pity. Toughen up. Stay on the more modest level of dead consciousness. Not at what was, or

the destructions to come. Otherwise you write off what's here, really *here*. And you remain a person of the 'what if?' and the 'but'. Remember in travelling, what's redemptive is the reality outside. Stay in your skin. Don't jump forward or back. Keep tuned to what's here. Stay faced to it.

Among the wobbly tiers of *loukoumadhes* of Jani's cafe at Piraeus, took a stab at the map. It came up — no reason — Poros. I bought the ticket. In the shop with the morning-grizzled back-packers, Levi jackets slung on the floor, the hash-hish patter of the Kabul-Isfahan-Lhasa travellers, everyone bleary over breakfasts. At this



hour only Piraeus Greeks can josh each other. They drink café *gyka*. After twenty years of health food fascism, they still eat those little plates of jam. Makes sense, the big stoke of sugar in the morning, health fiends notwithstanding.

#### On the boat.

At the first cut of the ship into the flesh of water, at that second's separation of land from sea, a paean of ineluctable pleasure went off inside me. Is it sexual? Stuff this Freud-fooled cliché! The pleasure is the one of bells, horns, deep-sea thrall, roll of waves, thrum of wind in the ear, the 'Hooray!' of movement, the joy of uncleaning. As we dove forward the land behind re-arrayed itself, recontoured its peaks, reshuffled its edge. Out on the sea, I saw 'Greek light'. Can still touch you to the end.

So. It's not going to be the exaltation of twenty, when I walked here with the world in front; but a gratitude for things because of the world behind.

What am I doing on the Aegean? A last victory lap? Victory? The time since the first pure visions have been one of non-stop, unavailing effort. But this is for sure; whatever is *not* going to happen, even if you never fulfil ambition, the work of achieving truth-in-spirit is never going to stop having to be done. From where the strength? From this, here, now — these studs of joy in the sea, the islands!

#### April 17. At Poros.

Hours of heaven. The citrus grove at Galata lies across the sea from Poros on the mainland. In the grove the soil was red, cypresses spiralled, poppies blazed under silver olives. A brisk blue breeze during the hours of tramping under golden lemons.

Suddenly I heard a music in the grove. Went towards it. Found a hidden taverna full of feasting folk among the trees. A man saw me peeping through the shrubbery. He let out a yell, ran at me, grabbed my hand. He made me sit at a laden table of old lurching men. They offered me food, and I, perverse and starved, said, 'Oh, no thanks.' Ghalambros, the old man, he held my head, opened my mouth — does this really happen? — and force-fed me like a fattening duck. The others kept squashing succulent titbits, rude parts of animals, best morsels in my mouth. The company was an old sailor, an engineer, a man whose wife had just died, the Ghalambros who said he was ill, and a lemon-grove farmer. Amid the chortling and cackling over the viands and *ouzaki* I told Ghalambros I wasn't real well either. He pointed to the sky. 'The God' — he said it in Greek — 'he will look after you.'

Couldn't have walked back through the grove after that. Waved down a guy on a Yamaha for a lift. 'Where you travelling?' he yelled over his shoulder.

'Don't know. Any ideas?'

'Go to Hydra.'

'Why?'

'Just go. You see.'

'Endaxi.'

'Oreal! Kalo taxidi, Kyria!'

*Ole!*

In the evening on the quay of Poros walked amidst the masts of ships. The land, a mantle of heroes, lay behind. The sky at sunset was soft-peat black, striated with silver. 'Eat something, Madame?' a waiter gesticulated at the gingham tables by the waterside. Ate hugely of *horiatiki* salad in ponds of oil, of groiny meat in a sauce snazzied up with leeks, and a mountain of chips. Thought to go and sleep, a snag snarling, tightening in me. But I sat on, and time passed. And the unhappiness began dissolving into the pure and terrible sky, the lap lap of the sea, the aureoles of quay lights. Later, in bed, I heard a Greek sing in a café below until morning. Lay there with nothing thought out, but somehow un-knotted, just listening to it.

#### April 20. Poros docks.

Waiting for ship to Hydra. Even if there's nothing left you can still see, use your eyes, perceive. Gulls dive against cypresses. From the hills, a roar of tragic light. The smells of the Aegean world; whitewash, petrol, burning rubber, bikes, oil, cooking, resin, doughy *boughatsa* and donkey drops. Unfathomable, the mixture of evil and good.

#### April 21. On ship to Hydra.

Passionfruit-skin coloured lands shimmy in the sea. They swell out of the horizon, turn rose, old gold, then very pink. They heap, they wane, come rounding, and melt like a music from the past. Out there, on the rails I turned into the wind. On the way across the sea people were saying it had been a poor spring. Nor had the olives of Hydra flowered.

#### April 22. Hydra.

Hustled for rooms on the port for three hours. No bed, no *pansion*, nix! Fatigue. Walked away from the harbour. Sat down in the dust at the base of a fir tree. Shoulders hurting. Pissed off. A holidaying Dutchman came swinging along, the let-loose belly of late fifties, carrot hair, civilised eyes, carrying a child on his shoulder. He looked at me, a bad-tempered sulk in the dust.

'You call this an island!' I snarled at him because he looked so pleased with it. 'No room! No board! Nothing!'

'Maybe', he said in a slightly ironical or perhaps just an entertained English, 'if you come with me, we find something.'

He carried my bag and I (user!) let him. My shoulders killing me. He led the way to his daughter's and Greek son-in-law's villa in the village of Kamina twenty minutes from Hydra. 'My daughter is a writer', himself a journo, Hans the Hollander said, 'she flies everywhere, Europe, New York, South America. Her husband is a media man. Melina Mercouri's minder. They travel, children, everything, on tours, in entourage, like Tina Turner. How many hours per day do you write?'

'Seven, eight, nine.'

'Perhaps', said Hans, 'you can teach my daughter to be serious. To sit to it.'

'Maybe your daughter is writing in her head all the time?'

'In the cha-cha clubs of Rio?'

First I met the husband. He was a mischievously good



looker of a man with a lot of complex sass (the gals like this) in his eyes. He held a little daughter who shrieked in an idle, me-centre-of-the-universe staccato, 'Baba! Baba!' He had on a T-shirt that said on the front, 'The World's a Bitch'. On the back it said, 'So am I'. His wife, Ingeborg from Amsterdam-USA-Rio, emerged from sleep onto the patio. A fluff-haired, well-made girl, dizzy-full of life. She was very proportionate but her breasts were enormous, hormonally enlarged. The image was of explosion, of being blown up. 'I'm so sleepy all the time', she bitched good naturedly in that slightly lispy but conceptually well-grasped English all the Euros talk here, 'It's the fucking Pill! Hate it so much! Hate diaphragms. Tried loops and coils. I got infected, nearly sterile.' She kept looking at me imploringly, while the men, her father and husband, stood around looking absent, like they weren't there. 'Anyway, please stay here in our villa.'

#### April 23. On Hydra Port.

Hans introduced me to expatriate artists lolling under the port's café awnings. I haven't come to scoff — but is Hydra an island of New Wave or Next Wave vagabonds from the art jet set? Picked it up by the look of Vague Cool, the prickly body-consciousness. The men were all trying on Arid but looked only fruity in male jewellery and white pantaloons. There's a feel here of photocopy artists, dot painters, health freaks, joggers, cruel semioticians and deconstructivists. Let me be wrong. . . .

#### April 27.

The drifters who live here paint and write, have affairs and chats, disdain the discos, but frequent dives like Up On High for brunch. They rent houses, or lob in with their mates, give Happy Hour drinks and serve *mezzes*. They leave for spurts but always come back. 'Hydra's heaven!' they say over drinks at sunset. They 'hang'. Everyone in their cafes and patios looks out on the horizon. A line of meditation for them?

'Hanging' fills me with revulsion because I am tempted to the loose drift of it. The doing nothing, the no purpose. 'No purpose can be a purpose,' Hans says. He comes here, he says, for the 'energy' of the lull, for its reactivation of the senses. But what's to see in Kamina village? Asbestos rubble, plastic bottles and bags, shale and scree underfoot, pugnacious children, New Wave wastrels and scared cats.

Energy not worked to a purpose is horrible without limits. That's why intellectuals like volatile brain activity, its mechanical performing futility. They adore energy, the God-word for them.

I'm going sour here. I don't like anything. Because there's no liking in me.

#### April 30. Hydra.

Met Carolina and Lena, two vulnerable, bright and sexually wooed Northern women. Both are having 'Greek affairs' with men who speak only Greek. Lena is a cardiologist from Sweden. Carolina, a Dutch teacher of music. Now on the port both sell the pricey junk jewellery for their lovers and bugging up their reproductive tracts (as women always have) for their men. 'Once I used to be very strict about what I do to the life-continuing organs,' Carolina said. 'Now I don't know.' Too awful for comment, I asked her instead, what's the point of an affair with someone you can't understand? How can you know your lover's mind without language? 'I know', Carolina said, 'that's why Stavros and I are so passionate.'

#### Afternoon by the port.

The innocence of hurt animals. A tiny, starved-to-the-skin donkey is eating a wooden box. A Greek goes 'Psst!' to stop it. Animals are cruelly burdened with sacks of salt, potatoes, barley. A moronic *porco* tourist is taking flying jumps at its back. The ass wants a photo of himself on a donkey. Who is the idiot? The animal's spine cracks inward at each jump.

What would Christ have done? I don't know. Maybe, just say 'Please, stop'. And if the jerk did not? Christ would have knocked him cold.

#### April 29. Hydra.

Still here. Swine of Circe, I can't move from this isle of the Fates. 'O moiras.' There was Clotho of the spindles. Lachesis who had the book of fate. And Antheos, the shears. Draw from all this sensory disintegration the Excalibur of consciousness. Achieve authority of self.

#### April 29. Hydra. Kamina.

Walked out to Kamina harbour. Sat awhile at rust-red cafe. Had beer and chips for lunch. Watched a classical rhythm; fishermen mend nets and sacks, load and unload, thrash octopus, gut fish, all the while talking across the harbour to each other. They threw back chat, fishing lines, tackle, packets of smokes, bites of octopus at each other.

Then went walking. Craggs of rock so essential and vast, you feel either inane or like a child of the universe under them. Walked for hours in a white, ridged, gouged wilderness of stone. Exhaustion makes you one with the scape. All is spindly and burnt though not yet May. Lichens, mosses, and one spare poppy survive on Hydra's flanks. Aegean distances, force of rock, hazy depths, stone lines and sky is the island feeling this time. Sat down for a fag. Surrounded by the sea. Goldily lolling in it, the shapely loaves of the Peleponnese. From the hill came the unique wind-song of the pines. Bands of light curved in the sea. A single spear of shine ran to the horizon. What was it? Animals stir. Flies zizz. The apple-green light from the trees. Here's a Zen; accept, for now, being a flat and empty person. For twenty years I asked, prepared the line, made straight the ways for it to come. That it did not, means *not* that I am one to whom 'no' has been done, but that what I asked for did not exist. Am I peering inside now because of fascination with the pain? I hope from its opposite, that it may come to an end.

One night, all of us eating at the table, Hans began talking about discipline. Why doesn't Ingeborg write more? He thought he was being restrained and rational, but his will of blood was boiling inside.

Ingeborg exploded like a cracker. Her life was busy, she said — commitment to her man, her children, her house, friends of theirs who came to visit, relax. From the magazines editors came to be amused and courted. She had a social life, a private one, a sexual life, for Christsakes! Hans accused her of avoiding the issue. Of lying. 'Didn't you and mother want this "socio-sex life" for me when you took me to the gynaecologist for the Pill and I was twelve and still a virgin?'

'Rubbish!' he left fly, and out rolled the whole conundrum of the sexual revolution that ripped off the deep sexual modesty and reserve of a generation of girls and boys. 'We wanted you to feel free! Not repressed! We wanted spontaneity for our children. Not our generation's sexual neurosis.'

'You wanted me to fuck!'

'We wanted you to have a choice!'

'You set me wild — not free! I had no choice. I was

a child! You made sex compulsory!'

'We wanted you to be healthy! Natural!'

'I wanted to be a virgin! Free! Available for myself Not hurt. Or a man's! You and mother had no standards. You taught me nothing. I've no meaning of sex! But you've got what you've wanted. I fuck all the time, I've had a hundred affairs — so has he!' — she flung at her husband sitting there in a flappy smile — 'I don't know what anything is. And you want me to *write!* as well?'

Afterwards, Ingeborg put her arms on my shoulder. She cried, kissed my face. She got the point of what the old sneak was doing — playing me off against her. 'How do you do it, Katrin? Don't say it. They're fucked — that permissive, sex-sick generation!'

Hans gave me a newspaper article of Ingeborg's to edit. It was about the inmates of the insane asylum on the island of Leros. It read extremely well, hard-nosed, clean facts, moving with point, passionate. As asked, I fine-tuned it. You're a good writer, Ingeborg. Your losses are real, not imaginary. Sometime you will have to face it in solitude, your losses and your gifts. But believe there is a desiring and a willing that is a new birth.

#### The gold road to Vlichos.

Arguably the most Homeric road I've seen . . . furred with grasses above the sea. Fooled around with the prickly pear, didn't know it was a cactus. Got hot pins in my fingers for hours. There's a cool-hot wind, nearly May. Passed a yard of kidding-around goats, vertical black sticks for eyes. A smell of animal ordure that in no way disgusts. Greeted by a man on a mule with the impeccable and detached Hellenic form I like.

The gossipiness and fritter of Hydra. People have stayed fragments.

Above Vlichos. Clumps of land in the sea at dusk. Sitting among the stones of Hydra. Against a hillside of mean grey shrubs and thalassa grandeur I accept: that I'd put my work and self together with too much strenuousness instead of allowing life to work in me; that I had tried as much as possible; that my personality — as distinct from nature — did not please me. That I might have to cover a road or so before it turns around to new parts. That I would take with me talismans on the way, the great thoughts of my mentors, memories of truth-talks with friends, my love of food, my body's strange health, and all this was bounty and will be enough. I also accepted that after the push to the outside in which I lost character, tongue and effect, that my voice might have to be retired for awhile; that to work personality out of its wrong starting points may never end, not in this life, but that this was good news, not bad, for it meant that personality was real, chosen, serious and hefty work. And that you just might get your voice right after the work of a lifetime.

Also that no one is going to continually and forever keep on missing the bullseye.

#### May 3.

If to be an artist is to make who you are and what you do identical; if it is being a witness to what you know, putting it together in a framework and bringing it off both within and outside yourself, then what to make of

these repulsive dribblets and slashlets of the *faux naïf* pranksters here on Hydra who say they are artists?

Wormed my way through the usual stonewallings to get a look at the studios. Saw: butcher's paper, plyboard, filthy big canvasses with semiotic signs on them, documentary photos called 'media extractions' (remember, in the sixties abortions were called 'period extractions'), collages of photocopies, squiggles and arrows, a refry of the sick seventies when art got cancer. There's a painter here who, liking the misery and fractured nonsense of Francis Bacon, makes figures that look like rejects from Belsen. Shave-pated, fly-blown skin, anorexic, in the violent jags of the brain-sick. Everyone drawing bodies flayed, dying and vomiting. It's called 'New Expressivism'. Vapid and bad-tempered, its credo is 'off'. Though the first thing that hits you is that they can't draw and the work is inept, the artists keep floating terms like 'control' and 'manuality' and 'organisation'. Sherri from New York explained to me: 'Art has no values' and 'Art is its own result'. She said she was right behind Motherwell in the US, who reckoned the canvas itself was the object. But I said it was Fuck 'n' Chuck art with no soul. 'Hey', Sherri laughed into her marguerita at Up On High, 'you got a foul mouth!'

Only an art from the soul is real. Only that is distinct, carries truth, discovery, information. The collapse into solipsism does not enable but degrades the self. This art tears humans from the sockets of their being, from what they are. It does not free but severs the relation to everything. And these scared scribbles of Sherri still evince a half-hearted lingering towards the dimension of soul. But she rejects the idea of 'soul' because it will not yield to ideological control and is 'indemonstrable' to her criteria. Shelled out on her some. Guess we're not going to be friends, after all, Sherri and I — though I like her.

The thing she is right about is that I haven't kept the Apollonian precept, my favourite: 'Keep a reverent tongue.'

Admit it, Fat Swino, you're stuck. There's something tacky about writing behind people's backs. What's the alternative?

'Why go?' over mousaka Hans asked at the Vlichos taverna. 'It's pretty inert here,' I said. 'Hydra's a closed place. I want open.'

'You hide', said the perceptive Hans, 'behind your openness.'

But it got me going.

#### May 7.

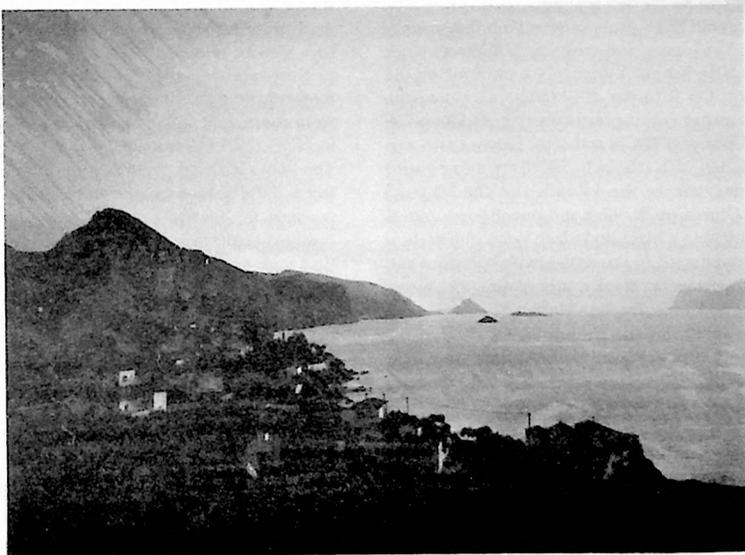
Walked out on the Homeric road to Vlichos. Mountains above, below the bronze sea. Bare-face to the Aegean, a small church. It leaned into a landscape as stern and spiritual as the icons inside it where Christ and the saints look out from the cosmos into the eyes of Man with the best of invitations, detachment and compassion. Beside the iconostasis the thought: if there was abiding in myself I could stay here, or anywhere. Then it started happening.

I left the church and walked up the road, to go mountain-scrabbling. I came to a crossroad. A pile of rocks, like a cairn, was marking it. As I bent to look at the stones, something primeval ringing off them, I came aware of a man in the distance, swinging a stick. When he neared I asked what the stones were. He laughed, sort of battered and sideways, 'Inne to "herm". Hermios,' he giggled, pointing his staff at a coy angle to the sky.

'Hermes the god?'

'Etchi!' again he giggled, embarrassed by superstition, or maybe just shy. Then he bent to his ankles and hand-sketched the shape of wings. The god of passage, I remembered, had wings on his heels. The man bade me farewell and went. I stayed with the stones and the evening.

(Continued on Page 47)



I've introduced **DOUG BARBOUR** elsewhere in this issue. He makes no necessary separation between life and literature. He has written three long trip reports since the one below.

TRAVEL

## Journeying/journaling: Australia and New Zealand, April-May 1992

by Doug Barbour

This was a big trip, well over a month long. Sharon and I travelled across large portions of both Australia and New Zealand by land, mostly by car. So some of the anticipated pleasure was of landscape, and we were not disappointed; but much of it was in meeting old friends and occasionally making new ones.

Because journeys never transpire quite as they are planned, we started a week early, then hung around in Vancouver with friends for a week before actually taking the long tiring flight to the antipodes.

Our reason for going to Vancouver early was a delightful one: to participate in 'For Phyllis — a tribute to Phyllis Webb', who is one of my favourite poets and one of the great influences on my own writing.

We left a cold Edmonton, snow still on the ground, for a warm Vancouver, and stayed with Sharon's sister Susan and Mike Kilvert in their place overlooking the Fraser River. On Saturday, 28 March, we got to the Western Front just as things were starting, and found all kinds of friends — of Phyllis and of us. This was a writers' celebration, but with scholarly overtones, so we heard an interesting talk by the Librarian at the National Library in Ottawa on Phyllis's still uncollected critical writings; watching a black-and-white video of a tv show on poetry she hosted in the sixties, with bpNichol and Bill Bissett performing their sound poems, and everyone looking So Young. Daphne Marlatt, Sharon Thesen and I spoke on 'Phyllis, the Writers' Writer'. Both of the others' papers were extraordinarily moving and poetic, proving, on the pulse so to speak, how fully Phyllis's writing had entered into their own. Phyllis then read from her early to her later poetry but not her recent poetry, a usually brilliant performance despite a cold, which stopped her early. It was a terrific time, even if it was difficult for Phyllis Webb to take all the praise being showered on her in person.

black-&-white then or  
colourful now / how the words  
hold us together

We went to a fabulous exhibition of David Milne's paintings on Sunday, both oils and watercolours, the latter of which I had never seen. The watercolours were especially revelatory. Milne is our first great modernist, a painter who fully understood how fully implicated in its materials his art was. If it is now clear that the early Group of Seven and some of the artists who preceded them but have been occluded by their ability to present themselves as the first artists to see Canada clear, did in fact owe much to the Impressionists, it seems equally clear to me that Milne found his great master in Cézanne and those who followed from him (although not Cubism as such). No matter how 'realistic' his paintings appear, representation is not what they're about, so they approach a state of abstraction that is all the more winning for its apparent refusal to cut itself off from the nature in which it is grounded. I have long loved his oils, but I had not seen any of the watercolours. The paper is always there as part of the construct, and some of the late pieces approach pure abstraction, as in perhaps my favourite: 'After Sunset' (1948), where swathes of colour are interrupted by tiny blotches of red that look as if they were dropped there by Jackson Pollock.

I could name at least twenty paintings in this show I would happily commit a crime for, but I will have to be satisfied, like many others, with the catalogue (even if it hasn't even a black-and-white reproduction of my favourite!).

Next day we travelled over to Vancouver Island, where we had a fine visit with Stephen and Maureen Scobie, dinner at Smaro's with Phyllis and Bob (and I got perhaps the best haircut I have ever had from a woman Smaro recommended, which set me up nicely

for the rest of the trip).

Back in Vancouver later in the week, we had lunch with Angela and George Bowering, talking mysteries, poetry (George had been on a reading tour in the US and had had to miss the Phyllis celebration), and some of our mutual friends in Australia, whom we would be seeing soon.

The flight was long: a terminal bore. Hours in Honolulu, but not let out of doors (the Americans are so afraid that anyone from elsewhere is dying to sneak into their country), many more hours in Sydney because we arrived on the one day in decades that fuel workers went on strike against the internal airlines, which were thus very far behind schedule. Added to that was the fact that our travel agent (our *ex*-travel agent) had forgotten to get me a ticket to Perth, although she had gotten one for Sharon! Such an expense on the first day of a trip is not jolly.

When we finally reached Perth we had been in transit for more than twenty-eight hours, and we crashed completely at a small motel we found downtown, since there was no word awaiting us about where to stay. (It turned out that Kateryna Longley had faxed Edmonton, but had just missed us. After we phoned Dennis Haskell, the poet who had arranged my reading at the University of Western Australia, he told us he would take us out to the lovely hotel on the river in Fremantle that Kateryna had booked for us.)

We fell into sleep, woke in the middle of the night, slept again, and were somehow ready for Dennis the next morning when he came to pick us up and take us to Sunny's on the Swan, before taking me to the uni (which is how all Aussies refer to universities) for lunch and the reading. We had met him the last time I was in Perth, in 1986, and it was good to see a friendly face I knew. He gave us a scenic drive by the river out to Fremantle, which Kateryna insisted was the only place to stay ('There's no need to go into Perth. It's nothing compared to Fremantle!'), and I left Sharon sitting on our balcony, looking out across the sunflecked water of the river.

Back at the uni, Dennis introduced me to Brenda Walker, who is teaching the new creative writing course with him, and rushed off to a lecture. Brenda's a poet and novelist, and I made the first of many exchanges of books with her. She looked at my broken lines and muttered that she had been hoping to see that, and commented on something I had noticed as an outsider, that Australian poetry is generally formally conservative. Having agreed on general poetics, we set out on a walk to some bookstores, where I found a couple of good books secondhand, and back to lunch. The University of Western Australia is beautifully situated, a wonderful collection of Oxford-like buildings surrounded by trees and bush, both native and imported: a lovely campus, terrific to walk through on a warm fall day (high summer to a Canuck: 26°C). The reading seemed to go well, and after some tea and phone calls to arrange a dinner that evening, Dennis drove me back to Sunny's, where Sharon and I enjoyed a drink and watched the sun go down over the river.

**Terminal disease:  
ah to ease into the sun  
of friends new greetings**

Dennis picked us up and took us into Fremantle to the Sicilian, a noisy but good BYO (bring your own) restaurant whose interior Richard Longley had designed. Hugh Webb, of Murdoch University, and Carol, who teaches film studies there, also joined us. Richard did not design the sound system, which made general talk at even a table as small as ours impossible, as he shouted out to us when he and Kateryna came in. Richard is a gentle humorous 6 feet 9, and he claims a space anywhere he goes. From his place at the head of the table he regaled us with tales of his tribulations working for a Japanese firm designing and building a recreational facility in Fremantle: because no single person wants to take responsibility for making a wrong decision, he said, 'decisions flower', and they do, but it often takes much longer than an impatient occidental wishes. That day the final design had been accepted, but his stories of how the other designs weren't exactly turned down but just sort of disappeared from conversation over a week or more of meetings was both comic and instructive. Everybody talked as we ate some very fine food and drank a number of terrific Australian wines. It was a most enjoyable evening renewing old friendships with Kateryna and Richard, and Dennis, and making new acquaintances of Hugh and Carol, who had just seen the big blockbuster Canadian film *Black Robe*, which was showing everywhere in Australia because it was directed by Bruce Beresford. Dennis also contributed some good gossip about the writing scene in Sydney back in the late seventies when he lived there and participated in it. There is a tremendously vital writing scene in Western Australia now, fuelled by the success of the Fremantle Arts Centre Press, with which Dennis Haskell is now fully engaged.

After dinner, Richard and Kateryna invited the three of us back for a drink, and to see their half-house, designed by Richard, which is in the centre of Fremantle but so close to the beach that they can down for a swim every morning before going to work. Because they had to rent half the house and it is now so narrow, Richard made the first floor of heavy glass to allow light to reach the ground level. When it was first put in, this really freaked out their cats, who would walk only where the beams showed. The house is very cosy and very modern at once.

Dennis drove us back to Sunny's, where we discovered that delayed jet lag was going to keep us awake much of the night. But the trip had finally really begun, and the pleasure of that first evening boded well for the rest of it.

The next day, Sharon and I wandered around Fremantle taking in the sights, and took the train into Perth to take in the Art Gallery of Western Australia, where we saw some fine contemporary Aboriginal art as well as a retrospective of one of Australia's best-known and oddest cartoonists, Michael Leunig. Following Kateryna and Richard's advice, we found a terrific little Thai restaurant for dinner, and fell into a needed sleep upon

returning to Sunny's.

After packing on Thursday morning, and while Sharon waded in the Indian ocean, Kateryna drove me out to Murdoch University in her brand new and terrifically neat Honda Civic GL (anyway, the top-of-the-line new car with fuel-saving engine and built-in CD player), her 'bribe' for taking on the onerous duties of Dean of Humanities earlier in the year. There I met Marion Campbell, the fiercely intense but humorous author of two extremely fine novels, *Lines of Flight* and *Not Being Miriam* (both from Fremantle Arts Centre Press), that I had read before Christmas. I found that instead of giving a reading I was being asked to take her writing workshop for the next three hours. I read a lot of my own work as I talked about the poetics I favoured, as well as setting the writers an (I hope) engaging little writing project. Kateryna was terrifically busy deaning, so I wandered over to the Library to meet Grant Stone, the chief librarian and an sf fan, who was happy to show off the brand new computer system, just installed, that can find the whole world on CDs.

Later we returned to Kateryna and Richard's. They took us, over our protests, to another small and terrific Thai restaurant, then drove us and our huge pile of luggage to the train station. We also met Kateryna's son Paul, who plays violin and was fixing his 4X4 in the garage, and Richard's third son Griffith, now as tall as his father and brothers (one of whom, Luc, now plays in the National Basketball Association). Both boys were gracious and charming; but what else would you expect, given their parents?

friendship flowers too  
where at ocean's edge grow green  
its never-falling leaves

The next two days were rest, as we sat in our little roomette and walked to the dining car, while travelling across the interior to Adelaide. I think we really caught up on our sleep during this trip, so that we could function on Australian time for the rest of our travels. Sharon read some novels, and I read through the double issue of *Salt* magazine that Brenda Walker had given me. It was titled *The Bird Catcher's Song* after a sequence by Robert Adamson, a poet I had really not come to know in my readings of Australian poetry.

And we stared: over the long hours, we stared again and again out the window at the famous Nullarbor Plain, which one guide book tells us comes from an old Aboriginal word meaning 'No Trees'. Well: the 'No Trees' part is certainly accurate, and the view across sand, rock and spinifex (a kind of scruff vegetation) in all directions to the curve of horizon is fascinating; but both 'null' and 'arbor' come from Latin, and I don't think there's too much of a link between that language and any of the Aboriginal ones.

Later we came back into a somewhat green country, still essentially empty, although the occasional corpses of cars added a small note of melancholy to the passing scene. It was a wondrous sight — once. But I'm not sure I would make the same trip again, unless I was once more seeking a quiet and total escape for a couple of days to get over jet lag.

Arriving in Adelaide, we were met by Michael Tolley, whom I knew as a lecturer at the University of Adelaide and a fine sf critic. He and his wife Inga had invited us to stay with them for the weekend, and they outdid themselves in generous hospitality. I had brought Michael a couple of Canadian sf books I hoped he didn't have. Looking at his huge library, I suspected they might be the only books he doesn't have! On our arrival, he offered me a bunch of books as a gift from the new sf publishing house Aphelion Press. As he showed off his wonderful library it became obvious that he collects crime fiction as well, and he and Sharon got into a weekend-long conversation on mysteries. Meanwhile, we met their children and their grandchildren, who were cute as all get out. Inga cooked a wonderful dinner, and we fell into deep sleep in what was really a separate little suite.

The next day, Sunday, we drove our rented car up into the hills overlooking Adelaide to spend some time in the Cleland Wildlife Park, where we wandered among kangaroos and emus and wallabies and so many wonderful birds we couldn't count them all, and Sharon finally got to pet a koala bear. The kangaroos were on the whole quite languid, although one would occasionally hop a few times towards a family that obviously had food for them. There was one troop, lying in the shade of a large gum, for which the term 'indolent' had been invented. On the other hand, another small troop, having found too many people to be as empty-handed as us, gathered around a bush and started tearing it apart to eat. We got around some pretty mean-looking emus that had no trouble clearing the paths for their own walks — they were as big as we were, and had much bigger beaks — and walked though a rockway where a number of small rock wallabies kept pecking around the rocks at the top of the hill at us, and occasionally hopping quickly along them.

Michael had invited a number of his colleagues and fellow sf fans over for drinks, so that evening we got to meet and talk to a fine and various bunch of people, including John Foyster and Yvonne Rousseau, ex-co-editors of the late lamented *Australian Science Fiction Review*, and Andrew and Beata Taylor, he being one of the better Australian poets of his generation. I had met him in Canada some years before. I also met Suzette Henke, a visiting scholar, and one of the best recent Joyce critics. Various colleagues at the University of Alberta had said I must try to meet her, and there she was at the party.

Monday, we packed and got ready to leave, thanking the Tolleys for their generous hospitality and wonderful food, and drove into town, where I was able to park under the English Department's building. While Sharon spent some time looking at new and older art in the South Australia Art Gallery, I gave a seminar on contemporary Canadian and Australian poetry in which I didn't seem to make any really stupid errors about the latter.

After exchanging books with Andrew and saying goodbye again to Michael, we took off down the Princes Highway toward the ocean. As it was autumn, however much the temperatures suggested otherwise to us Canucks, darkness fell quite early, so it was getting dark

long before we got to Mount Gambier, our destination for that night. With the ocean to our right as we drive south, the elements combined to put on a wonderfully rich and awesome sunset for us, all black clouds with running lines of reddish purple between for well over an hour.

**friendship shines against  
a darkening sky / meet it  
pass on / remember**

Early next morning, we were off from Mount Gambier, heading onto the Great Ocean Road, which definitely lives up to its name. We stopped for breakfast at Portland, at the Ocean Pier Tearoom, then started off across a high bluff overlooking the ocean.

I had called Brian Edwards and Robyn Gardner in Geelong the evening before to say we'd get in early in the afternoon, taking a Canadian view of the distance and adding an hour or so for viewing. But I had forgotten just how hilly and curvy a road it was we were travelling. It was a gorgeous trip, but a very slow one, especially as — knowing we didn't have to get there early — we stopped at a number of viewpoints to look at the Bay of Islands and the Twelve Apostles, various hoodoo-like stumps of rocky ex-headland, layer upon layer of stone, being slowly carved away by the voracious surf. Even as we drove, the views were spectacular, long beaches where the surf rolled in, huge views of sea stretched out to the horizon, sudden descents into rain-forest, occasional glimpses across partly farmed valleys to the dark green forested hills beyond.

As we got closer to Geelong, we were driving right along the coast, a narrow highway twisting and turning along the edge of the cliffs, suddenly descending into small towns along a surf-crashed beach and then ascending again into the rocks, and always making one U-turn after another, keeping our speed at about 40 kilometres per hour tops. We admired the houses perched high on the hills, their huge front windows open to the sea, and were somewhat nonplussed by the house perched, it seemed, high atop a concrete pier stuck out from the hillside in Fairhaven: a terrific view in all four directions, but just a little exposed, to say the least. All in all, it was an eye-filling day, one for the memories and the photo album.

**no ancient palace  
forest & ocean alone  
pay time's reckless bill**

When we got to Geelong and found Robyn and Brian's place, we received a warm welcome, and took all our baggage in, since we would be staying there for a couple of nights, and met Robyn's son Nicholas, who was immersed in a computer game. That evening, they took us to a wonderful fish restaurant on the water. We passed the evening getting caught up on all the gossip in various centres Canadian and Australian since they had been in Edmonton the previous winter.

One of the continuing themes of the conversations I had with people at every university I visited in Australia was the way in which government interference and

cutbacks were wreaking havoc upon the educational system. Brian had spent the day in Melbourne discussing the ongoing amalgamation of Deakin University with a number of colleges. This program — of amalgamating various colleges into larger units with already existing universities — has been under way for well over two years, and is still causing trouble everywhere; it was introduced by the government, who forced it through as law but then left it to the participants to work it out. As an example of how badly planned the whole process was, the college in Melbourne Deakin was amalgamating with was just across the street from Monash University, which was, of course, being forced into amalgamation with other colleges much further way. We had gotten onto this topic because I had noticed a sign for Deakin University (which is in Geelong) that morning just outside of Portland — an ex-agriculture college, as it turned out.

But there are other signs of how badly off the universities are: there were ten people teaching English at Deakin's Department of Humanities, but in 1992 three left and not one will be replaced. That means the department has been cut by nearly one-third. Since there are so few people left, they will have to shoulder an overwhelming teaching load.

I felt very sorry for Brian as he told me all this. He's an incredibly energetic person, who manages to edit a literary magazine and do all kinds of his own writing and a fair amount of administration, but it must be getting him down. Not that he showed any of that during our visit, and he still gets up every morning for his 10-kilometre run. He and Robyn live in one of those wonderful high thin Victorian row houses that can still be found all over Australia. They put us in the upstairs library, its old wood bookcases full of tempting delicacies — even to stare at the shelves and read the titles.

**'crossing in mist' or  
good talk of friends far away  
say wine moon good/night**

The next morning we drove over to Deakin, where I gave a reading mainly to creative writing students. As we came in, the lecturer was talking about a (I would call it Romantic) search for one's own voice, so perhaps my talking about how to find your way out of the potential trap of 'the lyric I' and its too often monological voice opened a poetics dialogue of sorts.

The reading seemed to go well enough, but I had to leave right away to drive into Melbourne, where I had a reading that afternoon at Monash which, it turned out, was about 30 kilometres south-east of the Melbourne city centre (it is a very large, spread-out city). But I followed my map and instructions carefully, and although at one point I felt I must have driven past Monash by mistake since the trip was taking so long, I arrived without making a single wrong turn.

Once there, I had lunch with Clive Probyn, the Head of the English Department, and one of his colleagues, both of them British expatriates. As Clive had taught in Nairobi in the early eighties, the conversation covered a lot of ground.

Afterward, I was introduced to a small but interested

group by Jennifer Strauss, a poet I had met in 1984, and the reading went off fairly well, I think. I had tea afterward with Jenny, and we had a good talk, and again I heard sad tales of what government policy has done to the universities, especially to the arts and humanities.

The drive back to Geelong was made extra interesting by a raging rainstorm, but I got there without mishap, and found Brian and Sharon preparing salad for the dinner that evening, as Robyn had also gone into Melbourne for a seminar. Brian had invited various colleagues to meet us; all the women made it, although none of the men did. Everyone brought some food, and the result was a delicious dinner, accompanied by much varied and delightful conversation. Sneja Gunew, one of Australia's leading theorists, especially of multiculturalism, was there (we had met her at a terrific conference in Calgary back in February), and told us that she'd be visiting the University of Alberta in late September. The talk ranged from literature to the Body Shop, with much intriguing talk about the charming discourse of cook books in between.

The next morning, we took our leave of Brian and Robyn's hospitality, and with their directions to St Kilda as the best place to stay in Melbourne, set off. We were lucky, and got to the city quickly, finding our way to St Kilda and finding a motel near the waterfront. So I left Sharon to explore, while I set out for La Trobe University, which turned out to be about 30 kilometres north-east of the city centre — luckily straight up a single road of many names.

As the university couldn't arrange anything since classes were ending that day, Professor Lucy Frost, the Head of English, had invited me for lunch with a few faculty members. When I finally got there and we walked over to the Staff Club, I found a sizable table waiting, including Max Richards, a tall, lanky poet originally from New Zealand, Chris Palmer, whose interests include sf, Richard Friedman, Laurie Clancy, a cheerful fellow in his fifties who asked to be remembered to the Manhires in Wellington, Jenna Mead, who is married to poet Philip Mead, one of the newer Australian poets to gain recognition, Joanne Tompkins, a Canadian I had met two years previously at Armidale, and Janette Turner Hospital, the Australian-Canadian novelist, whom I keep running into in the strangest places. She teaches one term at La Trobe, one term at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and spends some time with her husband in Kingston, Ontario, where he teaches at Queen's. Lunch was, therefore, a loud and boisterous concatenation of conversations.

Some of the pleasure was taken out of the lunch when Janet opened her purse to pay and discovered that all her money — which in this case included not only a couple of hundred bucks Australian she had just taken out of the bank, but \$200 each US and Canadian that she keeps in her purse because she moves among the three countries so often she doesn't want to be always changing money. She kept insisting that someone must have broken into her office, but Lucy Frost finally made her understand that no one had a key for all the offices, and that she must have left hers unlocked — which at least meant she could be safe, but did not make her, or

any of us, feel any better about the robbery. When I saw her last, as I left La Trobe an hour or so later, she was still talking to Security.

Immediately after lunch I had an interesting talk with Max Richards, who had read my poetry because La Trobe has a commitment to buy Canadian books. (As he told me somewhat bitterly, La Trobe was to buy Canadian, and continued to do so, and Monash was supposed to buy New Zealand, but had reneged on its commitment.) We exchanged books, he telling me that his poems were very much in the trad British line of Philip Larkin. He also offered the following opinion, which I found very interesting and hoped to discuss later with some people in New Zealand: that one of the reasons New Zealand poetry since the sixties had developed so much more along the lines of the New American Poetry was because poets such as Manhire and Wedde, who had gone to the US and been influenced there, had returned to teach and edit in New Zealand, while others, like him, who had gone to Britain and been influenced by Larkin and the whole post-Auden school, had either stayed there or ended up in Australia or elsewhere, so that their influence on developments 'back home' during the seventies and eighties had been minor if not non-existent.

I found my way back through the increasing traffic to our motel, and got in touch with Bruce Gillespie, perhaps my first contact in Australia many years ago. He was busy setting up a dinner for the next evening with Lucy Sussex, a writer who had just published a well-received collection of short stories and a non-fiction book on a nineteenth-century woman who had emigrated from Canada to Australia, and about whom she had asked me for help in tracking down information a few years ago. That sounded good, and I decided it would be a good idea to call Jenny and Russell Blackford, who had had us to dinner two years previously. As it turned out, they were preparing to leave for Van Diemen's Land — oops, sorry, Tasmania — the next day, but suggested we drop by for a drink that evening anyway.

We found a restaurant that wasn't quite as good as we had hoped, and also a bookstore in which I found a few poetry books on sale, and picked up some bottles of wine, one for the Blackfords and a couple for the next evening, which was Good Friday, a day on which almost everything is closed in Melbourne. Jenny's sister and a friend had arrived by overnight train from Sydney that day, and everyone was tired, so a strangely wired conversation ensued, although it was nice to meet the last fifth of editorial board of *Australian Science Fiction Review*, Janeen Webb. I reiterated my and many other readers' sadness that they had decided to call it quits, but plainly, with two of the editors now in Adelaide, and all of them busy pursuing various careers, it would have been difficult to continue. They did give us a useful warning about the upcoming Easter weekend, saying that we had better book motels ahead as everyone gets out of town for Easter.

We took a fairly early leave, and drove back along the palm-studded beach front to St Kilda, looking at the lights of the city towers shining across the bay. I made a number of phone calls before we finally had places to

stay Saturday and Sunday, at the much-higher-than-regular special-Easter rates.

Good Friday, Sharon and I spent mostly on the beach and the pier, which stretches out a good half-kilometre or more into the sea. There was a Maori sea canoe there, offering free rides and a commentary on how it had made the trip from New Zealand across the Tasman Sea. Named *Te Aratuwo Re* (I think), meaning *New Dawn*, its crew included Pakeha, and it was a very impressive sight. The crew explained the religious significance of everything, including the paddles. We walked along the beach, had a lunch on the sidewalk, and generally enjoyed the sunny 25-degree 'fall' day.

Bruce called to suggest we drop by his and Elaine Cochrane's house around 5.30, which would give us time to look at the books and check through the Norstrilia Press books before Lucy and Julian joined us for dinner. I had told Bruce that I wanted to buy copies of Norstrilia's Gerald Murnane novels, but in the event I think I got a copy of almost every book they published! A terrific bargain, but where was I going to put them all? He also gave Sharon a copy of *Mean Streets*, an Australian magazine about mysteries.

Bruce is another great collector, whose comments on Michael Tolley's obsessive collecting were tinged with some self-directed irony as he showed me the 2000 CDs he and Elaine have amassed in the past seven years or so. Bruce is stern in his exclusions, however, and has tried very hard not to collect jazz or folk, sticking strictly to classical and rock and pop; but he has gotten into opera recently, and those boxed sets do add up. It was an admirable wall of music, surrounded on three other walls by books of all sorts, which could be found on the walls of other rooms of their small, cozy and very bookish house. Their seven cats like books and music, we surmised, or at least have learned to live with them.

When Lucy Sussex arrived, she had for me copies of both her books, for which I traded some poetry (which I had also given Bruce and Elaine). Then we set off for the Thai restaurant, which served us a wonderful and varied meal, as we talked of many things: children's lit (Lucy was of the opinion that the writers therein were far nicer to one another than sf writers were); mysteries as a heavy growth industry in academia (Bruce opined that every academic in the country was writing them to add a bit to his or her income); the question of literary appropriation, which had come up at the La Trobe lunch too, as Janette Turner Hospital had just received the *Globe & Mail* articles on what the Canada Council was alleged to have said about it, and was livid. This led Bruce into an aria on the current situation of Australians: 'We're still just congregated on the edge of the continent, and we don't know how to survive without immense technological aid even a few kilometres in; and if our population keeps growing we'll soon run out of water.' As he propagated this pessimistic prediction, he kept eating with relish, and gave no sign that he ever planned to leave his country for that of his ancestors. Still, the predictions, if they ever prove out, will give new meaning to the phrase 'the fatal shore'.

Full and happy, we walked back to their house, where we perused more CDs, as well as a marvellous parody,

*The Complete Book of Australian Verse*, which had poems by such as 'Rabbi Burns' and even 'Margaret Attwood', some of which we heard read on the accompanying tape. But we finally had to take our leave, for we had to hit the road in the morning. It had been an evening of wide-ranging and entertaining talk, the very best kind. I don't know if there's any proper place to mention this, but such evenings are clearly helped along by the wide variety of inexpensive and good Aussie wines available at the numerous bottle shops everywhere, wines one can always take to the still numerous BYO restaurants (both practices, the bottle shops and the BYO restaurants, signifying a degree of dining sophistication still, alas, not to be found in Canada); suffice to say that we both got awfully used to making our way through a nice bottle of wine with our meals as we travelled across these two countries.

moon or no moon we  
drink & talk & fan the coals  
of friendship anew

Having booked ahead, we could take our time driving to Orbost, enjoying once again the various views of landscape and ocean along the way. Orbost is on the famous Snowy River, and we walked over to look at its mirrored quiet surface in the failing light, before enjoying one of our few evenings of southern TV: a Sydney production of *The Importance of Being Earnest*, which had a wonderful set, the back of which was a giant *Yellow Book* whose pages opened out to create the background for each act. The direction was a bit over the top, but Wilde's lacelike comedy survived intact. But where was real TV, like *Jeopardy* or *Rescue 91*, you ask? Well, there was another channel, but it was showing rugby that evening.

Sunday it was up the eastern coast toward Sydney, staying near the water in Bateman's Bay. We had lunch in Eden, which is perched on a hill between the two parts of Folded Bay, an absolutely gorgeous spot, yet full of For Sale signs in the midst of worldwide recession. We ate dinner at The Reef, a fine restaurant we had eaten at two years ago. It lived up to our memories very nicely, as we looked out over the river lights from our window table.

Our drive up to Sydney the next morning was fairly fast, although the traffic was extremely heavy until we finally reached the motorway.

We booked into a fairly expensive small hotel, the Haven Inn on Glebe Point Road, getting our room at half price through the Information kiosk at the airport. Aside from being a very nice place to stay, it had the distinct advantage of being on one of the best restaurant streets in Sydney, and just a couple of blocks from the best bookstore in the city, Gleebooks.

I got in touch with Sonya Mycak, an Australian student of Canadian literature, and we arranged to meet the next day at the Art Gallery. Sharon and I took a long walk down the hill to Darling Harbour, and a much longer walk through some of the dock area before we found our way back up the hill to our hotel. That evening we found a nice little spot just down the street to eat, and then enjoyed the street life for awhile before

hitting the sack.

We took it easy the next morning, and set off for downtown and the Art Gallery of NSW, where we spent some time looking at the twentieth-century Australian art, including a retrospective of Francis Lyburner (1916–72), an essentially expressionist artist who spent a lot of time among the demi-monde in both Australian and England. He's good, but his vision of women is Romantic in the fearful/sexist sense. Through a mixup in communication, we didn't meet Sonya on time, but eventually we connected and had a good talk, she having arranged a dinner with some writers and academics she thought we'd enjoy meeting for the next night. We spent a bit of time in the Aboriginal gallery before closing time, then headed back to our hotel and went off to Numero Tre, a great little restaurant where we had gone on our last night in Sydney in 1990. Although the terrific waitress we had so liked handling every table was no longer there, it was still small, full and offering good food.

Wednesday, we headed for The Rocks, where we took in a couple of small Aboriginal galleries and finally bought one of the many books on Aboriginal art that are now available. This one gives some coverage to all the different areas and their art.

Then we walked over to Circular Quay to meet Gerry Turcotte for lunch. Originally from Montreal, Gerry now teaches at the University of Wollongong: his accent is almost pure Aussie, but with a subtle francophone overtone. We had met at the ACSANZ conference in 1990, and it was good to talk to him again and get caught up on things in Australian–Canadian studies.

Now things began to work most serendipitously for me: Gerry said he was going to a book launching at the University of Sydney that afternoon, a Selected Poems by an older poet, which had been partly edited by a good friend of his. It sounded interesting, and offered me a chance to meet some people of the University of Sydney, which had in the past proved particularly opaque to my inquiries.

While Sharon headed back to the hotel, we walked into the oldest campus in Australia, with its beautiful Oxfordian architecture in its lovely parklike setting. It proved an interesting afternoon. While signing my copy, Ronald McCuaig told me how his wife and he had travelled to British Columbia on their way back to Australia from Britain at the beginning of World War II. I met Tom Thompson, an editor at Angus & Robertson, who joked about the tremendous mana his name had in Canada (even if the spelling isn't the same as that of our famous Group of Seven painter). Gerry introduced me to Peter Kirkpatrick, his friend the poet who originally edited and wrote the introduction to McCuaig's book, to Elizabeth Webby, the new Head of English, who is much more interested in post-colonial writing than her predecessor, and to Michael Wilding, a novelist and short-story writer who told me that we'd be having dinner together that evening, then gave me a bunch of his books as well as the newest volumes from Paperbark Press, of which he is one of the proprietors. (I promised him both of my books that evening, of course.)

Michael Wilding and I talked a bit that afternoon,

and quite a bit more that evening. He is morosely witty, mordant at times, and clearly very sharp. As we compared notes, it was clear that we had both joined our departments of English the same year (1969), feeling sure in those secure pre-Flood times that we would be moving on in a few years, except that all the openings closed within a year or two. The feeling that things had been better for higher education ten years or more ago was one we shared too. As writers, we also had much in common, and even more, as I was to find out that night. He was also helpful, telling us that the Co-op Bookstore just off campus now carried a lot of Australian literature, including many A&R poetry titles at sale prices. After various conversations and much wine, Gerry and I set out for the store, where I found far too many poetry books and bought them all — the price was just too right. Gerry even found a few Canadian books on sale for his upcoming course on CanLit. We walked back to the hotel to find that Sharon had picked up a couple of cold beers for us. The afternoon wound down gently, and Gerry had to go off to a meeting he was chairing that evening.

Sonya and her friend Hazel Smith, a performance poet from England now teaching at the University of New South Wales with Sonya, and her companion, the scientist and musician Roger Dean, picked us up and drove us over to a restaurant they guaranteed served seafood as good as that of the famous (and highly expensive) Doyles: La Botte D'Oro, an unprepossessing little place in Leichhardt. We haven't eaten at Doyles, but the barramundi we had was great. As was all the wine and talk. Michael and his partner, Lyndy Abraham, another friend of Sonya's, were also there, but our table, though loud, couldn't begin to compare with some of the others. The general feeling in the place was of large camaraderie at all the tables, and as we talked along into the night there was no pressure to finish and leave. A terrific little restaurant we'll try to get back to if we're ever in the area again.

I had some interesting conversations with Hazel Smith, who feels her work is considered a bit far out by the Aussie poetry crowd, and who knows all the British poets involved in sound poetry, at least by reputation. Roger was also interesting, although his basic attitude — that if you still paid attention to and enjoyed melody you were somehow morally corrupt — grated a bit. But he certainly knows his *avant garde* music, and mentioned a number of Canadians I had not heard of, as well as some I had; and he did express some admiration for R. Murray Schafer.

When, later in the evening, Michael came to our end of the table and we talked further, he decided that I really should meet his good friend, the poet Robert Adamson (whose work I knew only from anthologies, as I hadn't come across any major references to his work). We'd really get along, he knew, and so he'd give me directions to Adamson's place on the Hawkesbury River and call him tonight to say we were coming. As he drew maps for us, I thought, Well, of course I'd like to meet another poet, but I'm a bit shy about just dropping in, even if announced, sort of. But as he thought about it, Michael decided that he needed to see Robert himself,

so he would take us out there the next afternoon. Although not consulted beforehand, Lyndy agreed it would be a good idea, as she always enjoyed visiting Robert and his wife, the photographer Juno Gemes. So, having already drawn us a map to Robert's place, Michael now drew us a map to the Staff Club at the University, where we could meet for lunch the next day. Thus our late, boisterous, wine-and-talk-filled evening came to a close.

Next morning we packed before heading out for breakfast, and then I went quite mad in Gleebooks, picking up many poetry books I had not been able to find at the Co-op, as well as a bunch of anthologies of criticism and theory, including Kateryna and Sneja's collection of essays on ethnic writing. By this time all our bags were bursting at the seams with the extra weight of the books I had taken on. (Although I had managed to lighten the load of books I had brought with me, I still had a few.) We had no trouble finding the Club, and I was able to show Sharon the kangaroo gargyle on the clocktower of the quad that Gerry had pointed out to me the day before.

Like us, Michael and Lyndy were a bit worse for wear, but ready for the day. We had a sandwich at the Club and met some of Michael's colleagues from other faculties, all of whom expressed interest in the fact we were from Canada and then proceeded to insult the country in small or large fashion, although I don't think they realised that they were doing so. One woman had been to Edmonton, and told us how unsophisticated it was. Oh well.

Driving out of Sydney, we followed Michael and Lyndy via a route we could never have found on our own, which allowed us a view of some of the lesser-known suburbs, and then drove up to the Hawkesbury River and Cheerio Point Road where Robert and Juno live in a house overlooking the river.

Robert Adamson turned out to be the Australian poet I had given up hope of finding, the one who shared my love of the poetics of the New American Poetry; in fact, he had a long correspondence with Robert Duncan, and eventually brought Duncan to Australia. He's a charming, fey, genuinely nice man. He was in the midst of writing a review of Francis Webb's *Collected Poems*, *Cap and Bells*, and of a book on Webb, whom he believes to be one of the best Australian poets of his time (the fifties and sixties), and so greeted us all with a gnomic question about 'as above so below: what do you think that really means?' We hit it off right away, although I think Michael's presence helped; their friendship, the depth of which appeared in all kinds of little signs, goes back to the late sixties. Juno was busy in the office when we arrived but eventually joined us, with her camera, down on the pier, where we were watching the late light lift from the water and discussing Mercurius. (Lyndy is an authority on literature and alchemy, having published a book on *Marvell and Alchemy*; she too is a generous and delightful person.) It was a glorious scene, and the evening was a show: the sky slowly gave up light while the river continued to reflect it against the dark hills, finally becoming a grey mirror mirroring only itself.

As our talk gained in intensity, they suggested we stay for supper, as we could drive into Moonee Moonee to a local fisherman's shop and buy 'the best fish and chips in Australia'. This sounded good, as Robert and I were really getting into our conversation, so I phoned ahead to the motel we had booked for that evening to say we would be late. The owner said that if we were later than 8 p.m. he would leave a key out for us in the milk box. (Remember this.) The men drove into town for the fish and beer, and we kept talking, me finding more and more correspondences in our sense of poetics.

Robert is in an interesting position in Australian poetry, it seems: he is recognised as an important poet, yet marginalised in terms of his poetics. Most of the critics and poet-critics don't understand his poetic stance. When he tries to interest some of his friends in, say, a writer like Michael Palmer (whose work I also admire, and with whom he is also in correspondence), they all say they can't understand him, so they don't think he's any good. So we also agreed that 'understanding' isn't as important as many of the other possible responses to poetry.

Robert Adamson's position may be changing a bit, however, for he has recently started writing a lot for one of Australia's more interesting literary magazines, *Scripsi*, and the story of how that came about is both funny and an insight into literary politics everywhere. *Scripsi* had long made editorial use of John Tranter, another of the Australian poets who came to prominence in the sixties and seventies; although he was influenced by the New York poets like Ashbery and O'Hara, he shows a strange (to Adamson, to me) aversion to the other New American poets like Duncan, Creeley, etc.; nor is he, I got the impression, interested in the writing associated with the L = A = N = G = U = A = G = E group. His wife is now an agent, and she somehow insulted the *Scripsi* editorial board with some high and mighty demands about John. So they have turned to Adamson, to whom some of the younger Aussie poets have begun to pay attention, offered him a place for pretty much anything he wants to write about, Francis Webb for example. Unlike Tranter, it seems, Adamson is pretty eclectic in the poetry he likes, which includes Tranter's (which I like too), but did seem to relish the ironies of the situation.

Robert had got in touch with Duncan after he spent a long night talking with Allen Ginsberg when he visited Australia years ago, and asking him why he and his fellow poets were so hard on another poet he liked, W. S. Merwin. Finally Ginsberg said, Look, this kind of talk is giving me a headache; you should talk to Robert Duncan; and gave Adamson Duncan's address. Adamson was too bashful to write to Duncan, but his then wife sent Duncan a copy of his latest book, and sometime later an eight-page letter from Duncan arrived in response; thus was their friendly correspondence born. When Duncan finally visited Oz, he talked about his love of Vancouver, for but some reason Adamson still doesn't know the Canadian poets with whom he has so much in common. Yet, as his talk about Palmer indicated, there are many he would find interesting (so I decided to have some books sent to him when I got back, as I also figured he would be a good person with whom

to maintain contact); for example, when I told him of bpNichol's comment that content is always there, so he was interested always in finding new forms, as each would release content, so to speak, in new ways, would, as they cannot really be separated, create content anew, he was delighted, and agreed. As we talked it became clear that he could be slyly witty at the expense of those he thinks deserve it, but he is generally gently, humorously curious about everything, and obsessed with the function of the imagination in art (a very Duncanish approach — and now that I've read Adamson's poetry I would place him as a Romantic like Duncan, and can really understand why they hit it off so well). He's basically generous to other poets, as his remarks on his fellow Australian poets showed; he praised many of them, and stated his delight in their various works; yet he also suggested that they showed far less interest in the formally challenging poetics of the Pound-Williams-etc. line, a view of Australian poetry I had come to through my reading; but his very presence in the scene was altering some of my biases, always a good thing. So he talked of how what he referred to as the Tranter group really like the older poet Bruce Beaver, as does he, while the poets aligned against Tranter tend to ignore him (and do they ever, even to the degree of leaving him, along with Robert and some other poets I would call important, out of a 1991 anthology of twentieth-century Australian poetry). On the other hand, although he admires much of Les Murray's poetry, he thinks much less of his philosophy (theology), and suggested that as his power has waxed, so has his eccentricity. (He did say, apropos of Murray's recent move to dedicate all his books To the greater glory of God: Well, actually, it may appear humble but it's all rather self-praising, isn't it?).

We traded books, and he gave me his last, somewhat ragged, copy of the 1976 *Crossing the Border*, much of the contents of which had been too experimental to be allowed into his recent *Selected Poems*. He also found some early books from Paperbark for me, and a copy of *Scripsi*. So I was wonderfully even more loaded with books when we departed than when we arrived. After supper (the fish and chips as promised: mmm), we talked on, until finally we had to go. Michael and Lyndy led us out to the main highway and pointed us off through the dark.

to meet imagine  
nations companioning  
crossing the border  
again & again  
in the talk continuing

We had no trouble getting to The Entrance and finding our motel, which was right on the shore where you can hear the surf all night long. But there was no key, and no owner. I finally asked the manager of the restaurant there if he had it for us, but he said no, adding that we shouldn't have to wait too long for the owner's return.

So we sat in our car with the windows open listening to the surf and the radio (where we heard a lot about another tourist travelling through Australia then: Neil Diamond, who was proving, much to our and many

others' surprise, the best-selling pop musician of all time there, and was selling out concerts all across the country), and watching for him to come back. Finally, three hours later at 11.45 p.m., the manager let us into a room where we collapsed onto our bed and fell asleep to the surf sound.

Next morning, full of righteousness, I went up to the office to get our key, only to find an ashen-faced owner, full of apologies but, you see, his mother had died the night before and he had had to rush off to Sydney, and in the rush had forgotten to leave out our key. He gave us the room for free, but any discomfort we had felt disappeared in the face of his loss.

We proceeded up the coast to Port Macquarie, where it was cool and dark, but we still took a nice walk along the heights above the beaches. The following day the sun appeared, and we drove through increasing heat up to Byron Bay. It was a great drive because we kept shifting from rainforest to shoreline, both offering visual delights. I have an ongoing affair with gum trees: we saw many varieties in our progress, as well as palms and other rainforest foliage. And always, when we came within sight of the sea, the continuous surf.

At Byron Bay we walked the beach and drove at dusk into Broken Head, a complex moving and heady arrangement of colours and textures, slowly turning dark against the rusting sky. We also found a little Italian restaurant, run by an Argentinian, which served us delicious inexpensive food.

The next morning we drove into Brisbane through a stunningly harsh rainstorm. Indeed, it rained a lot during our last two days in Australia, and always started as soon as we went out for a walk. I decided that I didn't want to try to learn to drive in another large city, and after we dropped off the car at the airport and took a taxi to the Club One, a gorgeously sybaritic hotel right in the downtown overlooking the river, I realised how tired out from all the driving — on the 'wrong' side of the road, after all — I was. So we went out for our first rainy walk and found the Elizabeth Arcade, a downtown mall open on Sunday even (and saw one of the great restaurant names of our journey: the Bow Thai Restaurant).

That evening we were invited to dinner at Gillian Whitlock and Gerry Buwalda's house, and although some of the other people we knew in Brisbane were all out of town on vacation, Russell and Sharon McDougal were there from Armidale. I had met Russell and Gillian at the first ACSANZ conference in Christchurch in 1984, but Sharon had only met Gillian, so this was a nice reunion, and indeed it was a great evening. I had wondered why we hadn't seen Russell at the last few ACSANZ conferences, but he's been busy researching and writing a life of Xavier Herbert for the past few years, and was in Brisbane to do some research; he hopes to have it finished soon, and to get back into Canadian studies again. As it turns out, he had introduced Phyllis Webb at the Adelaide Arts Festival and also brought her up to Armidale for some readings there, so we talked a bit about her. We had brought some Canadian children's books for Gerry and Gillian's kids, Annika and Sam, and at least one of them proved a big hit right away, as Gerry told us sometime later, having already memorised it.

The evening, Gillian's fine food and the always fine Aussie wine passed quickly as we talked of this and that: a relaxed and enjoyable time with old friends; just what we had needed after all that driving.

**friends find friends always  
everywhere the same: good talk  
warms against rainfall**

The next day we did some shopping, and took a long walk along the riverside — in the rain; but at least in Brisbane it was so warm we didn't really mind. I had made contact with Alan Lawson, who teaches at the University of Queensland, and we arranged that he and Joanne Tompkins and we would go somewhere for supper together before my reading that night. We had a fun dinner and got caught up, and even found out that they had been just around the corner from us in Byron Bay on Saturday, as they had been down there for the whole weekend.

I walked over to the Metro Arts building to meet Robyn Sheahan, who had arranged for me to read there, and Geoffrey Dutton, the other major reader that evening. A charming man, he has become a kind of Australian George Woodcock, editor and writer of popular books on Australian culture, literature and history. It turned out that he knew P. K. Page, one of our best older poets, from the time she spent in Australia in the fifties when her husband was Canadian High Commissioner there; but although he now lives in the Glasshouse Mountains, he didn't know her poem about them. He read first, a series of poems, mostly narrative, about war, beginning with a poem about his time in the RAAF during World War II and finishing with an intriguing anti-Gulf War poem based on writings about war and its rapacious aftermath from the ancient Greeks to the present day. Metro Arts and the Queensland Writers Centre obviously are well organised, as over 100 people had turned up and paid \$7 for the reading. They were an appreciative audience, too.

So my last evening in Australia was a fun one, but we had to get up at 0600 next day to get out to the airport for our flight to Christchurch. Whew. Anyway, although sometimes tiring, our month of driving and visiting across Australia had been a terrific time for us both; but for me, certainly, one of the highlights, aside from visiting old friends, had been my meeting with Robert Adamson. (After all, 'research' on Australian poetry was one major reason we had made the trip.)

**above this huge land's  
awesome shoreline opening  
where friendship's light shines**

On the flight across the Tasman Sea, I read Michael Wilding's first novel *Living Together*, a very funny and sardonic study of the permutations of living arrangements in a house in Sydney. It has a witty narrative voice, and a fine sense of shifting psychologies, a terrific ear for dialogue, and at least one fall-on-the-floor-laughing farcical scene that had me making a scene of myself at Christchurch airport. Sharon clearly wondered if she should go outside and pretend she didn't know me. (I

was finishing the book as I waited for Reg Berry to pick us up after his class.)

Reg, with whom I have stayed every time I've been in Christchurch since the first conference (organised by him), took us both back to his house, where we eventually said hello to Carolynne and their kids, Anthea and Aiden (both of whom are taking skating lessons, while Reg is actually playing hockey, and quite obsessive about it he is too). They are all terrifically busy, in other words, what with teaching (Carolynne and Reg) and school and stuff (Anthea and Aiden). Of course it was cool in New Zealand, where autumn is much more like the Canadian version, especially as they have so many of what they call 'exotic' trees (that is, ones from England and North America) that actually do turn colour and lose their leaves. So we started wearing the jackets and sweaters we had begun to wonder why we had brought to Australia.

That first evening, we had dinner there and caught up on gossip and personal histories for the past couple of years. Reg was telling me how difficult it is to teach poetry to the two large (300 and 150) lecture groups of first-year students, since each lecture has to be a full-blown performance; our system, in which each professor takes care of a small section of about twenty-five to thirty-five students (almost always thirty-five or more these days), is easier on the prof, at least in terms of actual performative effort. And of course cutbacks are making things harder for everyone in New Zealand too (the continual refrain I heard everywhere we went). The kids were pleased with the books we brought them, while Reg looked forward to playing the various jazz tapes I brought him.

The next morning, I took Sharon for a walk over to the Deans Bush, a lovely park nearby, and we wandered the paths of the wood for awhile.

After lunch, Reg took me over to the University of Canterbury, where I gave my one lecture of the tour, on the 'translation of form' of the ghazal into Canadian poetry by John Thompson and Phyllis Webb. The audience was small but very attentive, and I got some very useful questions and comments at the end. It was good to see again Rob Jackaman, a poet, and Mark Williams, an editor and critic lately moved to Canterbury.

Reg had a class right away, so I wandered across the campus — another lovely park, actually, with the Avon River flowing right through it — to the bookstore, where I took note of some of the new poetry books, but decided not to buy right away. Reg then took me downtown, and we found a few books at a secondhand store, and looked in at a rather awkward exhibition of young artists.

We had another quiet evening at the Berrys, which was really nice and restful, and the next day walked into the main city park to the Museum and Art Gallery and Arts Centre, where we took in a show of Canadian quilts made by artists, some of which were really spectacular, and two of which, 'Crib Quilt, Stealth Bomber' and 'Small Security Blanket' by Barbara Todd, all greys and blacks, using signage sigils to (re)present the title figures of the first, and bombs, planes and people in the second, were darkly sardonic in their satiric wit.

We also visited the CSA Gallery, where the Annual Autumn Exhibition by members of the Christchurch Society of Artists ranged from the godawful to the

merely pretentiously bad — all at outrageously inflated prices. Luckily, downstairs there was a fascinating series of collage-sculptures, 'Egospheres, Mindshells and Objects of Beauty', by a Roger Thompson, all of which revealed far more craft and effort than anything upstairs, yet were priced far more reasonably. Made of wire, wood and metal, they shimmered between the found world and the invented one of imagination.

The central park is still lovely at this time of the year, many roses still in final bloom in the Rose Garden, and huge bright leaves lying about beneath the massive maples that line some walks. (Any tree will grow higher faster in New Zealand.)

That evening we had dinner at a Thai restaurant with members of the English Department and an American academic who had given a paper on Wordsworth that day (and whose name I did not catch — or at least hold). The food was plentiful and good, and so was the wine and talk. (If I sound like I'm repeating myself, that's because all these dinners worked out that way — one of the true joys of such a trip as ours.)

Later in the evening I went down to talk to Fiona Farrell, the Writer-in-Residence at Canterbury, and Mark Williams came up to talk to Sharon and the Berrys. During our conversation, I mentioned Adrienne Rich. The American suddenly began to hold forth on how 'crazy' she is, mainly it seems because 'she caused her husband to commit suicide', then started hanging out with other crazy women — lesbians and feminists — and finally refused to speak to him at some conference they both attended. Since he seemed totally unaware that Fiona was getting angrier and angrier, I tried to suggest that perhaps he was overstating the case and that Rich had many good reasons for her attitudes, even if her behaviour toward him had seemed impolite, but he was having nothing of it. Luckily, someone else asked him another question, and soon he was off again about wishing he'd brought his camera so he could have a photo of all of us 'good friends'.

Despite that little contretemps, the evening was enjoyable, and I looked forward to reading with Fiona the next day. Which we did, and she read a story set partly in Canada — a nice gesture. We had an appreciative audience.

Afterwards we went back to the Berrys, where we found Aiden, who had been valiantly telling Sharon of one of his favourite science programs, and then Carolynne, so we were able to say our goodbyes to almost everyone before heading out the highway for the western coast, at first along a nice smooth highway, but once we got to the mountains and started through Arthur's Pass, along the narrowest, most winding-hilly roads I can recall driving. Wonderful prospects, the clouds above and then around us, rivers glinting below, half the time seen through foliage from the trees just below us on another curve, birds fleeing trucks, the view through canyon rocks at a 45-degree angle: all in all a wonderful trip to look back upon but incredibly draining to drive through.

### fall colours drown us warmth of a home opening to return again

We did get to Greymouth, and even in the dark could walk from our motel across the sandbanks to the beach, where we could barely see but certainly could hear the surf thundering in across the Tasman Sea. The next morning we went for a look, and the beach was much wilder than beaches in Australia, with lots of driftwood, and more gravel than sand; but a few brave souls were out on their surfboards in the grey light.

That morning we drove north along the shore. There was one section in particular that took us right along the ocean, rocky headlands, including the famous Pancake Rocks, which we stopped to investigate, walking in to them through a rainforest and then coming out on a headland overlooking the rocks and blowholes and out across the ocean. The layered rock, long carved by the surf, has been cut off into small islets that look just like a high pile of pancakes: hence the name. To an Alberta-trained perception, they also looked a lot like hoodoos, but surrounded by the ceaseless ebb and flow of white-capped waves: what a magnificent sight.

Finally we turned inland toward Picton, and drove through some spectacular forest and river valley before hitting a long stretch so closely under cloud that at one point we were surrounded by a mist so thick we could see only about two car lengths ahead. A day of continually changing weather, and then there was the time a huge hawk suddenly took off from the side of the road and barely cleared the car, its fanning tail scraping the window right in front of me. Whew.

We found a nice motel on the water just outside of Picton, and a nice restaurant in town, and I had some time that evening to catch up on my journal. (This isn't all just good memory, let me tell you.)

Sunday, we caught the noon ferry across the strait to Wellington on the North Island. Luckily for us it was a sunny, windless day, which made for a generally smooth crossing. I passed some of the trip watching a small (to Canadians) gull loop down to hitch a ride, and then clean every single feather, preening itself and shaking them all into place in the breeze that made.

In Wellington we picked up our car again and drove around one of the many hills (the locals call it Windy Wellington, but Hilly Wellington also describes it accurately) to our hotel across the street from the Botanic Gardens, which began a little below the front entrance and within a few metres towered above our fourth-floor room. After settling in and calling Bill Manhire — one of New Zealand's finest poets, who had organised my visit to Victoria University of Wellington the next day — we went for a short walk up and down the gardens, which are spectacular if mostly vertical, before getting ready for dinner with Bill, his wife Marion, and some of the newer Wellington poets.

Dinner was at the aptly named Dada Restaurant. It was a real pleasure to meet Dinah Hawkin, Jenny Bornholdt and Gregory O'Brien, each of whom has published at least a couple of books over the past few years, and Andrew Johnson, one of the editors of *Sport*, a smart and

fairly recent literary magazine. Dinner was a series of various and engaging conversations since it was impossible to talk to everyone at once, and I exchanged books with all three at the end. (Jenny and Bill both had just found that their new books were short-listed for the New Zealand Book Awards, which brought an added note of celebration to the proceedings.) Although Jenny and Gregory sat at opposite ends of the table and generally participated in separate conversations, one aspect of a discussion suddenly brought them into one of those moments when the whole table unites in conversation: Gregory and Jenny now live together; Jenny in particular was a bit pissed off at the way reviewers had recently tended to suggest that her latest work was 'influenced' by his. Why didn't anyone suggest that his might equally be influenced by hers? Hearing this remark, Gregory agreed, then pointed out that their work really took different turns: 'Mine', he said, 'is about superstition, while Jenny's is about coincidence.' As Bill said next day, when I mentioned this conversation, 'Of course, that pretty well covers everything between them.'

Another moment that brought the whole table together was when they all told me that Phyllis Webb had been the high point of the Wellington Writers Week for them: a wonderful discovery. They had bought what books of hers they could, and had ordered more from Canada through the bookstore Jenny used to work for. As usual, apparently, Canadian publishers had managed to give the strongest impression overseas that they are not in the least interested in promoting their own wares, although this time, at least, some books had made it to the arts festivals on time. Nevertheless, they all said, Phyllis could have sold well over a hundred copies after her reading had they just been there. I, of course, told them about the Phyllis Webb celebration we had attended in Vancouver and about my own great admiration for her.

Andrew then said he had attended a paper I gave on Innovative Canadian Poetry in Auckland back in 1986, and had kept the sheet of poems I had provided with it, even placing some of them under the glass top of his desk at one of his jobs until he had lost it. But he had memorised some of the poems, one in particular which he loved but whose author he couldn't remember. So imagine his pleasure, he said, when Phyllis read it at her reading; it was one of her anti-gazals.

I also talked with Dinah, who sat right next to me but spent some time engaged with Bill on the matter of the sagas, which he teaches. Although a relatively new poet, she's only a few years younger than me, and has spent a good deal of her life working for social change or betterment, including some time in New York, where her friendship with the homeless clearly entered the poetry of her first book. We talked about her job as a student counsellor at the university and how, even though she has a few days a week free, it is really difficult to leave it behind and change emotional direction into her writing. I suspect she gives a lot of herself there. She is a quiet but very present person.

Sharon and Marion talked at some length about teaching junior high school, and some of the others had their say about the education system and its faults.

Next morning Sharon and I puffed up and down the Gardens to a little tea room beside the Rose Garden, then back to pack our car. Then we walked, again up and down, across the Gardens to the University, where she proceeded on into the city to the Art Gallery, and I began a rather full afternoon, first reading to a lovely audience that included all the poets I had met the night before, as well as some students, including an MA student from Canada named Laura, who was doing her thesis on Michael Ondaatje, and Laura Kroetsch, Robert's daughter, who was spending one year as an exchange student from the US at Victoria.

After, I had a nice talk with both Lauras before heading off with Fergus Barrowman, editor of both Victoria University Press and *Sport*, for lunch. Jenny, Dinah and Gregory were also there, so lunch proved most enjoyable. Then Bill took me down to Radio NZ to do some taping of sound poetry for a series of programs on poetry as an aural art that he will be narrating, after which we found a few books I was looking for in a secondhand store and returned to the University, where I spent two hours with his creative writing workshop, answering all kinds of questions about poetry in Canada and providing a writing exercise for the students. (It was interesting to discover that both Dinah and Jenny had once been his students and were now colleagues; at least one of the students demonstrated by her work that she might join them some day.)

At six we walked up the hill through the rain to his house, which is perched on a small terrace, where Sharon was waiting with Marion, whom she had met during the afternoon. We said hello to their son Toby and admired some of their art (often by friends with whom Bill had collaborated; I was especially impressed by some Colin McCahon works, as he is considered one of the most important mid-century NZ artists). Then onto the motor way and off through the rain toward Palmerston North, where a nice motel had been booked for us by Dick Corballis, the head of English at Massey University.

**poets talk become  
friends in conversations / &  
those deeper in books**

Next day we went into town for breakfast, and I left Sharon at the Arts Centre and headed out to Massey for a noon-hour seminar on Canadian and New Zealand poetry. There I had a chance to say hello to David Dowling, who teaches at Massey as well as in Canada sometimes. While making some general comparisons between the two poetries, I was able to propose a few hypotheses about recent developments in NZ poetry, including Max Richards' thesis. Among some really interesting and helpful responses, one person took that up at some length, agreeing while giving a larger sense of complex context to the whole situation, so the seminar went really well from my point of view.

Afterward, since we had to get to Auckland early the next day, I said my thanks, drove into town and picked up Sharon, and we headed north. Dick suggested a secondary road that was just as fast and much more scenic for the first part of the trip. It was a delight,

curving up hill and down dale and along a river.

Later in the evening, as we headed northwest toward Hamilton, having come up along the edge of Lake Taupo, we hit the second truly magnificent sunset of the trip: first an orange red and violet sky with grey-blue clouds, then a sliver of new moon shining against a deepening persimmon sky above the hilltops, then the silhouettes of gums and cedars and naked 'exotics' black against the darkening wine-red sky, finally deepening into purple tones, grape and finally dark dark — all this lasting about an hour and a half as we came into Hamilton.

Hamilton was close enough to Auckland that we could find our way into the city and to the Ascot Parnell, 'a small hotel' near the Domain in Parnell which Don Smith had booked for us. Don is another friend from the first conference in 1984, and just a lovely gentleman.

He had arranged a reading for me that afternoon, the last day of classes, so I walked up across the lower Domain and up another fairly steep hill to the University of Auckland, finding my way to the English Department. While waiting for Don to return to his office from a seminar, I looked at the various notices and discovered that Ian Wedde, one of New Zealand's best-known poets and editors, was reading just before me, but Don assured me as we walked over to the club for lunch that his reading had been organised after he had made arrangements for mine.

We talked of many things at lunch, from *Tis Pity She's a Whore* and *The Duchess of Malji* to Basil Bunting. Bunting is certainly one of the greatest British poets of this century, yet the Brits have still barely begun to acknowledge him; Don absolutely agreed with me in that lovely engaged manner of his, saying that he had been introduced to Bunting back in the sixties by a British colleague at the University of Toronto. His colleague had eventually returned to England, where he wrote one of the first tributes to Bunting in *Stand*, a copy of which Don showed me when we returned to his office. As we talked, his continuing enthusiasm for teaching suggested how good a teacher he must be.

There was a good small audience for the reading, including Michelle Leggott, another important younger poet and author of a book on Zukofsky, and Alan Loney, the Literary Fellow at Auckland that year. I knew Michelle's work and hoped to meet her, but she was called away before the end of the reading. I didn't know Loney's, but when he came up to say how he'd enjoyed the reading, Don introduced us and suggested I go up to his office and talk with him for awhile. He turned out to be another marginalised poet whose work moves in a similar poetic to mine, so we had a great talk. He tends to work in longer forms that deliberately reveal their reluctance to make statements or reach closure; he is interested in the fragment as formal model, and in fact, he uses the power of connection among fragments with grace and wit. I traded the last copy of my book for his new one, and he showed me copies of some of the special limited editions he has published, for he is also a book-maker with a hand press. They were truly beautiful *objets d'art*.

So my final meeting was also a good one from my

point of view as a poet and critic. We covered quite a bit of ground in the short time we had together. Bunting's name came up again, as well as the New American poetry, and the poetry that has flowed from it over the past few decades. Alan expressed his sense of being on the outside of the general poetry scene in New Zealand, even if it is less conservative than Australia's, but he has chosen his way, and has a number of interesting projects under way, including a kind of anti-autobiography that sounded formally intriguing. He made some interesting comments on Wedde's literary-political power as the central editor of anthologies right now, adding that he felt Manhire would probably have been more open to a wider range of writing. When I got hold of Wedde's latest anthology of contemporary NZ poetry and found not one mention of Loney, I could see the reason for his critique.

of fragments shored flows  
talk on the margins gaining  
entrance to new ears

That evening Don had us over for what has become almost a ritual: dinner with him and Jill, Karl and Kay Stead, and Kendrick Smithyman and Margaret Edgcombe. I met Kendrick at that first ACSANZ conference, too, and Karl in Canada; they are both major New Zealand poets of their generation, although Karl is now writing full time and publishing a lot of fiction as well. They are old friends; indeed Don and Karl go back to first year in university, and Jill and Kay knew each other in school.

What always proves interesting to us is that when they get together for a dinner like this one (and Don had also cooked us all a wonderful dinner two years ago), they quickly get into a memory mode. This time Karl and Kendrick talked a lot about their school days, then Jill and Kay joined in. At one point Don asked about Earle Birney, then got out one of his books to read; this led to Karl's taking Birney to task for a couple of his satiric poems about travelling in New Zealand, but Don felt that Karl was being a little unfair, and Sharon suggested that Birney was including himself as a target for his attacks on bourgeois academia, but although she could see this, not all of them could, at least not in the heat of the argument.

As Karl and Kendrick talked further about their early days, Karl going on about his and Kay's first years in Armidale and then in London, Kendrick putting everything into a New Zealand historical perspective with his amazingly complete knowledge of New Zealand history, Don suggested that it was really a shame Kendrick wouldn't settle down and write an autobiography; but Kendrick was having none of that, and Karl suggested that it was all there, by implication, in many of his recent poems.

So it was a great and enjoyable hubbub of talk all evening long, under the ministrations of our most hospitable host and hostess. As always.

'homely' is the gift  
of making all welcome to  
the feast of friendship  
wine & talk wind on toward  
morning's other gift  
memory's tape unwinding  
open hearts in speech

The next day Sharon and I went shopping, or should I say, I did. I blitzed the various book stores in town, looking for all the New Zealand poetry I had missed, and finding most of it after much reconnoitering. We also gook in a couple of the exhibits at the Art Gallery, recent paintings plus a special Easter show of Colin McCahon's works, including his fascinating abstract, *The Fourteen Stations of the Cross* — fourteen separate paintings in only a few colours, blacks and browns mostly, with the name of each station printed in paint at the bottom of each panel. The power lies in the fact that the titles ask us to look for a representation that the actual canvases absolutely resist.

That evening we had one final terrific meal at a small Italian restaurant right around the corner from our hotel, which was a good thing as it was raining again — just before we left the country.

The next morning we drove out to the airport early, dropped off our car, got through all the foofarah, and eventually began our long flight home. Stops in Fiji, where it was already very hot and humid, and Honolulu, where it was airconditioned, and Vancouver, where we

went through customs and then had to sit around for three hours before our flight to Edmonton (so we did some walking around the airport parking lot in the drizzle just to get some exercise), and finally we were home, where Wendy picked us up at the airport and took us to our own house, which looked very welcoming after all that time away.

Of course, when we finally got to sleep late that night, what did we awake to the next day but snow! From autumn in New Zealand, which was beautiful and warm enough, to spring in Edmonton, which was unnaturally cold — what had happened anyway? Still, it was good to be back, and I soon began reading the books I was given and enjoying them immensely. This was a great trip, if still too tiring a vacation (but then, aren't all vacations that way?) partly because we managed to visit with so many old friends along the way. All that spectacular scenery is terrific, but it can pall when you don't know anyone over such a long haul. It's the friends along the way that really make a trip like this worthwhile, and they all demonstrated once again why it's good to have good friends. Nevertheless I was also really glad to make contact with some writers I hadn't met before, and that aspect of the trip will prove especially useful as I work further on my studies of the poetries of both countries. Especially if some of them also become friends in the future. Barrie had it right, of course: <friends/friends/friends// this is how the false 'i' ends.>

— Douglas Barbour, 1992

(From Page 33)

So. These old stones were a mark of Hermes, custodian of boundaries. But Hermes was also the fleet-of-foot and winged-of-heel herald of heaven. I flopped down on the rocks. Fiddling with the laces of my sneakers, an idea began. Could one take Hermes for a patron figure? And if so, what would the prayer to Hermes contain? Could you ask for mobility of soul, to be shifted lightly among the realms? If prayer of any kind was to absorb the qualities of the saint, then prayer to Hermes was asking to be like him, the good herald, a friend of the celestials and to Man.

Perched on the stones of the herm I thought: much of my life I had rationalized the refusal to live by a long-standing disdain for the superficiality of adventure, for the shallow meetings and small perceptions that come from it.

In the evening sun before the herm of Hydra, suddenly I wished to experience the rest of it, all of life, to see nothing as small, everything as itself, to see what there really was. Not to be skewered in obsessive pursuit, or go on fondling past disaster, censoring future

chance. But to be like Hermes, my new patron, light-hearted, keen-sighed, brave in the ranging, graceful of tread. To be a bringer of the good news from what is around, above, and below as well.

In the iconography of Hermes he was a thief in his youth, a trickster and a liar; but maybe he grew out of it. As mature god of journeys Hermes brought the gifts of travel, the unexpected, the unconstructed, the sheer lark of it.

Retightening my Adidas that minute (did I hear a rustle of wings therein?) I got unstuck. Tying up my sneakers, there was a snap, a nearly audible 'Ping!' inside, as a desire for movement sprang again and after all. Despite chronic fears of missing out, going flat to adventure, fluffing it, there was a prod to take a crack, a sense that I just might be good at it, I'd come to it, and to Go!

Turning from the mountains, I hot-hooved it to Hydra port in the last sun.

That evening I bought a ticket to Cyprus.

— Catherine Hoffmann, 1990

**ADRIAN RAWLINS** is a Melbourne poet, writer and entrepreneur who appears everywhere and does everything. He is the only person I've met whose statue has been put up in Brunswick Street (or anywhere).

PERFORMANCE

## Olé, Flamenco!

### Ruminations inspired by the Melbourne season of Paco Peña's 'Flamenco Fire'

by Adrian Rawlins

Flamenco seems a culture of which I have always been aware. As a child studying Jewish history I learnt of the 'golden age' of Spain, under Moorish rule, when religious tolerance and the free pursuit of the liberal arts produced social harmony and immense achievements in philosophy, architecture, medicine, music and social justice — much of which came to an end with the military success of the 'Christian' monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella, and the subsequent expulsion of Moors and Jews, the closing of the borders and the entrapment within Spain of normally itinerant gypsies.

In Andalusia, a region famous for its music and dances since the first century of the Christian era, pockets of people sympathetic to the *laissez-faire* atmosphere of the former regime settled away from the main cities to practise ways of life inimical to the 'Christian' orthodoxy imposed by the Inquisition. There developed a music that incorporated elements of Moorish, Sephardic, gypsy and inherent Andalusian folk art, and this music became what we now know as flamenco.

As a teenager I could buy records of flamenco and gypsy music at Thomas's Record Shop, at that time on the corner of Bourke and Exhibition Streets, Melbourne. Flamenco was also played live in certain cafes and folk clubs.

In 1957 the Luisilo Dance Company brought famed gypsy dancers to Melbourne's Comedy Theatre. Since then I have performed Lorca's poetry with Australian guitarists and, most recently, with South American poet, and I have had the honour to work as publicist on several Australian tours by Paco Peña, initially as a soloist and, in 1978, with his wonderful Flamenco Puro Company.

From my reading and listening I believe I have formed a fair appreciation of the art which at its heart is Song, which manifests within Andalusia as a living heritage of the whole people, shared freely in cafes, on the street, at family gatherings, in fiesta: in every depart-

ment of life, a shared spirit. However, what is shared in this truly folkloric way are one or two voices of Flamenco: flamenco and chico.

As there are three primary colours, three primary tenses in grammar, three primary modes in art (classical, romantic and expressionist), there are three basic modalities in flamenco: *cante jondo* (deep song), *cante flamenco* (celebratory song) and *cante chico* (small, gay or light song). A solo guitarist may express all three modalities in the specific song forms that have developed in the art.

Most dancing comes within the range of *cante flamenco*, though a passionately committed dancer, such as Raoul (who starred in Peña's penultimate tour here and earned the startling soubriquet from *The Age's* Neil Jillett 'beyond perfection') can dance with such passion and intensity that one intuitively knows one is in the presence of deep song.

Usually true *cante jondo* can only be conveyed by vocal artists. In his life of Nijinsky, Dickie Buckle relates a time in Spain when Nijinsky, Diaghilev and Cocteau went to a *tabla* in Madrid in the hope of hearing a legendary singer, now retired. They waited many hours while she pursued her duties as cafe proprietor, then late at night, when the tourists had departed and only friends remained, she put down her tea towel, took off her grubby cardigan and opened her mouth, her heart and her soul. *Cante jondo* flowed like lava from a smouldering volcano. Three of the greatest artists in the history of European civilisation stood on the table howling their appreciation of the art of 'this ageless marvel'.

This is flamenco.

Some years ago appeared on SBS a program on flamenco. When the film-makers wanted to show deep song, they took their cameras to a small poor village and showed us an old poor woman, wearing a black dress and sitting simply on the sofa in her living room. She



The Paco Peña Company. (Photo courtesy Hocking, Vigo & Gerrand.)

opened her mouth, her heart and her soul. Four centuries of grief poured from her: undeniable, indescribable, unstoppable; horizon-filling; time-denying; immutable and grand. Cante jondo: the very soul of a people; the first and immortal voice of flamenco.

It was, as they say, enough to make a grown man cry. I am not ashamed to report that tears poured down my face as I watched and listened to this pure example of Spanish soul.

Cante jondo. Deep, deep song.

What we saw and heard on the stage of the State Theatre during May 1994 was something else. True, the passion, the dedication were there. Considerable technical brilliance was there. But the 'song' was flamenco . . . and

chico. In private the Spanish visitors shared the true simple joy of playing, singing and dancing with members of Melbourne's Spanish community in a Johnston Street cafe, and the living tissue of this great folklore came gloriously to life.

There is no judging in folk art; it is all sharing. But I couldn't help noticing that the dancing that came closest to cante jondo that night was the vigorous athletic zappateado (footwork) of Fernando, the local star dancer.

Olé flamencol

— Adrian Rawlins, 1994

I know nothing about **DR JO-ANN STUBBINGS** except that she sent me this article out of the blue, she has appeared in many major Australian magazines, including *The Melburnian*, for which I also write, and she has a PhD in Contemporary Spanish Theatre.

FILM

## Heady thoughts on 'Basic Instinct'

by Jo-Ann Stubbings

*Basic Instinct* does for icepicks what Hitchcock's *Psycho* did for shower curtains all those years ago. Never again will you fix yourself a whisky on the rocks or lather up under a steaming Rheem with an easy mind. Anthony Perkins is ready to pounce.

Most of the pouncing or icepicking in *Basic Instinct* is over and done with in the opening scene. A pan down into the happy couple making love, a shot of the guy in ecstasy, a squizz at the buttocks of a faceless blonde and it's all over by the shouting. This lady wields a mean icepick, and after eleven-odd jabs at her lover's solar plexus she sets the stage for the sort of murder suspense that old Alfred would have been proud of.

Based on the novel by Joe Eszterhas and directed by Dutchman Paul Verhoeven, *Basic Instinct* abounds in Hitchcockian elements, beginning with the menacing discords accompanying the opening credits to the long, free panning shots so favoured by the master.

The plot itself is a nineties-style *Vertigo*, pushed to the limits. Nick Curren, played to perfection by Michael Douglas, is a detective with a past whose sole purpose in life is to ascertain the identity of the phantom icepick killer. Is she in fact the gorgeous blonde who, as one colleague suggests, has managed to 'fry his brains' for most of the action? The gorgeous blonde is, in real life, relative newcomer Sharon Stone.

Nick Curren falls into the class of malleable male pioneered by Jimmy Stewart's *Vertigo* character and championed by contemporary chumps such as William Hurt, Harrison Ford and Al Pacino in *Body Heat*, *Presumed Innocent* and *Sea of Love* respectively. James Stewart squandered miles of celluloid hotfooting it after Kim Novak's elusive femme fatale when we knew all the time she spelt trouble. These just heroes might be hunks, but they're vulnerable guys just the same. History has scarred them badly. 'Stewart' once plunged to the ground from a multi-storied building, 'Hurt' bungled a court case, 'Ford' and 'Douglas' had affairs that left their marriages in shreds... So chances are that at some stage these sometime pillars of society are going to throw caution to the wind and wind up in the cot with the culprit — if she's cute.

The dynamics of *Basic Instinct* rest with Stone's character Catherine Tramell. What makes her tick? And is she set to detonate after interval? Apart from luscious looks, Grace Kellyesque hair-dos, and wealth beyond her wildest dreams, Catherine doesn't have much going for her. Trouble is, her nearest and dearest keep kicking the bucket. We learn early on that her parents have died in a boating accident, a fiancé was killed in the boxing ring, and just now her lover has fallen victim to the dreaded icepick. How much more can a young woman take?

Plenty apparently. Catherine is in fact as cool as an ice cube. By strange coincidence the fate that befalls so many of her mates also forms the plots of the novels she writes, and so the plot within the plot thickens. Is fantasy ruling reality or vice versa? Has she created the perfect alibi to the perfect murder? The police don't know, we don't know, and Nick Curren, involuntary subject of her latest detective novel, and voluntary subject of her seduction, is sinking fast.

The theme of identity is the key to this suspense. Characters invariably are not what they seem, and there are more skeletons in the closet than you could poke a stick at. Catherine's affectionate friend Roxy, for instance, has done a fair share of throat slitting in her time, and the doe-eyed psychiatrist who objects to Curren's brutal lovemaking could probably use a consultation or two herself. To complement the role-playing — and to hit box office big time — there is a good deal of costume changing, hat swapping and, significantly, wig wearing. Echoes of *Vertigo* again.

The duality that exists between the detective and his dame keeps the action afloat and humour bubbling to the surface. As quickly as he can suss her out — hiding his yank tank behind tired old trees and giving tired old car chases along the highway — she is building up a dossier on him. He knows what she is thinking, she knows he'll be back on the smokes and Jack Daniels in no time. She is suspected of murdering her boyfriend; he is suspected of murdering the internal affairs investigator. And both suspect they are falling in love.

Contrary to the publicity which sees *Basic Instinct* as



# ANOTHER BOUT OF LISTOMANIA

by

**Bruce Gillespie**  
**Robert James Mapson**  
**Carey Handfield**  
**Jerry Kaufman**  
**Doug Barbour**  
**Tim Jones**  
**Michael Clark**  
**Robert Day**  
**Paul Anderson**  
**Don Ashby**

## Bruce Gillespie's lists

These items in the following lists are those that I have read, seen or heard *for the first time* during the year given.

### 1994 FAVOURITE NOVELS

- 1 *A Dark-Adapted Eye*  
Barbara Vine (1986; Penguin; 300 pp.)
- 2 *Possession: A Romance*  
A. S. Byatt (1990; Vintage; 511 pp.)
- 3 *Waterland*  
Graham Swift (1983; Picador; 310 pp.)
- 4 *The House of Stairs*  
Barbara Vine (1988; Penguin; 282 pp.)
- 5 *Chamber Music*  
Doris Grumbach (1979; Hamish Hamilton; 213 pp.)
- 6 *Talking to Strange Men*  
Ruth Rendell (1987; Arrow; 300 pp.)
- 7 *The Crocodile Bird*  
Ruth Rendell (1993; Arrow; 359 pp.)
- 8 *The Custom of the Country*  
Edith Wharton (1913; Signet Classics; 370 pp.)
- 9 *From the Teeth of Angels*

Jonathan Carroll (1994; Doubleday; 212 pp.)

- 10 *Genetic Soldier*  
George Turner (1994; AvoNova/Morrow; 403 pp.)
- 11 *Saint Maybe*  
Anne Tyler (1991; Chatto & Windus; 337 pp.)
- 12 *Gallowglass*  
Barbara Vine (1990; Penguin; 296 pp.)

Five novels from my Top 12 are written by the same person, under the pseudonyms Ruth Rendell and Barbara Vine. At this end of 1995 I find it startling to realise that I had read none of her books until early 1994.

*Talking to Strange Men*, the first of her books that I read, is irresistible. A man thinks he has found evidence of a spy's information drop. His attempts to take into account this new element in his life changes it and him. In alternating chapters, Rendell shows us that the 'spy drop' is part of an elaborate game played by boys who, sent to separate schools, are keeping in touch with each other. In turn, the game leads to situation of danger. The man never knows about the boys; the boys never find out who has been spoiling their game. The sense of menace is made greater because there is no investigator, apart from the author and reader, who can resolve the situation.

That was my introduction to one-third of Ruth Rendell's novels. They are usually called her 'psychological thrillers'. I call them good novels. The famous one-third of Ruth Rendell is the author of the Inspector Wexford mysteries. To judge from the few I have read, they seem to be written by a different person. Their plots are filled with red herrings, but are usually well resolved. The quality of the prose is slapdash by comparison with that

in the psychological novels. They don't stray much from the time-honoured structure of the police detective novel.

The Rendell who provides the greatest pleasure is 'Barbara Vine'. Rendell says that she feels and writes quite differently when she becomes Vine, but I don't see much difference in prose style between the Vine novels and the most recent Rendell psychological novels. The Vine books are usually written in the first person by an unreliable narrator, but so are some of the later Rendell novels. The Vine novels are Rendell novels, only more so.

I forget which novel won the Booker Prize in 1987, but *A Dark-Adapted Eye* should have. It's the best recent British novel I've read. A woman remembers her two aunts, and the part she played in their lives. Why is one of her aunts being hanged for the murder of the other? When she was a child, just before World War II, the narrator visited them regularly, when they were young and very attached to each other. They grew up in different circumstances, one to be poor, one to be rich. One of them has a child. The battle over this child, and the part the narrator plays in that battle, becomes the subject matter of the novel.

Yet nothing in the subject matter explains Vine's ability to make the reader live through this battle. It's because the narrator is an innocent. Like Henry James, Vine sees the innocent participant as the most dangerous person in any human situation. The reader's viewpoint is restricted to the claustrophobic viewpoint of the narrator, yet sometimes glimpses just beyond it. It's this feeling that things should not work out quite *this* badly that gives emotional power to the book. And, of course, that the narrator knows information, unavailable to anybody else, that makes the conclusion of the story entirely ambiguous. In a Barbara Vine novel, we can never know the truth about any situation.

In *House of Stairs* we find out much more of the truth, but again the antics of the innocent narrator have appalling effects on the main characters. The strength of Vine's/Rendell's writing is that she lets nobody off the hook. She is implacably cruel to everyone, because every character acts out his or her nature. *House of Stairs* is the great novel about one of Rendell's/Vine's obsessions: the ability of a strong person to take almost any action to protect her (usually her) possession of a beloved house. It often seems to be the same house, although the one in *House of Stairs* is architecturally rather different from those described in *Gallowglass*, *Kissing the Gunner's Daughter*, *A Fatal Inversion*, *Judgment in Stone* and *The Crocodile Bird*.

The narrator makes friends with a much older woman who inherits an enormous house in London. The older woman is lonely and naive enough to throw her house open to an assortment of people who might keep her company. It is obvious to the reader that some of these people might hatch a plan to gain possession of the house; only the narrator fails to see how she might be made part of this plan.

*Gallowglass* is, I suppose, much the same plot, yet reads quite differently because of the nature of the participants. A slightly simple young man becomes very attached to a cool, cruel man who enlists him in a

campaign to kidnap an heiress. She lives in a lonely house in the country (more or less the same house as in the other books). Although it is surrounded by woods, it is well guarded, and there is only one driveway. The narrator's sympathies are with the young woman, but his love and allegiance is with her kidnapper. *Gallowglass*, written in *faux naïf* style, is the best crafted of Vine's novels, and all the more chilling for the way the narrator tries to leave himself out of an enterprise that has him at its centre.

*The Crocodile Bird* is set around a large, lonely house that in appearance is much like that featured in *Gallowglass*. A woman has spent her life as the housekeeper, accompanied only by her daughter. She has never allowed her daughter to go to school or leave the grounds of the house. The daughter, who is the narrator, seizes the one chance she's offered to escape, yet in doing so she leaves her mother to face arrest. *The Crocodile Bird* is made all the more memorable because we only have the daughter's memories from which to reconstruct the 'real' situation.

A. S. Byatt's *Possession* is, in a way, a Barbara Vine novel that lets the characters off the hook. It's both better written than the usual Vine/Rendell book and not nearly as well made. The main character finds a small scrap of evidence that sets him and his friend off on a literary treasure hunt. The object: all the glittering prizes of literary scholarship. The subjects: two people who lived more than a century ago. Byatt cheats: in the end she has to give us information unavailable to the main twentieth-century characters. On the way she has a romp, composing reams of mock nineteenth-century verse, dragging main characters and the reader around the dank English countryside, and in the end... well, that would be unfair to tell you. *Possession* is a spectacular, amiable book.

It says something about *Waterland* that I cannot remember much about the characters, most of whom come to bad ends, but I remember images of the spectacular Norfolk fenland. This is geographical fiction at its best, laced with much historical tale-telling and glorious snapshots of amazing happenings.

In some other years, *Chamber Music* might have made it to No. 1. It seems a meek little novel, told in the first person by a woman who becomes the unloved wife of a major American composer at the turn of the century. Grumbach's understated style is a perfect voice for the wife's modest view of herself. She does not ask herself why she should have to endure so much; we simply endure it with her. Her cold husband suffers from a mystery illness that debilitates him. Only after much time can the narrator admit to herself that the illness is syphilis. After the situation seems to right itself, she must suffer another blow. She never recovers from that second blow, but it does enable her to live inside her own mind and write the truth about her husband.

I picked up *Chamber Music* in a bargain basement, and I've never seen it since. But it is a fine, haunting American novel; grab it if you see it anywhere.

I'm being a bit unfair to Edith Wharton in relegating *The Custom of the Country* to No. 8. I was very gung ho about her books in 1993! This book's sense of irony is as fine as that found in any other Wharton novel, and

the writing is as readable as ever. But the main character is one of the great monster women of fiction; worse, a monster who never looks like losing! The fun of the novel is watching her nearly collapse under her own excesses (mainly her ability to spend infinite amounts of money) but somehow pick herself up in time. The disappointment of the novel is that she never gains self-knowledge; she remains a spoilt child who, given everything, destroys everyone around her.

From *The Teeth of Angels* is Jonathan Carroll's best novel since *The Land of Laughs*, his first novel, which I discussed in detail in a recent *SF Commentary*. It has a modest structure that works much better than the baroque castles of many of his recent novels. A person suffers from a mysterious fate, one that will certainly kill him. A woman meets the love of her life, and finds out the terrifying truth about her lover. In the process, they, the reader and, I suspect, Carroll discover something about life that they had never before suspected. From what seems a gloomy tale one carries away an unexpectedly light feeling. Not that there's much reassurance; it's just Jonathan Carroll telling us again that the world is much stranger than we can ever imagine.

*Genetic Soldier* can hardly be compared to any of George's other novels, science fiction or otherwise. Humans, gone from Earth for many centuries, return to a planet that does not want them, and will employ any possible means to eject them. The humans, with nowhere else to go, claim their birthright. The conflict is made complex because we do not know the nature of the society to which the spacefarers have returned. At first it seems like a simple rural utopia, with small numbers of people living comfortably in an uncrowded world. The main character, a soldier from Earth who finds himself caught up with the spacefarers, is forced to question every assumption he has made about his own society. *Genetic Soldier* works because we keep thinking we have discovered the true nature of the new Earth, only to find that we have been wrong. Turner's double ending is highly successful.

*Saint Maybe* is another of Anne Tyler's tales of almost frighteningly sympathetic characters, people whose fates become so important to the reader that it's sometimes hard to read on. The main character is the 'Saint Maybe', a person who can't help being the good guy, although it never helps him much. When he decides to become a saint in the much more old-fashioned sense, he becomes a pain in the neck to the people who love him most. I suspect that Anne Tyler never sets out to write complex, fragile tales; her books just turn out that way.

## 1994 FAVOURITE BOOKS

- 1 *A Dark-Adapted Eye*  
Barbara Vine (details already given)
- 2 *Possession: A Romance*  
A. S. Byatt (details already given)
- 3 *Where I'm Calling From: The Selected Stories*

Raymond Carver (1988; Harvill/HarperCollins; 431 pp.)

- 4 *Waterland*  
Graham Swift (details already given)
- 5 *The House of Stairs*  
Barbara Vine (details already given)
- 6 *Chamber Music*  
Doris Grumbach (details already given)
- 7 *Collected Poems 1942-1985*  
Judith Wright (1994; Angus & Robertson; 436 pp.)
- 8 *Talking to Strange Men*  
Ruth Rendell (details already given)
- 9 *The Crocodile Bird*  
Ruth Rendell (details already given)
- 10 *The Chalk Giants*  
Keith Roberts (1974; Panther; 267 pp.)
- 11 *A Life in Movies: An Autobiography*  
Michael Powell (1986; Heinemann; 705 pp.)
- 12 *Million-Dollar Movie*  
Michael Powell (1992; Mandarin; 612 pp.)
- 13 *You Are Now Entering the Human Heart: Stories*  
Janet Frame (1984; Women's Press; 203 pp.)
- 14 *The Custom of the Country*  
Edith Wharton (details already given)
- 15 *From the Teeth of Angels*  
Jonathan Carroll (details already given)
- 16 *Genetic Soldier*  
George Turner (details already given)
- 17 *Saint Maybe*  
Anne Tyler (details already given)
- 18 *The Passing of the Dragons: The Short Fiction of Keith Roberts*  
(1977; Berkley Medallion; 307 pp.)

I reviewed *Where I'm Calling From* on p. 107 of the previous issue of *The Metaphysical Review*. I'm not repeating that review. In summary: Carver's brilliance is his ability to use simple words and sentence structures to give complex and uneasy meanings to the lives of people who consider themselves ordinary. He shows us that his characters and their circumstances are extraordinary, and I wish I knew how he does it. Most people (including umpteen bad Australian writers) who try to imitate Carver fail. Carver rarely failed, and I wish he were still alive and writing.

Since Judith Wright has a fair claim to the Nobel Prize, why did I place her *Collected Poems* at No. 7 instead of No. 1 on this list? Perhaps I read too many of her poems at one sitting. I can't see any lessening in her formal facility over the years, but in the poems written after the 1950s she never shows quite the dazzling quality of the earliest poems. Wright was a seer in her early years, cutting through the layers of Australian psychic palaeontology, expressing a vision that sees all of us as products of ancient forces. In later years Wright settled into a much narrower style of poetry. Or maybe I became used to her habit of mind. I still like her poetry better than Seamus Heaney's, this year's winner, so maybe she'll cop the Nobel Prize next year.

I feel that I don't need to talk about *The Chalk Giants* because I've already written about it in detail — but my essay still hasn't appeared anywhere but a tiny-circulation fanzine for ANZAPA. Since no *SFC* has appeared

since then, you haven't seen my essay.

*The Chalk Giants* is a fix-up, one of the best in the field, but that's all it is. It's not a novel. The individual stories include some of Roberts's best (especially 'Monkey and Pru and Sal' and 'The God House'). I don't think *The Chalk Giants* has ever been reprinted, but it still turns up in secondhand stores.

*The Passing of the Dragons* is a fine American 'Best Of' collection of Roberts's short fiction from the 1960s and early seventies. It shows that his talent extended beyond the mythic pieces in *The Chalk Giants* and later Gollancz collections. 'The Passing of the Dragons' itself is one of the best ecological hard-sf stories. This collection may be very difficult to find, but it's much better than the British collections that cover the same period.

Are 1317 pages too many for a film director to write his autobiography (divided into *A Life in Movies* and *Million-Dollar Movies*)? Not if you're Michael Powell, one of the most entertaining figures in the history of cinema. You could whisk through these pages without drawing breath, and still think the story is too short. The trouble is (we are told darkly by some major figures from the British film industry) is that much of Powell's tale is fiction, and that Michael Powell was not a Nice Man. Who cares? It's entertaining fiction. The trouble with books like these is that they make you curse the difficulty of tracking down Michael Powell movies.

I began a project of reading and re-reading the works of Janet Frame, another of my prime candidates for the Nobel Prize for Literature. Until now I haven't got much beyond *Owls Do Cry* (disappointing on a second reading) and *You Are Now Entering the Human Heart*, a compendium of Frame's better short fiction. Most stories are well written, but only 'Snowman, Snowman' (see my 'Favourite Short Stories' list) makes this an essential volume.

## 1994

### FAVOURITE SHORT STORIES

- 1 'A Small, Good Thing'  
Raymond Carver (*Where I'm Calling From: The Selected Stories*)
- 2 'Elephant'  
Raymond Carver (*Where I'm Calling From*)
- 3 'Snowman, Snowman'  
Janet Frame (*You Are Now Entering the Human Heart*)
- 4 'The Ragthorn'  
Robert Holdstock and Garry Kilworth (*A Whisper of Blood*)
- 5 'The Moose Church'  
Jonathan Carroll (*A Whisper of Blood*)
- 6 'Scrapings'  
Garry Disher (*Love Lies Bleeding: Crimes for a Summer Christmas 5*)
- 7 'One Last Zoom at the Buzz Bar'  
Alison M. Goodman (*The Pattern Maker*)
- 8 'What's in Alaska?'  
Raymond Carver (*Where I'm Calling From*)
- 9 'Errand'  
Raymond Carver (*Where I'm Calling From*)

- 10 'Cathedral'  
Raymond Carver (*Where I'm Calling From*)
- 11 'Boxes'  
Raymond Carver (*Where I'm Calling From*)
- 12 'Put Yourself in My Shoes'  
Raymond Carver (*Where I'm Calling From*)
- 13 'The Lordly Ones'  
Keith Roberts (*The Lordly Ones*)
- 14 'Rand, Rat and the Dancing Man'  
Keith Roberts (*The Chalk Giants*)
- 15 'The Walk'  
Greg Egan (*The Pattern Maker*)
- 16 'An Empty Wheelhouse'  
Sean McMullen  
(*Metaworlds*)

It's happened again. The Short Stories list is more competitive than the Books or Novels lists. I like short stories. I like narrative, and I like compression of language. Poems provide the latter, but not often the former. Novels provide the former, but not often enough the latter. To be a fine writer of short stories is a great and glorious achievement. Perhaps that's why almost nobody can earn a living doing it.

So ignore the placings, and search out any of these.

As I've said, I've already reviewed the Carver stories in the previous TMR. 'A Small, Good Thing' is the story that Robert Altman chose as the backbone of his film *Short Cuts*. Study the way Altman ends the section based on 'A Small, Good Thing' (the astonished face of the baker, played by Lyle Lovett) and the way Carver ends the story, and you see why Carver was becoming better and better in his last years, whereas Altman largely misses the point of Carver's work (which is compassion and compression).

On the other hand, and to give Altman his due, Carver never wrote anything quite as good as the Jack Lemmon character who is interpolated into the film's hospital scene.

'Snowman, Snowman' is based on a fantasy premise: it gives the thoughts of a snowman from the time he/she is built until the sun destroys it. (Since it was written many years ago, I don't doubt if the title has anything to do with heroin.) The fantasy idea is a framework for a prose poem, which I found as enjoyable as any poem I've read. This collection might not be still available, but Frame's short stories are often reprinted in new collections.

'The Ragthorn' is pure can't-stop-reading narrative: vengeance, murder, the lot, in a well-defined medieval setting. Would I spoil it if I said that it gives the reader a similar chill to that given by the ending of the first *Vanishing* film? Didn't this story win the World Fantasy Award? It's not often I agree with awards.

'The Moose Church' reappears as the first few pages of Carroll's novel *From the Teeth of Angels*. That doesn't invalidate it as a chilling story about obsession.

I can't describe Garry Disher's 'Scrapings' because, although it has a firm story structure, it depends for its effect on a claustrophobic style that strands the reader (and main character) in a warped, dangerous Venice. Disher is one of a small number of Australian writers who can craft taut tales of unease without losing control

of either style or narrative.

There have been some great examples of time-paradox stories in the sf field, and Alison Goodman's 'One Last Zoom at the Buzz Bar' should be added to the list. Also, it has the vigour of the best Generation X stories. A mad, dangerous romp; a lot of fun.

'The Lordly Ones' is Keith Roberts's lovely nutty story about a simple lad who is left to guard a toilet block after the End of the World as We Know It. Of course, he doesn't know it's a toilet block, that it needs guarding, or that it's the End of the World. What *we* know we must guess from stray bits of information. This story has some of the impact of 'Flowers for Algernon' without any of the sentimentality.

'Rand, Rat and the Dancing Man' is one of the far-future visions that make up *The Chalk Giants*. It is so original that I can't describe it, so I won't. Keep looking for this book.

'An Empty Wheelhouse' is one of a number of classic sf stories that Sean McMullen keeps turning out, seemingly without honour outside Australia. Wake up, you people in London and New York. 'An Empty Wheelhouse' is a self-contained story that is necessary reading as a preface to Sean's novels *Voices in the Light* and *Mirrorsun Rising*.

#### 1994 FAVOURITE FILMS

- 1 *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*  
directed by John Ford (1962)
- 2 *The Unforgiven*  
John Huston (1960)
- 3 *The Wages of Fear*  
Henri-Georges Clouzot (1952)
- 4 *Truly, Madly, Deeply*  
Anthony Minghella (1991)
- 5 *Oliver Twist*  
David Lean (1948)
- 6 *Shadows and Fog*  
Woody Allen (1992)
- 7 *A Midsummer Night's Sex Comedy*  
Woody Allen (1982)
- 8 *The Card*  
Ronald Neame (1952)
- 9 *Million Pound Note*  
Ronald Neame (1953)
- 10 *Tiger Bay*  
J. Lee Thompson (1959)
- 11 *The Witches*  
Nicholas Roe (1989)
- 12 *The Music Lovers*  
Ken Russell (1971)

If I gave a rank order to *all* the films I saw in 1994, I would give a completely different list. For instance, 1994 gave me my first chance in thirty years to see Roger Corman's *Little Shop of Horrors*, my favourite funny film. My own rules stop me listing it. First and second would be, of course, Orson Welles' *The Trial* and *Othello*. That

Astor double bill was our best night at the cinema.

Other wonderful films I returned to in 1994 included Vincente Minnelli's *Two Weeks in Another Town* (seen most recently in 1966), Hamer's *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, which I could easily see again every year, Lean's *Great Expectations* (ditto), and Altman's *Breuster McCloud* (which seemed much better than when I saw it first in the mid seventies).

The tap of new movies has been turned off. Classic movies have almost disappeared from free-to-air television. They've been bought by the new pay television companies. Nobody wants pay tv, but it's destroying regular television anyway. The blockbuster movies have also been caught up by pay tv.

1994 saw the advent of VCR to the Gillespie-Cochrane household (thanks, Dick), but I still haven't joined a video library. I'm part of a small group of people who watch movies on laser disc once a month. Many of these films are old favourites rather than new acquaintances. And I don't get to the movies much.

So the 1994 list is odd:

*The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* is one of those classic movies that I've missed each time it's been on tv. But thanks to the new VCR, I caught it this time. This film is both a legend and about legend-making. Everybody is superb, especially Jimmy Stewart as the reluctant hero and Lee Marvin in a wonderful send-up of all his other bad-man roles. Perfect script. Great black-and-white photography. John Ford's direction. What more could one want from a movie?

In his autobiography, John Huston lists *The Unforgiven* as the only one of his movies that he dislikes (mainly because of the difficulties of making it). Perhaps he should have watched it again. No relation to the recent big-budget Gene Hackman film also called *The Unforgiven*, it's as much of a classic western as any Ford film, but it lacks Ford's amused view of life, and replaces it with hard-headed asperity. Its subject, racism, can't have endeared it to audiences in 1960. Ordinary Americans are shown as bigots, the Native Americans are shown as the good guys, even when they are driven to attack the main (white) characters, and Audrey Hepburn gets to be a Native American princess. Burt Lancaster is at his best. The colour photography, shown on Channel Seven in a restored print, is spectacular.

*The Wages of Fear* is the most famous nail-biting film of all time, but the reviews give the idea that this is because of the question: 'Will the nitroglycerine explode or not?' A film cannot ride on one gimmick, and *The Wages of Fear*, shown complete for the first time, proves to be a complex mixture of dirty politics, fragile human characters, and a willingness of the director to torture the viewer almost beyond bearing. And the ending remains hard to take, even if you know it's inevitable.

*Truly Madly Deeply* is one of the few movies that might have done some good in the world. Say that you've lost your wife, husband or lover, and you watch this film on Sunday night television. You find yourself almost prostrate with grief, along with actor Juliet Stevenson, in one of the truly great movie performances. And then you're astonished and delighted when the dead spouse returns

as an all-too-solid ghost. And then you ask yourself: do you really want him or her back? Wouldn't that cripple your new life in some way? *Truly Madly Deeply* reminds me of Bill Forsyth's films because of its ability to turn grief into giddy humour. Is the triumph in the movie-making? No. It's all a bit pedestrian, like most British films. In the script? Not entirely. This is a film created by the total absorption of great British actors (Stevenson, Alan Rickman and Bill Douglas) determined to make this experience convincing. This is not the best movie of any year, but it's my own private delight of the nineties.

*Oliver Twist* is classic British cinema — but since it's David Lean during his best period, it's a lot better than mere 'British cinema'. This is blood-boiling stuff, with astonishing black-and-white photography and passionate performances. It doesn't seem to cut any corners from the original story, but to me it improves on Dickens's novel.

*Shadows and Fog* was breathtakingly beautiful to watch, with its modern black-and-white photography and Wellesian sense of menace. If it's not quite convincing, it's only because Woody Allen is so obviously paying tribute to the German Expressionists, Welles and film noir. If it had appeared in 1950, it would have been a genuine classic. But the script is interesting, and the performances fine. Not bad for a fake classic.

*A Midsummer Night's Sex Comedy* is a tribute to Ingmar Bergman, but Woody Allen gets Bergman right. (So does Bergman occasionally, as in *The Magic Flute*.) The comedy is not as important as the sense of magic that occurs as Allen takes colour cameras out into the glories of upstate New York in the middle of summer. In this and *Shadows and Fog* you can turn off the sound and still enjoy the film. Like *Shadows and Fog*, this turns into a fantasy film.

Ronald Neame is an underrated British director. Given the chance, he could make good British equivalents of the American wacky comedy (*Million Pound Note*, starring Gregory Peck with a British cast), but he could also make a film like *The Card*, whimsical British screen comedy at its best. Alec Guinness, in his most endearing role, is a likable rogue who gets to the top by being interesting while everybody around him is boring. This must have been refreshing message in 1952's grey Britain.

If Britain was grey in 1952, it became grim by 1959, to judge from J. Lee Thompson's *Tiger Bay*. In Australia, this was noticed mainly because of a burning performance from pre-adolescent Hayley Mills. Film historians should go back to it, noting that it predates the English film renaissance by three years, and stands up better than most Hollywood films of the late 1950s.

For those who puzzled their way through *The Man Who Fell to Earth* or winced their way through *Don't Look Now*, *The Witches* shows what Nicholas Roeg can do when he isn't being pretentious. No punches are pulled in telling this Roald Dahl story of witches who like to kidnap children. Anjelica Huston is the most vivid witch in movies since Margaret Hamilton, and the scene where the members of the witches' convention rip off their disguises is worth waiting for.

I know people who violently dislike Ken Russell's

films, and especially *The Music Lovers*. But then, such people are so literal-minded that they think that *The Music Lovers* is meant to be a biopic about Tchaikovsky. Characters with names like 'Tchaikovsky' and 'Madame von Meck' appear in this film, and lots of Tchaikovsky music is played in the background, but actually *The Music Lovers* is the product of a particularly lurid Ken Russell dream. If I had dreams like this, I'd be making movies too.

They are the films on the ranked list. Slipping off the list are a large number of documentaries that I saw during 1994, mainly on SBS. Most of them are not 'great films', but a few of them are memorable:

- *Sunny Stories*, Ken Howard's ingenious biography of Enid Blyton.
- *Common Threads: Stories from the Quilt*, an unexpectedly moving documentary (because I thought I had heard all the stories) about a wide variety of AIDS sufferers whose names are now on panels in the Quilt. (Directors: Robert Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman).
- *John Lee Hooker*, Tony Knox's affectionate biography of the Grand Old Man of Blues, shows that he's also become the Grumpy Old Man of Blues.
- *The Wonderful Horrible Life of Leni Riefenstahl*, in which Leni refuses to apologise for anything, tells how she made *Those Films* (which I still haven't seen), and now goes scuba diving in her eighties. She also has a few verbal stoushes with her interviewer and is very funny.
- *Loudon Wainwright: One Man Guy*, made by a Dutch team led by Blam Splunteren, is my favourite of the doccos I saw in 1994, because Loudon is one of my favourite people in the world. Not that I would actually want to be a friend of his; I might end up in one of his songs. Loudon sparring verbally with his daughter and son (and losing) is a high point of this film. Who'd want to be Loudon's son and have 'Rufus is a Tit Man' sung about you for the rest of your life?
- *Joe Cocker: Have a Little Faith* (Julian Cardan and Margaret Flower) has Joe's old dad sitting in his tiny Sheffield parlour telling tales about Joe's naughty childhood. Joe exposes all his warts, and in turn he's shown as this funny snuffly bird, looking nearly as old as his dad, but who can still raise the roof at the Palais. Joe's one of the last of the great rockers; it's nice to see a film that does well by him instead of indulging in publicity crap.

The worst documentary I've seen (in 1994 or ever) was nothing but a series of video clips about, of all people, *The Kronos Quartet*. These people ain't gonna tell you nothin' about nothin'. They pose well in cool clothing.

#### 1994 FAVOURITE POPULAR CDs

- 1 *The Silent Majority: Terry Allen's Greatest Missed Hits*  
Terry Allen (Fate)

- 2 *Smokin' the Dummy*  
Terry Allen & Panhandle Mystery Band (Fate)
- 3 *Career Moves*  
Loudon Wainwright III (Charisma)
- 4 *Spinning Around the Sun*  
Jimmie Dale Gilmore (Elektra)
- 5 *Outward Bound*  
Sonny Landreth (BMG/Zoo)
- 6 *A Bigger Piece of Sky*  
Robert Earl Keen Jr (Sugar Hill)
- 7 *John Prine*  
John Prine (Atlantic)
- 8 *Bloodlines*  
Terry Allen (Fate)
- 9 *Jericho*  
The Band (Pyramid)
- 10 *Live MCMXCIII*  
Velvet Underground (Sire) (2 CDs)
- 11 *Sweet Relief: A Benefit for Victoria Williams*  
Various artists (Chaos)
- 12 *Achtung Baby*  
U2 (Island)
- 13 *Watching the Dark*  
Richard Thompson (Hannibal) (3 CDs)
- 14 *Across the Borderline*  
Willie Nelson (Columbia)
- 15 *Unplugged*  
Rod Stewart (Warner Bros)
- 16 *Out of Time*  
REM (Warner Bros)
- 17 *Low*  
David Bowie (EMI)
- 18 *The Happy Club*  
Bob Geldof (Vertigo)
- 19 *Pedal Steal/Rollback*  
Terry Allen (Fate)
- 20 *Old Testaments and New Revelations*  
Kinky Friedman (Fruit of the Loom)

Since I buy several hundred CDs per year, and most of them cost about \$30 each, I choose carefully what I buy. If I choose my CDs carefully, it stands to reason that my final list of 'CDs that should be in my Top 10' will run to 100 items. And that's what happened.

Which means that, despite the rank order, the items in this Top 20 are about equal.

Musically my heart is not here, but occupies an arc that stretches from Austin, Texas through New Orleans to somewhere north of Memphis, Tennessee. How that arc also includes New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and London I don't know, but I have a flexible notion of geography.

Terry Allen and Loudon Wainwright could contest the King of Sardonic Humour award if ever they met, or even knew of each other. Terry Allen might just have the edge. I bought *Lubbock (on Everything)* a few years ago. That's still Terry Allen's best CD, and has just been re-released. The people at Reading's, Carlton, were able to get me the rest of Allen's CDs. They're all about equally good, but *The Silent Majority* and *Smokin' the Dummy* are just that bit funnier than the rest. When you hear Terry Allen for the first time, you think you're listening to just another Texas down-home singer —

until you listen to the lyrics. Terry Allen fires his shots widely, and hits lots of targets. Song titles include 'Advice to Children', 'Big Ol White Boys' and a zany version of 'Home on the Range'.

Loudon Wainwright III is another master of entertaining bad taste. *Career Moves* is the live album that every good singer deserves, but rarely gets: a concert CD that runs as a continuous experience, with all the emotional highs and lows of performance left intact. The program includes mainly songs from the last ten years, but also has 'The Swimming Song' and 'The Man Who Couldn't Cry' from the early albums, and the delirious 'Acid Song', that I've heard several times in concert, but which has been (I guess) judged to be unrecordable until now.

Jimmie Dale Gilmore is a great Texan singer, with a high, moaning voice, full of sorrow and angst and loneliness and all those other good things you get in vintage Texas music. *Spinning Around the Sun* is his best album yet, except for *The Flatlanders*, which he recorded with Joe Ely and Butch Hancock in the early seventies. (*The Flatlanders* keeps appearing under different names.)

Sonny Landreth is a brilliant New Orleans-style slide guitarist. He also sings well, and composes some great songs, but mainly I listen to his CDs for that guitar wail. *Outward Bound* is his best so far. Very bayou. Very rock and roll.

Robert Earl Keen Jr is not as powerful a singer or as fine an instrumentalist as Landreth, but he knows how to write a classic song. 'Corpus Christi Bay' is the best 'two drifters' song I've heard for awhile, and 'Jesse with the Long Hair', a clever Dylan-like story ballad, has already been covered by other performers. (So who *did* shoot the banker?)

John Prine was the first and one of the best of the 'new Bob Dylans' that Loudon Wainwright mentions on his album *History*. Prine even sang like Dylan for most of his career. But there is a gentle, wistful streak in Prine that has never allowed him to break into the ranks of the legendary singer-songwriters. His best album remains the first, *John Prine*, which includes 'Paradise', a song I find hard to get out my head.

The Band has lost three members since it split up in 1977, one to defection and two to death. Yet when the remaining members got the show back on the road, adding Jim Weider, Randy Ciarlante and Richard Bell, the old magic returned. *Jericho* is one of those CDs that starts off sounding tired, but quickly gathers pace, ending with six of the best songs these people have ever recorded ('Move to Japan', a satirical rocker, 'Amazon (River of Dreams)', a long instrumental that could have kept going forever, 'Stuff You Gotta Watch', one of the best Muddy Waters songs, Willie Dixon's 'Same Thing', and 'Shine a Light' and 'Blues Stay Away from Me').

Another band that nobody thought would ever reform was Velvet Underground. The impossible happened in 1993, and the tape recorders were rolling. As soon as they had done a few comeback concerts, three of them fell out with Lou Reed (surprise) and VW split up again. And then Sterling Morrison died recently. Thank the musical gods for hi fi concert recordings like *Live MCMXCIII*. Watch what you're buying. This appeared in both a single-CD and double-CD format. Make sure you buy the double CD.



Many of the CDs I've bought recently have been tribute albums in which a bunch of ordinary-to-good performers get together to touch the forelock to some rock singer they can't possibly emulate. So what was *Sweet Relief*? A tribute album to a singer who had never recorded? Who was Victoria Williams? It turns out that she has been a well-known songwriter for some time. When she was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis a few years ago, her friends helped her out by recording *Sweet Relief*. Brilliant songs. Victoria Williams rallied, and has since made four CDs of her own. She has a high voice that sounds like a magpie on acid, and only recently has she made herself an adequate singer of her own songs (on the recent *Loose*). To see how good her songs are, sample some of the tracks from *Sweet Relief*, especially Pearl Jam doing 'Crazy Mary', Soul Asylum on 'Summer of Drugs' and Lou Reed on 'Tarbelly and Featherfoot'. Sylvia Reed and Kelley Walker produced the CD.

Gillespie giving four stars to a *pop* album? By *U2*? Especially an album that sold umpty-umpteenth million copies? Just did it to surprise you. *Achtung Baby* is a great rock album, even if U2 use (pity help us) synthesizers. This has some of the best riffs of recent years. It's good and loud, it's not slick, and you don't get tired of it.

If I were Marc Ortlieb or quite a few other *SFC/TMR* readers I would put *Watching the Dark*, the Richard Thompson three-CD retrospective, top of the heap. But if I were Marc Ortlieb, etc., I would have most of these tracks already on CD. (I have most of them on LP.) There are a few new tracks, especially some fine concert performances, but the chief use of *Watching the Dark* is to remind you how good the man is, or could be.

Since Frank Sinatra grew too old to be let out at night, Willie Nelson has become the best song stylist in the world. No voice, but what style! In *Across the Border-*

*line*, lavish production covers up most of Nelson's style, but on the other hand he chooses some good songs: John Hiatt's 'The Most Unoriginal Sin', Peter Gabriel's 'Don't Give Up' (duet with Sinead O'Connor!), 'Heartland' (a new song by Bob Dylan), the great Ry Cooder-John Hiatt-Jim Dickinson ballad 'Across the Borderline', and best of all, two of Willie Nelson's own songs ('She's Not for You' and 'Still is Still Moving to Me'). Rich stuff, which didn't quite push Willie back into the Top Ten. Sacked from Sony/Columbia, he's now recording for his own small label, and sounding better than ever.

I know everybody has done an *Unplugged* album — and where's Neil Young's on the list? (No. 21, since you ask.) Rod Stewart's is the *Unplugged* I love because it has a magic moment when Rod announces the arrival of Ronnie Wood, and they launch into 'Cut Across Shorty', and the Faces are back together again. I sobbed like a drain. Put the Faces back together again, Rod. Make it all happen. Let Greatness Return to the Earth. (The drummer is fabulous on this album, but uncredited. Did Ronnie play drums as well as guitar?)

REM's *Out of Time* is a big-selling pop album that, like U2's recent efforts, I find irresistible. Bring back the mandolins, Michael; an *Out of Time* beats a *Monster* every time.

Has it taken me nearly two decades to discover David Bowie's *Low*? Yep. And I discovered it only because of Philip Glass's use of the same material in one of his recent classical CDs. Blame the reviewers in the seventies; they all agreed that the albums in the *Low* trilogy were unapproachable, wildly experimental, unlistenable . . . you know what reviewers are like. If Bowie were still recording music as fresh, inventive and listenable as this, he wouldn't be searching for a hit record.

When you hear Bob Geldof's *The Happy Club* (and *The Vegetarians of Love* from the year before) you can't believe that he's considered to be down on his luck. There aren't many British singer-songwriters who can write songs as tuneful as these, and the lyrics are funny and perceptive. If this CD had been given some airplay, justice might have been done, and Sir Bob would have been on top again.

Kinky Friedman sounds a lot like Terry Allen, but he's more wayward in choosing material for his recent CDs. When he gives himself a great hook, such as 'Asshole from El Paso' or 'They Don't Make Jews Like Jesus Anymore', he produces the best sardonic songs around. But he's careless. *Old Testaments and New Revelations* is not a new album, and it's not a 'best of'. Mainly it features rambling alternate versions of familiar songs. Not all of them are good songs, although some of them are his best. I just wish he could find a way to re-release his best albums from the 1970s. Or perhaps he should stick to writing crime novels. The Kinkster's the first to admit that his books sell better than his music.

### 1993 FAVOURITE CLASSICAL CDs

- 1 **Beethoven: *Complete Sonatas***  
Daniel Barenboim (EMI) (10 CDs)
  - 2 **Schubert: *String Quartet No. 14 in D minor (Death and the Maiden)*/Beethoven: *String Quartet No. 16 in F major***  
Hagen Quartet (DG)
  - 3 **Mahler: *Symphony No. 9***  
Leonard Bernstein cond. Concertgebouw Orch. of Amsterdam (DG) (2 CDs)
  - 4 **Mahler: *Symphony No. 9/'Adagio' from Symphony No. 10***  
Maurice Abravanel cond. Utah Symphony Orchestra (Vanguard) (2 CDs)
  - 5 **J. S. Bach: *Sonatas and Partitas***  
Itzhak Perlman (EMI) (2 CDs)
  - 6 ***Kathleen Ferrier Edition***  
(Decca Ovation) (10 CDs)
  - 7 **Mahler: *Symphony No. 4/Adagietto from Symphony No. 5/Sibelius: *Symphony No. 2/Glinka: 'Jota aragonesa'/Rimsky-Korsakov: *Tsar Saltan suite/Tchaikovsky: 'Andante cantabile'/Schubert: *Rosamunde overture******  
Paul Kletzki cond. Philharmonia Orch. and Royal Philharmonic Orch. (EMI) (2 CDs)
  - 8 **Beethoven: *Symphonies Nos. 4 and 5***  
Hans Schmidt-Isserstedt (Decca)
  - 9 **Schubert: *The Symphonies***  
Nikolaus Harnoncourt & Royal Concertgebouw Orch. (Teldec) (4 CDs)
  - 10 **Beethoven: *Missa Solemnis/Fantasy for Piano, Chorus and Orchestra/Haydn: 'Theresia' Mass***  
Leonard Bernstein cond. New York Philharmonic Orch. (Sony) (2 CDs)
  - 11 ***Favourite Cello Concertos (Haydn Nos. 1 and 2/Boccherini/Schumann/Saint-Saëns/Moñn/Dvorak/Elgar)***
- Jacqueline du Pré (EMI) (3 CDs)
  - 12 **Beethoven: *Piano Trio in D ('Ghost')/Piano Trio in B flat ('Archduke')***  
Beaux Arts Trio (Philips)
  - 13 **Elisabeth Schwarzkopf: *Schwarzkopf Edition***  
(EMI) (5 CDs)
  - 14 **Nathan Milstein: *The Art of Nathan Milstein: Capitol Recordings 1955-1966***  
(EMI) (6 CDs)
  - 15 **Ives: *String Quartet No. 1 (From the Salvation Army)/String Quartet No. 2/'Holding Your Own'/Barber: *String Quartet****  
Emerson Quartet (DG)

Here is a line-up of No. 1 Favourites — Beethoven, Bernstein, Barenboim, etc. — pushing each other off the bench. The only way I can talk about them is to explain why each one did not make it to No. 1 — apart from the CD that actually did get there:

The treasured No. 1, giant Gillespie rosette goes to Barenboim's first version of the complete Beethoven piano sonatas because collectively this is the best piano playing I've ever heard or am ever likely to hear, and many of the versions (say, of the No. 31 and No. 32) are so ethereal and astonishing that they could never be improved upon. You'll need to order this set; I've only seen it in a shop once, which is when I bought it. (Barenboim's second version of Beethoven sonatas on DG might be as good, but I haven't heard any of them.)

The Hagen Quartet's version of Schubert's *Death and the Maiden* quartet and Beethoven's last quartet didn't get to No. 1 only because it was one CD against Barenboim's ten. If it is possible to play the Schubert better than this, I can't imagine how good that would be. And the Hagen's playing of the Beethoven is the only satisfactory playing I've ever heard of one of his quartets (except for some beaten-up old LPs we have, played by the unknown Yale Quartet). Why won't Musica Viva bring the Hagen Quartet to Australia?

I can't offer any excuse for robbing Bernstein's last recording of the Mahler's Ninth of No. 1 except for the fact that the other two snuck in ahead of it. I already know how wonderful the symphony is; it's that extra Bernstein attention to previously unnoticed details that lifts this above the others. Also, DG's recording technology is supernaturally precise.

Abravanel's version of Mahler's Ninth would have been the Record of the Year in most other years — but Bernstein's is just that little bit more extraordinary. There is no definitive version of a Mahler symphony. Listen to Bernstein's and Abravanel's recordings one after the other, and you feel that you have had two quite different, equally moving experiences.

1993 was the year when Vanguard re-released all the great Abravanel/Utah Symphony Orchestra Mahler recordings from the 1960s. They give no evidence that they were recorded nearly thirty years ago, and several of the interpretations — the Third, the Sixth, the Seventh and the Ninth, recorded in the Mormon Tabernacle — are among the greatest ever recorded. They've been released recently in a cheap edition.

Perlman's version of the Bach Partitas and Sonatas for Solo Violin is the finest I've heard (apart from

Casals', of course). Their magnificence is not merely a matter of Perlman's dexterity, although that's awe-inspiring. It's more that Perlman treats these ultimate violin pieces as human documents, instead of difficult showpieces. There's something sweet and alive in the middle of Perlman's playing that other violinists delete when they approach Bach.

The only reason why the 10-CD *Kathleen Ferrier Edition* is not No. 1 is that many of the transfers from the 1940s recordings are very shrill. I get squawks from my speakers from some of them, and that should not happen. Some engineer wasted an opportunity to do this set as well as possible. Ferrier is the greatest singer ever recorded. A set like this should have included her radio performance of *Orfeo ed Euridice* instead of the much inferior abridged studio version. Also, it should have included her other definitive recording, the Bruno Walter version of Mahler's *Song of the Earth*, made not long before Ferrier died in 1953. But if you don't have any Ferrier in the collection, start with this ten-CD set.

I'm cheating on my own system by including the Kletzki double-CD set. If I'd included other CD releases of music I already had (such as the Muti four-CD set of Cherubini Masses or Abravanel's version of Mahler's Third) the list would have been quite different. The Mahler Fourth on the Kletzki Profile is the version I've been looking for ever since CDs became available. It was worth the wait. Despite the hissy transfer by EMI, the delicate, swooning playing of Kletzki and the RPO makes all the other versions (even Solti's; even Tennstedt's) seem a bit plodding. (Hiss to EMI; why can't they take the trouble to do digital remastering properly every time, instead of only half the time?)

But the reason I feel justified in including this CD in the Favourites list is all the other stuff on it. Even the lollipops (the Glinka, Rimsky-Korsakov and Tchaikovsky) are treated with passion and respect. The Kletzki version of the Sibelius Second is one of the great recordings, and makes a fitting companion to a recent coupling of his versions of the First and Third. Few people seem to remember Kletzki these days. The record's liner notes explain that he never had an orchestra of his own, and he made his best recordings just before the great days of the 1960s. But his recordings should be sought out, and treasured.

When I first met Lee Harding at the beginning of 1968 he told me that Hans Schmidt-Isserstedt was the greatest interpreter of the Beethoven symphonies, 'especially in the slow movement of the Fourth, which everybody else gets wrong'. Lee knew his music then, and presumably still does. In 1993 the Decca vaults finally disgorged the Schmidt-Isserstedt version of the Fourth and lo! it is as Lee Harding foretold: the slow movement of the Fourth is one of the great listening experiences. (To give him his due, Harnoncourt's playing of the same movement on his recent set of Beethoven symphonies is nearly as good.) Schmidt-Isserstedt's version of the Fifth, by comparison, is unexceptional. Also buy Schmidt-Isserstedt's version of the Ninth, which is now available on Award at \$10.

The only reason the Harnoncourt set of the Schubert symphonies is not No. 1 is that the Schubert symphonies are just a bit boring. In Harnoncourt's hands they

become exciting, and one wonders why so many earlier conductors have made them so particularly boring. The symphonies were not Schubert's strength, but — and here's the point of a truly great recording — Harnoncourt treats them as if they were.

The only reason Bernstein's version of Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* is not No. 1 is that I have a favourite version already: the 1962 Klemperer version. (That is my Favourite Classical Record of Any Year.) Bernstein is the only conductor who comes near to the zest, power and sheer enjoyability of Klemperer. Most other conductors treat the *Missa Solemnis* with Great Reverence, which is a Terrible Mistake.

Bernstein had an affinity for the Haydn masses. His performance of Haydn's 'Theresa' Mass can hardly be described as 'filler': worth buying even if you don't like the *Missa Solemnis*.

The only reason Jacqueline du Pré's versions of the great cello concertos is not No. 1 is because I have quite a few of them on other recordings. For instance, one of EMI's best ten CDs is the coupling of the du Pré/Barbirolli version of the Elgar Cello Concerto with Janet Baker singing *Sea Pictures*. Jacqueline du Pré is the best cellist ever recorded; certainly the only one you can pick if you hear only a few notes of her music on radio. If you don't have any or many of these performances, rush out to buy this set.

I hadn't bought the Beaux Arts Trio versions of the Beethoven Piano Trios because somebody told me they were not as good as hearing the Beaux Arts Trio play them in concert! Strange that I did not make the right reply: But how much better than anybody else's does that still make their CDs? The Beaux Arts Trio stamp is one of the few absolute guarantees in music. I should have bought their version of the 'Ghost' and 'Archduke' Trios years ago. What a feast.

After Kathleen Ferrier, Elisabeth Schwarzkopf is my second favourite singer of the century. I had great hopes when I bought the *Schwarzkopf Edition* that I would find all kinds of lost treasures. I had reckoned without EMI's flatfooted marketing department. Most of the CDs are filled with music I have already somewhere in the collection. The only genuine discoveries are some delicious 'Encores' (such as her incomparable version of Martini's 'Plaisir d'amour') and a third version (to add to her famous Ackermann and Szell recordings) of Strauss's *Four Last Songs*. Karajan accompanies her on this newly discovered recording. Unless you are a Wolff fan, which I'm not, the rest of the set shows signs of reaching into the bin. One day EMI will do justice to Schwarzkopf, but it hasn't happened yet.

The only reason why *The Art of Nathan Milstein* is not No. 1 is that, again, EMI has done the dirty on one of its great stars. Let's all have a nice big hiss at EMI. They seem to have chosen randomly from Milstein's great performances over a long period of time, then not bothered to do a good job of remastering the older recordings. Some of the versions sound quite bizarre, although the listener can discern distantly that they are fine performances. There is a great legacy of Milstein recordings from his last years, and someday they might be collected onto a worthy CD set.

The only reason why any version of Ives' quartets

misses out on No. 1 is that the version is not as good as the music demands. It pains me to say that the Emerson Quartet is not up to scratch on this recording — but I've heard how these quartets should sound — on a scratchy, long-out-of-print LP on Turnabout by the Kohon Quartet. Played by them, the Ives Quartets are as good as the Bartok Quartets. When you're listening to the Emersons, you can hear how good the music is, but never quite catch the moment of revelation.

---

## A list or two

---

**ROBERT JAMES MAPSON**  
**PO Box 7087**  
**Cloisters Square**  
**Western Australia 6850**

Some random thoughts on *TMR* 19/20/21, and a list or two:

### Jerzy Kosinski

I don't recall offhand whether I've mentioned any of Mr Kosinski's novels in my previous lists, but he's always been one of my favourite authors. As you point out, he has a very sparse, honed style. According to the bio in the back of his books he rewrote his novels up to a dozen times, and then pruned them back by up to a third. His most famous work (though for an author who has won a number of major awards he remains very unknown) would be *Being There*, which he adapted for the screen and which starred Peter Sellers. Kosinski died a year or two ago. In a stunning denial of his importance, and yet another demonstration of the parochialism of Perth journalism, it was reported in a half-inch paragraph that he'd killed himself in his apartment. Just that and nothing more. All the rest is silence.

His novels are really only one work, an exploration of a certain milieu, the odyssey of a stranger in a strange land. His world is amoral, sexually promiscuous (this is pre-AIDS; nevertheless Kosinski was curiously coy about actual descriptions of sexual acts), and ultimately a mirror for our own actions and morals, or lack of them.

\* In *The Painted Bird* he was also, surely, a prophet of the Other, the alien world that very few of his readers could have experienced. \*

### *Blade Runner*

This has been one of my favourite films since I first saw it at the cinema. As opposed to *Total Recall*, *Blade Runner* captures the essence of Phillip K. Dick. *Blade Runner* depicts a world that is strangely alluring, but in which decay and kipple exist also, a world in which being human cannot be easily defined and in which the human can be replicated to a frightening degree. *Total Recall* follows the Dick story line more faithfully (before going off the tracks totally) and has the more expen-

sive/effective special effects, but it is ultimately the same old storyline of hero versus the known-and-unknown-agents-of-a-grand-conspiracy-against-him that is familiar from countless Hollywood films. *Blade Runner* had memorable film noir scenes, such as Harrison Ford leaning against a wall in the rain reading a paper while that huge omnipresent blimp — like a benign but possibly threatening God — drifted overhead imploring and suggesting. *Total Recall* had . . . well, I had to think for a while there, because, apart from the special effects (okay, Arnold Schwarzenegger taking off the woman's head and throwing it to the ground where it continued to speak was amazing) there are no lovingly crafted explorations of the cinematic medium. Certainly *Blade Runner* had a lot of special effects, but all the scenes that spring forth from the fountain of memory are of *people*, such as Rutger Hauer releasing the dove; Harrison Ford, the Venetian blinds shadowing his face; and so on.

*Blade Runner: The Director's Cut* is my preferred version of the film now. It's much more mysterious, much more lyrical (thank God the spurious happy ending has been taken off — even at the time the bits of sticky tape used to tack it on were obvious). I like films that you can watch again and again, and this is one; films that ask you to think and to use some brain power to interpret and consolidate what they are saying. The suggestion now put across, of course, is that Deckard himself is a replicant (the image in his dream of the unicorn recurs in the origami figure Gaff leaves behind at the end) either literally or, perhaps more frighteningly, in a metaphorical sense. This is one of the few films I've purchased on video (I only buy about one video a year) in its wide-screen format so that the images and the compositions can be appreciated as they were intended. (I remember reading many years ago that the BBC, when showing *2001: A Space Odyssey* in the widescreen format, apparently concerned about all this unused telly space at the top and bottom of the picture, put little stars moving across the screen for the whole film.)

### Mahler and Sibelius

The way you talk of Mahler being one of the essential composers in your collection is the way I feel about Sibelius. I guess it all depends on your personality type, the way you view the world and how that interlinks with the way certain composers interpreted that world in their music. I enjoy all of the Mahler symphonies (the Tonnstedt cycle on EMI) but could live without him. Not so of Sibelius, however. Here is a composer who combines the intellectual rigour of J. S. Bach with the romantic fervour of Tchaikowsky. These two aspects build on each other. Sibelius is one of the few composers whose music I have more than a single interpretation of, just as you collect versions of Mahler symphonies.

I have four recordings of Sibelius's Symphony No. 4 in A minor. Elsewhere in *TMR* 19/20/21 you mention at a dinner sitting around the table listing great twentieth century works of music. In my opinion this symphony is the greatest. I still don't pretend to understand the work but on a visceral level it speaks to me. One critic, whose name unfortunately escapes me, said that Mahler encapsulates the personal crisis of the twentieth century; Sibelius, in this symphony, portrays existence

itself stripped bare. Alan Hovhaness, in a recent issue of *The Gramophone*, said 'I thought that piece, its great unison melodies, so lonely and original, said everything there was to say. And not only about music.' Remember that a composer Sibelius admired was Palestrina.

I've had a hard time choosing between three of the versions of the symphony (which is why I have all of them): Herbert Blomstedt conducting the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra on Decca (has there ever been a bad recording from this combination? Yes, but not very many); Neeme Järvi conducting the Göteborg Symphony Orchestra on BIS, in their survey of the Complete Sibelius Works (what a wonderful debt we Sibelians owe to Robert von Bahr and his company); and Herbert von Karajan and the Berlin Philharmonic on DG.

One performance I consider indispensable, though: Sir Thomas Beecham and the London Philharmonic Orchestra on EMI. Beecham was an early champion of the music of Sibelius, so much so that he was awarded the Order of the White Rose of Finland, and knew the composer, and so there is a direct link between the composer, who rarely conducted his own works, and this recording. Dating from 1937, whilst it lacks the dynamic range of Blomstedt or even von Karajan, it carries with it a spareness and conviction not found to the same degree in the other performances. If I had to choose a single desert island disc (and what torture that would be!) this would be it — along with a CD player and a power source.

\* Because of your recommendation, I tried playing all the versions of Sibelius's Fourth that are in the house, and found myself baffled. There might be some version that allows me to see inside it, but not even Lorin Maazel with the Vienna Philharmonic casts much light. I've just bought Kletzki's versions of the first three symphonies, and they seem better than any other versions I've heard. \*

## Lists

### Ten Favourite CDs of 1993:

- 1 Smetana: *Ma Vlast*  
Rafael Kubelik cond. Boston Symphony Orchestra (DG Galleria)
- 2 Dowland: *A Pilgrimes Solace/Mr Henry Noell/Lamentations/Psalms and Sacred Songs*  
Anthony Rooley cond. The Consort of Musicke (l'Oiseau-Lyre)
- 3 Nielsen: *Three Concertos*  
Myung-Whun Chung cond. Göteborg Symphony Orchestra (BIS)
- 4 Sibelius: Symphonies Nos. 4 and 6  
Sir Thomas Beecham cond. London Symphonic Orchestra/Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (EMI)
- 5 Sibelius: *The Tempest*, etc.  
Osmo Vänskä cond. Lahti Symphony Orchestra (BIS)
- 6 *Sex and Drugs and Rock 'n' Roll*  
Ian Dury and the Blockheads (Demon)
- 7 *Stories*  
Garrison Keillor (Highbridge)
- 8 *River of Dreams*

Billy Joel (Columbia)

9 *The Ultimate Experience*

Jimi Hendrix (Polydor)

10 *Goon Show Classics, Vols. 1-5* (BBC)

I've found my CD purchasing slowing down of late. Instead of buying one or two CDs a week I now buy that many a month, which might be a lot by some standards, but is a definite decline for me. I attribute this in part to having basically replaced my LP collection so that I have all the important/interesting works I want, but also to the lack of any really interesting material being released lately. I still buy CDs, of course, but that alluring, special CD that whispers 'Buy me' is becoming rarer and rarer.

Of the CDs listed above, all are single CDs except for No. 2 (two CDs), 7 (three CDs) and 10 (I cheated a bit with this one — it's actually five double-CD sets). This compares to your collecting habits, where it seems the multi-CD reissue reigns supreme. (Not that I'm not into completeness; it's just that I think even I'd be daunted at purchasing the whole thirty-five CDs of anything.) One of the CDs, No. 8, is a CD single.

\* I did get the 35-CD Haydn Symphonies set for half price. And I haven't indulged in too much such madness recently, for lack of cash and for the reason you mention: the lack of the set screaming 'Buy me' from the counter. I would have bought the complete Haydn Piano Sonatas played by Alfred Brendel if they existed; I had to be content with a recent four-CD set of him playing some of the sonatas. \*

The Smetana work is a marvellous nationalist piece in a performance that still sounds stunning (it's from 1971). Smetana suffered from deafness later in life — is this an occupational hazard for composers?

\* Surely syphilis, one of whose long-term effects is deafness, was the occupational hazard of many nineteenth-century composers. \*

John Dowland has appeared in my lists before. The recording above is a further reissue from the pioneering complete survey of his works by the Consort of Musicke. These recordings would probably not be the recommended versions these days, but they are nonetheless enjoyable. This is melancholy music for intimate occasions or settings.

The Nielsen concertos span his life, giving a quick overview of the ground he covered in his symphonies, from the early lush romanticism to the later, almost satirical humour. Why is there so little humour in 'serious' music? I always maintain that Webern — another of my favourite composers — always had a sense of humour and fun in his short, quirky pieces, and Mozart used humour, but not a lot of other composers spring to mind.

The first Sibelius disc I've already mentioned. The second, with the usual BIS high-quality recording and wonderful performance from artists most of us have never heard of, is the premiere recording of the complete music for *The Tempest*. There's some repetition here, and some of the pieces are short squibs, but there

is also a lot of wonderful neglected music, such as the complete overture, which was cut for the better-known suites.

1993 was the year I discovered Ian Dury. I had 'Hit Me With Your Rhythm Stick' on a 45, but had never really listened to him before. Unlike American artists, Ian Dury firmly belongs to the Music Hall Tradition that seems to have influenced British performers (such as the Kinks and Herman's Hermits). Although punk made Ian Dury possible, it's his sardonic and witty humour that makes him so enjoyable.

Garrison Keillor seems particularly relaxed in these readings of various stories so that he retains the same intimate interest of the listener that he controls so well in his radio monologues. (I didn't enjoy his reading of *Lake Wabegon Days* — he just seemed uninspired and uninterested.)

I've never been a Billy Joel fan (and probably won't ever be), but I loved the good feel to 'River of Dreams' enough to buy the single. This is also a song that actually has some content ('I must be looking for something,/Something sacred I lost,/But the river is wide/And it's too hard to cross.'). The other song ('No Man's Land') is good pop, but not as strong.

As opposed to collecting the Complete Mega-CD Edition of Jimi Hendrix, if there is one (I'm sure there is), this single CD is a good collection of his major pieces, both studio and live.

More humour from the Goons. I hadn't consciously chosen my CDs on the basis of such a criterion, but it seems 1993 was the year of Humour on CD. These pieces are up to forty years old, but still remain very funny. Surreal theatre for the mind. It's good to get them on CD at last so I can throw away those tacky tapes that always seem to get chewed up.

#### Ten Favourite Books of 1993:

- 1 Carson McCullers: *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*
- 2 Voltaire: *Candide*
- 3 Donne: *The Complete English Poems*
- 4 Calvino: *Under the Jaguar Sun*
- 5 Ted Hughes: *Moon Whales*
- 6 R. D. Laing: *Self and Others*
- 7 Donne: *Selected Prose*
- 8 Franz Marc: *Postcards to Prince Jussuf*
- 9 Calvino: *The Road to San Giovanni*
- 10 H. G. Wells: *The History of Mr Polly*

I'd encountered Carson McCullers before, but had never really gotten into her work. 1993 was the year something clicked and I read a number of her books. The one I've listed is a representative one. McCullers is from the same school as Tennessee Williams, writing about the South of USA — that strange, alien world that seems dislocated from the rest of the country. She was a victim of strokes (her left side was paralysed when she was thirty-one) and unhappily married (her ex-husband later committed suicide). It's hardly surprising that her characters are deeply unhappy, lost and confused, but always written about in an extremely perceptive manner.

*Candide* has always been one of my very favourite books — a humorous philosophical fable. This is the

French text. Not that my French is very good, but at least I understood enough to get the flow of the author's style, and I was already very familiar with the English text.

I've always enjoyed the Elizabethan poets more than any others and, Shakespeare/Bacon aside, John Donne was probably the greatest. He is very different from Shakespeare, however, almost a modern in outlook, and a very clever thinker. This quality is perhaps even more evident in his prose, written for various formal and informal occasions.

Italo Calvino has been dead for a number of years now, but fragments of his work continue to be published. Calvino was a modern fabulist and a wry humorist. (Perhaps 1993 was the year of the humorous fabulist author?) *Under the Jaguar Sun* presents three allegories exploring the senses of taste, hearing and smell. If he had lived, he intended that all the senses would be covered. *The Road to San Giovanni* is a selection of semi-autobiographical sketches from various periods of his life, and is in his realist style, though Calvino was basically a lucid writer of ideas, and used whichever style was appropriate at the time to convey these ideas. 'La Poubelle Agrée' from *The Road to San Giovanni* is a wonderfully witty observation of the social niceties of garbage in Paris.

Ted Hughes is one of the few living poets I enjoy, particularly for his earthy realism, even when writing ostensibly 'fantastic' pieces such as those contained in *Moon Whales*, dealing with the imaginary creatures of the moon. Most of these pieces are light, but then the author throws in things like 'Roots and foundations, nails and screws,/Nothing holds fast,/Nothing can resist the moon's/Dead-still blast.'

R. D. Laing was what should probably be termed an eccentric: a drunkard, a balladeer (why don't they release his sonnets on CD?) and an original thinker. *Self and Others* presents his thoughts on the relationships mentioned in the title. Laing writes well, and whether you agree with him or not, his writings demand consideration.

Franz Marc is a favourite artist of mine, and *Postcards to Prince Jussuf* reproduces the series of twenty-nine postcards he wrote to 'Prince Jussuf', actually the expressionist poet Else Lasker-Schüler. Marc's visions portray a unique world of nature, but a nature troubled by strange elemental forces. (Marc himself was killed in 1916 while fighting in the War.) The correspondence on these postcards is a strange semi-affair-by-mail (Marc was already married, Else divorced): 'Dearest Jussuf, rise up from your grave to our Dream Rock. There it is possible to say nothing and love one another. There people do not have foolish ideas. . . . Berlin is a sick background for a dream. Rise up to our level. We leave early Tuesday. Tied to the house Monday. Keep on loving us. Yours.'

Everyman has been republishing a lot of H. G. Wells lately, most of which I already have, but it has allowed me to catch up on the humorous novels of manners, not very loosely based on Wells' own experiences. *The History of Mr Polly* is one of the better ones. In his realist novels Wells was attempting the same thing as in his sf — to point out the absurdities of society and its ills. In his sf

he simply went a step further and usually wiped out that absurdist society to replace it with his beloved New World Order.

(24 August 1994)

### The Best of 1994

#### Favourite Books of 1994:

This is the first year when I've listed fewer than ten nominations. I probably bought fewer books than in previous years, so the percentage of memorable volumes from that list is probably similar to previous years. It's just the gross figures that are down overall. A large proportion of the books I purchased were also non-fiction books or reference works, and these have an uphill battle to qualify for the Memorable Book category.

#### Kevin Crossley-Holland (ed.): *The Exeter Book Riddles*:

Q: Why did the Anglo-Saxon cross the road? No, no, not that sort of riddle. These are eleventh-century poems describing, sometimes rather obliquely, rather common objects. I've always been fascinated by early English literature. (*Beowulf* is an exciting monster story, but how many people have read it?) The best riddles here are those to which no solution is extant, therefore they are very open-ended, and those ostensibly about commonplace objects, but full of *double entendre*.

#### Edward Lear: *The Complete Nonsense of Edward Lear*:

This is not quite the *complete* nonsense, but it's a pretty comprehensive edition of the works of someone whose lineage descends directly through Ogden Nash, Spike Milligan and Monty Python, without any nastiness or vindictiveness. (It includes the four volumes of nonsense published during Lear's lifetime, plus a few other occasional pieces.)

#### H. G. Wells: *Love and Mr Lewisham*:

Everyman continues to republish Wells's works, and here's one of his greatest non-sf works, part of that corpus of work which is autobiography thinly disguised, and expresses his strainings at outmoded and restrictive conventions for which he held no sympathy. Regardless of how relevant his sociological views are today (and I believe they are not totally irrelevant even if, as it seems, world events have passed them by), Wells was one of the most famous writers of his time, and is still a consummate wordsmith.

#### Mary Shelley: *The Last Man*:

Mary Shelley's *other* science fiction work, this is also thinly disguised autobiography, being about her, Shelley and Byron. Nonetheless, there are some impressive chapters as the plague ravages the world, destroying humanity in a metaphor of Shelley's despair at the memory of the death of her husband.

#### Robert A. Johnson: *Lying with the Heavenly Woman*:

Robert Johnson is a Jungian psychiatrist, and seems to publish a book every year or so, analysing a specific myth in terms of modern existence and, often, the imposed lack of values that society engenders. His books are only

a hundred or so pages long, but the message is impassioned and intense, as it should be when tapping the mythic foundations of the collective unconscious. There's an awful lot of psychic energy stored there that can be immensely creative or can wound terribly. (Johnson's book *He* addresses the Grail myth and the wounded Fisher King, for instance.) I prefer reading Jung's own words generally, but Johnson is not overtly technical or obscurantist and I find his books important reading.

#### Herman Melville: *The Confidence-Man*:

Isn't it interesting how the great novelist's great novels were unregarded in their own time? This work was Melville's last novel, though he wrote much verse, including epic verse, after this, and it received a poor reception. It tells the tale of a number of people who are all, in their way, confidence men in every connotation of that word, calling for the 'confidence' of others, and all of whom may well be the same person in various guises. Just as there are many layers to the confidence man, there are many layers to this novel. (Critics have seen the confidence man as Christ or, alternatively, as the Devil.) Melville, in works such as *Typee*, was a successful storyteller but here (and in *Moby-Dick*) the story may be read as it is, or as a metaphor for other existences and metaphysicalities.

#### John Clare: *The Shepherd's Calendar*:

This is a monthly almanac in verse of country life in the early 1800s, which probably wouldn't be all that interesting now except for Clare's distinctive (self-trained) voice. I seem to have a thing about poets who were regarded as eccentrics (like William Blake) or worse (Clare spent the last twenty-three years of his life in Northampton Asylum). It just goes to show that you don't need a university education or follow the mainstream to write great literature (and therefore there may still be hope for me).

#### Favourite CDs of 1994:

My CD buying has reached a plateau now that I've replaced the essential works in my now-extinct LP library but, with a number of excellent new recordings and (just as importantly) re-releases, it doesn't look like it's going to slow down for some time yet (until I run out of room to store them). I therefore had a hard time nominating ten best CDs, and had to make some unfortunately culling. The ones left are therefore more representatives of their brethren in similar categories, rather than the only examples of their excellence:

#### Debussy: *Orchestral Music* (Philips):

It's only taken about ten years, but there is now a plethora of CDs on the market that meet both of two criteria: they are relatively cheap, and they are also good performances. This one is in the Philips Duo series: two CDs in a single CD case for the price of one. These recordings are the famous Haitink/Concertgebouw recordings, and could have been described as The Essential Debussy, or at least the Essential Orchestral Debussy. I used to have these on the old LPs, and it's good to have them back in the more convenient and longer-lasting

CD format.

**Credence Clearwater Revival: *Ultimate Collection* (Festival):**

Another reissue of sorts, though not at mid-price, alas. CCR are for me probably the classic American rock group. Their music was never particularly complex, but it was always unfailingly effective. I guess you could either buy all their albums or just this single compilation of their greatest hits. You can see which choice I opted for. Seventy minutes or so of that old beast Rock 'n' Roll, pure and untarnished. (But where's the full version of 'Suzie Q'?)

**Gavin Bryars: *Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet* (Point):**

This is one of the few new issues in my list, and even this is not that new. Gavin Bryars recorded a tramp in 1971 singing a spiritual, and worked this up to a twenty-minute piece in 1975 which was recorded on Brian Eno's *Obscure* label. By this stage the tramp had died, and never heard what Bryars did with his recording. The work continued to evolve, until this issue, where it has become a 70-minute work in which the tape is continuously looped and the accompaniment varies. The work is actually much more powerful than it sounds, being hypnotically interesting, liked chanted mantras. While Bryars is a minimalist, he does not specialise in that empty minimalism that I despise, and which is so well characterised in the pulsating but unimaginative pieces of Philip Glass. Another reason for buying this CD is that Tom Waits is featured on one of the tracks singing a duet with the tramp.

\* *Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet* is one of those famous odd records that I've never had a chance to hear. I've never even seen it in a CD shop. Julian Warner threatens to play it to me one day. \*

**Thomas Beecham: *Beecham in Rehearsal* (EMI):**

What would a Best Of list be without at least one Beecham CD? I actually bought a number of them during 1994, but this will have to represent all of them. I chose this one because it displays more of the man himself than of the composers' works solely. With the death of von Karajan, the authoritarian (dare I say dictatorial?) conductor seems to have disappeared, but what a loss. Here is Beecham in all his drollery and suavity, telling risqué stories and basically having a good time.

**Richard Strauss: *Four Last Songs/Metamorphosen* etc. (DG Galleria):**

Like Philips' Duo label, DG's Galleria reissues some wonderful material at mid-price. Of all the recordings of the *Four Last Songs*, this with the mezzo-soprano Gundula Janowitz has long been a favourite of mine. Hers is a voice that, without being imperfect, conveys the anguish and dismay, the acceptance and wonder, of these songs about death and transfiguration. Von Karajan conducts. Need I say more?

---

## Shock! Horror! First letters of comment from Carey Handfield!

---

\* And now for something completely unexpected... Frame the following paragraphs, folks: *my first ever letters of comment from CAREY HANDFIELD*. (But we hear rumours that now Carey is on the Net you can't stop him writing letters.) \*

**CAREY HANDFIELD**  
**137 Green Street**  
**Ivanhoe**  
**Victoria 3079**

After reading your 'Best of' lists in *TMR* for years and, more recently, in Justin Ackroyd's *Slow Glass Catalogues*, I'm giving you my list for 1993. This is the first time I have done such a list.

- *Postmortem* (Patricia Cornwell)
- *Cruel and Unusual* (Patricia Cornwell)
- *Killing Orders* (Sara Paretsky)
- *In the Electric Mist with the Confederate Dead* (James Lee Burke)
- *Red Square* (Martin Cruz Smith)
- *Shadow Play* (Francis Fyfield)
- *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (Salman Rushdie)
- *Red Mars* (Kim Stanley Robinson)
- *The Destiny Makers* (George Turner)
- *Steel Beach* (John Varley)
- *The Chanur Legacy* (C. J. Cherryh)

They are not ranked in any special order, although I will say that *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* is the best book I read last year, and would recommend it highly to everybody.

(2 January 1994)

\* For all that Carey doesn't talk about books much, he's pretty good at keeping his literary antennae waving around. For example, he was the first person to recommend Dan Simmons' *Hyperion*, well before the rave reviews began to appear.

I've read, and can also recommend *Postmortem*, *Cruel and Unusual* and *The Destiny Makers*, and have bought a few of the others.

Not only did I receive one letter of comment, but a year later I received another: \*

In no particular order, here is my 'Best of 1994' list. As you can see, my Top 10 has two sf and eight crime/mystery books, which reflects the pattern of my current reading.

- *Cabal* (Michael Dibdin)
- *Vendetta* (Michael Dibdin)
- *Green Mars* (Kim Stanley Robinson)
- *The Bridge of Years* (Robert Wilson)
- *Dixie City Jam* (James Lee Burke)
- *Tunnel Vision* (Sara Paretsky)

- *Original Sin* (P. D. James)
- *Playing for the Ashes* (Elizabeth George)
- *The Body Farm* (Patricia Cornwell)
- *The Death Ceremony* (James Melville)

(9 February 1995)

\* Of these, I've read the Paretsky, George and Cornwell, and enjoyed them greatly. \*

## Raymond Carver etc.

**JERRY KAUFMAN**  
**8618 Linden Avenue N**  
**Seattle**  
**Washington 98104**  
**USA**

When you tell us the cost of *TMR* is \$2500, we are astonished. If we had to spend that much to publish *Mainstream* we simply couldn't. It's an enjoyable hobby, and sometimes more than that, but not so important as to deserve a month's income. Perhaps there's more difference between Australian and US dollars than I thought? Of course, *TMR* is huge and offset; this makes a difference.

\* I can no longer produce duplicated (mimeoed) fanzines because it has become impossible to buy duplicating ink, paper, etc. Last issue \$1700 was the price that Copy Place charged for printing, collating, folding, trimming and stapling 300 copies of 120 pages. Because of the recent worldwide paper price rises, the issue you are holding might be a lot more. It costs \$900 to post the issues airmail, since I refuse to send overseas copies by surface mail (three to six months to arrive, if they arrive at all). \*

Alan Stewart was in town for a few days, and we got to meet him briefly last night at a restaurant get-together. He showed the assembled multitudes various publications, including *Lhyfe Thyme*. You seem to have reprinted the bulk of it here. The articles are all very well done, and make me wish I'd taken more advantage of my opportunities to know Roger better. Coming as it does on the heels of *Blat*, with its tributes to Catherine Jackson, makes me feel more how mortal I am, and all of you others.

My eyes filmed over and went numb trying to read even a portion of all the lists. I gave up entirely on all the detailed lists of pop favourites. However, Richard Brandt's list of favourite movies included a number that make me think, 'Why haven't I seen this?' I have heard a few more of the songs that Greg Egan lists than you have, and especially agree with his inclusion of the Brian Eno song 'The Fat Lady of Limbourg', which is the one that caught my attention and led me to listen to all of Eno's song-oriented albums . . . and play them many times.

I also didn't read many of your reviews, as I'm not likely ever to come across the books you selected. The exception is *Where I'm Calling From* by Raymond Carver, a book I've already read. My favourites aren't the same as yours; 'A Small, Good Thing' and 'Cathedral' are among my favourite of all short stories. They're both about bridging seemingly impossible gaps and communicating with others. I think several of the ones you like were among the more impenetrable ones for me.

On the other hand, I read every word of Dave Langford's 'reviews', probably because they aren't really reviews — they're entertainments that quote liberally from very funny or peculiar books. Dave's taste in humour is as much fun as his own exhibitions of humour. Thanks for including these.

(23 August 1994)

\* Between the time of writing the review and concocting my own Favourite Short Stories list I changed my mind about my favourite Raymond Carver stories. This was in some ways a reaction to Robert Altman's distortion of 'A Small, Good Thing' when he used it as the backbone of *Short Cuts*. Eventually I listed my favourite stories from *Where I'm Calling From* as 'A Small, Good Thing' (No. 1), 'Elephant' (No. 2), 'What's in Alaska?' (No. 8), 'Errand' (No. 9), 'Cathedral' (No. 10), 'Boxes' (No. 11) and 'Put Yourself in My Shoes' (No. 12).

## Jazz and Europe

**DOUG BARBOUR**  
**11655-72 Avenue**  
**Edmonton**  
**Alberta**  
**Canada T6G 0B9**

I enjoyed Adrian Rawlins's account of the Wynton Marsalis Septet in Melbourne earlier this year. Shortly afterward, I saw the Septet on a Live from New York show, and it was good. I had gotten off Wynton, and haven't bought his recent albums (as I don't tend to play those earlier ones I own as much as many others), but I will have to track down some of the more recent stuff — a live album with the Septet would be a Fine Thing.

Not to take anything away from Marsalis, but I can't agree with Rawlins that he is the best band leader on earth, nor that his group alone is saving jazz. Many have and will continue to do so. We in Edmonton are quite lucky, and over the past few years we have heard lots of great groups live. Moreover, some of the older guys have been keeping the flame alive for years now, in various ways. Take the superb Steve Lacy Sextet, based in Paris but playing everywhere; take Joe Henderson, still playing brilliantly, and offering young players a wonderful place to learn in his own groups, such as the all-female rhythm section he had in the mid-eighties (never, alas, recorded); take Joe Lovano, a superb saxophonist,

whose own groups are models of jazz experimentation without forgetting the tradition(s); or take P. J. Perry, an Edmonton altoist, who is finally garnering the praise he so richly deserves, and whose playing mixes and matches the best of Parker and Pepper; and many other younger players I could point to.

No, Wynton Marsalis is good, and he is doing a lot, but he is not alone. For which I am most grateful.

I am reading Philip Larkin for the course, and so I have come across references to his Introduction to *All What Jazz*, and finally borrowed it and read it. How sad, I say, that he couldn't hear anything pleasurable in the music I have been listening to since I was in my teens. No, Parker, Pound and Picasso are 'modernists' and part of an evil plot to destroy civilisation and its content(edness) as far as Larkin is concerned. There is no melody, no swing in the music since the 1940s, and those who say they hear connections between that music and the glorious 'jazz' of his youth have no ears.

But I listen, say, to Jelly Roll Morton, then some early Duke Ellington, then put on some Mingus, maybe something else from later or about the same time (fifties to nineties), and it all does belong together. Not 'no ears' but 'different ears'? I have learned to go back and truly enjoy the early stuff (Jelly Roll Morton was genius, and his arrangements are amazing, especially now that we can hear all the instruments on CD), but I came to jazz in the fifties and later as something wonderful to listen to, not something that because it was so awful must be good.

Anyway, I did enjoy Adrian's piece, as it has the sense of joy in the live performance right up front. Let me tell you about Jazz City, he said . . . (actually I haven't time or space).

\* Philip Larkin's essays on jazz, some of which I have in *Required Writing: Miscellaneous Pieces 1955-1982* (Faber & Faber, 1983), remind me most of my own reactions to the decline and destruction of rock music throughout the seventies and eighties. You could almost replace 'jazz' with 'rock' in many of his sentences. I enjoyed the pieces for their curmudgeonliness, but of course disagreed with them — for example, Miles Davis's music, especially from the late sixties and early seventies, is one of the few bodies of jazz music that I really enjoy. \*

Those lists, always interesting:

I will mention Britten's *Three Cello Suites* by Timothy Hugh, on Hyperion CDA66274; and yes, they are wonderful.

I picked up the Casals version of Bach's Cello Suites and Partitas this year, and love them, but will have to search out a more contemporary rendition as well.

\* Have fun looking. John Bangsund is particularly fond of the Anner Bylisma versions, but I still play Casals' recordings for preference. An effective version from the 1960s, now rereleased, is Janos Starker's (Mercury Living Presence 432-756-2). \*

I love Gorecki, the Third Symphony, and also his string quartets (we heard the Kronos Quartet do his Third last year).

Recently a new store moved into town, A&B Sound, from Vancouver. It has the best prices in Canada and a

great range of both classical and jazz, plus lots of sales. I picked up a bunch of Virgo CDs, five for \$27.50, including a lovely *Music for Viols* by Fretwork, Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsody* by Kun Woo Park, Vaughan Williams's Symphony No. 5 and *Concerto for Two Pianos* by the Royal Philharmonic conducted by Menuhin, and *Concertos for Oboe* by Strauss, Bach and Marcello, with Ray Still — all very fine, even before you take account of the price.

Switching lists, I was glad to see someone else who really liked Clapton's *24 Nights*, one of my recent favourites. I don't buy many pop CDs. I enjoy all the recent Bonnie Raitts, and am mad about Richard Thompson, whose three-CD retrospective is great, but whose *Mirror Blue* is also terrific. We saw him, with just bass accompaniment, at the recent Edmonton Folk Festival. He was in terrific form. And anything by Van Morrison, whose *A Night in San Francisco* live album is on my must-buy list; *Too Long in Exile* is great.

Books: You'll see some I liked in the reviews.

I have just read Rudy Wiebe's first novel in years, *A Discovery of Strangers*, a brilliant novel about the first Franklin expedition, and perhaps an even better 'first contact' story than *Shogun*, certainly much better written. Wiebe, a friend, also wrote *The Temptations of Big Bear* back in the seventies, for which he won a Governor General's Award. If he doesn't win again for this book it will be a travesty.

Although I'm trying to keep up with science fiction and fantasy, I also do enjoy mysteries, and really like Elizabeth George, all of her books, although I would agree that *For the Sake of Elena* is one of her best.

Our small press has just published a mystery of sorts, *Healthy, Wealthy and Dead*, a very lighthearted story set in the foothills outside Calgary, Alberta; but its female narrator is witty, and I enjoyed editing it for the press. It's also sold well for a small press book.

I just got around to reading one of the *SF Best of the Years* from a few years ago, but would certainly have Kim Newman's 'Übermensch' on my Best of the Year list. It is terrifically deadpan and wonderfully warped, yet has a point to make too.

I am rereading some good earlier sf as I have a PhD thesis to examine: so I've just reread *The Gate to Women's Country*, which is wonderfully problematic in its treatment of gender war. I finally read *Native Tongue* and *The Judas Rose*, and they are both very interesting and disappointing insofar as they seem unable fully to realise the promises they implicitly make to their readers.

One of the wittiest, smartest, slyest fantasies of recent years has to be Ellen Kushner's *Swordspoint*, a book of superb style. When I finally got around to read *A Woman of the Iron People* I had to agree that it is a fine novel too.

I just read *Lavondyss*, and so reread *Mythago Wood*. They're good, and intriguing for the way they enter a finely judged *British* sense of myth, but also refuse to follow any of the usual fantasy tropes.

(14 August 1994)

The 1993 tour of Germany with Stephen Scobie was quite a trip. We did ten lectures with readings in ten days in ten cities in both the west and the east, then spent a weekend at the first ever European conference on New

Zealand studies in Laufen, and then spent a week at the EACLALS conference in Graze, after which we took a 26-hour train ride to Barcelona.

Barcelona is a city of one's dreams, and even more so when we found that Stephen's friend had found us a hotel within walking distance of about eight CD stores, where I found far too many great jazz CDs, but also a bunch of great bootlegs. Stephen, the Dylan fanatic, found *two* copies of the out-of-print Swinging Pig CDs of the famous Albert Hall 1966 concert with The Band and very generously let me have one, which he could have sold back in Canada for between \$100 and \$200; and it was a mere \$20! I also got two Van Morrison live concerts. What a city; I will have to back. The food was great too, and also inexpensive.

Paris was of course great, but also into the tourist season and therefore outrageously expensive and a pain in some ways.

(25 June 1993)

\* Doug has sent me three more trip reports, apart from the one I'm finally printing in this issue. A few months ago he and his poetry-performing friend Stephen Scobie visited Melbourne, providing a highly entertaining hour and a half of performance poetry. Doug had dinner with us, but Stephen Scobie was captured by the Bob Dylan fanatics, so we haven't had much chance to talk to him yet. \*

---

## Livin' in the Seventies

---

**TIM JONES**  
87 Ellice Street  
Mt Victoria  
Wellington 6001  
New Zealand

[In *TMR* 19/20/21] as usual, I enjoyed the multiplicity of articles. As far as I'm concerned, you can just keep rolling out these big issues whenever you get the time and money, and never mind what Joe Nicholas says.

The minor point that caught my attention was in Gerald Murnane's letter (p. 64). He mentions one of his students writing a scene in which two characters are driving with the car radio playing 'Khe Sanh'. One of the characters says that the song is part of the heritage of their generation. Good choice, I thought; that tells me something about who's speaking, and what sort of person he or she is. And then Gerald says that he's not only never heard, but never heard *of* the song! I could hardly stand up for falling down.

Yet my reaction was quite unreasonable: reflecting on the personal and official hit parades your contributors sent in, I realised that most of them would never have bothered with 'Khe Sanh', for it was recorded sometime in the mid-1970s, whereas your contributors' tastes were formed in the 1950s and 1960s, and seem to hold in contempt anything popular recorded after

1970.

I'm thirty-five years old, and I grew up in a household where the music never got lighter than light classical, so I didn't even start listening to popular music until fourth-form music class in 1972, the days of Uriah Heep and Deep Purple. Over the years, I've caught up with the 1960s, and my list of all-time favourites would include many 1960s songs, but the list of favourite songs I've contributed to (I think) made up of songs recorded in or after the 1970s, by artists who either started recording or did their main work after the 1960s. There's still good music being made, folks! I've tried to classify the list to give people a rough idea of the genre each song fits into. As you'll see, there's everything from disco to thrash metal, with just a hint of country.

But first to 'Khe Sanh', the signature song of the archetypal Aussie pub rock band Cold Chisel. It's about an Australian Vietnam veteran. 'There were no V-E day heroes in 1973', and he travels around the country and the world, trying and failing to settle down, and periodically returning to his old haunts:

and I've been back to South-East Asia  
you know the answer sure ain't there  
but I'm drifting north to check things out again.

It's a great song!

So here's the list. The genres are as follows:

**M:** 'Mainstream' pop/rock.

**S:** Soul/r&b.

**D:** Disco/dance.

**F:** Folk and folk-rock.

**P:** Progressive rock.

**A:** Punk, new wave and 'alternative' rock.

**H:** Hardrock, heavy metal, thrash metal.

**C:** Country.

I've also indicated NZ for New Zealand bands. Most of these should be available in Australia and the US in specialist record stores.

- Blam Blam Blam: 'Don't Fight It, Marsha, It's Bigger Than Both of Us' (ANZ).
- David Bowie: 'When You Rock and Roll With Me' (M).
- Kate Bush: 'Hounds of Love' (M).
- Chills: 'Submarine Bells' (MNZ).
- Cold Chisel: 'Khe Sanh' and 'Flame Trees' (M).
- Crowded House: 'Don't Dream It's Over' (MNZ).
- Earth Wind and Fire: 'Boogie Wonderland' (D).
- Front Lawn: 'Andy' (FNZ).
- Headless Chickens: 'Gaskrankinstation' (ANZ).
- Iggy Pop: 'Don't Look Down' (S).
- Isley Brothers: 'That Lady' (S).
- Joy Division: 'Atmosphere' and 'Love Will Tear Us Apart' (A).
- King Crimson: '21st Century Schizoid Man', 'Islands', 'Fracture' and 'Fallen Angel' (P).
- Gladys Knight and the Pips: 'Midnight Train to Georgia' (S).
- Labelle: 'Lady Marmalade' (S).
- Led Zeppelin: 'Black Dog' and 'Houses of the Holy' (H).
- John Martyn: 'May You Never' (F).

- Metallica: 'The Small Hours', 'One' and 'The Unforgiven' (H).
- Joni Mitchell: 'Shadows and Light' (F).
- Maria Muldaur: 'Midnight at the Oasis' (M).
- Muttonbirds: 'Too Close to the Sun' (M NZ).
- New Order: 'The Perfect Kiss' (A).
- Only Ones: 'Another Girl Another Planet' (A). (This is my favourite sf-related rock song.)
- Parliament: 'Wizard of Finance' (S).
- Pet Shop Boys: 'Being Boring' (D).
- Phranc: 'M-A-R-T-I-A-N' (F).
- Pogues: 'Thousands are Sailing' (F).
- Prince: '1999' and 'Purple Rain' (S).
- Red Hot Chili Peppers: 'Under the Bridge' (M).
- Sex Pistols: 'Anarchy in the UK' and 'God Save the Queen' (A).
- Shihad: 'Stations' (H NZ).
- Michelle Shocked: 'Anchorage' (F).
- Bruce Springsteen: 'Racing in the Streets', 'Factory', 'Reason to Believe' and 'Valentine's Day' (M, F and a little bit C).
- Straitjacket Fits: 'She Speeds' and 'Down in Splendour' (A NZ).
- Donna Summer: 'I Feel Love' (D).
- Television: 'Marquee Moon' (A).
- Tom Robinson Band: 'Power in the Darkness' (A).
- Toy Love: 'Squeeze' (A NZ).
- Undertones: 'Teenage Kicks' (A).
- Village People: 'Go West' (D).
- Yes: 'Heart of the Sunrise' and 'And You and I' (P).
- Yotheu Yindi: 'Timeless Land' (M).
- Neil Young: 'Tonight's the Night', 'Cortez the Killer' and 'Powderfinger' (F and H).
- Warratahs: 'St Peter's Rendezvous' (C NZ).
- Warumpi Band: 'My Island Home' (M).
- Who: 'Baba O'Reilly' (H).

So there!

\* I stopped listening to pop radio when, in the early 1970s, the commercial radio stations reduced the songs they played to their Play List. When I made an attempt in the early 1980s to find out what was doing in popular music, I found that I couldn't, because the radio stations had taken to playing three or four songs in a row without back-announcing. I'm still not sure how one was supposed to know which song was which. The TV program *Countdown* was a big help, unless of course the performers of a particular song had not released a video to accompany their song. Often a song would go to No. 1 without me hearing it.

Locals would urge me to listen to the alternative radio stations, such as 3RRR and JJJ, but I can't stand most of the music they play.

But you've changed the rules, anyway. Tim. If I included in my Favourite Songs those that appeared only on LPs or CDs and were never released on singles, I could fill the rest of this issue. Next time. \*

I've recently moved to Wellington, the capital city of our fair nation, and one of the things I'm enjoying about this is that I can now regularly go to see the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra in action. Belying its name, the NZSO rarely ventures outside the North Island, and my former home, Dunedin, gets it once or twice a year, usually in programs of stunning unoriginality.

Of the three fine NZSO concerts I've been to this year, the highlight was their playing of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 8 under the baton of Alexander Lazarev. Shostakovich's 'Leningrad' Symphony (No. 7) is probably my favourite symphony, but the 'Stalingrad' had escaped my attention. This performance was magnificent, and made a rather unapproachable symphony live for me.

\* I have a wonderful version of the Eighth by Nicholas Braithwaite and the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra (ABC Records), but I always choose to play it on a day when Elaine cannot stand loud music, but likes Shostakovich. My Mariss Jansons version of the Seventh is one of his best recordings. \*

I see that you list Steven Isserlis's performance of John Tavener's *The Protecting Veil* on your list of 1992 favourite classical CDs. A few weeks ago Isserlis played this work with the NZSO, but I found it disappointing: 20 minutes of content stretched on a 45-minute rack. Martinu's Symphony No. 6, in the second half of the program, appealed to me much more. I rarely enjoy 'sacred' music, especially at length; Arvo Pärt is the only modern composer working in this area whose work I've enjoyed.

\* *The Protecting Veil* works for me when I can sit down comfortably to listen to it at home. Panufnik is one not-very-long-dead composer whose 'sacred music' (they're called masses and sacred symphonies) is very attractive. Otherwise, Haydn and Mozart and people of their vintage are the best at choral music.

Thanks to the invitation to your wedding to Kay. We didn't quite make it. Haven't heard much from either of you since then. \*

---

## Best books and CDs of '94

---

**MICHAEL CLARK**  
**PO Box 103**  
**Daw Park**  
**South Australia 5041**

Your lists made excellent reading. The best thing about reading other people's lists is the way in which it highlights the variety and perversity of human nature, mine in particular. I sat and congratulated you or your other correspondents on your good taste every time an opinion coincided with my own, and cried 'Philistine' whenever our opinions differed. What good sport!

As you're probably aware, I usually send Justin a list of my favourite books for the year, and he prints them along with many others in the *Slow Glass Books* catalogue. For various reasons I've read fewer books this year than for many years, and unless I read something startling in the next few days, this will be my list for 1994:

- Kim Stanley Robinson: *Red Mars/Green Mars*

I'm cheating by bracketing these two together. Robinson's Mars books look like good old-fashioned sf in concept, but there is nothing old or crusty about the ideas or the concerns. What I find intriguing is the fact that he managed to retain my interest in spite of the fact that for lengthy periods (particularly in *Green Mars*) almost no action really takes place. But the talk — and there is plenty of it — is very interesting.

- **James Ellroy: *The Black Dahlia***

I read the four books in Ellroy's LA quartet in a more or less random order, finishing with this, the first. Ellroy has really taken crime fiction to a different level. The concentration of plot is extraordinary. It seems to me that there is a whole novel waiting to be written about almost every humble extra who crosses the stage. It is fascinating to see how the relatively conventional prose style of *The Black Dahlia* turned into the telegraphic style of *LA Confidential* and (particularly) *White Jazz*.

- **Ellen Datlow and Terri Windling (eds.): *Snow White, Blood Red***

This is one of the better original anthologies of recent times, and shows the unpleasantness that lurks beneath the surface of the largely homogenised fairy tale. This should be compulsory reading for everyone whose ideas of the fairy tale are based on Disney cartoons.

- **Brian D'Amato: *Beauty***

Apparently this was something of a bestseller. It is very clever, and while the book is about (and told by) a glitzy, flashy, superficial person, there is nothing superficial about it. Not recommended for anyone contemplating cosmetic surgery.

- **Vernor Vinge: *A Fire Upon the Deep***

This is a completely old-fashioned romping space opera, which my every instinct told me I should hate. Indeed, it has a number of flaws, such as a contrived plot, and very anthropomorphic aliens with a social system I don't believe could ever have evolved. However, it is all so much fun that you can't help but like it.

- **Peter Straub: *The Throat***

A wonderful big book from one of my favourite writers. The intertwining of elements of *Koko* and *Mystery* is ingenious. It is also a very good detective story, with more false endings than Beethoven's Fifth Symphony.

- **Nancy Kress: *Beggars in Spain***

I imagine this will be on many best-of-the-year lists. This is one of the fairly few occasions in which the novel is better than the (very good) short story on which it was based. Very thoughtful, even if a bit tendentious at times.

- **Alex Abella: *The Killing of the Saints***

This first novel by a Cuban American crept up on me. Every time I thought it was turning into a conventional crime novel it surprised me. It is much more than a crime novel, although that is how it seems to have been marketed. Abella may be an author to watch.

- **Bruce Sterling: *Globalhead***

I think Sterling is a great short story writer. I ex-

pected to like *Globalhead* before I started it, and I wasn't disappointed. Thought-provoking, provocative and entertaining.

- **Jane Yolen: *Briar Rose***

This is a subtle blending of the tale of Briar Rose with the horrors of Poland during World War II. Like the Datlow and Windling collection above, it shines a bright new light on some venerable themes, and shows that there is still plenty of mileage in the old ideas for those who know how to exploit them.

\* This list consists more of books I would like to have had time to read than books I've actually read. In fact I haven't read any of them. At least I get to see your comments, while Justin merely gets your list for the *Slow Glass Catalogue*. \*

I haven't really had much of a chance to appraise 1994 for music yet, but here are some preliminary thoughts. I have not listened to a smaller amount of popular music in any year since the mid-1970s. There seems to have been an absolute drought of anything I might want to listen to, much less buy. On the other hand, classical music on disc has never been better, with good quality available cheaply from companies like Naxos and Discover. (It's not all good, but there are some real finds.) Even better is the reappearance at bargain prices of so much excellent material from the vaults of Philips, Deutsche Grammophon, etc. The Philips Duo series has some great performances.

Without thinking about it systematically, here are a few recordings that I've particularly enjoyed this year:

- **Bach: *Sonatas and Partitas for Violin***

Itzhak Perlman, violin

Nothing has given me more pleasure this year than this wonderful music, wonderfully played. It is inspiring to hear the player finding such obvious enjoyment in the music. Excellent recording.

- **Brunel: *Missa et ecce terrae motus***

Tallis Scholars

This is a revelation. This twelve-part mass ('The Earthquake Mass') reminds me of Tallis's famous forty-part motet, *Spem in altum*. The Tallis Scholars sing beautifully, and with a little more passion (sometimes they sound rather sterile) than normal.

- **Various: *The Glenn Gould Edition***

Glenn Gould, piano

Sony's brilliant remastering of recordings by Glenn Gould, some quite old, is breathtaking. Nobody has ever played Bach like Gould, and his famous 1955 recording of *The Goldberg Variations* sounds magnificent. I know it is trendy to be a Gould fan at the moment, but that shouldn't detract from the magic of some of these performances. You do have to be tolerant of his background crooning (his 'vocalise', as the *Penguin Guide* drily describes it), but I find that it doesn't worry me — I'm too busy listening to the playing.

- **Edwards: *Maninyas/Symphony da pacem domine/Yar-rageh***

Stuart Challender, David Porcelijn and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra

If there is one piece of contemporary music that

has the potential to repeat the success of Gorecki's Third, it is the grave and beautiful *Symphony da pacem domine* of Ross Edwards. The ABC have a masterpiece on their hands here, if only they would promote it.

- **Bruckner: Symphony No. 6**  
**Christoph von Dohnányi and the Cleveland Orchestra**

This is a great new recording of a very underrated symphony, my favourite by Bruckner after No. 9. The classic performance by Klemperer dates from the 1960s, and hasn't been transferred very well to CD. The sound on this Dohnányi recording is quite sensational.

I am intending to be in Melbourne for a few days in early January, probably the first or second week. I hope to catch up with you and Elaine then.

(19 December 1994)

\* Elaine and I met Mike Clark when we were in Adelaide in 1980. When we met him again at Justin and Jenny's in late 1992?/1993? it was as if the conversation had been interrupted only for a moment. Therefore we were looking forward greatly to Mike's promised visit in January 1995, but it didn't happen. Then Mike got married during the year, and we wonder if we'll see him again for another ten years.

Meantime I congratulate you, Mike, on your acute (and useful) taste in music. I bought the Dohnányi version of Bruckner's Symphony No. 6 on your recommendation, and in turn can recommend it to anyone who thinks, as I do, that almost nobody plays Bruckner well. I agree that the music by Edwards is highly satisfying.

Canada gave the world Joni Mitchell, Neil Young, Doug Barbour and Glenn Gould. Oh, Canada! \*

\* I'm pleased that somebody beside me is glad to be unfashionable. I also can't be bothered with a certain sort of novel that is as drippy in a romantic homosexual way as the nineteenth-century novel was drippy in its boy-meets-girl romantic way. More interesting are novels or films (especially *The Crying Game*, which I've just seen, or several of Ruth Rendell's novels) which use homosexuality as a device for showing the extreme ambiguity of all human relationships. \*

Sf novels that have given me particular pleasure recently include:

- **Michael Blumlein's *The Movement of Mountains*** (obese doctor investigates degenerative diseases amongst genetically engineered offworld mine labourers).
- **David Brin's *Glory Season*** (convincing feminist 'utopia' that has its share of faults just like anywhere else).
- **Eric Brown's *Meridian Days* and *Engineman*** (the former a bit like Bob Shaw's *Palace of Eternity*, but nonetheless competent; the latter a chunk of sense-of-wonder goshwownery and corporate skull-guggery).
- Just recently, the Miles Vorkosigen novels of **Lois McMaster Bujold** (run-of-the-mill space opera leavened to the point of redemption by some wonderfully old-fashioned ideas about honour, an unlikely disabled hero and a seriously twisted sense of wit).

As for music, there are times when I find myself muttering your cry of 'Forward to a CD-led bankruptcy!'

- This year, I scraped together enough money to splash out on the CD transfers of **Karl Böhm's 1967 Bayreuth *Ring***, about which I ought to write at length under the heading 'The Ring of Authenticity' — not as flashy as Solti, and pretty unpolished in places, but listen to 'The Descent into Nibelheim', with the musical anvils specified by Wagner, or the transcendence of the last few pages of *Götterdämmerung*, and the experience is wholly satisfying.
  - **John Eliot Gardiner's direction of the Monteverdi Choir and the Orchestre Romantique et Révolutionnaire** in Berlioz's early and rediscovered *Messe Solennelle* is fascinating for its youthful inventiveness, as well as its early use of themes later recycled in the *Symphonie Fantastique*, *Benvenuto Cellini* and others.
  - I finally secured the CD version of **Philip Glass's opera *Akhmatov*** — the price came down to £16 odd — but as I've had that on vinyl for a while, it wasn't really new to me.
  - Another opera worth getting on CD is **Sir Thomas Beecham's 1937 version of *The Magic Flute*** on a Nimbus CD transfer of notable quality (once you adjust to it) — excellent singing from the Berlin Opera soloists, and a snip at £10!
- I also acquired some Russian oddities:
- A CD of Soviet military band music, some of which sound as if it is recorded over the tannoy in the People's Tractor Factory No. 3, but which includes those now-rare pieces 'The Internationale' and

---

## Forward to CD-led bankruptcy!

---

**ROBERT DAY**  
'Ashgrove'  
Didgley Lane  
Fillongley  
Coventry CV7 8DQ  
England

I have kept faith with jolly old sf. I'm sure there is excellent work being done with the contemporary novel, but one has to draw the line somewhere. In any case, the twentieth-century British novel is mainly either about the state of middle-class society or the realities of life in Glaswegian slums. I have little interest in either. It is also fashionable nowadays to be homosexual and to write novels about it. I have never claimed to be fashionable, and I'm not about to start now!

'The Bolshevik Hymn' (national anthem of the USSR) ('A Battleship of a Tune!': J. V. Stalin).

- I borrowed a CD of music by the Russian composer Aleksander Mossolov, who started out as a Futurist in the 1920s, but quickly adopted the Party line when it became obvious that this was the way to keep out of trouble. We can't all be heroes for the Spirit of Mankind, and at least when Mossolov turned to producing suites of patriotic songs for soldiers and workers, they were competently done. The reason I tracked down his music was that I heard a short piece of ballet music from his Futurist period called 'Iron Foundry' and I *had* to have it! 'Iron Foundry' defies description, except as a piece of proto-industrial/heavy metal, in every sense of the word! The CD had gone from the UK catalogue, but if ever you come across a copy of Olympia OCD 176 (1987), seize it with alacrity and both hands!

\* There's one for the haunters of secondhand CD shops. Don't send it to me; send it straight to Robert Day. \*

I shall now take a twenty-four-hour break to (a) listen to Havergal Brian's *Gothic Symphony* and (b) contemplate the four — count them, four! — Gillespie fanzines since my last communication.

Right. Done that. I've also made a journey to a nearby town to procure a new car battery, having found that the existing one has expired over the extended Christmas holiday.

You are welcome to a reprint of my Austrian travel diary. As I was travelling on my own, and mainly looking at exotic bits of railway, you might regret this. It was intended as a record of reflections, unrecorded experiences and an aide memoire for the set of slides (600 or so). But I found it helpful to do, and enjoyable to write, even if it does read like a con report. Let me know.

\* I won't say no. I've liked everything you've sent me in the past. On the other hand, I'd much rather receive that long-promised article on Hollywood film music of the 1940s. \*

(1 January 1995)

---

## Searching for Dan Dare

---

PAUL ANDERSON  
17 Baker Street  
Grange  
South Australia 5022

[After a vigorous bit of house rearrangement] We brought the sound system out of cold storage at the weekend. The amp, receiver and cassette deck are fine,

but the record player is not doing well. I am also finding the familiar space problem with my old collection of singles and EPs from thirty years ago. I have no idea as to the quality of their playing surfaces now, but they were fun in those days.

We have not bitten for a CD player as yet. The price tag on the CDs is a bit rich still, although I've seen plenty of semi-bootleg items at \$3.95. Have you tried them yet? One seems to be a recent Pink Floyd concert in the US about which Alan Sandercock was most enthusiastic when he was here last year. Of course he was referring to the concert tour itself.

\* For a year or more, a loophole in the Australian copyright law enabled a South Australian company to issue vast numbers of bootleg CDs of rock concerts provided that they paid a royalty to the performers. But that's not 'bootleg', surely? Yes, if the CDs were not authorised by the performers or their agents. Most of them sold for \$5 each here. I was pleasantly surprised by some, and felt ripped off by others (even at \$5 each). A recent Rolling Stones concert, for instance, had obviously been recorded by a microphone hand-held under a blanket. One for the rubbish bin. Another featured high-quality recordings of many of the 'Rolling Stones at the BBC' items (1963ish) that have never been officially released. The Eric Clapton CDs in this series were fairly good soundboard recordings, while most of the Neil Young items were obviously copied from old American bootleg albums (but they're Neil Young, so I'm keeping them).

The loophole in the Australian law has now been covered, and 'official bootlegs' have disappeared. \*

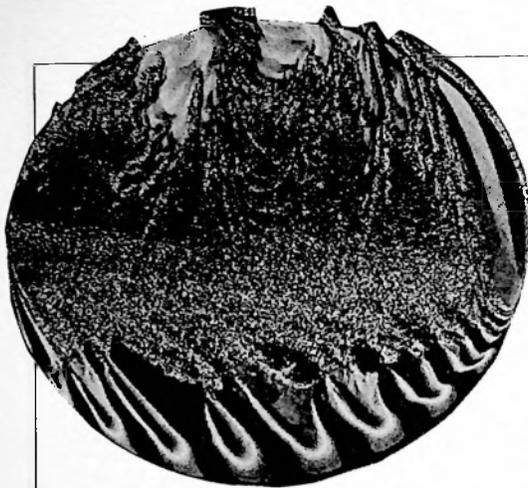
When we had a spare room it was OK to dump things in it. Now they have to find a new home. A lot of the old books will need to move out. I had kept a lot of the old 'William' books at my parents' place and had forgotten about them for thirty years or so. They found their way down here. I thought I might read them to the children, or they would read them themselves. Now I look at them, I can see that the books are fun, but the conversational 'English' of William is atrocious, and not suitable for readers learning to spell, especially with today's style of teaching.

A number of sf titles will also need to go, especially as they were marginal in the first place.

I am now trying to get hold of the Hawk Publications hardcover reprints of the old *Dan Dare* from the *Eagle* of the 1950s. The first four volumes are proving hard to come by as the company does not respond very quickly to the regular faxes sent by the comics shop that I go through here. I picked up the *Rogue Planet* volume when I was looking for a present for Mother to give me. *The Man from Nowhere* followed, and I was able to get the subsequent books more or less as they appeared. Now the only ones available are the ones I already have.

I missed out on getting *Operation Saturn* and *Prisoners of Space* earlier when I saw them in a shop as I was concentrating on chasing up reprints of *Flash Gordon*.

A while back Brenda found a few black-and-white reprints of the weekly *Flash Gordon* in a shop at Largs Bay. I checked out the comics shop to see what was available. I found some lovely hardcover editions of the



1930s Sunday colour strips. I was able to pick up Volumes 2 and 3 at very good prices, then over the years filled in the set of six. The last one I found was Volume 1. Volumes 3 and 4 of *Dan Dare* disappeared while I was still hunting for *Flash Gordon*.

\* I haven't bothered to fill in my childhood collections, except to persuade my mother to give me some of the books that meant a lot to me then. (But whatever happened to some of the others?) I remember my teenage years with a bit more affection, which is why I continually try to fill in gaps in my collections of pre-1963 pop singles. (Not that I'm buying secondhand 1960s singles, although some shops still sell them. I keep hoping for CDs that include rare items. \*

We are beginning to see films in actual cinemas again, now that Michael is in school. With my flexitime I take a day off every so often and we catch a morning session. The children are dropped in school by 8.45 and so taken care of until 3 p.m. or so.

The last movie we saw was *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*. We also saw *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, and I suggested *Maverick*, as I remembered enjoying the tv series.

I've also seen *Death in a French Garden* and *On the Waterfront*, which I had taped. I like the convenience of time-shifting, as a lot of good films are shown only from midnight to dawn. There is always the temptation to keep recorded tapes around, especially if a film does not get screened often.

(24 January 1995)

\* We don't have the temptation to keep films of video, because there is no room in the house to store them. Nevertheless I have bought most of the Rolling Stones videos, the only Roy Orbison video (*A Black and White Night*) and some interesting tapes that Elaine's sister Valerie gave to us. Oh, and *Fantasia* (also a present from Valerie), Philip Tyndall's *Words and Silk*, about the work of Gerald Murnane (thanks, Gerald) and *Only Angels Have Wings* (thanks, Dick). I'd like a complete set of Orson Welles movies, but would prefer to wait for the unlikely day when I can afford a laser disc player. \*

## Favourite CDs 1994

**DON ASHBY**  
49 Darlington Grove  
Coburg Victoria 3058

There was another Antifan film that came out to support the Aussiecon II bid. I had it dumped on my lap, about a week before it had to go to the US, so that I could do a final cut, create the sound track and get copies printed. That was a busy week. Most of the work was done on the dining-room table of a house that Claudia, Carey and I were sharing at the time. I recall that we got it to Robin Johnson just before the plane left Tullamarine Airport. The film lacked the ingenuous charm of the first, but certainly did its bit to secure the bid for Australia. I've never actually seen the film on the screen. The only copies went to America, and my impressions were gained through the editing suite. I wonder if there is a copy about so that I can see it.

Favourite CDs for 1994, in no particular order:

- Arameida: *More Ways than One* (Natural Symphonies)
- Shamrock and Thistle: *Shamrock and Thistle* (Rounder Records)
- Graham Dodsworth: *In Good King Arthur's Day* (Newmarket Music)
- Penelope Swales: *Between Light and Dark* (Penelope Swales)
- Maddy Prior and the Carnival Band: *Carols and Capers* (Park Records)
- Tiddas: *Sing About Life* (Phonogram Records)
- Soundtrack: *The Joys of Women* (ABC Music)
- Nova Schola Gregoriana: *The Naxos Collection 38* (*Gregorian Chant*) (Naxos)
- Choëur des Moines de l'Abbaye d'en-Calcat: *L'année Liturgique* (FM)
- Turn Around: *Go Back* (Polyester Records).

\* You're the only person outside of 'folk circles' (usually people I know because of my sister Jeanette) who buys some of the local folk music CDs. Arameida and Tiddas are far too Uplifting and Inspirational for my taste: I think of them as New Age. The only time I saw Penelope Swales perform, she came on as a local female Bob Dylan without all of Dylan's song-writing abilities. Her CD might be interesting. I must look out for that Maddy Prior CD. I haven't heard the others on this list.

Don also sent a highly entertaining article, 'Memoirs found in a Blog Tub', that appears in the *Aussiecon Memory Book*. Designed to evoke endless nostalgia during Arcon, which itself was designed for nostalgia buffs, the *Memory Book* has many reminiscences and photos of Aussiecons I and II. Don's article goes nicely with his story of the Magic Pudding Club (*TMR* 4), which I will reprint when I have room. \*

(From Page 16)

awhile, and Erik Darling and Fred Hellerman seem to have disappeared from view. \*

We're doing the usual things. Juanita has been doing most of the gardening — vegetables — our idea of flower gardening is to stick some perennials into the ground and if they grow, fine, and if they don't it's one less thing to mow around. It's been a very hot summer, so far, a good many days over 90°F and a few over 100°. Most of the records for heat were set in the 1930s, back when there were no air conditioners and very few electric fans. I remember my school being dismissed for the heat back then. I was lucky: I could walk three or four hundred yards and immerse myself in a lake. (At least, I could if I didn't have to mow the yard or hoe the garden.)

Juanita got an invitation to a con in South Carolina in June; the concom offered free room and transportation. So we got a car — one with a working air conditioner — from a rental agency and drove down. A 1344-mile round trip, which included side trips to the Cowpens and Kings Mountain Revolutionary War battlefields, Carl Sandburg's North Carolina home, and a reconstruction of Boonesborough in Kentucky. Lovely trip.

The convention was odd; about three-quarters of the attendees were devotees of role-playing games, and the rest were filkers. I was on a writers' panel with Karl Edward Wagner, Grey Rollins, somebody who was asleep through most of the panel, and *one* audience member. The above-mentioned and David Weber were at the autograph session, with no autographs being requested. (I'd have asked Rollins for an autograph myself, if I'd had any of his *Astounding* stories on hand, but I didn't.) Still, we sold enough stuff to break even on expenses, made friends — possibly permanent friends — with the couple who were Guest Liaison, and at least temporary friends with the couple at the next huckster table to ours.

Sandburg's home looked like a much more expensive version of ours. Book cases in every room, several typewriters in view, a guitar (a cheap one, according to Juanita) leaning against a chair, correspondence scattered around. Very fannish. Of course, there were a lot *more* books than we own, and none of them science fiction, but in the history and biography Sandburg owned a lot of the same books that we do, which was a bit startling.

The Boonesborough reconstruction was notable mostly for the fact that the forge and the powder magazine were only 30 to 40 foot apart. Mike Longcor, who is a blacksmith and owns black powder weaponry, said that that was probably far enough 'most of the time', but I don't think I'd have wanted to live there. The pioneers were a sturdy lot . . .

I keep getting told I should join First Fandom, now that they've changed the eligibility to allow in anyone who's been in fandom for over 30 years. 'All your friends are there.' No, they aren't; most of our fan friends haven't been alive for much over thirty years. I enjoy contact with some of the other old farts, but not all of them.

(14 July 1994)

## Trips

LEIGH EDMONDS

6 Elvira Street  
Palmyra  
Western Australia 6157

Valma and I agree that it is nice to get a fanzine (*TMR* 18) from you for a change rather than the biennial telephone book. And there is plenty of readable and enjoyable stuff too, we have been reading it and enjoying it. Valma liked Jenny's and Yvonne's articles in particular.

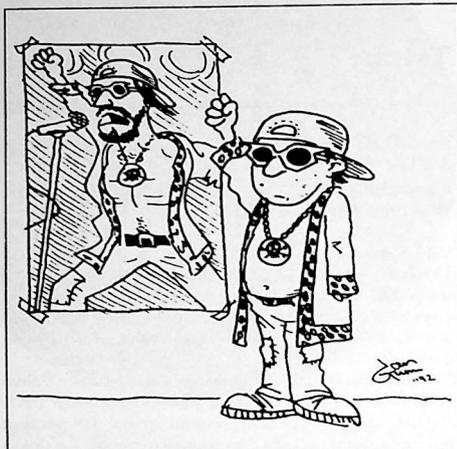
I was mortified by Dirk Strasser's article, since Valma and I hope to get to the US for a weeks in October 1993. Is there a way of getting around in the US without feeling obliged to hand over money to people for doing next to nothing? As Dirk says right at the beginning, to me it seems like 'an unnatural act', something that is obscene. I'd probably find it just as easy to relieve myself on the footpath. But it is just one of those things that has to be endured when travelling overseas.

\* In 1973 the tip expected by Americans was 15 per cent (although I didn't find this out until I'd paid 10-per-cent tips throughout most of the trip). \*

You probably heard that Valma and I spent a couple of months in Europe in 1992, helped out by people like Swissair and McDonnell-Douglas. It was a lovely if totally exhausting trip and, no, I don't have any intention of writing it up for you or any other fanzine. Actually, years of training in stf fandom proved invaluable in working our way around in history fandom. For example, there we were at a restaurant in Luzern chatting with some historians. One, a Dutchman, said that one of his hobbies was cooking, so I said something like 'Fine, we'll be there for dinner next Wednesday.' As it turned out, we were a couple of weeks late, but we discovered that he is a good cook, and he likes lots of red wine too. (He is also interested in the same areas of aviation history that I am, so we are now collaborating on an article.)

But, so far as I could see, nobody in Europe expected us to tip. Well, perhaps they expect tips in some parts of Europe, but not the parts that we could afford to go to.

Yvonne's report of your garden party reads like a who's who of Australian fandom, past and present. If somebody wasn't there, they somehow ended up being quoted in reference to someone else. I can imagine the endless hours of searching that Yvonne must have gone to to find all those little snippets about people. Did I really say that about going around to visit you running off *SFC*? I probably did, but I think that the context or something got lost along the way. I seem to recall the vision of watching you running off your fanzines as mainly one of the amazing energy and speed with which you turned the crank on the machine and the way in which the duplicated pages went shooting off into the air so that the whole of that front room seemed to be



filled with A4-sized snowflakes floating around and gently settling over every surface in sight.

\* When I tried to sell the duplicator a few years ago, it took five advertisements in *The Trading Post* to find any enquirer who could remember what a duplicator was! We Masters of Mimeo, obliterated from the public memory! \*

I always mean to write you a letter when I hear some good music on the radio — III, that is. I was almost moved to write a few months back when they started playing that lovely Keith Richards track (at least I like it) and the latest Divinyls track. The first time I heard the Richards track I was unaware that it was him, but from somewhere my subconscious must have recognised it, because the idea suddenly popped into my mind that this track had the 'bite' that had long since gone out of the Rolling Stones. Or perhaps that it has just gone out of Mick Jagger. The other thing that has attracted my ear in a lot of music that I like at the moment has been the drumming, which was good on both the Richards and the Divinyls tracks.

(9 May 1993)

\* You might remember from 1973, Leigh, that I promised that when the Rolling Stones returned to Australia, I would queue for umpteen hours to get the tickets for you, Valma and me. When they returned 22 years later, you are in Perth (did you go to the concert there?) and ticket queues have been replaced by phone booking. All 50,000 BASS tickets for each concert were sold by phone in an hour. Would I pay \$96 for a seat somewhere in the Southern Stand at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, about half a mile from the stage? I didn't waste my money. \*

Here is a Mini-Minor loc to your M-1 tank fanzine (19/20/21).

Lots and lots of lists, all the sign of people trying to see if they can make their minds tidier. If you want to see real list-makers and quantifiers, you should talk to

engineers, which is what I've been doing a lot of lately. They are very strange fellows, from one perspective anyhow.

It was lovely to see John Litchen's little article about the Aussiefan/Antifan film. It was a little expression of genius, and it was also a sign of the times when lots of people were doing all sorts of interesting and exciting things. I wonder where the movie is now.

(mid-August 1994)

\* Nobody seems to know where the American copy disappeared to. John Litchen has his own copy. Several letter-writers have mentioned seeing it at conventions in America. Nobody seems to have proposed anything like the film in the bid for Australia in 1999. \*

## Roy Orbison and Larry Branson

ANDY SAWYER

1 The Flaxyard  
Woodfall Lane  
Little Neston  
South Wirral L64 4BT  
England

Last night we saw a bio-drama of Roy Orbison (*Only the Lonely*). It was basically a linking of his songs in the context of his life-story. The script and direction were pretty weak, but Larry Branson as Orbison was uncannily accurate, both in looks and voice. (Pity he's not a good actor.) It's probably not worth seeing if you don't like Orbison. It doesn't get anywhere near what made Orbison tick — his extraordinary ability to create songs that went far beyond mere balladry and his obvious obsession with work — but maybe nothing could. He came over as a shy but gifted geek. Maybe that's what he was. Looking under the surface, it's interesting to speculate why Larry Branson should make a living out of being Roy Orbison. Elvis imitators respond to the sex and charisma of the original, but who'd want to *be* Roy Orbison except for the few people who suspect that 'Running Scared' and 'Only the Lonely' were written about them?

\* If I were given my three wishes, before wishing for Life Eternal or the Universal Prosperity and Contentment of Humanity, I would wish that I could sing as well as Roy Orbison did in 1962. And since Larry Branson has probably had the same wish since he was a boy, and has been given his wish, why not find a way to make a public exhibition of oneself singing like Roy Orbison? The trouble with imitators is that they don't feel free to go beyond the repertoire of the person being imitated. It would be wonderful if Branson could sing in the Orbison style the best of

today's ballads. But that won't happen. Like Björn Again, the band that imitates Abba, or the Australian Doors (doing quite nicely in Britain), he'll be condemned to sing forever the songs that made his hero famous. And nothing but. \*

The audience was made up mainly of people in their forties and above (that is, people who were into Orbison the first time round), but Rosamund and Harriet came largely because of his involvement with the Traveling Wilburys! I quite liked the Wilburys imitation, though I've since been told that they got the sharing of the vocals for 'Handle With Care' wrong.

(10 May 1994)

---

## Pavilions

---

**RALPH ASHBROOK**  
303 Tregaron Road  
Bala Cynwyd PA 19004  
USA

Re TMR 18: Thank you for sending me the second place prize in the Gerald Murnane Dream Contest: an all-expenses-paid trip from 1964 through 1992. I'm glad you liked my suggestion that Gerald's dream represented the Mind/Body Problem ('Gerald doesn't see the body as a blossoming garden any more. His refuge is the mind, which reflects the buildings/tardis. It appears to reside in a small place, but extends beyond limit.') Imagine my surprise upon discovering that first place went to the Peter/Lucy Problem.

Clever of you to reveal the actual riddle of the sphinx in Yvonne's piece. The sphinx really asked Oedipus, 'What would account for a door-slam, followed by a hush, followed by a door-slam?'

I figured out about the death of the novel. Like the Golden Age of SF and the Kingdom of Heaven, it isn't out there. It's in here. I recently read A. S. Byatt's *Possession*. I loved it. It was fun and smart. But then I read *The Lincoln Hunters* again and it restored me to a place, time and self. I won't be surprised when this turns out to be someone's golden age. And I like the message that making any absolute judgements is self-indulgent. Your lists from year to year reflect an enthusiasm and coherence without being stuck.

Another writer I just stumbled on is Rebecca Goldstein. Her *Mind-Body Problem* (1983) is a good idea. It takes the dumbness and funniness of the history of philosophy and the dumbness and funniness of sex and shows what it might be like to be genius.

While looking for Flannery O'Connor stories in old collections I stumbled on 'Death of a Traveling Salesman' by Eudora Welty. She captures a mind-set through conversation that I find jarringly Phildickian.

Thank you again for showing us inside your pavilions through the years. Am looking forward to your Swimsuit Issue.

(May 1993)

---

## Warhoon 28 still alive

---

**WALT WILLIS**  
32 Warren Road  
Donaghadee  
Northern Ireland BT21 OPD

Yvonne Rousseau's 'The Garden Party' is an extraordinary piece of work. I can't remember anything like it in fanzines before. The nearest equivalent I can think of was when Irish fandom used to take advantage of fine summer days by sitting out on the front lawn of Oblique House zapping passing insects with water pistols and capping each other's puns. This activity, I recall, we referred to as 'discussing broad matters of policy'. What particularly impressed me about Yvonne's account was the detailed information she was able to produce about everyone she mentions. This would have taken me months to dig out of old fanzines and correspondence. I'm left with the impression that Yvonne has got a fantastically well organised mind.

(5 June 1993)

The tribute to Roger Weddall is moving, and makes me regret all the more the inadequacy of my own recollection of him. To my shame I have no recollection of my meeting with him recorded in your photograph of us sitting beside each other at Conspiracy. It's some reassurance that even you have the date of Conspiracy wrong. It was Magicon in 1992, surely?

\* \*Blush\* You're right. It was Magicon, 1992. \*

Martin Bridgstock's account of his controversy with the Creation Scientists is utterly fascinating. We are fortunate to have such a doughty champion. This is the first detailed account I have seen of the beliefs of these nut cases, and I am wondering about their attitude to fossils. Do they believe, like the elder Gosse, who inspired by the thought that Eve must have had a navel, believed that all the fossils and similar vestiges of pre-history were created simultaneously in 4004 BC?

I liked your Lists section, though I have to skip most of the stuff about music on account of my hearing difficulties. But this is more than made up for by your fascinating asides like the one about it having been possible to travel from New York to the centre of the continent by interlinked tramways. I first heard of this from Ted White, who told me about a possible journey from New York to Chicago. This is my first intimation that the possible journey extended beyond Chicago.

Thanks for your good offices in getting David Russell his copy of *Warhoon 28*, and for your own extravagant compliment about that publication. I keep seeing references to people getting a copy of *Warhoon 28*, but never any comment from the people themselves about it.

\* Okay, there's an invitation. Send your review of *Warhoon 28* to me, but also send a copy to Walt Willis.



If you haven't seen *Warhoon 28*, it's a collection of Wall's complete fan writings of the 1950s and 1960s. Richard Bergeron did a magnificent job of putting together and illustrating this giant book, but unfortunately a few years ago he sent all his spare copies to Joe Siclari to sell on his behalf. As David Russell found out, it's very difficult to extract copies from Joe Siclari, so I hesitate to make recommendations about buying copies. I don't even know if any are left.

One thing struck me about 'The Harp Stateside', Wall's account of his trip to America during the early 1950s. The trip, paid for by fans, that was the basis of the idea of the Trans Atlantic Fan Fund (TAFF). How little America changed between the early 1950s and 1973, when I travelled there. Or rather, the differences between America and Australia/Britain/Ireland were already well established then. (I'm talking about the many aspects of American road culture — interstate buses, roadside motels and diners, and the general convenience and domination of Interstate driving — that did not become part of Australian culture until the 1970s or later.) \*

I see that Joseph Nicholas is still going about his business of losing friends and alienating people. I remember once publishing a Joseph Nicholas Course for Vacuum Cleaner Salesmen that began with 'What a dirty house you have.' He didn't understand what I was getting at.

(23 August 1994)

---

## Backyard event

---

**CY CHAUVIN**  
**14248 Wilfred**  
**Detroit**  
**Michigan 48213**  
**USA**

I love travel issues, TAFF and DUFF trip reports especially, so the Travel Issue of *TMR* (No. 18) was a pretty good read for me. My favourite parts are the small

personal details of everyday culture, the differences people only notice in personal reports.

John Bangsund's article 'How I Became an Editor' is both interesting and surprising (I would never have guessed he was a former theological student), and it provides some coverage of the same time period you wrote about in the *SFC Reprint Edition*. I am fascinated by stories about how people discover sf or fandom; is it the echoes of my own experiences that I enjoy, the nostalgia for that time when everything was new? Or maybe, it's the greater interest and enthusiasm that writers usually bring to material, the detail of personal experience. Also, John Bangsund of 1992 writes better than his 1964 persona.

Your editorial was wonderful. 'Did you ever form a close bond with a group of friends . . . ?' says it all. I don't know if meeting a friend from the past might cloud my memory, but sometimes it can be traumatic. I know when I first went to conventions, it was to meet those I had written to for the first time. That special pleasure is very rare now. Dick and Leah Smith wrote on their postcard to me that Australian fandom seemed like US fandom in the 1970s to them, and I wonder if at least part of that feeling came from meeting so many people they 'knew' from letters and fanzines for the first time.

This is probably unfair, but summation of the theme of *The Last Magician* ('a crystal shape whose sides are the individual people of the group') sounds much more interesting than your description of the novel's events. This is in contrast to a review that Elaine wrote of *Disch's The MD* in a previous *SF Commentary*, in which she panned the novel but her description of its events made *The MD* seem very engaging.

Yvonne Rousseau's 'The Garden Party' is certainly an unexpected piece. How novel and amusing to have someone who was not at the event write about it — and then to do extensive quotes from old fanzines as background material! I'm amazed, and convinced all the more that events in fanzines happen in a sort of null-time, apart from real-time, with the past and present all part of the same whole.

And then of course Yvonne quotes from 'The Ones Who Walk Away from Melbourne', my imaginary DUFF Report, and 'The Garden Party' becomes even a step further removed from reality. This tickled me immensely, but I can see that I should have a lot to answer for if I ever turn up in Australia (as well as feel embar-

rassed).

I also loved the photograph of 'Monty, the party animal', and Yvonne's descriptions of the other cats. Other feline photos would be a nice touch in future. (I also enjoyed the photos of the fans in your garden.)

Yvonne did such a nice article that I think I'll commission her to write up my next backyard event!

PS: A Best Book of the Year: let me recommend *The Last Kings of Thule* by Jean Malutte, a beautifully written (and translated) anthropological text about the Eskimos of northern Greenland. Based on the author's experiences in Greenland in 1951, it is as wonderfully alien as any SF novel and a great deal more human than many. Of course, it made me wonder if it might have been one of the sources Le Guin used for Winter in *The Left Hand of Darkness*.

(22 June 1993)

\* Thanks for all the compliments. Cy, but you still haven't told me what *you* have been doing during the late eighties and early nineties. \*

---

## From your elder chick . . .

---

**MAE STRELKOV**  
**4501 Palma Sola**  
**Jujuy**  
**Argentina**

[In *TMR* 18] I noted your wish to know what happened to Mike Shoemaker. His last letter to me reached us when we already had moved up to these northern wilds. It was some four or so years ago he wrote me that he'd showed to several friends an article of mine on language roots (from a 1974 *WSFA Journal*). He explained that they wanted to read more of that sort of material, and had I any more they could see? At that time I was still getting back my strength from a pancreatitis bout and didn't feel inspired to enter a proper correspondence, so merely made a bundle of some files I could spare which he needn't return.

I know the material wasn't first rate: I just happened to have it handy. I don't recall what it was about, only that it was some sort of article. I did send to Ron Clarke the first time he sent me a *Mentor* a similar messy bundle of stuff, and he published it very neatly, and even mailed it back to me.

Mike never wrote again. It could have been that the reply got lost in the mails. I waited a while for his opinion on the material I'd sent, but then feared he must be so disappointed that he preferred not to have to let me know.

At the 1974 World Science Fiction Convention at Washington DC, at Alexis and Dolly Gilliland's house, the Washington SF Association gathered one evening, and I recall sitting on the steps of some stairs with Mike

and talking about language roots, and what a passion it was for him to think about such old language terms. We must have chatted for at least half an hour, while the partying went on all over the house, upstairs and downstairs. (There was another staircase. We didn't seem to be in anybody's way.)

To lose a friend with a passion for thinking about our oldest language roots has been for me a true loss. So few care about this topic.

(17 May 1993)

\* Can anybody solve this puzzle? Mike Shoemaker stopped writing to me or sending fanzines at about the same time as he disappeared from Mae's ken. I valued his letters of comment greatly, as much for their asperity as their information and opinions. \*

As a follow-up to my letter in *TMR* 19/2021:

*Auntie Loo, the giant pig:* She grew so huge at last that she used to step on her own digs in the mud she loved to wallow in. And her brain developed. She learned to mistrust all her 'loving humans'. She heard and watched the culling going on. As the boys and our worker (Benjamin) dragged off her progeny regularly and they never returned, she grew suspicious. She became a hurtling, murderous monster every time someone tried to take away a pig. In vain she tried to fight for their lives. Tony no longer could go near her, nor anyone else. The flunkies took over, corralled her, bound her, sacrificed her. She was prepared for sale, and the enormous mass of her healthy flesh was transformed into 'silver fish' (dollars). And we all felt so bad, even the flunkies.

*Ducks (and chickens):* I look back on golden moments in bright spring sunshine, when I was still illusion-prone. Two tiny wild ducks with coloured feathers had joined the white ones I described. Some gypsies in a fine new pickup had stopped to buy a pig; their kiddies had let loose two tiny ducks they'd pinched elsewhere in our irrigation ditch, and the pair swam off and they couldn't be found. So the gypsies, their kids and a pig, drove off duckless. I stuck the wild ducks in with the big Morocco species I've mentioned to you already. The huge white ducks (once mature) chased the two girl darker ducks in vain at first when they grew bigger. The wonderful native ducks flew off in gorgeous sweeps of wing around us while the white ducks watched bewildered, unable to give chase.

But in the end papa male duck raped his wife to death, then raped his daughters to death (bashing in their heads, no matter how we tried to intervene). Then he raped (with a dragging member worn out from misuse) a hen or two, setting bad examples for his stalwart male offspring. It was a wild season, but the girl coloured ducks did get caught at times and produced eggs that produced cute ducklets, and so on.

But I knew what lay ahead — more raping of innocent young chicks (ducks and hens). The male Moroccan ducks also tried to pursue and mount their toddlers, and that could not be allowed. We gave the ducks, the few survivors, to Benjamin, our worker. (I will never pick broken eggshells off newly hatched fledglings again. Not in this life anyway. I'm too old to solve marital infidelities and such. I'm 77 now.) I'm sick of chickens too. We decided fresh eggs (you have to hunt or the

chickens and dogs eat them first) aren't worth it. We buy our eggs now from Palma Sola or San Pedro.

The pigs thrive. They're full of beans (the boiling of which is another outdoor chore for our boys). Yes, beans we buy by the truckload.

Am I still in cahoots with the Universe and such? (I hear a monstrous chuckle of fatherly/motherly amusement over this chick here, me!)

Swamped by my own verbosity, I put the typewriter away, and tidied all the mess around me. The clan has been clamouring: 'Paint!' Those few who had my paintings from decades back had them on display in their homes. Visitors went ecstatic. Our new son-in-law on a visit from Canada made an issue of it. He wants paintings — all I can produce. He doesn't want my writings — ugh! My daughter-in-law in Canada, Elsa, asked for an autobiography I'd mentioned in a letter. (We exchange long missives though she's no longer George's wife, but it doesn't matter to either of us. We're better friends than ever.) Neil glanced, it seems at the material. It's on computer now, typed up by Elsa's sister's secretary. Now Elsa is showing it to *Christian* publishers. 'Fundamentalists,' she wrote. 'like your parents were, somewhat. But if they want to change a word we'll show it to more modern publishers next.' There seems to be a stir as it goes its rounds, and I giggle imaginatively, as I visualise how I must be knocking those Fundamentalists for a spin with the material.

Elsa's son Steve (one of our 16 grandchildren sprinkled everywhere) just wrote so loyally. He read my book and it made him feel so close to my father Benjamin. In my last letter to Elsa I told her, 'Oh, let the Fundamentalists "embellish" the manuscript if they want. It's really my parents' story more than mine, and they'd have wanted it "embellished", i.e. censored, poor loves. Why not?'

Steve now writes: 'I don't think it would be a good idea to delete the "enhancements".' (By that he meant the jokes I'd made at my poor parents' expense, pulling their leg about their dread of Far Eastern religious views like reincarnation. And what if I were a nasty Buddhist in my last life!)

Elsa is all eager to get the book(s) launched somehow. Everybody will find the stuff infuriating — fundamentalists, atheists, satanists, what have you. I had such fun writing it, some six or eight years back. But cozening up to the Creator is 'too daring, maybe too wicked' (even for Satan to stomach, I guess).

Ron Clarke got my other book on our first years here, and it's to appear in *The Mentor* gradually.

Steve's letter continued: he's against omitting my imaginative bits about parents' and grandparents' contretemps before I was born or even thought of. All this is based on their stories and my imaginative additions, of course. Just a bit nasty — I get nasty when discussing fundamentalist influences on anyone, you see. For this reason, all praise for Martin Bridgstock's story of his fight with them. I fight too, but with mockery and laughter. Imagine if that fundamentalist press in Canada should buy the book! A viper in their hand!

The story of my parents wasn't angry. It was poignant, loving, heartbreaking, admiring, despairing, all of that. They were always heroic, never villains. But oh so closed

in their minds! Tragical! Imagine fundamentalists experiencing 'the Rapture' my way. Rapturous I've been throughout my life, but not their way. 'Jesus comes.' But not as they think it should be.

I am so getting the publications lately of Polebridge Press in the States. They debunk Christianity's traditions, but keep the kernel of Jesus as the overthrower of every status quo.

I'm sitting at the edge of the bed with the typewriter on a low nightstand. As a swift touch typist, the position is not the best; hence the errors. This is already too long a letter. I love the silence and wordlessness of painting. I aim to reach 100 paintings before getting back to my language studies (always so enjoyable to do). But no sooner are the pictures done than owners show up. Tony's wife's clan all want my paintings. Sylvia's mother-in-law in Jujuj is so nice that I gave her four already and promised more. Tony's grandmother-in-law was so pleased with her painting that she knit me a pair of warm moccasin-type socks. I'm wearing them for this cold spell. I know Neil in Canada on his next trip will try to acquire a heap, and I must take some to Elsa and her kids too. Nobody wants me dead till I do those 100 or so. As for my language studies . . . who cares? Only I.

---

## Odd glimpses of Australia

---

**PATRICK MCGUIRE**  
7541-D Weather Worn Way  
Columbia  
Maryland 21046  
USA

I enjoyed Yvonne Rousseau's account of the garden party. It is impressive, although not quite unprecedented, that without being there she could write it up both vividly and in a way that struck actual attendees as faithful.

I was also interested to see from the photograph that Yvonne's 'marquee' has sides (in defiance of the *New World Dictionary's* definition of 'marquee', although in conformity with the *OED's*.) The implication seems to be that Melbourne autumn rains stand a good chance of being heavy and slanting, which is a bit more dramatic weather than what I'd always pictured (on little evidence). As the American dictionary's definition may suggest, our picnic and garden-party shelters, whether permanent (in parks) or temporary, tend to have roofs only, with open sides. (However, parts of California have the US climate most similar to Melbourne, and my limited California experience does not include picnic shelters.)

As I write, the matter of Lucy Sussex, Peter Nicholls and Damien Broderick has had rather over a year to resolve itself, and I hope some progress has been made.

\* It didn't, and it hasn't been. \*

The US archetypal fan feuds were mostly the product of teenagers. Reference to the new *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* quickly establishes that even Lucy, considerably the youngest of this trio, is easily old enough to be a teenager's mother.

A propos of little, I also learned from the *Encyclopedia* that the current name of famed onetime *Amazing* editor Cele Goldsmith (first to publish Le Guin and others) is now Cele Goldsmith Lalli. A few days later, I saw her under that name on network (Sunday-morning) television, being interviewed as an expert on contemporary wedding etiquette!

On Yvonne Rousseau on Australian national myths, and especially on the contention (in Bruce's summary, not the excerpt) that these made Cherry Wilder's books puzzling to non-Australians. If there's an American/Australian difference here, it would seem to be not that America lacks stories of people who were lost and then found, or not found (Roanoke Island), or of explorers and settlers starving heroically (various Spanish explorers of North America; Jamestown, Plymouth, the Donner Party), but there are *also* stories of well-planned competently run expeditions (archetypally that of Lewis and Clark), and also of military conflict, frontier guerrilla warfare, etc. If the Oz national mythos is indeed as summarised, an American should be able to respond to the patterns, but they would look a bit drab and monochrome. That would indeed give Australians different mental furniture, but on the American side, it would be a more subtle effect than if Americans *lacked* parallels to the Australian experience.

Conversely, Yvonne's theory ought to mean that Australians ought not to have natural resonance with large portions of the American experience, but on the contrary my impression was that American literature and popular culture were fairly well received in Australia. You guys spend a lot of time writing about American sf, anyhow.

Considerably more background information might have helped to make more sense of 'Mabe and Jenny See the World'. The relations between the individuals mentioned take a while to guesstimate, and one has to keep reminding oneself that 'Jenny' and 'Jinny' and 'Jenny Gibbs' are all different people. Although it is nowhere stated in so many words, I presume that this expedition was inspired at least partly by Tinsel Town business, and that this was the logic for a US itinerary consisting exclusively of the Atlanta Airport and parts of California, a scarcity of data-points which does not inhibit the author from deriving all sorts of conclusions about 'the US'. I suspect the account was originally written for a family newsletter or some such, and that much of the problem resides from *TMR's* editor, for not providing more context, rather than the author herself.

\* Incorrect. I wanted Jenny Bryce to provide more context, but she had good reasons for not giving it. \*

My impressions of the various John Bangsund pieces finishing off the issue are more uniformly positive, but just as all happy families are alike, it's hard (for me,

anyhow) to say what in particular I liked about things that I liked. No flaws obtruded themselves. Bangsund is not some Hollywood type (or friend of Hollywood types) but a fan, and one with non-fannish interests that I share to one degree or another. Moreover, I've known him through print for about twenty years. Accordingly I come in with some context, get things better explained in his articles, and am drawn to want to know about his experiences and ideas.

(19 July 1993)

I enjoyed the story of Martin Bridgstock's battle with Creation Science. Martin gives no indication that he ever recycled the exploit into something academically career-enhancing, which somewhat surprises me. Surely something that counts for sociology academic brownie points could be written about the structure of the Queensland Creation Science Foundation and its supporters (including their evident low interest in error checking and general integrity, in contravention of the moral principles of the religion they were nominally upholding), or indeed about the structure of the people who end up actively opposing them (as Martin says, most scientists try to ignore the whole matter: who take up the cudgels, why, and how do they organise themselves?).

And surely it is of potential sociological interest that 'fundamentalism' should be strongest in the part of Australia closest to the Equator, just as in the US. This seems quite strange, especially in that even the Australian southern coast is no farther from the Equator than is the American South. Does it have to do with low urbanisation? Ethnic background of the people involved? Religious composition not explained by the above factors? And of course there are questions of definitions left unexamined by Martin's article. His graph more or less equates (at least for its purposes) Christian conservatism with fundamentalism, but at least in the US (where the word was coined) 'fundamentalism' refers specifically to a kind of extreme Evangelical Protestantism. There are also (say) highly conservative Catholics and Anglicans and Eastern Orthodox, but they are not trying to conserve the same things as are the fundamentalists.

\* I'll leave the answers to Martin. If he follows up these suggestions, I hope he offers the English-language version to me before he writes it in sociological language for academic publication. \*

'The Reunion': Forty-six students in one 'class'?! Does that mean (as it generally would have in an American elementary school in those years) physically in one classroom, with one teacher? It appears to from contextual clues. Was the student teacher there to help all year? Thirty would have been considered a bit too large for an American class.

\* Yes, forty-six in one classroom. And there were classes in the same school at the same time with more than fifty students. Student teachers came in for only a term at a time. Gerald Murnane once wrote a superb article about the psychological frame of mind that this situation imposed on the classroom

teacher: you had to run your room like a little kingdom.

Many of the teacher unions' campaigns in Victoria during the 1960s and 1970s were aimed at reducing the size of classes. Having succeeded in reducing them to twenty per class by the end of the 1980s, they are now faced with a primeval Education Minister who is doing his best to reduce all conditions in schools back to those of the 1950s. (Many suspect that Don Hayward pines for the good old days of the 1890s, when class sizes of 100 were common.) \*

It might have helped if, for your international audience, you'd explained how Australian grades are numbered. Your sixth grade appears (p. 29) to have been followed immediately by four years of 'high school', presumably followed by university or equivalent. (Unless there is something in between.)

\* Oops. Somewhere I must have said that I spent four years of secondary education at Oakleigh High School. This took me to the end of Form 4 (Year 10 under the current system). My parents moved to Melton, and I finished secondary school at Bacchus Marsh High School: Forms 5 and 6 (Years 11 and 12). I went to university much at the same age as students in America do.

Nobody else noticed this boo-boo. \*

What is the source behind your allegation that intercity tramways ('streetcar lines' in American English) died in America *because the automobile manufacturers bought them and closed them down?* (p. 43). I've never heard that story before (and I live here, and my parents lived through the period in question), and it sounds suspiciously like the plot of *Roger Rabbit*. My understanding is that the intercity tramways couldn't cover their expenses after ridership dropped because of passenger trains, buses, private cars and shifting population patterns. Some are now being revived on a modest scale (often now called 'light rail lines') and there is talk of more sweeping revivals.

\* The war between private and public transport is an important issue here. Those supporting public transport often quote on talk radio programs the 'fact', which they seemed to have gleaned from an American book whose title and author I cannot remember, that during the 1920s and 1930s the American automobile industry bought public transport systems in many American systems and deliberately closed them in order to give impetus to the motor car. I can't say how I would find the person who originally read that, or the book that gave this as fact. Maybe some Australian reader can help.

My feeling, when reading *Ragtime*, was that the idea of an intercity tramway was so wonderful that I couldn't see how anybody could have allowed the system to disappear. But then who could believe that I am currently living in a State whose Premier is trying to build a monstrous freeway system when cities all over the world are replacing their freeways with new public transport systems? \*

---

## Tips against tipping

---

**CRAIG HILTON**  
**PO Box 430**  
**Collie**  
**Western Australia 6225**

I enjoyed *TMR* 18, and I particularly identified with Dirk Strasser's piece on tipping in the USA. He's right — it is very hard to pay what's printed on a bill and then have to give more money by . . . well, by some sort of duty of obligation. That's why I learned eventually, when on holiday there, always to enter a restaurant with a reserve of loose change and never to use up your coins paying for your food. I once charged a light lunch of sandwiches to my hotel room account and then found that I only had a \$10 note, so I made my way across to the bar to break it down into something smaller, only to be latched onto by three waitpersons who I'm sure had taken lessons from frigate birds: 'Ah, will you be leaving a gratuity, sir?' 'Yes, I'm in the process of working on it!' Sheesh.

And did you know that you don't have just to tip the man who carried your bags but also the man who *told* him to carry them?

But then there is their goods and services tax. *Don't ever let a government set one up here!* It makes standing in line for an ice cream an exercise in the ludicrous. You have your 40 cents ready in your hand: 'That'll be 43 cents, sir.' Double take. Start rummaging around for your wallet. Look for another 3 cents. Appear for all the world like an innocent abroad. Where else will 'Five postcards for a dollar' cost \$1.05? It's a satanic plot, I tell you.

(26 December 1992)

\* A bit after you wrote this letter, Craig, Australians voted back into office a government they didn't particularly like because it promised *not* to introduce a goods and services tax. I hope voters remember this. \*

---

## More, please, from Jenny Bryce

---

**JEANNE MEALY**  
**766 Laurel Avenue**  
**St Paul**  
**Minnesota 55104**  
**USA**

Re *TMR* 18: Great cover lol! Ian Gunn is amazingly

funny and talented. As I worked for the Minneapolis convention bureau for awhile, the illo on page 2 (the alien looking at tourist information) caused me to burst out laughing as I turned the page.

I'm sorry I missed the Garden Party. It sounds like a successful blend of friends getting reacquainted and discovering interconnections ('You know them!') Ywonne's version of the Garden Party was truly inspired.

I am so impressed with Jenny Bryce's 'Mabe and Jenny See the World' that I'm nearly at a loss for words. They went places I haven't been (yet) and experienced things new to me (and best experienced at a distance, in some cases). That doesn't guarantee interest or high praise, though. Jenny's writing style merits anything good I can say. The power went out here for an hour, and I wasted no time in getting a flashlight so I could continue reading (after checking that it was more than just a blown fuse and there was nothing I could do except be patient). She makes humorous writing look easy, with those understated descriptions and comments! I would love to see more writing from her.

I enjoyed Dirk Strasser's article on tipping in the US. Maybe it'll make him feel better to hear that some of us natives are still confused about who to tip and how much to give them. The tip is usually left on the table when a diner leaves. It also can be given to the person at the register when the bill is paid, with instructions that it be given to the waitperson, just as he did.

(8 January 1994)

---

## Gallowglass

---

\* The first part of the following letter from **NED BROOKS** springs from a discussion in his fanzine *It Goes on the Shelf* about the name 'gallowglass'. This interested me, because it is both the name of one of my favourite Barbara Vine novels, and, I thought, a variant on my own surname, which I've been always told means 'servant of the bishop': \*

**NED BROOKS**  
713 Paul Street  
Newport News  
Virginia 23605  
USA

The *OED* gives *gallowglass* (without the 'w') as the primary English spelling of the Gaelic *galloglach*, but says that the *gall* is from the Gaelic for 'foreigner, stranger' and the *oglach* a very all-purpose word that could mean 'youth', 'servant', or 'warrior'. The *OED* traces the term back to 1515. It generally seems to have meant a class of mercenary soldier, mentioned in one reference as particularly being armed with an axe. Then in 1703 comes

the reference that seems to have gotten into DeCamp — M. Martin's *Description of the Western Isles of Scotland*: 'Every chieftain had a bold Armour-Bearer whose business was always to attend the person of his Master night and day to prevent any surprize, and this person was called the Galloglach'. That is, a bodyguard — and perhaps a paid foreigner as being less susceptible to clan feuds.

The *OED* also gives the much better-known word *gillie*, also from the Gaelic, and says it is from *gille*, meaning 'lad' or 'servant', and quotes a 1730 remark about the Highland chieftain with his Gilly standing behind his chair. Obviously this corresponds to your idea about the 'Gill' in Gillespie, and seems quite contradictory to their remarks about *gallowglass*.

Good for Martin Bridgstock! It's encouraging to learn that a non-expert can check the references and show that the labours of generations of scientists who really want to know what happened in the distant past far outweighs the blather of religious fanatics.

I have never been to a school reunion of any sort, nor had any desire to. Certainly I was never likely to attend a reunion of my sixth-grade class, which would have been at a French school in Concepcion, Chile. Other than my brother, I can only remember the name of one other boy I knew at that school, Manuel Sanhueza. All the classes were in French or Spanish, and I cannot remember a single useful fact or idea I learned there.

I listen to a lot of classical music on the radio, but seldom know which piece is on. There are a few favourites I always recognise, of course — I had fallen asleep the other night and woke up to an attempt to play Lalo's *Symphonie Espagnole*. It was so awful that I listened to the end to see who was responsible — I seem to remember that the violinist was Ann Wilson. My favourite version is the old one by Henryk Szeryng and the Chicago Symphony.

I had heard of the Gorecki Third Symphony and was curious about it, but not enough to buy one. The secretary at the office lent me the CD, and frankly, I couldn't see much in it. Some of the vocal parts reminded me a bit of Villa Lobos' *Bachianas Brasileiras* but totally lacking any pizzazz.

Is the Barry Humphries of the putrid 'Dame Edna Everage' phenomenon (I saw a few minutes of it on TV once, and that was way too much) the same as wrote the strange and wonderful 1974 book *Bizarre?* What a waste of talent if it is!

(12 July 1994)

\* Yes, it's the same Barry Humphries. His most remarkable creation was Sandy Stone, already killed off, although occasionally resurrected in a stage show. Sandy Stone, a particularly tired old suburban Melbourne man, summarised everything Humphries loved about Melbourne as well as everything he despised. Edna Everage seems to have become a monster out of Humphries' control. Certainly she and the American public saw little in each other, whereas British theatregoers, consistent fans of Humphries, stay fascinated by what Melburnians often find are particularly arcane in-jokes about their own city. \*

---

## Why no Favourite Paintings?

---

**SYD BOUNDS**  
27 Borough Road  
Kingston on Thames  
Surrey KT2 6BD  
England

[Re *TMR* 18:] I like the cover but the star picture (obviously) was Elaine's photo of Monty. How can you expect to compete with *Playboy* unless you give a feline his own centrefold?

\* Monty, most wondrous of cats, died two years after that photo was taken. \*

Remember Phil Harbottle, editor of *Vision of Tomorrow*? Recently he had an sf picture story published in the *Garth* strip in the *Daily Mirror*. I've been collaborating with him on another script (non-sf) for the same series and he's just sent in the finished script. Fingers crossed now — especially as my rent shot up this year.  
(7 May 1993)

[Re *TMR* 19/20/21:] 'The Lark Ascended': After all these years, I have finally realised why 'I Must Be Talking to My Friends' is such a must-read-on. You are writing a soap opera but, instead of devising fictional characters, you use real people. Time to get busy on an Aussie tv soap, two of which are popular over here.

\* I thought that it was obvious from the mid-1970s that 'I Must Be Talking to My Friends' is my own personal soap opera! (Or continuous diary.) \*

And a picture of Walt Willis: I wouldn't have recognised him, but it's years since we last met. Then again, looking at that burly figure on page 28, I doubt if I'd know you now. Time goes faster these days.

Lists:

- While I was on holiday, I saw an old film, *The Wrong Box*, on video.
- My favourite sf book: *Pasquale's Angel* by Paul J. McAuley (Gollancz): an alternative history set in Florence in the 1500s.
- Crime: I've been reading the 'M'sieur Pamplemousse' novels of Michael Bond (author of *Paddington Bear* — is he famous down there?).
- Poems: Surely you must know *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*?
- Serious omission department: what, no list of favourite paintings? When was the last time you looked in an art gallery?

Ian Gunn's cartoons set off Dave Langford nicely.

Your NSW Education people are using one of my children's ghost stories in a program for disadvantaged schools.

(22 July 1994)

\* You've caught me at a weak point, Syd. My feet and

back won't let me traipse around art galleries, and I don't like looking at paintings on walls. (If I put on my spectacles, I have to stand back from the paintings. If I take them off, I have to stand right up to them.) I'm not even sure that I like much pre-1880s painting. I take much greater pleasure in black-and-white art from any period, particularly black-and-white photography (especially in films of the 1930s and 1940s) and nineteenth-century etchings. \*

---

## Information Revolution or Terror?

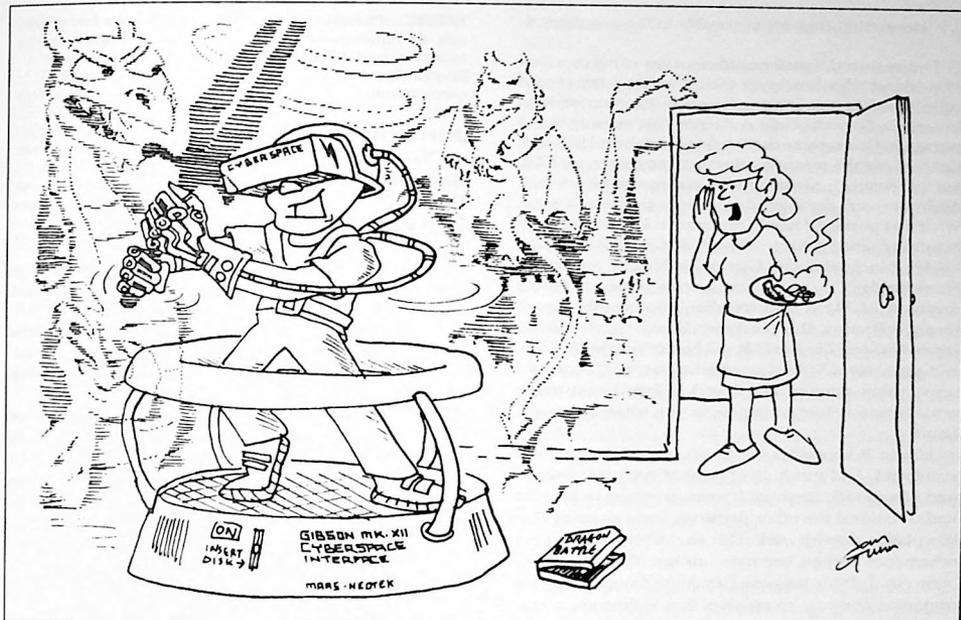
---

**PAUL VOERMANS**  
11 Leinster Grove  
Brunswick  
Victoria 3056

Time travel is indeed possible — in fragments. I keep wondering what the future will make of all these lists. That is, of course, beside the point, since 'Lists! Glorious Lists!' is obviously meant as a forum, but I imagine the grief of future readers who pick up on the passions involved in some of the lists without being able to access any of their contents because no LPs have survived. It's all very Stanislaw Lem. What astounds me is the diversity of taste they reveal. There are many other forms that enlightenment about one another might take, but this one is full of a happy irrelevance. The rambling listifying is somehow very Australian, and the underlying complaint against from some of your fellow reader/listener/viewers reminds me of the charge laid against many Australian films: they are told in a charming fashion but don't seem to go anywhere much. To which the reply is: so who gives a bugger? The old world produced so much linear order, and with it lower infant mortality, underground sewage, the bicycle and many other wonders, but it also produced megadeath and suicide as a way out of high school graduation; the very existence of *TMR* has something to contribute to a new way of looking at things which belies its surface sensualist self-satisfaction (phew).

I have been reading various books on serial killers, genetics, all of Jane Austen, *The Whole Internet User's Guide and Catalogue*, I'm slowly ploughing my way through *Alien Shores* (there is an article on all these Australian sf anthologies, but am I the one to write it? I'm reading them all, anyhow), and Fiona gave me Rousseau's *Confessions* for my birthday (the lovely Everyman Editions rebirth: a cot-death or still going?). It's sitting by the bed waiting for the right moment.

My enthusiastic leap into the cybersurf (wearing my daggiest nineteenth-century cozzie and skiffy board in hand) will no doubt bore the many people we know who have been paddling, perhaps kayaking, for years — it will also bore many of those who haven't been there and



haven't done that. Yet it occurs to me that if you sent out *TMR* and *SFC* as net items, going just by the postage on the copy sent to me, you would save you enough to buy the most luxurious (and therefore even Bruce-friendly) connection to the net, even if only a minor proportion of subscribers receive it by e-mail or FTP. It would, as the bullcrap goes, pay for itself, since beyond the hardware you're probably looking at a total investment of about a dollar to actually send all of them out. In fact, if you have *TMR* on disk and haven't managed to send them all out yet, I'd be happy to e-mail on your behalf those of your readers who are on the net, asking them if they'd like it in that form rather than hard copy. You need not bother yourself with any technical details for the moment. Sending the actual magazine would also be a simple matter. You are very welcome to make the inquiry through me for this or future issues. I hardly expect the form of your publications to change (I prefer the paper sort of zine myself) and I think it'd be too much trouble *at first* to send the illustrations, some of which would be a great pity to miss, but there is no reason why the two versions should not exist side by side even if you don't don Bermuda shorts and leap into the virtual spume yourself for a while yet.

\* I'm chuffed by the offer, especially as publishing a *TMR* takes many months of saving. But a proposal that seems to you easy seems to me impossible:

- How would I make sure that I hit all the people I wanted to reach?
- How would those people on the net know that a version of *TMR* existed there? Most of my readers are not on the net, and I would still have to send

the paper version to everybody to make sure I missed nobody.

- How would I send it? The magazine is currently coded in Ventura, which is not one file, but five, which cannot be decoded unless you have your hard drive set up exactly as mine is. The WordStar text by itself includes the Ventura codes. To remove them would take a month's work, and then I would need to recode the text in . . . something. How do people write text for the Internet? How do they make sure that the person at the other end can decode what they send?
- Only the paper version represents what I want people to receive. It's not a matter of mere illustrations, but of showing exactly what and where everything fits.
- Only the paper version exists. Electronic versions of documents don't exist until somebody prints them out. The only Internet documents I've seen so far (text only) look eminently suitable for throwing in the bin. This is why I object to the Internet as it seems to be used at the moment: a vast amount of effort producing almost nothing that could be called real documents.
- I seem almost incapable of working out computer software from a manual. Therefore I am very reluctant to get involved with the Internet. Another bloody program to send me up the wall! I would be completely in your hands, or in the hands of anybody else who undertook to send the magazine, and you would have to put up with me forever carping at you to send me my e-mail!
- The text alone of each issue of *TMR* is 1 Mb. A full Postscript version would be about 20 Mb. Exactly where does one park documents of this

size so that they are accessible to the enquirer? \*

Unless forced, I shall not attempt any of my own lists. The friend who has been taking care of my record collection has just returned from a two-year stint in Indonesia. So both of our collections are coming out of storage in Colac, mine for the first time since 1987. Not that we have the means to play them any more (or CDs, for that matter); never mind, I can commandeer Don Ashby's record-playing thingy and put them on cassette. What do I possess? I hardly remember. Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Patti Smith, Harold Budd, Elvis Costello, Pookie Snackenburger, Glenn Gould, The Supremes, Frank Bridge . . . do I have any of these, or have I dreamed it? More time-travelling. Some other guy's record collection. Did I ever own *More Songs about Building and Food* or *The Pearl*? It will be exciting to find out, and probably a little disappointing as well, because I suspect that some of the titles I believe I own might actually have belonged to people with whom I shared a house.

Martin Bridgstock's article on creation science was wonderful. And speaking of right of reply not being a part of scientific method, it was interesting to hear on Radio National the other day some *doctor* claiming that inoculation doesn't work. This was all very well, but her vehemence earned her more airtime than her opponent got. I don't suppose Geraldine Doogue has any prejudice one way or another, but it does seem that increasingly RN is choosing controversy over information these days.

The Internet is a prime example of a similar problem. Thousands, possibly millions of people floundering around together in newsgroups on the principle that two ignorant people know twice as much as one. I suppose I am just being cruel, but it seems that the Information Revolution needs to give away to the Information Terror, or some damn thing. Off with their drive heads! Those of us who are interested in finding out about our world are using the extra resources to pack more — more eclectic, up-to-date, detailed, accurate — information into their work, but the lazy and cynical, for whom having stuff at the fingertips is as attractive as it is to the shy and curious, are overwhelming our media. We ought to have more diverse, challenging media, and some people are doing their best to make it so, but alas, as ever, no gadget is going to decrease the number of nongs on the planet.

(23 August 1994)

\* Precisely. Which is why I don't have much impetus to join them. \*

---

## Old?: Berry versus Jerry

---

\* There are two John Berrys in fandom, **JOHN D.**

**BERRY**, of Seattle, suave **DUFF** winner of a few years ago, and infrequent correspondent to Gillespie fanzines, and **JOHN BERRY** of Herts, a person I've known about all my life, but with whom I've never corresponded before: \*

### **JOHN BERRY** **4 Chilterns** **South Hatfields** **Herts AL10 8JU** **England**

I am somewhat chagrined to note in your letter column a nasty swipe at us oldies by the obviously young and attractive Jerry C. Davis. This is the second or third quite recent attack on us wrinklies. Having been in fandom for forty years, and first visited Irish Fandom when I was twenty-eight years old, even a *New Scientist* reader can calculate that I am sixty-eight years old.

I live in a council bungalow with my wife, and we were casually walking to the Council Office to pay the rent. A police station and courthouse are next to the council offices. I head a shout from an avenue leading from the police station, and saw two young men being hotly pursued by two uniformed men, who transpired to be prison officers. One youth was thin and small, and the other very large and powerful. As they neared men, with terror in their eyes, I selected the thin one, and forced him into a hedge. I grabbed him, and he struggled wildly, swearing at me. We whirled round for a moment, and then he broke free. Meanwhile a posse of police and prison warders had arrived, and quickly nabbed the thin one, and later the big powerful one.

I noticed blood dripping down my left hand, and noted two saucer-shaped cuts just under the nails of my left fore and middle fingers. A female detective stopped me and asked me if I were the 'gentleman' who had held on to one of the escapees. I nodded proudly. She asked me to go into the police station, and she treated my cut fingers and then took a statement from me. She went to get my wife and I coffee, and meantime four prison warders sat at the next table, also sipping coffee.

Our cups arrived, and as I signed my statement I heard one of the warders laugh and say 'Did you see that old geezer try to stop one of the escapees?' Honestly, I could hardly believe what I heard. Me . . . a geezer? If he had said something like 'Did you see that Burt Reynolds lookalike swoop on an escapee?' I wouldn't really have had any cause for annoyance.

The detective went over to them and whispered that I was the geezer they were talking about, and a couple of them came over and shook my hand. At the moment of writing, and I'm touching wood, I am completely sound in mind and all limbs, and also happen to be in full possession of all my physical faculties.

(17 July 1994)

\* While Elaine and I were drinking coffee and eating cake at the Cafe Bohemio, I heard wonderful music in the background: sort of Velvet Underground without the Lou Reed vocals.

I asked the young lady behind the counter what the CD was.

'*The Dirty Three*.'

Thanks to Julian Warner. I recognised the Dirty Three as a newish Melbourne group.

'Great stuff,' I said. 'I must buy the CD.'

The young lady winced. 'I wish my father liked this sort of music.'

Ouch. At the age of forty-eight, I'm the same age as somebody's father. Inside my head, I'm always twenty-six.

**JERRY DAVIS**, below, was taken to task by several other people responding to *TMR* 19/20/21 for making rude remarks about old people. As any regular reader of my magazines knows, Jerry simply likes to get irritable about his fellow over-70s: \*

**JERRY DAVIS**  
109 Seaview Street  
Pt Huenene  
California 93041-3330  
USA

It is difficult to set priorities when one is in the post-70 age bracket. One is stuck with old habits. What could it matter what I do or say to anyone now? Yet I am usually reserved.

People are all living longer, even those we have taught to kill people faster and in larger numbers. I don't know how many were killed in Iraq, but I finally learned that no young men or women should ever be sent to wars, yet all our wars, civil and otherwise, have been fought by boys — now boys and girls. A US unit wiped out by a SCUD missile took out a reserve quartermaster unit from the Quaker state that should have been hundreds of miles away handing out shirts and pants, which is what they were trained to do.

I went to a St Patrick's Day parade. It is a small non-religious event here, like Cinco de Mayo for Mexicans, and sometimes a St David's event, mostly for the Welsh. I'm Welsh and Irish, and I guess we are accepted as well as blacks, Hispanics or Italians.

I went down the coast to George Pepperdine University for a baseball game. It has great athletic teams. Most impressive is its location. Pepperdine is located on a bluff overlooking the ocean. It is generally regarded as a surfer-playtime school, but actually it is a Church of Christ school, with chapel mandatory for loyal members of the faith, who are a minority of the student body. It was funded by George Pepperdine, auto parts tycoon and church member. I knew the first president there, Dr Hugh Tiner. In fact he immersed and baptised me, but it didn't take as much as I wanted.

(16 March 1993)

\* I realise that the Churches of Christ in USA are not quite the same as the denomination of the same in Australia (who correspond with the Disciples of Christ there), but it's still startling to see this connection with the religion I grew up in. \*

How do they handle Christmas in Australia? Most of my relatives are Catholic or Methodist, so it varies from complete religious celebration to mild observance. Of course, I realise that many devout followers of Jesus make a point of ignoring Christmas on the grounds that no one knows when or where or why Jesus was born, but

all else is very literal — there it is, right there in The Book.

I guess the most popular evangelists here are Paul and Jan Crouch of Trinity Broadcasting. They have TV and radio stations everywhere — much bigger than Pat Robertson of the 700 Club. So we have a nation of atheists, agnostics and unbelievers side by side with true believers (Eric Hoffer). The late Alan Watts said that there were no Christians in California, the US, or anywhere — not even Jehovah's Witnesses — none really believed.

I never got involved with the Lafayette Ron Hubbard's Dianetics/Scientology church, but when I went to the World Conference of Friends in 1984, I was surprised to find out that the Quaker umbrella covered people from those who espoused literal belief in each tot and tittle to those who didn't believe in the divinity of Jesus at all. The Unitarians here, including the preacher, say that the church includes Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, snake handlers, still and running water Baptists, immersion, dunking, sprinkling and/or none of the above. I wonder how that went over with some Catholic, Baptist and Church of Christ seekers who came inquiring to the Unitarians. It boiled down to what you believed was your religion.

(17 December 1992)

I am now working on a plan not just to eliminate the middle class but also the middle-aged. Anyone born between 1946 and 1964 will be taken right away to the ovens in Arizona and New Mexico. Meanwhile, here at the ranch I am recruiting members for the 1918 Club. We want no whippersnappers born in 1919 or later. We will hike, walk or stroll our way into senility. I had no luck in getting the old folks to go on a permanent cruise, maybe ending up at Grayhavens with Frodo and Bilbo.

I no longer read science fiction. I used to read it at the age of twelve, and it still should be written for that age group. Maybe I never read sf. I just read pulp magazines with stories that had some science fiction. There is no science fiction, no fantasy; there is just fiction.

(You understand that I'm giving old-age opinions that I have no intention of defending. There is no logic, no reason, just mind sets. The world didn't begin with a Big Bang, Steady State or the Little Old Clockmaker. It has always been there. Image is everything. Perception is reality.)

Our family came from Appalachia, the hills of West Virginia. We were called Ridge Runners or Snakes. We broke off from Virginia for political and geographic reasons. Stonewall Jackson and Pearl Buck are our most famous alumni, along with Dutch Kindelberger, founder of North American Rockwell, an aerospace firm.

We had the first insane asylum west of the Allegheny Mountains. All our family members and other locals were either inmates or orderlies, or both. We are not entirely inbred, even if we have pointed heads. Even so, it was a better place than California will ever be, but Kindelberger brought us here to build airplanes, we couldn't afford to leave.

I'll try some lists:

- Best songs: 'The Peanut Vendor' and 'Tony's Wife'.

- Best US author: Willa Cather.
- Best Welsh author: Dylan Thomas.
- Best Irish author: Brian Friel.
- Best English author: Thomas Hardy.
- Best West Virginia author: Pearl Buck.
- Best California author: Frederick Faust.
- Best reruns: *The Jeffersons* and *Upstairs, Downstairs*.  
(21 July 1994)

\* It took me a minute or two, but finally I worked out that the following letter from Jerry is his reply to Jennifer Bryce's article about visiting California (TMR 18): \*

I can't really understand why Los Angeles and all of southern California can get so much attention. Of course it has a year-round warm climate, but as I realised just about a week ago it is nothing but a damned desert. The rest of it is in the imaginations of the rootless, bootless malcontents who come here to break into the movie business. Their brains get overloaded and shorted out, and they want to sell a movie script or get a job in the mailroom of a movie company. All movie jobs are obtained by your pals and buddies. We oldsters have to have sunshine to motivate. Ray Lafferty, the grand old science fiction writer, has always lived in Oklahoma, except for four years with the US Marine Corps in World War II. He served in the South Pacific at the same time as James Michener, the well-known Pennsylvanian Quaker writer and sage.

Of course, all the told-timey dustbowl refugees and the first wave of Okies, Arkies and Texans had to come here to avoid starvation in the midwest. Most stayed. Some of us came from North and South Dakota, or Ohio, or West Virginia, as I did.

As the Okies prevailed in California, the accent changed. Now the desperate losers come from big cities like New York and Boston, and the hungry from Mexico, and again the US accent changes. To top that, there are now people from Indo-China, such as the Hmongs.

It's tough for us oldsters, ninety per cent Protestants, mostly white, a few African-Americans (now the accepted terminology), a few Latins and a few Central and Southern Europeans.

(26 May 1993)

---

## Garden idyll

---

**JOSEPH NICHOLAS,**  
15 Jansons Road  
South Tottenham  
London N15 4JU  
England

Not quite three years to the day since we received the previous issue of *The Metaphysical Review*, but close enough . . . and by an eerie coincidence, *Terminator 2*:

*Judgement Day* (featuring, of course, an indestructible robot from the future blowing people's heads off in slow motion, etc. etc.) received its network television premier this weekend. However, this time there wasn't an attempted coup in Moscow to distract my attention from the fanzine, and I don't think I read any of it while sitting in the garden, either — chiefly because, following a long spell of uncharacteristically warm temperatures, thanks to a high pressure cell over southern Scandinavia pushing incoming low pressure zones from the west away to the north over north-west Ireland and north-west Scotland, the weather patterns have reverted to what we think of a 'normal' for a British summer: temperatures in the sixties rather than the seventies, intermittent sunshine, occasional showers of rain, and the lower pressure zones once again on a more southerly track. But after a rocky start — a wet and cold Easter, a grey and windy mid-May, a ferocious thunderstorm in early June — it's been a very good summer indeed, with whole weekends full of bright sunshine which has been most conducive to sitting out in the garden pursuing one's Heavy Reading Program and going brown, rather than cooping oneself up indoors in front of a computer screen to pursue work on *FTT* 16. (I'm sure you'll understand.) Besides, it's a brand new garden that we have here, and we want to enjoy it to the max.

When we acquired the house, the patch of land at the back could barely be described as a garden at all: it had obviously been neglected for years, and consisted of little more than a patch of overgrown grassland with a few spindly rose trees along one fence. (An indicator of just how overgrown may be gleaned from the following anecdote: when clearing up the builder's rubble and other junk on Boxing Day, I encountered what I thought was a length of steel tube lying in the grass — but when I pulled, an entire collapsed rotary clothes line rose into view. Inverted, it has since been pressed into service as a pea wigwam.) Apart from laying out a few lines of old bricks to demarcate the planting beds from the lawn area, there matters remained until late March, when the soil had warmed up enough for the work of planting things to begin. And other work intended to enhance its potential, such as putting pea and bean netting along all three fences, properly trenching in the bricks that divide the lawn from the beds (many more bricks, presumably the remains of an earlier inhabitant's path and patio, were discovered beneath the soil when we started to dig the beds), erecting a rose arch at the entrance to the lawn area (it was intended to provide support for pea vines, but although germinating successfully, the peas failed to thrive), levelling and partly reseeding the lawn area, and digging a pond.

The pond was very much an afterthought: my original plan for the far end of the garden was to erect a pergola, under which one could sit on fine summer evenings (when the sun would no longer be shining straight into one's eyes), drinking wine and perusing the pages of an Improving Book. But we spent the May Day weekend with the Harveys in Hertfordshire, admiring their large and well-stocked pond, and when we returned I suggested to Judith that we had room for a small one of our own. She agreed, so a month later, having acquired liner, sand, cement, paving stones and

so forth, we dug a round-cornered triangle about five feet by four feet by three feet, constructed a rockery behind it, and began mulling over what to put in it. A small water lily, obviously — but when we woke up on Saturday morning some two weeks later we discovered that one decision has already been made for us, by a couple of frogs that had clearly emerged from somewhere to disport themselves on the shallow beach adjacent to the rockery. Careful observations in the weeks since then have suggested that there may be up to five frogs visiting our pond, presumably travelling up and down the gardens in our block via gaps in the fences; but the fact that we have frogs at all — remember, this is suburbia! — is really rather wonderful.

Nor are they the only batrachians to have found a home in our garden: lifting the first of our potato crop about a month ago, Judith encountered what she at first took for a pale green and hence possibly diseased potato but which, as she bent to pick it up, blinked its eyes, puffed out its cheeks, shifted its back legs, and proved not to be a diseased potato at all, but a rather startled toad.

Yes, we grow potatoes. We also grow, or have grown this year, tomatoes, tomatilloes, broccoli, spinach, two varieties of lettuce, carrots, capsicums, spaghetti marrows, two varieties of melon squash, strawberries, alpine strawberries, radishes, garlic, garlic onions, runner beans, broad beans, peas, asparagus peas, jerusalem artichokes, sage, lovage, rosemary, lemon balm, lemon grass, chives, two varieties of thyme, basil, sorrel, fennel and innumerable other herbs. And one or two flowers in between . . . indeed, our garden has been so productive that, aside from the occasional meat content and the butter or oil used for cooking, the food on our plates has consisted entirely of stuff we've grown ourselves. And it's a great deal tastier than the stuff you can find in the shops, too . . .

At which point, having got this far, you're probably scratching your head and wondering what on earth has got into Joseph Nicholas that he can spend so much time talking about his fucking garden. Well, I kind of wonder that myself — after all, if anyone had told me a year ago that I'd be spending so much time on garden activities, as opposed to just sitting in it and letting Judith do all the work, I'd probably have laughed in their face.

However, there are several possible explanations for this newfound enthusiasm. One is the fact that we own the garden, as opposed to renting it, and therefore have far more freedom to play with it than we did with the one at Frinton Road.

Two is the fact that until we arrived here there was no real garden at all, and everything you can see now we ourselves have built from scratch.

Three is the sheer novelty of having a garden to build from scratch.

And four is the point that, after several years of very stimulating but also very draining political activism, I think I've earned the right to relax and watch nature at play.

After all, did not the ancient Greek philosophers and the Renaissance humanists have good things to say about the joys of gardening, and express a desire to

spend their retirements cultivating same? Not that I'm anywhere near retirement yet (unless I get made redundant in the slow-motion destruction that the government is visiting upon the Civil Service, in which case my twenty years of service would qualify me for an Extremely Huge redundancy payment indeed), but I suspect that purchasing the house has contributed to the continuing changes in perspective to which I alluded in my previous letter, as I shift further from political activism and adopt a more relaxed and contemplative outlook. Or something like that. (Helps generate the mental space in which to write lengthy theoretical articles for *FTT*, anyway.)

It occurs to me that, in view of the extensive list of foods our garden produces, you might also be wondering just how large it actually is, and how far away is the 'far end'. The first point to grasp, of course, is that we are not growing industrial quantities of stuff, but food we can pick and eat on a daily basis (except for the potatoes and runner beans — we've frozen large amounts of the latter, and have several bags of the former in store); and the second point to grasp is that we pack it all as close together as we can, on the French *potager* or English cottage garden basis. Thus we have managed to fit a small pond, a small lawn, and extensive vegetable beds in a garden no more than 15 feet wide (that is, as wide of the house) and 35 feet long. Much smaller than the average suburban Australian garden, I imagine. (Come to that, the house is probably much smaller than the average suburban Australian house.) We shall show it off to Lucy Sussex when (or if) she visits us in October, and she can take some photographs to show you later — albeit that at that stage of the year there won't be much to photograph. The pond, yes, our miniature fruit trees, the winter vegetables, the rose arch and bird table . . . but much else will have died back and been composted. Indeed, having dug up the first two lots of potatoes, we now have room for, and have started, a new compost heap — the current heap, on which grows a large tomatillo and two melon plants, will be dug in once they've been put down — which will doubtless grow ever larger as winter draws ever nearer. Will we even have room for all the dead vegetation?

There's definitely a sense — although in gardening terms September is traditionally treated as part of the summer, with autumn beginning in October — that the season is ending, and that it's time to prepare for the winter. Perhaps we'll get a lot more bird visitors this winter than last — but then of course we arrived at this address in the middle of winter, at a time when their feeding and foraging habits would have been well established, and it took them several months to realise that we were even here and that food was being put out for them. Even so, I doubt we'll get the same variety as we did at Frinton Road; there, the railway embankment beyond the back garden served as a sort of nature reserve, and provided us with robins, green finches, dunnocks, blue tits and great tits in addition to the ubiquitous sparrows and blackbirds; here, however, we seem to get no more than the ubiquitous sparrows and blackbirds, with an occasional wood pigeon.

And the neighbourhood cats, who do not seem to have internalised that the garden is no longer their

playground, as it probably was during its neglected phase. There are at least three of the bastards: a ginger, a tabby (which I think of as 'speckled'), and a black-and-white that appears to be leader and is certainly the most arrogant. On one occasion, a few weeks back, it actually sat in the middle of the lawn and watched me approach before getting its legs under it and leaping up to the top of the fence — just too high for me to reach (especially with all the plants in the way), and therefore high enough for it to lounge insolently in the sunshine, pretending to have no interest in the garden at all. Eventually, it turned to saunter off elsewhere — so I seized my opportunity and caught it straight up the bum with a pebble from the rockery. It has behaved more warily of late, but may require a few more beatings before it finally learns to fuck off and stay fucked off, and take its furry friends with it.

At which point, I imagine, B. Gillespie and doubtless E. Cochrane are reeling back in horror, asking themselves how I can possibly even think of throwing stones at cats, reminding themselves that cats are the loveliest of beasts and quintessentially fannish animals, blah blah blah. To which I reply: bollocks. Cats are not welcome in our garden because they dig up the seedlings, because they like to sit in wait beneath the bird table, because they strut about the rockery spilling pebbles on the lawn, and because experience has shown that more frogs in suburban garden ponds are killed by cats than die of any other causes. The frogs are our allies in the nightly war against the snails and slugs that would otherwise eat everything we grow, whereas the neighbourhood cats are good for absolutely nothing at all.

The other point about winter, however, is that I shall be able to resume all the D-I-Y that has been put on hold over the summer months. In part, this was because we'd spent up big shortly after moving in, and had to allow the finances to recover; but also because, as with publishing fanzines, putting up shelves is not something you particularly want to be doing when the sun is shining down outside. Not that I've actually put up many shelves so far, but at least we haven't had to do any painting and wallpapering. (As you may have gathered from other sources, such as Perry Middlemiss's *Hard Yakka*, our house is a top-to-bottom renovation, with new everything and a colour scheme we chose ourselves.) An immediate priority, however, is to acquire additional tiles for the bathroom walls, which are tiled up to splash height around the bath rather than full shower height (had we seen the house earlier, we would probably have been able to ensure that it was tiled to full shower height — but at least we saw it early enough to prevent the builder putting a completely unnecessary wall-mounted gas fire in the front half of the through lounge), as a consequence of which the paper there is beginning to peel and damp spots are appearing on the plaster; but the trouble we've had trying to find an exact match for the existing tiles! We have one last local D-I-Y superstore to visit, after which it will be matter of picking out the nearest possible match and getting them up before we have to worry about replacing any of the plaster. Then there's the drawers and shelves in the alcoves in the bedroom, so that we can unpack a few boxes of stuff that sit there at present; then the sliding doors for the

built-in wardrobe we've erected across the other end of the bedroom (which will probably be so expensive that they'll bring all further D-I-Y to a juddering halt for another few months); then, possibly, perhaps, in time for next summer, some shelves for my office! (Judith's office was shelved and equipped shortly after we moved in.) Then for the first time ever, I shall be able to take the few hundred sf books I still possess out of their boxes! This, you might grasp, is why putting up shelves in my office has the lowest priority of all: because the stuff's been in boxes for so many years now that another year won't hurt. Of course, I shall also be able to unpack the politics and nuclear issues non-fiction, which at Frinton Road was on shelves rather than in boxes; but one consequence of the move was the opportunity it gave us to reorganise the stuff on the free-standing shelf units, so that the history and the other non-fiction is now properly accessible.

\* When your letter arrived, Joseph, I had hoped that Elaine might like to reply to it in these pages. At the time she wasn't excited about the idea, especially as she had just joined a gardening apa, and was hard at work on the first issue of her fanzine. (I won't give details of the apa here, since I get the idea that it already has a waiting list.) Elaine's fanzine is called *Digging Is What Keeps Me Sane*.

I have no intention of digging, for sanity's sake or otherwise. I refuse to bend over in order to weed. I tend to stay out of our garden, except occasionally to wander around it, admire the flowers, and pat one of the mobile garden gnomes (cats). Elaine could describe our garden with some accuracy; I can't.

All I can say is that it is the same size as our house block because it is the twin to it — fairly big for an inner-suburban block. For some time it looked from the front fence like an undeveloped wasteland. That's because Elaine has been carefully digging out the rubble that she found in the ground — seven enormous heaps so far, and she's only covered about a third of the block. When she cleans out one section, she plants it with flowers or vegetables. The vegetables, which include tomatoes, lettuces, radishes, spinach, broad beans, various types of herbs, and potatoes, have fed us for several seasons so far. Last summer Elaine let the pumpkins take over the whole block. We're still eating the pumpkins that she grew. Slowly Elaine is planting trees, and she always has a variety of colourful flowers planted. (I can never quite tell the difference between one flower and another, except that some are Bright and Colourful and others are Small and Undistinguished.)

The cats are, of course, the chief decoration of the garden, but only because they are our cats. To make sure your garden is not invaded by neighbouring cats, have one or more of your own.

As someone who has suffered through forty-eight Melbourne summers, I can assure you that I have no love for the summer sunshine. Frequent newspaper and radio warnings about the ozone gap and ultraviolet thresholds only confirm my prejudice. There are times during spring and autumn when I quite enjoy walking around in the sun, but I rarely sit out in the garden. All I get is a cat landing on my lap. What better time than summer for staying inside to publish fanzines?

I have absolutely no ability to Do It Myself. If we need cupboards or bookshelves built, we wait until we

have the cash to pay someone to do it. That's why our second lot of renovations took place ten years after the first lot. \*

A few updates:

*Magazines read:*

*Marxism Today* closed in 1992, and was formally merged with *New Statesman & Society* (that is, the latter took over the former's mailing list; there is otherwise no trace of the former in the material published by the latter). I now also read, in addition to the other magazines I listed, *Q*, *BBC Music* (with a free CD every month of material from the BBC's archives), *BBC Wildlife* and *The Ecologist*. Oh, and sometimes I, er, look at the pictures, like, in, um, Judith's gardening magazines.

*Music enjoyed:*

Delete *The Wonder Stuff*, who recently threw in the towel; correct the spelling of *Curve* to *Curve* instead of *Crue*; and add the *Auteurs*, the *Cranberries*, *Pulp*, *Blur*, *Manic Street Preachers* and *Madder Rose* (a US outfit that you'd at first take for a British independent label group, so clearly has it been influenced by the British indie scene rather than the Seattle grunge sound).

We have also, in a gesture of surrender to the march of technology, purchased a CD player — but in a fit of reactionary technophobia have agreed that for as long as vinyl is available we'll purchase only old music to play on it, 'old' in this case meaning classical. But before anyone rushes forward to suggest what we should buy as the basis of a proper classical collection, I shall state quite bluntly that we buy what we like, which means lots of choral stuff for Judith and lots of baroque, such as Bach, Haydn and Mozart, with an admixture of fiery Russian stuff, for me. We aren't interested in opera, because opera is nothing more than a colossal wank (and a colossal expensive wank too, by all accounts, so firebombing a few opera houses on gala nights should be a good way to polish off the nobs); and we buy for repertoire rather than particular artistes or performances, so anyone who tells us that we ought to pay full price for X's 1992 recording of *Y* with the *Whitsit Philharmonic* on the ABC label instead of a budget version of the same piece of music will simply be told to take their posing elsewhere.

\* The only trouble with that attitude is that you might come to dislike a work simply because it's been played in a listless or stupid way, not realising that it becomes a completely different work in the hands of some other conductor or performer. In classical music, often the cheapest CDs contain the best performances (for instance, Decca's Belart series, the recent EMI Forte series of two-CD sets, the Philips two-CD sets from last year, or the recent DG Originals series).

I don't ever go to watch opera, but I wouldn't be without my favourite ten operas on CD. Opera comes up well on video. \*

*Foreign travel undertaken:*

Apart from Petra in January 1992, Judith visited Australia for a month in September of that year while I spent a week in Flanders. In 1993, Judith went again to Aus-

tralia, while I spent a week in Cairo; we then had a week in Istanbul in June, followed by a two-week tour of parts of Ireland in August with Judith's friend Maureen from Perth, who possesses that most useful of things for rural countries like Ireland, a driving licence.

After that we bought the house, which means that this year will have been the first since 1988 that we have not been able to afford to go abroad at some point. We may be back in Australia next spring, though, to attend the wedding of Judith's sister Roslyn; if so, the expense would mean that it would probably be our only foreign trip of the year.

(2-5 September 1994)

\* Not only are we not planning an overseas trip this year, but we seem to be finding it impossible to take a holiday at all. It's now five years since we took a holiday away together, and that was only a few hundred miles away to Mt Buffalo Chalet, our favourite place. Elaine always has an urgent freelance job to do at the time I have a free week, or I've just received another job when Elaine gets a few days off. I haven't been outside the state since 1981, or outside the country since 1974. \*

---

## A metaphysical experience

---

**SKEL**

**25 Bowland Close,  
Offerton, Stockport,  
Cheshire SK2 5NW,  
England**

*10 July 1994:*

Hi Bruce. Odd morning this morning. Arose to face the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune at around 5.00 a.m., as is my wont. Actually that's not a bad time as there are surprisingly few slings and arrows around so early in the morning. There isn't usually a Cas around either, but every so often she bears up arms against a sea of snooze and staggers downstairs to keep me company, and today was one such day.

Not that either of us is much company to the other at five of the clock, when the synapses are just going 'prrrrrt' and firing off randomly, which goes some way to explaining this morning's conversation. I'd done some recording the night before and had left the lists of what was what on top of the record player. 'That will have to go in your den,' she said. '5 a.m.,' I responded. 'That's not too early to be tidying up and nagging me.' 'Well, I can't vacuum, I've washed the Hoover!' she replied. And indeed she had. The thing is, her parents are coming to visit us, and the last thing a woman wants is for her mother to think she isn't doing her job right. So she cleaned the house, and then she cleaned the cleaning implements. 'I've washed the Hoover,' she said. 'It's pristine.'

'Pristine?' I asked. 'Isn't that a novel by Stephen King, about a vacuum cleaner that is taken over by an evil malevolent entity?' 'Yes,' she replied. 'It strangled people with its flex and then sucked up the evidence.' 'Invasion of the Vacuum Cleaners from Outer Space,' we both cried simultaneously, our synapses going 'prrrrrr' at precisely the same instant.

There is something about 5 o'clock in the morning that the mind of man was not meant to encompass.

Notwithstanding all of the foregoing, you'll be pleased to know your zine lived up to its name this issue (or it/they being 19/20/21; should that be these issues? or possibly 'these issue/'this issues' to confuse the reader whilst indicating that they're all living together under a single cover, reminiscent of those fannish households you kept mentioning in your tribute to Roger Weddall?). Anyway, there I was early yesterday morning, finishing my second cuppa and worrying at the last two clues in the cryptic crossword that I'd saved from Thursday's *Independent*, set by Spurius (who along with Lucifer I consider their cutting edge; Aelred is almost a waste of space whilst the others — Aquila, Quixote, Mass, Phi, Portia *et al* — fill the spectrum in between) . . . and I hear a flat-flat of letters falling onto the hall tiles, followed by the sounds of something extremely large, thick, and relatively unbendable being bent and forced through our fairly narrow letterbox, accompanied by the strained grunts you hear when seriously muscle-bound weightlifters are cleaning and jerking, or snatching world records at the Olympics. I thought immediately that either the poor postman was having an inappropriate and particularly difficult bowel movement on my front path, or else it was *TMR* arriving. The noise terminated with a whimper and thud (which wasn't decisive either way) but indeed, upon entering the hall I discovered I was indeed psychic on this occasion. How's that for 'metaphysical'?

Incidentally, it now occurs to me you can with all honesty add to your brag sheet '*TMR*, the fanzine that has been compared to a "particularly difficult bowel movement", which is fairly metaphysical all by itself.

But that's not all. My normal practice is to print a letter off, take it to work and reduce-Xerox it in two copies: one to send, and one to file. The full size originals I bring home and bin. Now this morning, the day after *TMR* arrived containing my LoC, and fully 27 months after I'd mailed that LoC to you, whilst I was laid up in bed reading the Roger Weddall section Cas was downstairs sorting through some ancient kipple of hers and shouted upstairs to me, 'What's this old letter to somebody called Bruce doing among my stuff? Don't tell me you never sent it.' She brought it upstairs and indeed it was the mysteriously unbinned original of my letter in the very issue I was even then holding in my hands. I ask you, what are the odds on this one letter, which remember, should now be part of a landfill project, not only getting mixed up with some of Cas's stuff instead of being thrown away, but then after 27 months, whilst the xerox had travelled tens of thousands of miles to you and back, emerging at just the right time for me to hold it in my right hand and compare it to the published version in my left, and to know beyond doubt that *the typo was your sodding fault* ('ever bugger else')?

Go on, what odds would you attribute to this unlikely chain of circumstance? And you have the nerve to tell Mae Strelkov that you haven't personally been involved in anything weirdly inexplicable?

Nor is this the only weirdly inexplicable thing you've done. Why, in your response to Jonathan Cowie's letter you admitted you'd run 'bold leader sentences from letters' in *SFC* 62, 63 *twice*, 65 and 66, whilst apparently omitting them from issue 64. Of course this could have been a typo, but then that would make two in a single issue (or three if you count the address that doesn't quite jibe with the one on your letterhead), which from somebody who's worked in typesetting is obviously totally unthinkable.

✱ It's all perfectly understandable. The golden rule is: never proofread your own stuff. Unfortunately, I did last issue, and didn't let Elaine near it. Hence the ghastly mistakes. ✱

4 September 1994:

That wasn't where my initial attempt at this letter ended, but in the time since I've changed direction several times and so have decided to delete the final page and start again, mainly again because of your metaphysical influence.

In truth I rarely listen to Loudon Wainwright III, but that's because of unfortunate happenstance rather than a lack of appreciation. I first got hooked on him about 16 years ago when the BBC featured him on one of their 1978 'Sight & Sound in Concert' series, where they broadcast the concert on TV, and simultaneously in stereo on one of their FM radio channels. The 60-minute concert was brilliant, and I got it on one side of a standard quality C120 on the 'Hi-Fi' music centre that was then my pride and joy (£274, and top of Sharp's range at the time . . . I still use the speakers) but which was woefully inadequate by current standards. But money was tight and I wasn't looking for a 'new' artist whose records to collect, having all on to keep pace with existing favourites . . . so my LW III collection went into a timewarp. Many years later I started picking up the odd album of his in sales or from secondhand record shops, with variable results. *A Live One*, *T-Shirt*, *Final Exam* and *Album II* are excellent quality, but *Album III* was very skkkritch. Even so I was still able to pick out another 60 knockout minutes of material to put on the other side of my original tape.

But there was another problem. I like to listen to my music loud, and Cas doesn't, and whilst I do have some reasonable headphones to go with my main system, it does not make for togetherness . . . and if I'm listening on headphones I'd rather be off on my own anyway. So mainly I listen on my Walkman while I'm doing something routine like bottling my beer, going shopping on my own, or whatever. But they don't recommend that you use C120s on such machines — and the only time I chose to ignore their advice I ruined a tape and spent sodding ages trying to get all the bits out of the mechanism.

The problem with recording a new tape is twofold — on the one hand I don't currently have a tape-to-tape facility, so those brilliant 'In Concert' numbers are

unavailable, and whilst I do have some of them on original albums these earlier versions (like 'Dead Skunk' and 'Muse Blues') are such pale comparisons that, good as they are, I can't bear to tape them — and secondly, without them I didn't have enough personal favourites to fill a C90 or C100.

But I've recently had my forty-seventh birthday, and various kind relatives slipped me a few quid to 'buy something you like'. This coincided with lots of CD sales in Manchester (where I work) and Stockport, providing the opportunity to replace some much-loved, much-played (and therefore much-scratched) albums. In fact the only out-and-out new stuff I bought was the three LW III albums he did for Demon/Rounder between 1982 and 1986 — *Fame and Wealth*, *I'm Alright* and *More Love Songs* — which means I now have more than enough material to put together a really choice C100 for my listening pleasure.

I also realise that with these three albums I'm now not missing as much of his material as I had previously thought. There is, of course, the first album, which is probably not too great an omission, plus *Attempted Mustache* and *Unrequited*, plus the recent *History* and live *Career Moves*. Anyway, all this LW III activity is down to you and TMR concentrating my mind on him, so effectively by way of a 'thankyou' I've recorded a tape for you which I'll probably mail before I finish this letter, leaving you to wonder for a while what's going on.

I say 'effectively' back there because in fact I recorded the tape for you as part of the now non-existent third page of my original letter, back in July. The thing is, Christine Lavin is the main new musical input Cas and I picked up on our 1993 US visit, and which I listen to more than anything else since our return. Neither of us can imagine anyone not liking her, and so we are in the process of recording tapes of her material for all our regular correspondents (and whilst I may not write to you frequently, I do write regularly, so you qualify). Besides, I assume you'll like it to at least some degree, based on a comment from *People* magazine reprinted on the back of her *Compass* album, 'If we could get her and Loudon Wainwright III named our national folk music laureates, we'd have most of the country's problems accurately described, if not solved, in no time.'

But if you don't like it it's no problem.

\* But surely I've talked about Christine Lavin often enough in TMR for anyone to know that Elaine and I are as much fans as you are? Thanks for the tape, anyway, since it reminded me of some of the quieter tracks that we haven't played for awhile, as well as the off-the-wall tracks we play often.

We've recently converted local fan Ali Kayn to Lavin. The other great Lavin fan is David Russell, who went to one of her concerts, in the country town of Warmambool, and was actually razzed from the stage by Christine Lavin ('Look at the hair, girls, look at the hair').

Last October I meant to send you tapes of all the Loudon Wainwright albums you're missing, but here it is next October, and I've only just sent you *Album 1* and *Attempted Mustache*. \*

What reminded me about this tape and the unfinished letter was some other recording we did last

night. Cas had promised Susan Manchester some Linda Ronstadt. As part of the CD/LP replacement program we now have five of her albums on CD to complement our albums that go all the way back to her Stone Pony days, so Cas picked out a two-C100 set for Susan to represent elements of her entire career. My only input was to act as recording engineer. Despite the fact that two of our CDs are old favourites *Heart Like a Wheel* and *Hasten Down the Wind*, Cas was surprised to discover that the albums represented by most tracks were her two most recent ones (discounting the Mexican stuff, which we don't buy), *Cry Like a Rainstorm, Howl Like the Wind* and *Winter Light*, which we probably would never have splashed out on if you hadn't mentioned the former favourably in a recent (hah!) TMR.

I also managed to pick up CD replacements in the sales for three of my Ry Cooder albums (*Get Rhythm*, *Bop Til You Drop* and *Paradise and Lunch*) plus the *Crossroads* soundtrack. No Joe Ely, though. Your comment about his *Love and Danger* album mirrored my own view, but when I lent it to Mike Meara (another Joe Ely/Loudon Wainwright III/Ry Cooder/Linda Ronstadt/Christine Lavin fan) he was disappointed by it. Just in case you're interested, and given your penchant for lists, the full list of artists we picked up CDs by were Harry Chapin, Ry Cooder, John Denver, Dr Hook, Marianne Faithfull, Emmylou Harris, Buddy Holly, Carole King, Kris Kristofferson (plus one of those he did with Rita Coolidge), the Mamas and Papas, Randy Newman, Stevie Nicks, Linda Ronstadt, and Loudon Wainwright III.

A motley crew, what? Still think you could sit down here 'to enjoy almost any item in the record collection'?

\* Probably. I wouldn't bother to buy CDs by Chapin, Denver, Dr Hook, Carole King, Stevie Nicks or Kris Kristofferson singing his own songs, but I have CDs by the others. Emmylou Harris's *Wrecking Ball* is being acclaimed by many as the Best CD of 1995, and Randy Newman's *Faust* is entertaining (although the best numbers are sung by James Taylor). Marianne Faithfull's CDs from the last decade have been consistently bleak and brilliant. \*

That'll probably be it until the next major round of sales starts. Most of the above came in at £6.66 or less, but money is tight and new CDs so damn expensive. I simply can't justify to myself paying out about £14 or more for stuff I already have on an album or tape, nor can I spend that kind of money to try an artist I'm not familiar with. When I was in a record store in Indianapolis they played this terrific song by a female vocalist. I went to ask them which album it was, and they pointed out this compendium of various artists singing Eagles numbers, which killed my interest stone dead. I don't much like 'various artists', as when I'm in the mood to listen to a particular artist, I don't want to listen to mostly somebody else. Anyway, the artist in question was Suzy Boggus, and whilst there were several of her albums in the store I'd already bought a couple of Hoyt Axton CDs and was feeling guilty at this late stage of our holiday about all the money I'd spent on CDs, so had already regretfully passed on a couple of Sally Fingerett albums that tempted me... and so I passed on Suzy Boggus too. I've seen her albums over here since then, but don't

know whether the track I liked was typical of her material or not, and at over £14 a throw I suspect I'll never find out. Well, not until we get back to the US and into some used-CD stores. But it's good to be on the lookout for new experiences.

Like *TMR* 22/23/24/ . . . /40 or whatever. An old friend, but with the added frisson of a piece by me within. I can hardly wait, though of course given your publishing schedule nothing is more certain than I will have to. Do us a favour: don't make it such a monolith that nobody will be surprised if it doesn't appear before 2001, OK?

\* It's all in the hands of the people who pay the bills, Macmillan Education of Australia Pty Ltd. I just keep typing. \*

---

## What you do when you no longer read science fiction

---

**ANDREW WEINER**  
26 Summerhill Gardens  
Toronto  
Ontario M4T 1B4  
Canada

Thank you very much for *TMR* 19/20/21. I think I get it, finally: *TMR* is where you put the interesting stuff these days, whereas *SFC* is where you put all the stuff about science fiction, which I hardly read anymore (or write, for that matter) and have very little interest in reading about. Logical, I suppose, given the title — but it seems to me that *SFC* used to have very little to do with 'science fiction', unless you count Philip K. Dick as a science fiction writer (personally, I prefer not to).

I especially liked 'The Reunion', and wished it had gone on longer. I wonder why 'fans don't like to be reminded of their schooldays'? Could it be — I'm just throwing this out now — that they read sf to escape from something? Nah . . .

I was pleased to see that Richard Brandt enjoyed the tv adaptation of 'Going Native' in *Tales of the Darkside*. I have yet to meet anyone who has seen this episode, although quite a few people seem to have seen 'Distant Signals', the other story of mine picked up for this series. To answer Richard's question, I thought it was very well done (much better than 'Distant Signals'). It's actually a very faithful adaptation, except for the fact that they changed the sex of the protagonist (to avoid looking like a *Man Who Fell to Earth* knock-off, is how it was explained to me). And 'Going Native' is one of my favourite short stories, maybe because it's so far removed from 'science fiction'.

(23 September 1994)

\* If *Tales of the Darkside* ever showed here, I missed

it. Sounds as if it is the only equivalent to the 1968-69 BBC series *Out of the Unknown*, which featured episodes that were based on actual sf stories.\*

---

## Searching for Anna Russell

---

**ED MESKYS**  
RR2, Box 263  
Center Harbor  
New Hampshire 03226-9708  
USA

I have just finished *TMR* 19/20/21 some eight months after it arrived. I have a young man come and read fanzines for me two hours a week, and I get more zines than I can handle at that rate.

I especially enjoyed the story of the debunking of the locally entrenched creationists. For years I received on tape from Recorded Periodicals *The Skeptical Enquirer*, though I had to give it up recently. Raised their prices so much that I dropped *Skeptical Enquirer*, *Omni* and *Science News*, keeping only *Scientific American* and highlights from *Byte/PCWorld*. John Boardman coined a word for Creationists and their ilk which I have adopted, 'funnymentalists'. He also runs new age into a single word 'newage', which he pronounces to rhyme with 'sewage'.

\* I'll keep that in mind each time I receive a New Age CD to review for *The Melburnian*. \*

I only occasionally read crime fiction — Sayers, Ngaio Marsh, Tony Hillerman and Dick Francis. Oh yes, Elizabeth (not Elisa) Peters. I did read one Brother Cadfall book, which I enjoyed, but I did not have enough time to pursue the series. I never read the 'Saint' books, though I remember seeing the magazine and paperback series on the stands about 1960. His escapes remind me strongly of the recent TV series *McGuiver*. So often the villain left him to perish and he found an ingenious, often barely credible way to escape. The *Doc Savage* pulp magazine was before my time, and I never got into the new series of paperback novels a decade or two ago, but for a while one of the National Public Radio stations broadcast a series of adventures. Again he had incredible escapes. He had almost as much dexterity in his toes as in his fingers and wore special socks with the toe ends cut off. When tied up, he would kick off his shoes and use his toes to untie the knots.

Perhaps you can help me with a musical request. I love the satire of Anna Russell, and have four of the five LPs she issued in the States. My favourite routines are on Wagner's *Ring*, the bagpipes, the folk song with the

refrain 'Hey libido, bats in the belfry', and Hamleto. The album I do not have is the one that takes off *Peter Grimes*, but I got to copy it onto cassette. She had a single cut record in a pocket of her book *Power of Being a Positive Stinker*, which I have never heard. In her autobiography *I'm Not Making This Up You Know* she wrote about the time she lived in Sydney when the Opera House was being finished and opened. Apparently she issued two records in connection with the opening, *The Magic Flute* and, if I remember, a take-off on *Madame Butterfly*. Would you, by any chance, have these recordings? If so, could I arrange for cassette copies?

\* Our friends Robin and Frances have at least one of them, but their record is so worn that I'm not sure it can be taped. The send-up of *The Magic Flute* is on the only Anna Russell CD that's appeared so far in Australia, but the other Australia-only items are only likely to turn up in those few secondhand shops that still sell LPs. Somebody out there might have them in good condition. (If so, send me a tape as well.) \*

### We also heard from . . .

JAN CREGAN sent several fascinating and brilliant letters, but she won't let me quote from them.

MARK AND VANESSA LONEY are just about to end their three-year overseas stay in Washington, DC. Their wedding was the last social event that Roger attended, and he died soon after they reached Washington. 'For the first time when someone close to me died, I was too far away to do anything in a direct and personal way. We sent flowers and I asked Nick Price to go to the funeral service for us, but there was still an overwhelming feeling of . . . inability. I finally cheered myself up a little by picking up *Lake Wobegon Days* and immersing myself in in Garrison Keillor's world.'

In January 1994 Mark wrote to me asking me to submit examples of my fanzine writing to *Fanthology '90*, of which he had just been appointed editor. I couldn't think of any fannish pieces I'd written that year, so I did nothing about the invitation. ALAN STEWART sent Mark lots of Oz fanzines anyway, and Mark picked my article about 'The Non-Sf Novels of Philip K. Dick', the last thing I would have expected to be chosen for the *Fanthology*.

I've had several letters from GARRY DISHER, one of my favourite Australian writers. (My reviews in *The Melbourne Report/Melburnian* of his books somehow reached him.) He has the grace not to be too bemused by *The Metaphysical Review*: 'I wish all literary journals gave you the feeling that an arm was being put around your shoulders and you were about to be told a yarn (instead of intimidating you with English-Department-speak). . . . TMR intrigues and fascinates me. I am quite private, by choice and nature, and the world seems large to me, yet TMR turns both notions upside down.' Garry sums up well what I am trying to do with the magazine. He also sent a copy of his latest Wyatt novel, *Crosskill*, which I enjoyed greatly.

URSULA LE GUIN didn't make it to Australia for a Writers Festival in 1993, even after the organisers were

quite sure she would make it. 'I am awfully glad not to be looking forward to what had become a kind of nightmare of over-scheduling and flying about wildly in airplanes. I just can't handle that stuff anymore.'

Every few years I send Ursula a report on the current doings of the people who attended the 1975 Writers Workshop for which she was the Writer in Residence. 'Tell Pip even if she doesn't write a novel she could write Ursula. Tell Petrina now that she's finished her novel she could write Ursula. Please give George my warmest good wishes for a rapid and serene recovery.' Which, as far as I know, is just the recovery he made after his stroke in early 1993.

ANNETTE CARTER, a buddy I met during my early Macmillan days, writes from Sydney every so often, visits us about once a year, and subscribes. Her annual visit to Melbourne is a highlight of the year.

I haven't heard from BRIAN ALDISS since Easter 1994, but I must mention here the great favour he did for me during late 1993: 'The chap at the University of Liverpool, Dr David Seed, is keen to develop in several directions, including doing a series of reprints. They're going to put my *Pale Shadow of Science* and . . . *And the Lurid Glare of the Comet* into one volume, with a bit of shuffling. Seed asked me for other suggestions. I said you should be approached to put together an anthology of criticism from *SF Commentary*. It's time your work was more widely known over here.' And DAVID SEED did write to me, and I've done a bit of preliminary work towards the anthology, and I'm currently waiting to hear whether it will go ahead. Thanks, Brian.

EVA HAUSER is not nearly so connected to sf as she was when she travelled to Australia in 1992 as the GUFF candidate. In fact, her life has changed greatly but 'I hope I shall meet some Australian fans again at the Worldcon in Glasgow in '95'. Maybe some of the travelling Australians in '95 will get to Prague if you don't get to Glasgow.

MARK LINNEMAN, honorary Australian fan (nine years spent in Melbourne), rings us quite often from Lexington, Kentucky, but he also sent a serial letter (21 October 1993–21 February 1994). Apart from his personal news, which has been bad non-stop since 1992, he writes: 'Bruce, BILL BOWERS says hello. There is someone whose recently history makes mine look like a walk in the park. . . . Octocon is run by the CFG (Cincinnati Fantasy Group), which has been around for 30-plus years. Old fart fandom at its finest, and I fit right in. Bowers, Roger Sims, Mike and Carol Resnick, Scott and Jan Dennis are typical members. There are also some fellow travellers such as Mike Glicksohn or Dick and Leah Smith, who come to events such as Octocon. Australia's own Stephen Boucher is a CFG member; he makes his two meetings a year to remain on the active roster. As well as allowing members to sell stories to Resnick for his anthologies the CFG has a suite at the Worldcon where you can (1) escape the throngs, and (2) find some generally interesting people. Wound up talking to Sam Moskowitz, Maureen McHugh (a CFG member), Forry Ackerman and Jack Chalker in one ten-minute period. CFG folk are good people. The Lexington fans seem to be mostly Trek-oriented and really enjoy, as they did at one of their monthly meet-

ings, activities such as target practice with hand guns. I do not fit right in.'

**NICK AND AUDREY SHEARS** astounded me by sending me their end-of-year here's-what-our-family-has-been-doing letter, thus taking up a correspondence that lapsed many years ago. Nick was a member of ANZAPA in the seventies while he was still living in South Africa. When he moved to Britain he became an active fanzine publisher for some time, then seemed to disappear. I hope he stays in touch.

**SCOTT HILLIARD** spent lots of money on a subscription, plus back copies, then disappeared from sight. I hope this issue reaches you okay, Scott.

**TERRY MORRIS** is optimistic. She subscribed to both *TMR* and *SFC*. She is also in ANZAPA, and somebody who attends Nova Mob. But she's not quite ready yet to send a long letter of comment.

**DAVID RUSSELL** sends amazing and spectacular presents on my birthday every year (17 February, since you ask). This year from him I received my very first Star Trek birthday card, a valuable book token from Slow Glass Books, and a copy of Fedo's *The Man from Lake Wobegon*. David also sends cartoons, and keeps up with the doings of Garrison Keillor more assiduously than I do. The one thing he won't do is call in to the Gillespie-Cochrane household when he is in Melbourne.

I got back into contact with **NOEL KERR** because of Anzapacon (October 1993), the fabulous fannish Australian equivalent of Corflu and Ditto rolled into one. Noel could not attend, but he did rejoin Anzapa after well over 20 years away from it. I enjoyed an article Noel wrote about the people he meets accidentally. 'I like to find out what makes people tick, with the result that Irene is always telling me off for asking too many questions of people I meet. I really go to town when I have the chance for a long talk with some elderly person. I just love to hear their likes and dislikes, and lifestyle when they were younger. I like to draw comparisons with my own life as a teenager, which I always felt was different to that of other kids.'

I asked Noel if he knew what happened to **JOHN BREDEN**, Melbourne fan for many years. 'I have just taken time out to ring John's mother, and was informed that John's business in Thailand folded some time ago and he lost quite a sum of money. He is now teaching English at some school in Bangkok.'

**IRWIN HIRSH** has also been lying low for a few years, but still keeps up with the wider world of fandom. He takes me to task for the way I produce fanzines (of course), but also agrees with me that 'it is difficult to get Australians to contribute letters to fanzines'. This issue of *TMR* gives the lie to that one. Australian fans do seem to have lost interest in discussing sf books in *SF Commentary* kind of detail.

**MAUREEN** and **CORDELIA BREWSTER** stay in touch, although we see them only every six months or a year. Hil

**JOHN FOYSTER** sent me from Constantinople 'a shot of the new, thinner Gillespie in action. I'm sure there are better ones around, but this is something . . . Good to have seen you again.' Many commentators couldn't help noticing that you were having a good time at Constantinople, too, John. I wish I could keep that

weight off.

**ROBERT LIGHTMAN** sent a pleasant note when I resigned from FAPA in mid-1994. He continues to trade *Trap Door*, currently the world's best fanzine (well, *Habakkuk* is pretty good as well, and so is *Anisble*) for my fanzines, and I consider this a privilege. Bob even asked me to contribute to *Trap Door*, which is some compliment. I'm so overcome I haven't thought of anything to write yet.

**JOHN LITCHEN** seemed pleased with the *TMR* presentation of his article about the making of the Aussiecon film. Quite a triumph for me to land that little article, with photos as well. He and Monica have just moved to 3 Firestone Court, Robina, Queensland 4226.

**PERRY CHAPDELAINÉ** is someone who slipped out of sight. I saw his name somewhere, and wrote to him. 'I'm still very much alive, dancing, jitterbugging (East and West Coast Swing) four times a week, flying an airplane and still writing. The vast majority of my writing, however, is on alternative medical treatments.'

Every now and again I keep in contact with **MICHAEL TOLLEY**, mainly on matters to do with *SF Commentary*. Michael still seems supernaturally busy. *The Body Dabber*, his small fanzine about crime fiction, is one of the best things I receive in the mail.

**YVONNE ROUSSEAU**, as well as ringing us quite often from Adelaide, sends fabulous letters over which she slaps a 'DO NOT PRINT'. What's the use of sending us details of the Adelaide launch of *Alien Shores* if I can't reprint a single succulent sentence?

Although **CLAUDIA MANGIAMELE** might well have taken offence at some statements and revelations in *TMR* 19/20/21, instead she sent a subscription and her best wishes. Her partner **GERARD GLEASON**'s comment about that issue: 'Why do cats have to get into everything?'

**ADRIENNE LOSIN** sent greetings from 'sunny, warm-by-day and freezing-by-night Central Australia' when she was in Alice Springs visiting relatives. 'There are lots of sf books in the secondhand stores and at market stalls. So whatever its other faults, Alice Springs must have some intelligent life.'

In a letter dated 12 August 1994 **VAN IKIN** said that he had gained control over his Department's computer and printer, and was hoping to produce the next issue of *Science Fiction* by October 1994! A bit too much hoping going on there, Van.

**KAY GUBBINS** and **TIM JONES**, people we greatly enjoyed meeting at Constantinople, which they attended as the FFANZ delegates, sent us an invitation to their October 1994 wedding. Since the wedding was in Wellington, we couldn't get there (although we were tempted to do so, and finally do that New Zealand trip we've never booked for). We were chuffed to be asked.

I hadn't heard from **CHRIS PRIEST** for a long time. He'd been busy with kids and work; mainly mundane work, but I've heard elsewhere that Chris has delivered the novel that he was working on in August last year. The day after I wrote to Chris, I received my copy of *The Book on the Edge of Forever*, the handsome American version of Chris's *The Last Deadloss Visions*. Chris reminded me that I had never reviewed the original version, whose fanzine version Chris keeps updating. I

meant to, Chris! It was a high priority for my column of reviews of non-fiction books that I was supposed to be writing for Van Ikin's *Science Fiction*. Unfortunately, the column has disappeared under the combined weight of the delayed appearance of *SF* and my own laziness.

ALEX SKOVRON is one of those nice people who, although he doesn't have time to write letters of comment, sends money from time to time. I suspect his subscription already takes him up to the year 2020 . . .

JOHN HARRINGTON sent some artwork. Thanks, John.

During his August 1994 DUFF trip to America, ALAN STEWART stayed with many fans and met many cats: 'Lots of cats: Jeanne Bowman and Don had six, and Janice [Murray] and Lan have four. One has slept on the foot of my bed most nights. He's called Odie, for opposable digits, as he has thumbs, but Janice claims he's the dumbest cat she's ever had. I got up to Vancouver, met Garth Spencer, and talked to William Gibson's answer machine.'

According to LELAND SAPIRO I've never been off his mailing list. He sent two missing issues, which still leaves some gaps, and I've seen no more copies of *Riverside Quarterly* since August 1994. (But he hasn't seen any more *TMRs* from me since then.)

PERRY MIDDLEMISS sends occasional notes, most recently on matters dealing with Arcon. He found in the *Weekly Telegraph*, 31 August 1994, the first news I'd had that Bill Forsyth, ace film director of *Gregory's Girl* and *Local Hero*, is still alive and working. (I'd heard one stark announcement, about five years ago, on *Film Buffs' Forecast*, that he'd died. Then no news at all.) Sounds as if Bill won't be working much from now on. 'The problem, I tell Forsyth as gently as I can,' writes the *Weekly Telegraph's* David Gritten, 'is that *Being Human* is a hard film to like. Its five stories seem to lead nowhere. One expects some resolution at the end; there is none. Had I been watching it for pleasure, I would have walked out.' *Being Human*, released in America in the middle of last year, has not reached Australia in any form. Forsyth's previous film, *Breaking In*, was very enjoyable, but it ran only two weeks in town, and was shown in the cinema only after it had been released on video.

LUCY SUSSEX and JULIAN WARNER sent a postcard from America during their round-the-world trip of last year. They reported that they had dined with John Baxter in Paris and witnessed a 'scandalous party at Joseph and Judith's'. You'll have to ask Lucy and Julian the nature and extent of the scandal, if they can still remember the details. Julian writes: 'CDs are very cheap in US and Canada. Very tempting to spend too much on them.'

BILL DANNER discussed 'Linotype' and 'Monotype' at length because it turns out I was mistaken about the nature of monotype. Also he berates my 'present computer face, otherwise quite well designed and readable' which 'lacks apostrophes and quote marks and uses instead, as many do, the character usually used to designate minutes'. It's called Palatino, and it's one of the few typefaces supplied by Adobe as an inbuilt face for laser printers. Fortunately, now I have access to Baskerville.

PETER KERANS reappeared. He disappeared from

my view in 1989 ('Returned Address Unknown'). I've written to him, but haven't heard from him again.

GEORGE TURNER cannot bear to keep a book in the house after he's read it, so he's sent several parcels of books during recent years. Thanks, George.

After all these years, during which FRANZ ROTTENSTEINER has been Stanislaw Lem's agent and staunchest defender, the partnership has ended acrimoniously. This is a matter of some importance to me, since not only will Franz have let go the rights to Lem's fiction, but he will not be able to give me rights for Lem's articles, quite a few of which appeared in *SF Commentary*, and most of which were translated by Franz, who no longer wishes his translations to be available. This is some break-up. All this affects a certain project called *The Best of SF Commentary*. I don't know what's happening; Robin Bloxidge in Liverpool was trying to patch up an arrangement when last I enquired. Even if the 'Best of' project reverts to me, however, the Lem articles that would have been the centre of any such book could be conspicuously missing.

JOHN NEWMAN subscribed: thanks. Also I 'talk' to him via ANZAPA: hence the piece on Roger Weddall that appears elsewhere in this issue.

MICHAEL HAILSTONE sent two postcards during his trip to South America late last year. Did he write 'Am enjoying the sights; wish you were here'? No; he was still upset about something I'd said or done or failed to say or do in 1992. Some people work even harder than I do at staying upset about things.

STEVE SNEYD from Huddersfield is more interested in poetry than science fiction. Like many another correspondent, he had tried to get some response out of me during one of those long periods when I don't write letters. He wanted to buy Roger Zelazny's *When Pussycat Was Last in the Catyard Bloomed*, published by Norstrilia Press. Eventually I sent it to him, and now we are on each other's mailing list. Steve produces the only hand-written fanzine I know of: a natty little leaflet about recent alternative poetry he's come across. (4 Nowell Place, Almondsbury, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire HD5 8PB, England). He sent me *Take Them to the Garden*, a short book 'written/adapted by John Dowie from the words of Philip K. Dick'.

We've kept in touch, sort of, with JENNIFER BRYCE, although I know she doesn't have time to produce any more articles to match her wonderful trip report that I published in *TMR* 18. We were lucky enough to attend the amiable joint birthday party she held with Graeme Foyster, but have, alas, seen them only once since.

TERRY JEEVES, says that 'It's sad to hear about Roger Weddall. My own personal friends Doc Weir, Ken McIntyre, Eric Jones and Eric Bentcliffe, plus quite a few teaching colleagues, have all vanished. At seventy-two, I'm wondering how much time I've got left . . . Syd Bounds says 'histomaniacs' (I'm one) can't get down to writing. Well, I've compiled all my sf magazines into index form, and still found time to write a history of pulp sf magazines and my autobiography — both around 60,000 words — plus 'Wartime Daze', a 35,000-word account of my wartime experiences. A publisher enthused over it — then wanted to cost-share, with my

share being £3300. No way.\*

Thanks to **DOUG BARBOUR** from Canada and a reviewlet I put in *TMR* 19/20/21, I've exchanged brief letters with **ANDREW TAYLOR**, one of Australia's most interesting Australian poets. I've bought Andrew's latest volume of verse, and will read and review it as soon as I can excavate it from the Trojan dig that I call my study (a potential tomb of book-filled boxes waiting to fall over and crush me.)

We had a meal with **MARTIN BRIDGSTOCK** when he was visiting Melbourne last year. Afterwards he sent a postcard, but doesn't seem to have the time to write more articles for *TMR*.

It's been our fault that we haven't seen **ELIZABETH** and **PETER DARLING** during 1994 and 1995, because we stopped attending the monthly Musica Viva chamber music concerts, which is where we saw Elizabeth and Peter regularly for several years. We saw them briefly at Esta Handfield's funeral, but apart from that the main news we had from them was last Christmas. Elizabeth took 'the package' (Victorian government inducement superannuation package to rid itself of staff) 'and now wonders how she had the time to work'. Peter has been incredibly busy, as he has been for every year I've known him. Elizabeth did manage to get away with Peter on several trips. Miranda (who we've met at several recent social occasions) is now working as an architect, after wondering for several years whether she would ever be able to put her training into action.

**MEV BINNS** keeps sending me his catalogues, although I find little to order from them. Thanks, Merv. I still can't see why you import books for which you don't have forward orders; usually you don't happen to import the books I'm interested in buying. On the other hand, I keep meeting people who still buy all their sf from Merv Binns Books, PO Box 491, Elsternwick, Victoria 3185.

In January 1995 **JANICE MURRAY** sent a letter suggesting that Australian fans take the trouble to meet Lionel Fanthorpe, who was rumoured to be visiting us in July. If this visit happened, nobody in Melbourne heard about it. Sorry, Janice. I'm not the person to ask about organising something. Ask Alan Stewart every time.

In February, during the holiday season, **ROBIN WHITELEY** sent a postcard filled with notes about the trip she and **JOHN COLLINS** took to the North Island of New Zealand. 'Most people say the South Island is better, so it really must be very spectacular.'

**ANDY SAWYER** was heavily involved in the best-publicised (i.e. it reached Melbourne newspapers) sf event of the year: the granting by Liverpool University of an honorary doctorate to Arthur Clarke, who took part in the ceremony from Sri Lanka via satellite hook-up. Andy writes: 'This was probably the most terrifying experience I've been involved with so far, and I'm amazed that it went as well as it did.'

**MAUREEN SPELLER** sends me *Acnestis*, one of the two apas I'm now in. 'The reason I actually started *Acnestis* was less a feeling of being overrun with media fans so much as a feeling there had to be more to life than conversation about con-running, which dominates portions of Brit fandom. The name came from Andy

Sawyer. It used to be his fanzine title, and apparently it's the name for that part of the back which, when it itches, can't be reached to be scratched — which summed us up at the time: the bookish refugees. I seem destined to replay that role through my life, over and over.' Maureen is also a freelance editor and proof reader.

**BERT ROTHKUGEL** subscribed, and then his letter and cheque disappeared into the desk-mound for six months. Sorry, Bert. I hope you enjoyed your magazines when you received them.

**IAN GUNN** and **KAREN PENDER-GUNN** have sent postcards from various fan trips: one from their **FANZZ** trip (from Lyn McConchie's Farside Farm) and another from their recent **GUFF** trip (from Dave Langford's Hugo-filled living room).

**DAVID PRINGLE**, sporting a shiny new Hugo in his living room for *Interzone*, was kind enough to print a full-page advertisement for my magazines in an issue early this year. I've offered to return to favour, but he hasn't sent me a page ad. Instead he's sent some publicity on the 100th issue, which includes authors such as Stephen Baxter, Eric Brown, Greg Egan, Ian McDonald, Molly Brown and Geoff Ryman. 'With the exception of Ian McDonald, they are all authors *Interzone* can claim to have either discovered or, at any rate, "nurtured" from an early point in their careers.'

**LEANNE FRAHM** and I haven't talked much about the contents of this magazine or *SFC*, but we are in ANZAPA together, and since Leanne has decided that Melbourne is again visitable, we see each other about once a year. It's a highlight of the year for me, but somehow I thought I had put Leanne offside, and she wrote to say that This Definitely Was Not So. We caught up a few years' conversation, off and on, at Arcon. And Leanne did write this: 'One of the happiest things that's ever come out of my writing was Bruce Gillespie's saying that my story "On the Turn" was his favourite short story for . . . whenever it was — 1988? I am so proud of that. I've misplaced your review, but you used some magnificent huge word to describe it, one that I had to look up in the dictionary, and I was delirious with joy.'

**TOM WHALEN** keeps up with me better than I keep up with him, but we did non-correspond for a year because he was in Germany, not in New Orleans. Tom's off the Stuttgart again for a year. His recent reading includes 'all eight of the "other" Melville novels, my favourites being *The Confidence-Man*, *White Jacket* and *Israel Potter*'.

I've made contact with **GRAHAM JONES** and other people from Victoria University, who recently put on in Melbourne a well-run academic conference about sf called 'When Worlds Collide'. I was only able to attend a half-day, but I hope they stage another such event.

**IF YOUR NAME IS NOT HERE** and you know you sent me something delicious during the last two years, I might have misplaced your letter, or saved your comments for the next *SF Commentary*, whenever that might arrive.

— 11 November 1995

# Justin Ackroyd's SLOW GLASS 'BEST BOOKS READ' LISTS

## Justin Ackroyd:

The following lists are for our mutual entertainment, and to get some idea of what people read and enjoyed during 1993 and 1994, plus a couple of the worst of 1993. Amongst these lists you might find someone who reflects your taste in books, and as a result find new writers to read. Most books listed are available from **Slow Glass Books**, GPO Box 2708X, Melbourne, Victoria 3001, so if you're interested in any particular titles, drop me a line and I'll quote you a price. My thanks to everyone who supplied lists. Have fun!

1993

### JUSTIN ACKROYD:

#### Science Fiction and Fantasy:

*Fahrenheit 451* (Ray Bradbury)  
*Warpath* (Tony Daniel)  
*All My Sims Remembers!* (Joe Haldeman)  
*Alien Blues* (Lynn S. Hightower)  
*Inferno* (Mike Resnick)

#### Horror:

*Last Souls* (Poppy Z. Brite)  
*The Black Death* (Basil Copper)

#### Crime and Mystery:

*Detective* (Parnel Hall)  
*Katwalk* (Karen Kijewski)  
*The Devil Met a Lady* (Stuart M. Kaminsky)  
*Lower Man* (Dallas Murphy)  
*Everything You Have is Mine* (Sandra Scoppettone)  
*The Woman Who Married a Bear* (John Straley)

#### Mainstream:

*Concrete Island* (J. G. Ballard)  
*Blackburn* (Bradley Denton)

#### Children's:

*The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stuffed Tales* (Jan Scieszka, illustrated by Lane Smith)

### STEVEN MILLER

My part-timer/would-be writer:

*Dr Haggard's Disease* (Patrick McGrath)  
*Kitchen* (Banana Yoshimoto)  
*Slapstick* (Kurt Vonnegut)  
*Buddy Holy is Abuse and Writ on Gonymside* (Bradley Denton)  
*The Gunfight* (Richard Matheson)  
*Blackburn* (Bradley Denton)  
*The Joy Luck Club* (Amy Tan)  
*The Throat* (Peter Straub)  
*Reaper Man* (Terry Pratchett)  
*Briar Rose* (Jane Yolen)

### BRUCE GILLESPIE

Editor/publisher of *SF Commentary* and *The Metaphysical Review*

#### Science Fiction & Fantasy:

*Boy's Life* (Robert R. McCammon)  
*Doomsday Book* (Connie Willis)  
*Quarantine* (Greg Egan)  
*The Hollowing* (Robert Holdstock)  
*The Ward Colonial Boy* (Paul Voermans)  
*Night of Light* (Philip Jose Farmer)

#### Crime and Mystery:

*Cruel and Unusual* (Patricia Cornwell)  
*Missing Joseph* (Elizabeth George)  
*Complicity* (Iain Banks)

*The Hamlet Trap* (Kate Wilhelm)  
*Well-schooled in Murder* (Elizabeth George)  
*Murder at Home* (ed. Stephen Knight)

#### Mainstream:

*The Age of Innocence* (Edith Wharton)  
*Christina Stead: A Biography* (Hazel Rowley)  
*The House of Mirth* (Edith Wharton)  
*In the Reign of the Queen of Persia* (Joan Chase)  
*Scorned* (Ursula K. Le Guin)  
*The Painted Bird* (Jerzy Kosinski)

### JONATHAN STRAHAN

One of the editors/publishers of *Eidolon*, and world traveller:

#### Science Fiction:

*Mastership* (Barbara Kingsolver)  
*Virtual Light* (William Gibson)  
*Green Mars* (Kim Stanley Robinson)

#### Fantasy:

*The Thread that Binds the Bones* (Nina Kiriki Hoffman)  
*Lords and Ladies* (Terry Pratchett)

#### Horror:

*Drawing Blood* (Poppy Z. Brite)

#### Mainstream:

*Blackburn* (Bradley Denton)  
*The Bean Trees* (Barbara Kingsolver)  
*The Iowa Baseball Confederacy* (W. P. Kinsella)  
*Tales of the City* (Armistead Maupin)  
*Glimpses* (Lewis Shiner)

#### Mystery:

*J Is For Judgement* (Sue Crawford)  
*A Fearful Yellow Eye* (John D. MacDonald)  
*Bimbos of the Death Sun* (Sharyn McCrumb)  
*Roman Blood* (Steven Saylor)  
*New Orleans Mourning* (Julie Smith)

#### Short Story Collections:

*Beard Discoverers Fire and Other Stories* (Terry Bisson)  
*I Sing the Body Electric* (Ray Bradbury)  
*Swamp Fortus and Other Tales* (Poppy Z. Brite)  
*Dirty Work* (Pat Cadigan)  
*All the Sea with Oysters* (Avram Davidson)  
*Strange Doings* (R. A. Lafferty)  
*Nine Hundred Grandmothers* (R. A. Lafferty)  
*The Best of Jack Vance* (Jack Vance)

### MICHAEL CLARK

An Earl of Zetland fan

#### Science Fiction and Fantasy:

*A Woman of the Iron People* (Eleanor Aranson)  
*Use of Weapons* (Iain M. Banks)  
*The Howling Man* (Charles Beaumont)  
*Saint Peter's Wolf* (Michael Cadnum)

*The Little Country* (Charles de Lint)  
*The MD* (Thomas M. Disch)  
*Flying in Place* (Susan Falwick)  
*The Jaguar Hunter* (Lucius Shepard)  
*Beauty* (Sheri S. Tepper)  
*Doomsday Book* (Connie Willis)

#### Crime and Mystery:

*White Jazz* (James Ellroy)  
*Guardian Angel* (Sara Paretsky)  
*The Axeman's Jazz* (Julie Smith)

### ANDREW SULLIVAN

Published author:

*Consider Phlebas* (Iain Banks)  
*The Gunfight* (Richard Matheson)  
*The Player of Games* (Iain M. Banks)  
*A Bridge of Years* (Robert Charles Wilson)  
*The Cult of Loving Kindness* (Paul Park)  
*Children of the Night* (Dan Simmons)  
*Gerald's Game* (Stephen King)  
*The Healer's War* (Elizabeth Ann Scarborough)  
*Clear and Present Danger* (Tom Clancy)  
*Lolita* (Vladimir Nabokov)

#### Worst Book:

*Silver* (Ira Levin)

### CAREY HANDFIELD

A large part of Norstritia Press

#### Science Fiction:

*Red Man* (Kim Stanley Robinson)  
*The Destiny Makers* (George Turner)  
*Steel Beach* (John Varley)  
*Chanur's Legacy* (C. J. Cherryh)

#### Crime and Mystery:

*Postmortem* (Patricia Cornwell)  
*Cruel and Unusual* (Patricia Cornwell)  
*Killing Orders* (Sara Paretsky)  
*In the Electric Mist with the Confederate Dead* (James Lee Burke)

*Red Square* (Martin Cruz Smith)

*Shadow Play* (Frances Fryfield)

#### Mainstream:

*Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (Salman Rushdie)

### BRETT MAXFIELD

#### Science Fiction and Mystery:

*A Clockwork Orange* (Anthony Burgess)  
*Dream Baby* (Bruce McAllister)  
*Small Gods* (Terry Pratchett)  
*Fool on the Hill* (Matt Ruff)  
*Stations of the Tide* (Michael Swanwick)  
*Her Smoke Rose Up Forever* (James Tiptree Jr.)  
*Brain Child* (George Turner)  
*Night of the Coolers* (Howard Waldrop)

#### Crime and Mystery

*Mercy* (David Lindsay)

Stone City (Mitchell Smith)

**Mainstream:**

*Lord of the Flies* (William Golding)  
*The Trial* (Franz Kafka)

**Children's**

*The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales* (Jan Scieszka, illustrated by Lane Smith)

1994

**JUSTIN ACKROYD**

**Science Fiction and Fantasy:**

*Cold Allies* (Patricia Anthony)  
*Fall Spectra 3* (ed. Armines, Stout, McCarthy and LoBrutto)  
*Brittle Innings* (Michael Bishop)  
*Count Griger's Blues* (Michael Bishop)  
*XY* (Michael Blumlein)  
*Glory Season* (David Bin)  
*Drawing Blood* (Poppy Z. Brite)  
*Spanky* (Christopher Fowler)  
*Confederacy of the Dead* (ed. Gilliam, Greenberg and Kramer)  
*Strange Daughters of the Sun and Moon* (Lisa Goldstein)  
*Beggars in Spain* (Nancy Kress)  
*Gun, with Occasional Music* (Jonathan Lettlem)  
*The Woman Between the Worlds* (F. Gwynplaine MacIntyre)

*Dance of the Light* (George R. R. Martin)  
*Glimpses* (Lewis Shiner)  
*Hyperion* (Dan Simmons)  
*The Fall of Hyperion* (Dan Simmons)  
*A Bridge of Years* (Robert Charles Wilson)  
*The Haruast* (Robert Charles Wilson)

**Mainstream:**

*1968* (Joe Haldeman)

**Crime and Mystery:**

*Heaven's Prisoners* (James Lee Burke)  
*Dead Man* (Joe Gores)  
*Drawing Dead* (Pete Hautman)  
*Strip Tease* (Carl Hiaasen)  
*Murko Mojo* (Joe R. Lansdale)  
*Black Betty* (Walter Mosley)  
*Wireless* (Jack O'Connell)  
*Tunnel Vision* (Sara Paretsky)  
*Shocking* (George Y. Pelecanos)  
*The Long-legged Fly* (James Sallis)  
*The Civilians Eat Themselves* (John Straley)

**BRUCE GILLESPIE**

**Science Fiction and Fantasy:**

*The Chalk Giants* (Keith Roberts)  
*From the Teeth of Angels* (Jonathan Carroll)  
*Cremat Soldier* (George Turner)  
*The Passing of the Dragons: The Short Fiction of Keith Roberts*  
*Nomanisland* (D. G. Compton)

**General:**

*Passion: A Romance* (A. S. Byatt)  
*Waterland* (Graham Swift)  
*Where I'm Calling From: The Selected Stories of Raymond Carver*  
*Chamber Music* (Doris Grumbach)  
*Collected Poems 1942-1985* (Judith Wright)  
*A Life in Movies: An Autobiography* (Michael Powell)

*Million Dollar Movie* (Michael Powell)  
*You Are Now Entering the Human Heart* (Janet Frame)  
*The House of the Country* (Edith Wharton)  
*Saint Maybe* (Anne Tyler)

**Crime and Mystery**

*A Dark Adapted Eye* (Barbara Vine)  
*The House of Slaves* (Barbara Vine)  
*Talking to Strange Men* (Ruth Rendell)  
*The Crocodile Bird* (Ruth Rendell)  
*Gullwinglass* (Barbara Vine)  
*Kissing the Gunner's Daughter* (Ruth Rendell)

**JONATHAN STRAHAN**

**Science Fiction and Fantasy:**

*Alemany and Dream* (Charles de Lint)  
*Brittle Innings* (Michael Bishop)  
*Night Rebus* (James P. Blaylock)  
*Necromile* (Terminal Cafe) (Ian MacDonald)  
*Moving Mars* (Greg Egan)  
*Genetic Soldier* (George Turner)  
*The Iron Dragon's Daughter* (Michael Swanwick)  
*Resurrection City* (Greg Egan)

**Crime and Mystery:**

*Just Personal* (Julie Smith)  
*The Last Things of Doctors Delgado* (Marele Day)  
*Dying for a Post-war World* (Max Allan Collins)

**Comic/Graphic Novels:**

*Sandman: A Game of Yins* (Neil Gaiman)  
*Sin City* (Frank Miller)

**YVONNE ROUSSEAU**

Author/Critic

*The Bookish Bride* (Margaret Atwood)  
*Secrets of the Forest: Discovering History in Melbourne's Ash Range* (Tom Griffiths)  
*The Last Magician* (Janette Turner Hospital)  
*Go Steady* (Elmore Leonard)  
*What Franny Jones Knew, and Other Essays on Writers* (Cynthia Ozick)  
*Witches Abroad* (Terry Pratchett)  
*War* (Geoff Ryman)  
*Daughters of Paradise: Women Writers of the Fin-de-siècle* (ed. Elaine Showalter)  
*Bonafide Anglaise* (Violet Trefusis)  
*Swims on an Autumn River* (Sylvia Townsend Warner)

**TERRY DOWLING**

Author/Critic

*Necromile* (Terminal Cafe) (Ian MacDonald)  
*Voices in the Light* (Sean McMullen)  
*Green Mars* (Kim Stanley Robinson)  
*Resurrection City* (Greg Egan)  
*Low Souls* (Poppy Z. Brite)  
*Alien Shores* (ed. Peter McNamara and Margaret Winch)  
*Red Dust* (Paul J. McAuley)

**STUART COUPE**

Editor of *Mean Streets*

*Green River Rising* (Tim Willocks)  
*The Scald's Bride* (Minette Walters)  
*Ashes by Now* (Mark Timlin)  
*Original Sin* (P. D. James)

*Simisola* (Ruth Rendell)  
*Dead Man Upright* (Derek Raymond)  
*Dick Contino's Blues* (Hollywood Nocturnes) (James Ellroy)  
*Wireless* (Jack O'Connell)  
*The Concrete Blonde* (Michael Connelly)  
*Black Betty* (Walter Mosley)  
*Mucho Mojo* (Joe R. Lansdale)  
*Singray* (J. R. Carroll)

**BILL CONGREVE**

Editor/publisher of MirrorDance Books

*The Ends of the Earth* (Lucius Shepard)  
*Johnny and the Dead* (Terry Pratchett)  
*Razorid Saddles* (ed. Joe R. Lansdale and Pat LoBrutto)  
*Nature Strip* (Leonie Stevens)  
*The Gathering* (Isabelle Carmody)  
*Pluto, Animal Lover* (Laren Stever)  
*Dark Places* (Kate Grenville)  
*Writer of the Purple Rage* (Joe R. Lansdale)  
*A Good Clean Fight* (Derek Robinson)  
*Skin* (Kathe Koja)  
*Grimscrite* (Thomas Ligotti)  
*A Manhattan Ghost Story* (T. M. Wright)  
*Alien Shores* (ed. Peter McNamara and Margaret Winch)

**CAREY HANDFIELD**

*Cabal* (Michael Dibdin)  
*Vendetta* (Michael Dibdin)  
*Green Mars* (Kim Stanley Robinson)  
*A Bridge of Years* (Robert Charles Wilson)  
*Dixie City Jam* (James Lee Burke)  
*Tunnel Vision* (Sara Paretsky)  
*Original Sin* (P. D. James)  
*Playing for the Ashes* (Elizabeth George)  
*The Body Farm* (Patricia Cornwell)  
*The Death Ceremony* (James Melville)

**BRETT MAXFIELD**

*The Pillars of Eternity and The Garments of Caen* (Barrington J. Bayley)  
*A Very Private Life* (Michael Frayn)  
*Scissors Cut Paper Wrap Stone* (Ian MacDonald)  
*The Onno Road* (Iain Banks)  
*Squall Line* (James Hall)  
*Body of Evidence* (Patricia Cornwell)  
*Jonah Hex: Tu-o-Gun Mojo* (Joe R. Lansdale and Timothy Truman)  
*Venus Plus X* (Theodore Sturgeon)  
*Worlds Apart* (Joe Haldeman)  
*Wallflower* (William Bayer)

**WARREN MAXFIELD**

*Wallflower* (William Bayer)  
*Beauty* (Brian D'Amato)  
*The Lion* (Stephen Fry)  
*Juniper* (Steven Gould)  
*Skin* (Kathe Koja)  
*Beggars in Spain* (Nancy Kress)  
*Gun, with Occasional Music* (Jonathan Lettlem)  
*The War Hound and the World's Pain* (Michael Moorcock)  
*White Butterfly* (Walter Mosley)  
*Anno Dracula* (Kim Newman)  
*Flicker* (Theodore Rozzak)  
*A Simple Plan* (Scott Smith)  
*Green River Rising* (Tim Willocks)

— *Slow Glass Books Catalogue*, Nos. 67 (March 1994) and 83 (September 1995)