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## Scratch Pad 28

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Based on the non-Mailing Comments section of \*brg\* No. 21, a magazine written and published by Bruce Gillespie, 59 Keele Street, Victoria 3066, Australia (phone (03) 9419-4797; email: gandc@mira.net) for the June 1998 ANZAPA (Australian and New Zealand Amateur Publishing Association) mailing. Cover graphic by Ditmar, using Bryce2.

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### Contents

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- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| 3 | GET NETTED: WE'RE NOW ON THE INTERNET<br>by Bruce Gillespie        | Gillespie   |
| 3 | I CAN'T STAND WHAT'S HAPPENING TO MY<br>FRIENDS by Bruce Gillespie | 6 FAVOURITES 1997 by Bruce Gillespie                |
| 5 | SOMETIMES NOT SO GRUMPY by Bruce                                   | 7 BOOKS READ SINCE APRIL 1998 by Bruce<br>Gillespie |
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### Get Netted

As the colophon reveals, the Gillespie & Cochrane household now has an Internet account ('g&c' = 'gandc', see?).

Why are people addicted to the Internet? Quite apart from the fact that it took six weeks to find out why we were sending some people two messages each time we sent them one message, we've found it a lot of bother to send messages that could just as easily be sent by picking up the phone or sending a fax.

Internetters expect answers to queries, no matter how trivial the question. My attitude to letters is that they should be left until I can no longer avoid answering them; the 90 per cent I can avoid answering I gather up unanswered after six months and shove in the back of a filing cabinet. The best letter is a letter of comment, written as a mini-essay. But people on the Internet get hostile if you don't spend an hour a night thinking up boring answers to (often) unnecessary questions!

As for the Web . . . ! I thought this would be the fun part of the Internet. Type in a few words into your search engine and explore the world of information? Wrong. Type in the words you really want to find. Go through an endless maze of search and double-back until you find the Web address you want. What's the answer? 'This address does not answer'. 'URL Error Message 404.' This is a system?

I still don't have the faintest idea of how to write a Web page or set it up, although our provider allows five megabytes of Web space free. Everybody says 'It's easy', but nobody has shown us how to do it yet. Dennis Callegari has offered, but somehow we've never arranged for him to visit. John Bangsund has offered to do it for a very reasonable professional rate, but at the moment I don't have the money to pay anybody for anything.

That's hardly the point. I haven't yet found any good writing on the Web, except for John Bangsund's *Threepenny Planet*. (I tried to find Sean McMullen's Aus-

tralian SF Bibliography last night, but couldn't.) What's the use of Web pages when all they carry is advertising or indexes? Doesn't anybody have anything interesting to say out there? I subscribed to Timebinders, only to find that most of the messages are utterly trivial. I hoped that somebody might have put pages from famous fanzines on the Timebinders Web site, but I found only Contents lists.

It's hardly surprising that I still believe that a proper, well-edited, printed fanzine is the only worthwhile form of communication. Sure, it costs a fortune, which I don't have. A benefactor has offered to finance the next *Metaphysical Review*, and I'm typing as fast as I can when I can. But of course I must stop every few days to do paying work, since that's what pays all the other bills. The next *SF Commentary*? It's all on hard disk. It's a fabulous issue. At the moment there's not the slightest chance of publishing it, since I'm not earning enough to raise the \$2000 to print and post it. Put it on the Web? Yes, but would the people I want to read it even know it's there?

### I can't stand what's happening to my friends

I'm grumpy because **Allan Bray** is dead. This sort of thing just has to stop! Here's a great bloke, who seems to have had all sorts of difficulties for years, who eleven years ago met and married a lovely lady named Lesley, and they accomplished all sorts of things that Allan never would have tried on his own, such as working towards a university degree, and then the dreaded brain tumour has to hit him! It seemed as if surgery last year had succeeded in removing the tumour, and he and Lesley had re-enrolled at university for 1998. But the tumour returned, and Allan died in late April. He was a valued member of ANZAPA during the 1980s, and a mainstay of South Australian fandom. I'm glad he was able to travel to ANZAPAc on a few years ago.

I'm grumpy because **Jackie Causgrove** is dead. Jackie



Brian and Margaret Aldiss, with unkempt visitor from Australia, Heath House, January 1974. (Photo: Chris Priest.)

Franke, as she was then, once rescued me from a very difficult fix. In late September 1973 I was standing at the counter at Chicago's O'Hare Airport, ten minutes to go before boarding my aircraft back to Australia, with my luggage already on the plane, when I found that my ticket would not allow me to go home to Australia from USA. I had to go to Britain first, or pay \$700 on the spot to convert my ticket. I couldn't afford the \$700 but I could just afford to stay in Britain briefly on the way back to Australia. I wandered around O'Hare in a daze for half an hour, then found the only phone number I had for the Chicago area: that of Jackie and Wally Franke. I rang Jackie, who immediately drove 40 miles to rescue me. I had only my hand luggage with me. American Airlines assured me that they could retrieve my main luggage, but it would take a week to travel to Sydney and back. Jackie and Wally found me some spare clothes and put me up for that week. We visited the Passevoys in Chicago, and some other Chicago fans, and the next weekend travelled to Bob Tucker's to stay the night. It was a great week. My luggage came back. I continued my trip, and eventually spent four weeks in Britain. In later years Jackie stopped writing to me, for reasons I'm not sure of. She and Wally split up, and somewhere in the late seventies she began living with Dave Locke, who was with her until she died of lung cancer on 15 May.

I'm grumpy because **Margaret Aldiss** has died. I met her only once, but once was enough to show me why she was one of the most valued convention attendees in Britain. She was Brian's greatest supporter, and his bibliographer: just one of those people you cannot imagine as not alive any more.

I'm grumpy because **Bill Rotsler** is gone, and had such a difficult last couple of years. For a splendid tribute, see the latest issue of *Trap Door*. The bright lights are going out all over fandom.

I'm grumpy because several of our other friends are suffering from cancer, and don't yet know whether the debilitating combination of surgery and chemotherapy will work. Some of these people, such as **Ian Gunn**, are a lot younger than I am. Worse, Ian has had to undergo

a second round of chemotherapy recently. I haven't yet heard any news of how he and **Karen** are going.

I'm grumpy because our friends' twenty-five-year-old marriages are ending. Nothing we can do about it, of course, but it was disturbing to hear within a week about the recent splitup of **Sally Yeoland** and **John Bangsund** (see my Mailing Comment to Sally towards the end of the issue) and the December splitup of **Lee Harding** and **Irene Pagram**. I have vivid memories of 1972, when both couples got together. From Canberra came fanzines and letters of delirious happiness from John. In Melbourne there were amazing scenes when Lee, then aged in his mid thirties, and Irene, then aged seventeen, became entangled with each other and with my life, which was doing odd things at the time. Two years later, I attended the welcome for John and Sally at John's mother's place. In 1982, Elaine and I went to Lee and Irene's wedding in a garden in Ferntree Gully, where we blissed out in October sunshine. Maddie was born, and we've watched her growing rapidly. Through the seventies and eighties Irene and Lee endured some hard times that would have battered anybody's marriage. We saw Irene and Lee together most recently at George Turner's funeral, which seems to have become a major dividing line in everybody's fortunes. We didn't hear from them for more than six months. Race Mathews tracked down Lee, who told him about the December breakup. And about Lee's heart attack in late February. Lee is feeling much better. He's living at Rosebud, and Irene is still living in Echuca. Maddie is trying to commute between between them. Best wishes to Sally and John, and Irene and Lee and Maddy. What more can I say?

I'm grumpy because **Polly** doesn't like **Violet**. In retrospect, I suppose I should be grumpy with Elaine for importing Violet after TC died. If it ain't broke, don't fix it, and the combination of the four cats left after TC died was working well. But we had to have a fifth cat, it seems. When we've introduced a new cat in the past, we've never before had more than a week of hissing, booing and pawcuffs. Also we've never before had a young cat named Polly who remains determined to oust

the newcomer. But then, we've never had before a cat such as Violet, who came from who-knows-where via the vet's. She likes people, but is totally unused to the company of other cats. She has no more desire to get on with them than they have to get on with her. The new arrangement would have worked if only Polly hadn't decided to go into heatseeker-missile mode every time she sensed the presence of Violet. If Violet had fought back, Polly would have had to pull her head in. Instead Violet sometimes hits Sophie, who runs away from her. The only way we keep any sort of peace is to allow Violet to sleep on the bed during the day and shoo out Polly.

I'm double grumpy because the owners of buildings on both sides of our place are doing renovations, and have been doing so for more than six months, and the workers at one building have pulled down a part of the shared side fence, have not put up the new fence but instead have put up a temporary wire-mesh fence through which **Theodore** keeps finding escape holes. Theodore seems to have developed some evidence of a brain in (catty) middle age. Last night was his most successful escape. We're still not quite sure how he got out. He must have got locked in somewhere around Collingwood, because he was back at 6 a.m. Elaine did not sleep all night. I slept okay. I might feel grumpy at cats, but I refuse to let their idiocies spoil my sleep.

### Sometimes not so grumpy

Good things happen. Not many of them, and not often.

As I've already written, a friend has sent me the money to guarantee the publication of the next issue of *The Metaphysical Review*. Now I just need the time to finish setting it. At the same time, **Irwin Hirsh** told me about Kodak's FlashPix CD system, which should solve the difficulties I've had when including photos in my magazines. I sent in 66 fabulous fannish photos for scanning onto CD. The cost, including the cost of the CD itself, was \$74. If I want more done, I send back the CD, plus the extra photos. Each CD can fit 100. The images themselves need to be read by Kodak's own software, which is installed from the CD, but each image can be unzipped into a TIF or BMP. Not that I'm ever going to run 66 photos here or in TMR, but at least now they are available for anybody who's interested.

**Merv Binns** and **Helena Roberts** got married. Merv, at the age of sixty-two, married for the first time. One of the original members of the Melbourne Science Fiction Club, he remained a stalwart bachelor during all the years he kept the Club going, supplying books to us while he was manager of McGill's Newsagency, then owner of Space Age Books. He went broke, and supported his father during his final illness.

Helena joined the Melbourne Science Fiction Club in the 1950s. She married a photographer named Kelvin Roberts, who died about ten years ago. Merv and Helena seem to have been gravitating towards each other ever since. Although it was held on the hottest late March day ever (summer was supposed to have ended weeks before), the wedding was very enjoyable. The ceremony took place on the front lawn of Merv and Helena's house in Carnegie, followed by a wedding banquet in the back garden, with sumptuous amounts of food supplied by

contributions from friends. As an example of how to hold a wedding when you're broke, it couldn't be better. Helena was definitely radiant, and Merv was seen to smile, except he came over all emotional as he told us how much it meant if his mother and father could have been there.

Recently Elaine and I went bush. Sort of. **John and Louise Gauci** were our very quiet neighbours, in the office building on the corner of Keele and Budd Streets, from the late 1980s until October last year. They set up their company, LJ Productions, to produce children's TV series, and had great success with *Sugar and Spice*, *Pugwall* and *Pugwall's Summer*. However, they've been underemployed during the last few years, and had to sell the building next door. At first we had little to do with them, although Louise always admired our cats, especially Monty and Sophie. When we got Sophie, she was the mirror image of LJ, the office cat. Sophie spread out wider and wider, and the resemblance ended, but Sophie often stared at LJ through their front door. Louise expressed interest when Elaine began to grow treelets for the Tree Project, so Elaine offered to try any seed Louise could provide from the 'block at Launching Place'. Eventually, six months after we stopped being neighbours, John and Louise took us to see the fabled block at Launching Place.

For some reason, I thought Launching Place was way off in netherest Gippsland. But it's part of the Yarra Valley; houses and small towns line the road all the way out beyond Seville to Launching Place. John and Louise said that the drought had been obvious at the block, but recent rain made it seem very green when we arrived there. The headwaters of the Yarra form one edge of the block. The rest is mainly paddock, which is now turning into a tree plantation, thanks to the many trees bought by John and Louise or donated by Elaine. There are also two long rows of grapevines, and a large patch of the dreaded black-berries. The only living quarters is a tin shed, which contains a small tractor and some camping implements. If John and Louise leave anything else there, such as tools, it gets stolen. Many fishing enthusiasts and walkers probably walk through the block, down the bank of Yarra, without realising they are travelling through private land.

John and Louise are able to get away from it all because they haven't taken it all with them. They say the pleasure of the place is simply getting away from the city for the weekend. They are clearing the blackberries, harvesting the grapes in season, gathering up the rubbish that the fishing fraternity leave behind, and generally keeping the place green and alive.

Since I can't put a name to each tree in the valley, John and I stayed behind while Elaine and Louise went to inspect the treelets. John was a producer/director for the ABC until the early 1980s, and worked on such famous mini-series as *I Can Jump Puddles* and *Power Without Glory*. He knows everybody, and has lots of good gossip about the TV and film industry.

After giving us a barbecue lunch, John and Louise then drove us to the other side of the city to inspect their new studio. Although they could not keep up the bank payments on the Keele Street place, selling it enabled them to buy a double-storey house in a quiet suburban

cul de sac in Yarraville. The house has plenty of room for their current scale of operations, and came complete with its own house cat, Booby. Yarraville itself is unique: Melbourne's best-kept secret. No main road runs through the shopping centre, which consists of several narrow streets lined by a wide variety of useful and trendy little shops. I can't think of another little patch of Melbourne that is so self-consciously picturesque. Perhaps the secret of Yarraville is already out: John and

Louise said that almost every other house is being renovated at the moment.

Back to Keele Street, and the realisation that Wellington Street now seems horribly noisy, even on a Sunday. Ah well . . . but at least we did leave our house for a whole day. Who knows? Maybe one day we'll get back to Mount Buffalo, or even go interstate. No, I don't believe *that*.

## Favourites 1997

### FAVOURITE BOOKS 1997

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 <i>Titan</i><br/>Stephen Baxter (1997; HarperCollins Voyager; 581 pp.)</li> <li>2 <i>The Voice That Thunders: Essays and Lectures</i><br/>Alan Garner (1997; Harvill; 244 pp.)</li> <li>3 <i>Confessions of a Failed Southern Lady</i><br/>Florence King (1985; St Martin's Press; 278 pp.)</li> <li>4 <i>The Secret of this Book: 20-Odd Stories</i><br/>Brian W. Aldiss (1995; HarperCollins; 334 pp.)</li> <li>5 <i>Sirius</i><br/>Olaf Stapledon (1944; Dover; 157 pp.)</li> <li>6 <i>Strandloper</i><br/>Alan Garner (1996; Harvill; 200 pp.)</li> <li>7 <i>Windows</i><br/>D. G. Compton (1979; Berkeley Putnam; 255 pp.)</li> <li>8 <i>Seasons in Flight</i><br/>Brian Aldiss (1984; Jonathan Cape; 157 pp.)</li> <li>9 <i>At the Caligula Hotel and Other Poems</i><br/>Brian Aldiss (1995; Sinclair-Stevenson; 99 pp.)</li> <li>10 <i>Fermat's Last Theorem</i><br/>Simon Singh (1997; 4th Estate; 362 pp.)</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11 <i>Collected Poems</i><br/>Philip Larkin (1988; Marvell Press/Faber &amp; Faber; 330 pp.)</li> <li>12 <i>Last and First Men</i><br/>Olaf Stapledon (1930; Methuen; 355 pp.)</li> <li>13 <i>Gather Yourselves Together</i><br/>1994; WCS Books; 291 pp.)</li> <li>14 <i>Barefaced Messiah: The True Story of L. Ron Hubbard</i><br/>Russell Miller (1987; Michael Joseph; 390 pp.)</li> <li>15 <i>Keepers of the Flame: Literary Estates and the Rise of Biography</i><br/>Ian Hamilton (1992; Pimlico; 344 pp.)</li> <li>16 <i>Tourists</i><br/>Lisa Goldstein (1989; Simon &amp; Schuster; 239 pp.)</li> <li>17 <i>Star Maker</i><br/>Olaf Stapledon (1937; Penguin)</li> <li>18 <i>King Solomon's Carpet</i><br/>Barbara Vine (1991; Penguin; 356 pp.)</li> <li>19 <i>From Time to Time</i><br/>Jack Finney (1995; Simon &amp; Schuster; 303 pp.)</li> <li>20 <i>The Year's Best Australian Science Fiction &amp; Fantasy</i><br/>edited by Jonathan Strahan &amp; Jeremy G. Byrne (1997; HarperCollins; 365 pp.)</li> </ol> |
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### FAVOURITE FILMS 1997

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 <i>Touch of Evil (complete)</i><br/>directed by Orson Welles (1958)</li> <li>2 <i>Fearless</i><br/>Peter Weir (1993)</li> <li>3 <i>Eating Raoul</i><br/>Paul Bartels (1982)</li> <li>4 <i>Groundhog Day</i><br/>Harold Ramis (1993)</li> <li>5 <i>In Country</i><br/>Norman Jewison (1989)</li> <li>6 <i>Cape Fear</i></li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>J. Lee Thompson (1962)</li> <li>7 <i>Crumb</i><br/>Terry Swigart (1994)</li> <li>8 <i>Giant</i><br/>George Stevens (1956)</li> <li>9 <i>Gettysburg</i><br/>Ronald F. Maxwell (1992)</li> <li>10 <i>In the Name of the Father</i><br/>Jim Sheridan (1995)</li> </ol> |
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- 11 *Rats in the Ranks*  
Bob Connelly and Robin Anderson (1996)
- 12 *Forrest Gump*  
Robert Zemekis (1994)
- 13 *The Fly*

- David Cronenberg (1986)
- 14 *Twelve Monkeys*  
Terry Gilliam (1995)
- 15 *Edge of Eternity*  
Don Siegel (1959)

## FAVOURITE SHORT FICTION 1997

- 1 *Tom Fobble's Day*  
Alan Garner (Collins)
- 2 *'A Man and His Dreams'*  
Marele Day (*The Year's Best Australian Science Fiction and Fantasy*)
- 3 *'Ratbird'*  
Brian W. Aldiss (*A Tupolev Too Far*)
- 4 *'The God Who Slept with Women'*  
Brian W. Aldiss (*The Secret of this Book*)
- 5 *'Horse Meat'*  
Brian W. Aldiss (*The Secret of this Book*)
- 6 *'A Swedish Birthday Present'*  
Brian W. Aldiss (*The Secret of this Book*)

- 7 *'A Day in the Life of the Galactic Empire'*  
Brian W. Aldiss (*The Secret of this Book*)
- 8 *'Glory'*  
Nicholas Royle (*Narrow Houses, Vol. I*)
- 9 *'Passing the Bone'*  
Sean Williams (*The Year's Best Australian Science Fiction and Fantasy*)
- 10 *'Naming Names'*  
Pat Cadigan (*Narrow Houses, Vol. I*)
- 11 *'Another Orphan'*  
John Kessel (*Meeting in Infinity*)
- 12 *'Jackie Chan'*  
Chris Gregory (*Twins*)

## BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS

These are books read since the end of April 1998. The ratings are:

- \*\* Books highly recommended.
- \* Books recommended.
- 👉 Books about which I have severe doubts.

### \*\* THE CHIMNEY SWEEPER'S BOY

by Barbara Vine

(Viking 0-670-87937-1; 1998; 343 pp.)

To 'Barbara Vine' (Ruth Rendell) every person is an alien to every other person, no matter to what extent we think we understand each other. In *The Chimney Sweeper's Boy* she pays tribute to Germaine Greer's *Daddy We Hardly Knew You*, my favourite non-fiction mystery story, then follows her own perverse path. The main character is dead for most of the novel. Who was he? What was his real name? Why did he cut himself off in the early 1950s from his original family? Why did he become a magnificent father and a poor husband? His wife and daughters investigate his story, uncovering level after level of obfuscation, while slowly working out that their father told his real story in his novels. But in the novel's first scene, the dying author had already handed his true autobiography to a man who had no idea what he had been given. Some reviewers have complained about the cleverness of this novel, ignoring the revealed pain in the life of the wife, whose story this really is, and the magnitude of the epiphany in the book's last pages. I don't know how Vine/Rendell maintains the standard of her writing for novel after novel (three

novels a year at the moment), but I'm grateful for her energy and perception.

- \* **THE YEAR'S BEST AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY, VOL. 2**  
edited by Jonathan Strahan and Jeremy G. Byrne  
(HarperCollins Voyager 0-7322-5942-2; 1998; 443 pp.)

I'm disappointed to be disappointed by this volume, as Vol. I was magnificent. I guess the stories weren't there to be anthologised. I have no real favourites, since even the best stories are beset by hurried exposition or failed, patchy endings. Or perhaps I was grumpy on the days I read it. Stories that are very good, but could be just a bit better, are Greg Egan's 'Reasons to be Cheerful', Terry Dowling's 'Jenny Come to Play' (my favourite in the book), 'Niagara Falling' (Janeen Webb and Jack Dann), 'Love and Mandarins' (Sean Williams), 'Merlusine' (Lucy Sussex), and 'Due West' (Rick Kennett). A theme of human monsters dominates several of these stories. I don't know whether Jodie Kewley's whimsical 'Nicholas Afalling' is very good, but oddly it remains with me as the most memorable story in the book.

- \* **KISSING THE BEEHIVE** by Jonathan Carroll  
(Doubleday 0-385-48011-3; 1998; 232 pp.)

Carroll's previous novel, *From the Teeth of Angels*, felt like a sign-off statement to the world, transcendent and despairing at the same time. It's been a few years between that novel and *Kissing the Beehive*, which is the most disappointing Jonathan Carroll novel so far. It's about a writer with writer's block,

who breaks it by travelling back to his home town. Autobiographical, perhaps? If so, inspiration failed to strike. All the familiar surprise elements of a Carroll novel are here, but they now feel sterile and unsurprising.

**And now for some novels and novellas that I can't talk about, or even rate. They are contenders for the Young Adults section of this year's Aurealis Award. I'll list them now, and talk about them after the awards are announced next year.**

**SWEETWATER NIGHT** by Alison Stewart  
(Hodder Signature 0-7336-0570-2; 1998; 170 pp.)  
**KILLING DARCY** by Melissa Lucashenko  
(University of Queensland Press 0-7022-3041-3; 1998; 230 pp.)  
**COLD IRON** by Sophie Masson  
(Hodder 0-7336-0583-4; 1998; 185 pp.)  
**THE LYREBIRD'S TAIL** by Sue Robinson  
(Lothian 0-85091-883-9; 1998; 158 pp.)

**THE GODDESS: AFTER DARK 25** by Robin Klein and Anne Sudvilas  
(Lothian 0-85091-894-4; 1998; 48 pp.)  
**THE CARNIVAL VIRUS: AFTER DARK 26** by Sue Robinson and Peter Gouldthorpe  
(Lothian 0-85091-900-2; 1998; 48 pp.)  
**FANTASTIC WORLDS** edited by Paul Collins  
(HarperCollins Moonstone 0-7322-5878-2; 1998; 316 pp.)  
**THE PLAYGROUND: AFTER DARK 28** by Shaun Tan  
(Lothian 0-85091-898-7; 1998; 48 pp.)  
**THE GHOST OF DEADMAN'S BEACH: AFTER DARK 27** by Venera Armano and Dominique Falla  
(Lothian 0-85091-897-9; 1998; 48 pp.)  
**A DARK WINTER: THE TENEBRAN TRILOGY, BOOK ONE** by Dave Lockett  
(Omnibus 1-86291-368-4; 1998; 328 pp.)

— Bruce Gillespie, 21 May 1998