

THE METAPHYSICAL REVIEW

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THE TRAVEL & LEISURE ISSUE

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March 1993

I MUST BE TALKING TO MY FRIENDS . . .

... or else 150 of them wouldn't have turned up at our Garden Party. Thank you all very much. Thanks also to those friends who voted for me to give me 1992's Ditmar for Best Fan Writer; and to the Constantinople committee, who've chosen me to be one of the Fan Guests of Honour at the 1994 Easter Convention.

Lost

Yvonne Rousseau's article about our Garden Party is an extraordinary piece of work. From 800 kilometres away, using only the telephone and her trusty imagination, she has been able to recreate the Garden Party as it was experienced by the people who were there.

Yvonne's account is not quite perfect. She fails to mention some people because she didn't know that they might be there. They include people from the Melbourne publishing industry, and others we've know for anything up to twenty-three years. (I met Maureen Brewster in 1969.) Many are people Elaine has befriended during the last few years.

The Garden Party was designed to gather all the people we've known over the last twenty years or so. Some we could not find addresses for. Others we had not seen for anything up to ten years.

In particular, I wanted to gather the people I knew from Publications Branch of the Education Department. The Branch no longer exists, and I was there for only two and a half years (February 1971-June 1973), but as Neil Young might say, 'all my changes were there'. I learned much of what I still know about writing and editing from those people. Here was a chance to catch up with a decade's gossip.

I hadn't seen Robyn Whitely and John Collins since the party we held in 1984. Did we chat long and heartily, our talk filled with astonishing information and fond reminiscences? No. I spoke to them for a minute at most. I'm not sure I spoke to John at all, but merely waved at him across a crowded tent.

I had seen Ngaire Ravenswood occasionally down a corridor when we both worked in the Macmillan building. I had last met David Ravenswood more than a decade ago. Did we talk long and happily? We waved at twenty paces.

Fortunately Elaine and I have seen Robyn, John, Ngaire and David since the party. What a great night

of gossip that proved to be, although much of it must have puzzled Elaine.

The bit I liked most about the party were the people who walked across the yard, only to fall about in astonishment: 'Why are you here? How do you know them?' Heather and Dale, for instance, we had met because of our friend Anna. But years before, Heather and Dale were friends of Mark 'Rocky' Lawson (not able to attend the party because he now lives in Sydney), and hence knew some of the Melbourne University Science Fiction Association crowd, such as Roger. Reunions all round. Another bloke, John, I had never met, but it turned out that he had worked with Rob Gerrard some years before.

Which all goes to show that in Melbourne, if you hold a big enough party everyone will turn out to know everyone else.

What about the people who did not attend the party?

Some, such as Yvonne Rousseau and John Foyster, Rocky Lawson and John McPharlin, were interstate at the time. There were plenty of people to whom we did not send an invitation because we knew they could not be in Melbourne that weekend. There were some pleasant Collingwood people we've met only in recent years. Elaine and I decided that the garden would have been too small if we had invited the people I had met through the local Neighbourhood Watch group and she had invited the people she'd met through the Fitzroy branch of Community Aid Abroad.

What if all the children had turned up? As Yvonne notes, they would have outnumbered us. (The kids who turned up seem to have a good time. The teenagers who turned up had a less interesting time; apologies to Cordelia, Diana, Morgan, Brooke and quite a few others. If I'd had time, I would have introduced you all to each other.)

But what of the people who have disappeared? What of the people who have dropped out of our life, without explanation, without forwarding address? Rick, we would like to hear from you. Thanks for the note a few months ago, but you didn't leave a return address. Malcolm and Julie, I wonder what happened to you? Malcolm, you were the sort of person I expected to hear on the radio every second day, offering an opinion on some health policy matter or other. Now all governments have put your policies into practice, to their eternal shame, but your efforts have been forgotten. Maureen L., what happened to you after 1971? You were an exciting young lady, and you actually talked to me, but I would never have dared to ask you out. By the time I had learned to be a little less

shy, you had gone to another job.

What of all the overseas fans I would like to have invited to the Garden Party? Many of them have also disappeared from fanzine fandom, leaving no forwarding address. Where is the wonderful Terry Hughes, who introduced John, Sally, Elaine and me to the works of Garrison Keillor? Why doesn't Lesleigh answer my letters or acknowledge my fanzines? Whatever happened to Jeff Smith, one of the truly great fanzine editors of the early 1970s? Why didn't Don Keller keep in touch? Where are you, Bob Tucker? Did me writing about your books in 1975 ruin your life? Where are you, Barry Gillam? I would have expected you to have become one of America's top film critics by now, but instead you seem to have disappeared. Whatever happened to Mike Shoemaker, one of my favourite correspondents, and publisher of much-valued small fanzines?

Did I insult you people? What did I say? How can we bring back the friendship?

I feel an article, or even a book, coming out of all this, but not yet. On 20 June 1992 I was rung by a person whose name I did not remember. He told me that he had been in my primary school class from Grade 3 to Grade 6, yet I still could not recall his name. He said that some of the people from Oakleigh Primary School have kept in touch with each other, as they live in the Ferntree Gully/Knox area, and planned to hold a reunion of our Grade 6 of 1958 early in 1993. I wanted to attend that gathering but I was not quite sure whether I really wanted to remember my of those people from my deep past. Or should I have written about them first, as a way of 'remembering' them before all my memories were destroyed by meeting them 35 years later?

Where are the Lost? Where do you go? In the following review for *The Melbourne Report*, I tried to express something of what I feel:

THE LAST MAGICIAN

by Janette Turner Hospital
(University of Queensland Press
0-7022-2405-7;
1992; 352 pp.; A\$29.95)

Did you ever form a close bond with a group of friends, a bond that has lasted the rest of your lives, despite separations, spats and the cruelties of ordinary existence? And when one or more of those friends seemed to disappear from sight, did you find yourself catching your breath with hope and dread each time you saw a glimpse of someone who might be your long-lost friend?

This is not romantic love. This is something much

deeper — a crystal shape whose sides are the individual people of the group. Lose one of these friends and you lose a part of yourself. Given the slightest hope of regaining your friend, you would go to hell and back to find him or her.

This is the central theme of Janette Turner Hospital's *The Last Magician*, the most exciting Australian novel in over a decade. However, you would never guess it from reading the reviews that appeared when the book was published. The other reviewers have given extravagant praise to *The Last Magician*, usually describing it as a 'post-modern thriller'. Some of these reviewers, especially Joanna Motion on 3RN, give some idea of how enjoyable a read it is. But no one before now has dared to say what it is *about*.

It is easy to see why reviewers don't want to make definite statements about *The Last Magician*. It begins with a confusing barrage of images and ideas. Eventually we discover that the story-teller's name is Lucy Barclay, and that she worked as a prostitute and bar-maid after being educated at one of Brisbane's most expensive schools. She becomes involved with Charlie Chang, a photographer and proprietor of the brothel and bar at which she works. Through him she becomes involved with a group of people who have known each other since childhood — Catherine Reed, now a TV interviewer, Robinson Gray, now a high court judge, and Cat, the mysterious wild woman whom the others are searching for. The other member of their group is Gabriel, Robinson Gray's estranged son and Lucy's one-time lover.

For its first 30 pages, *The Last Magician* seems to be about nothing but interconnected images: a waterfall in the rainforest outside Brisbane, railway lines and ladders, a South American mine carved out entirely by the hand-labour of hundreds of thousands of peasants, an equivalent quarry of underground connections spreading out from Redfern under the whole of Sydney, and Botticelli's famous pictures of Dante's descent into hell.

All are images of hell. All are images of liberation. In this novel, the real hell is nice society, the society presided over by Robinson Gray. The other characters hurtle through the undergrounds of life, escaping and undermining the malign influence of the rich and the secure.

However, *The Last Magician* is much more than a series of images. Above all, it is a very effective thriller, forever pointing forward to great secrets and awful dangers. Eventually Hospital reveals some answers, only to leave us much confused at the end of the novel. Then you go back to Page 1, read the book again, and find that many of the answers were hidden at its beginning.

The main characters are united only in their search for Cat, their friend who suffered an awful fate when they were children. She has appeared definitely only twice during the last thirty years, but those two occa-

sions changed the lives of everybody concerned. Later, Chang and Gabriel set off in search of her. They seem to disappear, leaving Lucy and Catherine Reed as battle-scarred survivors. But at the book's beginning (actually at the end of the story) Lucy sees a short film in a London cinema, a film made by Chang long after he 'disappeared'.

Here is the return to the book's real theme. These people cannot escape each other. The bond remains, despite a terrible crime that one member of the group perpetrated against the other members of the group. What if members of this group keep disappearing? Could anyone stand such loss?

The Last Magician, despite all its puzzlements, is a ferocious love story between six people. Loss and shared past secrets give great emotional weight to this love. Secrets that can never be solved give it extra weight. When we reach the end of *The Last Magician*, we have taken a journey through hell (today's urban Australia) with this doomed company. There is no happy ending. There are at least four quite different explanations for what we've read. But we feel privileged and exhilarated to have shared this journey with Janette Turner Hospital, her piercing vision of life, and her wonderful cast of characters.

That's the end of the review that appeared in *Melbourne Report*. I'd like to write a much longer account of this novel, but not until people have read it. I'd like to swap opinions about the 'real' truth of Lucy, Gabriel, Cat and the others. Somebody might hold a seminar on the book, but I fear that the usual brand of academic speaker will deconstruct it out of existence.

I really thought I was onto something entirely personal and original in talking about the power of the image of lost friends (or necessary enemies) in *The Last Magician*. A week later, I read the following passage, an extract from an article in *Foundation*. In a long article about the work of Cherry Wilder, Yvonne Rousseau, that most perceptive of writers, has this to say about:

AUSTRALIA'S LEGEND OF THE LOST

Extract from
'The Wilder Alien Shores: Or, The
Colonials Are Revolting'
Foundation No. 54, Spring 1992

The plot [of Cherry Wilder's *Second Nature*] is essen-

tially about the lost becoming found. . . . Rhomary's deserts and droughts, the waiting for ships from 'Home', the wanderers lost in the bush, and even the inland sea (which Australian explorers believed in but never found) correspond closely to Anglo-Celtic legends of Australia's pioneering days.

For colonial Australian writers of the 1890s, as H. P. Heseltine expresses it:

the insane horror of bush life was perhaps most powerfully projected into one of their recurring themes — the child lost in the bush; not the child lost and found dead, but the child lost, simply swallowed up in all that emptiness.

The best-known stories of Australian explorers, too, are of Burke and Wills ('lost', in that they died of hardship, on a mismanaged expedition) and of Ludwig Leichhardt (lost, together with the expedition he was leading — never to be found again). In New Zealand, legends of lost wanderers are not traditional, since exploration was much less hazardous there, and the land was in general more hospitable. But in Australian schools of Wilder's era, as Jill Ker Conway recalls, 'All we were taught of Australian history was the story of the exploration of Australia, mostly a sad tale of headstrong efforts to cross trackless deserts, missed rendezvous, death from thirst or starvation.'

This legend of missed rendezvous and the possibility of death by starvation is also the story of the first two years of Anglo-Celtic settlement in Australia, when no supply ships from England arrived: everyone (from convicts to Governor) suffered famine, because the seeds they had brought with them rotted in the ground when planted, and all their supplies became exhausted — even the officers' clothes degenerating into rags. After months of fruitlessly scanning the horizon for ships, the colonists feared that some great catastrophe had occurred at 'Home', or even that the British authorities had simply forgotten them. (By contrast, Anglo-Celtic New Zealand colonization did not begin until the nearby Australian settlement had become established, and thus New Zealand has no myth of being stranded and lost — although both colonies felt themselves to be very far from 'Home'.)

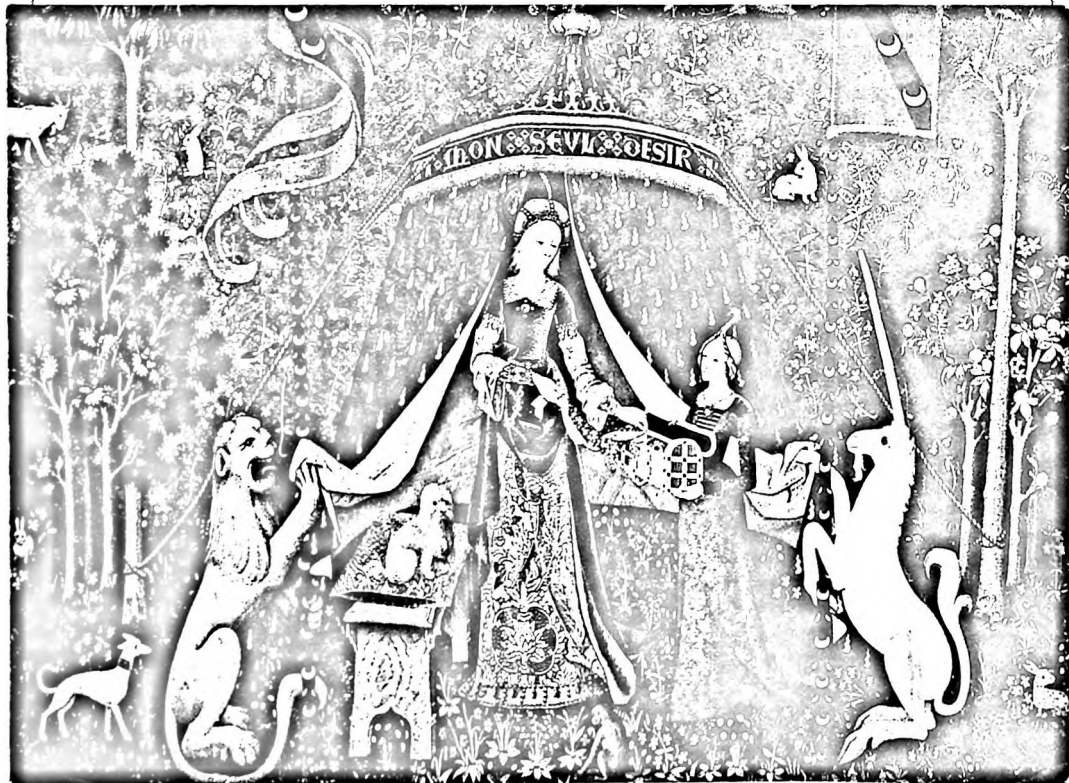
If there is an archetypal colonial Australian myth, then, it is the story of someone lost (as, for example, in Joan Lindsay's very popular 1967 novel, *Picnic at Hanging Rock*). Its ideal fulfilment is in finding and being found again. By contrast, the plot of conflict, whose ideal fulfilment is good folk triumphing over bad folk, is comparatively alien to the average Australian temperament: Australians have traditionally suspected that, apart from sports heroes, folk who succeed are probably not good.

(pp. 18–19)

In writing this, Yvonne Rousseau wanted to show why Cherry Wilder's books, deeply rooted in New Zealand and Australian as they are, seem puzzling (especially emotionally puzzling) to overseas reviewers. Will Janette Turner Hospital's *The Last Magician* also fail to stir in overseas reviewers that powerful stream of emotion that I and other Australian reviewers find in it?

The Legend of the Lost Child helps to explain why Elaine and I found much satisfaction in putting together a Garden Party in which many people met other people they had not seen for some years, or people they didn't expect to see again.

And it is expressed even more powerfully in the efforts of several people to track down fifty-two people, most of whom they met last thirty-five years ago, and all of whom I thought would be unrecognizable to each other. I'm talking again about the Oakleigh State School 1958 Grade 6 Reunion. It seemed an impossible task to find more than a few of these pupils, yet the committee conducting the search found forty-five of the forty-six, plus ten of those who were in the other Grade 6 in our school that year. This seems like the ultimate expression of the search for the lost child (all fifty-five of them). Perhaps I can go to America and use their methods in an attempt to find the many fans still lost from my life. Or should I leave them living in the clear sight of memory, rather than muddy their images by meeting them again after so many years?



'La dame à la licorne', from the Cluny Tapestry — Yvonne Rousseau's suggested design for the Garden Party. A pity we couldn't have provided a unicorn.

The Garden Party

by Yvonne Rousseau

When Bruce Gillespie and Elaine Cochrane purchased the vacant block next door to their house in Keele Street, I sent Elaine a birthday card showing a tapestry scene where a medieval lady sat in a flowery pavilion amid various aristocratic dogs, with a unicorn looking over her shoulder. I recommended that this should be their model for developing their new property. Almost at once, Bruce assured me that they were already working on it — but would probably substitute cats for the various animals depicted in the tapestry.

Sixteen weeks later, on Sunday 3 May 1992, the block was the site for a garden party, to introduce it to fandom. Because I was unable to travel from Adelaide to Melbourne for the party, Bruce consoled me by inviting me to write a long-distance report of it, relying on the impressions of several guests — and thus freeing myself from the limitation of occupying only a single vantage point at any particular moment.

To intensify the garden-party mood, my introduction of people's names will often be accompanied by at least one observation about them that has appeared in print. Some of these observations will faithfully recreate in the reader the muzzy feeling a genuine guest gets upon being landed with a complete stranger and the explanation: 'You're a tricycle-rider, he's a triceratops — you two have so much in common!' But my observations about our hosts shall be simple. Elaine was described by Bruce in *The Metaphysical Review* 11/12/13, November 1987, as having 'worked in a variety of occupations, all of which would fit her to become a science fiction writer. Elaine is not a science fiction writer. Instead, she is a book editor'. Of Bruce, Brian Aldiss wrote in *Bury My Heart at W. H. Smith's*: 'Bruce stands as an exemplar of a science fiction aficionado' — and Leigh Edmonds recalled in *Bugs 2*, 1983 that, in long-ago days when Bruce was wrestling



The marquee (pavilion) before people arrived. (Photo: Jane Tisell.)

Elaine and Bruce request the pleasure of your company at a

Garden Party

to celebrate their entry into the ranks of the landed gentry.

Time: 2.00 pm to dusk

Date: Sunday, 3 May 1992

Place: 61 Keele Street, Collingwood
419 4797



BYO booze. Please do not bring plants or gnomes.

with an unruly Gestetner duplicator, 'going around to see him in the process of running off an issue of *SF Commentary* was one of the great treats and one of the most exciting pleasures available to Melbourne fandom at that time.'

The day of the garden party was pleasantly cool and intermittently sunny, with very little wind. For giving an outdoor autumn party in Melbourne, however, prudent hosts always erect a marquee rather than a flowery pavilion. Thus, having penetrated to the block through a small gate, the garden-party guests (who began arriving, as instructed, at about two in the afternoon) passed into the somewhat warmer atmosphere of a cream-coloured all-weather marquee with a blue-striped roof. There was a row of tables down one side of it, and chairs were provided both there and outdoors.

Guests had been formally invited to celebrate Bruce's and Elaine's 'entry into the ranks of the landed gentry.' This wording caused some confusion, many supposing that the party was a celebration for paying off the mortgage. One such guest was Clare Coney, who was Ian Watson's 'editor at Gollancz on four or five books' — as Peter Nicholls mentioned in *ASFR* (second series) 22, Summer 1989. Another was Clare's husband, Peter Nicholls — who was described by Damien Broderick in the *Melbourne Age* of 20 July 1991 as 'a world SF and fantasy authority, editor of the Hugo-winning "Encyclopedia of Science Fiction", witty, urbane and irreverent'. On seeing such a huge tent (covering two-thirds of the block), Peter conjectured that Bruce was parading an unusual solution to the fannish problem of too many books in too small a house.

Elaine had already laid down long sections of much-admired brick path on the new block, and had created some fenced-off vegetable plots. Finding elsewhere a large number of weeds, the guests considerably stomped them as flat as possible in the course of the

party. They also delivered helpful garden-warming gifts — some in subtle defiance of the invitation's hint: 'Please do not bring plants or gnomes'. Thus, an orange and pink plastic plant in a container of soil was donated by Geoff Roderick and Roger Weddall. (Of Roger, Marc Ortlieb wrote in *Thyme* 79, June 1990: 'I first met Roger Weddall in a cold and drafty Church campsite in the Adelaide Hills, but then we were still young and impetuous'; and in *Larrikin* 9, February 1987, Jenny Blackford reported Roger as saying: 'It's the squishy bits in Heinlein I can't handle.') Roger believed that the plastic plant that he and Geoff had brought was 'ghastly', but Elaine thought it was 'horrible'.

Gifts from other guests included plastic water-lilies, a plastic wind-up frog, a vase and an egg (both made of glass, and both beautiful), some china pigs, wine, chocolates, homemade chutneys and jams, a small concrete cat, various manures ('store-boughten' — as some of our US friends might say) and a fishpond (described by one guest as an unidentified 'large box-shaped thing').

Many babies and children attended, and one dazzled guest reported that Bruce (mindful of books and computers and compact discs) had obviously battened down all hatches in preparation for the toddler brigade's onslaught, posting in the house numerous signs such as: 'Machine Gun Emplacement Here' — 'Wrong Way: Turn Back' — 'This Corridor Is Mined' — and the like. Elaine, on the other hand, believed that the signs read: 'Wrong Way: Go Back' — 'Frightened Cats Beyond This Point: Please Do Not Disturb' — and (on the front door) 'Please Enter Through Garden'. Half the guests with children left them at home (otherwise, as one guest incautiously expressed it, 'there would have been more kids than people') but even so there was a sea of toddlers underfoot, bouncing about like carbon particles in Brownian motion, bumping about against each other, against the poles of the mar-

queue, against adult legs — tirelessly identifying unexpected objects as their natural playthings. Finding these antics distracting, little Jack Nicholls locked himself inside the only lavatory, in order to get on in peace with reading Enid Blyton. (His father Peter soon coaxed him out, however, on the grounds that such behaviour inconvenienced all the other guests; and he is certain that this episode took place hours earlier than the formation of the enormous queue observed by Roger Weddall outside the lavatory around sunset.)

Of the Cochrane-Gillespie cats, Oscar, Muffin and a highly distraught TC were locked (for the greater good) in the front room during the entire garden party — while the free-ranging Apple Blossom and Sophie soon made themselves scarce (Apple Blossom sunning herself somewhat grumpily on the fence, however, until her tolerance was overstressed by the second child to attempt to grab her). Theodore kept appearing and disappearing (not quite in the manner of the Cheshire cat) — but Monty had a magnificent time, scrounging caresses from every possible prospect, and scrambling through forbidden doors ('Wrong Way: Go Back') whenever they were opened, in a constantly thwarted attempt to get among the salami.

No one appears to have worn garden-party gloves, but Karen Pender-Gunn (who describes herself in *Pink* 9, July/August 1990 as 'the editor of a fluffy little fanzine of no consequence called Pink') wore an extremely suitable pink garden-party hat adorned with ribbons and bows, and Frances Papworth wore a Rastafarian beret. An agreeably stunning costume was also admired upon Sharee Carton — of whom Marc Ortlieb reports in *Tigger* 16, October 1985, that Cath Ortlieb's brother John Circosta 'had a lovely photo-

graph of Sharee as an innocent fourteen-year-old. He just about fell over backwards when Justin Ackroyd brought back [from the US] photographs of the 1984 vintage Sharee.'

Although only a fortnight's notice could be given, there were more people at the garden party than at this year's national convention in Sydney. Charlie and Nic Taylor and their children were there, as was another Bruce (also a stalwart of the Nova Mob), of whom Bruce Gillespie wrote in *SF Commentary* 52, June 1977: 'Bruce Barnes's financial help made [the first offset issue] possible'. Some of Bruce Gillespie's former workmates from the Education Department's Publications Branch had also arrived — among them Gerald Murnane (described in the Victorian Society of Editors *Newsletter*, October 1989, as 'the author of several books [...], the lecturer at Victoria College, the keen punter, the man who helped the Society run our workshop on fiction editing, and now the subject of film'). Gerald was reported by an admiring witness as 'rabbiting on at great speed'. This eloquence may partly account for what Gerald afterwards took to be George Turner's mind-boggling modesty in never once mentioning, during their conversation, that his novel *Brain Child* had achieved both a film option and a second printing. (In the Melbourne *Sunday Herald*, George Turner was defined by Dirk Strasser on 6 January 1991 as 'Australia's most revered science fiction writer' — and was reported by other guests to be in fine spirits at the garden party.) A more equal dialogue occurred between Peter Nicholls and Gerald, when they exchanged views about horse-racing — and in particular about New Zealand bloodstock, a subject on which both proved highly informed.



Monty, the party animal.
(Photo: Elaine Cochrane.)



Some of the party guests: from left to right: Phil Ware (hidden), Julian Friedin, Philip Handfield (not quite hidden), Geoff Roderick, Marc Ortlieb, Mandy Herriot, Justin Ackroyd and Roy Ferguson. (Photo: Jane Tisell.)

Bruce had been one of Gerald's publishers, as part of Norstrilia Press — famed for the advice its members gave when the Blackfords were beginning to publish as Ebony Books: as Jenny Blackford reported it in *The Notional* 3, June 1985: 'You fools! Don't do it!' Bruce's colleagues from the now-quiescent Norstrilia were both at the party: Rob Gerrand (whom Bruce described in *SF Commentary Reprint Edition: First Year 1969* as being, in 1968, 'thin, wan, pale, intense, and officially the Assistant Editor of *ASFR*') and Carey Handfield (of whom Don Ashby wrote in his account of the Magic Pudding Club in *The Metaphysical Review* 4, July 1985: 'I have never seen Carey when he wasn't hungry' and — utterly unrelatedly — 'next time he shakes your hand, remember to count your fingers afterwards'). Rob arrived without his family, but Carey's children were with him, and so was their mother, Carey's wife Jo Masters — of whom, in *Dreams and False Alarms* 5, February 1989, Bruce wrote: 'We were clearing away Norstrilia Press stuff when Joanna delivered the great line: "I only married him for his junk"'.

Neither Merv Binns (described by John Foyster in *ASFR* (first series) 13, December 1967 as 'the noble

bookseller') nor his father Ernie was present. But another notable bookseller was there: Justin Ackroyd — characterized by Lottie Erikson in *Thyme* 39, September 1984 as a 'life-size teddy bear'; and reported as follows by Valma Brown in *The Notional* 9, December 1985: 'Justin, while disclaiming any liking for smoked oysters, was seen scoffing them down — but Ghod got him back later in the form of an eel, and bit him.'

Of Mark Loney, Brian Earl Brown wrote in *Space Wastrel* 3, June 1986: 'Mr Loney continues to write well written and carefully argued serious articles'. At the garden party, Mark's companion Vanessa was overheard having a somewhat uncomfortable conversation with Damien Broderick (who was described by Peter Nicholls in the Melbourne *Sunday Herald* of 1 April 1990 as 'the brightest glow among the dull red embers of Australian science fiction'). Vanessa was revealing that she knew Damien's name only because, working in a bookshop, she had noticed it on the cover of his novel *Transmitters* (published by Ebony Books), and that she thought this cover was pretty tacky. (This conversation, however, is reputed not to have dampened Damien's spirits — which were widely reported to be high or fine.) As is well known, Mark Loney was

the Orbital and Overall Co-ordinator of the first Human Orrery Project in 1986. Among the other participants seen at the party were Dennis Callegari (the Sun), Phil Ware (the Black Hole), Jenny Blackford (Mercury), Russell Blackford (Vesta), Janeen Webb (Juno), Alan Stewart (Eros), the Real Official Carey Handfield (Saturn), Lucy Sussex (Comet Halley) and Roger Weddall (the Narrator).

Many other guests first met Bruce and Elaine through hobbies or ways of life other than fandom; and it was pretty to see the astonishment of old acquaintances realizing for the first time that each of them had links with Bruce and Elaine. Bruce lamented that he had hardly a chance to exchange a word with most of his former workmates in the Publications Branch (or with many other guests that he was equally delighted to see). Meanwhile, the presence of one or two members of the local Neighbourhood Watch perhaps caused confusion. Thus, there were false sightings of Dinny O'Hearn (described in the Victorian Society of Editors *Newsletter*, October 1988 as 'that infamous academic, reviewer and presenter of the ABC and SBS Book Programmes') and John Alderson (he of whom Chris Priest wrote in *The Metaphysical Review* 5/6, October 1985: 'PS: John Alderson shot a cat?').

Terry Stroud was undeniably present — he whose 'famous cake' took the 1987 Melbourne Eastercon aback (as reported by Michelle Muijsert in *Space Wastrel* 18, July/October 1987). And because Roy Ferguson and James Drewett both attended, one female guest at the garden party was also taken aback — by an exclamation that her hair was 'so messy': why didn't she let James (whose trade is hairdressing) have a look at it? Elsewhere, Dale and Heather Mann, with experience as both parents and cat-companions, were closely arguing that cats are smarter than children.

During the whole party, only two wine glasses were broken — one of them during washing up — despite some very large-scale hugging (especially of people wearing alluring warm jumpers like Frances Papworth's). The food (much of it prepared by Elaine) and the wine (brought by the guests) were agreed to have been wonderful — as was the coffee (for which Bruce and Elaine had borrowed a very covetable coffee-making machine from a local shop). Elaine's sisters Margaret and Valerie had both arrived early, and were extraordinarily helpful — Margaret, indeed, arriving at noon and running some vital last-minute errands. One of the unrelated guests who also helped out in the kitchen was Jane Tisell, of whom Marc Ortlieb wrote in *Tigger* 17, December 1985: 'Jane Tisell used to do fanzine reviews for Merv Binns. Feel free to add her to your mailing list'.

Eva Windisch is the editor of *Tirra Lirra* (described by Bruce in **brg** 2, June 1991 as 'an A4-sized little magazine usually aimed at readers in the Yarra Valley') and can testify that Sally Yeoland was also present, since Sally's felafel startled her severely,

when she bit into an unexpected hot section. Of Sally Yeoland, Bruce enquired in his *Sweetness and Light* 2, December 1984: 'How do such fine writers as you and John [Bangsund] live in the same house and not produce the Great Australian Novel?' Of Sally's husband, the far-famed John Bangsund, it was written in *Thyme* 61, February 1987: 'apart from John Bangsund ("Shhh!"), BNFs are extinct in Australia'. But John (editor of the inimitable first series of *Australian Science Fiction Review*) had to send apologies to Bruce and Elaine, being incapacitated by hours of enforced non-smoking at the wedding reception he and Sally had been guests at the previous day — and also having some urgent editing work to do.

All Victorian-dwelling editors of the second series of *ASFR* were present. Among these were Janeen Webb, who has been described by Judith Hanna as 'extravagantly decorative' (reported in *ASFR* (second series) 10, September 1987) and Jenny Blackford (whose perspicacity, in her review of his *Soldier of the Mist* once set Gene Wolfe 'gibbering' — as he reports in *ASFR* (second series) 20, June 1989: 'Upon my honour, I never mentioned Zalmoxis in that book. [...] How did you know?'). Another attending editor was Russell Blackford (of whom Stuart Sayers, writing of *Ebony Books*, reported in the *Melbourne Age* of 24 August 1985: 'He is by calling an industrial advocate, by accident — and cautiously, almost reluctantly — a publisher of SF.') At the garden party, Jenny Blackford was heard to say (after Russell had been wondering aloud whether becoming a Queen's Counsel was what he wanted to do with his life) that while Russell was wondering that kind of thing, she would be wondering things like whether she should plant a camellia or a rhododendron in the garden.

John Foyster (an editor of both series of *ASFR*) was as absent in Adelaide as I was — but our city was represented by Roman Orszanski (described by Judith Hanna in *Thyme* 68, May 1988 as 'that ecologically and ideologically sound mad March Hare and all-round beaut bloke'). Consulting with Roger Weddall, Roman realized that part of the garden-party gathering was a complete reunion of Anaconda, a small convention held in 1976 at the home of Claudia Mangiamiele's mother Dorotea. Claudia, who brought her husband and child to the garden party, seems to have inspired fanzine editors with an awed absence of adjectives whenever they mentioned her name: but 'beauteous' and 'lithe' are two that might have sprung to their minds. (When I knew nothing of fandom, Claudia was among my daughter's dance teachers at Madame Mangiamiele's Mangala Studios of Yoga and Creative Dancing. The Studios were renowned for End-of-Year Lantern Evenings 'for all the children of the Dance-Classes at Mangala Studios' — so that, in the summer dusk of December, passers-by would be startled by a procession of mysterious lights bobbing along at various heights through the leafier pathways of the Mel-

bourne University grounds.) Anaconda saw some fanfarrish first meetings with Bruce Gillespie — and also with Randal Flynn (at present overseas) (described in *SF Commentary* 46, May 1976 as having, at the age of eighteen and a half, 'simultaneous ambitions to be a writer, a student, a great thinker, and a gosh-wow person'). In *The Metaphysical Review* 4, July 1985, Bruce remembers taking Anaconda's interstate and MUSFA fans to the Magic Pudding Club: 'Nobody, even at midday, was awake except Randal Flynn. During that weekend Randal met Claudia Mangiamiele and Roger Weddall'. All apparently went well, except (as the enigmatic Roman observes in *Lhyfe* 1) for 'that rather nasty episode with the Gunpowder Green . . .'

Many garden-party guests had to stow somewhere about their persons at least two fanzines. Copies of *The Occasional Fanzine*'s first issue were being handed out by Marc Ortlieb (of whom Adam Jenkins wrote in *Just Alice* 4, November 1991: 'getting a letter from Marc proves that this is a real fanzine now — it's reminiscent of an initiation rite'). Meanwhile, Roger Weddall was handing out *Lhyfe* 2 — but Peter Nicholls reacted to his copy by accusing Roger of having been unconscionably rude about him in a letter of comment to *ASFR* (second series) 25, Spring 1990. Roger was observed to respond in a somewhat bemused but amiable manner. Bruce, too, took in good part Peter's abuse of him for having forgotten as yet to deliver his entry on Gerald Murnane for the new edition of the Nicholls/Clute Encyclopedia. But Sean McMullen (referred to by Jenny Blackford in *Larrikin* 9, February 1987 as 'well-known ex-opera-singer') was observed to look faintly harrassed when Peter told him that an extended deadline made him eligible now (with a book published in 1992) for inclusion in the Encyclopedia.

A guest already securely in the Encyclopedia was Wynne Whiteford — of whom Bruce wrote in *SF Commentary* 62/63/64/65/66, June 1981: 'I can still remember seeing Wynne Whiteford's distinguished face peering at me from the cover of one of Ted Carnell's *New Worlds* when I first began buying the science fiction magazines in the early 1960s.' The equally secure Lee Harding was not at the garden party, however. Anne Godden (who was made an Honorary Life Member of the Victorian Society of Editors in 1989) is Lee Harding's publisher, and was heard to ask: 'Is Lee Harding going to be here?' Bruce replied that he hadn't been able to find out. 'Lots of people want to find Lee Harding,' Anne said.

Although Lee's wife Irene Pagram was also absent, Sue Pagram was there, with her husband David Grigg (of whom Bruce Gillespie wrote in *The Metaphysical Review* 11/12/13, November 1987: 'Real-life David Grigg, who has written some fine stories but currently does not seem to be writing fiction, is the real-life brother-in-law of Lee Harding'). At the garden party, David was heard to confide that when he belatedly became chairman of Aussiecon Two he felt like a cabin

boy abruptly promoted to be captain of a sinking ship.

Two of David's fellow Aussiecon committee members, Peter and Elizabeth Darling, telephoned their apologies for being unable to attend the garden party. Another part of the Aussiecon committee was more mysteriously absent: no Ashbys were seen (not even of any sort). But John Litchen, who directed the promotional film for Aussiecon One, was there, as was his wife Monika. Of the Litchens, John Foyster wrote in *The Notional* 10, January 1986: 'I would swear that Monika Litchen looks no older than she did ten years ago, but John admits to shaving off his beard because of the preponderance of white among the black.'

Several Victorian fanzine editors were conspicuous by their absence: no LynC and Clive, no Irwin and Wendy Hirsh, no Michelle Muijsert, no Terry Frost and no Greg Hills (of whom it was whispered behind his back that he had umpteen fanzines on disc — each of them in turn scuttled by the discovery of superior software with which to begin a newer, better fanzine). But *Ethel the Aardvark* editor Alan Stewart's 'very cheery' appearance was favourably reported. (In *SF Commentary* 69/70, January 1991, Bruce described Alan as a 'tall, mild-mannered and newly moustached fan about town'.) *Thyme*'s editors (to the present time) were represented not only by Roger Weddall (well-known ex-opera-extra) and Mark Loney, but also by Peter Burns — who proclaimed in *Thyme* 66, January 1988: 'I voted for The Door, I participated in the creation of The Door as a candidate'. Peter's wife Yoko Otomo and their child were also there — as was Michael Hailstone, of whose fanzine *Matalan Rave* Bruce wrote in *The Metaphysical Review* 11/12/13, November 1987: 'It keeps improving, despite the determined efforts at sabotage by Michael's typewriter.' The behaviour of that typewriter has become steadily more intimidating, and Michael mentioned that a *Matalan Rave* had been lying about in its final stages for the past six months; he found that he was doing less and less with more and more of his time.

Other editors present included *Ye Olde Sockes*'s Julian Warner (formerly, as Mark Loney points out in *Space Wastrel* 3, June 1986, 'Reverend Jules' of the band Slippery Jim & the Ratettes) and several New Wave fanzine editors, such as Karen Pender-Gunn. Ian Gunn reported in Eric Lindsay's *Gegenschein* 63, April 1992 that the noises New Wavers make 'tend to be chuckles, guffaws and hoots of derision rather than snarls and shouts.' Of Ian Gunn himself, Alan Stewart wrote in *Ethel the Aardvark* 34, December 1990: 'it appears he is usually fairly square, but parades in primary colour patterns occasionally'; while in *Raw Bits* 14, April 1990, Bruce Gillespie entreated Ian not to confine the brilliance of his cartoons to ANZAPA: 'Try a few of your best ideas on *File 770* or the best British fanzines. Be famous, Gunn.' Another New Wave guest was Phil Włodarczyk, of whom Ian Gunn wrote in *StunGunn* 12, February 1990 that his 'zines

**GERALD MURNANE,
Macleod, Victoria 3085**

You asked me to put in writing the account I gave you yesterday under the marquee of the dream that I had on the preceding night.

I dreamed that I had gone alone to your house in order to see the garden that had been established on the adjoining block. I was not expecting any party; nor was there any sort of gathering. You and Elaine were in the background, going about your business, but I was led around the place by one of those invisible presences who lead us in dreams and who impart information to us without actually speaking.

No garden was to be seen. I was led first through what had once been your house but was now a single room: a vast ballroom with a gleaming floor fifty metres across. Where the vacant block would have been were large concrete courtyards with never a tree or a potted plant in sight. To speak of courtyards suggests walls or buildings nearby. These courtyards separated at least three large brick buildings. One belonged to you and one to Elaine. Goodness knows what the other was for. I formed the impression that you and Elaine had divided up all your

belongings and lived separated lives, each in your own building. I hastened to add that this partitioning of your lives seemed not have been arranged in any spirit of animosity. I gathered that you had arranged things thus in the interests of efficiency. The glimpses that I had of each of you showed me an Elaine and a Bruce I had scarcely seen in my waking life. Each of you strode grimly in and out of your headquarters. Serious business was afoot. Not a moment was to be wasted.

Come to think of it, the buildings (red-brick, ornamented) had somewhat the look of army buildings. Then again, they bring to mind now, as I write, some of the wards of Mont Park Psychiatric Hospital that I've seen on my walks around Macleod.

Last, the block had the same spatial deceptiveness that Dr Who's tardis had. I seemed to walk for hundreds of metres across the concrete courtyards. And only now I've remembered that neither you nor Elaine offered to show me inside your pavilions or whatever they were. But I was not offended. I could see you had much more important things to think of.

Thanks for the hospitality yesterday. We met some people we hadn't seen for years.

(4 May 1992)

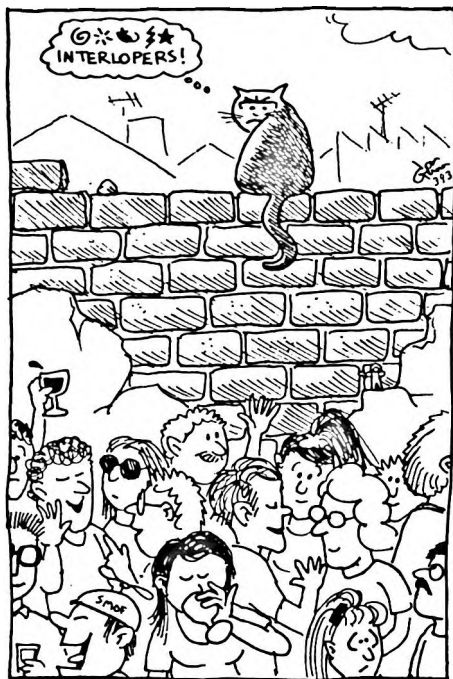
(which are also "showcases" being almost entirely artwork) never feature audience feedback at all'. Also New Wave was James Allen, who reported (as treasurer) in the Conjunction program guide: 'I'm one of those people who do things on deadline or late, but don't worry. I've got the money. All of it...'

The party was scheduled to stop at sunset — around six or seven — when it became very dark indeed inside the marquee. But just as most of the guests were leaving, Bruce's spirits were greatly lifted by the arrival of his sister Jeanette (of whom he wrote in *Dreams and False Alarms* 1, August 1984: 'Quite the opposite temperament from mine' and in *The Metaphysical Review* 15/16/17, August 1991, 'Jeanette can have more fun broke than most of the rest of us could have with a lottery win'). Jeanette had been detained until then by a prior engagement folk-singing.

Meanwhile, the party's food had been not only wonderful, but also extremely abundant. Towards the end of the afternoon, a scene resembling the close of the day's trading at Victoria Market's produce stalls took place in the lounge room (formerly guarded by a 'Wrong Way: Go Back' sign), with hostile exhortations of, 'Go on — take it; we won't be able to eat it' as grapes, walnuts, coriander, bread, melons, lemons and dips were pressed upon the departing guests. The ebullient Monty was observed to flatten his ears and try to make off with his share of the salami. (During

the food preparations, Monty had also found that he doted on chick peas: thus, it was perhaps not because he became utterly unnerved that he was only narrowly prevented from leaping into a bowl of houmous.)

There remains to report the garden party's most-talked-of incident. For this, I need first to describe some much earlier events, recorded from an even greater distance by the US fan Cy Chauvin, in 'The Ones Who Walk Away from Melbourne'. This was a 'duff report' for 1973 (published in Irwin Hirsh's *Sikander* 14, August 1987, as a consequence of Cy's promise on his 1979 DUFF platform that he would 'invent' a trip report if he didn't go to Australia). Cy described how he discovered Bruce Gillespie's abode by tracking a Melbourne cat ('it occurred to me that 90% of the cats in Melbourne must have been owned by BRG at one time or another'). He found Bruce hunched over a basement typewriter, surrounded by squirming cats, and wearing an embarrassing striped propellor beanie: 'but all the intelligence seemed drained from his face.' Although Bruce at first mistook him for an 'agent of distress' (sent 'by Foyster and the others' as a test of Bruce's devotion), Cy overcame this distrust and succeeded in delivering Bruce from the doom of the 'magic beanie' which (as Bruce revealed) had 'to be freely taken for [Bruce] to be freed from the charm of Post-Fanzine Depression'. So long as this dreadful beanie remained strapped to his head, Bruce



had been enslaved as the 'miserable martyr meant to keep the peace in Australian fandom. A balancing of yin and yang.'

Whether or not the removal of the beanie was responsible, Bruce certainly became happier — whereupon complaints were made about the fanzines he then produced. Thus, in *SF Commentary* 62/63/64/65/66, June 1981, an exasperated Bruce accused Philip Stephensen-Payne of wanting Bruce 'to be blindingly, gaspingly, utterly horribly miserable' just so Phil could 'fuzzle over' the kind of *SF Commentary* he was used to.

Disquietingly, Cy's intervention removed the beanie not only from Bruce but also from Australian fandom. And although peace (however boisterous) reigned on 3 May 1992 in the garden-party marquee, one guest found other regions less tranquil. She was Lucy Sussex — credited by Padraic P. McGuinness in the *Weekend Australian* of 18–19 April 1992 with writing 'one of the best short stories in any genre published in Australia in the last decade' (McGuinness was thinking of 'My Lady Tongue'). Lucy had passed through the marquee and was in the yard when Jane Tisell handed her a copy of Lucy's short-story collec-

tion for signing. While this was going on, Peter Nicholls approached and began upbraiding Lucy (in the presence of Jane, Ian Gunn and Karen Pender-Gunn — who dispersed casually, in some embarrassment, as far out of earshot as possible). Peter was accusing Lucy of ignoring him. According to one witness, he began: 'Why don't you talk to me any more? I've walked past you twenty times and you haven't said hello'; according to another, he ended by informing her that she was quite the rudest person he had met since returning to Australia. He then left — whereupon Lucy retired to the kitchen for a cup of tea.

Not yet recovered from her encounter with Peter, Lucy was then confronted (in the presence of a different set of guests — Sharee Carton and both of Elaine's sisters among them) by Damien Broderick. Damien was aware of Peter's anger against Lucy (indeed, three witnesses aver that Damien had jestingly been encouraging Peter to make Lucy know of it). Nevertheless, Damien was unaware that a contretemps with Peter had just taken place. He therefore began reproaching her for what she had said at a National Book Council seminar some months ago about the way he edited 'My Lady Tongue'. (As Lucy knew, Damien had been part of her audience at the seminar.) Damien ended, according to one witness, by advising Lucy, in a marked manner, to be more careful what she said — whereupon Lucy, having pointed out that she was clearly in no fit state to respond just then, informed him that he was a bastard. Damien then left, producing an impression of slamming the door. (Because the door is springloaded, guests were slamming it inadvertently all afternoon.) At this point, Lucy decided that she was not suited to this garden party, and went home (producing an impression of slamming yet another difficult door). Thus, guests distant from the scene set themselves this problem: what would account for a door-slam, followed by a hush, followed by a door-slam?

As an answer to Damien's remarks, Lucy decided to post him a transcript of what she had said at the seminar. But the Peter-Lucy problem is less soluble, since many of my informants believed that Peter had hitherto been consistently ignoring Lucy (a habit thought to have originated in Lucy's ignoring the friends Peter was usually with: as Melbourne fandom knew, a permanent rift had developed there). Peter, on the other hand, asserts that he himself would be ignored at any social gathering where those friends were present. Thus, beliefs of my informants' kind have inspired in Peter the following aphorism: 'in British fandom bitchiness is an artform; in Australian fandom, it is just a habit'.

Or does the cause lie, rather, in a well-meaning US intervention: in the removal from Australia of Bruce's fabulous beanie?

— Yvonne Rousseau, 14 May 1992

JENNY BRYCE is one of those people whose career sounds like that of a science fiction writer, but she isn't one. She has been a teacher, educationist, musician and music teacher, a trader in art deco objects, and a teacher again. Recently she returned to the Australian Council for Educational Research, where she was working when I first met her in 1976. She's a very good writer as well.

The people mentioned in this article:

Mabe, Jinny, Jenny and **Liz** all went to university together in the mid-1960s. **John, Rob** and **Bruce** are husbands, but **Rob** is not Mabe's husband. **Jinny**, a well-known Australian journalist, is married to **Bruce**, a well-known Australian film director, and **Trilby** is their daughter. The year is 1986.

Jenny Bryce:

'Many years ago, Mabe used to write English essays for one of her children in return for ironing. I do not intend to do any of Mabe's ironing, so instead would like to acknowledge the central role she has played in the writing of this piece. Mabe's delightful dry sense of humour coloured my own impressions of the trip, and without her meticulous diary-keeping, the piece could not have been written.'

TRAVEL

Mabe and Jenny See the World

by Jennifer Bryce

We have just taken the seemingly irreversible step through the doors labelled International Passengers Only. Here we are. Alone, with our passports, tickets and travellers' cheques. Jenny has her valuables in a money belt, but Mabe carries hers in her petit handbag.

However regretful we may be at leaving our families, there is a certain sense of freedom. Will we remember their requests? A Matterhorn in a snow-storm, Ovomaltine, LA Lakers T-shirts . . .

We have flown to Sydney many times, and in many things, but never before in a DC10 with Oriental Delicacies. Jenny is pining for a roll and coffee because it is breakfast time, but Mabe had her breakfast at 5 a.m.

And now, at Sydney International Airport, the great achievement has been accomplished. We have assembled the Duty Free Pentax and loaded it with film. What will we do for the rest of the journey? Jenny has taken a charming snap of Mabe sitting in the coffee shop. Will it come out?

We've got a window seat that enables us both to stare out at the pinkish purple-brown of the centre of Australia. Who wants to read a book when one can become absorbed by this spectacle? Mabe, who is more familiar with the terrain, can point out river beds and dried-up lakes.

10 September, Manila

Mabe has just been to her first foreign toilet. The water was about an inch from the rim of the bowl. She took no action, because this might be standard. When it was flushed, water came out of the handle. She took no action, because this might be standard. An attendant provided her with toilet paper by pushing it under the door.

We are no longer fresh, eager travellers. Evidence of this, should it be required, has been provided by a photographer who appears to earn his living by snapping people as they stagger off their planes into the transit lounge. We've decided not to buy the photograph. After three hours of looking at wood carvings and shell ornaments we have succumbed, and paid SA8 for two fruit drinks and a Hershey Bar.

11 September, Frankfurt

Most of the memory of the relentless offering of dinners of meat or fish, the movie about a robot, and sitting on the Bangkok tarmac for an hour with the plane's air conditioning turned off thankfully has been obliterated. All we had time to do in Dubai was pass through security. And yet we have arrived in Frankfurt early. Normally we would have had to endure another hour of this perpetual transit: not belonging anywhere.

While we wait, we are being shown what could almost be described as a propaganda movie for the Philippines. The sound is relayed through the public address system. You can't escape from it. It started with cheering people and a banner with 'Cory Aquino' on it. Then the song started: 'Come celebrate our new Philippines . . . a new day is dawning.'

Frankfurt is mean. We've spent most of our time being done out of money. The vending machines don't give change and, when we decided to take a bath at the airport, the attendant could easily understand what we wanted until we tried to explain that we should get 2DM change.

Thanks to Mabe's librarian's mind, Jenny was able to look up a phone number and make a phone call. We can no longer take for granted the accomplishment of such simple tasks.

We are gradually realizing that we are in Europe. It smells different. The sun is gentle. We stored our luggage for a couple of hours and walked along the Main, thinking that it was the Rhine. Ate frankfurters mit mustard standing at a table and, for John's benefit, took a photograph of his favourite chocolate croissant stand and purchased a croissant to eat on the train.

We are now hurtling through the European countryside on the *Tiziano*, completely acclimatized, to the extent that Mabe has been explaining the train's seating arrangements to the German passengers. Our luggage takes up far less room than that of some 'locals' who have been shopping in Karlsruhe. It is far too exciting to read. We should arrive in Basel with plenty of time to stroll to the Tinguely Fountain, where we will meet Liz.

12 September, Basel

Haven't seen an alp yet, but we have seen seventy Picassos and a monkey playing Mozart. We thought we'd adapted to Swiss ways in eating muesli and yoghurt for breakfast, but we should have been eating it in ice-cream soda glasses for lunch. Crossed the Rhine (or was it the Mosel?) by ferry, and walked along it. The Swiss are unable to pick us as tourists now, as we're so quick with our money.

13 September, Basel

Went to France this morning, but it was closed. In Ferrette, met French sewer smell for the first time, never to be forgotten. Jenny trod in something she found indescribable in French or English. We climbed 1000 feet straight up to a ruined castle, the path ironically called 'The Path of the Dwarves'. (Maybe Liz's French is rusty, and it was for giants?) Trois cafés, and another experience in another foreign toilet. On to St Ursanne in Switzerland next, where we ate pain et brie and drank eau minerale beside yet another river. Didn't climb another 1000 feet to see a grotto where a hermit was visited by a bear, but negotiated the purchase of a slice of dough tart with cream. Drinks on Jenny Gibbs

at Hotel Jenny. Dinner of museli, then *Twins* on television: a sophisticated talent show where comperes, competitors and audience are all twins. The ads are best.

Where have all the people gone? Europe seems to be deserted. No Japanese tourists, and certainly no Americans. Jenny is conspicuous with the camera slung around her neck. Of course, we are visiting out-of-the-way places, thanks to Liz. But even Basel seems empty.

14 September, Basel

The women of Basel don't wear coloured panty hose. Their dress is very conservative. I guess they thought we were American punks when we wandered through the art gallery today with our yellow and blue legs. It was a rainy day, so we decided to stay in Basel. Mabe had seen the Monet exhibition in Melbourne, so she explored the rest of the gallery while Jenny saw the Monet.

The gallery was supposed to be crowded, but Mabe found herself in a room of Gauguins, sans garde. She didn't take any of them. Jenny liked the Tinguely *Musicheharmonie*, and wished that it could be turned on.

We were out on the loose, without Liz as a guide, and enjoyed the challenge of being independent. An English-language newspaper would be good to read on a rainy afternoon. Everything was closed except the railway station, where we found . . . people! We were so surprised that we celebrated with zwei cafés, shared with a Belgian lady with whom we commiserated on the high costs. We enjoyed chatting with her.

Successfully negotiated the journey home, sustained by a Swiss chocolate. Spent some time on the *Sunday Times* crossword. Then, as it was still wet, went to the film *Turtle Diary* — in English.

A traditional Swiss evening meal of Racklet. Heard on the News that a bomb has exploded in the Champs Elysées. Entrance to France, except for the Swiss, will be by visa only. Just as well that we went there yesterday.

The Australian news must be very sensational compared with that of the Swiss. There are few on-the-spot coverages. There seems to be a lot of discussion and analysis, especially on the Swiss German channel, which we can't follow at all. There were no banner headlines about the French bombing, and there appeared to be no great concern. Is the media very responsible, ensuring that there is no undue alarm, or do Europeans take such events as a matter of course?

15 September, Basel

Today has been mixed. Jenny tried to introduce some novelty into our trip by having heart palpitations. We were very impressed with the doctor who treated her; not so impressed with the hospital that refused her because she was a foreigner.

The undramatic parts of the day were a motor trip to Roman ruins, complete with concrete steps and iron railings; Rheinfelden, where we went to the toilet — the only thing not shut; and Laufenberg. We crossed into Germany for lunch: half a kilo of pale sausage mixed with cheese, and salad. Searched unsuccessfully for a matterhorn in a snow storm. At an ice-cream shop the perceptive waitress ushered us straight to the *damen*, which we counted as a triumph for our ability with the German language, or perhaps mime.

16 September, Gruyères

Saw an alp today. Quite impressive. We motored through countryside delicately scented with pig manure, to beautiful Gruyères, home of la crème.

Had lunch somewhere that starts with L, on a lake, then on to Murten, where we fell into Tourist Traps. Looked unsuccessfully for a Matterhorn in a snow-storm. Would now settle for any old alp. Was offered a Garfield, but declined.

At one point on the highway we had to make a detour because of an accident. There, on a siding, was a band of gypsies. Not in colourful horsedrawn wagons; today they drive Mercedes. They appeared to be relaxing over lunch, and had hung their washing to dry on a signpost. Perhaps they wash more frequently than some of the city folk who, we learned, have access to communal laundries once every three weeks.

Good driving by Liz and navigating by Jenny brought us to Gruyères and utter luxury. We're staying at La Fleur de Lys, in rooms overlooking the town square. Progressive dinner, with far too much to eat. Mabe had a bath and scrubbed with the nail brush, but Jenny went to bed dirty. How uncouth.

So well have we blended into the countryside that Mabe was able to tell a French couple that their room was on the second floor, and wish them 'bon soir'. How sophisticated.

17 September, Versoix

Mabe suffered indigestion overnight from the dinner of jambon, cabbage, and a bucket of cream. Jenny started the day with a luxurious bath, making full use of all facilities offered by a chambre avec bain. Indulged in le petit déjeuner; then, as it was pleuring heavily, spent the first part of the morning in Tourist Traps.

Purchased a pseudo Matterhorn for Mabe, a hat for Bruce, a funny hair thing for Doug, and considered getting a yodelling outfit for John. Too wet for any other activities.

Drove on to Montreux, amused by the school children in Bulle, who manned (childrended?) the pedestrian crossings holding up mock lollipops. Walked along le lac at Montreux to Château Chillon, stopping at an Arabian dive along the way for café and thé. This was the only part of the day when it didn't rain. Returned from Chillon by trolley bus. There weren't

many people around, and a lot of places were up for rent or sale. Assumed that this is because of the downturn in tourism caused by fears of terrorism and nuclear accidents, but the lack of people may have been because of the wet weather and, perhaps, at the end of summer, this is the time to sell. If only we had a spare million we could buy our retirement villa on Lake Geneva.

Continued to motor around the lake through Vevey and Lausanne to Versoix, to be close to the Geneva Airport for our flight tomorrow. Indeed, our dilapidated hotel is right on the flight path — the planes use Mabe's pristine washing, hung at the window, to line themselves up for the final plunge into Geneva Airport.

This hotel is 20F per person cheaper than the one at Gruyères . . . you have to pay extra for a bain. There are frequent avions overhead and autos below. Had grandes assiettes de salade for dinner, washed down with local wine, which we had seen growing along the side of the road. Dessert in another restaurant included a solid crème caramel with nuts. We are now reclining on hair sheets. Hope they switch off the planes soon.

Mabe's note at 5.45 a.m.: 'Had thought planes bad. Worse is being next to the loo, and sharing the intimate details of each person's style through the night. Am I developing an obsession?'

18 September

This was a day of flying. Firstly we flew Sabena by 737 from Geneva to Brussels, bidding farewell to Liz at Geneva Airport. It was a one-hour flight, and we were interested to find that the Economy Class section of the plane was almost empty. We had been a little puzzled when asked whether we would both like window seats, but we had a whole section — six seats — to ourselves. Most passengers were flying first or Business Class, and those sections of the plane were much bigger than they are in Australia. We were pleased to be given some Belgian chocolate.

There was less than an hour to wait in Brussels before we boarded the Sabena DC10 for Atlanta. Once again the plane wasn't full. Sabena had received high marks for providing Belgian chocolate, and these were further inflated when we found that the inflight movie was *Hannah and Her Sisters* — so much better than the robots of Philippine Airlines. We were also impressed by the handing out of current newspapers and magazines — *The Times*, *International Herald Tribune*, *Le Soir* and *Working Woman*.

Jenny was impressed by the wide selection of music. There was Belgian chamber music — Loeillet — and a Belgian (as well as an international) jazz channel.

What a contrast to find ourselves in grey, smoggy Atlanta! The drab 1950s-style town centre didn't look at all inviting, especially when it would have cost US\$11 to go there. So we filled in about three hours at the airport.

18 September, Jenny's flight from Atlanta

Waiting to take off at Atlanta Airport. I'm sure some of the planes landing now took off while we were waiting here, reached their destinations, and returned. What an interminable wait. Musik is belting out all the time, and Mabe is sensibly sleeping. Every so often the plane revs encouragingly, then slows down to a crawl. The Captain has just announced that we're seventh in line to take off.

The US is smoggy, smelly and unfriendly. The vending machines won't tell you how much to put in. It's very hard to find things. We gave up trying to find the cheap bus to downtown Atlanta, but we did enjoy 'playing' with the credit card phones.

Just to continue our bad impression of the US, we seem to be surrounded by smokers, although our seats are designated non-smoking.

Apart from the credit card phones, the only other exciting thing in Atlanta was the computer train that takes you around to the various concourses and speaks with a robot-like voice.

Perhaps all of these complaints are the result of having had a twelve-hour afternoon?

We've taken off at last. I've had some plastic coffee in a disposable cup and was given a tiny straw, which I discovered about two weeks later was to stir it with. Drinking hot coffee through a very narrow straw certainly helps to pass the time.

Now I'm listening to Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante for Violin and Viola on the headset as we glide across America, with lightning flashing all around us. It's a remarkably moving experience; quite unexpected. Mabe is sensibly asleep.

And now, this must be Los Angeles. It's very clear. I've seen many cities from the air, but nothing like this. Is it a city? There are so many coloured lights. The *Queen Mary* looks like a set from a very extravagant production of *No, No, Nanette*. Indeed, the whole of Los Angeles might be one great film set, except that it is so expansive. There are no edges to indicate the beginning and end of reality; it must be one vast, colourful, flickering illusion.

Mabe: I wasn't asleep at all.

There have been many great feats in Jinny's life, which we won't enumerate here. But one of them will certainly be that of Impala-ing us along the freeway system from LA International Airport to the Hollywood Hills. Jinny's sense of direction isn't very good but, in anticipation of this journey, about fifty years ago, the Fathers of Los Angeles erected large letters inscribing 'HOLLYWOOD' at the end of Beachwood Drive. These letters provide an essential navigational aid for those who dare to venture out onto the freeway system. This morning Liz was driving us past ancient cottages with colourful window boxes and woods reminiscent of the brothers Grimm. Now, it's the neon lights of hamburger joints and the anticlimax of a

seedy, rather worn-out Hollywood Boulevard.

19 September, Los Angeles

Mabe was in a slightly better mood this morning, but woke up before she was awake and, as she had been rendered speechless by America, decided to return to bed. Jenny was annoyingly sparkling from 8 a.m. onwards.

Went down Hollywood Boulevard in the Impala and had lunch at Musso and Frank's Grill, the oldest restaurant in Hollywood. Heartening to find that it wasn't a hamburger joint.

While Jinny was waiting in the express queue at the bank, the following remarks were passed about the teller: 'Perhaps she's gone on vacation; Will we recognize her when she gets back? She'll have aged a lot!'; 'Perhaps we could meet here every year!'

Jinny did twenty-one laps of the pool while Mabe turned a pleasant golden toast colour, and Jenny pretended to.

Didn't go to dinner with a producer and film stars: had dinner with Della, the nanny, American style.

20 September, San Simeon

Up and ready to leave for a six-hour drive through the desert to the Hearst mansion. Bruce has toothache and Mabe has a sore throat: who will be the lucky third to come down with something?

Thanks to the game 'Botticelli' and a speedy American freeway, the drive didn't seem as arduous as anticipated. But the country seems pretty dreary compared to Australia. California is a desert. LA is a giant oasis, all artificially produced. The beaches didn't seem especially good.

The tours of Hearst Castle provided us with our first example of efficiency in the US. There are so many people visiting the castle! Four different tours, lasting around three hours each, leave the base every ten minutes.

Went on Tour 1 in the afternoon. Fascinating. Such an amazing mixture of medieval (and earlier), baroque, and art deco mixed together at Hearst's whim. The architect was a woman. Planning started in 1919.

Stayed in the Jade Motel at San Simeon. Mabe and I each had a double bed. Nothing much on TV. Had dinner at the Bramble Inn. We have now learned that salad is an entree. One other good thing about America (there aren't many) is iced water with meals.

21 September, Los Angeles.

The Night of Terror

American motels don't serve breakfast. When Jenny rang to ask about breakfast, the proprietor laughed, drawing her attention to the complimentary coffee (one sachet each). So Jenny went on an early morning mission to find some food — difficult without a car — and ultimately tracked down some blueberry muffins.

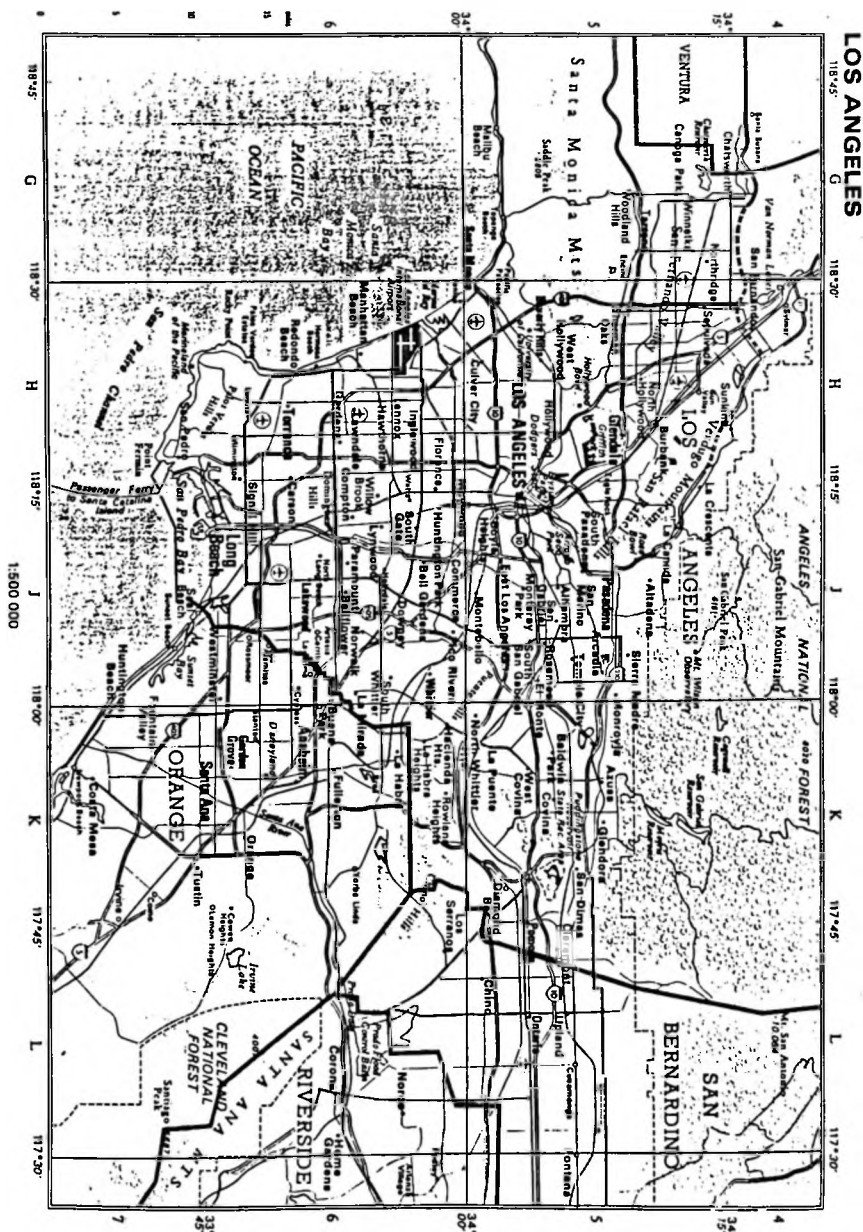
Went on Tour 2. Very friendly and informative

guide. We suspect she may be a student of the history of the period. The group was small, so it was easy to ask questions. Saw a lot of guest rooms and Hearst's own room (he had a mistress, but wouldn't permit guests to indulge in extramarital relationships). His library was huge, but he didn't employ a librarian.

Lunch at a place Bruce didn't like, with lots of gum trees, and boomerangs in the souvenir shop. Had some

Denney's ice cream. On the way home became adept at holding Trilhy's dummy in. To make up for Bruce's disappointing lunch, we had delicacies such as potato skins at a charming outdoor café in Santa Barbara. Some of the Spanish-speaking waiters didn't understand English.

Bruce had to go to New York. The rest of us were faced with The Night of Terror. It was Della's day off.



The car wasn't at home when we returned (Bruce had hired a larger one for the San Simeon expedition). We were a little puzzled, but not alarmed. What was the loud snoring noise coming from Della's room? She was out to it. What had she done with the car? After a while we had to rouse her for a phone call from Bad News Max. She spoke with very slurred speech, and we made out that she had lent the car to someone (illegal, since it was hired and the other person's name wouldn't be on the contract). We shouldn't worry; it would be returned later tonight. By whom? 'Jush don't you worry . . . ev' thing's gonna be all right.'

It wasn't all right for Della. She ended up being fired because Bruce and Jinny felt that after this escapade they couldn't trust her with the baby. Since Bruce was going away, Jinny would have to break this news to Della when she sobered up.

Della disappeared again after her phone call from Bad News Max, and we tucked into the dinner she had left in the oven — on her day off . . . she was basically generous and kind-hearted. Apprehensive about the return of the car and the looming confrontation with Della, we consumed more wine than usual and entertained ourselves with horror stories: jokes about Bad News Max, burglars, muggings and other LA entertainment. We decided that it would be wisest not to open the door when, or if, the car keys were returned.

Around 11.30 p.m. a car pulled up outside. One pair of feet was heard climbing the thirty-nine steps to the door, and the door bell sounded. 'Who's there?' The woman wanted to see Della, but left the keys on the front doorstep as instructed. No car drove off. We were a little surprised, because there is no public transport near by. The keys were retrieved. They included the house keys. Why had these been lent? But another bottle of wine was opened and the mirth returned.

The mirth was utterly shattered when the burglar alarm went off at about 12 a.m. We stood in silence, shaking. Had the mystery woman cut a set of keys? (The burglar alarm is activated when entry is attempted through any outside door or window or if a key is put in a door without first turning off the alarm.) Della stumbled out still stoned, unconcerned, and unable to enlighten us about what was going on.

The security service didn't ring, as they should have, so Jinny rang the police. The alarm went off again. Two security guards arrived, checked the place, and explained implausibly that the alarms were probably set off by little creatures like chipmunks. The police arrived. They started to fill out a 'false alarm' form before speaking to us. They left quickly: 'Have a nice evening, ladies', an ironical remark to the terrified ladies. But Jenny took their advice and went to bed, sleeping soundly.

Della was not to be seen, but an hour or two later the house was filled with the sound of her macabre raving and sneezing. Was there someone with her? The sneezes followed the raving so quickly it seemed al-

most impossible for one person to execute this extraordinary performance. What had she taken that was making her sneeze? As the alarm went off twice more, Jinny reluctantly had to disconnect it. Mabe stayed awake until 5 a.m., starting at every noise. But we had no need to use the weapons Jinny thoughtfully placed by our beds.

22 September, Los Angeles

Removed body from swimming pool first thing, and buried it under avocado tree while Jinny did her twenty-one laps.

Some people were coming to measure the house because it had been sold. They would have to go into Della's room. What would they find? We decided it would be best to act as though nothing had happened. We waited apprehensively while the measuring lady went in. To our great relief we heard voices. She was alive, and presumably reasonably sane.

As soon as the measuring people had gone, Jinny had the task of firing Della. The atmosphere wasn't quite as bad as we'd feared. Della hadn't liked Los Angeles; she was from a much smaller town. She was pleased to go home to her family and to the prospect of getting married (to someone other than Bad News Max!).

We had a very quiet day, recovering from the previous night. Jenny walked down to the supermarket and bought some goodies for lunch. Everything seemed to be very expensive, but otherwise not greatly different from an Australian supermarket. We felt that at least two of us had to be home with Della in case of further untoward behaviour. Nothing happened.

23 September, Los Angeles

Woken up by burglar alarm at six o'clock. Said 'ho hum' and went back to sleep. (It was set off by Della's departure to catch an early plane back to North Carolina.)

The amusement for the day was a tour of Universal Studios. Trilby made her debut. This was to be the beginning of many tours and adventures for her, as she no longer had a nanny to look after her. Given that she's already been to Ireland, Universal Studios was probably no big deal for this much-travelled four-month-old.

We drove to Universal City with the hood down, arriving just in time for a lunch of 'Old English' specialties: acapulco and spinach salad. Mabe and Jinny enjoyed the tour, especially *King Kong*. *Jaws* seemed rather tame. Jenny preferred the more intellectual pursuits of observing the set for *Psycho* and going to a session about animation. Trilby thought it was interesting.

We are close to the Hollywood Bowl, but unfortunately there are no concerts on. Everything starts the week we leave.

Perhaps if we convince Bruce that the Mustang is a 'pillow bigher' style car he will let us drive it all the

time. Jinny is very confident in the traffic, to the extent that when we pointed out that she was driving on the wrong side of the road she retorted, 'It's OK, there's nothing coming!'

Resolved to buy the book *Why Are Men the Way They Are?*

24 September, Los Angeles

Spent the day having lunch at Hamburger Hamlet. As it rained all day, this seemed to be an appropriate activity. Jinny spent many hours going to the bank. Rob arrived in the evening. He is visiting the US on business — the first man to live in the house since The Night of Terror. What a responsibility.

25 September, Los Angeles

Left relatively early (9 a.m.) in Rob's business taxi and headed for Wilshire Boulevard. Lots of avenues of very tall palms. Left Rob educating American businessmen and embarked upon a morning of independence — the first time we'd tried to find our way around Los Angeles without Jinny's assistance.

Caught the bus along Sixth Avenue to Philippine Airlines and arranged to stop over in San Francisco at no extra cost. Jenny had a huge coffee (in a milkshake container) and Mabe, a soup, from the most sullen person we've yet encountered. She didn't even say 'Have a nice day'!

Took a very crowded bus to the LA County Museum — outside, a mixture of prehistoric animals and renovations. Jinny joined us here. The highlight was a room full of Daumier etchings of Greek myths. Jinny had to return home to Trilby, who was being minded by the cleaning person.

We were on the loose again. Walked up to Farmers' Market. Mabe, having overcome her obsession for a Matterhorn in a snowstorm, now wanted T-shirts for particular basketball teams. Spent much time in Tourist Traps looking for them. After inspecting, decided not to buy *Why Are Men the Way They Are?*.

Had cappuccini — almost the real thing, but plastered with nutmeg.

Rob shouted everyone to dinner at Merton's. Meant to be very trendy, possibly too upper class for yuppies. It was very noisy. This didn't bother Mabe as she still has no voice.

26 September, Los Angeles

Tess Harper (lead actress in *Tender Mercies* and *Crimes of the Heart*) took us to the Norton Simon Museum in her BMW. The best art collection we have seen so far. Excellent selection of twentieth-century art — huge collection of Degas. Felt that everything had been handpicked — which was almost certainly the case — just the very best examples.

Had an unnecessarily large Mexican lunch.

27 September, Los Angeles

Jenny went down to Hollywood Boulevard in the morning believing that she would find a bank open. No such luck, but at least the outing provided a good walk. People don't walk here; they drive everywhere.

Then off in the Mustang with Rob to the Getty Museum. Saw Beverly Hills by day on the way. The museum has an excellent collection of antiquities for those who like them. For Jenny, the highlight was a special exhibition of Julia Margaret Cameron photographs. Our visit ended with a pleasant walk through the herb garden.

Home to prepare for another sumptuous meal at Le Dome. Joined by Tess Harper, whose autograph was sought. It is fun turning up at these spots in the battered Impala, and using the valet parking service.

28 September, Los Angeles

Jinny and Bruce had to go to a wedding, so we were on the loose again. Rob had left early in the morning for Boston.

We had planned to go to the *Queen Mary* and Howard Hughes' plane, but the public transport got the better of us, and we decided to go to Santa Monica instead. This gave us some idea of the size of Los Angeles. Jenny thought we could go to Santa Monica by bus, then take a rather extravagant taxi ride to Long Beach. At Santa Monica we asked a taxi driver what the fare would be. He looked surprised at the suggestion of going to Long Beach — as though it were in another country — and said that if he turned his meter off some of the time he could do it for \$60! We stayed at Santa Monica.

We found the Change of Hobbit Bookshop, and purchased T-shirts for John. It seems a great shop for sf fans, but not of much interest for the likes of us.

We walked on the Santa Monica pier. It was good to be away from the grot of Hollywood Boulevard. But a lunch of pressed turkey sandwiches and iced tea made by pouring cold water on a tea bag was not particularly inviting. The Americans cannot make tea. Tea made without tea bags is unknown; likewise the practice of pouring boiling water over the tea bag. Tea is a cup of warm water with a tea bag next to it. Some fresh lemonade bought on the foreshore helped to deaden the shock of the iced tea.

It took so long to get to Santa Monica that we soon felt we should start to return home as we believed it would be unwise to be wandering around the Hollywood Boulevard area after dark. A Haagen Daaz ice-cream shop was conveniently placed at the Hollywood bus stop. Mabe discovered that there is an exception to her general dislike of ice cream: Haagen Daaz macadamia nut.

29 September, Los Angeles

Disneyland. Jenny was prepared to hate it, and came

under sufferance although her first impressions were that it wasn't as plastic and artificial as she had expected.

We headed straight for Tomorrowland and the 3-D film *Captain EO*. We sat through it with our fingers jammed in our ears. Jinny sensibly decided not to subject Trilby to it — her hearing would undoubtedly have suffered. The effects are certainly very good, much better than those of *Creature of the Black Lagoon*. Mabe wanted to walk out, but Jenny made her suffer, and was paid back by being made to go on *Pirates of the Caribbean*. Everyone else thought it was wonderful, but Jenny thought it pointless and stupid, not to say unnecessarily hair-raising. Our pseudo boat, which seemed to be on rails, travelled through all sorts of frightening scenes, with drunken mannikins leering at us and yo, ho, ho-ing. At one point, all of the surrounding scenery appeared to be on fire. The worst part was when the boat took a sudden dive, just like the Big Dipper at Luna Park, but in darkness, and ploughing through water . . . into an abyss.

Jenny was very happy to mind Trilby while Jinny and Mabe visited the Haunted House, the Matterhorn Bob Sleigh, and Terrifying Mr Toad. They were both extremely pale when they emerged.

Although we had officially left Disneyland, the ride home appeared to be a continuation: Mustang with screaming child ploughing into the wilds of the Los Angeles freeway system and taking a wrong turn. This ride lasted much longer than any of the others.

30 September, Los Angeles

Mabe thought this was going to be a sitting-by-the-pool-and-getting-brown day, but just as she became settled, we went off to the MGM studios for lunch. Indeed, Jenny nearly made us late because she was obsessed with the idea of going to the Post Office — a feat beyond her skills in geography and patience.

Had lunch with Bruce, Tess Harper and Bruce's editor Ann, who demonstrated some of her editing techniques. We saw some 'looping' for *Crimes of the Heart* and were most impressed with the ad-libbing skills of an ad hoc Southern crowd of three.

Mabe learned that one should never order Cobb salad. Tess says it was invented for people who can't talk and cut up their food at the same time. This way they just shovel it in.

1 October, Los Angeles and San Francisco

We both felt sick during the night. Was it the salmon for dinner? The ice cream? The chocolate-coated macadamias? The wine? The lot?

Wonderful Sonia Mendoza came today and worked miracles while we, Trilbyless, visited Rodeo Drive Beverley Hills and fell into various Tourist Traps. We had not been able to bring ourselves to go on a tour of Beverley Hills film stars' houses — outside only. But we decided that if Rodeo Drive were all one saw of Los

Angeles one would probably think it quite a pleasant city.

Sad farewells, then a quick, cheap taxi ride to the airport. Jenny's Visacard wouldn't work in the telephone: Mabe's did, but no one was at home.

Philippine Airlines ground crew didn't inspire confidence, but we and our luggage did arrive in San Francisco.

To save money, we are staying at the YMCA. The room is okay, but there are no partitions around the showers — it's useful to be shortsighted. For the first time in the whole trip, Mabe went to bed dirty, nourished by an interesting meal from vending machines, as we were unsure of the wisdom of wandering around the San Francisco wharf area after dark. Jenny had a strange dream where the YMCA bathroom turned into a scene from *Marat Sade*. Surrounded by white tiles, some women were trying to fit into babies' baths in order to bath on their own, while others plunged recklessly into the communal pool of warm, slimy, suddsy water.

2 October, San Francisco

Wonderful café laté for breakfast at a nearby coffee shop. San Francisco is going to be wonderful. The weather is warm and clear. We thought that our hotel was near the Golden Gate Bridge, but it's the Bay Bridge — looks similar to a novice. Today we went on an organized tour: decided this would be sensible as we have such a short time here — and it's a means of getting out of town.

The tour lasted all day. We soon found ourselves going over the real Golden Gate Bridge to the Muir Woods. Our tour guide is from Puerto Rico, so we pronounce names like Sausalito with a Puerto Rican accent. Even at 10 a.m. on a Thursday, the Muir Woods were crowded. We were left to our own devices for about three-quarters of an hour to stroll along tracks looking at the giant redwoods. We would have liked to see some fauna, but even the bravest chipmunk would have been frightened away by the hordes of people.

We loved Sausalito, described as an artists' colony. We sat on the waterfront and watched the boats while eating fruit.

In the afternoon we were driven through the city area. Most impressed with the huge Golden Gate Park — there are even some buffalo wandering around in it. An outdoor concert was in progress. Had drinks at the Cliff House, then made our way to the wharf area for a bay cruise. The weather continues to be perfect. Sailed under the Golden Gate Bridge, and took many snaps. Drinks, on Jenny Gibbs again, at Fisherman's Wharf — margaritas. As this is our last night in the US, we decided to have a good meal at a nearby Italian restaurant.

3 October, San Francisco

The weather continues to be warm and wonderful. The

day started again with a café latté — just as good as yesterday.

Our plane doesn't leave until quite late this evening, but no problems with our luggage. A bus picks up passengers from the hotel, and we can store our luggage there for the day — very convenient.

Having made a general survey of the city area yesterday, we can now spend time in the places that especially interest us. Started off by wandering around some outdoor secondhand bookstalls. Mabe bought a photograph of Californian vineyards, and Jenny, a Doris Lessing to read on the plane. Had drinks of refreshing freshly squeezed grapefruit juice, then made our way to the California Street cable-car terminus.

Mabe thought that the cable-car ride wasn't too different from a ride on a Melbourne tram, but Jenny, who travels more frequently than Mabe on trams, was impressed with the human energy required to operate the grip. And the hills are so steep, it's amazing that these old vehicles can stop! There seems to be a rule that absolutely everything gives way to the cable car.

There are ordinary tram lines in San Francisco too, and a collection of trams in use, gathered from all over the world. There's one from Melbourne, but we didn't see it.

The cable car terminated at Van Ness Avenue, where we caught a trolley bus to the Museum of Modern Art. Here we wallowed in twentieth-century paintings and photography. Jenny was particularly impressed with Rauschenberg's series on the landing on the moon, and one of our favourites was a cow passing judgement on its portrait . . . art naïve?

We then went to a Tourist Trap for Jenny: the San Francisco Opera Shop, which stocks Beethoven's Ninth Symphony as wrapping paper, among many other things. Mabe was placated in a book shop and with an extravagant afternoon tea.

It was almost the end of our stay in San Francisco. We wandered around the California Street area in the pleasant balmy early evening, photographing Victorian houses and sitting for a while in a park. Then we returned by cable car to our hotel, bracing ourselves for another long flight. Fortunately we slept a lot.

5 October, Manila

Saturday, 4 October never existed for us, thanks to the International Date Line.

Philippine Airlines have done us proud, not before time. We are now swanning around in luxury on the seventeenth floor of the famous Silahis International Hotel. We were moved from our sixth-floor room, having dirtied the bath and towels and rumpled the beds, for some obscure oriental reason. But, as well as a better view, this room has a shoe mitt.

We are planning to use the complimentary sewing kit to make matching herringbone suits from the bed covers, to wear while sipping our complimentary rum punches. The YMCA was not like this!

According to Kitch Ortego, writing in *What's On in Manila*, we are staying in 'a mighty enjoyable place, contrary to what you might have heard or read that says something negative about this vibrant capital, this pulsating vortex of Western-style democracy'.

A useful brochure called *Fire Tips and Techniques* tells guests what to do, in six pages, if the hotel catches fire. At the foot of the last page is the hotel's logo: 'Silahis: We Light Up Your Life!'

After our complimentary lunch, which included blancmanges reminiscent of those in *La Grande Bouffe*, we went on a non-complimentary tour of Manila. We had understood that tropical downpours stopped and the sun came out. Not so on this particular Sunday. To go outside was like someone throwing buckets of water at you horizontally. Umbrellas weren't much help, although everyone was using them.

A twittering eight-seater bus endeavoured to show us the 'vibrant capital'. We saw very little, thanks to the sheets of rain and jet lag. Typical of Manila, there were more people employed to conduct the trip than were actually needed: two people for a party of seven — a talkative tour leader and a driver. Of course, their pay would have been so low that the company could easily afford to do this. The travel agent who sold us the tour tickets refused to take Visa, although there was a Visacard sign in the window. She said this was because it took a week to get the cash. This seemed a rather lame excuse at the time, as this is nearly always the case with credit cards. We learned, however, that the tour leaders are paid cash at the end of each day. This may have explained the reluctance to take Visa.

Through the sheets of water we could just make out what seemed to be very seedy back streets of a run-down impoverished city. At one point, the bus hovered in a service station, then moved on. We thought this strange. A huge memorial park with many thousand marble crosses, a carillon and other monuments to the Second World War is considered to be a highlight of Manila.

As we climbed the hill to this park, the bus ran out of petrol. A yellow two-litre plastic container was produced, and petrol poured into the tank. How far would the bus go on two litres? Shouldn't we return to the service station? The bus proceeded up the hill to the memorial, through a barrage of security. Sure enough, on the downhill return, the petrol ran out again. We coasted for a while, then the tour leader had to push — holding his colourful umbrella in one hand and pushing with the other. No one offered to help. When this became too difficult, the driver caught a taxi to the service station.

What did the locals think of Aquino, or Marcos? It was difficult to tell. The taxi driver thought that Aquino was going to end up as bad as Marcos. The tour leader seemed to be more pro-Aquino and pointed, with some derision, to Imelda's department store: 'I think it's closed now.'

What with the sheets of rain and jet lag, everything seemed to be drab blur. There was very little colour; only from the gardens of the houses of the rich, which are protected by high walls and guards. The palace was a greyish hulk. Aquino doesn't live there, but goes there to work each day.

At the end of the tour we were literally locked into a Tourist Trip. We were very thirsty, and were told we could ask for a complimentary drink. There were complimentary shell necklaces too. We decided that we should politely look at the wares, although at this stage we weren't really interested in wood carvings and shell ornaments. As we didn't intend to buy, we felt we couldn't accept the drink. And the two of us were 'tailed' by three shuffling women with calculators at the ready. When we had inspected most of the extensive emporium, we decided to return to the bus. But the doors of the store were locked! We were not, however, forced to buy anything.

'Mr Atkinson, Mr Atkinson. Please check at the Transit Desk.'

'Mr Atkinson, Mr Atkinson. Please check at the Transit Desk, Mr Atkinson.'

This announcement had been made many times the morning we arrived in Manila. Mr Atkinson had not checked at the desk. Everyone — including transit passengers — seemed to be waiting for him to do so. Five young well-groomed Filipino women had huddled excitedly over a computer terminal presumably eager to see what it could tell them about Mr Atkinson. We ultimately met Mr Atkinson, who had been assigned to the Silahis Hotel also. One might have expected a confused, middle-aged businessman. But Mr Atkinson — he never told us his first name — was in his thirties, self-assured, keen to display how well he could handle the natives. He came from Sydney and spoke with a slight English accent, which may have been cultivated at a North Shore independent school. He seemed to have unlimited money. He had been holidaying for some months in Nepal, and travelled Business Class.

When we reached the Silahis, Mr Atkinson suggested that he would be spending most of the day at the bar. But once we were assigned to our rooms we didn't see him again until it was time to return to the airport.

There was some uncertainty as to what time our plane would leave. The rain was still extremely heavy, and the hotel was keen to get us to the airport early as the roads were becoming flooded. We travelled with Mr Atkinson. He appeared to be on standby, but was confident that he would get a seat. When there was no one manning the entrance for transit passengers, Mr Atkinson led us through a side door, bypassing the customs and passport control into the transit area where we could wait to board the plane. No one seemed to

care.

We had understood that the plane would leave around 9 p.m., but the departure sign indicated that boarding would commence around 11.20 p.m. . . . plenty of time for a very extravagant Filipino coke.

Also time for the astute Mabe to return to the interesting toilet she had discovered at the beginning of our holiday. And time for her to discover how to close the door. You don't move the door. You bring the wall to the door — *c'est facile!*

We didn't see much more of Mr Atkinson. He was a smoker and a Business Class traveller — altogether a different category of person.

Would we have recognized our names if we'd been paged? Unlikely. They seemed very keen to get in touch with a certain 'Mr Bernardo Popsicle'.

Of course the boarding of the plane was delayed. But we did ultimately get on, and were taxiing to the runway . . . 'This is your Captain speaking. There is a disabled aircraft on the runway. I have been advised that our take-off will be delayed.' What did this mean? A crash landing? Problems caused by the bad weather?

Playing cards were handed out, compliments Philippine Airlines . . . for playing patience?

A half hour or so later: 'This is your Captain speaking. We have to wait until the disabled plane has been removed from the tarmac. We will have to return to the lounge.'

Cries of 'we like it here' from the Australians — at least the plane's air conditioning worked, whereas the air in the transit lounge was fetid and still.

Two hours later: 'The Captain would like you to return to your seats so that you can eat your dinners.' (It is the early hours of the morning, but a roast dinner would be wonderful!)

The dinners are handed out, and we start to pick at the least worst bits: oriental coleslaw with dried sardine tails, roast boiling fowl with tinned champignons, solid pink instant pudding with tinned mandarin segments washed down with Coca Cola.

'This is your Captain speaking. The runway is now clear and we could take off, but we'll have to wait until you've finished your dinners so that tray tables can be upright.'

'We don't want this bloody shit anyway!' yelled the Australians. But the Germans wanted theirs. So we waited for the German passengers to finish and to be served coffee.

Took off, still in torrential rain, which seemed to be leaking in Jenny's window — but who cares? We now understand the meanings of fatality and endurance.

Next day in Melbourne, with our Ovomaltine, LA Lakers T-shirts and pseudo-Matterhorn, we read that there had been serious flooding in Manila. Some people had drowned, and many had to be evacuated.

— Jennifer Bryce, 1986

I know virtually nothing about **DIRK STRASSER** except that he is co-editor of *Aurealis*, the Melbourne-based sf magazine. Since the accompanying article was first published in Melbourne's *Age* newspaper a few years ago, I assume that Dirk has worked as a freelance journalist (and may still do so).

TRAVEL

Take a few tips from an innocent abroad

by Dirk Strasser

(Reprinted by permission of the author.)

Question: What is the difference between an Australian and a canoe?

Answer: A canoe sometimes tips.

There is a great deal of truth to this riddle that has done the rounds of the American tourist industry. It exposes the greatest gulf between our two cultures. It is not that Australians don't tip; they simply *can't* tip. Tipping is un-Australian, it is an unnatural act. It is obscene.

Of course, there are those of us who realize very quickly during our first trip to the US that it is sometimes necessary to practise obscenity in order to survive. You learn very quickly that tipping is a ritual in America and that unless you divine its nuances you will remain a spiritual outcast.

Even if you have convinced yourself to fight your natural urges, the way to enlightenment is not an easy one. You are tarnished with an Australian accent. The moment you open your mouth you can see those Donny Osmond smiles droop. Only slightly though, because these people are true professionals.

Although you have been tainted with the collective guilt of a million antipodean travellers, your waiter will still believe he is in with a chance and he will save any real unpleasantness for after the act. This is American justice at work: you are innocent until proven guilty, except, well . . . hell we pretty much know what's gonna happen, don't we?

It's the porters who prove to be the first embarrassing hurdle in your initiation. Jeez, these blokes are helpful. But why are they still hanging around after they've put your bugs on the minibus to your Anaheim hotel? Suddenly you remember all those scenes from the old Hollywood movies. You do not like embarrassing silences. It is the first day of your holiday; you want to enjoy yourself; you do not want this feeling of

discomfort. But how much do you give them? You really would not have a clue. In all the old movies the skinflint never gives enough. And they were *old* movies. So what do you do?

'There you go,' you say. Jeez, he was grinning from ear to ear so you know you've given him way too much. Make a mental note. You can zero in on the correct amount eventually — after enough mistakes.

The next mistakes is just waiting to happen. It is inevitable after you see that diner across the street from your hotel. You're hoping it will be just like stepping on to the set of an old Hollywood movie. Unfortunately, it's going to be a comedy.

You want to order a coffee and a hunk of pie — it would make it seem more authentic somehow. But you're pretty hungry, so you decide to go for the steak. How could you have messed it up so badly? Try to remember next time that the correct response to 'Well?' is not to repeat that you want a steak but to say 'No, medium thanks'.

But the real problem is still to come. The docket says pay at the cash register. How can you tip if you don't pay the waitress at your table? You make a decision based on your limited experience. Of course it's wrong. You can tell you've committed another *faux pas* by the bewildered look on the face of the woman at the cash register when you give her the extra money and, pointing to the waitress, say 'This is for her'. How were you supposed to know that you should have left the tip on the table?

You have enjoyed the day tour of LA; the tour guide was particularly friendly and helpful. You've found out that it is not Graumann's Chinese Theatre any more, that it is just Mann's and that it has been for a long time. You learn that your handprint is exactly the same size as Tom Selleck's. You discover that the correct spelling is *Venice* Beach and that it wasn't just American pronunciation of *Venus*.



You found out that you would have caught a glimpse of Jimmy Stewart pruning his roses if you had taken yesterday's tour. You also found out that you only have to repeat everything two or three times before the tour guide understands what you're saying. What you have not found out is how much you are supposed to tip the bloke at the end of the day. He didn't look too happy with the \$2 you gave him but, well, you *are* still learning.

It's only when you sit down in a restaurant that you start to feel some confidence. This is one situation you *can* handle. You even tipped once or twice back in Australia, in a fit of madness. But there are some bad omens as the night wears on. You cannot get out of the habit of saying, 'I'm right, thanks', even though you've finally realized it does not mean anything in the US.

And you are beginning to doubt whether this famous American 'service' is quite what it's cracked up to be. It is only a little irritating when the waiter thinks he can put on an Australian accent just because he's seen *Crocodile Dundee* and *Young Einstein*. You also feel like pointing out that the plural form 'G'day mates' simply is not in use. But you do not bother because you do not want to get into a conversation with the condescending bastard.

The real trouble starts at the end of the meal. This

is a new one for you. What do you ask for? It is not the 'bill'; that would be too easy and, besides, something in your television memory needles you, telling you it is wrong. You can't seem to get it into focus though. That's the trouble with anything to do with television: it is not real. Think . . . what *is* the right word? The 'account'? The 'cheque'? Or how about avoiding the problem altogether by saying 'I'd like to pay'? Something tells you 'cheque' is correct but you can't seem to get the word out of your mouth.

'Can we have the . . . um . . .'

'Check, sir?'

'Yes,' you say gratefully, until you notice that faintly amused turn to his lips.

You learn very slowly, mainly from fellow Australians. You can't seem to broach the subject with the Americans you meet. You do not want to expose yourself, and they would not understand anyway. Is it 10 per cent or 15 per cent? Waiters' wages are much lower than those of their Australian counterparts. No double time or even time-and-a-half. You've even heard that they get taxed on what the Government assumes they'll make in tips. Jeez, that means they'll lose money if you don't tip them. So tip them. Just leave it on the table as you go. It's not really that different to Australia . . . who are you kidding?

So you do tip. You give them their bloody gratuity. Boy, were you glad to get rid of all those coins that were weighing your wallet down. What was that word of insult you heard as you walked out the door? Wasn't it enough? Hell, how were you supposed to know that a swag of coins, no matter how much they add up to, is taken as a personal insult? You'll never work these Yanks out!

You eventually reduce the gaffes: a hint here, a clue there. You watch others, trying desperately to pick up how it's done. Relatively insignificant scenes in movies you've seen years ago become meaningful learning experiences. But you never really understand it. It's a sacred rite whose observances we, as outsiders, can mimic, but whose deeper nuances remain forever locked away from us. It is a matter of what you have grown up with. Perhaps there *is* only scant difference between the sacred and the obscene.

It is easy for the obscene nature of tipping to bubble to the surface again as you ruminate on the subject during your taxi ride back to LA Airport. You think of all the money you could have saved if you had not striven with such fervor for redemption. At least you're safe now: no more angry waiters, no more anxiety attacks when smiling faces hover helpfully in your presence. The canoe is in calm waters again.

But hang on . . . it's not quite over. . . . How much *are* you going to give the cab driver?

— Dirk Strasser

I haven't heard from **TOM DISCH** for some time, so I don't know what he's been up to. His recent novel *The MD* has been nominated for the Bram Stoker Award.

TRAVEL

Notes of an AmPart

by Thomas M. Disch

In March 1989 I visited eight cities in India, Pakistan and Israel as an American Participant — an AmPart — for USIS. It was an experience of almost non-stop exhilaration, if I can include in the category of exhilaration the awe of witnessing some vistas and vignettes of Good-Lord-Look-at-That! calamity and squalor. Such as the boy in Calcutta ladling water out of the gutter into a large bronze ewer. Or the goings-on in the Kali Temple, idolatrous practices calculated to turn even a relativist like Einstein into a Methodist missionary. Or just the first whiff of Bombay getting off the plane. But surely no one who's ever read a newspaper undertakes such a trip without the expectation of a few such epiphanies. Forty years ago my jaw first dropped at the photos in Lowell Thomas's travel books showing the diseases of the East; now I've seen them in the flesh.

The wagging of tongues, my own and others, was much more characteristic of my time as an AmPart than jaw-dropping. It was my job and my pleasure to make off-the-cuff speeches, join in workshops and panel discussions, and generally socialize. The speeches and panel discussions were on a variety of literary topics — theatre, children's books, computer-interactive fiction, science fiction (which drew the largest and most lively audiences), and even one high-sounding talk before members of the Department of Dance, Drama and Music at Bangalore University on the assigned theme: 'The Contemporary Artist: Creative Versatility'. I decided that that was an excuse for me to reminisce about my own teenage infatuation with Mrs Andahazy of the Ballet Borealist back in St Paul and my short, happy career as a ballet student, and my latter formative years checking coats, selling orange juice and (thereby) studying drama at the Majestic Theatre.

The venue for this talk was a monastically modest one-storey building, a setting, in the words of my USIS report card, 'reminiscent of the ancient Indian Gurukula system where students sit cross-legged on the floor with the master in front of them'. After the talk, one student asked the old master if he would show him a few steps from Ballet Borealis days. I'm sorry to

say I farked out, citing age and incapacity (in fact, afraid of looking foolish), but wasn't it nice of him to have asked? Indians are masters of the veiled compliment. Another gentleman informed me, after I'd read aloud some poems, that I looked just like another poet, Geoffrey Chaucer. An Indian who's decided he likes you keeps holding your hand as a tender of intimacy well beyond the term of even the warmest handshake. The vocabulary of smiles is larger across the whole spectrum from lemony-sour to blissed out. It was easy to see how someone like Forster, alert to expressions of tenderness and humour, would fall in love with India.

My trip coincided with the period of maximum furor (so far) in the Rushdie affair, and I expected to be called upon to speak up for the Freedom of the Novel in the face of throngs of stone-hurling zealots. In the days before the trip and on the long plane trip I rehearsed any number of courageous and outspoken Statements of Principle that would be, even so, tactful and diplomatic. In the event I only had occasion once to announce myself at one with those other defenders of free speech who'd just been speaking out at the recent PEN media circus in New York. That came as the very last question after my very last appearance in India, and my reply was, just as rehearsed, courageous, outspoken, tactful and diplomatic. I wasn't stoned or booed or even disagreed with (it was getting late), but that was surely because the people who might have wanted to do such things don't usually attend talks by science fiction writers they've never heard of (in India the only sf writer anyone's ever heard of is Isaac Asimov) given on the outskirts of town under the auspices of an electronics concern. There was a good turnout, in fact, but not of would-be assassins of Rushdie or me.

In Pakistan, anti-Rushdie feelings were higher, but in the week I was there, the national mood was one of self-congratulation as the country was celebrating National Pakistan Day after the first democratic election in many years. The newspapers, however, were still full of fulminations against Rushdie and calls for his death. One Karachi letter-writer, after noting that both

Walter Scott and Washington Irving had been guilty of bias and bigotry, declared darkly: 'The very word "Mohammedan", coined by the British in place of the word "Muslim", reflects their intentions and their bias.' Another, in the context of endorsing Khomeini's death threat, observed: 'Once, Sir Bertrand Russell, when asked if he was prepared to die for his beliefs, replied, "Certainly not. After all, I may be wrong." To the same question a good Muslim would give a different reply.' What is most disheartening is that such zealotry (amid other dazzling non sequiturs not quoted here) should have its source not in illiterate, slogan-shouting mobs but from men in command of complex English syntax who can quote Walter Scott and Bertrand Russell. (Though recent WestCiv history has precedents for that, too; Ezra Pound, for openers.)

In Pakistan I was allowed an insight into the frame of mind that lumps fiction together with heresy. After a screening and discussion of *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* at the American Centre in Karachi, a young man came up and, with a puzzled look, asked me if I'd seen *Star Trek: The New Generation*. When I said I had (a fib), he posed this question: *Star Trek* showed mankind adventuring into outer space; *Close Encounters* showed our own planet being visited by aliens; why were there two movies? At first I didn't take in what he was asking, but after some questions back and forth it became clear that to his way of thinking the future was unitary and its depictions should reflect that. The idea of a spectrum of future scenarios representing divergent and contradictory possibilities was esthetically and logically abhorrent to this young man (who, I later learned, was a gifted auto-didact, employed at work requiring a high level of technical capability). It may be that fiction will always be a threatening concept to the fundamentalist (though not necessarily the Muslim) mind, for once one has allowed that one soul-satisfying story is the fabrication of a merely human writer, how shall Holy Writ be preserved from the corrosion of doubt? Simply to pose that question in a fundamentalist society is to invite assassination.

In Israel I was to have served in tandem with Harlan Ellison, but at the eleventh hour Harlan bowed out (he suffers from Barre-Epstein Syndrome, a disease that strikes its victims with a deadly lethargy at unpredictable intervals). I tried to make up to audiences in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem for Harlan's absence by telling them jokes about him, but he was missed — more by me than by anyone, since I had to deliver his talks as well as my own.

After the amazements of the subcontinent, Tel Aviv

was like a New York suburb. Or to quote one of my own haiku/snapshots from the trip:

Engine by New York
and body by Miami
Shalom Tel Aviv

In both cities there were sf readers both knowledgeable and passionate, and ever again our discussions turned to the vexing question of why, with such readerly thirsts to be slaked, Israel had not developed an indigenous science fiction, why sf should always be an imported commodity. Surely the soil ought to be receptive. Israel may well have more book-readers per capita than any country in the world. Many of its basic institutions were the creation of utopian experimenters. And with regard to anxiety for the future — one of the great fertilizers of sf — Israel has an existential edge over even dwellers on the San Andreas Fault. So why (Israeli sf readers fretted) does Hebrew lack its own sf? The most satisfying answer our discussions yielded was that Israel's view of the future must always be seen through the narrow window of opportunity of its immediate geo-political future. The day after tomorrow blots out those galactic vistas that Americans have so long taken for granted, the carefree optimism that assumes that progress is a natural function of an expanding universe.

The most unexpected pleasure of the trip was making the acquaintance of various Foreign Service officers and employees. My prior sense of what such people might be like was based on the TV appearances of Eliot Abrams. The real people I met were nothing like that, but, in varying degrees, forthcoming, articulate, friendly, polymathematically well-informed, and full of curiosity about, and a contagious enthusiasm for, the cultures to which they'd been posted.

Indeed, after four weeks in their company and under their tutelage I was able to add to my list of regrets for the lives I might have had a career in the Foreign Service. But at least, as a novelist, I have the potential consolation of imagining the life I missed having and putting all my wishful misconceptions of what it would have been like into a work of fiction. And some readers may even believe (if I hint at the possibility) that it may not be fiction at all, but a veiled account of what really happened on my Secret Mission of 1989. I mean, why should the State Department be sending science fiction writers half way round the world? There must be more to it than I've let on, don't you suppose?

— Thomas M. Disch, September 1989

GLIMPSES OF A GOLDEN AGE

or how I came to be writing about Adelaide in 1964

by John Bangsund

It's hard to believe now, but from 1961 to 1965 I was respectably employed as a librarian at the Victorian Railways Institute. In my spare time, which seemed endless, I read good books, listened to good music, watched good films, travelled a lot around Victoria, and wrote about these and other things in a diary. Something of a republican even then, when Queen Elizabeth visited Melbourne in 1962 I didn't stay in town for the show but went off to Portland, stayed in a cheap pub, and read nothing but Shakespeare for three or four days. I lived alone, but I had a social life that now seems extraordinarily active. I joined the ALP, indeed belonged to the same branch as Barry Jones (then emerging as Australia's greatest TV quiz champion, now national president of the ALP). I was moderately active in Amnesty, writing swingeing letters to foreign dictators, who never wrote back. I went to concerts and films and exhibitions, usually with some bright girl I had met in the library. I did not watch television. I did not read science fiction. At a party in 1963 I met Lee Harding. I was 24. My life was about to change in a way I could never have imagined.

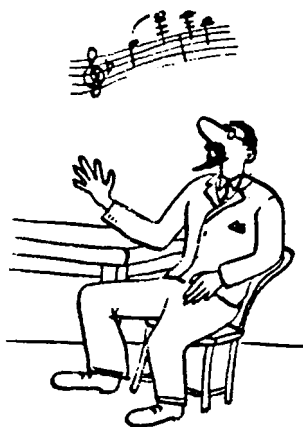
'You go through Bayswater and head for The Basin,' Lee said, when I accepted his invitation to dinner, 'you'll come to a service station on your right, then our place is the third house along. You can't see it from the road.' Lee and Carla's place was full of books and music, and I felt at home the moment I arrived. And we had so much to talk about! I believe I stayed the night. Lee was very tactful about science fiction, barely mentioning it. Knowing my background as a theological student, before I left Lee gave me a copy of Arthur C. Clarke's 'The Nine Billion Names of God' and invited me to comment some time on the theology in it. The hell with theology! I was suddenly and most unexpectedly hooked on science fiction. Lee introduced me to the best and most interesting writers, and I couldn't get enough of them. On a long trip to Queensland later that year I read nothing but sf. Some of the places I stayed in are linked still in my mind with the books I read there.

Lee also introduced me to fanzines and fandom, and eventually fans. I met the fans' voices first. Lee was part of a round-robin continuing conversation on tape with John Foyster, John Baxter and Bob Smith. I think I met John Baxter first, on that trip to Queensland. We

sat at either end of a sofa in his Sydney flat, sneaking glances at each other, because Lee had told us that we looked and talked alike. Apart from agreeing that we didn't, I remember little of that meeting with John Baxter. His interests overlapped with Lee's, but not much with mine. I met John Foyster some time in late 1963 or early 1964. I couldn't quite relate the man to his voice or his fanzines, and didn't know what to make of him at all. He was the youngest of us. He seemed at once shy and arrogant, considerate and condescending. I had never met anyone with such a sharp wit. When I read Shelley's comment on his friend Peacock, 'His fine wit makes such a wound the knife is lost in it,' I thought instantly of Foyster. We established a mutual respect from the start, but it says something about both of us that I was surprised, years later, to realize that he had long regarded me as a friend: such a great honor I thought he bestowed sparingly. John Foyster is probably friend to more people than anyone else I know.

In 1963 Lee and Carla became, almost literally overnight, my best friends. Lee was an enthusiast, a man born to make discoveries and share them as quickly as possible, then move on to the next. I have something of that in my own nature, so Lee and I sparked each other off. I spent most weekends at Lee and Carla's place, and during the week Lee and I had long conversations on the telephone. 'Are you two lovers or something?' my mother once asked me — a question that embarrassed me no end. 'Tell her I've got a bum like a peach,' Lee suggested when I told him. He wasn't quite as fast as Foyster, but close.

As I recall, Lee didn't actively encourage me to write. In fact my first fanzine writing appeared in John Foyster's *Satura* — a letter or two, maybe other things, nothing of any merit. But I had been writing for years, in my diary and occasionally elsewhere, and I desperately wanted to convince Lee that I had at least the makings of a real writer, the sort of writer who could be published, perhaps even for money. One night I gave him a short story to read. He read it, in total silence. He finished it, got up quietly from his chair, walked quietly to the back door, opened it, and shouted into the night: 'Speeee-yew!' Well, I didn't think much of it either, but I was hoping for some sort of constructive comment. As he came back into the room and we fell about in convulsive laughter, I knew he had given



me far more than that.

The third Adelaide Festival of Arts was held in March 1964. I took a fortnight's leave from the library and went to Adelaide. I had visited Adelaide three times before, during the 1950s, and had good memories of the place. It is still my favorite Australian capital city: Sally and I lived there for a while in the late 70s, and would have stayed there indefinitely if there had been work for me. My budget for that trip in 1964 was minimal, though it seems luxurious now. I had paid for my train fare and modest accommodation, and for tickets to the main things I wanted to see, and had a few pounds left over. I did a lot of walking in Adelaide, far more than I could believe when I moved there twelve years later, but I was young then. It was early autumn. Everything about the place was luminous, golden: the train's early morning descent through the glorious Adelaide hills, the trees along the Torrens, the late sun on the city buildings, the day's memories as I returned to the caravan park at Hackney.

At the Railways Institute in Adelaide, where I was welcomed as a messenger from some higher plane of existence (my library had thirty branches, theirs none), I was given an office and a typewriter, and there I wrote another story, 'The Beheading of Basil Pott'. From that office, and from my little rented house in Hackney, I also wrote a lot of letters to Lee Harding. When I returned to Melbourne I couldn't believe Lee's excitement. He wanted to publish my story. He wanted to publish my letters. He wanted to publish a *fanzine*. He had published *fanzines* before, but nothing like what he had in mind now. This one would be something really special, and he would call it *Canto*.

The rest of 1964, outside of working hours, was

mainly taken up with *Canto*, a lady named Carolyn and a 1952-vintage car. 'An *Alvis*!' Lee cried in some mixture of disbelief and despair as I drove my limousine up his driveway at The Basin. At least he knew what it was. I had long been a connoisseur of motor-car design, and in 1952 had fallen in love with the *Alvis* TA-21 at the Melbourne Motor Show. I never thought I would own one, but there it was, in mid-1964, a snip at £500. Carolyn liked it. I met her the night before I left for Adelaide, and saw the *Alvis* in a used-car lot in Prahran one day on my way to her place. Lee never entirely approved of Carolyn or the *Alvis*.

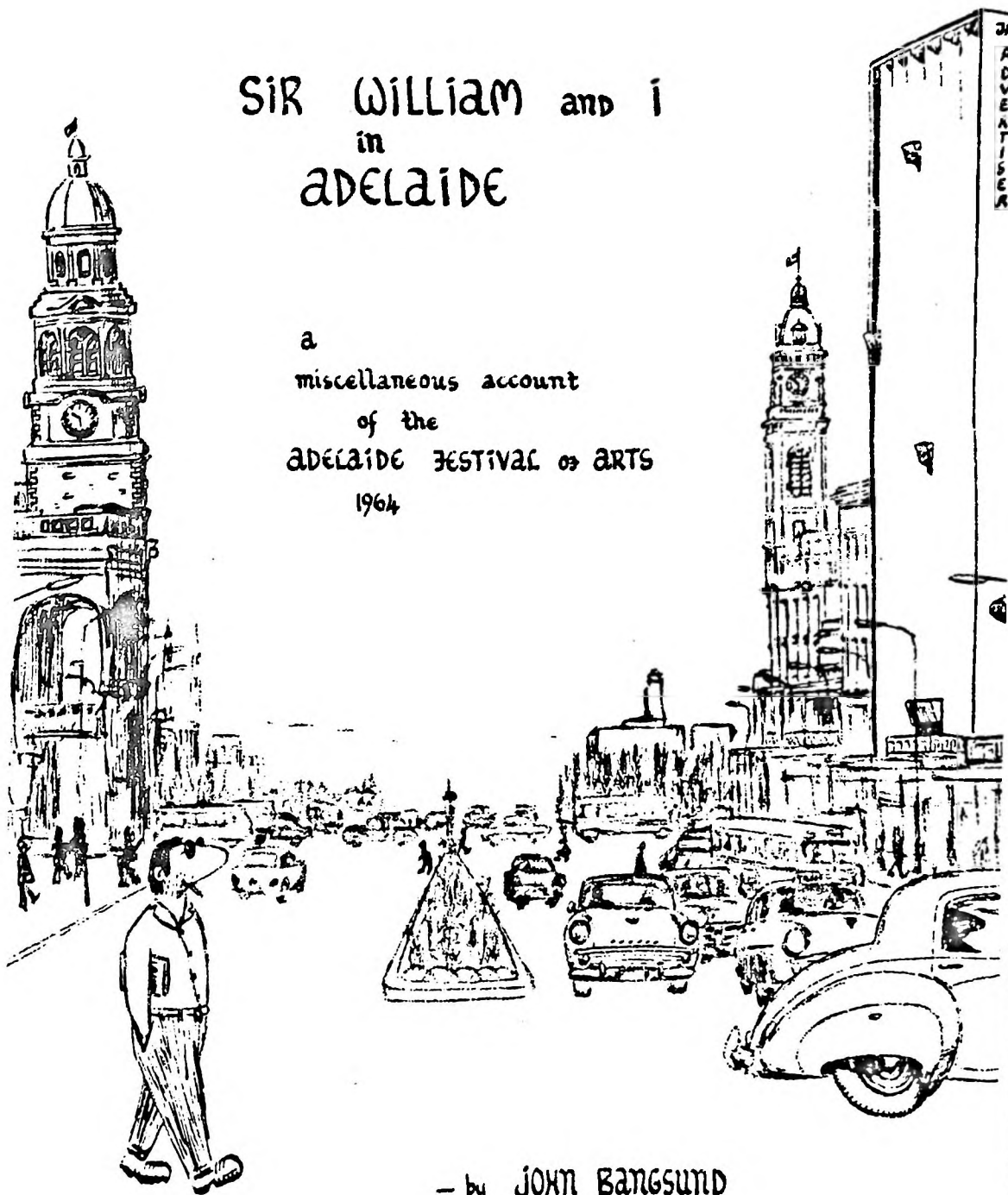
One day Carolyn and I drove to Olympic Park to watch John Foyster running in some athletic meeting. I parked the car in Batman Avenue. We cheered John when we saw him, but he probably didn't hear us. Shortly after there was an announcement on the PA system: in a very plummy voice an official said that if anyone present owned a black *Alvis* sedan (not mine, I thought, mine is black and silver-grey), registration number WT-962 (but that *is* my number, I thought), they should inspect it at their earliest convenience, since it appeared to be on fire. The *Alvis*, it turned out, wasn't actually on fire, but was close to it. Carolyn and I were both smokers, and one of us had dropped live ash on a cloth that I kept under one of the front seats. The car was billowing smoke when we reached it. I doubt that John Foyster ran faster that day than I did.

Meanwhile, back at The Basin . . . I was very fond of ellipses in those days, as you will see. Lee didn't seem to mind them. I can't recall now whether Lee or I cobbled my Adelaide letters together to make up the piece we called 'Sir William and I in Adelaide', but I suspect I did. The uninspired introduction and ending are certainly mine. Rereading the piece after all these years was an unexpected pleasure: on the whole it is embarrassing, but I like its exuberance — and the touches of humor that creep in here and there between the bouts of labored witticism. But I must say that I have long since become very fond of Walton's music.

Canto 1 appeared early in 1965. As well as my piece on the Adelaide Festival, it included my Basil Pott story, a fannish comic strip based on Walt Kelly's Pogo characters that I did later in 1964, and pieces by Foyster, Bob Smith and Don Symons (a superb writer, known to the great world, if at all, as the father of the rock musician Red Symons). For the second issue John Foyster wrote about Dame Joan Sutherland and Don Symons wrote about his career in gold-smuggling, and other things were written or planned, but *Canto* 2 never appeared. In 1966 John Foyster organized a science fiction convention, the first in Australia since 1958. Today's Australian fandom, and much of our science fiction, had its origins in that convention. In turn, that convention had some of its origins in a house near The Basin that you can't see from the road, and a caravan park in Hackney that has long since gone, and a *fanzine* that appeared just once.

SIR WILLIAM and I in ADELAIDE

a
miscellaneous account
of the
ADELAIDE FESTIVAL OF ARTS
1964



- by JOHN BANGSUND

Sir William and I in Adelaide:

**A miscellaneous account of
the Adelaide Festival of Arts 1964**

Text and cartoons by John Bangsund

It all began rather badly. The train arrived an hour behind time. The taxi driver switched on his meter and insisted there was no such place as the Adelaide Caravan Park at Hackney. As the pennies flipped over he fumbled with a street directory until I took it from him and pointed to Bruton Street. 'Aw — that's Hackney Caravan Park,' he said. 'Well, whatever it's called, let's go there!'

We went, he grumbling, driving like a madman all the way.

The lady proprietor calls it the Adelaide Caravan Park, too, and she said she wasn't expecting me so early and didn't I have a car? She escorted me to my home-for-a-fortnight: a large, rather bare room in a rambling old house, sunlight streaming through a huge window, and outside shrubs and flowers and trees full of singing birds. There didn't seem much in the room that needed cleaning, but she said that she had to, so I pocketed a paperback, locked my coat and bags away, wiped Victorian cobwebs from my sunglasses, and

with a mental fanfare set out to walk into Adelaide.

Along the banks of the Torrens, through a beautiful park, my head full of Beethoven's Sixth and e. e. cummings's 'always it's spring & everyone's in love and the flowers pick themselves' — past the zoo and the university and into North Terrace, where pretty girls stroll by Elder Hall, the National Gallery, the War Memorial — where music spouts gaily from lamp posts and every autumn tree litters the pavement with dead leaves and expiring crotchets.

Crowds of people parading King William Street. Dignitaries assembling outside the Town Hall for the Prime Minister's official opening of the Festival. I escaped from people and canned music into an espresso joint around the corner, and as I sat reading could hear faintly the mechanical periods of Sir Robot Menses. Then the bands played, the procession of floats and marching girls, clowns, bagpipes, whistles and streamers started, and I strolled out to watch them.

Saturday night. The Bayanihan Philippine Dance Company: 'the most exciting dancers in the world'. Well, hardly. But quite good fun, even if the primitive tribal dances resembled nothing so much as a well-organized boy-scout corroboree — and some of the Spanish items rather sedate square dances. From a good seat in Melbourne's Princess Theatre I would probably have enjoyed this show immensely, but from my twelve-shilling seat in the Thebarton Town Hall, having paid to see dancers, I found it impossible to see any part of the performers' anatomies below the knees.

In Adelaide as in Melbourne, there are only two kinds of public entertainment provided on Sundays. You can go to church or pop out to the airport and see the planes come in. I went to church — to a spanking new Protestant chapel in an outer suburb, where a former colleague is preacher. His church looks rather like a factory from the outside and a concert hall inside. Depressingly bright, spacious — and underpopulated. Is it a characteristic of Protestants only that they prefer to sit at the rear of their churches — or is this common to all denominations?

When Alan recognized me he nearly fell out of his



pulpit. If he had heard the slightly scurrilous words I sang to his dreadful washed-in-the-blood-type hymns he might have raced down and ejected me from the service. Then again, perhaps he hadn't chosen the hymns and was himself singing his own words to them. Who knows? Most sensitive preachers have some mental reservations of one kind or another. So, you feel like singing, but you don't like the words. Freedom of worship, you know, and to each his own and all that. And there was this little girl kneeling on her chair in front of me and we made faces at each other during the prayers — so altogether it wasn't an entirely unenterprising evening.

Monday night at the Regent Theatre, Rundle Street. Dr Krips, the South Australian Symphony Orchestra, Miss Nancy Thomas and Mr Richard Lewis. Crowds of people rippling in little arpeggios from their classical Rovers, Wagnerian Chryslers, atonal Citroens, thronging the entrance to this beautiful theatre. Dress and conversation formal. Inside, the pretty usherettes tripping breathless septuplets (seven to my four) up and down the steep aisles. Soon nearly every seat is occupied. Here is this great orchestra, ready after months of strenuous rehearsal to bring us the first symphony concert of the Festival. To thunderous applause, Dr Krips appears. God saves the Queen. We are seated again. There is a silent feeling of tense excitement as the baton is raised . . . the instruments poised ready . . . a thrill of expectancy. . .

And whadda we hear?? Bom-bom-bom-bah!! Beethoven's Fifth. Ah well. . . We settle back to hear the old warhorse charge again. Once more I listen in vain for Helen's goblins, as memories of that celebrated concert in *Howards End* come back: Helen and Margaret, and Mrs Munt tapping out the tunes, and Helen walking off with that poor blighter's broly. . . Do you know what E. M. Forster has to say about this work? 'It will be generally admitted that Beethoven's Fifth Symphony is the most sublime noise that has ever been penetrated into the ears of man.' Hmn. . .

Mahler's *Song of the Earth* has its moments, thanks largely to Richard Lewis. Since he knows the work so well and doesn't need to sing from the score, he entertains us with his impressions of a drunken man singing (which Mahler may or may not have required from his male soloist). I found myself wishing for Maureen Forrester instead of Nancy Thomas — a lady with undoubted gifts but, to my ears, a rather grandmotherly voice. The orchestra played all of the notes as written, often making them sound just like music by Mahler, and on the whole, if one overlooked their dreary, interminable last movement, it wasn't too bad a performance of a difficult work.

Tuesday afternoon finds me at Elder Hall, where I sit jammed uncomfortably into the sweating midst of eight-hundred-odd people listening to Alfred Deller

and Co. singing English and Italian madrigals. A spiritual delight — but a physical ordeal. What a pity that such an intimate kind of music has become a sort of museum-piece to be heard only in a crowded hall like this. (Back in the pre-TV era my family often gathered around the piano to sing hymns and 'community' songs: I wonder if, hundreds of years hence, people will fill halls to listen to dedicated little groups singing 'The Rose of No Man's Land' and 'The Old Rugged Cross'.)

Deller is a tall, bulky, precarious-looking bod with gleaming eyes and a Van Dyke beard. He speaks with a cultured, middle-range voice which reminded me, incongruously, of Terry-Thomas. To see him and to hear him talk you would scarcely suspect the fantastic singing voice of this eminent counter-tenor.

The Adelaide Town Hall is about as commodious as Melbourne's Assembly Hall, which explains why concerts of any size here are presented in the Regent Theatre. Tonight in the Town Hall the Australian Youth Orchestra under John Hopkins plays to a smallish audience comprised (apparently) of the performers' relatives. Because they have picked on something more their own size, this orchestra provides a much more satisfying concert than Monday night's offering. Franck's *Symphonic Variations* are well played: soloist Miss Lyall Duke is one of your slumping, jerking, theatrical-type pianists — but a jolly good one. Dvorak's Eighth Symphony also goes splendidly, with just the right lyrical approach and the loud parts played with great gusto. The kids enjoy themselves — and I share their enjoyment.

At nine-fifty Mr Hopkins is incited to perform two encores. Then, after sustained applause, he motions for silence and from the audience Professor Bishop gives a little speech and requests a standing ovation. Which



was well deserved and also a rather smart move for, standing, there was nothing more for us to do than to walk out. But for this I can just imagine the orchestra playing encores until midnight.

I dawdled a while over a leisurely cappuccino, trying not to look too obviously at the lovely lady in the black low-cut bosom, and then walked home. Unfortunately not with her. Blonde she was, and of Monroesque stature. Can't have everything, says I, striding past the Hackney Bus Depot, and certainly I'm having a healthy, invigorating holiday — living on wheatmeal biscuits and black coffee, with an occasional wiener schnitzel. Up at the crack of midday without fail, and I've walked easily six miles today. . .

Dean and Bennie are good friends of mine, and they have a brand-new baby named Andrew who is fascinated by the process of somebody lighting and smoking a cigarette. He amuses himself playing with the butts and tasting them, while Dean — my old roommate at college — and Bennie — friend of my youth-camp days and later my long-suffering parishioner at Newmarket — and I talk about old times and what's happened since. While I seem to have become a sort of semi-ethical hedonist, they are now Presbyterians. We got stuck into our respective philosophies, and they were rather disturbed by my 'constructive nihilism'. We'd about reached the point of writing farewell notes and taking hemlock when the situation was saved by the timely *deus ex machina* arrival of their friendly neighbourhood clergyman. Who turned out to a sane and likeable gentleman indeed — an expounder of honest-to-godism and organizer of teenage jazz-band church services. Having read about but never attended such a gathering, I promised to go to church on Sunday to hear his combo.

Came Sunday, and two blocks away from the Presbyterian church you could hear the steady beat and the saxophone wailing 'Count Your Blessings', which I felt might turn out to be rather apt advice. Another un-church-looking building, but inside I find the all-purpose design countered by a friendly, relaxed, informal atmosphere. The place was packed with teenagers — and a few adults. The minister wore a grey suit with a collar and tie. No clerical trimmings. Piano, drum, double bass and saxophone escorted us dirge-like through the pitiful hymns. A girl read a prayer, a boy with a Beate haircut read the lesson, two more girls took up the collection. The sermon was of the predictable 'you don't have to be a square to be a Christian' variety. When the religious bit was all over we were served coffee, moved the chairs back, and danced. At least, the kids did. We went home. Back up the hill, past the Pentecostal chapel — where I imagine those conservative brethren had spent the night praying for their depraved Presbyterian neighbours.

What really annoyed me about this jazz gimmick was having to sing the 'Exodus' song and 'I'll Walk

With God' and so on. This stuff is cheap and corny: it smacks of *Reader's Digest* religion. If the church must be modern, then let it be virile — not trite and sentimental.

Wednesday. And here I am squatting on the banks of the Torrens about a mile or so north-west of the city. Before me the great tent in which *Henry V* is to be staged. Having arrived early I am now occupying my time looking at the river and soaking up sunshine. This is the quiet end of the Torrens. After its plunge over the weir and gentle descent through a series of smaller dams, this is where the river disappears. I have heard tall stories about 'pulling the plug out and losing the Torrens': now I see the point.

Children laughing, dogs darting about them. Two small boys paddling a log in midstream. Disconsolate gulls, squawking, lazily gliding. Gentle rippling water lapping the reeds. Along the opposite bank a toy train goes clattering and whistling into town. Yonder the encircling hills and, closer, peeping over the tree tops, the few tall buildings of Adelaide.

Henry V is great. Henry himself much younger than I imagine him, but played convincingly. Katherine charming. Under the gloomy canvas, gathered on three sides of the raised and projected stage, the audience sits intent, watching the heroic clamour, pious sentimentality and pathetic goonery of Willy Waggedagger. Nervous titters from the school kids at this afternoon's matinee, and loud guffaws from others at some of the master's bawdy wisecracks — such as the Constable of France complimenting the Dauphin on his 'whoresmanship'.

Afterwards, a pleasant walk back into town, where I am delighted to find in my café the Philippine dancers. These girls — what luscious dolls they are, close up! Yowee! I nearly eat my serviette . . . One of the men (just my cursed luck!) invites himself to my table and leafs through my *Henry V* program. He won't be led into conversation. Finally asks if I'm in the Australian Ballet (!), and departs without comment to my regretful answer.

Call me Fred. My real name is Augustus — Augustus Needle — but my fellow inmates call me Fred. I lived in a street in Fitzroy — the better part of Fitzroy, you understand. A pretty place. On a spring day the sun's last dying rays turn the rubbish tins to crimson and gleam from the fish-heads in the iridescent gutters.

Now, in our street there was this little old lady, see. . .

It's Thursday, and I've been working on the first chapter of my novel. The above's as far as I've got so far — but I have decided on the title. I will call it 'The Old Lady of Fred Needle's Street'. But perhaps you are more interested in the Festival than my literary efforts

ACT III.

SCENE I.—FRANCE. Before Harfleur.

Enter KING HENRY, EXETER, BEDFORD, GLOSTER, and Soldiers, with scaling-ladders.

K. Hen. Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more;
Close the wall up with our English dead!
In peace there's nothing a becomes a man
As modest stillness and humility;
But when the blast of war blows in our ears,
Then imitate the action of the tiger;
Stiffen the sinews, summon up the blood,
Disguise fair nature with hard-favour'd rage;
Then lend the eye a terrible aspect;
Let it pry through the portage of the head
Like the brass cannon; let the brow o'erwhelm it

As fearfully as deth a galled rock
O'erhang and jutty his confounded base,
Swill'd with the wild and wasteful ocean.
Now set the teeth and stretch the nostril wide;
Hold hard the breath, and bend up every spirit
To his full height!—On, on, you noble English!
Whose blood is fet from fathers of war-proof!
Fathers that, like so many Alexanders,
Have in these parts from morn till even fought,
And sheath'd their swords for lack of argument!

Dishonour not your mothers; now attest
That those whom you call'd fathers did beget you!

Be copy now to man of grosser blood,
And teach them how to war!—And you, good yeomen,
Whose limbs were made in England, show us here

The mettle of your pasture; let us swear
That you are worth your breeding; which I
doubt not;

For there is none of you so mean and base,
That hath not noble lustre in your eyes.
I see you stand like greyhounds in the slips,
Straining upon the start. The game's afoot!
Follow your spirit; and upon this charge
Cry—God for Harry! England!—and Saint George!

[Exeunt. Alarum, and chambers go off within.]

Enter NYM, BARDOLPH, PISTOL, and Boy.

Bard. On, on, on, on! to the breach, to the breach!

Nym. Pray thee, corporal, stay: the knocks are too hot; and, for mine own part, I have not use of lives: the humour of it is too hot, that very plain-song of it.

The plain-song is most just; for humours do abound:

Boy. As duty, as
As bird do.

Enter 1

Flu. Up to the peak
you callous!

Pist. Be merciful
mould!

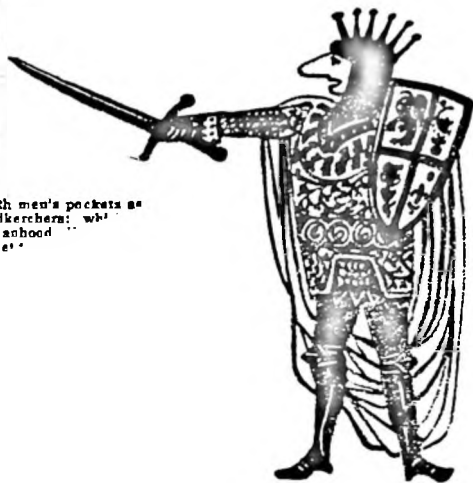
Abs. thy rage, abs
Abs thy rage, abs
Good hawkcock, bat
Nym. These be
our wine had hum
[Exit]

Boy. As your
these three are
three; but all
serve me, could
three such and
Bardolph. — by
by the means
not. For Pist
a quiet sword:
words and kee
he hath hear
best men; an
prayers lest
his few bad
good deeds; i
but his own,
he was drun
call it mutch
here it twi
bulgence, a
brothers in d
fire-shovel: I
men would ca
as familiar with men's pockets as
or their handkerchiefs; wh
against my manhood
another's pocket
pocketing up
and seek son
against my w
cast it up.

Re-enter

Cow. Cap
scently to the
speak with

Flu. To
not so good
the mir
[Exit]



—so let me tell you about Sir William Walton and how he arrived here last week and announced to the press that he didn't like 'festivals'.

Equipped with transistor radio, unshelled peanuts and an SF novel I once again ventured to the Regent. Bulging pockets, unshaven chin, dirty shoes and an egg-splattered duffle coat seemed to set me apart from the dazzling dames and their dashing dons in that glittering audience as I scaled the steps, the STEPS, the thousand steps to Row Z, high up on the back wall. Here let me remark that from my observation on two occasions I have concluded that the Regent suffers from acoustic feedback: to all the orchestral items an interminable rumbling accompaniment. I felt quite at home. . .

In this vast audience once more there is a tense thrill of etcetera. Now onto the stage shambles Sir Willy Wally and there is Thunderous Applause. He turns to the orchestra, which was also present, and raises his

venerable hands. At the sight of those uplifted hands the audience leaps to its feet as one man. The national anthem. And what a performance! Vivid, exciting, majestic, yet reverent, a profound and memorable interpretation of a favourite work. But for its sacred nature all of us — oh yes! all of us! — would have applauded that soul-stirring sound. As we regain our seats perspiration spangles their brows and there is sweat on mine. What a fantastic beginning to a concert!

I have heard the opinion expressed that William Walton is the greatest figure in English music since Purcell. Perhaps the bearer of this interesting hypothesis has heard something that wasn't presented in Adelaide, and if so, why wasn't it? Certainly, on the strength of *Façade*, *Variations on a Theme of Hindemith's*, the Cello Concerto, the First Symphony, *Belshazzar's Feast* and the opera *Troilus and Cressida* I would not deny him his place in English music, but he is by no means the 'greatest since Purcell'. Where

shall we place Elgar, Holst, Vaughan Williams, Britten — even Delius — on the composers' premiership ladder? Assuming that we need such a ladder.

The best part of the concert was Mr Whitehead's performance on the cello. At times, sawing away like a Paganini possessed, I could imagine him cursing the grey-headed one so nonchalantly beating time above him and determining to batter the perpetrator of this pointless frenzy about the ears with a blunt bassoon or boil his body in one of the seven kettle drums littering the stage. Ah, the bangs and thumps and irrelevant squeaks we heard that night — every noise an orchestra can make. Mind you, all organized with mathematical precision — every whizz, blast and thud timed exquisitely. I don't know; perhaps Walton's music isn't pretentious at all; perhaps the profundity I looked for wasn't there and was never intended and all this was just good fun. . .

The next night's concert provided much more interesting musical fare. The Festival Chamber Music Players presented a Handel Concerto Grosso, Mozart's Symphony for Strings, Strauss's beautiful *Duet Concertino for Clarinet, Bassoon, Strings and Harp*, Britten's *Simple Symphony*, and a *Petite Symphonie Concertante for Harp, Harpsichord, Piano and String Orchestra* by the Swiss composer Frank Martin. Frank Martin is pronounced Frongk Mahtan, si vous parlez français, or Frank Martin, if you don't.

Excuse me while I go for a walk. The ground here is spread with gravel and I like to make irritating gravelly noises while I walk and perhaps wake some of the lucky bastards who sleep normal hours. . . Ah, that's better. Outside it's cold and dark, no lights anywhere, wind sighing in the trees, and noises, weird noises like unfriendly aliens (I've been reading Sturgeon), and only the crunch, crunch of my lonely footsteps. . . shudder! . . . pardon me, I'll just check again that I really have bolted my door. . .

Being an inveterate non-reader of newspapers, Friday night found me standing cold and vaguely anxious outside the Centennial Hall, where Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem* would have been presented if one of the principal singers hadn't developed bronchitis or something. And a devil of a job it was getting my money back on Saturday morning. Allan's close their booking office at 11 and I arrived there at 11.05. But I wasn't the only one. I haven't figured out why, but there was this little bloke holding a long rope stretched across one end of the shop, keeping people back from the booking office, and he mumbled something about seeing the manager and before I knew it there I was, holding a rope in a music shop somewhere in Adelaide and all those strange people glaring at me and, well, I

felt rather a nit.

After a prolonged lunch I sauntered along to Elder Hall to hear Alfred Deller's final concert. Which was excellent. Then a leisured walk through the National Gallery — wonderful Boyds, crazy modern stuff from the Stuyvesant collection, delightful Eskimo artefacts, and awe-inspiring bits and pieces of ancient Gothickry — and then to Victoria Square, where I lounged about looking at the birds. Now, here is a Funny Thing: several times during the day I had experienced a Premonition. Considering my depleted treasury, wouldn't it be a typically Bangsundian thing if I missed the train home? I resolved to leave plenty of time to walk to the station.

I spent nearly an hour and all but my last one-and-tenpence in the café near the Town Hall, where the proprietor has the delightful habit of switching off the telly and playing chess with his customers. Alternately reading *Henderson the Rain King* and watching their R-KB1ch K-N1 R-B8ch! I at length heard the Town Hall clock striking 6.45, debated whether to continue reading or to walk slowly down to the station. Deciding the latter, I made my way down King William Street, looking in the shop windows, admiring the sunset and the dolls.

At the station I asked a luggage clerk for my travelling bag, thinking I would first find my berth on the train and then return to lug the case down. I asked him where I could find the 'Overland'. 'Down along there, through the glass doors, across the hall, down the stairs, and Platform 11's a little way along on yer right. And it leaves in three minutes I think yer'll find.'

I grabbed the case as well, and ran down there and through the doors and saw two sets of stairs across the hall amazingly I chose the right ones along the platform flung the case and myself into the first sleeping car I came to and — the train moved off.

As close as that. The train had of course left on time — Adelaide time — and I nearly hadn't. So, it almost ended rather badly, too.

— John Bangsund, March 1964



HOW I BECAME AN EDITOR

by John Bangsund

(Reprinted with permission from *The Society of Editors Newsletter*, September–October 1992.)

I became head librarian at the VRI in 1962. My predecessor, a man past retiring age, had run the Victorian branch of the Returned Servicemen's League from his office and more or less let the library run itself. I was very impressed by the activities of the VRI earlier in the century, when it was a workers' educational, cultural and recreational centre — part of the same movement as the Mechanics' Institutes. For years it ran lecture meetings, addressed by outstanding men (invariably men) from all fields of endeavour, and by all accounts the meetings were packed. I recall seeing Bernard O'Dowd's name on one of the programs, and he was talking about poetry, not about parliamentary draftsmanship (his day job). There were concerts. The library thrived: among its old books that had survived was a huge leather-bound set of Wagner's operas; the dates stamped in the volumes were many. In 1962 the two main activities of the Institute were industrial training (courses on signalling, basic electricity and the like) and sport. The library's annual loan rate had peaked during the Depression, fallen slowly during the 1940s and 50s, and by comparison had all but collapsed after 1956, when television came to Melbourne. I felt like changing some of this, and I did.

I removed the maze of balustrades and grilles from the library, changing it from a fortress into a big open space. I hung framed prints of early Melbourne about the place and brought in armchairs and a goldfish tank. I set up a collection of children's books. I abolished the Dewey system from the small non-fiction section, and doubled its size. My predecessor had kept the motor-repair manuals in a locked cupboard in his office; I put them out on the shelves, and increased the section tenfold. I wrote a book column for the *Railways Newsletter* and ran ads for the library in the weekly gazette. I founded the VRI Music Club, organizing regular concerts in the library of recorded classical music, and wrote the program notes for them. I visited the branch libraries much more often than they were used to, and upgraded their collections. I encouraged the opening of new branches. My reward for all this was suspicion from the general office and enthusiasm from the library's users. By 1965 the annual loan rate had shot up to a figure approaching those of the early 1950s, and my expenditure on acquisitions had set entirely new

records. By 1965 I knew I wanted to be a book editor. The general office was pleased to see me go.

The library was unusual in that it was able to buy books directly from publishers at trade rates. This meant that publishers' sales reps visited me regularly, and they usually went away happy. The reps were mostly interesting blokes (all men, yes), but I was surprised at how *unbookish* most of them were. When I mentioned this to Jim Ellis,² one of the reps from Cassell, he said that booksellers were much the same: among the people he called on there were only three who were good for a bookish conversation, and I was one of them. He could talk at length with anyone about the trade and books in general, but with me he could talk about Dostoevsky and Iris Murdoch, Nietzsche and Michael Innes, Joyce Cary and Kazantzakis and Camus. Jim was a bright, gentle, witty man, and we got on famously. He liked *Canto* when I gave him a copy. (So did Max Harris in Adelaide. On the strength of my drawings in *Canto* he commissioned me to illustrate an article by Andrew Fabinyi in *Australian Book Review*. I have not been commissioned to illustrate anything since, with good reason.)

Canto 2 went unpublished mainly, I think, because Lee Harding lost interest, or simply couldn't afford it, but in some part (I didn't want to cloud the 'golden age' with this kind of talk) because I hated the way he edited me — my writing and even my drawings. Lee's writing has always been good, in recent years very good indeed: his *Displaced Person* hasn't been out of print since it won the Children's Book of the Year Award in 1980. But when it came to editing, in 1965 anyway, Lee had a tin ear. He was an interventionist editor, as every editor must be at times, but he didn't know how to intervene sympathetically. He seemed to have no respect for other people's writing, which to my mind was the first duty of an editor: not that their words were sacred, but neither are they raw material. I was sure that I could out-edit Lee any time, and Jim Ellis encouraged me in this belief.

Jim also encouraged me in the belief that I could get into book-editing by the back door. Australian publishing was still in its infancy, but there were signs that it was about to grow up in a hurry. Jim and I were confident that if I could get some kind of job in publishing, sooner or later my talents would be recognized. So I went to Cassell and began my short career as the world's worst sales representative. Oh, I wasn't that

bad, but I didn't have the killer instinct needed for the work — and I wasn't helped by Cassell's firm-sale policy. When you ordered books from Cassell you were stuck with them: other publishers were experimenting with sale-or-return, but not Cassell. During my two years with the company they introduced something much more controversial — the closed market. This relieved booksellers of the burden of overstocking, but it also reduced their profit margin. The retail price of a book had always been twice its landed cost; in the closed market the price remained the same, but the bookseller's margin was reduced from half to one-third. The truly professional booksellers protested mightily. Frank Cheshire, one of the most successful and influential booksellers in Melbourne, caused a sensation in the trade when he stopped buying books from Cassell. (But he went on buying Cassell's books, through Oxford University Press. Oxford were in a building close to Cheshire's main shop, and Frank Eyre and Frank Cheshire were good friends.)

This isn't telling you much about how I became an editor, but it may explain the kind of editor I became. I wasn't interested in the politics of publishing, or for that matter the business of publishing — more exactly, I wasn't interested in getting involved in such things and turning them to advantage. I was interested in the books themselves, and in doing what I could to get the books to the people who wanted them. I had done this at the library; I went on doing it at Cassell. When advance copies of the *Jerusalem Bible* arrived at Cassell no-one knew what to do with them: the company already had Eyre & Spottiswoode's *real* Bibles, and sold them in great quantities; what could they do with a new translation from Darton, Longman & Todd — and a *Catholic* translation at that? I went to Melbourne's biggest Catholic bookshop, took an order for a thousand copies, and listened to what I was told about this Bible. And I read it, and loved the translation. I sold hundreds of copies to religious booksellers, and dozens to general booksellers, and single copies to little country bookshops and newsagencies in three States, from Albany to Orbest to Ulverstone (five States if you count places like Albury and Mount Gambier, which were on my country runs); by the time I left Cassell I had sold about three thousand copies. DL&T also published things like *The Ancren Riwle*, translated by Tolkien, and I sold a swag of those too. Cassell was lucky to have a former theological student on their sales staff; otherwise they might have lost the agency. I was lucky I did so well with the religious list; otherwise I might have lost my job much earlier.

A new sales rep was taken on in 1967 while I was in Western Australia, and by the time I returned he had sold vast quantities of books to people I had already called on with the same list. He knew nothing about books, but he could sell anything to anyone. Soon afterwards Jim Moad called me to his office and encouraged me to resign. Jim had worked his way up

from storeman to sales rep to sales manager to managing director of Cassell Australia. Jim said he had hoped I would go a long way in the company. I said I had enjoyed being a rep, even if I wasn't much good at it, but what I really wanted was to be an editor. Jim was sympathetic — but life wasn't lie that, he said; sometimes it wasn't possible to do what you want to do; what *he* really wanted to do, he said, was play the stock market. Instead of which, I thought, you are stuck here as Australian head of a great publishing house. The irony of it! — the absurdity! I went off and got a job as production scheduler at a Dunlop tyre factory. It was great: I could do a week's work in two days and spend the rest of the time reading.

The first book editors I ever met were Andrew Fabinyi and David New, at Cheshire's in 1959. Six years later I met Bob Sessions, the editor at Cassell. I volunteered to read proofs, and enjoyed such books as Peter Mathers' *Trap* and Thomas Keneally's *Bring Larks and Heroes*. I gave Bob a long list of queries for Keneally, and I believe Keneally accepted some of my suggestions. I can't recall Bob encouraging my ambition to be an editor. Maybe he did, in a general way. If he didn't, I wouldn't blame him. I was generally regarded as a bit of an oddball around the place anyway, a salesman who read the books but didn't sell many, a staff junior who discussed music with David Ascoli (Cassell UK sales director, and translator of the German musicologist Alfred Einstein), an practising agnostic who talked theology with religious booksellers, and a science fiction nut.

The science fiction convention at Easter 1966, held in McGill's Newsagency's warehouse in Somerset Place, was an extraordinary event. It was, as I've said, the first in Australia since 1958, and there was something of the atmosphere of a revival meeting about it, a wonderful feeling of something happening, a powerful sense of fellowship. Toward the end, when we were discussing whether to hold another convention next year and generally what to do next, I suggested that we could keep up the momentum and preserve some of the feeling of community by publishing a fanzine. The idea was well received, and people instantly started nominating editors: Harding! Ron Clarke! Baxter! Broderick! But over them all Lee Harding was saying — very clearly, magisterially even — *I nominate John Bangsund*. 'And so', John Foyster wrote two years later, 'the die was cast, since when the cast has been dying.' The die was cast indeed: that was the moment when I became an editor.

It's always fun thinking of titles for things, and there was no shortage of suggestions for the title of this fanzine. For a while I seriously considered *Jindivik*, which had a nice Australian sound and a connotation of flight. Unfortunately it was the name of a flying drone used by the military for target practice, so that was out. In my wilder moments I toyed with *The Invisible Whistling Bunyip*. If you have read Edmund

Wilson on H. P. Lovecraft you will know where that came from. But on the principle that if you can't think of a name that is both clever and obvious, forget clever and go for obvious. I called it *Australian Science Fiction Review*.⁴

The first issue appeared in June 1966. It ran 32 quarto pages and was printed on the Melbourne SF Club's Roneo duplicator in McGill's warehouse. I had typed most of the stencils in the basement of the Commercial Travellers' Club in Perth. The contributors included Brian Aldiss, Michael Moorcock, Langdon Jones, John Baxter, John Foyster, Lee Harding, Jim Ellis as 'Jay Wallis', and Bob Sessions as 'Scribarius' — and Stephen Murray-Smith (a quote, with his blessing, from *Overland* 33) and Bernard O'Dowd (his poem 'Australia', probably reprinted with Lothian's permission, but maybe not). My editorial started and ended with quotes from Sean O'Casey. One of Lee's reviews had the title 'Communist Chulplex Raped My Wife!' Such things more or less set the tone of *ASFR* from the beginning: it was concerned with science fiction as literature; it was irreverent, often funny, serious about everything and grave about nothing; it was unashamedly Australian, and its outlook was international.

One day in 1967 Bob Sessions said 'Do you know that George Turner is one of your mob?' Which mob? All I knew about George Turner was that he was a Cassell author who had shared a Miles Franklin Award with Thea Astley, and that his latest novel, *The Lame Dog Man*, was due out soon. Bob was working on the jacket copy, and he showed me what George had written about himself: he was a science fiction addict. So I arranged to meet George Turner, and we had a good talk and I gave him a set of *ASFR* (and I met his dog Caesar: 'Don't encourage him,' George said as Caesar placed his great paws about my neck and licked my face), and that meeting accidentally launched George's distinguished career as a critic and eventually writer of science fiction.

That is one of the best things that came out of *ASFR*. Here is another.⁵ In February 1967 I wrote about two novels, *Planet of Exile* and *Rocannon's World*, and I said 'I feel sure Ursula K. Le Guin will go a long way' — one of my better predictions. We struck up a correspondence later that year, and in 1973 she agreed to come to Australia as our guest of honour if we won our bid to hold the 1975 World Science Fiction Convention in Melbourne. We won, Ursula came to Melbourne, and I had the privilege of handing her the Hugo Award for best sf novel of 1974, *The Dispossessed*. While Ursula was here she ran a workshop for aspiring sf

writers, the first of a number conducted by distinguished local and overseas writers. Her influence on Australian sf is incalculable. But it wasn't simply a matter of a bunch of Melbourne fans saying 'Let's put on a World Convention, let's get Ursula Le Guin as guest of honour' and just doing it: you need funding for a scheme like that. The committee applied to the Literature Board. Nancy Keesing was chairman of the board at the time. In a review of George Turner's *In the Heart or In the Head in Overland* 67 (1984), Nancy said that it was *ASFR* and other fanzines I had sent her that persuaded the board to give us a grant.

Back in the real world, on the strength of *ASFR* I got a job as assistant editor of *Materials Handling & Packaging*; on the strength of that I got a job at the *Age*; on the strength of that, and a rigorous test, in 1972 I got a job as a Hansard sub-editor in Canberra; from there I moved over the road to AGPS, where I first enjoyed the title of editor; from there I moved to Rigby in Adelaide; I went freelance in Adelaide in 1976, returned to Melbourne in 1978, worked part-time as assistant editor of *Meanjin* from 1988 to 1992, and now you know the lot, or most of it anyway. Since *ASFR* it has all been downhill, and I should have stayed in the library, or the tyre factory, but some people never know when they're well off and I'm one of them and that's how I became an editor.

Notes

1. When my father died in 1965 I reluctantly sold the Alvis and acquired his Morris 1100. Apart from a self-destructing Humber, I have since driven eminently sensible cars.
2. Jim Ellis died in 1979, in his mid-forties.
3. Caesar, a Great Dane, played an important role in George's *Transit of Cassidy* (1978), published by Bob Sessions at Nelson.
4. *Australian Science Fiction Review* ran for twenty issues. The last appeared in 1969. A second series of *ASFR* published from 1986 to 1991 by an editorial collective including John Foyster, Yvonne Rousseau, Jenny and Russell Blackford, Lucy Sussex and Janeen Webb.
5. **Editor's note:** The best thing that came out of *ASFR* was, of course, *SF Commentary*, followed closely by the Australian and New Zealand Amateur Publishing Association (ANZAPA), Leigh Edmonds' *Rataplan*, Eric Lindsay's *Gegenschein*, John Alderson's *Chao*, and the many fanzines of many people such as Shayne McCormack, Marc Ortlieb, Perry Middlemiss and Irwin Hirsh. **End of Editor's note.**

John Bangsund, September 1992

Who reads Tirra Lirra?

- People who are interested in the world around them
- People who like poetry.
- People who appreciate getting the full story.
- People whose interests range widely.
- People who enjoy short stories.
- People who are aware of the needs of the environment.
- Full-forwards do it.
- Scrabble players do it.
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Algae, animals, architecture, Argonauts, art, birds, bread, buildings, butterflies, Catholicism, ceramics, cheese, China, conservation, constipation, Coombe Cottage, discrimination, dragons, earthquakes, education, eating, farming, festivals, forestry, Ernst Fries, football, furniture, frogs, Gaelic League, galleries, golf, goshawks, Lloyd Gould, Heide, holidays, immigration, lighthouses, Lilydale, lies, listomania, Elizabeth Macarthur, Melba, Melbourne, mushrooms, neighbourhoods, oral histories, orchids, paintings, paradise, ponies, pottery, public art, racism, raptors, restaurants, salinity, sculpture, spiders, theatre, trout, venison, viticulture, white witches, Alistair Whyte, wildlife, wine, woodworking, women's issues, writers, Yarra River, Yarra Valley, W. B. Yeats.

Who writes for Tirra Lirra?

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
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