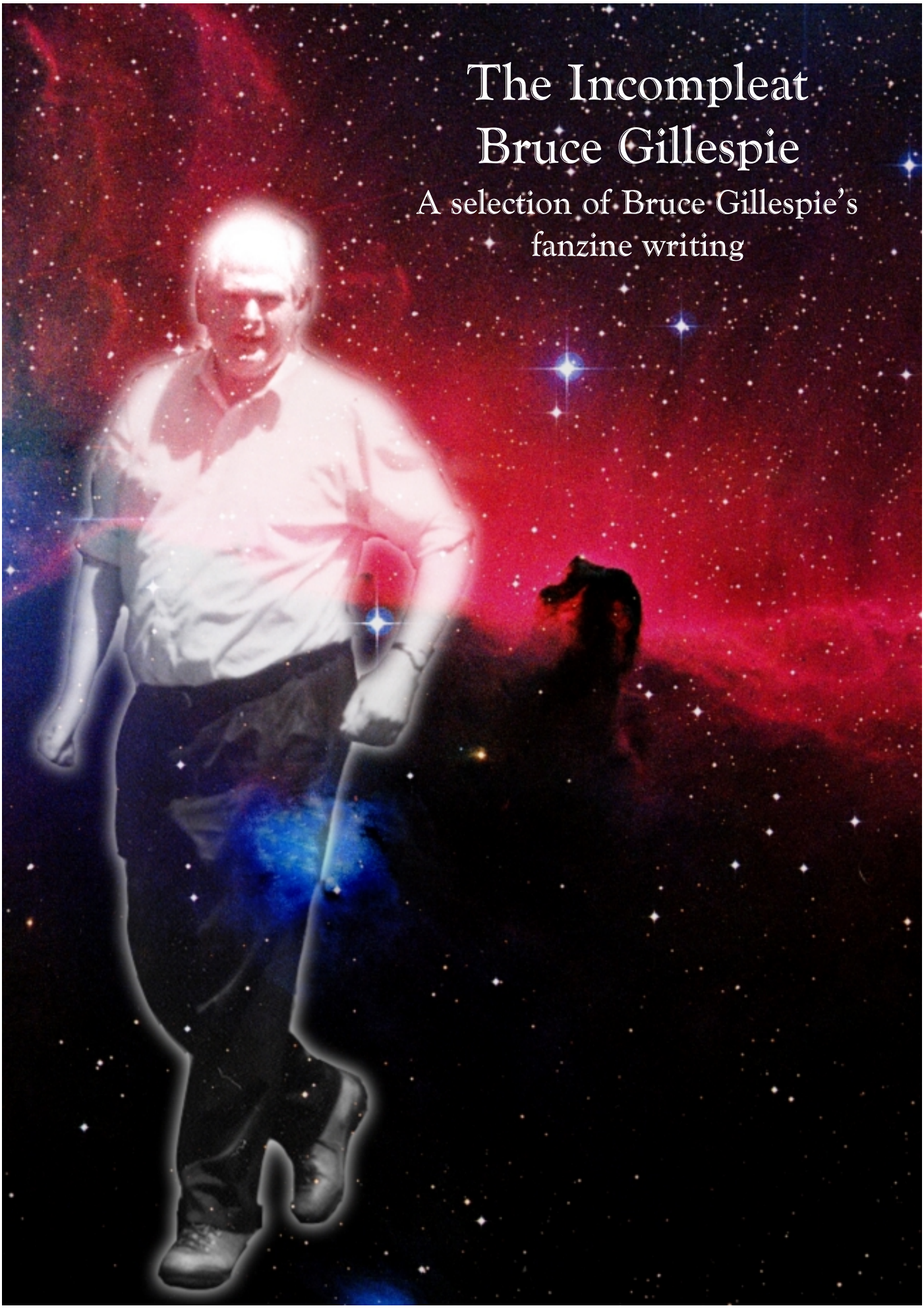

Cover: Ditmar

The Incompleat Bruce Gillespie

A selection of Bruce Gillespie's fanzine writing

Edited by **Irwin Hirsh**, 26 Jessamine Avenue, East Prahran VIC 3181, Australia. Published by the **Bring Bruce Bayside (BBB) Fund**, with a grant from **Aussiecon Three**. Fund Convenors: **Arnie and Joyce Katz**, PMB 152, 330 S. Decatur Blvd, Las Vegas NV 89107, USA. Australian Administrator: **Bill Wright**, Unit 4, 1 Park Street, St Kilda West VIC 3182. Printed by **Copy Place**, 415 Bourke Street, Melbourne VIC 3000. Available for $A10, $US10, or £5 (notes please, not cheques).

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Illustrations and photographs: Front cover: 'I Must Be Searching for My Friends': computer graphic by Ditmar (Dick Jenssen); photo of Bruce Gillespie by Helena Binns. p. 2: Peter Mack. p. 3: Helena Binns. p. 6: book cover by Leo and Diane Dillon. p. 7: from the collection of Toni Weisskopf. p. 9: Richard Hryckiewicz. p. 12: unknown. p. 21: Jane Tisell. pp. 22 and 23: from the collection of Roger Weddall. p. 27: Jeanette Gillespie. p. 30: unknown, probably Paul Williams. p. 38: illustration by Graeme Davison.

Notes from a babe-in-arms

Editor's Introduction by Irwin Hirsh

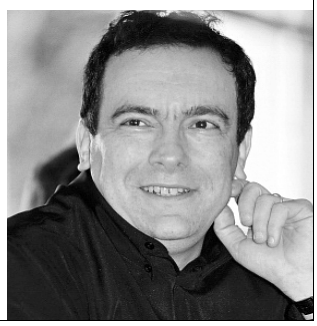
My relationship with Bruce Gillespie began in 1976 in Space Age Books, when I purchased some of those fanzine-thingies I found on the shelves. Later that year I decided that I liked Bruce's approach to science fiction and publishing, and became an *SF Commentary* subscriber. In the years since I've traded fanzines with Bruce, and contributed articles and letters to his fanzines. Along the way I managed to persuade him to contribute an article to my own fanzine; later on Bruce rewarded me by thanking him 'for making me write it'.

For almost four decades Bruce has been an important part of the SF fan landscape. In March this year members of the Trufen email list began talking about raising enough funds to enable Bruce to attend the 2005 Corflu and Potlatch conventions in San Francisco. I put up my hand and offered to edit a special publication: a volume that could be used to promote the Fund and remind fandom why Bruce is worthy of our largesse, act as a fund-raiser, and an appropriate 'legacy' that lingers on long after Bruce's trip has gone from recent memory.

The cost of publishing this volume has been covered by a grant from Victorian Science Fiction Conventions Inc, the body that ran Aussiecon Three. Bruce was Aussiecon Three's Fan Guest of Honour, and VSFC's sponsorship of this publication is a way for the convention continuing to celebrate the achievements of one of their GoHs.

It's been fun re-reading Bruce in his and others' fanzines over the past two months. My far from complete collection has about 5500 pages of Gillespie-published zines. Fortunately for the purpose of selecting material for this publication, not every word is by Bruce. Australia Post's weight-range imposed a 40 page limit, which made the final selection an interesting experience. Let's just say that we are hoping that it'll be possible to publish a second volume. Please enjoy.

— Irwin Hirsh, June 2004



Irwin Hirsh, 2003.
(Photo: Peter Mack.)

Irwin Hirsh joined fandom during the mid 1970s, and has since published many fanzines (including *Sikander*, *Thyme* and *Larrikin* — with Perry Middlemiss). He also collects fanzines.

Introduction: The incomplete compleat Bruce Gillespie

by Ditmar (Dick Jenssen)

Like all of us, Bruce Gillespie has opinions. Like most of us, Bruce Gillespie has firm opinions. Which is as it should be in a society which treasures the individual, respects the rights of the individual, and approves of divergence of opinion. So, while Bruce and I agree on the quality of many writers, we disagree on others. Thus while we both believe that Robert Musil's *Man Without Qualities* is one of the great novels, Bruce does not share my devotion to Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*; and while we agree that Cordwainer Smith is a luminary of the SF world, I cannot share Bruce's opinion of the quality of Phil Dick's prose. Unfortunately, Bruce is of the small minority of those who not only have firm, strong opinions, but who can give convincing, rational, well-argued reasons for holding those critical views. Which, at times, is most irritating indeed, for when confronted with valid ideas contrary to our own, it becomes necessary to think. To think carefully — and for someone like myself that can be a distressing event. But, of course, a rewarding and enlightening experience, as well — modifying one's mind-set is often enriching, and Bruce is an exemplary guide in such matters.

The pleasures of Bruce's critical work, apart from breaking down our prejudices, include offering fresh insights to the delights of those authors whom we already appreciate, and pointing out those facets, both large and small, of their writing which we may have missed, or dismissed. But, perhaps, most important is introducing us, though his writings, to stories and novels which we have ignored, overlooked, or were simply ignorant of.

While Bruce's opinions may be convincing, he is never, in the Ambrose Bierce sense of the word, positive; that is, he is never 'wrong at the top of one's voice'. Unlike some authors he has a voice, so does not need to scream, and thus never writes as though his groin has been freshly sprayed with napalm. His prose, therefore, is always rational, considered, logical, thoughtful and thought-provoking. Since he has been writing for many years, one can occasionally, but very rarely indeed, discover a minor inconsistency or two. Which, again, is the natural course of the intellectual life, for we all mature, our tastes change, new influences bear upon us, and our critical faculties develop. And so I say: 'Does Bruce contradict himself? Very well, then he contradicts himself. He is large, he contains multitudes.' He is, after all, merely human. Superior human, but human nonetheless.

Being human, Bruce's oeuvre encompasses more than critical analyses of SF — he also writes of other fans, of fannish events, and of the quotidian in his life. And in that of his wife, Elaine Cochrane. You will find examples of all of these in the pages of this publication. To those of you who are already familiar with Bruce's voice, you know what pleasures to expect; to those of you who are reading his writing for the first time, you have joys ahead of you which make us others jealous. For regardless of what Bruce's words are about they are always a delight to savour.

So delightful have they been found by the true fans of Australia, that Bruce has a probably never-to-be-equalled record of awards. From 1972 through 2004, he has acquired sixteen (that's 16!) Ditmar Awards and three Atheling Awards. (Let's forget about the unsuccessful nominations).

So, 'whoever you are holding me now in hand, without one thing all will be useless' — which undoubtedly is the prose of Bruce Gillespie. Read and enjoy.

— Ditmar

Dick Jenssen is a retired meteorologist, a founder member of the Melbourne Science Fiction Club, a film watcher and collector, a computer games enthusiast . . . and Ditmar-winning artist who uses computer graphics to grace the pages of fan publications throughout the world, especially those published by Bruce Gillespie and Bill Wright. He's also the Ditmar that the Ditmars were named after. Ask him to tell you that story sometime. (Photo: Helena Binns.)

Where we're arriving

First published in *SF Commentary* 24, November 1971, edited by Bruce Gillespie.

Last weekend was very pleasant. The sun took control of Melbourne's weather and, as happens here, summer came abruptly. (Some years we get spring as well, but not often.) As the temperature rose, the surfaces of cars and roads began to glitter. Moisture began to disappear from the ground and the leaves of the trees. The cat roamed in the garden instead of sleeping in the living room. Heated air muffled street sounds.

Our house, made of solid brick, stays cool for several days during a heatwave. I closed down most of the blinds, opened some windows and settled down to finish my review notes on *The Year of the Quiet Sun*, by Wilson Tucker. My parents had gone out, so there was no noise around the house. The sound of car tyres subsided to a soft hiss. Bruce Gillespie was at peace (as Tucker might say).

> During the previous two weeks, I had received the welcome and long-delayed news that *SF Commentary* 21 has arrived in the USA, only four months after it was posted. (*SFC* 22 arrived in the same week, of course.) In one mail, I received letters from Damon Knight, L. Sprague de Camp and Brian Aldiss. A few days later I received very long letters from Philip José Farmer and Hank Davis. Very quickly I lost that familiar 'why bother?' feeling. During the same fortnight I had rediscovered films after losing a lot of my enthusiasm during 1969 and 1970. (Elia Kazan's *The Arrangement* converted me back to film fandom.) At long last I had begun to write reviews again — perhaps there's a chance of finishing the Brian Aldiss critique, after all. Forty letters written within a few weeks. Mail flooding in (including 500 pages of APA-45) . . .
>
> And, like Brian Chaney, I began to notice the effect of travelling by time machine.

At the end of 1968, the Education Department of Victoria sent me a letter asking me to report to 'Ararat High and Technical School' on the first Tuesday of February 1969. After a frantic month during which I arranged accommodation in Ararat (and typed all the stencils for *SF Commentary* No. 1), I arrived at the 'Ararat High and Technical School'. My arrival rather puzzled the administration. Halfway through the day *I* found out that the Ararat Technical School was now a separate institution within the same buildings, and *they* found out that the Education Department had sent me to the Technical School.

Things never picked up after that. They only got worse, so I shall draw a curtain over the two years that followed. Occasionally I peek behind that curtain, but usually I hope to take advantage of Freud's observation that we forget the most painful experiences of our lives. Like Philip Dick's electric ant, I've tried to snip 1969 and 1970 out of the ribbon of my life. But what happens if two years disappear so abruptly?

> On the first day that I began my new job at Publications Branch in February 1971, I stared unobtrusively (I hope) at one of the women who joined the Branch at the same time. About two hours later I finally asked her if she attended Dip. Ed. tutorials with me in 1968. Cautious recognition followed. Since 1968 she had married, had taught in Technical Schools for two years and enjoyed it, and had entered the Branch to 'try something new'. She had cashed her two years well; she had changed, but almost imperceptibly, and for the better.
>
> The time machine worked well, in this case.

Several weeks later, I was travelling home by tram. As usual, I was reading vigorously (and, if you don't know what a vigorous reader looks like, observe me sometime). Appropriately enough, the book was some volume or another by Proust. I happened to glance up. A face was smiling guardedly at me, a face ringed by a beard that hadn't been there two years before. 'My ghawd,' I said, or words to that effect. Perhaps I even said 'hello'. The inscrutable face belonged to one of my best friends at university. I lost track of him completely during 1969, mainly because neither he nor I is a particularly good letter writer. By the beginning of 1971 I had no idea where he lived, or how I could get in touch with him, provided I could be bothered. Only accident had made this friendship survive.

I met my friend a few times afterward, but we had very little to say to each other. He'd bought a lot of records in two years (mainly pop and blues, which he used to scorn) and I bought a lot of records in two years (mainly classical, which I had discovered only in 1968). So what? Neither of us had changed very much. The time loop had closed, the time machine had dumped us both in 1971, but we were still talking about the same subjects in the same way. In most encounters of this sort, the earlier and the later images overlap to form a stereoscopic picture that is more interesting than the two original images. The time machine did not work in this case because, in a way, no time had passed.

When I was at university, I met quite a few girls who were interesting, or attractive, or both. I met one of these girls more often than most. We might begin to talk about films (and I was really a film fan then), or some other subject of mutual interest. Sometimes the conversation would proceed to the point of 'Have you seen? No? Well, you ought to see . . .', and only later would I hit myself over the head and realise that I should have asked if I could *take* her to see . . . But I was painfully shy (or stupid) (or both) (and still am), and I didn't choose the right moment (and never do), and besides, I lived at Bacchus Marsh and I never stayed in town at nights anyway, and I didn't have a car (still don't) and . . . By the time I had debated all this inside my own head, I was sitting alone.

I saw her a few times after that. She worked during the summer vacation in a café in Melbourne and, the last time I spoke to her, she was going to do her MA. Exit me to Ararat; exit the lovely lady to the graves of academe.

I came into the Editor's office one Friday morning and found that he was talking to somebody who looked vaguely familiar. A few minutes later, I found out that the interviewee, who would begin work on the next Monday, was my wistful acquaintance of two years before. On the next Monday, I had a chance to talk to her . . .

. . . and I found that the time machine had broken down altogether. I tried to place the new image over the old image, and the picture made no sense at all. She had started MA, but had dropped out, no reason given, and all questions evaded. She had taught for about a year, but had dropped out, no reasons given, and all questions evaded. Her manner is far more guarded than I remember. Lots of other details didn't match. It was like meeting a different person, a twin maybe. It seems that time has rasped her very badly while it has, in the long run, treated me well. My blank years may have been her lifetime; but I don't know and I'm puzzled.

Three encounters; three skips in time; three effects of the time machine, or rather, the relationship between people's different time machines. The uninitiated might think that the time machine is science fiction's most fanciful and 'impossible' invention; for me, the time machine is SF's most pervasive and coherent image, the point where the literary field comes closest to our own lives. Look what Wilson Tucker does with a simple time machine, for instance.

The Year of the Quiet Sun (by Wilson Tucker; Ace SF Special 94200; 1970; 252 pp.; 75 cents) is about a time machine, and it *is* a time machine. Or, to choose another metaphor, it is like a tree whose trunk is embedded in the last twenty pages, and whose branches extend backward in time to the book's beginning. While we read the book, we slither down the branches toward the ground. We know that we are falling faster and faster, but we don't see the ground until we hit it. When we crack our skulls against the end of the book, we find an image of ourselves carved in the bark of the tree. Or, like Alice in Looking-Glass Land, and like Brian Chaney in *The Year of the Quiet Sun*, we head forty years into the future in order to find out about ourselves in the present.

(Now, a warning. If you don't know *The Year of the Quiet Sun*, don't read on. Go away and read it quickly. Then come back to this article.)

Tucker writes most of the book from the viewpoint of Brian Chaney. He is the main branch of the living organism that is *The Year of the Quiet Sun*; he travels in its time machine, and *is* its time machine. The other 'branches' are Kathryn van Hise (called Katrina during most of the book), Gilbert Seabrooke, Major William Moresby and Arthur Saltus. The height of the tree stretches from 2000-and-something backwards to 7 June 1978, when the action of the book begins.

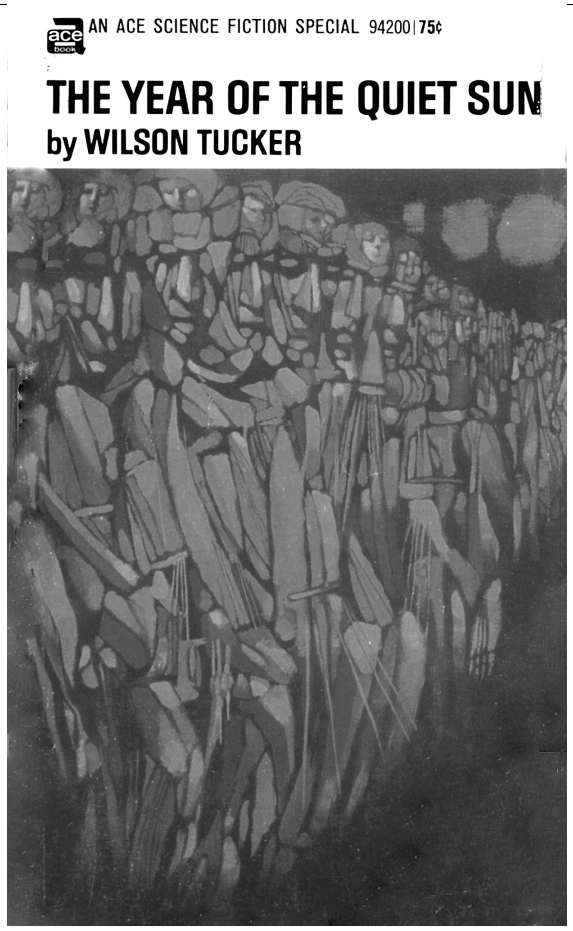
On the book's first page, Brian Chaney sits on a Florida beach, recovering from his recent trip to Israel. He thinks about his past and present, and does not care much for either. Kathryn van Hise, from the 'Bureau of Standards', walks up to him. 'The leggy girl was both alpha and omega: the two embodied in the same compact bundle,' writes Tucker, and few readers would guess that this is not merely an ordinary pop fiction cliché. However, if you have read to the end of the novel (and, as in many matters, you must know the end before you can see the significance of the beginning) you will realise that Tucker's first sentence is quite precise. Kathryn appears at the beginning of Chaney's 'new' life, and meets him at its end. The reader must also notice the reference to the Book of Revelation: 'I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end' (Rev. 22: 13, RSV).

I've pulled down the blinds. The tired afternoon sunlight illuminates my book, touches my typewriter and spreads a beam of heat over the wall opposite. The temperature inside my room rises into the middle 60s. I begin to wonder: if Tucker makes a religious reference so early in the book, does he have some religious or mythical framework for the whole book? Does Tucker want to give Kathryn van Hise the status of the angel in Revelation? If so, what is Brian Chaney's position? Is he a St John figure? No, anything but. Tucker's book has none of the thunderclap-and-umpteen-angels flavour of Revelation. Tucker's prophecy proceeds by means of tiny details and delicate steps.

From its beginning, its alpha, this book puzzles me greatly. Tucker announces that his simple words and sentences bear a huge weight of meaning. I must sift every sentence and weigh every word. 'We have seen a sign, and his name is Wilson Tucker.' But *The Year of the Quiet Sun* does not read that way; it does not hit us over the head but insinuates its human meaning into us in a very quiet way.

I shake my head, give up these speculations, and fetch another cup of coffee.

During the first chapter, Tucker almost makes Chaney sound like a Campbell-hero. Kathryn wants him to join the 'Bureau of Standards'; Brian objects to offices 'cluttered with top-heavy bureaucrats speaking strange dialects'. Kathryn tells him, 'You were selected' (sounding rather like a Van Vogt superman-story). She offers him a bribe: the Bureau wants to make a *physical* survey of the future. Tucker writes that Chaney 'felt as if he'd been hit'. This sounds very familiar and hackneyed; like any time-travel book written during the early 1950s.



However, I had read the whole book when I reread the first chapter, so I knew that it got better. I realised that Tucker laughs at some of Chaney's opinions in this chapter, as well as supporting some of them. 'When Chaney realised that the girl was coming at him, coming for him, he felt dismay and wished he'd had time to run for it.' The contrast between Kathryn's beauty and her official position and manner disturbs Chaney. In the first chapter Tucker shows us (although the casual reader may be excused for missing the point) that Chaney will not face the consequences of his actions. Chaney has written a book that gives a complete, and controversial, translation of the first two scrolls of Qumram. However, he refuses to admit to himself that he is now a celebrity whom many people might hate. He spends so much energy escaping from this facet of his life that he nearly misses the new open door offered by Kathryn. As Tucker says in the last chapter, Chaney won't 'open the doors' in front of him.

As soon as I began to look at the second chapter, I found that I could not write sensibly about the early part of the book without referring to the last few chapters. *The Year of the Quiet Sun* is so good because every section relates to every other part. As Tucker projects his time machine backwards and forwards in time, he ties time together into one knot. Or, as I've said before, he creates a time machine of his own. In one sense, the novel depends upon one sentence; in another sense, that sentence depends upon the rest of the book.

If you want to understand the book at all (on your second reading) you must know that by the end of the book Chaney has become stranded in the year 2000-and-something. (All clocks have stopped, so nobody knows what year it is.) In the first half of the book, Moresby, Saltus and Chaney go forward two years and find that Chicago has split into a black section and a white section, divided by a fifteen-mile-long wall. Moresby then goes forward to 1999, where African–American guerrillas kill him. Saltus reaches 2000, from which he barely escapes with his life. Chaney goes forward to 2000-plus, from which the Time Displacement Vehicle cannot push him backwards.

On the day before the three men carry out their missions, they gather beside the swimming pool inside Elwood Station. Saltus and Katrina swim in the pool. Chaney and Moresby sit separately by the side of the pool. Gilbert Seabrooke, the project's director, comes down to the side of the pool and sits beside Chaney. This is the first time that the two have met. Chaney makes a snap judgment: 'Seabrooke's pipe jutted out straight to challenge the world. He was Establishment.' As usual, Chaney's snap judgment is liable to correction. At first, Seabrooke speaks in double talk: 'I make it a practice to explore every possible avenue to attain whatever goal is in view.' He regards himself as a 'practitioner of science' battling it out with the Senate subcommittee in charge of the project's funds. However, although Seabrooke talks glibly, he fears the future more than Chaney does. Chaney, translator of the strange *Eschatos*, denies the disturbing pictures shown in the ancient manuscript. Seabrooke's views are consistent, and as hard-headed as possible without giving way to despair. By contrast, Chaney says, 'I can predict the downfall of the United States', but adds airily, 'I mean that all this will be dust in ten thousand years . . .' At the same time he reminds Seabrooke:

> 'Worry about something worthwhile. Worry about our violent swing to the extreme right; worry about these hippy-hunts; worry about a President who can't control his own party, much less the country.'

Chaney's two statements do not match up. His facts should show him clearly that by 1978 the United States is well on its way to disintegration. But he assures Seabrooke that the USA might endure 'at least as long as Jericho'!

Chaney does not have his mind fully on the problem. Out of the corner of his eye he watches Katrina and Saltus swimming in the pool. 'Chaney looked at the woman's wet body and felt something more than a twinge of jealousy.' Saltus claims all of Katrina's attention while Chaney tries to listen to Seabrooke. The project's head tells how nine men died when a TDV returned to its exact time of launching. 'It was an incredible disaster, an incredible oversight, but it happened. Once.' Chaney becomes suspicious, and questions Seabrooke's certainties, until finally the project head can say that 'every phase of this operation has been researched so that nothing is left to chance'.

Through Chaney's eyes, Tucker has already shown the reader that everything has been left to chance, among other things the 'certainty' that the USA has a future. Nobody notices the one fact that eventually dooms the project: that the TDV must have a power source at both ends of its journey. Like the most important clue in a mystery novel, everybody knows all the relevant facts, but nobody can quite guess their meaning. Like any device,

the time machine is no better than its builders. Tucker shows us that the builders have committed *hubris*. They express certainty about matters that only time itself can reveal to them. Either they want the Answers (which a conservative extrapolation of the events in 1978 can give them) or they want to travel through time and face the risks. Only one man proves equal to the task, but he cannot provide any Answers for the world of 1978. Having slipped through the net of time, he cannot wriggle back again.

In the pool scene, Tucker appeals to our own sense of remembered time. The sun shines, the pool sparkles, a beautiful woman and a lively man chase each other around the pool, Chaney looks on jealously and thinks nobody notices his discomfort, while Seabrooke spells out the end of the USA in matter-of-fact statements. This scene is not the calm before the storm, as I thought when I first read the book, but part of the storm itself.

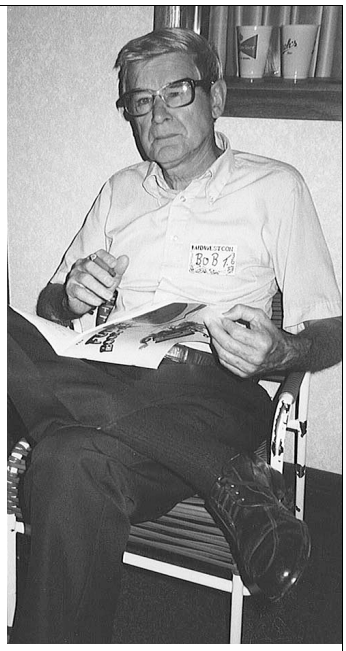
The sounds of this scene echo throughout the rest of the book. When Moresby steps out into the embattled world of 1999, he notices that 'the pool was drained, the bottom dry and littered with debris':

> The next-to-last time he'd seen the pool . . . Katrina had played in the blue-green water wearing that ridiculous little suit, while Art had chased her like a hungry rooster, wanting to keep his hands on her body. A nice body, that. Art knew what he was doing. And Chaney sat on the sun deck, mooning over the woman — the civilian lacked the proper initiative; wouldn't fight for what he wanted.

Although Chaney had thought that nobody noticed him by the pool-side, Moresby had been watching him keenly. Major Moresby regards Chaney contemptuously as 'civilian'. When Moresby crosses twenty years of time, he must immediately call upon all his military skills. William Atheling Jr has warned authors not to change viewpoints within a novel, but Tucker does so successfully. During this section, Tucker changes his viewpoint from that of Chaney to that of Moresby. However, he judges Moresby just as effectively as he sizes up Chaney during the rest of the book. Moresby can call on nothing but his military skills. He dares too much. As Moresby remembers the pool incident, he brushes off Chaney as a man without 'the proper initiative'. Moresby shows too much initiative, too much certainty in the face of the completely unknown. In the world of 1999 he dies for his efforts. Chaney loses a great deal in 1978, but he continues to live in the twenty-first century.

When Saltus emerges in the year 2000, he finds only an 'eerie silence'. The barracks have burned down, someone has taken supplies left for the time travellers, and bodies lie in the snow. Saltus sets out on his 'survey' in a jaunty manner. Into the tape-recorder he gives Chaney some good old-fashioned Republican American advice: 'You'd damned well better shoot straight if you have to shoot at all. Remember *something* we taught you.' When Saltus passes the swimming pool it is:

> *Nearly* empty: a half dozen long lumps huddled under the blanket of snow at the bottom, lumps the shape of men . . . Saltus turned away, expelling a breath of bitter disappointment; he wasn't sure what he had expected after so long a time, but certainly not that — not the bodies of station personnel dumped into an uncovered grave.
>
> He remembered the beautiful image of Katrina in that pool — Katrina, nearly naked, scantily clad in that lovely, sexy swim suit — and himself chasing after her, wanting the feel of that wet and splendid body under his bands again and again . . . And Chaney! The poor out-gunned civilian sat up on the deck and burned with a green, sulphurous envy, wanting to but not daring to. Damn, but that was a day to be remembered!



Arthur Wilson (Bob) Tucker. (Photo: from the collection of Toni Weisskopf.)

Dead bodies in the pool replace the glittering water, the two swimmers and their watchers. In the year 2000, Saltus only has the memory of Katrina, although in 1980 he finds out that he will marry her in the years between 1978 and 1980. He also remembers the 'poor out-gunned civilian', still the man to whom he condescends. Saltus and Chaney form a firm friendship in the early part of the novel, but the soldier always presumes that he can kick around the scholar. In fact, the scholar outlives the soldier and, in a very ambiguous way, outmanoeuvres him. By the end of the book, all the soldiers have killed each other. The only knowledge that remains rests within Chaney's head — his knowledge of the ways in which the ancient tribes of the Negev Desert survived in the middle of desolation.

When Chaney emerges from the TDV, he finds that all the electric power is off. The station is in complete darkness. He explores a desolate world. A headstone rests in the ground. Its inscription reads 'A ditat Deus K'. Someone has tied skulls to the station's gatepost, warning away all intruders. when Chaney looks at the swimming pool he sees:

> A few inches of dirty water . . . — residue from the rains — together with a poor collection of rusted and broken weapons and an appreciable amount of debris blown in by the wind: the pool had become a dumping ground for trash and armament. The sodden corpse of some small animal floated in a

corner. A lonely place. Chaney very carefully put away the memory of the pool as he'd known it and backed away from the edge.

This passage shows Tucker's extraordinary attention to detail. Why did the pool 'become a dumping ground for trash and armament'? Because the destruction of the whole world took place in the air around the pool. But even so much violence leaves few fragments. What is the 'sodden corpse of some small animal' that 'floated in a corner'? Might it not be the last remainder of the human bodies that lay in the pool when Saltus saw it? What is the 'memory of the pool' that Chaney so carefully 'puts away'? The same memory that Moresby and Saltus recalled with gusto. At this point, Chaney cannot face the memory of the steps he should have taken.

I could explore this book for several thousand words more. *The Year of the Quiet Sun* is a living, trustworthy book. Tucker has considered every line and detail; he has imagined every scene fully and weighed every word.

But where does he place the full weight of the book? Where does the time machine actually arrive? What lies at the base of the 'tree'? I'll go back to the last meeting between Katrina and Chaney. Compare the whole of the rest of the book with these lines:

He said: 'When this survey is completed I want to leave . . .'

Quickly: 'Is it because of something you found up there? Has something turned you away, Brian?'

'Ah — no more questions.'

'But you leave me so unsatisfied!'

A moment of silence, and then . . . 'Ask the others to be here at ten o'clock in the morning for a final briefing. We must evaluate these reports. The probe is scheduled for the day after tomorrow.'

'Are you coming downstairs to see us off?'

'No, sir. I will wait for you here.'

Again Tucker shows his ability to convey the greatest possible meaning in the smallest possible number of words. Of course there is something that Chaney found 'up there' — he found out that Saltus marries Katrina sometime between 1978 and 1980. However, Chaney determined the direction of that future in 1978, as he sat by the poolside while Saltus wooed Katrina. And shouldn't he have shown some reaction when Katrina cries out in deliberate ambiguity: 'But you leave me so unsatisfied!'? Chaney misses the point of the conversation, although the reader does not. Because he misses the point of the conversation, he must go thirty or forty years into the future so that he can meet Katrina again. Chaney says only, 'I wish you luck, and I'll think of you often in the tank.' (What *do* you say in such a situation? Katrina sees which future Chaney has chosen, or rather, failed to choose. She addresses him again as 'Mr Chaney' instead of 'Brian'. She gives her farewell, 'No, sir. I will wait for you here.'

And when Brian Chaney steps out of the TDV in the year 2000-plus, he finds that Katrina has kept her word:

The aged woman was sitting in her accustomed chair to one side of the oversized steel table . . . As always, her clasped hands rested on the tabletop in repose. Chaney put the lantern on the table between them and the poor light fell on her face.

Katrina.

Her eyes were bright and alive, as sharply alert as he remembered them, but time had not been lenient with her . . . The skin was drawn tight over her cheekbones, pulled tight around her mouth and chin and appeared sallow in lantern light. The lustrous, lovely hair was entirely gray. Hard years, unhappy years, lean years . . .

Katrina waited on him. Chaney struggled for something to say, something that wouldn't sound foolish or melodramatic or carry a ring of false heartiness. She would despise him for that . . . He had left her here in this room only hours ago, left her with that sense of dry apprehension as he prepared himself for the third — now final — probe into the future. She had been sitting in the same chair in the same attitude of repose.

Chaney said: 'I'm *still* in love with you, Katrina.'

Katrina has waited her entire life, she has endured the decline and fall of her world, she has brought up her two children under the worst possible conditions, and she has seen her husband die. No heat, light or time remains in the station. From the past comes a man who might be a ghost; a man who lacks the experience of forty years' continuous disaster, a man who has not changed at all. But finally, thirty years too late, he does show that he has changed. Not much, but enough. He says the words that he should have said in 1978; he realises the meaning of his time journey; for once, he observes carefully the scene in front of him, places his image of Katrina-past over the image of Katrina-present, makes the right judgment, and says the right words.

But, you might say, there are no time machines. *That's* part of the book's significance, as well. As Chaney explores the deserted station, he reflects that but for the time machine 'he would have plodded along in his slow, myopic way until the future slammed into him — or he into it'. That's us; we're the people unblessed by Time Displacement Vehicles, busily walking myopically towards the brick wall of the future. Isaac Asimov puts it more bluntly: the present world outlook reminds him of the tale of the man who fell off the Empire State Building; as he passed the tenth storey, he said, 'Well, I've fallen ninety storeys and I'm all right so far' (*F&SF*, May 1969, p. 99). But Tucker has not written the book in order to warn us about certainties that should strike the readers of any newspaper. He has written about time-travelling, rather than The Future; about saying and doing the right things and words at the right time. *The Year of the Quiet Sun* is about ourselves. That's all. That's enough.

— October 1971

The elder ghods, the johnny come lately, and the babes in arms

Fan Guest of Honour Speech Aussiecon Three, 2 September 1999

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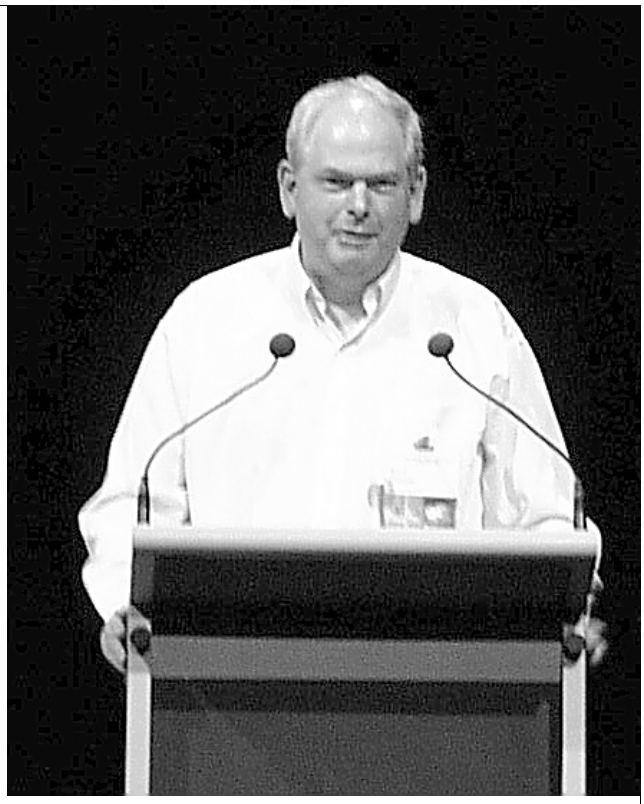


Bruce Gillespie delivering the Fan Guest of Honour speech. (Photo: Richard Hryckiewicz.)

Members of the Aussiecon Three Board and Committee, fellow fans:

On a summer's day, about three and a half years ago, I received a letter from the Bidding Committee for this convention — Aussiecon III, the 57th World Science Fiction Convention. I read that letter. It fluttered to the ground from my paralysed hand. Even I was stunned into stricken silence. That piece of paper was a letter from Jean Weber inviting me to be the Fan Guest of Honour at Aussiecon Three if Australia won the bid.

My reaction then, as now: 'Why me? Surely somebody has made a terrible mistake. They've got the wrong person. What did I ever do to *them*?'

There were good reasons to ask an Australian to be Fan Guest of Honour. Our Fan Guests of Honour in 1975 were two Canadians, and our Fan Guest of Honour in 1985 was American. Don Tuck, the Australian Guest of Honour at Aussiecon I, not only didn't turn up at the convention but immediately left fandom altogether. Since then no overseas world convention has asked an Australian to be Fan Guest of Honour. It was the right time to show the local colours.

But the burning questions remain. 'Why do we have to put up with Gillespie, whose speeches set new standards of boredom, and whose last known joke was in a fanzine in 1972, and only David Grigg ever noticed he'd committed it?' I am the person for whom Garrison Keillor wrote his Rights for Shy People. There are scads of Australian fans who give funny, entertaining talks. Many others can tell you in great detail about the secrets of the universe or the secret handshake. Those people would even *enjoy* being up here instead of me.

You can't even blame the *current* Worldcon committee for the fact that I'm here. I was selected by the Bidding Committee. As soon as Australia won the bid, the Bidding Committee dissolved itself, and left everything in the hands of the Board.

However, I do qualify for this position in one important way — I'm sufficiently ancient. I've been around fandom for thirty-two years: since the second week in December 1967. It is, after all, an unwritten rule that Guests of Honour at a World convention should have been a pro or a fan for twenty-five years or longer. Also, I've been around *continuously* for all of that time.

There remains one problem — I must have been selected by people whose sense of Australian fan history is faulty. I am not, indeed, an elder ghod of fandom, despite physical appearances. A major stream of this convention is called Fanhistoricon, during which the real story of Australian fandom will be told. Fan historians such as John Foyster, Leigh Edmonds or Chris Nelson can and will tell you that I am a mere stripling, a johnny-come-lately on the Australian fan scene. All those Australians who joined fandom after me — after 1967 — are, of course, mere babes in arms.

I've told you why I should not be here. Who, then, should be standing here? Such a person should have been around even longer than I have, and contributed far more than I have. I offer you my little list.

In making up this list, I jotted down people without whom *I* would not be here, and more importantly, without whom the first Aussiecon, in 1975, could never have been held in Australia. Who, after all, could have imagined in the 1930s, when a small group of teenagers met each other in Sydney, that one day Australia might be able to hold not just one world convention but three of them? That early Sydney group included people who are only names to me. They included Vol Molesworth, Bert

Castellari, Bill Veney, and Eric and Ted Russell. I've never met them, although fan historian Chris Nelson has interviewed two of them. I've seen their faces in photos published in Ron Clarke's *The Mentor*, when Ron reprinted Vol Molesworth's 'A History of Australian Fandom 1935–1963', which is actually a history of Sydney fandom.

To judge from the photos, Bill Veney was a big, bluff cheery sort of man. Molesworth is rarely shown smiling. They don't seem to have liked each other much. *Nobody* in Sydney fandom in the early years seems to have liked each other much. They held tumultuous club meetings, full of points of order and resignations, with splinter groups stomping off into the night. This whole group, with schisms and disputes, rarely exceeded ten people.

In 1940, a teenager named Graham Stone joined the Sydney group, about the time Don Wollheim and Frederik Pohl from America suggested that the members of the Sydney Group call themselves the Futurians, the same name as the main New York fan group of the same period. During World War II, it was impossible to obtain paper supplies on which to publish fanzines. Nearly all the members of the Sydney group went off to war. In 1947, five of them met for the first time in five years, and Sydney fandom was reborn.

By 1947, Graham Stone was an important part of the Sydney scene, and has remained so ever since. The Futurians still exist. Graham Stone is still alive. His fifty-nine years of continuous activity should surely be honoured.

Yet if we offered such an honour to Graham Stone, it is probable that he would not accept. Sometime during the 1950s, Stone fell out spectacularly with the rest of Australian fans, especially those in the rapidly growing Melbourne SF Group. Nobody in Melbourne can remember what the dispute was about, but Graham Stone still can. He will not reveal why he still considers Melbourne fandom as a dreadful conspiracy against him. But the barrier was set up, and has never been removed.

When in the 1960s Melbourne became the centre of fan activity in Australia, Graham refused to have anything to do with that movement or *Australian Science Fiction Review*, the magazine that created that movement. In 1970, when Syncon I took place, the first Sydney convention for many years, Graham Stone did not attend, although some of the Futurians did so. The Futurians still meet, and probably always will. But no news of their activities escapes south of the Murray River, or indeed anywhere north, west or south of Sydney.

A couple of years ago Elaine and I attended the birthday gathering of a non-fannish friend of ours. We were talking for about half an hour to an archaeologist named Tim, who lives in Fitzroy. We mentioned our interest in science fiction. He said: 'My father is very interested in science fiction.' Tim's name, it turned out, is Tim Stone. He is Graham Stone's stepson. We mentioned that his father had a reputation throughout Australia as being one of our most disputatious fans. Tim looked shocked. 'That can't be,' he said. 'My father is the most gentle of men. Totally devoted to science fiction, of course.' What is the real truth about Graham Stone? Only Ron Clarke, another Sydneysider who won't venture south of the Murray, could tell us. Whatever the truth, all hail to Graham Stone's nearly sixty years of SF activity.

The second name on my list is Mervyn R. Binns, known everywhere as Merv Binns. Fortunately, he has received the A. Bertram Chandler Award, but the fact remains that he should have been selected as a Worldcon Fan Guest of Honour many years ago. Since 1954, he has been vitally important to Australian fandom. He should certainly have been treated better than being denied an entry in the recent so-called *Australian Science Fiction Encyclopedia*, since much of the rest of Australian science fiction activity could not have happened without his efforts.

I first became aware of Merv in the early 1960s. With my eleven shillings pocket money per week, I haunted the book shops of Melbourne in search of science fiction magazines and books that I could afford. I quickly realised that only one shop, McGill's Newsagency, had the really good stuff. Not only did it have the full range of British publications, but it even sold some American books. One of these was a very cheap copy of the American hardback edition of Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle*, which had just won the Hugo Award. I still don't known how ten copies were sitting on the counter at McGill's, but I bought one of them, and it is still one of my most precious possessions.

For many years, every SF book sold at McGill's contained a little slip of paper advertising the Melbourne Science Fiction Club. I couldn't attend because meetings were on Wednesday nights and I was commuting from Melton, and later Bacchus Marsh, and the last train home was at 6.20 at night.

It didn't take long to realise that the manager of McGill's, the rather abrupt and not always cheerful man behind the counter, was the person who put those slips of paper inside the books. At the time I did not realise that he, Merv Binns, also controlled a much greater empire than McGill's. It was the Melbourne Science Fiction Club.

In 1966, Merv also began to sell at McGill's duplicated magazines that I recognised as fanzines only because I had been reading Lin Carter's column about fandom in *If* magazine. In August 1966, I bought *Australian Science Fiction Review*, No. 2. It cost 30 cents, and I had to think carefully before spending such a large amount on a fanzine. From then on for a year I bought *ASFR* every month at McGill's. When the publication schedule of *ASFR* began to falter, I complained to the manager. After two years I wrote to the editor of the magazine.

As I became more and more involved with fandom itself, I discovered the importance of Merv Binns to everybody in Australia interested in science fiction. He was one of a group of people, mainly teenagers, who formed the Melbourne Science Fiction Group in 1954. The leader of that group, Race Mathews, has written a lively account of those early days of what became the Melbourne SF Club. At various times, other members of the club were more active than Merv, but most of those people disappeared during the fifties and sixties. Some of them, such as Race Mathews and Dick Jenssen, have rejoined fandom during the last five years or so. Race Mathews is best known these days as a distinguished politician. Dick Jenssen (or Dr Martin James Ditmar

Jenssen) is remembered in the Ditmar Awards, which are hotly disputed year after year. Bill Wright, who dropped out during the 1980s, has recently returned to vigorous fanzine publishing.

During the 1950s, the Melbourne Science Fiction Club kept moving premises. Editors of *Etherline*, the Club's magazine, came and went. Although there were Australian SF conventions in the early 1950s, first in Sydney and then in Melbourne, none was held between 1958 and 1966. During that lean time, Merv kept the Club going.

During the 1950s, much of the appeal of the Club was that it was one of the few places in Australia where SF readers would obtain supplies of their reading matter. During the War, the Australian Government stopped the importation from America of all non-essential supplies, including magazines and books. The only American SF that arrived here was in British editions. The only authentic American SF magazines in the country arrived here as ballast in ships. I've been told that Mr Franklin from Franklin's Books in Melbourne bought these at Princes Pier. In turn, the American magazines gravitated to the Club, where members could read and swap these rare treasures. The Government ban on spending American dollars lasted until 1959.

I've asked quite a few members of the Club when it moved to its most famous quarters, 19 Somerset Place, where it occupied the upstairs bulk store of McGill's itself. The answers I received ranged from 1955 to 1965. Nobody, not even Merv, could remember the right date. John Foyster says 1962. New Zealander Mervyn Barrett, who was living in Melbourne at the time, remembers the date as April 1961. Whatever the truth of the matter, the move to Somerset Place took place long before I joined fandom.

As I've said, the Club room was originally a McGill's bulk store. It had a high ceiling and was very roomy. There Merv created a haven for all those people who sought solace from football-crazed, six-o'-clock-swilled suburbanised Melbourne. The Club rooms contained the Melbourne SF Club library, accumulated since the early 1950s; a duplicator, ink and duplicating paper; a table tennis table, cooking facilities, a chess set, comfortable old leather theatre seats, and projection facilities. You entered the place by riding on one of the last hydraulic lifts in Melbourne. The lift had broken down by the time I discovered the club. By then the only access was a very narrow wooden staircase.

At the end of 1970, one of the members of the Club became concerned that the Melbourne Fantasy Film Group was regularly showing 1930s and 1940s films on nitrate stock. Nitrate stock was notoriously unstable. If any one of those films had spontaneously burst into flame, nobody could have escaped alive from the Club rooms. The Club member reported this to the Melbourne City Council, and the Club was closed immediately.

For once in his life, Merv did not despair. He had already been thinking about leaving McGill's and setting up his own shop. In early 1971, with the help of a loan from Ron Graham from Sydney, he set up Space Age Books in Swanston Street. For the time being, the Club's library was moved to a flat rented by Paul Stevens and John Breden. Today, Merv is best remembered for that heyday of Space Age Books, which lasted until 1985. It was one of the first specialist SF book shops in the world, and for many years probably the largest. Many of us were quick to point out the unwise business practices that Merv made at Space Age, especially in the matter of security. For the first and only time in my life, I stole a book. I took it from the shelf, meant to pay for it, then discovered it in my bag when I got home. Next day I went back and slipped it back onto the shelf. Nobody had noticed.

We also remember the value of Space Age Books as a centre of the best years of Melbourne fandom. If somebody can resurrect the first Aussiefan film, made in 1972 by John Litchen, you will see both the interior and exterior of the first Space Age Bookshop at 317 Swanston Street, plus pictures of many Melbourne fans as they appeared then — slim and sporting a lot of long hair.

How, then, does Merv's long fan career form a connection between 1954, when a few teenagers met in each others' homes, and this convention? The short answer is: by being there. The long answer is: by selling *Australian Science Fiction Review* at McGill's. That's the fanzine that I began to buy regularly in 1966 and is the reason why I became an SF fan rather than merely a reader. *ASFR*, as it was always called, was edited by John Bangsund, and during its first year much of it was written by John Bangsund as well as John Foyster and Lee Harding under their own names and various pseudonyms.

In *ASFR* No. 2, the editor described himself and his lifestyle:

> Last weekend my wife and I moved from our flat at Coburg to my old place at Northclump, salubrious suburb, sometimes called 'New South Rome' by the cynical, situated on the slopes of an extinct volcano and bounded by the noble Merri Creek and mighty Yarra River, a suburb called 'home' by the illustrious Bernard O'Dowd, the great Joe Fogg, and now, once more, by myself. In the rapture of my homecoming I managed to mislay some letters which should have appeared here — or they may be irretrievably lost in the wildernesses of Western Victoria, where I spent the last four days conning humble shopkeepers into buying my employer's publications and the last three nights typing stencils in motels en route. (At a guess I'd say I'd be one of the few reps on the road who travels with an electric typewriter, a pile of sf, and selected volumes of Hardy, Peacock and Hazlitt in the boot of the car.)

John Bangsund was a man of wit and perception, I thought. Better still, although his magazine is devoted to SF, he and his writers read much besides SF. This was somebody I would like to meet. The other contributors to the magazine also sounded interesting. I would also like to meet the other writers, including such mysterious figures as K. U. F. Widdershins and Alan Reynard. They were personalities, not merely reviewers or critics. *ASFR* was not only serious about science fiction — treating it as a branch of literature instead of some ghetto artifact — but also had that special quality, which later I came to

Melbourne fans, December 1967: John Bangsund, Leigh Edmonds, Lee Harding, John Foyster, Tony Thomas, Merv Binns, Paul Stevens.

know as 'fannish'.

In 1966 I was a bit more serious about SF than I am now. A strength of *ASFR*'s reviewers was that they had not met the writers whose books they reviewed. Since every famous SF writer was fair game, many of them began to send letters to the magazine. In 1968, Samuel Delany wrote to John Bangsund:

> The Review — a number of people around here have started referring to it simply as 'The Review' (indicating that there is no other, perhaps?) — has become one of the more intriguing voices in the dialogue of current SF.

In No. 10, George Turner, a new contributor, put himself on the map by laying a depth charge under Alfred Bester's *The Demolished Man*, one of SF's sacred icons. *ASFR* gained Hugo nominations in 1967 and 1968. And in 1968, John Bangsund drew a cartoon of the spire from the Melbourne Arts Centre on a letter he was sending to Andy Porter in New York, and scribbled as a bit of an afterthought, 'Australia in 75'. Andy Porter took the suggestion seriously. So did many other Australian and American fans. During 1970, the Bid was on to gain the right to hold the 1975 World Convention in Australia.

When I actually met John Bangsund, I suspect I appeared to him as that ultra-enthusiastic fool whose articles he had agreed to publish. I was surprised because John Bangsund in person turned out to be diffident, even rather shy. In person, Lee Harding was more like the John Bangsund I expected. During 1968, John underwent a year of increasing emotional and financial difficulties. *ASFR* was about to fold. Lee Harding, John Foyster and Leigh Edmonds put an enormous amount of work into producing the first two issues of my magazine *SF Commentary*. John Bangsund taught me how to use a duplicator, and for a time I tried to emulate some of the best features of *ASFR*. Not even the Second Series of *ASFR*, published during the 1980s, could do that.

For many overseas fans, John Bangsund disappeared from sight in the early 1970s. However, he continued to publish in various apas. Australian fandom would have been entirely different without him. And he should be standing here instead of me.

But what about John Foyster, you might say? Why wasn't he chosen as Fan Guest of Honour at the convention? He seems to enjoy giving talks such as this. He's good at humour, which I'm not. Also, he's been around much longer than I have, and is the link between all the people I've mentioned so far.

John Foyster learned about fanzines and fandom from John Baxter — the same bloke who today writes film biographies and lives in France. Foyster met Baxter at Baxter's family home at Bowral, a New South Wales country town. During the same weekend they both met Damien Broderick, a teenager who was at the time training to be a priest. As John writes:

> On the Monday morning John Baxter and I set off to catch a train to Sydney. We were about halfway to the station when the ground began to vibrate wildly. When the earthquake was over, we ran back to the Baxters' house to see if there was any damage. There was, as I recall, relatively little damage — a crack or two of a very minor nature. And so we

turned back for the station and took the train to Sydney.

How better to start your fannish career than with an earthquake!

By the mid 1960s, John Baxter had stopped publishing fanzines, even as John Foyster began publishing them. His early titles included *Satura*, *The Gryphon* and *The Wild Colonial Boy*. Soon after, John Foyster met John Bangsund and Lee Harding, which led to the publication of Lee Harding's fanzine *Canto* 1. John Bangsund was not much interested in science fiction, but he gave the impression that he might enjoy publishing his own magazine.

In Easter 1966, John Foyster organised the first Australian convention for eight years. Held at the very crowded Melbourne SF Club rooms in Somerset Place, it generated the feeling that Australian fandom had undergone a renaissance. Kevin Dillon was so moved by the fannish significance of the event that he walked down the aisle and placed in John Baxter's hand a twenty pound note in order to set up the next Australian convention. Twenty pounds would be worth about $400 today.

The most important event of the 1966 convention occurred during the Business Session. It was decided that Australia needed a new national magazine. John Baxter said at the time: 'What we're thinking of is an amateur magazine, circulated amongst people who are interested in science fiction, and probably containing articles and reviews and stories, perhaps.' Lee Harding named John Bangsund as the person who should edit it, and John said yes. Lee Harding and John Foyster joined the team that would produce it monthly. It was, of course, *Australian Science Fiction Review*.

Although the idea of Australia in 75 was hatched by John Bangsund in Melbourne and Andy Porter in New York, it was John Foyster who led discussions about the Bid at both the first Syncon in 1970 and the Easter convention of the same year. John had picked a committee to investigate the possibility of holding a world convention in Australia. During 1970 and 1971, every fanzine publisher in Australia churned duplicators in order to raise interest in the idea. In 1973, Australia won the bid.

I find it difficult to catalogue all of John Foyster's many achievements within fandom. In 1966, after a detective pilgrimage, he discovered the true identity of Cordwainer Smith just a week before the news came that Dr Paul Linebarger had died, and that Dr Linebarger had written SF as Cordwainer Smith. John's tribute to Cordwainer Smith appeared first in *ASFR* No. 11, and has been reprinted several times since then. John's two critical fanzines *exploding madonna* and *Journalist of Omphalistic Epistemology*, featured writers such as Samuel Delany, James Blish, Sten Dahlskog, Brian Aldiss, George Turner and many others, although its print run was only 15 copies per issue. His many other fanzines have included *Chunder!* and *Norstrilian News*, which gave Carey and me the idea of calling our small press Norstrilia Press.

In August 1970, John began the Nova Mob, Melbourne's SF discussion group. It took the entire first meeting to decide on this name. The Nova Mob has kept going, with one or two lapses, ever since. The format has remained the same: one person will give a paper on some aspect of SF, but the rest of the evening is social. No dues are paid; we depend on the good graces of the people at whose homes we meet. Our Thirtieth Anniversary is next year.

John was also the Chairman of Aussiecon II during its early stages. In 1986, he gathered together a collective to publish the Second Series of *Australian Science Fiction Review*. In 1987, he moved to Adelaide, where he began Critical Mass, the Adelaide equivalent of the Nova Mob.

The trouble with reducing a person's career to a catalogue is that it gives the impression that John Foyster is a paragon of virtue. Not so. I have at home a photo of John, taken in 1963 before he grew a beard. The beard masks a sardonic smile. John prefers the role of devil's advocate because occasionally he doesn't mind siding with the devil. He has, for instance, spent the last thirty years denigrating most of my own fanzine efforts, which has only made me more determined to keep going. However, on the day when I was most deeply in trouble, in late 1975, it was John Foyster who turned up that day at the door and sat down at the same table for a couple of hours, saying little, but providing just the support I needed at the time.

Let John Bangsund say it best, as he always does:

> There is a certain daunting aspect to John Foyster, in person and in print. He does not suffer fools gladly — not from any malice or lack of essential humanity, but simply from having more important things on hand. This shows itself in a certain abruptness of manner — perhaps aloofness would be a better word — which is easily misunderstood by lesser mortals, i.e. most of us. In his writings he expects you to make the necessary logical leaps from one thought or sentence to the next . . . — and if you don't do this, that's tough cheese and you should be reading something else. Foyster the merciless is well known in fandom — perhaps more so overseas than here. [However] John's fandom is the pure old-time 'just a goddamn hobby' kind. Not the crass commercialism of those who charge money for their fanzines; not for him the sad hang-up of those who have nothing else in life except fandom. . . It's just lucky for us that John's way of life, in its enviable totality, includes a deep involvement with fandom. We are richer for it.

In describing some of the people who should be here instead of me, I realise that I have still left out many names. 'What about . . .' I hear you cry!

What about Leigh Edmonds? He has to be on the list. Leigh began ANZAPA, the Australian and New Zealand Amateur Publishing Association, which celebrated its thirtieth anniversary last year. He published several of Australia's best fanzines, especially *Rataplan*, *Fanew Sletter* and *The Notional*. *Rataplan* was nominated for a Hugo in 1985. Leigh Edmonds was my co-organiser on the only convention for which I was ever responsible. It was called Bring Your Own Con. It had no program, and no guests of honour. Each day took place at a different venue, including the Botanic Gardens and the huge back

yard of my parents' then residence at East Preston. Leigh enjoyed fandom back then, and was one of our few producers of fannish fanzines, but in recent years has given the impression it is rather less important than his career. A pity. I'd give a lot to see a new issue of *Rataplan.*

What about Ron Clarke? Ron Clarke is one of the few remaining Sydney fans. He began publishing fanzines in the early 1960s, even before *ASFR* began. Ron was still at school when he published the first issue of *The Mentor*, and it has kept going ever since. John Foyster extols the virtues of *The Mentor* more enthusiastically than I do, but I wouldn't be without it. Over the years Ron has published much valuable material, especially long-running columns by Bert Chandler, Buck Coulson and Mae Strelkov. He was one of the last fans in contact with Peter Singleton, the famous British fan who wrote all his columns and letters from a mental hospital.

What about . . .? What about . . .? The cavalcade of names goes on.

What about Robin Johnson, perhaps not the only native Tasmanian with a pukka British accent, but a startling figure to meet at an Australian convention in 1968. During the early seventies Robin was famous for being able to hold a conversation, listen to the phone, type a stencil, listen to a music tape and watch television — all at the same time. No wonder he called his own fanzine *The Butterfly Mind.* After he moved to Melbourne, he became Chairman of the committee to run Aussiecon I, and did a brilliant job. This brilliance took its toll. Towards the end of the last day of the convention Robin was found wandering down the middle of Bourke Street. He says he does not even remember that last day.

What about the women fans, you might say? Where are they on my list? I joined Melbourne fandom at a time when the only women who turned up at conventions or club meetings were the wives or girlfriends of male fans. The situation had been so one-sided in the fifties in Sydney that there was a bun fight when a woman actually asked to join the Futurians. By the late 1960s, there were plenty of women SF readers out there, but the Melbourne SF Club rooms frightened them off. The three SF widows of the time, Diane Bangsund, Carla Harding and Elizabeth Foyster, none of whom is now married to the fans of the same surname, gave a theatrical presentation at the 1971 New Year's convention. This was a wonderfully rude picture of the lives of SF fans at the time.

There were certainly famous women fans in Sydney fandom in the forties and fifties, including Norma Heming, who died young, and Norma Williams, who was writing to fanzines as recently as the 1980s. Only one woman, Margaret Duce, is remembered as having joined the Melbourne Science Fiction Club during the fifties. She disappeared during the sixties, then reappeared during the 1970s with a new name, Helena Roberts. She was the official photographer for Aussiecon I, and also photographed Aussiecon II. She still has large albums of those photos. After her husband Kelvin Roberts died, she began to rejoin fandom, and two years ago she married Merv Binns, to our great rejoicing. It would have been quite right if Helena had been chosen to be Fan Guest of Honour this year.

However, it was Shayne McCormack who became the first female fannish recruit of the 1970s. She and Sabina Heggie attended the 1970 Easter Convention. They were the first *Star Trek* fans to make contact with the mainstream of fandom. Sabina disappeared after a year or two, but Shayne began to publish some excellent fanzines. With Bob Smith, she organised Syncon II in 1972. It was the first hotel convention held in Australia, and was a great success, showing that a world convention could be held in Australia. By 1975, about half of the members of Aussiecon I were women.

And there's another name. Bob Smith. I could talk for half an hour about his contribution to Australian fandom, especially his famous carousing expeditions to Melbourne from Puckapunyal Army Camp during the early sixties. And what about Paul Stevens, who invented the Paul Stevens Show and the Golden Caterpillar Awards and wrote some of the funniest pieces that have appeared in Australian fanzines? The list of distinguished elder ghods of Australian fandom is impressive.

I've left one candidate to last. His name is also Bruce Gillespie, although he often appears as 'brg' — that's small letters, not capitals. He bears little resemblance to the person you see in front of you, although he inhabits the same body. When he sits down in front of the keyboard, he is debonair and literate and all-powerful and even sometimes slightly witty. None of the dullness and shyness you see before you. As the Gillespie fingers begin clicking across the keyboard, the magic essence of fandom descends through him. Editorials and articles pour through the keyboard onto disk. The contributions from great fannish correspondents from all over the world begin to form a glorious pattern on the page. A fanzine takes shape. It might be *SF Commentary*, which began in 1969, has been a bit sick lately, but will be resurrected Real Soon Now. It might be *The Metaphysical Review*, which began in 1984, never features a word about metaphysics, but is powered by a great enthusiasm for music and books and fannishness and travel and joy and sorrow — what I call 'personal journalism'. It might be little magazine called **brg**, for the members of ANZAPA, or it might be *The Great Cosmic Donut of Life* for the members of Acnestis. It might be a letter, or more often these days, an email. Whatever it is, it's the product of the Bruce Gillespie you can only meet on paper, the one who loves publishing as much now as he did when he typed his first stencil in that blindingly hot summer of 1968 when George Turner said he'd send me some reviews and John Bangsund gave me the *ASFR* files and John and Leigh and Lee duplicated and collated the first issue, and the letters poured in and they've kept pouring in ever since, and . . . Thank you, everybody. Thanks to you and the Aussiecon Three Committee for putting up with my ravings tonight. It's been a wonderful and very short thirty-two years. Enjoy the rest of the convention.

— August 1999

I must be talking to my friends

Editor's note: Since 1970 'I Must be Talking With My Friends' has been the title Bruce has used for his *SF Commentary* and *Metaphysical Review* editorial columns: a mixture of news, letters, notes and updates. The following two pieces are extracts from the column.

Entering the Space Age

It couldn't happen, of course. The market wasn't here. Nobody could ever carry it out. People would stay away in droves. The dream could never come true.

On Wednesday, 6 July 1971, a dream of many Australian science fiction readers did come true. The Space Age Bookshop, directed by Ron Graham and Merv Binns, opened at 314 Swanston Street, Melbourne. There they were — science fiction books covering a whole wall of a bookshop in Melbourne. There they were — manager Merv Binns and assistant manager Lee Harding selling books by the minute, Carla Harding handing out pamphlets to people waiting for a bus, Paul Stevens changing records and helping at the counter — SF fans standing around in bewilderment.

Harry Warner Jr, fandom's historian, in *All Our Yesterdays* records that in the forties 'Australia suffer[ed] from a difficulty unique in the history of known fandoms: almost total inability to find prozines, either native or imported.' As American SF books and magazines did not become freely available in Australia until the early 1960s, most Australian fan activity concentrated on the acquisition of that most precious commodity — SF books. In Melbourne, the Melbourne SF Club provided that service for over twenty years. Merv Binns worked at McGill's Newsagency during the day, but at night he took on his real identity — the Fuehrer of the MSFC. Merv kept his kingdom (if you don't mind the switched metaphors) stocked with books seen nowhere else in Melbourne — American paperback SF titles. Over the years he also imported on behalf of the Club copies of overseas film books, comics, fanzines, and anything else MSFC members wanted. The prices were good, and the service was (sort of) good.

But the MSFC was never known to anybody but initiates. Many ardent SF readers still had to endure piles of British reprint paperbacks and the occasional readable hardback book. Whenever Merv talked about opening a bookshop of his own, we smiled knowingly and remembered that the Club had less than 200 people on its rolls. Melbournites weren't interested in SF — or so we thought.

Opening night took on exactly the right note of fannishness and high hopes. No champagne supper, although there was some champagne for the toasts, but a very Australian mixture of meat pies and grog and chatter. We noted that the hosts of the party tried to take their seats as often as possible — it had been an exhausting day (somebody said Merv had been up to 3 a.m. the night before putting the finishing touches to the shop), David Grigg was there (I hadn't seem him for awhile), and so were the supporters from Melbourne and Monash Universities. John and Elizabeth Foyster took over proceedings for a while after they arrived — although John was just a *little* apologetic that a policeman didn't hit him over the head during the anti-Springbok tour demonstrations. Those noble warriors of Australia-in-75 tried at times to conduct mini-business meetings in the middle of a party, but for once we could ignore them. (It's bad enough that they hold business meetings at the Degraves Tavern.) John Bangsund appeared very mellow, and so did Apollo and Grishenda, Lee Harding's fan-type friends. David Boutland and John Foyster swapped opinions about Victorian policemen and Victoria's right-wing press. And the rest — as I said — including me — stood around and looked bewildered that the miraculous event actually took place. Dick Jenssen hosted the toasts (including a birthday greeting to himself) and ended the night with a very pleasant speech. (Sorry, I can't remember his more insulting jokes.) How did I celebrate the event? I *think* I was one of the first people to buy a book from the shop.

— *SF Commentary* 22, July 1971

Trip to the group mind: Australian SF Writers' Workshop

The story of the Writers' Workshop begins more than a year ago, and the process of its gestation forms an epic of which Robin Johnson is the hero, and the full story of which may never be told.

It's all Ursula Le Guin's fault. About this time last year, she had almost reached the stage where she could no longer see a way to attend the World Convention in Melbourne and also accompany her family to England in August this year. Besides, I don't think she really knew what science fiction conventions were all about. Perhaps she took Stanislaw Lem seriously when he described conventions as 'gay parties'.

At any rate, she wanted to do something 'serious' during her stay in Australia as well as be Guest of Honour at the Convention. She suggested that we run a writers' workshop for previously unpublished writers. Which, as we found out, takes about nine months of organising.

Robin Johnson, our noble Worldcon Committee Chairman and doer of all good deeds, pointed at me and said, 'You're It.' 'But,' said our quivering reporter, 'everything I've ever tried to organise has been a complete failure.' 'This had better not be a failure,' said Robin, and left me with the job.

Somehow Robin kept doing most of the jobs anyway. Our first task was to gain finance for the Workshop. We had to spend several weekends writing long-winded appeals to the Arts Council for money. Then Robin spent hours on the phone ~~browbeating~~ persuading Dr Costigan to give us the money. Finally he told us that we had received the money, and we could begin true preparations. Meanwhile, Carey and I had spent some time in the Dandenongs getting lost down bush tracks and talking to the proprietors of guest houses and country pubs. We made one tentative booking, but later found the ideal place for a Workshop — Booth Lodge. Robin placed another application for funds to help people to attend what could only be a very expensive workshop. Again, success. In the long run, the budget for the Workshop was about half that of the entire World Convention, but if only a few of our aims are fulfilled, the investment will have been worth it.

Robin even did most of the work of finding transport for people from Melbourne to Booth Lodge, since, by the night of Friday, 1 August, I was scarcely in a condition to think about putting one foot in front of the other. (Neither was Robin, but he kept going anyway.) All of us, including the interstate people, met at Cahill's restaurant, then travelled by car to Booth Lodge, about two miles beyond Belgrave (that is, about thirty miles due east of Melbourne, and very much in the hillside country of the Dandenong Ranges). Ursula was expected to arrive from Sydney the next morning. I was very nervous.

I had based the entire organisation of the Workshop upon suggestions from Ursula herself, in innumerable letters, and Vonda McIntyre, who helped Ursula to run something similar at Washington State University. I had a few ground rules — make sure people are physically comfortable; that they have typewriters galore and a photocopier; that they realise that a workshop is a working week, not a holiday. When I arrived at Booth Lodge, it was as if I had radiated my expectations for the workshop by telepathy. Everybody was sitting in a circle, industriously reading each other's stories. Not a sound. Mrs Chisholm, in charge of Booth Lodge, met me at the door, and did her best to keep things running smoothly during the next week. ('You look so *delightfully* vague,' she said to me next day, as I wandered around wondering what an Administative Organiser should do.)

The working mood did not fade during the entire week. I was amazed. After she arrived on the Saturday, Ursula was amazed. It was like being part of a group mind. In the mornings we would tear apart the stories that were submitted before the workshop began. In the afternoons, we would tear apart (and often read aloud) the stories that we had written overnight. Ursula would give us our next assignment. As soon as the evening meal finished, everybody would rush to typewriters, wrinkle brows, pace floors, and produce the extraordinary pieces that we read the next day.

'Perhaps I shouldn't say anything because I've been up all night and I really don't know what at I'm talking about,' said Andrew Whitmore. He stayed up all the next night as well. David Grigg stayed up till 3 a.m. on several nights to finish stories that were highlights of the Workshop. One night I was wandering around in a stupor at 2 or 3 a.m. when I looked up to see a light from the room of Marian and Pip Maddern. They were both still writing.

I started writing as well, even though I was supposed to organise. Everybody else did the organising. I wrote the first pieces of fiction I have finished for four years. Other people even said they liked them. I began to realise what other people were feeling.

'You trusted us to trust each other to trust ourselves,' I said to Ursula as the Workshop ended. At the centre of the group mind was surely the most remarkable person I've ever met. Nobody could call Ursula Le Guin a 'teacher', since really she said little during the entire week. When she commented on a story, she could summarise everything she wanted to say in a sentence or two. But somewhere in those sentences, and in the comments each person said to each other, were the keys that opened up the minds of everybody else. Everybody's writing improved unbelievably during the week of the Workshop. At the same time, we all found that we didn't need to treat Ursula with Expected Reverence. Instead she organised a wild night of frivolity during which one group of us had to achieve communication with the others, who were the Aliens. When communication failed, people became quite upset, but the point had been made. We made nonsense of all those science fiction stories where the aliens have little translating voice boxes on their abdomens and understand instantly all the world's languages. Ursula wrote ribald stories with us, and contributed some pieces for discussion. She went for a walk with us through Sherbrooke Forest. (We were nearly lost, or slithering in the mud. By the side of the road there is a sign saying, 'Danger. Lyrebirds cross.' Afterwards, Ursula drew us a cartoon showing the cross lyrebirds.) Somebody, probably Randal Flynn, invented the two alien tribes, the Grongs and the Grooblies. We all turned into grongs, including Ursula Le Grong. Soon we were no longer a group mind, but a whole new race of super writers, all ready to astound the world with our efforts.

We haven't astounded anybody yet, of course, least of all the editors of magazines and original fiction anthologies. But a lot of people have begun submitting stories for the first time. The rest of us are trying to stay in touch with each other, rather than let the experience disappear. Quite right; too: it was the best week of my life, and probably the best week of theirs. And, thanks to Robin and Ursula and the members of the Workshop and the Magic Pudding Club and everybody else who helped, it wasn't a flop. Amazing. When's the next writers' workshop?

— *SF Commentary* 44/45, December 1975

Waiting for Roy Orbison

First published in *The Metaphysical Review* 14, November 1989, edited by Bruce Gillespie.

> In '75, when I went into the studio to make *Born to Run*, I wanted to make a record with words like Bob Dylan that sounded like Phil Spector, but most of all I wanted to sing like Roy Orbison. Now everybody knows that nobody sings like Roy Orbison.
>
> — Bruce Springsteen, at the induction of Roy Orbison into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, 21 January 1987

I The summer of 1961–62

During the summer of 1961–62 I was fourteen years old and sitting on a chair in the middle of a lawn in the Melbourne suburb of Syndal while the sun beat down. In one hand I held a hose pointed limply at the nearest thirsty patch of grass. In the other hand I held a science fiction magazine, while I squinted in the glare of the sunlight. At my feet was my new transistor radio, which I was paying off, at one pound a month, to Patterson's Stores.

I was reading the novella version of J. B. Ballard's 'The Drowned World'. As I eye-tracked it, the sweat gathered on my forehead and poured down over my cheek onto the page, and another bit of lawn drank water but remained obstinately dry. In 'The Drowned World', sweat poured over the characters and water rose from beneath them as heat and ocean overtook the world. Life and art oozed together.

From my transistor radio, continually threatened by my inaccurate hosing, came the sound of 'Peace Pipe', an instrumental hit by the Shadows. A calm attractive tune, 'Peace Pipe' had been picked by Stan Rofe and Keith Livingstone as the main theme of their day-long 'Summer Hits' program on 3KZ.

That was the perspiring summer of 1962: the Shadows' 'Peace Pipe', Ballard's 'The Drowned World', and the early hit songs of Roy Orbison. 'Crying' had just disappeared from radio playlists, and 'Dream Baby' had just been released. For Christmas my Auntie Linda and Uncle Fred had given me my first long-playing record — Roy Orbison's *Lonely and Blue* — and I found every possible chance to play it. This was not often, as there was only one record-player in the house, and my parents preferred Mozart to Roy Orbison.

That was a summer of impotence and dammed, damned potentialities. I did not choose to sit out on that lawn in the heat. Given a choice, I would rarely have left my room.

I was there because the summer of 1961–62 was long and hot, and the dams were drying up, as they did most summers in Melbourne until giant new reservoirs began supplying the city in the 1970s. The government had banned watering lawns with fixed sprinklers. Therefore somebody — me — had to sit on a chair in the middle of the lawn, out of the shade, and hold the hose.

I had no choice. That's what irked me. Fourteen years old, and the product of a Good Christian Home during the early 1960s. I did what I was told. Being me, I grumbled the whole time, but I did it.

1961 was the year in which I fell in love yet again, and really discovered Roy Orbison's music. 'Falling in Love' meant worshipping from afar. Once my eyes were filled with the image of the beloved, I thought of little else. But I did nothing about it. Instead I walked moonily around schoolgrounds singing in my head 'she walked away with m-e-e-e'. I pedalled down the edge of Blackburn Road, disregarding the stream of traffic bent on pushing me off the curb, while within my head I wandered lonely lanes, 'crying in the rain' with the Everly Brothers.

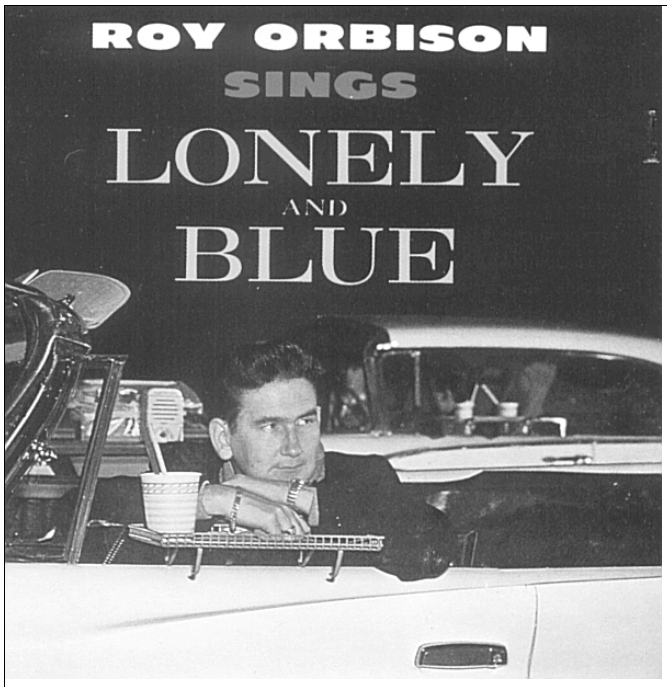
My life seemed a series of sad songs, which might have been happier if I had ever let the girl know that I doted on her. But I didn't, because I had no idea what to do next. What do you say to a glorious goddess you worship eternally? Especially when you are the merest worm of the earth, with no muscles, no ability at sport, no smart conversation, and no money? I couldn't actually ask her out, as my weekly pocket money did not even stretch as far as the price of one cinema ticket. Maybe I could declare myself in song. Perhaps I could get over the message, the tale of my breaking heart, by singing Roy Orbison songs. But I couldn't sing. I still can't sing.

How did I survive this heartrending situation? By getting on with being fourteen — listening to the radio; collecting and writing up hit parades, which was my main hobby then; buying the few science fiction magazines I could afford; and publishing my first fanzine.

I owe a great deal to Ron Sheldon. I haven't seen him since 1968, and have no idea where he lives, but someday I'd like thank him for introducing me to two lifelong obsessions — publishing fanzines and collecting the records of Roy Orbison.

At the beginning of 1961 Ron Sheldon volunteered to do all the donkey work for a magazine that I would edit. Yes, Ron Sheldon was the first Carey Handfield. Ron and I typed the Fordigraph ('ditto') stencils, and Ron duplicated the four- or six-page magazine on his father's machine. During 1961 we published 26 issues, which were sold to the kids and staff at Oakleigh High School, and made 7 shillings profit for the year. This was the last time I made a profit on a fanzine. In 1962 Ron's parents told him he had too much homework to continue the magazine, so it stopped.

Sometime in 1960, Ron said that his favourite singer



Cover of Roy Orbison's first album, *Lonely and Blue*, recorded in 1960.

was Roy Orbison, and his favourite song 'Only the Lonely'. I said 'Uh?' I liked 'Uptown' well enough. That had been Roy Orbison's first hit in Australia. 'Only the Lonely' was nice, but I hadn't really listened to it. After Ron mentioned it, I listened to it. One day, when I was riding my bike from Syndal to Oakleigh with the transistor radio buckled to my belt, I had a road-to-Damascus (road-to-Oakleigh?) experience. At the end of 'Only the Lonely' Roy repeats the verse, but sings ever-higher notes, finishing with the word 'take'. For the first time, I heard the 'k' explode at the end of the song, echoed cavernously and gloriously in that epic sound of the early Orbison records. From then on I was an Orbison fanatic.

The standard biographies tell me that Roy Orbison was born in Wink, Texas, in 1936, that he became a country singer at an early age, but for a while became a rock and roll singer when Johnny Cash suggested that he send a tape of 'Ooby Dooby' to Sam Phillips of Sun Records. He made quite a few records for Sun, but had no success. Later he was employed as a songwriter; his most notable success was the million-selling 'Claudette' for the Everly Brothers. Joe Tanner of Monument Records signed a recording contract with him in 1959. Orbison's first record for the company was 'Paper Boy', a light, hesitant rockabilly ballad that had no success. On 'Uptown', in late 1959, Orbison sounds more confident, but the song still given no hint of his later style. 'Uptown' succeeded nowhere but in Australia. It was followed by 'Only the Lonely', which became very successful in America and Australia in 1960. From then on, Orbison had a string of hits that lasted until he changed record companies from Monument to MGM in 1965. In 1966 his wife was killed in a motorcycle accident, and a year later two of his three children were killed in a house fire in Nashville. Except in Australia and Britain, he had no virtually recording success after 1968.

What was so marvellous about Roy Orbison's records? I'm tempted to let other people describe them: for instance, *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Rock*:

> The songs utilised sweeping strings, crashing choruses and powerful crescendos. At a time when pop music was irredeemably lightweight, Orbison stood head and shoulders above his contemporaries; his vocals were peerless, his range extraordinary. His songs compelled attention.

There was the Roy Orbison voice, the vocal chords I wished I possessed. A voice that was often called 'operatic'. More accurately, a voice that *could have been operatic*. Roy wasn't all that great in the low range. He used the low notes at the beginning of songs to roll them along, to the point where he could take off. When he pushed that voice off the ramp, it flew or crashed. One of the great flat notes of all pop music is Orbison's last note in 'Crying'. So is the last note of 'Borne on the Wind', and he sings flat through most of 'Falling'. On the other hand, the last phrases of 'Only the Lonely', 'Running Scared', 'Leah', 'Gigolette' and 'Crawling Back' still sound to me as miraculous, uplifting, hair-raising (choose an adjective, then double it) as they did when I first heard them.

Roy Orbison had another recording voice, seldom used. On his version of 'Beautiful Dreamer', you hear a frail, lilting semi falsetto, a soft Southern version of the Irish tenor voice. I wish he'd sung more songs that way.

Where did the startling originality come from? Not from Roy Orbison, I suspect. After his basic style became unfashionable, Orbison seemed incapable of adapting to the pop music styles of the 1970s and 1980s. The standard biographies suggest that the loss of his wife and children disturbed him so fundamentally that he was unable to write or arrange new material for many years. Perhaps. Or perhaps somebody else had invented the 'Roy Orbison style'.

It's difficult now to recall the pace and excitement of pop music in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Today Fleetwood Mac or AC/DC can survive three-year gaps between albums. In 1960, a six-month gap between hits would finish a career. Chuck Berry remains a legend, although his well-known singles came out over only a four-year period. Roy Orbison had nearly 30 successful singles in less than seven years — at least four singles a year, most of them double-sided hits. And each of those singles had to be seen to be better than the one before, or in some way different. When everybody in Nashville, New York, Detroit and Chicago was competing at that level, pop music changed very rapidly.

Roy Orbison recorded several of the songs that Buck Ram wrote for the Platters. Before Orbison came along, 'Twilight Time' and 'The Great Pretender' were the two songs that came closest to his style. Who saw the possibilities for Roy Orbison's voice? Probably Fred Foster, owner of Monument Records, or Joe Tanner, who is credited as the arranger of Orbison's songs. The real breakthrough came with 'Running Scared' (1961). While Orbison's voice rises throughout the song, the march rhythm remains insistent and steady. The instrumental accompaniment starts with a solo rhythm guitar. Drums and electric guitar join it; then strings; then bass and sax; then chorus; then the explosion of Orbison's triumphant last note. The same formula as Ravel's 'Bolero', but squeezed into 2 minutes 10 seconds. Instant opera.

And the power of the song is in the arrangement, not

merely the song. You can't perform 'Running Scared' any other way.

'Crying' (1961) was a different matter — a far more complex song, with a slow shuffle beat, two climaxes, and a tune so wayward that I suspect it is unsingable. Orbison failed the test. But the *effect* of the song is the same as in 'Running Scared': instant opera. If you're fourteen, and whistling around the house, trying to do your homework and read a book and forever driven outside by parents because 'the sunshine's good for you', you stop dead when you hear 'Crying' on the radio, arrested, without realising it, by the same emotions that will stop you dead eight years later when you hear the last movement of Beethoven's Ninth for the first time.

II The summer of 1962–63

Everything changed during 1962. It was, I now realise, the last year of my childhood — the last year in which I had no control over my destiny. It was the greatest year ever for pop music, although nobody would agree with me now. It was the year I nearly became a Normal Functioning Member of Ordinary Society, but failed.

1962 is the year I had what I usually thought of as a normal social life for an adolescent. I joined the Christian Youth Fellowship of the Glen Waverley Church of Christ. An older girl (all of sixteen!) tried to organise dancing, but the minister stopped that. The group met each Friday night, and went on midnight rambles, and talked, and played ping-pong, and had deep and meaningful Biblical discussions. (Readers of Garrison Keillor's *Lake Wobegon Days* will be familiar with this intense but limited lifestyle.) And — you guessed it — I fell in love again. Again I had no idea what to say to my new love, and again I had no money to take her out, but she sort of got the idea, and Something Might Have Happened if we hadn't moved to the country. My feelings about everything became stronger, and I still had no way to express those feelings except by playing Roy Orbison records and singing his songs in my head.

My father was stuck on a low-paying rung within the State Savings Bank of Victoria until he saw the chance to become a branch manager. In mid 1962 he gained the Melton branch. At that time Melton was a tiny village (500 people) 30 miles west of Melbourne, and my father would be the first State Savings Bank manager in the town. (Today Melton has more than 40,000 people, and is a satellite suburb of Melbourne.) In August 1962 the rest of the family moved from suburban Syndal to country Melton. For the last four months of 1962 I stayed with my Auntie Linda and Uncle Fred in Murrumbeena and finished my fourth form exams. In December 1962 I moved to Melton. Eventually my hoped-for girlfriend and I stopped writing to each other.

Again the summer of 1962–63 was hot. The north-west wind built up speed as it hurtled over the Western Plains and, it seemed, straight through our flimsily built house. We had no lawn or garden, and had to spend the whole summer spreading out tons of soil so that my father could sow the lawn in the autumn. There was no escape from the heat, dust or boredom except by playing Roy Orbison records or listening to the radio.

1962 was Roy Orbison's crowning year, a short period of time in which he released four perfect records ('Dream Baby', 'The Crowd', 'Leah' and 'In Dreams'). During his tour of Australia early in 1962 he said in interviews how happy his life was, how unlike his songs was his own temperament. *Cashbox* magazine named him as Best Pop Male Performer. I spent all day crouched over the radio, pretending to be doing homework, waiting for the next playing of the latest Orbison record.

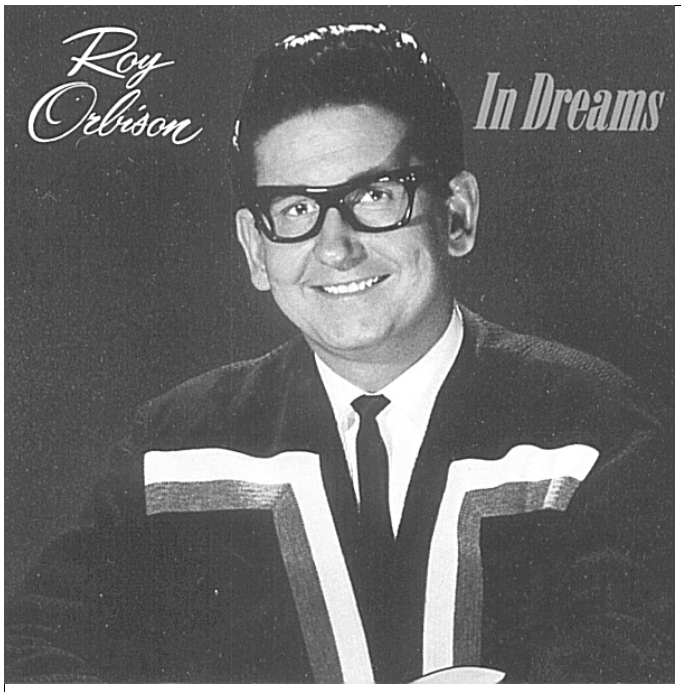
The most perfect pop song ever written or recorded is 'The Crowd' (May 1962). It wasn't a great success in Australia or anywhere, but it still astonishes me every time I hear it. 'The Crowd' is a simple song that sounds complicated, which is probably why it failed. Here the innovation in 'Running Scared' has been taken one step further. The insistent march rhythm is here, and all the compressed melodrama of the earlier song, but this time the rhythm turns into a snare-drum tango. The song begins with Orbison's immensely mournful 'I go out with the crowd', accompanied by a tolling piano note. The Voice rises, and the great dramatic tango begins. Orbison's notes lift ever upward. He ends each crescendo with a note higher and more exciting than the one before. Opera has nothing to match it, until you're nearer forty than fourteen.

How as the 'Orbison sound' constructed? As far as I know, nobody has published a history of recording studios. How did the engineers in Nashville gain that punchy, epic sound, an aural glow, that nobody can repeat now? Why did Orbison himself abandon this sound, so that by 1968 his songs sounded cheap and scrappy? Nothing fades like information about popular art, because usually it's not written down until after the popular art itself has become decadent.

Orbison was already losing his musical way in 1963, but he had one last season of success. In 1964, when the Beatles sound had already displaced the other veterans of the early 1960s, Roy Orbison gained a worldwide hit with 'Oh, Pretty Woman'. He toured Britain, Europe and Australia with both the Beatles and the Rolling Stones. His records suddenly became hits in places where they had been ignored. All that ended when in 1965 he changed record companies (from Monument to MGM) and in 1966 when his personal life was destroyed. I waited for his return.

III The summer of 1987–88

The summer of 1987–88 was the longest and hottest since the series of horror summers that I remember at Melton and Bacchus Marsh during the 1960s. The cool changes didn't cool down the house; each hot spell was more vicious than the one before. I turned 41 years old. Some time between 1962 and 1988 I ventured to speak to girls, and even got around to kissing (et cetera) a few. One woman, Elaine, consented to marry me, although not until after a complicated romance that might just as easily have left both of us as bachelor people. I live in a house that we own. It has a small garden that we don't need to water with a hand-held hose. I earn money. I publish fanzines occasionally. In a manner of speaking, I have achieved all the ambitions — except writing a novel — that I had in 1962, plus many that I could not have imagined.



Cover of Roy Orbison's third (and best) album, *In Dreams*, recorded in 1962.

Why look back to the pop music of 1962? Journalists say that we keep enjoying popular music of particular periods for the instant nostalgia it provides. That can't be right. I have no desire to relive periods of my childhood or adolescence. Enjoyable personal experience started with my first year at university (1965) and, more poignantly, my first year in fandom (1968). I would reverse the old saw. The only reason to enjoy remembering the age of fourteen is to recall the music itself. It contained an unrepeatable simple integrity, a concentration of material into two-minute epics, and a sharp sense of the ludicrous comi-tragedy of teenage emotional life. I can't go back again. I don't need to. The music is still here, preserved on vinyl, tape and CD.

Playing Roy Orbison records today reminds me that I might have done much, but didn't. If I have nostalgia for 1962, it's for a sense of having the rest of my life ahead of me. Life in 1988 brings no choice. There seem to be no great second chances after you turn forty.

Or is that also a delusion? In 1962 I could never have imagined the future that lay before me. In 1988 I can't imagine any future except a gradual downward slide of the life I'm leading now. Perhaps it's time to play those Roy Orbison records again — anthems for an unknown future, not merely tunes from a lost youth.

IV The summer of 1988–89

In 1987 I was startled to see a video clip for 'In Dreams'. The song was the same as Roy Orbison's great hit from 1962. The black-clad dark-spectacled figure was the same. But the newly recorded version was inferior to the original. Same arrangement; same voice; different recording engineer. Later I bought the new version by mistake. It was on the well-publicised CD from Virgin Records: *In Dreams: The Greatest Hits*, complete with cover note by Bruce Springsteen, saying that *he* always wanted to sing like Roy Orbison. All the songs were re-recorded, not the originals. Virgin Records became interested in Orbison because the *original* version of 'In Dreams' sparked a lot of interest among the people who saw David Lynch's film *Blue Velvet*.

Blue Velvet began the revival of interest in Orbison. In early 1987 Orbison was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. At a later special concert to celebrate Orbison's career, Springsteen, Elvis Costello, Dave Edmunds, k. d. lang and many others played with him, and he was singing as well as ever. There were rumours of an album of new songs.

Everybody in the music business was on Roy Orbison's side. When would he produce the goodies? Could he write good new songs, arrange them in a way that would make an impression on 1988's audience, and finally gain a hit album? Would CBS, which now owned the back catalogue of Monument Records, put on CD the original versions of his records?

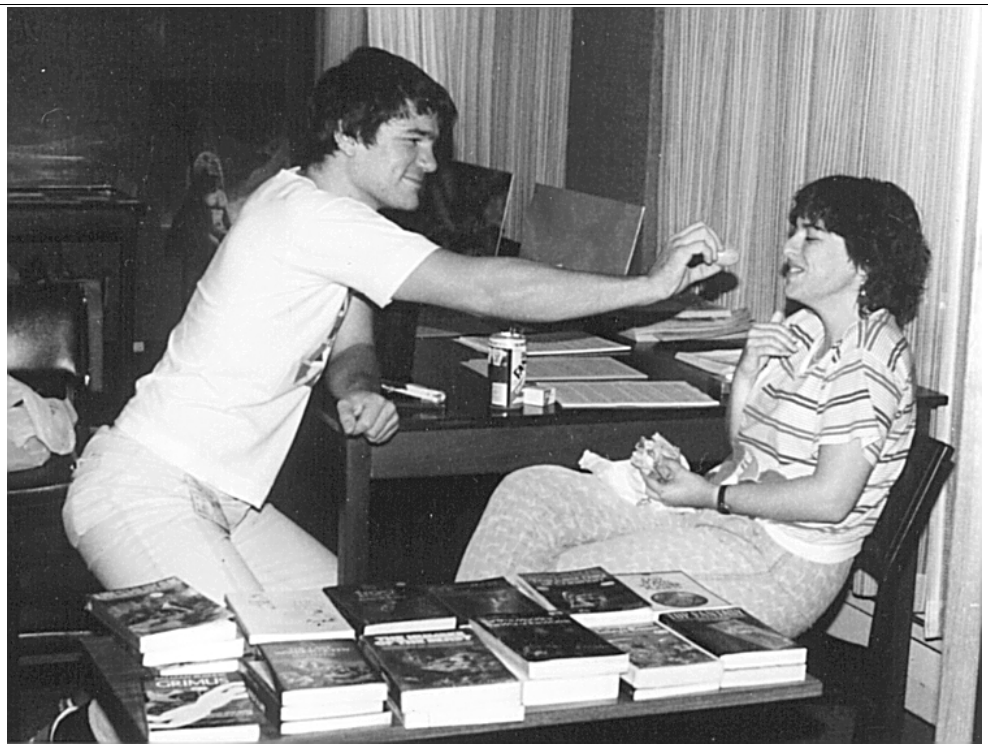
In December 1988, Roy Orbison finally achieved the success I had waited for since 1964. The *Travelin' Wilburys: Volume One*, his collaboration with Bob Dylan, George Harrison, Jeff Lynne and Tom Petty, reached Number 1 on the album chart. His new album, *Mystery Girl*, with songs written by U2, Elvis Costello and Jeff Lynne, was about to be released. Once again the glorious voice would float above us from the radio. We, the fans, had not waited in vain.

But on 7 December 1988, at the age of fifty-two, Roy Orbison died of a heart attack. All his summers ended. Ours too? But we still have the music.

— Bruce Gillespie, November 1987–January 1988–March 1989

Note, 2004:

Because of Roy Orbison's death, suddenly we had on CD far more Orbison music than had ever been available before. CBS/Sony didn't admit to having his Monument tapes until the man died. The songs were released randomly on CDs with names such as *Our Love Song* and *Best Loved Standards*, followed by the four-CD box set, *The Legendary Roy Orbison*. Later, the first three Orbison albums, *Lonely and Blue*, *Crying* and *In Dreams*, were released on CD. The digital remastering of the old tapes has been magnificent. Still missing are new editions of Orbison's albums for MGM. Most of them were not great, but a collector must have everything.



Roger Weddall and Wendy Hirsh, Eastercon '87, Melbourne. (Photo: Jane Tisell.)

The lark ascended: Roger Weddall 1956–1992

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After Roger Weddall's funeral on 8 December 1992, a large group of his friends gathered at the house where he had been living, ate afternoon tea, and told Roger stories. There are thousands of them, each as varied as the teller. Here are some of my Roger stories. Of course they are also Bruce Gillespie stories:

I

The first time I talked to Roger was in early 1974, after I returned from my only overseas trip. He and Alan Wilson visited the Degraves Tavern, which was in a basement off Degraves Street in the city, and was the weekly fannish meeting place until it closed in early 1976. When I returned to the Degraves Tavern in February 1974, I found that a new group of people had joined Melbourne fandom. The most noticeable newcomers were Don and Derrick Ashby, who had identical midland English accents and black pointy beards. Loquacious and amusing, they held court at the centre of a group dominated by Lee Harding and Irene Pagram, and Leigh Edmonds and Valma Brown. Henry, the proprietor of Degraves Tavern, had arranged the tables in a large U shape. Roger and Alan sat way off at the end of one of the U arms. Nobody spoke to them. This was typical. Malcolm Gordon turned up every week for two years at Degraves Tavern before anybody spoke to him. Eventually I said hello, but little else, to Roger and Alan. All I knew about them is that they represented the Melbourne University Science Fiction Association (MUSFA), and that MUSFA people wanted to get involved in general fandom. This did not happen until the late 1970s, and Roger and Alan did not bother turning up to Degraves Tavern again.

During 1975 I was the only person from general fandom who discovered that the MUSFA people were friendlier and less cynical than the Degraves cabal. During 1974 Charles Taylor had introduced me to Elaine Cochrane and Frank Payne, the two people with whom he was sharing a house. The three of them were members of MUSFA. I visited them several times during late 1974. In 1975 Charles invited me to one of the monthly MUSFA Bistro Nights. The first I attended was at the old Jamaica House when it was owned by Monty, an enthusiastic Jamaican who was known to everybody in food circles and Carlton bohemia. (After he died, at the age of forty, his wife Stephanie Alexander became Melbourne's most distinguished restaurateur.) Monty served the hottest food I have ever eaten. That night in late 1975,

Members of the Melbourne University SF Association (MUSFA), 1975: Dennis Callegari, Alan Wilson, Mark 'Rocky' Lawson, Roger Weddall, Charles Morgan, Michael Joseph.

about twenty riotous MUSFAns drank a vast amount, and returned to 10 Johnston Street. Somebody was very ill in the toilet. In the early morning, Dennis Callegari walked home from Collingwood to Templestowe.

Me? I was suddenly stricken by *l-ov-e*. Not for the first time was I transfixed by the presence of a woman who hardly noticed me. Claudia Mangiamele was the princess of MUSFA, and I suspected all the other males at Jamaica House were equally, hopelessly, in love with her. Not that Claudia meant to be flirtatious. She had (and still has) the rare quality that Roger had: the ability to focus her interest entirely on any person she considered a friend. Because most of her friends in MUSFA were young, single males, her presence created a stronger emotional effect than she intended.

Four weeks later, we held another riotous MUSFA night, this time at a long-defunct Lebanese food restaurant known as Green Cedars. We were placed in a large upstairs room. What better place for a polite riot? Most of these people were under twenty, and not used to alcohol. Yet again, a MUSFAn was very ill. Rigid, he was handed down the stairs of Green Cedars and carried out the door.

I can't remember Roger as being more riotous than any other MUSFAn in those days. He was a lot quieter than the (in)famous David Firman, who needed only the slightest hint of tipsiness to begin singing loud ribald songs. (Whatever happened to David Firman?) But already I recognised that Roger listened to what you were saying while talking to you flat out and carrying on three other conversations around the room. (He also conducted hour-long pun competitions with Dennis Callegari.) Roger included me in the group. That's more than anybody in general fandom bothered to do.

At the beginning of 1976, about thirty of us, mainly MUSFAns, went to Adelaide to join some people from the Adelaide University SF Association at an sf convention at a camp site in the hills. The aim was to repeat the very successful first Advention (held at another hillside camp site) of 1972. The weather was very hot, the chemistry of people not quite right (although meeting Marc Ortlieb for the first time was a highlight of the convention), and a very young, very drunk James Styles caterwauled loudly all one night.

I was glad to escape at the end of that convention, but some Adelaide University people enjoyed it so much that they returned the visit. Anaconda, an entirely impromptu convention held mainly at Claudia Mangiamele's mother's house in Carlton during the Australia Day weekend, 1976, began the most extraordinary year of my life.

People who had been only acquaintances suddenly became friends. Roger decided that I was a person who should be cured of chronic shyness. On the Monday morning after the night of Charles Taylor's twenty-first birthday party, I heard a knock at the door of my flat in Carlton Street. Not only were all those people up, but they had decided to invade my place. After the invasion, they dragged me out to the Carlton Gardens across the street from my place. Never have I met a group of people so glad to be in each other's company! I enjoyed that company, and I was glad that Claudia was there, although it seemed obvious that she was already nuts about Roger. Add to that dynamic several other romances that had begun in Adelaide or during Anaconda, and you have an atmosphere of heady joy that had escaped me during my adolescence but was quite a tonic three weeks before my twenty-ninth birthday.

The events of the next three years turn on a sentence I spoke that morning in January 1976. 'The Magic

Pudding Club is only two streets away,' I said. 'Let's invade them.' And we did. The Magic Pudding Club, in Drummond Street, Carlton, was a slanshack that at that time included (at least) Don and Derrick Ashby, Ken Ford and John Ham. Staying with them for the weekend was a very young Queenslander named Randal Flynn. Randal had travelled to Melbourne from Brisbane for the World Convention and Writers' Workshop held in August 1975. He decided that he liked Melbourne and Melbournites so much that he returned. Surely he could stay in Melbourne forever, for free! When we invaded the Magic Pudding Club in Drummond Street, everybody but Randal groaned, rolled over and went back to sleep. Randal invited us into the back yard. In that way Anaconda carried on, while the other Magic Pudding people swore at us and got breakfast.

By the end of that morning, when the Anacondans disappeared out the front door, Randal had become firm friends with Claudia and Roger. Two weeks later, by the time of my birthday party (catered by the Magic Pudding Club, it was also Valma Brown's birthday), the three of them had decided to set up house in Moor Street, Fitzroy, nearly as close to me to the east as the Magic Pudding Club was to the west. My peace of mind was about to disintegrate.

I visited Moor Street often, because Claudia lived there. Claudia didn't notice me, but she certainly noticed Roger. She and Randal agreed that Roger was behaving 'very peculiarly'. Randal had agreed to give a home at Moor Street to two cats, MGM and Gus. Roger had the same magical effect on them as he was to have on Apple Blossom. Claudia and Randal didn't like cats. Suddenly Claudia and Randal were living together, as well as living in the same house. To the outsider, Roger seemed an outcast in his own house. For perhaps the first time in his life, Roger had no idea what to do. Why hadn't he carried off the magic princess? Why had he left her to an cheeky upstart like Randal? And why did magical princesses never notice people like me?

I visited Moor Street when all three of them were there. Roger kept playing records that I had never heard, but which became favourites of mine. If it had not been for Roger, I would never had heard *Crisis! What Crisis?* by Supertramp. That album has never been played on radio, although Supertramp became popular later in the 1970s. Roger played *American Stars and Bars* by Neil Young. Like many other people, even today, I rather dismissed Neil Young because I had heard only *Harvest. American Stars and Bars*, with 'Like a Hurricane', the first of Young's power-guitar anthems, made me a permanent fan. It was because of Roger I discovered Lou Reed — not *Berlin*, Roger's favourite, but *Coney Island Baby*.

Roger, Randal and Claudia agreed that I was somebody who should be rescued from lonely isolation at 72 Carlton Street. Randal made this his crusade. Some days I had to chase him away in order to get some work done. (Unlike Stephen Campbell, another friend of mine, he was not much use for producing fanzines.)

Roger was less insistent than the others about the crusade, but one night he knocked on the door at midnight. 'How'd you like to come around for dinner?' he said. Since I had last eaten at 6 o'clock, and was feeling peckish and lonely, I followed Roger to Moor Street.

Claudia Mangiamele in 1976. (Photograph from the Roger Weddall collection..)

There I found the main room full of people. I can't remember where they had been or why they hadn't eaten, but Randal and Claudia began preparing food at midnight.

At two o'clock in the morning we sat down to the one of the grandest feasts I've ever been to. It was the first time I really saw Roger in action as the Great Celebrator. He was able to draw the best out of everybody in that room. From then on, I took it as an axiom that even a social troglodyte like me would always enjoy a social occasion organised by Roger.

Roger's dinner parties become art events. Not that he cooked home dinners, or paid for restaurant meals. All he had to do was ring you. You dropped everything to make sure you attended these events. If you sat down between two people you didn't know, Roger made sure you got to know them. If you didn't, he changed seats to sit next to you. If the whole dinner party failed to sparkle, he managed to get everybody to change chairs. This was hell on the waiters.

Randal and Claudia moved to a large two-storey terrace house in Rathdowne Street, Carlton, leaving Roger by himself at Moor Street. Tony Sullivan, the almost invisible fourth member of the Moore Street household, had already moved. Charles Taylor moved into the new Rathdowne Street slanshack. Roger could not afford the rent, so he gave up the Moore Street house and moved in with Elaine and Frank.

Meanwhile, Elaine had picked up Apple Blossom on a building site at 1 a.m. while walking home from the Easter 1976 Convention held at Trinity College, Melbourne University. (All the action of this saga takes place within walking distance.) Roger and Apple Blossom fell in love.

II

In the end, 'Roger's cat' Apple Blossom outlived him by two weeks. Roger died on 3 December 1992, and Apple Blossom on 18 December. Not that Roger ever owned

Apple Blossom; she owned him. So did every cat that Roger ever patted.

When Roger shared the house at 10 Johnston Street, Collingwood, with Elaine and two other people in 1976, he was already a person who slept during the day and lived by night. When he arrived home at some late hour, he listened to records on headphones. Sitting in the bean bag, he fell asleep. Apple Blossom fell asleep on top of him. When they were both awake and in the same house, Roger teased Apple Blossom. She spat and howled and clawed, having a wonderful time. She had the world's second-best vocabulary of cat swear words. Apple Blossom lived in the same house as Roger for only about four months. He ran out of money, and returned to his parents' place.

After Elaine and I got together, each time that Roger visited he called first to Apple Blossom, who always expected to be picked up and teased. Howl, spit, claw. What fun! In 1982, when Roger returned from overseas, and had been away from our house for about a year, Apple Blossom remembered him immediately. After Roger died, when his father visited us, Apple Blossom tottered towards him because for a moment it seemed that Brent Weddall's voice was that of his son.

III

In October 1976 I was still in love, to the amusement, annoyance and embarrassment of everybody I knew. Instead of Worshipping From Afar, my usual approach to falling in love, I had Declared Myself. And got nowhere. But I still lived within a hundred yards of the Beloved. No, I was not ordered from the door. Claudia and Randal always welcomed me whenever I visited, as they welcomed everybody else in Melbourne fandom. It was quite common for a nightbird such as Don Ashby to call in at Rathdowne Street at midnight because he saw an upstairs light. Rathdowne Street became host to some of the most spectacular parties I've ever staggered away from.

For the first and only time in my life, I began to hold parties at my eyrie in Carlton Street. I went as close as I've ever been to madness. I needed people desperately. If I couldn't entice them around for a beer or a yarn, I would find any available excuse to visit them. Carlton Street became the epicentre of one instant party after another. Roger and I began to demolish bottles of Southern Comfort as if they were mineral water. During one party at my place, Roger succumbed to alcohol early in the night. He locked himself in the toilet and wouldn't emerge. Fortunately, long-suffering Martin, who lived in the flat below, was away for the night, so the rest of us could use the downstairs loo. When everybody else had left, Roger was still in the loo. I hauled the spare mattress down to the kitchen. Next morning, he was lying on it. He was lying so still that Flodnap, my cat who was so shy that nobody but me had set eyes on him for months, was circling him unafraid. For a few moments I thought Roger had died. He got up, said 'Good morning; I'm fine', staggered up to divan in the living room, and fell asleep there for another four hours.

One night in late October, one of my parties finished with Roger, Claudia and I sitting together on my living-room floor. Fuelled by Southern Comfort and coffee, we talked all night. It was bizarre magic. At dawn, Roger and I walked Claudia back to Rathdowne Street. We all said goodbye, and I floated home.

I slept for a few hours, and woke to the strangest weather I have ever witnessed in Melbourne. A seamless shroud of luminous orange cloud glowed across the sky. The weather was early-summer warm, but not yet hot. There was no wind. We all waited for the total eclipse of the sun. Roger had gone with a group of MUSFAns to the hills to observe the eclipse. I had been invited to Claudia's mother's place to join the eclipse-watchers there. The air became quite still. It became nearly dark, and the air glowed. I glowed, and knew I would never again feel such a stranger to myself.

Leigh Edmonds called the events of my life during October and November 1976 my 'crushing blows'. For years afterward ignorant fans believed that my entire function in life was to fall under crushing blows of ever more devastating strength. Within twenty-four hours, (a) Claudia told me very clearly of what she thought of the ragged idiot (me) who kept claiming her affections without having the slightest reason for doing so; (b) the estate agent sent a letter saying that the house at Carlton Street would be sold, and that I should leave the flat as soon as possible; and (c) it became obvious that my regular freelance employer had dispensed with my services for the time being.

Within a month I found a job of sorts (half-time assistant editor of *The Secondary Teacher* for the Victorian Secondary Teachers Association, at a miserable pro rata salary), but not until I had nearly run out of money. I survived only because Bruce Barnes, a kindly soul who is constantly in the background of all this action, lent me a large amount of money in order to set up *SF Commentary* as a commercially run magazine. Business success, as ever, evaded me, but the loan gave me an improbably provident cushion of money during those difficult months. During my enforced holiday I published some of the best issues of *SF Commentary*, but they produced few new subscriptions.

I decided to become a sensible person again, but this proved impossible. After spending most of my life trying to keep human beings at arm's length, I found I needed them very badly. Or was it simply that visits from friendly people gave me an excuse to drink too much?

I visited Elaine and Frank and Roger several times at Johnston Street, Collingwood. This old bluestone house had always been a gathering place for MUSFA people. However, Frank was often at Melbourne University, studying for fifth year Medicine exams, and Roger was rarely home. He returned very late at night, and woke up sometime during the day. Already Elaine and I were enjoying each other's company.

Soon my worries had narrowed to one problem: where would I live? Upstairs at 72 Carlton Street was the first place that was really *mine*. It was my home; I could not face the thought of living anywhere else. I was offered a few rooms in a vacant house, but I could tell from the description that my books and records and duplicating equipment could not fit there. The Final Notice to Quit arrived in January 1977.

In January Chris Priest and Vonda McIntyre arrived in town to conduct, with George Turner, the second

large SF Writers' Workshop. (Ursula Le Guin had conducted the first in 1975.) Vonda visited a fan gathering at my place. People dropped in from everywhere to say hello to Vonda. Elaine and Frank visited as well. On that night, only about a week before I had to leave Carlton Street, they offered to accommodate me at Johnston Street. Roger was returning to his parents' place. Elaine and Frank wanted to get rid of the other bloke. And I needed two entire rooms, plus a lot of the store room, to fit in my junk. And it was decided that night. I had always said that I would not share a house with other people — but I had grown desperate for company, and I needed the accommodation.

This story has become more about me than about Roger. Roger had separate groups of friends, entire worlds of people who did not know each other, but knew Roger well. He would disappear for weeks at a time, then visit every night for a week. Yet we never had a sense that he was slighting us. Of course he would always return. He would be drawn back by Apple Blossom as well as the other cats. The household now included Solomon and Ishtar, Elaine's cats from 1973/74, my cat Flodnap (inadvertently named by Randal in 1976), and Julius, a half-wild black kitten who was, strictly speaking, Flodnap's cat. I suspect the real reason why Elaine asked me to move to Johnston Street was because one day at Carlton Street Julius fell at her feet and declared his unending devotion to her. And thus it was until Julius disappeared in 1980.

IV

1977 was a difficult year. I had little money, and I was living a household in which Frank and I whinged at each other whenever we saw each other. I was sharing space with Elaine. We discovered that we ran the household together rather well. As far as I knew, she and Frank were a permanent couple, so I didn't allow myself to think libidinous thoughts. I published some magazines, wrote a bit, and generally wished I could find a way back to 72 Carlton Street. (The house sold for $50,000 at the beginning of 1977, was renovated and sold for $100,000 two years later, never occupied before it was sold again two years after that for $150,000, and would be worth at least $350,000 these days. This property–speculative process explains why none of us lives in Carlton these days.) The VSTA job seemed designed to make me feel incompetent — the lowest of the low. I gained some extra money by typing (including the first draft of what eventually became Gerald Murnane's *The Plains*) or editing occasional monographs for the company that had dumped me in late 1976.

1977 was also a healing year. I saw Randal and Claudia very little, so I regained a sense of perspective. I reduced my drinking, sobered by the rapidly rising price of alcohol during the mid-1970s. Roger turned to tequila from Southern Comfort; I was content to go back to beer or Coca Cola. Except for typing *Yggdrasil*, MUSFA's magazine, during that year, I was out of much of its activity.

The more I was sure that my life had stopped altogether, the more it moved towards great change.

Frank finished sixth year Medicine, and in December 1977 was offered a residency at Hobart Hospital. Elaine and I were left in the house together. Things did not seem well at Rathdowne Street. On the day when Roger introduced me to Patti Smith's *Easter* album, Claudia and Randal seemed hardly to be talking to each other. Roger, Alan, Dennis and the other MUSFA members were attempting to organise their first national convention for Easter 1978. Within twenty-four hours, both Roger Zelazny and Brian Aldiss accepted Roger's invitation to be *the* guest of honour at the convention. Roger moved house to Nicholson Street, Abbotsford, to live next door to Don Ashby, who had moved after the Magic Pudding Club broke up.

After a month of growing desperation, I asked Elaine if she would live with me. She said maybe, but flew to Hobart to work out with Frank if their relationship was actually over. It was, and I was deliriously happy. Elaine seemed pleased about the new arrangement, although she probably would have liked a bit more freedom from stress to decide the direction of her life.

Roger asked Don for a Tarot card reading about the rapidly approaching Easter convention. After giving his reading, Don threw away his cards. Is disaster, he reasoned, in the prediction or the expectation? And can the person who tells the cards escape the upcoming catastrophe?

Roger was merely one of a committee who ran Unicon IV, the notorious 1978 Easter Convention, but somehow he copped all the blame for its failures. His crime was to be the most visible to a group of upstarts who were trying to put on conventions without the help of the 'real fans'. The convention events were quite enjoyable, and I had a good time.

But my position was supposed to be *the* Ditmar Awards Committee. My decisions should have been absolute, so that the committee could not be accused of self interest. But the committee had allowed on the ballot (and allowed to win) MUSFA's own magazine. Worse, the committee changed my casting vote in one category. A rebel meeting during the convention declared several winners void. The recounted results pleased no one. When the awards had been given out, I received a non-Ditmar committee award for my work with Norstrilia Press. At the end of the day, the committee gathered all the attractive green lucite trophies for engraving. I kept mine. The other trophies disappeared into the Geology Building of Melbourne University, never to be seen again. Mine is still on the mantel.

The 1978 Convention had two Guests of Honour stalking the corridors glaring at each other. Roger Zelazny and Brian Aldiss each put on good shows for the crowd, and Elaine and I had several wonderful long chats with Brian. But Roger Weddall was blamed for the situation. Some years later, he visited Brian in England and they made friends again.

Roger's crime? Oh, he was young and naive in 1978. All through January, February and March 1978 he would insist on saying: 'Everything will turn out all right at the convention, you'll see.'

Then as now, I never trust anyone who says everything will turn out all right on the night.

Roger has rarely been under greater pressure than during those months. We knew his personal life was in tatters, but he could not tell us how or why. The convention was *not* all right on the night, but it was more

memorable than any dozen perfectly run conventions held since.

Roger took everything right on the chest. So did Alan, Dennis and a few others who remained members of the convention committee. Nothing annoyed his critics more than Roger's relentless cheerfulness. In the end, that cheerfulness saved the convention and made Roger quite a few lifelong enemies.

A few days after the Convention, Claudia rang. She had split up with Randal. Could she bunk down at our place for a fortnight until she could find somewhere else to live? She arrived, but we hardly saw her. Soon she departed to join a strangely mixed household in northern Carlton (including Henry Gasko, Keith Taylor and Carey Handfield, as I remember it), and set out to make up for lost time. Roger and she were now, we were told, 'an item'. Okay, I thought, that settles that. That's how things should have been all along.

And Roger? Not for the first or last time, Roger disappeared. When Claudia visited his place, he was never there. Distraught, she would go next door. Don and whoever else was semi-living in the house at the time welcomed Claudia. A few months later, Claudia and Don began living together, and did so for five years.

V

From 1978 onwards, Roger appears less frequently in my story, yet becomes more and more a mainstay of it.

Roger made grand appearances. He disappeared for months at a time. Then a phone call. 'Why don't we go out somewhere?' And it would be the best night out for months. We went with Roger, Charlie and Gerald and Catherine Murnane to the Mermaid Restaurant before it burned down. One night when we felt rich we took Roger and Charlie to Two Faces, by reputation the most expensive restaurant in Melbourne. $100 for the four of us? Yes, that was expensive in 1979. The food came in tiny portions, and did not seem remarkable. The wine cellar *was* remarkable. The bottle of 1972 Wynn's Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon we had that night is the best bottle of wine I've ever tasted.

Roger and Charlie were sharing a house in Whitby Street, Brunswick. At the same time, Roger had gone back to university to do one subject a year. He joined what was called the Part Timers' Association, which connected him with a completely new group of friends. Some of them were also in MUSFA, but many were not involved in science fiction. Charlie got a job teaching at Monivae College in Hamilton, in the Western District of Victoria. We saw him once or twice a year. Roger moved house many times.

In 1980, Roger set out on his first overseas trip. He worked out a way to extend the life of his Eurail pass. He often slept on the train to save on expenses. In a letter that he sent to Phil and Mandy, he drew a map of his European rail travels. The crisscrossing lines blacken the middle of the continent. He visited almost every country, and went to some, such as Finland and Hungary, whose languages were too difficult even for him. He walked along the coast of Cornwall to Lands End, and visited Bergen, the northernmost railway station in the world. He sent vast letters written in mountains of tiny writing. His photos, particularly of Norway in winter, were magical. On the way home, he visited Sri Lanka. A few weeks later, when we took him to Phantom India restaurant, he asked for the hottest curry in the house. He ate it, too.

There were odd elisions in his account of the journey. What really did happen during that glorious Christmas Eve at Innsbruck? Roger would never tell us, although he told a few people. He did tell us about the girl he spent some time with. They arranged to meet a few months later in Paris, but Roger said that he simply could not bring himself to turn up to meet the appointment. The lady obviously had marriage on her mind, and Roger (it always seemed to me) was determined to avoid permanent relationships of any kind.

Roger was master of the information brick wall. I remembered a night at Enri's Restaurant about a year before Roger went overseas. We had dinner with a friend of mine who counted himself as a bit of a psychologist. Roger managed to get Rick's life story out of him without any trouble. When Rick began to ask questions of Roger, he gained nothing.

The head of the Lifeline telephone counselling service, speaking at Roger's funeral, said that although he had worked with Roger for six years, he had learned about his connection with science fiction only the day before!

I still wonder what Roger really discovered about himself during his first overseas trip.

When he returned, he seemed to be the same Roger. He still regarded the company of other people as the only valid focus of his life. He visited his friends regularly, offering gossip, humour and even advice and comfort when needed.

When he returned, he was *not* still the same Roger. During the early 1980s he began to shrug off many of his butterfly tendencies. For the first time, he would commit himself to a time and date, and *actually turn up at the right time on the right date.* For the first time he committed himself to regular publication of a fanzine. He and Peter Burns took over *Thyme* magazine from Irwin Hirsh and Andrew Brown. In that magazine Roger showed journalistic skills and powers of wit and sarcasm that nobody had suspected. Some people were determined to be annoyed by Roger's repartee; others realised that he had an unerring eye for the true pattern of events. As someone once said of Jane Austen — he might have been protected from the truth, but precious little of the truth was protected from him.

Elaine and I remember Roger best because he helped us so often. In 1982 and 1984 he allowed us to take trips to Mount Buffalo because he minded the house and took care of the cats while we were away. After we returned from our first Mount Buffalo trip in 1982, the woman who lived next door said: 'What has that man been doing to your cats? They've gone completely *mad!*' Of course. Roger knew exactly the right way to entertain cats.

Roger's 1985 overseas trip was quite a different journey from the 1980–81 lark. We received almost no letters. Several long letters from Egypt went astray. On the way overseas, he lost his luggage. (It stayed in an airline office in Manila for six months until he returned for it.) In Egypt, he suffered a near-fatal road accident. Or rather, it would have been fatal if the bloke he was travelling with hadn't been an American. Tranferred to the Ameri-

Elaine Cochrane, 1998. (Photographer: Jeanette Gillespie.)

can hospital, his body completely wrapped in plaster, Roger gradually improved. Eventually he reached Britain, then home.

After he returned from the 1985 trip, Roger began to acquire an unexpected quality — purpose. Roger had always lived every moment as it came, usually successfully, but often to not much effect. Again he took up the reins of *Thyme* (from Peter Burns, who had successfully pretended to be Roger the whole time he was away). *Thyme* won a Fanzine Ditmar in 1987.

Roger became a volunteer of the telephone counselling service known as Lifeline. He took this activity very seriously, often going away for weekend training courses, and eventually becoming a trainer of counsellors. To judge from the eulogy given at the funeral by the head of Lifeline, Roger was one of the most effective counsellers they ever had.

Roger got a job. A real job. He became a social worker with Bridge House, a halfway house to train intellectually handicapped people to join the general community. As far as I know, he was very good at that job.

Roger disappeared again. Spectacularly. The people with whom he was sharing a flat did not see him. They woke up in the morning to find attached to the refrigerator a brief note and enough money to pay the rent and expenses. They guessed that he had, after all these years, become involved with somebody. They did not know how far he was taking the experiment.

After a yum cha lunch at King Wah Restaurant in the city, Roger took the tram home with us. This was unusual, as we thought he had been avoiding us. As we were clumping along Keele Street, I overheard him telling Elaine that he had just broken up with a particular bloke. His first attempt at a serious relationship had been a perplexing disaster.

I don't think we were surprised to be told, in the most offhand way, that Roger had decided he was gay. Or rather, that for him sexual relationships with men had become more satisfactory than his many relationships with women had been. Many bits of the Roger pattern began to fall into place.

Later we surmised that for many years Roger had been deeply puzzled about his sexual identity, probably beginning with the failure of his relationship with Claudia. Some event during his 1985 overseas trip had made him decide that a satisfying homosexual relationship might have been what he was seeking.

As I said, only during the 1980s did Roger gain a sense of purpose. Soon after his first relationship failed, he introduced us to a bloke named Geoff Roderick. They set up house together. Geoff is a very quiet bloke when you first meet him, but Elaine and I felt from the first that he was exactly the person Roger had been looking for all his life. (Yet for many years Roger did not know he was looking for anything, let alone anyone.)

Roger and Geoff's good luck ran deep for about four years. And then . . .

VI

At the beginning of May 1992, we held a Garden Party. It was one of the few highlights of a dismal year. It wouldn't have been a great celebration without Roger's attendance. Roger sparkled. Everybody sparkled, especially Monty our cat. Roger introduced Geoff to Claudia.

A few weeks later Theodore, our ginger cat, couldn't pee again. Roger rang. 'Geoff and I want to visit. We have some pretty bad news to tell you.' 'Even worse than a cat who can't pee?' I said. 'Yes,' said Roger, 'it's even worse news than that.'

On 30 May 1992 Roger and Geoff arrived at our place. The place had been full of visitors all day. It took awhile before Roger could begin his story. He had suffered a lump under the arm about six months before. It had been diagnosed as 'cat scratch fever'. The lump returned. It had been tested a couple of days before our Garden Party. In late May it had been diagnosed as lymphoma, but doctor said that it could be treated successfully.

Roger swore us to secrecy. He knew that the lymphoma was very dangerous, but all the medical personnel assured him that he should be optimistic. A Chinese doctor in Richmond said: 'I can cure you!' but put Roger on an unexciting 'treatment' of meditation and macrobiotic food. The important thing was optimism. We weren't allowed to be anything but optimistic. We would rather not have known the secret at all, especially as we could not say what we really felt. We could not even say: 'Roger, if your life is nearing the end, why not end it properly? Let's talk about all the good and bad times. Roger, have you made your will?' (He hadn't.) 'Roger, let's say goodbye.' But we could never allow ourselves to say goodbye.

Roger won the DUFF trip to America. He was greatly pleased at the honour given to him, and he and Geoff had made elaborate plans to travel through America and Europe for six months or more. However, he had to tell some people about his condition because he had to cut short his August–September trip to America in order to return to Australia for chemotherapy. When Roger returned, it was found that the cancer had travelled to a section of his spine, giving him dreadful pain. Treatment actually removed the growth in his spine, but not until he had been placed on heavy pain-killers. Also, no treat-

ment could stop the growth and eventual spread of the original tumour.

We knew, as few people did, that he was ill and in great pain during the last two public events he attended — the farewell party for Mark Loney, and Mark and Vanessa's wedding. But Roger sparkled during Mark's party. Nobody could have suspected he was ill. I'm told that it was obvious he was in pain during the wedding, but in photos taken then he looks no different than most people remember him.

For Elaine and me, Roger *appeared* ill only about a fortnight before he died. Very few people ever saw him other than the exemplar of amiable energy.

On 3 December, Geoff phoned us late in the afternoon to tell us Roger had died. He invited us to the hospital to make our own farewells. There we met Beryl and Brent, Roger's mother and father, Deb, his sister, and Dai, who lives with Deb. In 1979 Roger's father had built the renovations for our Keele Street house before we moved there from Johnston Street, but I had never met Roger's mother before. I had also never met Deb or Dai. It was a bit startling to meet Deb, since she re- sembles her brother very much. Within a few minutes we felt we knew her and Dai.

We went to say goodbye to Roger. As when my father died, I felt that the unmoving shape on the bed had very little to do with the person we had known. After all, hadn't Roger always represented the Spirit of Life Itself? And if that life disappears, cannot it reappear?

Roger's funeral at the Springvale Necropolis on 8 December was the saddest event I've ever attended. Many of the several hundred people who were there had not known Roger was ill until after he died. His co-workers at Lifeline and Bridge House were as afflicted as his family and the hundred or so fans who attended. The service included a brief section from Vaughan Williams' 'The Lark Ascending', Roger's favourite piece of music, and a eulogy. The celebrant spoke some paragraphs that Elaine and I had written. The head of Lifeline spoke about Roger's work with that organisation. And Deb, courageous, said: 'Roger was no saint; he was unique.'

Roger was unique because he was the only person I have ever met whose central interest was other people. Not just selected individuals or groups, but all people. Roger was equally available to all his friends. He paid absolute attention to our concerns, and remembered what was important to us. He made patterns from people, seeing unexpected connections between them or healing emotional wounds. There were only a few people he gave up on, usually egocentric people who could not stand slights or prickings of their pomposity.

Roger became angry with friends who sold themselves short. A few weeks before he told us about the cancer results, he listened to me wondering whether I would ever make a success of anything non-fannish. 'Let's face it, Bruce,' he said. 'You're a failure! Enjoy it.' What he was trying to say but couldn't was: there are much worse things than petty abstractions like 'failure'. His impatience and his words seemed strangely liberating at the time, but gained extra meaning when I learned of his illness.

Roger's great strength was also a weakness. He never finished his degree in Psychology because the university course made it into an abstract study. Because he did not finish his degree, Roger could never get the jobs for which he was really suited until he gained the position at Bridge House.

In times of trouble, I trust the dream machine in my head to tell me what is really happening.

In one dream, I was sitting in the next room while Roger and Elaine were talking. I wanted to go in there and say, 'Why are you talking like this as if nothing is wrong? Roger will be dead tomorrow.' When I woke up, it took me some minutes to realise that it had been a dream. I dreamt it on the night after the funeral, but my main feeling remains disbelief that Roger is no longer a central part of my own story.

Another dream was surrealistic, but just as vivid. I was on an train travelling around a curved valley. The carriages of the train had running boards on the side, as in Western movies. Rocky Lawson appeared as a train-napper. He was climbing along the running boards outside the carriages, attempting to stop the train. He reached the engine, and I'm not sure what happened. The train stopped suddenly. Carriages spilled off the rails into the valley. The engine was balanced on its back end. People wandered around hurt and dazed, but nobody was killed. I was unhurt, but had no idea how to help the others. Suddenly Roger was there. I stared at him in disbelief. He shrugged. 'Sure, I'm back,' he said, as if I should never have doubted otherwise. 'I'll be leaving in a transcendental ascent into heaven next time, but you won't be there to see it. Now let's help these people.'

In another dream, Melbourne University's Union building was a giant glass palace featuring a double-storey restaurant. I was at one huge table of diners, and went to get some extra wine for the table. As I looked down the sweeping staircase between the two floors, I saw the other group of diners I had promised to be with that night. I went down to talk to them, and they begged me to stay. But I still had to fetch the wine for the table upstairs! I had no idea how to resolve the situation. At the end of the dream, dressed in nothing but shirt and shorts, I was running in the driving rain away from the Union building.

I suspect my dream showed me what life was often like for Roger. He promised so much to everybody that often he was caught in the middle of all of us, unable to enjoy the celebration.

But Roger enjoyed most of his life. What I'm really mourning is life for all of us who are left. We're all stuck for someone to talk to. We don't know to whom we can tell all those secrets and jokes we could only tell Roger. We don't really believe what's happened. And maybe we never will.

— 5 March 1993

The non-science fiction novels of Philip K. Dick (1928–82)

A talk prepared by Bruce Gillespie for the October 1990 meeting of the Nova Mob. First published in **brg** No. 1, October 1990, edited by Bruce Gillespie for ANZAPA.

I

What *are* the non-SF novels of Philip Dick? As happens often when discussing Dick's life and career, it is not easy to give a simple answer.

The books that I want to concentrate on during this talk comprise a series of novels that Philip Dick wrote during the 1950s with the aim of launching a career into the mainstream of American literature. For this reason, they might truly be called 'mainstream' novels, much as I dislike the term. None of these novels was published during the 1950s or 1960s, and only one, *Confessions of a Crap Artist*, appeared during the author's lifetime. In his biography of Philip Dick, *Strange Invasions: A Life of Philip K. Dick*, Lawrence Sutin shows that this lack of success was a constant, inconsolable disappointment to Dick until he died. In 1960 he wrote that he was willing to 'take twenty to thirty years to succeed as a literary writer'. This dream had virtually died by January 1963 when the Scott Meredith Literary Agency 'returned all of Phil's unsold mainstream novels in one big package that was dumped on his doorstep . . . These rejections coupled with the ray of hope of the Hugo [for *The Man in the High Castle*], made it official. After seven years, Phil's mainstream breakthrough effort was formally at an end.' These 1950s manuscripts were later stored at the library of the University of California at Fullerton, and remained largely unread, except by scholars like Kim Stanley Robinson, until after Dick's death in 1982.

But Phil Dick's dream of mainstream success never left him. He had fond hopes that *The Man in the High Castle* would be a general literary success as well as a Hugo winner. This has not happened. In his last years, he begged Dave Hartwell at Timescape Books to market *The Divine Invasion* and *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer* as general novels. This happened, but removing these books from the science fiction category seems merely to have deprived them of sales within the genre.

Other novels of the 1970s and 1980s are so much based on Phil Dick's day-to-day experience that they might also be counted as non-SF novels. *A Scanner Darkly* is the most obvious example. Set slightly in the future of the year in which Dick was writing it, and containing only one SF device, it tells in a almost documentary way the story of the young drug addicts who shared Phil's house during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Four of Dick's SF novels are closely related to the 1950s non-SF novels. These novels, which are *Time out of Joint*, *The Man in the High Castle*, *Martian Time-Slip* and *We Can Build You*, begin with highly realistic settings and characters that might just as well have been lifted from any one of the 1950s non-SF novels.

II

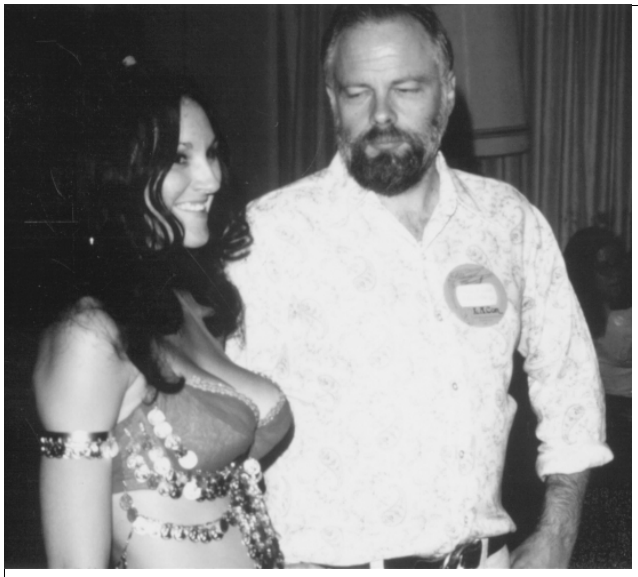
Philip Dick, born in 1928, died in 1982 of a massive stroke. He spent most of his life in southern California, especially around Berkeley and San Francisco. He appears to have held only two regular jobs in his life, and by 1950 was doing his best to become a full-time writer, especially as he was no good at anything else. He had an early success in marketing science fiction short stories, and began to succeed with SF novels during the 1950s and early 1960s. In 1963 he won the Hugo award for *The Man in the High Castle*. This boosted his reputation, which had grown slowly during the 1960s, and slowly he gained fame, both within and without the SF field, during the 1970s. Helped immensely by several film options and the completion of *Blade Runner*, loosely based on his novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*, he was just beginning to gain his first real financial rewards when died in 1982.

Philip Dick didn't do as well from SF as Isaac Asimov or Arthur Clarke, but he did better than most of his contemporaries. Given that Dick enjoyed an SF career that produced about 40 novels and about 80 short stories, why was he not content with success within the science fiction genre? Why was he so absolutely determined to become a mainstream literary writer, and why was this the one ambition of his life that was denied him absolutely?

The answers to these questions lie partly in the Sutin biography (I haven't seen the Rickmann biography yet) and other recent memoirs of the man, but much more obviously in the texts themselves.

III

Part of the answer is undoubtedly that it was very easy for Philip Dick to write successful science fiction. He turned to it a bit too naturally. Like many of us, he began to read science fiction when he was twelve years old. Unlike many young SF readers, he was at the same time reading his way through the rest of world literature. By the time he began glimpsing a career for himself as a writer, his ambition was to become an American Maupassant or Balzac. His technique of interleaving



Philip Dick and very good friend at LACon, the World SF Convention held in Los Angeles in 1972. (Phil sent Bruce this photo in late 1972; vague recollection that it was taken by Paul Williams.)

chapters, each chapter based on a different set of characters, was based more on the great nineteenth-century European novelists than the works of anyone in science fiction. But before he could have any success in literary fiction, he met Anthony Boucher, editor of *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*, who published his first story — a science fiction story — in 1951. Phil Dick had just been married for the second time, had no job, was highly ambitious as a writer, and found himself with the need to find money fast. Between that sale and the end of 1954 he wrote and sold 63 science fiction short stories, and wrote two SF novels and sold one of them (*Solar Lottery*).

But, as I've mentioned, during all this activity Dick did not see himself as an SF writer, except under protest. For a long time he ignored the SF fans entirely, and met very few other SF writers. At parties he would find ways of avoiding telling people that he wrote science fiction for a living. He still put a lot of time into writing non-SF novels, even while continuing to churn out torrents of SF short stories.

> One fellow Berkeley SF writer with whom Phil formed a close bond was Poul Anderson . . . Together, they could talk over the facts of SF life: editors chopping stories, lousy royalties, no recognition outside of fandom. Recalls Anderson:
>
> > I bitched, and so did everyone else. You have to remember that in those days a science fiction writer — unless he was Robert Heinlein — was really at the bottom of the totem pole. If you wanted to work in the field you had to make the best of what there was. But we didn't feel put upon. . . . Okay, you get shafted this time, but there was always more where that had come from.

But when Dick's second marriage, to Kleo, broke up in 1958, he found himself living with Anne, a lady with expensive tastes. After they married, there was a child. During the mid-1950s Kleo had worked, helping to bolster Dick's ambition to become a mainstream novelist. Married to Anne, Phil had to work flat out to make a living. The only way to guarantee this income was to write science fiction novels, which sold — but never gained advances of more than $2000 each. Even *The Man in the High Castle*, which was a Hugo winner and Book of the Month choice, made only $7000 at the time. By the early 1960s, SF was the only work that Phil could sell, but writing it condemned him to a life just above poverty level. The later breakup of his third marriage didn't help, either. No wonder that Philip Dick clung to his lifelong illusion: that those non-SF novels of the 1950s would someday be discovered and published, or that one of his new novels would be recognised by critics for *The New York Review of Books*.

IV

So much for why Phil wanted to write his non-SF books. Why should any of us read them? This is a difficult question, one I can't answer to my own satisfaction, let alone yours.

During the early 1980s, Kim Stanley Robinson read them in manuscript, well before Dick had died or anybody had shown an interest in publishing them. Robinson's verdict, in his otherwise excellent book *The Novels of Philip K. Dick*, is uncompromising. Robinson's charges are that:

1 'All of the realist novels are prolix in a way that is utterly unlike Dick's mature work. Every scene, no matter how important to the novel, is dramatized at equal length, in a profusion of unnecessary detail.'
2 They are humourless: 'A uniform tone of deadly seriousness is only occasionally replaced by attempts at black comedy that go awry.'
3 There is 'an uneasy mix of realism and the fantastic. Despite making a very serious commitment to writing realist works, Dick's interest in the arcane and the peculiar crops up everywhere in these works, without being fully integrated into them.'
4 'They are dull.'

The result, as Robinson summarises his own argument, is 'an artistic personality split down the middle. On the one hand were long, serious, turgid realist novels, not one of which sold; on the other hand were short satirical stories, which were very successful — within the bounds of the science fiction community.'

These are strong words, guaranteed to raise the hackles of any true fan of all the works of Philip Dick. Also, they did not square with my impression of the few non-SF novels that I had read before this year. I volunteered to give this talk so that I could refute these foul accusations, and persuade you to read the recently published lost masterpieces. In doing the research for this talk, I destroyed my own thesis. Philip Dick's 1950s non-SF novels are certainly nowhere near as interesting as his best SF novels, but not for the reasons given by Kim Stanley Robinson.

V

Robinson's needling comments were not the only reason for wanting to investigate the non-SF novels. My other stimulus derives from the mid-1960s, when I persuaded

a friend of mine to read some of my favourite Phil Dick SF novels. He had obviously not read any SF before, and still had the rather sniffy attitude to SF which one usually finds among otherwise well-educated Australian readers. His reaction was of cautious admiration, but he also said: 'If it were not for the SF gimmicks in these books, you would not be able to stand the view of reality that they show you.' Okay, I'm paraphrasing, but that's the gist of what he said. Since then I've often asked myself: what would Phil Dick's books have been like without the science fiction superstructure? Could you bear to read them, regardless of their literary quality? Would you be so appalled that you would never be able to finish such a novel?

This remained a theoretical question until, many years later, I heard that Dick had actually written and failed to publish several non-SF novels. Now, thanks to publishers like Ziesing, Morrow, Gollancz and Paladin, you and I have gained the chance to read them. Here, surely would be the answer to my question. The trouble is that the answer does not answer the question.

VI

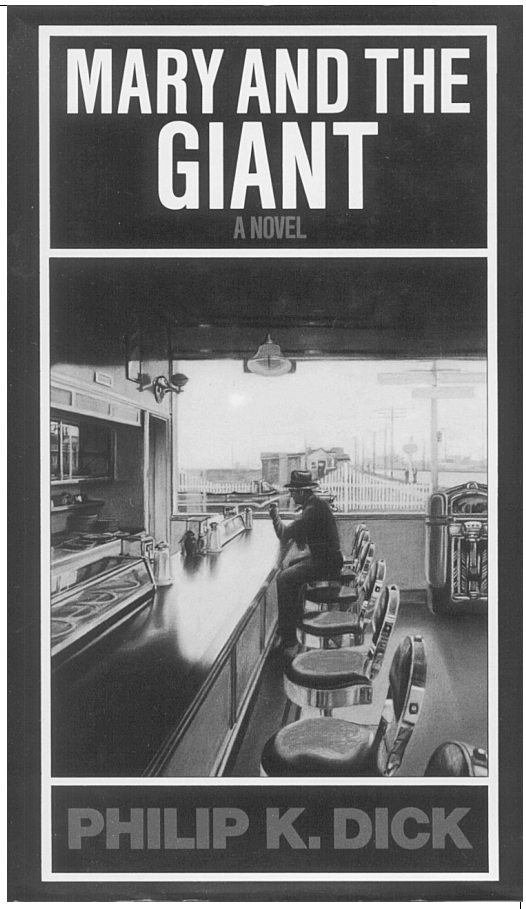
Back to Kim Stanley Robinson. It occurs to me that all works of fiction are much less interesting to read in manuscript form than they are on the printed page. That's the only reason I can see why he would think the non-SF novels are humourless or that they contain too much realistic detail. Perhaps, holed up in a university library reading manuscripts, Kim Stanley Robinson's eyes nodded over the odd page or three.

Let me refute Robinson by looking at the novel that least resembles the science fiction novels. According to both Robinson and Sutin, *Mary and the Giant* is one of the very first of Dick's non-SF novels. To me it is the best. Like all the non-SF novels and some of the best SF novels, it tells of ordinary people living in a small town that is big enough to feel like a city, but which is basically only a commuter suburb of San Francisco. The time is mid to late 1953. The main character is Mary Anne Reynolds, described here in what is perhaps Phil Dick's best paragraph:

> In the tired brilliance of late afternoon she walked along Empory Avenue, a small, rather thin girl with short-cropped brown hair, walking very straight-backed, head up, her brown coat slung carelessly over her arm. She walked because she hated to ride on buses, and because, on foot, she could stop when and wherever she wished.

Here is a girl with no special talent or features except she is good-looking and has a spiky sense of humour. She has a certain independence and flair, a need to run her own life in a small town where everybody else just obeys the rules. Mary Anne is young, restless, clever but not very well educated. She is, in short, the first of the young dark-haired girls who became the main obsession, both of Dick's fiction and his life, during later years.

Mary Anne Reynolds is jaunty in everything. She insists on hanging around the local bar, although she is under age, because jazz music is played there. Two of the



performers, a white pianist named Paul Nitz, and a black singer named Carleton Tweany, become involved in her life. At the same time, the new man in town, a tall middle-aged urbane chap named Joseph Schilling, falls for her immediately when she applies for a job at his newly opened classical music store. Into this small town also arrive Schilling's ex-lover, Beth Coombs, and her husband Danny. In turn, they have in tow a vapid chap named Chad Lemming. Beth and Danny are trying to get Schilling's support to launch Lemming's recording career.

> The young man had now emerged. His hair was crew-cut; he wore horn-rimmed glasses; a bow tie dangled under his protruding Adam's apple. Beaming at the people, he picked up his guitar and began his monologue and song.
>
> 'Well, folks,' he said cheerily, 'I guess you read in the papers a while back about the President going to balance the budget. Well, here's a little song about it I figured you might enjoy.' And, with a few strums at his guitar, he was off.
>
> Listening absently, Mary Anne roamed about the room, examining prints and furnishings. The song, in a bright metallic way, glittered out over everything, spilling into everyone's ears. A few phrases reached her, but the main drift of the lyrics was lost. She did not particularly care; she was uninterested in Congress and taxes.

The weird sense of the ludicrous is shown in an understated way. Chad Lemming is an entirely new phenomenon, the 1950s folk singer, but he comes over as a nice dill. Mary Anne is mainly concerned about

leaving the Coombses' apartment to go over to Tweany's. The other people in the room are promoting themselves in one way or another. Even Flaubert could not give a more accurate portrait of small-time people trying to be big-time. From our point of view, the main interest is that Dick is writing about people he knew well. Our other accounts of the 1950s in fiction tend to be in long hindsight. Phil Dick committed himself to putting on paper the life of his own time — and nobody wanted to publish him.

In *Mary and the Giant*, Dick's humour works on a number of levels: the straightforward satire of people like the Coombses and Chad Lemming, but also the humour that you get by pitching the viewpoint of a naive original such as Mary Anne against the viewpoint of people who think they are in the intellectual swim.

When all these unbalanced people go over to Carleton Tweany's grotty apartment, at two o'clock in the morning, they find Carleton still awake:

> Tweany, still wearing his pink shirt and hand-painted tie, was sitting at the table eating a sardine sandwich and drinking a bottle of Rheingold beer. In front of him, spread out among the litter of food, was a smeared copy of *Esquire*, which he was reading.

Carleton Tweany is a thorough original: cheeky, musical, sexy — he goes against every cliched view of black people held by whites at the time. He and Jim Briskin (a black character from several later novels, including *The Broken Bubble* and *The Crack in Space*) must have been based on some very impressive black person Dick met in Berkeley during the 1940s. Sutin does not identify this person, but the power of his personality is so impressive that some future biographer should find out who he was. Certainly, by the 1950s Phil Dick scoffs at his fellows' racial prejudices.

At Tweany's place, the group begins a party, which quickly degenerates into one of the great party scenes in American fiction. It is entirely different from anything in Dick's other fiction because here the characters really interact. All of the characters in all of Dick's other books are so fundamentally isolated that they can only interact in anger, alarm or despair. In *Mary and the Giant*, and to a lesser extent in the next non-SF novel, *The Broken Bubble*, people actually enjoy being with each other:

> Suddenly Beth leaped from the piano. In ecstasy she seized Lemming by the hand and dragged him to his feet. 'You too,' she cried in his astonished ear. 'All of us; join in!'
>
> Gratified to find himself noticed, Lemming began playing wildly. Beth hurried back to the piano and struck up the opening chords of a Chopin Polonaise. Lemming, over-powered, danced around the room; throwing his guitar onto the couch, he jumped high in the air, whacked the ceiling with the palms of his hands, descended, caught hold of Mary Anne, and spun her about . . .
>
> 'They're nuts,' Nitz said. 'They're hopped in another dimension.'

Needless to say, this spontaneous ecstasy degenerates quickly, as happens at so many parties, into a dark experience. Nitz, flaked out in the bathroom, falls and hits his head. Everybody else is going crazy. 'The bull rumble of Carleton Tweany never abated, rising and falling, but contained within the frenzy of the little old piano'. Dick spins his themes ever closer together. Beth Coombs sheds her clothes. Paul Coombs, who turns out to be the only one of them who is really nuts, is suddenly outraged that Tweany, a black, should see his wife naked. The police arrive; they've been called by the woman who lives downstairs. Mary Anne escapes before the police arrest the lot of them. The last sentence of the chapter is 'Outside, in the darkness, a bird made a few dismal noises. In an hour or so it would be dawn.'

VII

This episode contains in it much that makes Philip Dick's non-SF novels refreshingly different from his SF novels.

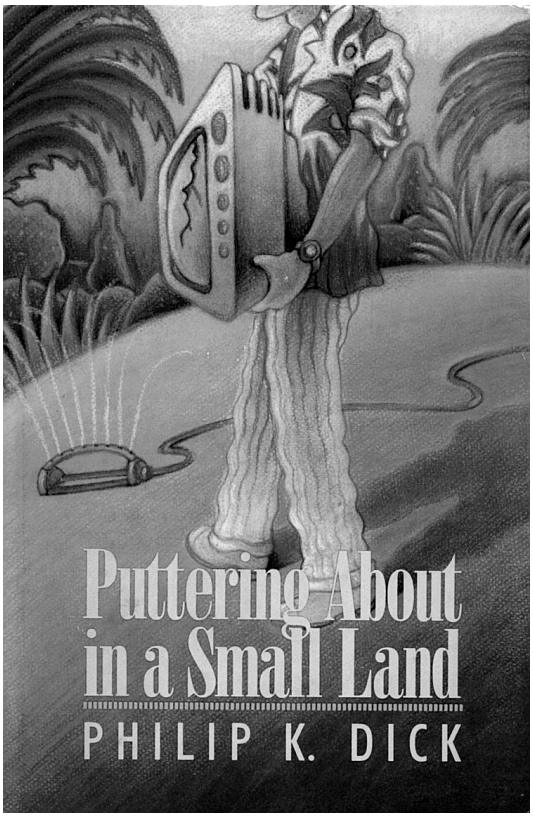
1

All the action springs from the personalities of the characters, not from exterior menacing forces. Only in Dick's non-SF novels do we find *collections* of interesting characters. In the science fiction novels there are isolated memorable people such as Tagomi and Robert Childan in *The Man in the High Castle*, Arnie Kott in *Martian Time-Slip*, and Joe Chip in *Ubik*, but the non-SF novels are composed of nothing but people. There are, for instance, the two couples, the Lindahls and the Bonners, in *Puttering About in a Small Land*; the memorable black characters, such as Tweany in *Mary and the Giant*, Jim Briskin in *The Broken Bubble*, and Tootie Doolittle in *Humpty Dumpty in Oakland*. There is the wonderfully sad Milton Lumky the salesman from *In Milton Lumky Territory*. There is the great Jim Fergesson going on his last pilgrimage in *Humpty Dumpty in Oakland*.

2

Ordinary people, looked at with the steady and sardonic gaze of Philip Dick, are funny most of the time. In other words, the non-SF novels are continually funny, not humourless, as Robinson asserts. But the humour springs from the inconsistency between the way people see themselves and the way they seem to other people and, of course, the much-amused author and reader. These novels contain very few ha-ha jokes.

The humour of incongruity can be seen most clearly in the novels where Dick puts up versions of himself, then shoots them down. *Mary and the Giant* includes an older idealised version of himself in Joe Schilling: obsessive about music and young, dark-haired girls. He gets the girl, but only for a few minutes and in circumstances that are equally humiliating to both of them. In the end he achieves dignity by leaving her to work out her own life. In *Puttering About in a Small Land*, Roger Lindahl finds himself drawn into an love affair, almost without meaning to, with Liz Bonner, his sexy and over-demanding neighbour. Faced with his wife's wrath, he can do nothing more decisive than hiding naked under the sheets of the bed. Since Phil Dick's private life was in a particularly chaotic state when he was writing this



novel, I suspect that much in *Puttering About in a Small Land* is drawn from memory.

3

This is the truth of life in the 1950s in California as one person saw it. Dick is determined to be as truthful as possible. The urban landscape of the 1950s is often a major subject of the non-SF novels. For instance, a quotation from the first page of *Humpty Dumpty in Oakland*:

> As he drove, Jim Fergesson rolled down the window of his Pontiac, and, poking his elbow out, leaned to inhale lungfuls of early-morning summer air. He took in the sight of sunlight on stores and pavement . . . . All fresh. All new, clean. The night machine, the whirring city brush, had come by, gathering up; the broom their taxes went to. . . .
>
> Nice sky, he thought. But won't last. Haze later on. He looked at his watch. Eight-thirty.
>
> Stepping from his car he slammed the door and went down the sidewalk. On the left, merchants rolled down their awnings with elaborate arm-motions. . . . By the entrance of the Metropolitan Oakland Savings and Loan Company a group of secretaries clustered. Coffee-cups, high heels, perfume and earrings and pink sweaters, coats tossed over shoulders.

This is not merely description, because the rhythm and chatter of the prose sweeps along the reader, convincing us that we are caught up in the busy deliciousness of a new day. Since we know Phil Dick, we also guess that he is setting up his character for a perfectly ghastly day.

But there is more. Notice that 'nice sky'. I wonder how long it is since there has been a clear sky in San Francisco at eight-thirty in the morning? Readers could well drink up these novels in the same way that one drinks up the details of a historical wide-angle photo of one's own town.

4

This telling the truth extends far beyond the details of buildings and food and roads and hills. In *Mary and the Giant* we find a sub-political world, largely untouched by Senator Joe McCarthy and the forces he was unleashing at the time, but in which people are fighting many of the battles that would dominate American life during the 1960s. In trying to find the reasons why the non-SF novels of Philip Dick remained unpublished in the 1950s, Kim Stanley Robinson fails to mention the obvious: their undisguised frankness on matters sexual and racial. In the 1950s there are two American battlegrounds, Dick seems to be saying: the bedroom, between male and female; and the street, between black and white.

As Dick's own emotional affairs became more chaotic during the 1950s, the battles between men and women in his non-SF novels become more ferocious. In *Mary and the Giant*, Mary Anne Reynolds likes to be involved with large, powerful men, but she is frigid. Sex was, to her, 'very like the time the doctor had stuck his metal probe into her nose to break off a polyp'. But Mary Anne herself, with her cheekiness and willingness to break the stuffy old rules, is the heroine of her novel. She achieves a kind of balance between sexual and emotional needs.

By *Puttering About in a Small Land*, written only four years later, the two characters who represent aspects of the author are in retreat before the demands of vivid, purposeful female characters. A battle is raging. In one brilliant scene, Dick describes what would now be called rape within marriage. In a scene of quicksilver emotional parries, he shows the mixture of confusion and joy as the man achieves sexual ecstasy for the first time in months as he has his way, the fury of the woman as she realises she has failed to put on her diaphragm and is likely to become pregnant, and the see-sawing emotions as both parties try to justify their actions, then berate themselves. There is even a strange and temporary truce at the end of the scene. No American novel could have said so much, so clearly, with so little moralising, before the late 1960s or early 1970s.

5

In *The Novels of Philip K. Dick*, Kim Stanley Robinson concentrates on only one major theme of the non-SF novels. Since he covers it well, I quote him:

> Another abiding concern of [Dick's is] the effect, in American postwar capitalism, of business relations on the personal relations between employer and employee, and indirectly on all personal relations. Dick believed this effect to be profoundly destructive. . . . In *The Man Whose Teeth Were All Exactly Alike*, Dombrosio assaults his boss when his boss hires his wife. He becomes estranged from his wife after he is fired, and eventually tries to hoax his neighbor, with whom he once was friendly. In *Mary*

and the Giant, Mary works in a record store for a disturbed owner and she is forced to conduct a sordid affair with him to keep her job. And in *In Milton Lumky Territory* this theme is expressed most fully. The protagonist, Bruce Stevens, marries his fifth-grade teacher of years before and takes over her business, a typewriter sales and repair shop. Business difficulties make the marriage a perpetual battle, and as the business nears bankruptcy Stevens becomes obsessed, and one by one destroys all of his personal relationships.

These business relations give much of the special character to the non-SF novels, since all are based on the very few jobs that Dick took before he became unemployable. These jobs were working in a small repair shop and music shop. Over and over again, in both the SF and the non-SF novels, Dick introduces the employee who is highly dependent upon the whims of a fundamentally worthwhile but often capricious or even dictatorial employer. As Robinson shows in another part of his book, Dick's meagre experience of paid work made him both admire the manual worker as the epitome of the American good guy, and pity him for being stuck in a lowly job.

VIII

I think I've proved that Kim Stanley Robinson is wrong in the reasons he gives for dismissing Philip Dick's 1950s non-SF novels. These books are indeed funny, although you need a sense of the sardonic and ironic to get the best out of them. They are not over-detailed: their detail is of the kind that the current breed of American writer — the so-called 'dirty realists' — have accustomed us to. Dick's non-SF novels are certainly less romantic than those of, say, Larry McMurtry or Richard Ford or any of those people, but he does not have the lyrical gifts of, say, Anne Tyler or Raymond Carver. Like other American realists, Dick assumes that so-called ordinary people are always extraordinary, even gothic, if looked at with any insight.

However, if I have persuaded you that these novels have none of the faults pinned to them by Robinson, have I persuaded you that they are worth reading? Probably not. Yes, if you are interested in novels written about the 1950s where the viewpoint is not clouded by nostalgia or faulty memory. Yes, if you like novels about people being people. Yes, if you like well-written realist novels. All of these books are better written, in any formal sense, than most of the science fiction novels — hence, perhaps, Robinson's impatience with them.

But would you — could you — ever prefer them to Dick's best science fiction novels? This, if you remember, is the premise of Michael Bishop's cheeky but unsuccessful recent novel *Philip K. Dick is Dead, Alas*, which appeared in America as *The Secret Ascension*. In an alternate world, Dick has just died. He is known for the kind of novels I've been talking about. He also wrote a small number of SF novels, known only to aficionados. Etcetera. I don't believe it, as I don't believe Bishop has grasped the fundamentals of Dick's style or approach.

In the late 1950s, Philip Dick wrote three ambitious SF novels as well as some potboilers. The first two SF novels that we still value are *Solar Lottery* and *Eye in the Sky*. With *Time out of Joint*, the third of them, Dick became a master of the SF field — but he couldn't have written that novel without writing the non-SF novels I have just been discussing.

The beginning of *Time out of Joint* seems to be set in exactly the same small town that we enter in most of the non-SF novels. It has a downtown, and lots of shops and houses, and a public transport system, and lots of people, but basically it is quiet. Everybody knows everybody else. Business chunters along.

The scene shifts to Ragle Gumm, who is a bachelor sharing an ordinary house with his sister Margo and brother-in-law Vic Nielsen. Their neighbours are the Blacks, Bill and Junie. You can predict already that Ragle will have an affair with Junie. Ragle Gumm is the only bloke in town who does not fit in: the only man who does not go out to work every morning. Every day he sits and solves the Where Will the Little Green Man Be Next? contest. It comes in the paper every morning, and Ragle Gumm has been the national champion for three years running. Solving the puzzle each day obsesses him: 'Spread out everywhere in the living room the papers and notes for his work formed a circle of which he was the centre. He could not even get out; he was surrounded.'

At this point the book begins to diverge slightly from the pattern set in the non-SF novels Dick was writing at the same time. Why is this man filling in these puzzles every day, apart from the fact that his constant wins provide him with a modest income? More mysteries slip into the story. Why, when Vic Nielsen reaches for the light switch, does he suddenly feel as if he should be reaching for an overhead light cord? Why, when walking up the two steps up to the front door, does he step up the third step, which isn't there?

These puzzles aside, for several chapters *Time out of Joint* stays very much in the pattern of the non-SF novels. Compare it with, say, *Humpty Dumpty in Oakland*, which features Al Miller, the most completely failed small-time character of all Dick's small-time failed characters. 'I'm a bum', he says of himself. 'He absolutely lacked the ability to see how things really stood.' In *The Man Whose Teeth Were All Exactly Alike*, much of the action takes place because one of the characters finds himself stuck at home while all worthwhile American males are out making a crust. This also happens to Roger Lindahl towards the end of *Puttering About in a Small Land*. And in *Time out of Joint*, sure enough, here is Ragle Gumm: 'Stunning desolation washed over him. What a waste his life had been. Here he was, forty-six, fiddling around in the living room with a newspaper contest. No gainful, legitimate employment. No kids. No wife. No home of his own. Fooling around with a neighbour's wife.'

As readers of the Sutin biography will realise, all you need to do is substitute the term 'writing' for 'newspaper contest' and you have the exact way in which Dick saw himself at the time. Not only was writing very badly paid, but it somehow made him less of a redblooded American male than anybody else. The consequences of this perception — 'I'm a bum' combined with an awareness of the quality of his writing — played havoc with his third and fourth marriages.

The point I am making is that *Time out of Joint* is more

autobiographical than the obviously autobiographical non-SF novels. This is because Dick no longer feels the need to stick to the surface facts of ordinary life. Behind ordinary life in an ordinary American town lies something else altogether.

Gumm has several extraordinary visions of his little town. In one of them, he walks up to a soft-drink stand, which seems to dissolve before his eyes.

> The soft-drink stand fell into bits. Molecules. He saw the molecules, colourless, without qualities, that made it up. . . . In its place was a slip of paper. . . . On it was printing, block letters.
>
> SOFT-DRINK STAND

In the second incident, he is sitting in a bus:

> The sides of the bus became transparent. He saw out into the street, the sidewalk and stores. Thin support struts, the skeleton of the bus. Metal girders, an empty hollow box. No other seats. Only a strip, a length of planking, on which upright featureless shapes like scarecrows had been propped. They were not alive. . . . Ahead of him he saw the driver; the driver had not changed. The red neck. Strong, wide back. Driving a hollow bus. . . . He was the only person on the bus, outside of the driver.

The exact status of this vision is never made clear in the story. Is it purely hallucination, or some supernatural view of the town? But its status in Dick's mind is made clear when we read in Sutin's biography that Dick actually had several such visions early in his life, long before he wrote this book. His distrust of his own perception of the world made him a virtual prisoner in his own house at various times in his life.

What we find in *Time out of Joint* is that the bits and pieces of a science fiction superstructure, which gradually invade Ragle Gumm's consciousness, are actually more autobiographical, more real to the author than the accurately drawn worlds he presents in the non-SF novels. It is for this reason that the non-SF novels fail, not because of any intrinsic demerits.

In *Time out of Joint*, Dick finds metaphors for the very real paranoia which afflicted him from time to time. The miracle is that he finds coherent metaphors that he can use to construct an exciting story. Ragle Gumm happens to hear a broadcast that makes him aware that the world outside this town is very different from what he had imagined, and that Ragle Gumm himself is totally important to that world. When he tries to leave town, in what is one of Dick's most brilliant pieces of action writing, he is captured and sent home. On his second attempt, he travels from the world of 1959 to a totally alien and very frightening world of the year 2000. A war is on, between the 'lunatics', colonists on the Moon and throughout the solar system, and the One World Government. Ragle Gumm's job had been, through the contest, to predict each day's strike from weapons sent from outer space. The town he had lived in was entirely a fake, with only a few people around him also sharing the illusion.

So here at last is the truth that Dick could not allow himself to write in the non-SF novels. In the end, they failed to sell because in them Dick was constantly pulling back from what he really wanted to say. This constraint improved his formal style, and the non-SF novels have few of the melodramatic flourishes that threaten to destroy so many of the SF novels. But having learned his craft, of showing the underlying reality of things through surface appearances, Dick had trained himself to write the SF novels, in which he could tell his own truth. The penalty for that was feeling that he had failed as a writer and as a man; yet, paradoxically, he came to feel that he was the centre of the universe, that what he was telling people was more important than truths they could find anywhere else.

IX

When I first tried reading *The Man Whose Teeth Were All Exactly Alike*, I could not get past page 70. I was constantly reminded of that statement made by my friend more than twenty years before. Without the metaphors of science fiction, Dick's intensely detailed account of the battle between two families, the Runcibles and the Dombrosios, seemed too painful to read. One feels that there should be a filter between such emotional reportage and the reader. It's not a matter of entertainment merely; it's the fact that no general truth can be derived from such painful separate truths. In the science fiction novels, Philip Dick would put into his words his feeling that there is something generally wrong with the world. The non-SF novels have to take the ordinary world as a given. In the end, Dick felt this was untrue, and he was untrue to himself by portraying the world thus. During the 1950s and early 1960s, the so-called ordinary world became increasingly ghastly to Dick. He felt that we are all lonely stick figures out there on a plain, and vast distances separate us. Our only hope is to find out our individual realities and perhaps achieve some fragile fellow-feeling with some other human being. This feeling pervades the non-SF novels, but Dick cannot find an adequate way to express it. Give him a loony SF plot, plus the small-town setting that he uses in some of his best SF books, and the Phil Dick mind suddenly bursts into life. Paradoxes, ironies, and brilliant visions burst upon us. This is the real Philip Dick; the writer of *Time out of Joint* and *Martian Time-Slip* and *The Man in the High Castle*.

What a terrible pity that he could never quite accept his greatness in the SF field, and never realised why the non-SF novels failed to establish him as a literary figure. The non-SF novels are enjoyable enough to read, and often brilliant, but they are important only because the point us to the real talents of Philip Dick, who never quite saw his own strengths.

— 1 October 1990

Trains in the distance

First published in *Sikander* 14, August 1987, edited by Irwin Hirsh.

'Everybody loves the sound of a train in the distance', sings Paul Simon, 'Everybody thinks it's true . . . The thought that life could be better/Is woven indelibly/Into our hearts/And our brains.'

And it is true, about trains, and life, and hearts, but I didn't know that when I was four years old. In 1952 a train — the one with the electric thingie on top — was our way of getting to the centre of Melbourne. Other trains — the exciting ones that chuffed smoke and snorted steam — played shuttle on the line that was over the road from the front of our house. For hours each night they batted goods wagons at each other along the shunting rails.

And there were other trains that hurled themselves past our house, roaring at me to stay in my safe garden on our side of the road. These workhorses of the Victorian Railways were headed for a mysterious region called 'Gippsland'. Such an engine would drag behind it a long line of goods wagons that sometimes took five or ten minutes to pass our house.

No wonder I wanted to be an engine driver when I grew up. Trains were all-powerful. They went very fast on long journeys. They played mysterious Brobdignagian games just over the road and beyond a slight fence. From the parapet of the verandah at the front of our house I could watch their endless antics. And one day I might even have my own set to play with.

In every childhood there is a day that is so magical or terrifying or ambiguous that forever after you wonder whether or not you lived it; perhaps it was your first very vivid childhood dream. For years I had such a memory, a dream-feeling. I remembered that my father opened the door of the front lounge-room, a door that was almost never opened to anyone, let alone to children, and let me glimpse an entire model-railway set laid out on the floor. Lines made a circle on the carpet. A bridge crossed it; a railway station was there beside it. My father picked up the railway engine, wound a key, and let the little green object scoot around the circle until it jumped the rails and clattered towards the wall. My father attached carriages to the engine. This slowed it, and the whole regalia trundled off demurely around the circle.

This went on for some time. It seemed that the set had two engines, a little green one and a black one, both driven by clockwork, and lots of carriages. We tried out all the possibilities. Various combinations of carriages circled the track. I wound up the engines until the clockwork broke on one of them.

That was that. I wasn't old enough for the train set yet. I was bundled off to bed, and in the morning there was no sign of the miraculous layout. Nor did it show itself again for about four years, which is so long a time in a child's life that I really thought I had dreamed the whole episode.

It's still not clear to me how parents decide that a child is 'old enough' for something. In their endless attempt to get me to do something in life beside reading books, Mum and Dad revealed one day during the particularly long and hot school holidays at the end of 1956 that the model train set really existed. It had been my father's when he was a boy. Dad showed me the Hornby catalogue for the year, sometime in the late 1920s, when he had started the collection. The catalogue was more exciting than the set of model trains. All the engines and carriages shown were based on famous English trains of the early twentieth century, and each of them bore mysterious initials, such as LNER, LMS, and GW. My father explained that these letters showed which English railway company each belonged to. The idea of private ownership of railway lines was new to me, and somehow indecent. No matter. English railway engines and carriages, as shown in the catalogue, looked much prettier than the humble black chuffers and red rattlers that passed our house every day.

I have always been bored by games of any sort. Once you know the rules of any game, there is no more interest in it; you give up such a useless activity and go back to reading books. So what do you do with a model-railway layout? It was very exciting to get everything out of the tin trunk in which the set had been stored for thirty years. It was rather nice putting together the first circular track, and running trains around it. But watching things go around in circles was boring after the first half hour.

To beat the boredom, I connected the straight rails, and put aside the circular rails for when the line went round corners. Off we went, and soon had a track that stretched from the kitchen, through the living room, and into the front passage. This was fun for a while. We could invent place names for destinations, and use blocks and toys as part of the layout. There was one snag: my mother wanted to use the house as well. After she had tripped over unsuspected rails and carriages a few times, she decided that maybe I could go back to reading books.

Not so, for I had glimpsed a new idea: that of 'destination'. Where could we take the railway lines so that they stretched out into the distance, like a real railway line? How could I make their destinations mysterious and variable?

One night I had a dream, one that excites me still. Somehow the Oakleigh railway line curved over Haughton Road, came up the side of our house, made

itself small, climbed up through some passage in the floor, went through the living room, out the other side, and eventually rejoined the main railway-line. (Years later I discovered that someone had written a song along similar lines: 'The Railroad Goes Through the Middle of the House'.) It was during the hot days of the January annual school holidays, in that long-gone era when summer began in December and ended in February. The lawn was dry, and there was no danger of sudden showers. Why not set up the whole layout on the back lawn?

The back lawn was a large oblong, with a grassed gutter down the middle. A chunk at one end of the oblong had been turned back into garden. It looked to me like a map of the United States of America, with the gutter as the Mississippi River, and the chunk as the Gulf of Mexico. My obsession the previous year had been the films, comic books, and stories about Davy Crockett, so by the end of Grade Four I knew everything there was to know about American history and geography. In 1954, during the visit to Australia of Queen Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh, my parents had bought an atlas. It was, naturally enough, called The New Elizabethan World Atlas. One double-page spread in it showed the USA. I spread out the atlas in front of me. The double-page map was filled with possible destinations, including many that I had never heard mentioned in films or comic books or on the radio. 'Natchez' — what a wonderful name. There was no name in Australia with that kind of sound. Waco, Texas. You could journey towards a place with a name like that. Tampa, Florida: let's head for there.

There was one difficulty: the line could go to Florida, or over to St Louis. Seattle or Los Angeles were quite out of the question unless, of course, you started from there. Nope. New York was always the starting place. We needed new railway lines so that the layout, with the help of points and a bridge across the Mississippi, could cover the continent. From then on my parents and relatives were faced with expensive requests at each birthday and Christmas time: more railway lines! extra carriages! Even at the age of nine I was afflicted with the collecting disease, which merely got worse with age.

The model-railway idyll lasted only three summers. The weather was too damp during the May and September holidays for us to set up the railway layout, and we didn't get many ideal days even during the summer holidays. By the beginning of the summer of 1958–9 the crunch had already come. My parents had decided to move from Haughton Road, ironically because they were increasingly irritated by the noise from the Melbourne-to-Gippsland railway line across the road. We moved to Syndal on 17 February 1959, and I took the lines and engines and carriages out of their tin trunk only once again in my life. Yet, somehow, by summer 1958 — that last, regretful period of six weeks at Oakleigh — I had collected enough lines to cross the American continent, via Saint Louis, and send a branch line to Florida as well. We had extra accessories and lots of extra carriages, but never a bridge that crossed the Mississippi safely. (The carriages always fell off the bridge my father had built to cross the gutter.) The clockwork mechanism had failed in both engines. The rails had already begun to rust.

The whole layout is still with my parents. In its tin trunk it was dragged up to Bacchus Marsh and back to East Preston, up to South Belgrave and down to Rosebud, but it's never been played with again. Maybe it's valuable — perhaps very valuable — to someone. Whatever happens to those model railways, they already have given their special pleasure, not because of what they are, but because of the way they attached themselves to my imagination.

Why did I choose America as the basis of that model railway layout? Why didn't I choose Australia, which has roughly the same shape and size as the USA?

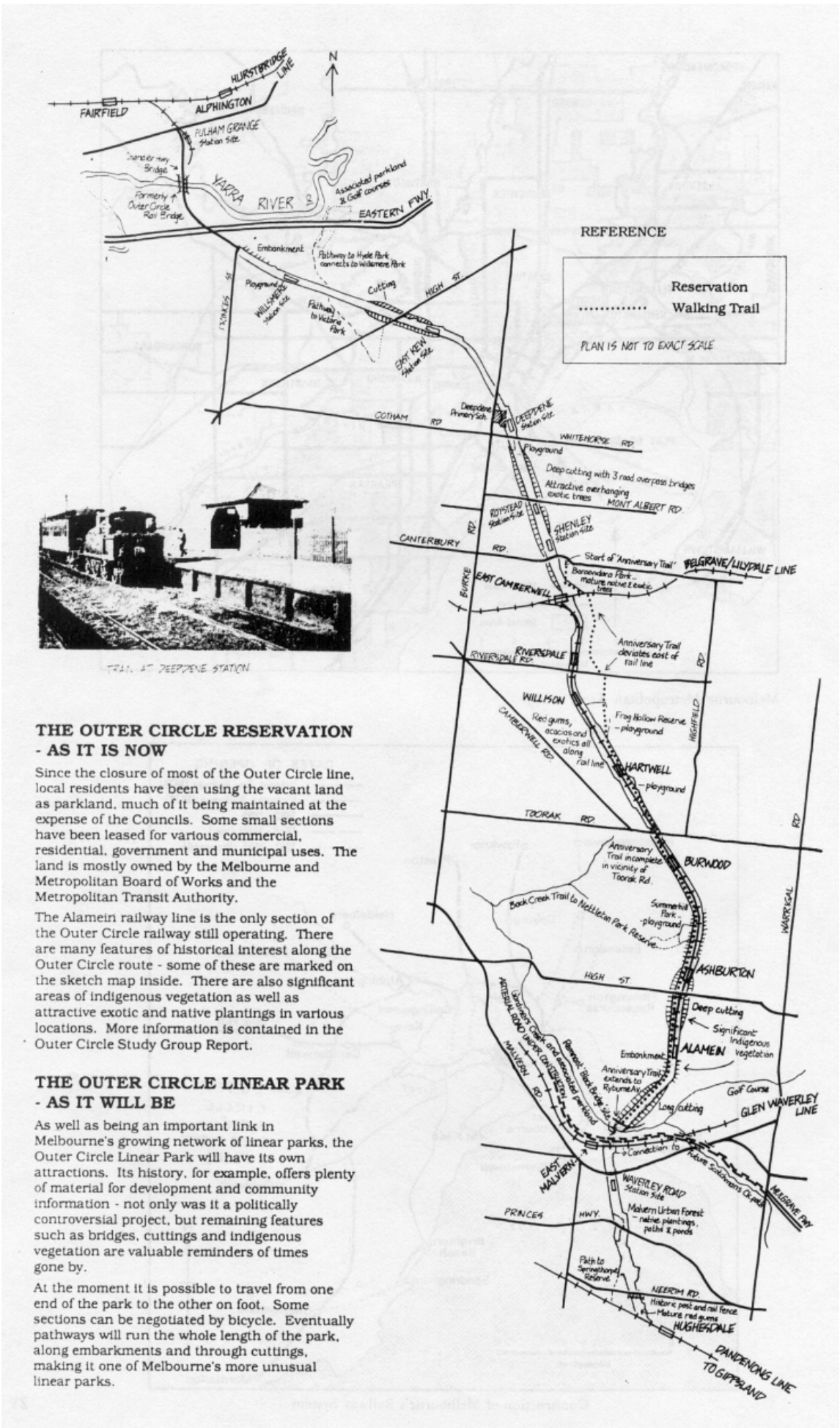
Because there's nothing in the middle of Australia except desert. Only one line, the Transcontinental, crosses the continent. In the middle of Australia there is no Des Moines, Iowa, no Grand Rapids, Michigan, no Wichita, Kansas, where a tired railway passenger can alight for a good night's rest before going on with his journey. When I was nine or ten, Australia did not seem to hold out possibilities; it seemed empty in the middle. I felt the same about Melbourne and its suburbs. You rode through Murrumbeena or Caulfield or Toorak in real and very suburban carriages; they were built merely to carry people; they left nothing to the imagination. The suburbs, your own home turf, were home, parents, relatives, houses and gardens, everyday practicalities, boredom. Could anything ever be better, except over there somewhere in New York or the middle of America?

It was only much later that I found out that Victoria's railway system was not built wholly according to boring ironbound practicalities. The people in charge of Melbourne's most important growth period, from 1870 to 1890, used the suburban rail system as a way of letting their imaginations go. Also, of course, they wanted to line their pockets. They bought undeveloped land way off the edge of the suburban perimeter and then bribed somebody in parliament to run a railway line through it. This procedure often worked. The Melbourne suburb of Hawthorn, for instance, was built around its railway station.

Victoria's rail system radiates out from Melbourne. During the 1880s country towns, no matter how small, were able to persuade politicians that one railway station could buy lots of votes. Lines spread across wide plains and previously unheard-of rivers and climbed into desolate mountain forests. Most of these lines were never profitable.

Therefore during the 1880s Victoria's rail system became a model railway set that used real engines and carriages. Its imaginative purpose, as opposed to its practical purpose, was to give Victorians the feeling that they could travel safely from anywhere in the colony to anywhere else. And this remained true until the late 1960s, when suddenly the railway system began to make huge losses and politicians began planning ways of shutting it down.

Railway trains are symbols of power, especially when carried along by steam engines. All that prancing and chuffing and speed and prevailing against relentless gravity and distance! But railways are also a symbol of domesticity. If you get on a passenger train, it carries you to the place shown on the destination board. It doesn't crash, except in the most exceptional circumstances. A land filled with railways, like the USA of my atlas, is a



TRAIN AT DEEPDENE STATION

THE OUTER CIRCLE RESERVATION - AS IT IS NOW

Since the closure of most of the Outer Circle line, local residents have been using the vacant land as parkland, much of it being maintained at the expense of the Councils. Some small sections have been leased for various commercial, residential, government and municipal uses. The land is mostly owned by the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works and the Metropolitan Transit Authority.

The Alamein railway line is the only section of the Outer Circle railway still operating. There are many features of historical interest along the Outer Circle route - some of these are marked on the sketch map inside. There are also significant areas of indigenous vegetation as well as attractive exotic and native plantings in various locations. More information is contained in the Outer Circle Study Group Report.

THE OUTER CIRCLE LINEAR PARK - AS IT WILL BE

As well as being an important link in Melbourne's growing network of linear parks, the Outer Circle Linear Park will have its own attractions. Its history, for example, offers plenty of material for development and community information - not only was it a politically controversial project, but remaining features such as bridges, cuttings and indigenous vegetation are valuable reminders of times gone by.

At the moment it is possible to travel from one end of the park to the other on foot. Some sections can be negotiated by bicycle. Eventually pathways will run the whole length of the park, along embankments and through cuttings, making it one of Melbourne's more unusual linear parks.

settled land. People can move as they like. No wonder Paul Simon feels that the sound of a train in the distance reassures you that life could be better. All you have to do is travel far enough and you reach that better life.

Something like this thought must have occurred to the people who built Melbourne. Suburban houses fill the spaces between railways. Why not, then, build a railway that did not stretch out directly from the city, but instead made a great loop that would link all the radiating railways?

Such a plan was made in the 1880s. It was called the Outer Circle Line, and was the most gloriously silly episode in Melbourne's long history of absurdly disastrous public projects. It would go north from near Hughesdale station (now on the Oakleigh line), and cross three other lines until it arched in from the north at Clifton Hill station (very near where I live now). It would provide jobs and guarantee the growth of suburbia. And it would, although nobody said so at the time, symbolise Melbourne's maternal quality, its desire to give total security to its citizens, enclosed as they would be by railways.

The Outer Circle Line was actually built during the 1890s, but as the last sections were opened, the first sections were about to be closed down. Graeme Davison, in his *The Rise and Fall of Marvellous Melbourne* (Melbourne University Press, 1979), writes that 'The new line was built to the most generous engineering standards with wide double-track cuttings and embankments and closely spaced stations.' However, 'in its first nine months of operation [the Outer Circle Line] attracted only 5153 passengers (most of them joy-riders?)'.

The Outer Circle Line was Melbourne's great model-railway line. Hour after hour, trains would trundle across deserted paddocks and past empty stations. I see on each of these stations a lonely station master standing forlornly while waiting for the passenger-of-the-week to turn up.

The Outer Circle Line might have succeeded if it had been opened ten years earlier, in 1881 instead of 1891. 1891 was the beginning of Australia's worst depression, an event that stopped Melbourne's growth for nearly thirty years and ensured Sydney's win in the battle between the cities. Davison records that entire new suburbs, built during the boom of the 1880s, lay empty, their home-owners forced to give up their houses because nobody had the money to take over their mortgages.

Many of the paddocks beside the Outer Circle Line were filled only during the late 1950s. By that time most of the line had been demolished. It left only odd patterns of streets through the 'garden suburbs' — patterns so irregular and striking that you can still use a street map to trace the old path of the line. I'm told that there are also plenty of remnants of the line — sleepers, rusty steel bits — hidden behind suburban fences or in unexplained little parks.

There will never be another Outer Circle Line, not even among those grandiose schemes that governments announce every few years. At one stage there was going to be a line from Huntingdale Station to Monash University (demolishing how many millions of dollars' worth of factories and houses?), and even six years ago the Cain Government still talked of a line from Frankston to Dandenong. This didn't happen. Instead the government built a freeway covering the same distance.

Cars have made railways very unprofitable in Victoria, and now politicians and bureaucrats seem to spend their nights tossing and turning, trying to think up acceptable ways to kill the railway system. Most people are still as emotionally attached to the suburban railway system as I am, so the government cannot destroy the system at one go. But only seven per cent of Melbourne's people still travel on the system. Most Melbournites live in one outer suburb and travel to work in another outer suburb. The railways may still radiate from the centre of Melbourne, but Melbournites' lives do not.

If the railways go, the Melbourne I grew up in will have gone. Maybe it has already. When I was a boy, Oakleigh was on the edge of the suburbs. Now Oakleigh feels like an inner suburb, and the sprawl stretches another 40 kilometres to the east. Only a small proportion of Melbourne's people lives within walking distance of a railway station. And if we can no longer hear the sound of a train in the distance, can we still hope that life will be better?

There is only one remedy. One day in the future, when Melbourne lies in ruins because it no longer has its surburban railway system, and when we've won Tattslotto and can afford to retire to a large, comfortable house set on wide lawns surrounded by hedges, I will take out a rusted tin trunk from where it has been hidden for many years. In it I will find all those railway lines, carriages, engines, and accessories. They will be very rusted by then, perhaps unrecognizable. But if the wheels of the carriages and engines still turn, I will lay out the lines across the lawn.

I will not, however, return to the map of America in my old atlas. Instead I will turn to the map on page 156 of Graeme Davison's *The Rise and Fall of Marvellous Melbourne*. I will call the central station of my system Melbourne. Straight lines will stretch out to a station which I will name Hughesdale. Circular lines will veer off to the north. With a combination of straight and circular lines I will bring the trains back to their destination at Clifton Hill, and finally into Melbourne. Hour after hour trains will travel through the long grass. No passenger will ever step on or off that train. But I will know where those carriages are and will keep them all moving.

At last I will recreate the Outer Circle Line. In this way I will create the real Melbourne — the marvellous Melbourne that never quite came into existence — on that lawn in the future.

The Bring Bruce Bayside Fan Fund

The Bring Bruce Bayside Fund (BBB) was hatched in the week after a most successful Corflu, the annual fanzine fans convention, held in Las Vegas in March 2004. In the course of a discussion in Trufen, an Internet-based fannish chat group, it was decided to invite Australia's **Bruce Gillespie** to attend next year's Corflu/Potlatch pairing at San Francisco in February/March 2005. A special fan fund was set up to raise funds for the purpose.

Requests for information, donations, and messages of support should be sent to:

Arnie & Joyce Katz Fund Convenors	Bill Wright Australian Administrator	Claire Brialey & Mark Plummer British Agents
JoyceWorley1@cox.net	bilw@iprimus.com.au	banana@fishlifter.demon.co.uk
PMB 152, 330 S. Decatur Blvd. Las Vegas, NV 89107 USA	Unit 4 1 Park Street St Kilda West VIC 3182 AUSTRALIA	14 Northway Road Croydon Surrey CR0 6JE UNITED KINGDOM

Information about the fund, including all the BBB Bulletins issued to date, can be accessed at www.efanzines.com and www.users.bigpond.net.au/hirsh/bbb/bbb.html.

Who *is* Bruce Gillespie?

Bruce in 1973

Melbourne's Bruce Gillespie joined fandom in 1968 and started his best known fanzine, *SF Commentary* in 1969. The first eighteen issues appeared in its first two years. In 1972 he won the first of many Ditmar (Australian SF achievement) awards and received his first Hugo nomination for SF Commentary. His other fanzines include *The Metaphysical Review* and *The Great Cosmic Donut of Life***.** He is co-editor of the universally acclaimed intercontinental fanzine *Steam Engine Time***.**

Bruce today

Bruce spent four months in North America in 1973, attending Torcon II (the 31st Worldcon) where Australia won the right to hold the 33rd World Science Fiction Convention in Melbourne in 1975. Then he went across to Britain for all of January 1974. On his return to Australia he met his life mate Elaine Cochrane (they were married in 1979) and established himself as a freelance editor. In 1975 he formed Norstrilia Press with Carey Handfield and, later, Rob Gerrand. Their first book was *Philip K. Dick: Electric Shepherd.* He coordinated a successful writers' workshop at the 1975 Aussiecon conducted by Professional Guest of Honour Ursula K Le Guin, where he wrote short stories of his own. Bruce was Fan Guest of Honour at Aussiecon Three (the 57th Worldcon) in 1999.

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