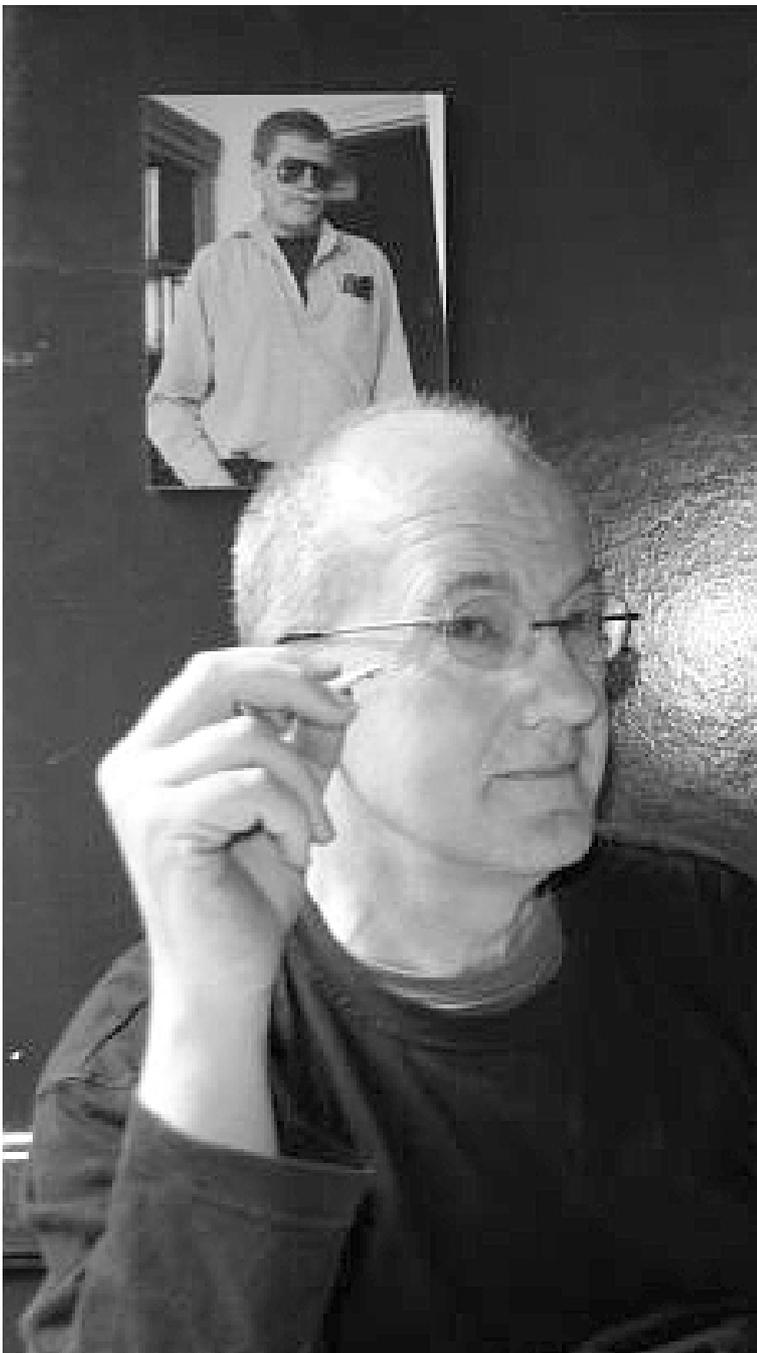


Scratch Pad 64

June 2006

John Brosnan 1947–2005



Above:

Thanks to Roger Robinson (Beccon Books) and Forbidden Planet Books, London, for this picture of John Brosnan (taken in 1997). It's the only clear picture of John from the last thirty years that I've been able to obtain.

Left:

Meanwhile, another recent picture of John can be seen above the pensive face of Peter Roberts. (Photo: Ian Maule at John's funeral.)

Photos of John, as well as book covers, publicity and film posters lined the wall of the pub where John's funeral was held in 2005. The funeral drew people not seen in SF circles for many years, including former ANZAPA member Peter Roberts, whose fanzine Checkpoint was the Ansible of the 1970s.

Scratch Pad 64

A fanzine for efanzines.com, based on the non-mailing comments sections of **brg** 46, June 2006, for ANZAPA, by Bruce Gillespie, 5 Howard St, Greensborough VIC 3088. Phone: (03) 9435 7786. Email: gandc@mira.net. Member fwa.

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Photos: Elaine Cochrane (p. 2); Roger Robinson (p. 4); Ian Maule (pp. 5 and 6); unknown (p. 7). See also credits for cover photos.

Sophie 1990–2006

On 9 May 2006, Sophie, our oldest cat, died. People who've visited us over the last sixteen years have met Sophie. She is the little black cat who grew.

In May 1990, Elaine met Sophie during the week when TC disappeared. We thought TC had gone forever. Elaine combed the lost animals' shelters of Melbourne looking for TC, who disappeared before the introduction of electronic chip identification. At the RSPCA lost animals' shelter, she went into a room of cats, all of whom rushed towards her. Sophie was the most enthusiastic of them all. Elaine scooped her up, and left her to be neutered and vaccinated. The next day, we heard TC's unmistakable yodel faintly in the distance. Elaine kept

calling and calling, until suddenly we saw TC in the kitchen window of the office building next door. He had been lost in the bowels of the building for a week, but had not dared make himself known to the regular occupants. We called John Gauci, one of the owners, and he was kind enough to drive in from the suburbs to help us retrieve TC. The next day, Elaine went to fetch Sophie to join her new family.

Sophie stayed enthusiastic about all in things in life. She was the cat that people (especially Sally Yeoland and Julian Warner) liked to cuddle when they visited. She was really keen on food. Some months after she came to live at our place, she proved hard to call in at night.



Sophie, early 2006: no longer the roly-poly cat many ANZAPAns would have met
(Photo: Elaine Cochrane.)

Elaine would go up Keele Street or up Wellington Street and call as loudly as possible. Sophie would come running at very high speed on her short legs. In a few months, she became very fat. We guess that the only thing that stopped her expansion was that whoever was giving her a second meal each night moved away. But the damage was done, and Sophie stayed very tubby until the last year or so of her life.

We do not know what happened to Sophie during her grandest adventure. She disappeared. Elaine went out every night calling cats around our part of Collingwood. She kept being approached by the neighbourhood moggies, including lots of black cats, but no Sophie. Then eight days later, as I was coming in from our (outside) loo, Sophie walked in under the back gate. She had lost little weight, and was very glad to see us. She smelled of machine oil. Obviously she had been shut into one of the many little factories or workshops in our part of Collingwood, but she must have subsisted by catching mice. She never disappeared again.

After Muffin died of feline AIDS in the early nineties, Sophie took over as Elaine's main garden supervisor. You might remember that we took over the block of land at 61 Keele Street in mid 1992. Elaine began digging it over, square metre by square metre, to rootle out the pile of bricks and other junk that had been dumped in the ground. Sophie believed in supervising operations. She joined in the digging, enjoying the wonderful laxative properties of loose soil. Often she would place her face so close to Elaine's digging operations that she ran the danger of losing an eye, or an entire head, as Elaine swung the pick.

Sophie's last illness took a long time to claim her, mainly because of Elaine's and vets' attempts to keep her alive. Sophie developed an unpleasant asthmatic cough at least three years ago. It overtook her irregularly, and the vet could find no real signs of ill health. However, Sophie began to throw up her meals at the

most inconvenient times and in the most inconvenient places. Fortunately, our patterned carpet at Keele Street was designed so that unsightly stains (such as spilled wine glasses) could be cleaned successfully. Elaine found that if she restricted Sophie's diet she could stop her throwing up most days. Her cough was getting worse. The vet offered various treatments, and also discovered that Sophie had become hyperthyroid. As Elaine was dosing her for various conditions, Sophie suddenly stopped eating. When a cat like Sophie stops eating, things are serious. The vet suggested using cortisone for her cough, but it did not boost her appetite back to normal. It became difficult to find food that Sophie would eat. Slowly she lost all the weight she had ever put on. She stopped chucking, but she still had the asthma. And basically she stopped processing whatever food we could persuade her eat. At the end, Elaine was grilling chicken pieces, cooling them, and feeding them to Sophie bit by bit to keep her alive. In her last two days, Sophie lost all her energy, and was spending all her time merely breathing. So she took her last trip to vet's.

After TC died in the late nineties, Sophie became top cat. This status lasted even after we gained big Flicker and his son Harry, both of whom were much bigger than Sophie, and had much more strength. Flicker was most concerned when Sophie was coughing, and he is the only cat who seems to have missed her. By seniority, Polly should now be top cat, but Flicker regards her with contempt.

You would think that losing Sophie would have cast an air of gloom over Greensborough paradise. She is badly missed, but we are also aware that Elaine's ingenious efforts kept Sophie alive and happy much longer than we had expected. She was always enthusiastic and purry, and one can't say the same for the others. We're thinking kitten thoughts, but don't tell our four remaining cats.

News? What news?

If this were a blog, it would be the most boring blog of them all. That's why I haven't bothered adding material to either of my blogs. There isn't much news from around here. Things happen. Life goes on, quite comfortably. But I never get around to publishing the Trip Report, *SF Commentary*, *Steam Engine Time*, or *The Metaphysical Review*. I'm failing to do what I should be doing, because I don't have the money for it. Since September 2005, I've received much more paying work than came my way this time last year. However, the cash never quite accumulates enough for me to publish. If I sat in my room and did nothing except read, listen to CDs and watch DVDs, I might just survive on current income. But it takes real money (something approaching the incomes that everybody else is supposed to be getting) to *do* anything.

Elaine has had much more paying work than I have. Still, she dug deeply into her savings to pay for the all the extras we needed when we moved house. Elaine's hobby is digging trenches so she can plant lots of the native plants she brought as cuttings from Collingwood. Her hobby is somewhat less expensive than mine. She's also now secretary of the Australian Plants Society Yarra Yarra Group, which involves a bit more paperwork than

she expected.

The highlights of my year are not the sort of events that might thrill a fanzine audience. Thanks to Dick Jensen, I've seen a whole lot of DVDs that wouldn't have been otherwise available to me, such as all the Oscar nominees. Thanks to Murray MacLachlan, I've been able to listen to some otherwise unavailable CDs. The DVD stores also keep releasing, at very low prices, some of my favourite movies. In recent weeks I've seen Altman's *A Wedding* for the first time since 1978, and John Boorman's *Hope and Glory* for the first time since 1987. Thanks to Dick, I've seen a crisp new print of Powell and Pressburger's *I Know Where I'm Going*. There are few pleasures in life greater than watching *IKWIG*, as the PnPers call it. The PnP people are the Powell and Pressburger fans. It's only because Dick discussed their website that I've joined their listserv. A fine bunch of folks, like all fans, although none of them has so far been revealed as an SF fan.

A highlight has also been my occasional meandering walks through the valleys and across the hills of Greensborough. Yesterday I took the train to Rosanna (three stations away), explored the small shopping cen-

tre near the station, and walked along Lower Plenty Road to the Plenty River. There begins the path along the river back to Greensborough. A perfect winter afternoon for a two-and-half-hour walk. In a year or two, I will be able to offer guided tours of the area.

If I feel a bit low sometimes, it's because of friendship dropouts. The Tuesday afternoon gathering at the Standard Hotel in Fitzroy has disintegrated. That's not our fault. Elaine and I were willing to come in all the way from Greensborough every week, then once a month, but few others want to make the effort. *Sigh* Worse, Maureen Kincaid Speller has stopped editing *Acnestis*,

without any explanation, leaving me with few links with English fans. I'm told the Top English Fans have all become bloggers, but the mechanics of blogging elude me. I just know there's nobody Out There with whom to talk books every month.

I keep hoping life will soon get back some of its buzz, but I haven't won the lottery yet, and I don't have any guarantees of continuing income. Still, not to worry. All I have to do sit in my favourite chair, and Flicker will sit on my lap for an hour or two. It's always nice to be friends with a happy cat.

Memories of John Brosnan (1947–2005)

by Bruce Gillespie

There they are: John Brosnan's dates. The man was the same age as I am when he died. Well, nearly. He would have been 58 in October 2005. I was 58 in February 2005.

What has prevented me — thus far — being finished off by what killed John: acute pancreatitis, according to the coroner, presumably related to both diabetes and alcohol consumption?

Finding Elaine, more than anything else. Feeling melancholy in the 1970s, I got stuck into the juice in a big way. But when Elaine and I got together in early 1978, I had much less reason to drink in order to face life and feel jolly. (In the eighties, Elaine and I and Mark Linneman drank a great deal too much red wine, but that's another story. That was research, part of our ongoing quest to find the most congenial restaurant in Melbourne. It was, and still is, *Abla's Lebanese restaurant* in Carlton.)

Many years ago, I gave up all thoughts of becoming a writer of fiction. John Brosnan did maintain his ambition, and at times it seemed as if he would crack the big time. I thought his books were a bit too genial ever to carry him into the big league. SF fans like their books to be solemn and glutinous. If John had discovered the Terry Pratchett approach before Pratchett did, he might have become very rich. Long ago I decided to stick with that branch of non-fiction called 'fan writing': you can't make money doing it, but you don't have to *worry* about making money doing it. I just wish my chosen method of earning an income, freelance book editing, had been successful instead.

But again, I found Elaine, and John never found a life's partner. Elaine's carried me over endless bad patches. I would not have survived anywhere near as long as John did if it hadn't been for her.



At my worst, I'm as melancholic as John ever was, and nowhere near as funny. But because of fandom, and because of Elaine, I haven't been allowed to retreat from the world. You could say I've been forced to become a social animal in spite of myself. As Brian Aldiss puts it, 'Cheerfulness keeps breaking in.' I suspect it did not break into John's life often enough.

In the end, it may have been simply a case of different drugs for different folks. The grog got to John, and eventually the coffee will get me. So why are we all addicts of something or other?

Here are some pieces I've collected about John Brosnan since he died, beginning with the email messages.

LEE HARDING

Just had an email from Baxter, informing me that John Brosnan was found dead yesterday.

Had been dead for several days. Baxter was his best friend, mentor, collaborator and — in recent times — financial manager. I needed to pass this on.

12 April 2005

IAN MAULE

ian@nabu.net

What a bummer :-)

I haven't seen John for over 20 years, but in the old days I briefly lived in the same house as he did (I freeloaded on Greg Pickersgill's floor for six months), and afterwards he and Peter Roberts were regular visitors to the Friday evening card school John Piggott and I ran.



Harry Harrison (left) and Chris Priest at the farewell for John Brosnan. (Photo: Ian Maule.)

STEPHEN GALLAGHER
www.stephengallagher.com

What sad news. I wasn't well up on John Brosnan's fiction, but *Movie Magic* and *Future Tense* are books that I've read over and over. I didn't know him well, but I *did* know him, and thought him a likable and shy bloke behind a slightly forbidding exterior. We had a long, long drunken conversation once during one of those endless Fantasycon raffles, in which John's angle to the floor increased until I couldn't quite see how he was managing not to fall over without the aid of comedy boots.

I can't remember that we said anything special, but I remember the pleasure of the evening.

12 April 2005

DAVID PRINGLE
47 Forest Road, Selkirk, Borders TD7 5DA,
Scotland

'John Brosnan, author and fan, has been found dead alone, at his home in South Harrow . . .'

Bad, sad news. But all of us who knew John also knew that this was likely to happen one day.

We published some stories and articles by him in *Interzone*. But . . .

Many is the time in the past I've drunk with John at British SF conventions or in the Troy Club in London (his regular watering hole for many years — the woman who ran it, Helen of Troy, herself died of liver failure a few years ago, I think).

John was a great boozer—but he was also an all-round good fellow. I always liked him a lot.

12 April 2005

The funeral: 29 April 2005

by Ian Maule

It was the children, I hadn't expected the children. I was coping, just, seeing people for the first time in 20 and in some cases almost 30 years but talking to James Charnock, who had been a babe in arms the last time I saw him, and Kettle's daughter, who I didn't even know existed, knocked me sideways. There was John Hall, Kettle, Edwards, Pat and Graham Charnock, Holdstock and — bloody hell! — it's Peter Roberts. There was Dave Langford, Ron Hansen, Avedon Carol, Linda Krawecka,

John Jarrold, Alun Harries, and Chris Evans. There were assorted people from the publishing world and there was Harry Harrison, John Baxter and Chris Priest (who knew who I was without any prompting) and peering down from the walls were photos of John Brosnan, so in sense John was there too.

Brosnan's funeral was an emotional day for me and with his passing a part of my past has gone forever. If I ever get to see the old Gannets again, Harry, Rob, Ian, Kev and the others I'll probably cry, I'm like that, a sentimental old fart.



Above: Ian Maule, famous fanzine publisher of the 1970s, and Roy Kettle, even more famous fan publisher of the 1970s (and recent recipient of the OBE for his work as a senior British public servant), at John Brosnan's funeral. (Photo: courtesy Ian Maule..)

Left: Malcolm Edwards, John Brosnan's publisher at Gollancz in recent years, and one-time member of Ratfandom, along with John Brosnan and assorted other British fans, such as Greg Pickersgill and Roy Kettle. (Photo: Ian Maule..)

John Brosnan: a tribute

John Baxter

BRG: John Baxter has allowed me to reprint the following tribute to John. This is not the same as his tribute submitted to *Locus*, and different again from his speech at the funeral and the obituary he placed with *The Australian*!]

John and I don't go back as far as many people in the fan community. By the time he became active, I had left both fandom and Australia, and while I knew his name, we first met in person when an eager young man in black, with a Prince Valiant haircut (he hadn't yet added the third and, later, indispensable elements of his culture, the beard and dark glasses), introduced himself to me at the National Film Theatre in London.

Being in London and moving in the same movie circles, we saw a lot of one another, often attending the same bizarre social events. I remember, when John was writing for *Starburst*, being present at a birthday party for its editor Alan Mackenzie at which a scantily-clad showgirl burst out of an improbable-looking canvas cake. John also distinguished the fiftieth wedding anniversary of Harry Harrison by getting very drunk and berating an equally pissed Kingsley Amis for refusing to give him an interview. My wife and I carried John home insensible from that event, and, over the years, from an increasingly large number of others.

You give me too much credit for the day-to-day shoring up of John's tottering life. While I've done what I could over the years, Roy Kettle and Rob Holdstock in London were far more involved. As well as collaborating

with John on a number of horror/sf novels — they were jointly Harry Adam Knight and Simon Ian Chilvers (HAK and SIC) of *Slimer*, *Tendrils*, *The Fungus*, etc. — Roy was John's guardian, mentor and confidant, while John routinely moved out of his fetid Harrow flat into the Holdstocks' more salubrious home whenever they were out of the country.

About a year ago, Roy, Rob and myself got together in London in a last-ditch attempt to save John from himself, but our efforts to, for instance, place him in an effective drying-out program or even get cleaners into his flat were met with such stubborn resistance that we gave up. He refused to admit anyone to the flat, not only as part of a general paranoia but for fear they were representatives of the tax authorities. He had nothing but scorn for detox programs, a few of which he'd tried, and found ineffective. As for AA, John was so shy that the thought of revealing his problems to strangers filled him with horror.

Over the last fifteen years, John retreated both physically and mentally from the world. He had few romantic relationships in his life, and the break-up of the last important one about that time may have precipitated his flight. Certainly it was exacerbated by his move to Harrow, a suburb so remote that few visited him there. For a time he would come into the West End to meet people like myself who were passing through, or to drink at the poky and dingy Troy Club, on the edge of Soho, but its closing, and the death (from alcohol) of the owner Helen, a close friend, cut him off from an important source of companionship.

On numerous occasions, we tried to lure him to

France, if only for a holiday, but fears about his shady residency status in the UK made him unwilling to leave the country. Nor would he consider returning to Australia, where he could have relied on friends in the fan community.

He also left his long-time agent John Parker, moving to various smaller agents, or relying on friends in publishing to give him work. As part of the self-fulfilling prophecy that his life had become, he naturally gravitated to people who shared his emotional frailty and addiction to drink, so the attrition rate among his professional associates was high. An alarmingly high number had nervous or physical breakdowns, or died, while others elected to leave the business altogether. Lately, he had no agent at all, but dealt direct with old friends like ex-fan Malcolm Edwards, publishing director of Gollancz and now of Orion. Malcolm commissioned the bulk of John's sf and fantasy work, ie, the 'Skylords' trilogy, his comedy fantasy novels like *Damned and Fancy*, and the 'Mothership' trilogy, the second book of

which John had just completed at his death.

The grail of John's life was TV and the movies, but his relationship with both was fraught with frustration. His one American film, *Carnosaur*, commissioned by Roger Corman in a deal formalised by Corman's wife with a memo scribbled on a bar napkin at the Troy Club, was butchered, and his credit reduced to that of 'Original Story'. Numerous contacts with London producers of varying degrees of sleaziness, in particular those involved in the production of *Beyond Bedlam* (1993), convinced him that life in the movie world was one long rip-off, and he cut himself off from that as well. Undoubtedly his Golden Moment in film and TV was pitching a *Doctor Who* story in which the Tardis materialises in the BBC TV Centre. The Doctor, played by Tom Baker (like John, an habitue of Soho's after-hours drinking clubs), is immediately mistaken for actor Baker, with resulting complications. The producers weren't amused.

14 April 2005

John Brosnan: an Australian tribute

by Bruce Gillespie

John Brosnan discovered fandom in 1966 through *Australian Science Fiction Review* (ASFR). John was one of a very small number of Western Australian fans. He met John Bangsund (editor of ASFR) during one of Bangsund's trips to Perth. As soon as he could, John Brosnan moved to Sydney, where he became a valued part of the revived Sydney fan scene, and attended several conventions.

Without having the Contents list of the first mailing to hand, I can't remember whether or not John was a founder member of ANZAPA (Australia and New Zealand Amateur Publishing Association). If not, he joined very early, and was a strong presence during its first year (1968-69). His ANZAPazine was called *Why Bother?*

In 1970, he was part of the Big Bus Trip (1970), during which several Sydney fans, including Ron Clarke, travelled overland by bus from Australia to England. John reported in hilarious detail the ups and downs (mainly downs) of that trip, and stayed an ANZAPA member for a while after he settled in London.

John's exploits were many, including his great fanzine *Big Scab*, his membership of Ratfandom in the

1970s, and his perpetual attempts to become a big-name writer. He had quite a few novels published over the years. The most recent is *Mothership* (Gollancz, 2004), and he had finished a sequel. He had had a few books made into films (with unintended awful results) and published several important books about SF films.

An original member (1969) of the mailing list for my magazine *SF Commentary*, he stayed with me at my Carlton Street flat during his only trip back to Australia (1974) and kept in touch by letter and email until recently. He took me to the Munch exhibition at Southbank in London when I visited in 1974. His letters were always funny, but the tale he told — of alcoholism he could not kick although he knew it was killing him, and constant money problems — was melancholy. Until his death, John survived mainly thanks to the kindness of friends (especially Roy Kettle, Rob Holdstock, Malcolm Edwards and John Baxter) and the landlord of Ortygia House, Harrow, the famous old building that housed many fans and pros over the years.

I will miss his letters, although it's a great pity I did not get to natter to him one last time. Thanks again to Kim Huett and Lee Harding (and, indirectly, John Baxter) for the first news of the passing of an old friend.

John Brosnan's final letters to SF Commentary (excerpts)

I'm still here at Ortygia House but I don't know for how much longer. As I've pulled out of the income support system, it was either that or get a job, or take a six-month course on computers. I don't think my rent is being paid any longer. There's also a 'For Sale' sign out the front. It's been there for months but no one seems to be in a rush to buy the place.

I'm currently waiting for a reaction from my editor to the ms of my novel *Mothership* that I've finally com-

pleted. It's quiet; too quiet. I'm reasonably happy with it but whether it works or not I don't know. It's a light-weight piece with, hopefully, a fair amount of humour (which the editor wanted) but it's not a spoof. Hard to categorise it. I said to a friend that it fell between two stools. He said, you mean it's between shit and shit?

Still going on periodic alcoholic binges but have managed to stay out of hospital since I last wrote to you. Actually I should be in hospital today having a blood test



I know I've used this photo before, but it bears reprinting in this issue. Assorted comics fans at the Melbourne SF Conference, Easter 1968: (l. to r.): John Breden, Bill Wright (behind), Dimitri Razuvaev, Gerald Carr, Merv Binns, Paul J. Stevens, Kevin Dillon, and John Brosnan.

— my blood pressure is creeping up despite the medication — but I can't be bothered. Famous last words?
11 February 2003

I wouldn't describe my current mental state as 'chipper'. I would say I was manically depressed, except I seem to miss out on the manic phases. Just continually depressed. You said that I sounded in last year's email that I was about to take the Big Dive. I must admit that thoughts of throwing myself off the top of Ortygia House

have occurred to me but, as the old joke goes, with my luck I'd probably miss the ground. Also I don't think the building is high enough for a successful suicide attempt.

I don't think you stayed in Flat 2 here when you visited Chris Priest in 1974. He lived in the bottom flat, which is on the ground floor, or the basement if you want to be pedantic. I remember your 1974 visit. You persuaded me to accompany you to an exhibition of Munch's work at, I think, the Hayward Gallery on the South Bank. I was, as usual, feeling pretty depressed at the time. The Munch exhibition depressed me even further but you found it positively exhilarating.

Alarming to see that photograph of my younger 1968 self in your ConVergence report. I don't see Gary Mason in that collective of comic fans, yet I'm sure he was present. I definitely remember an incident that took place in the Melbourne SF club room at that time. Gary suddenly grabbed my arm and whispered urgently, 'We've got to get out of here!' Outside in the street I asked him what the problem was. His reply: 'They're smoking marijuana in there! The police will probably be here any minute now!' Once again I was struck by the huge gulf that existed between Melbourne fandom and Sydney fandom.

15 February 2003

We get letters

LESLEY SUTHERLAND
lesley.sutherland@arts.monash.edu.au

I'm just writing to thank you for your piece on Owen Webster, which I found at <http://www.efanzines.com/SFC/ScratchPad/scrat046.pdf> after just having picked up a beautiful copy (jacket intact) of *So* at the Monash Uni secondhand bookshop for \$3. Browsing through it, the intent and style of the book instantly appealed, so once back in my office I looked him up. Your blog was the only (and a most informative and sincere) source of information.

It's saddening to learn immediately that this man, whom I've only just discovered, died in such tragic circumstances, a loss that is not any the less for having occurred some time ago now.

31 March 2005

LLOYD AND YVONNE PENNEY
1706-24 Eva Rd., Etobicoke, Ontario,
Canada M9C 2B2

Not sure how long it's been since returning from your whirlwind tour of the American Left Coast, but I'm sure getting back home has been a relief. I look forward to your trip report, whenever that might happen.

I hate moving. Truly do. The move to get to 24 Eva was the worst ever, 48 straight hours of exhaustion and

muscle strains. Every so often, Yvonne muses aloud about moving, but I've told her that I will not move unless we can hire movers. Last thing I need is a heart attack in the middle of such exertions. I don't think we've ever voluntarily moved. One apartment we left, we did so because we lived on the top floor and the roof leaked through to the ceiling of the master bedroom. Management's reaction is that we must have abused the ceiling.

I don't think we'll ever own a house or a condo; they're far too dear here. I have no idea who's buying all these so-called super-luxurious condominiums for C\$250,000, which is considered cheap in Toronto. Just let me win the lottery, and all will be well . . .

Harry's a handsome cat, and he probably knows it. I hope he's settled in well, and that he has assumed the throne of Lord and Master of All He Surveys.

A fun Ditmar-morphed picture would have mountains of boxes of books going up a 40-foot wall. I can only imagine how many boxes of books you had to move. We had 30 last time, and I think that number will be going up at least a little. Our local literary SF convention, Ad Astra, takes place in a couple of weeks, and we will be using a table to liquidate some of the collection.

31 March 2005

ANNE, KATE AND CAROLINE McCURDY
Frankston VIC 3199

I am sorry that I have taken so long to get back to you

about the wonderful piece you wrote remembering Brian in your newsletter. It was very interesting for us to read how you felt about him, and the way he worked as a publisher both for and against the Macmillan system. Thank you for writing such a moving tribute.

The girls and I have had a very stressful time in the last few months. We sold the house, but the purchaser turned out to be a developer who takes a distinct pleasure in playing hard ball when it comes to delaying tactics associated with paying the deposit. [Our new address] is on the bus route to Frankston Station for the girls and only 10 minutes from my mother in Mount Eliza.

We will be having a housewarming party after we get settled, and we hope that you and Elaine will be able to come. I will let you know the details. I hope that you are both well and that 'country life' is agreeing with you.

We are now faced with that awful task of simplifying the huge amount of baggage we have accumulated. Brian was a self-confessed hoarder, and there is much to sort through, with some very difficult decisions to be made.

31 March 2005

ED MESKYS

RR2, Box 63, 322 Whittier Highway,
Center Harbor NH 03226-9708, USA

It is a shame that Phil Dick could not sell any of his mainstream novels while he was alive. Also, very little had been put on talking book. Now the literati have discovered him, much of his SF has now been recorded. But, far as I know, still not his mainstream. I did buy his posthumous juvenile and have it custom recorded. It was interesting, but was *not* a suitable juvenile book. I can see why it didn't sell, except now as a curiosity.

I met him while I was living in California and visited him weekly for the last few months before I moved to NH, but at the time had only read his *Eye in the Sky* and *High Castle*. I have now read many more. I also read about half his short fiction, because the first and fourth volumes of his complete short fiction were recorded by an agency which will custom record needed books for students, teachers, and other professionals. (I have asked them, RFB&D, and the official talking book program (NLS or National Library Service operated by the Library of Congress) whether *Quiet Sun* is available.)

1 May 2005

NORTON RED via Earl Kemp
Nortonred@aol.com

Really dug the down under ballyhoo '72 . . . I thought Nik Cohn was the coolest with *Awopbopalooobop Awopbamboom* when it first came out. That and Charlie Gillette's *Sound of the City* kinda gave a leg up to rock n' roll . . . not that it ever needed to have the blessing of any semblance of literati . . . ain't that the truth? Better the pocket-liner crowd *stay away*. Your scribbler there has a point when he says the earliest efforts are pure heart & soul . . . that by the time the hinterland hepsters hit the big towns with managers and money men, the smoothing and creaming begins . . . so true with everything. When they tell you what to do, what'll sell, what you're doing wrong . . . and when you follow their instructions... brother, you pay with your diluted deluded old self down the pike when you look back and go, 'aw, maaaaan!'

10 June 2005

TONY KEEN

48 Priory Street, Tonbridge, Kent TN9 2AN,
England

BRG: Regardless of what one thinks of Cheryl Morgan the person, I must say that *Emerald City* is pretty close to what I would like to do with *SF Commentary* in the best of all possible worlds. I don't know how she reads so many books per month, and she has the kind of non-academic style that I welcome. I've met quite a few people who find her reviews very helpful, especially as the SF field is now so large. Instead of going all-electronic, I try to keep up doing a print magazine, as a result of which I haven't published *SFC* since 2004. And I find time to read about four books a month.

I find it surprising that you should say this. *Emerald City* may be frequent and have a broader coverage, but, IMHO, cannot hold a candle to *SFC* when it comes to incisive in-depth commentary. *SFC* is, I believe, the benchmark to which all sercon sf fanzines should aspire, but few, if any, achieve.

18 August 2005

DAVE LANGFORD

94 London Road, Reading, Berks RG1 5AU,
England

BRG: There's nothing to stop me doing the electronic versions of all my fanzines, but that cuts out many of my long-time readers. What do I send dear old Syd Bounds, in his eighties, in his tiny house in south London, who still writes (and sells!) stories written on his trusty typewriter?

Yes, Syd is one of several good reasons to keep producing *Ansible* on paper. (Although a one-sheet fanzine (Sorry, semiprozine. I keep forgetting.) hardly compares to *SFC* or *TMR* in effort and expense.) I had a nice egoboo moment in Glasgow when Peggy White's daughter told me how much her mother liked to be kept in touch with SF/fan doings.

18 August 2005

BRG: After all these years, Syd has finally given up trying to hang on to his house in Kingston on Thames. He's moved to 6 Haygate Court, Haygate Road, Wellington, Telford, Shropshire TF1 1SR.

ROBERT MAPSON

33 Westfield Road, Kelmscott WA 6111

I don't know if you've been listening to Andrew Ford's series on 'Music and Fashion' on Radio National. He made the following comment: 'One reason that a recording of *Tristan and Isolde* will never sell like a pop single, is that it requires time to appreciate it, ideally, a lifetime. The piece lasts four hours and it's richly detailed. A successful pop single might last four minutes, will be full of repetition and you're meant to get it immediately. The pop charts aren't interested in things that take time.' Seems to me that you could just as equally apply this to literature, Garner and, oh, say, J. K. Rowling (though, strangely, the Rowling books are longer than the Garner books).

23 August 2005

Um, I hate autobiographies... How about: 'Robert Mapson first encountered SF in the Dark Ages, attended Swancon II, and has drifted around the shoals of fandom in the subsequent years. He discovered Alan Garner around the same time, and has maintained the Unofficial Alan Garner Page since 1997. His current activities involve hoarding supplies to wait out the tides of darkness and superstition sweeping the nation in the guise of psychics, homeopathy, intelligent design etc etc'.

31 August 2005

PETER SULLIVAN

1 Englemann Way, Burdon Vale,
Sunderland SR3 2NY, England

I know that *Scratch Pad* [the efanazines.com version of *brg*] isn't really designed to elicit comments, at least not outside of ANZAPA, but I just wanted to drop you a line anyway to thank you for putting issues 60 and 61 on-line at the efanazines.com website. I was especially interested to read the transcript of your talk on Philip K. Dick and *A Scanner Darkly*. My 'first wave' of reading SF&F was at school, and was mainly 'child-friendly' things like the 'Earthsea' books before moving on to Tolkien. But in my 'second wave' of SF reading (during and shortly after leaving college) I splurged almost exclusively on PKD. I worked my way through everything the local library had plus whatever paperbacks I could afford. (This was the very late 1980s, when he was becoming more 'mainstream'.) The only ones I still seem to have are *Flow My Tears the Policeman Said* and *The Preserving Machine* short story collection. Oh, and Michael Bishop's *Philip K. Dick Is Dead, Alas*, which I must admit I thought was an enjoyable/fantastic romp, but nothing more. Now that I seem to be starting on a 'third wave' of SF reading, I'm going back and working through the PKD books that I never got around to before, starting with *The Man in the High Castle*.

25 August 2005

Just a quick note to say that I have now finished *The Man in the High Castle*. A few queries/comments you might be able to help me with: The reality described in *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy* is obviously not our own reality, as it clearly diverges from it, even based on the brief descriptions of it that we get. Is this what is meant by Abendsen's comment towards the end that 'The question implies I did nothing but the typing, and that's neither true nor decent'? In that the Oracle described our world exactly, but he then 'edited' it — to make it either a better story or more palatable to readers in his own world?

I guess that the other thing that reading this book really brings out for me is how derivative Michael Bishop's *Philip K. Dick is Dead, Alas* is. Not that this makes the latter any less fun. But I guess it's a bit like seeing a spoof of *Hamlet* before the play itself (which I also did many years ago at school). The brooch that transports Mr Tagomi to an alternative (the real?) San Francisco is clearly related to the 'lynch pin' that Dick gives Lia in the later book to keep her linked to Cal. And the triangulation of three different alternative realities is common to both books too. In *High Castle*, it's the triangulation of the character's real world, the world perceived by the Oracle (our own), and the world described in *The Grasshopper*. In Michael Bishop's book, it's the triangulation of the characters' initial Nixonian world, the world they mistakenly get transformed to at

the end of the book, and the presumed 'target' of the Dick character in the book, our own (ostensible) reality. And I guess it's a sign of how much PKD has influenced my own thinking that I feel the need to insert 'ostensible' into that last sentence.

The other thing that occurs to me is that, Hugo Award notwithstanding, is that I'm not sure *The Man in the High Castle* really constitutes science fiction. For once, the term 'speculative fiction' is probably actually deserved. The problem is that 'speculative fiction' seems to have emerged as the codeword for what authors call their work in media interviews when denying that what they write is science fiction. Either because they genuinely believe this, or because their literary agents have given them a long lecture about how being perceived as an SF author will affect their marketability. So it's a term I'm not too comfortable with even when, as here, it's probably accurate.

19 October 2005

You wrote: 'I can't afford to print in colour all those gorgeous fanzines on efanazines.com. I print them on my black and white laser printer, one side only, and that will have to do.'

I gather that one of the APA zines in FAPA these days is called *Bare Back Sides*, that being how the editor produces her copy count . . .

Most of the zeens I download from www.efanazines.com I actually tend to read on screen rather than print off. For quite a few years, I was travelling the country as a computer consultant, and I soon learned that the more stuff (project documentation, software manuals) I kept on the computer, the less I had to lug around with me. So I got pretty much used to reading things off screen. My wife, for instance, is completely different, and *has* to print documents off in order to read them — anything longer than a one-page e-mail.

BRG: And thanks again for the letter of comment. My feeling is that the non-SF novels that were turned into SF novels included *Martian Time-Slip* (the obvious example), but I get the feeling that *Time out of Joint* also started that way, before Phil Dick had the brilliant idea of taking his characters from 1959 to 1999.

What's worrying is how many dates in Philip K. Dick novels that were 'in the far, far future' when he wrote them have now been and gone. *Flow My Tears* is set in 1984, if I remember, which seems positively historic these days. I guess we're all just getting old . . .

7 November 2005

Confessions of a Crap Artist has been designated 'Choice of the Day' on the BBC Radio 4 website, so will be available for download from the 'Listen Again' part of the website a few hours after transmission: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/atoz/> and see the sidebar on the right.

Alternatively, I have a cassette tape copy I can send by air mail, but, as well as being more immediate, the internet version is probably better audio quality as well!

17 January 2006

Thanks again, Peter, for the tape of *Crap Artist*. If I can find it, I should copy for you my tape of the ABC's drama presentation of Damien Broderick's *Transmitters*. Also, Yvonne Rousseau's story 'The Truth About Oscar' has been broadcast by the ABC, but I don't seem to have a tape of it.

Many thanks for the package of old Gillespie zines, which arrived safe and sound the week before last. (Apologies for not reporting this earlier, but I've been a bit out of circulation, due to a heavy cold.) These have all been added to my reading stack for the Christmas holidays.

Interesting that you mention the difficulties of getting the old issues on-line sensibly. I managed to get some issues of my old postal games fanzeens into PDF. The software that comes with my flatbed scanner has a 'photocopier' mode where it produces a 100% size copy of a full sheet of A4, sending this to your default Windows printer. What I did was set my 'default printer' to be the PDF Creator software, so that it would produce a PDF of each page. This worked quite well, although I found scanning in greyscale worked better than black and white. So I ended up with a load of single-page PDFs, which I then used PDF Toolkit (pdftk) to stitch back together in order into a single issue. The whole process took about half an hour for a 24-page zeen.

Downsides? Well, half an hour for 24 pages probably equates to over an hour for a typically sized Gillespie zine. Also, the file sizes are rather eye-wateringly large, as the whole of each page is, in effect, stored as a single big graphic. My 24 pages worked out at over 9 MB, which is a large download even for a broadband user. And one additional problem which you would have is that the page size for your older issues appears to be 11 by 8.5 inches rather than A4 — the margins are probably wide enough in most cases not to lose any important text, but it still makes it trickier to line everything up on the flatbed.

I note that the layout you use today in *Scratch Pad* and *Steam Engine Time* is basically the same as the layout you used for *SF Commentary* back in the 1970s — the difference presumably being that you can produce this layout yourself these days rather than having to send it away to be typeset. I suppose once you get a layout that works (especially one as clean, simple and elegant as yours), it'll work as well in any era.

I haven't really commented on *Scratch Pad* #62 yet. What really caught my eye was your article about indexing *The Latham Diaries*. Not because I recognised the name — these days, only US and European politicians seem to get much coverage in the mainstream UK media, and I'm ashamed to admit I haven't had time to read *The Economist* for many years. But my own interest in politics (which eventually turned into it being my degree subject) started by reading the first main UK political diaries to be published, those of Richard Crossman, which I read in paperback in the school library when I was a spotty 14-year-old. Even at that age, I was astute enough to realise that a diary like this is going to be at least somewhat self-serving, although it's an interesting question as to whether Crossman ever intended his diaries to be actually published, or just used as a resource by biographers. But by including details of 'private' cabinet discussions, thus blowing apart the fiction of cabinet collective responsibility, they were certainly controversial.

To what extent has technology made it easier to produce a diary for something like this book in the sort of optimistic timescales that publishers seem to expect? In my own field of accountancy, spreadsheets have removed a lot of the routine drudgery of, for example, producing a budget position statement. But this hasn't reduced the degree of professionalism required; if anything, it has increased the scope for an accountant to be a proper financial adviser rather than just a number-

cruncher. I can imagine the process of indexing a book has gone through a similar transformation — because you're not tied to the old manual card index anymore, you can actually do a more professional job in tracking down people referred to and (in Latham's case) decoding all those abusive nicknames!

19 December 2005

SFC 51 letter of comment

I'm sure you weren't necessarily expecting a letter of comment on the back issues of *SFC* and *The Metaphysical Review* that you kindly sent me towards the end of last year. But, according to fannish tradition, it's never too late to send egoboo, so here are some comments on the Robert Silverberg issue of *SFC*, number 51 [published in 1977].

Reading George Turner's lead article was interesting, in that it set off some 'compare and contrast' thoughts for me with Philip K. Dick. George quotes Silverberg as saying 'I wish only that I could be my own man'. It's almost as if Silverberg has recognised, too late, the Faustian bargain that he has entered into by accepting the terms and conditions of being a well-paid, but still hack, writer.

By contrast, Philip K. Dick made an equal and opposite Faustian bargain: to stick to the sort of stories that he wanted to write (and which *would* bring him fans, even if they were the select few rather than the comparative 'mass audience' that Silverberg reached), accepting that this would never make him rich. (As Thomas Disch notes in the Introduction to one short story collection, 'Dick managed to survive as a full-time freelance writer only by virtue of his immense productivity.'). Or am I over-projecting the fictional character of PKD as portrayed in *Philip K. Dick Is Dead, Alas* onto the real Dick?

Of the robot pope story, 'Good News From The Vatican', George says, 'The idea was there, but it had nowhere to go, and we will find this true of much of Silverberg's work.' Compare this to Philip K. Dick. Equally dodgy on character (many of whom are two-dimensional, or, to quote Disch again, 'more kindly represent the traditional complement of America's traditional *Commedia dell'Arte*.') and structure. But as a writer of short stories about ideas, he could not be disputed.

Interesting to see George say later on that Silverberg 'has had a first class idea (and many of his story ideas are bloody marvellous) and has not thought it through'. An accusation that could rarely be levelled at Dick!

Moving on to the specific book reviews, *Dying Inside* sounds a somewhat pointless story. The idea is neat — the paradox of the telepath who cannot communicate or be empathetic with others. This can go one of two ways. It can be a clever paradox, which gets explored, even if not resolved. Don D'Amassa seems to be implying that this is the novel he would like. The other alternative is a pointless, self-referential exercise, which is what Silverberg seems to have produced.

The problem is that the main character David Selig doesn't 'use' his powers in a substantial way — getting your rocks off by sharing your girlfriend's orgasm hardly counts, I fear. I'd like to think that, faced with a similar situation, I'd want to help humanity by becoming an ace peace negotiator or something equally idealistic. In practice, I might end up using my powers in other sorts of negotiation to become a very rich man. But the character of Selig really does neither.

One of the stock comic characters on TV over here at

the moment is an irritating teenage girl who responds to any proposed punishment by saying 'Yeah, but-am-I-bovvered?' ('If you don't behave, you won't go be allowed to go on the school trip.' 'Yeah, but-am-I-bovvered?') When it comes to losing his telepathy, Selig is bowvered, but it's hard to see why — it's not as if he's really doing much with his powers.

Actually, it reminds me a tad of another sketch from a comedy show, featuring super-heroes with amazingly naff powers (one of them was 'Interior Decoration Man', if I remember correctly).

22 February 2006

CASEY WOLF

14-2320 Woodland Drive, Vancouver,
Canada V5N 3P2

A Scanner Darkly was a book I stumbled across in the distant past and was rather rocked by. There is something almost brutal about it — or not almost, I suppose. It's just a different sort of brutality than normally found in our 'entertainment'. I liked the book more than I realised, in a strange way — it's all very hazy now, of course. although I *liked* *Man in the High Castle* much more at time of reading, *A Scanner Darkly* has stuck with me more — like a large sliver lodged deeply under the fingernail.

26 August 2005

HARRY HENNESSEY BUERKETT,
507 West High Street, Urbana IL 61801, USA

The top 25 science fiction novels

- 1 *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (Philip K. Dick)
A mind-bending, focused invasion of self; a novel paradigm.
- 2 *Ubik* (Philip K. Dick)
The ultimate deconstruction of alienation; also mind-bending.
- 3 *Roadside Picnic* (Arkady and Boris Strugatsky)
Alien refuse in 'The Zone' as an eerie metaphor for the science fiction field, itself.
- 4 *Beyond Apollo* Barry M. Malzberg
Intimate, fascinating, circular tale of technology's dysfunction, by an unreliable narrator.
- 5 *A Case of Conscience* (James Blish)
As complex and ambiguous a critique of science and religion as has ever been penned.
- 6 *Solaris* (Stanislaw Lem)
A haunting and moving depiction of Mind at a loss.
- 7 *His Master's Voice* (Stanislaw Lem)
The Folly of Science, illustrating Haldane's Law.
- 8 *Brave New World* (Aldous Huxley)
An intricately imagined critique of society; modern SF's first true social satire.
- 9 *Cat's Cradle* (Kurt Vonnegut)
An elegiac apocalypse, done with humour, and social satire.
- 10 *The Space Merchants* (Frederik Pohl & C. M. Kornbluth)
A dead-on social satire of twentieth-century advertising.
- 11 *Bring the Jubilee* (Ward Moore)
A well-conceived time-travel/alternate universe novel, haunting and tragically beautiful.
- 12 *Starmaker* (Olaf Stapledon)

An amazing and incredible scope of imagination and universe-building.

- 13 *Now Wait for Last Year* (Philip K. Dick)
Brilliant, tragic and poignant social satire: a neglected work.
- 14 *Rendezvous with Rama* (Arthur C. Clarke)
A spooky glimpse into the universe, illustrating the vastness of space and time.
- 15 *The Stars My Destination* (Alfred Bester)
Full of wild and unexpected plot twists; a fun apocalyptic.
- 16 *Norstrilia* (Cordwainer Smith)
Brilliantly imaginative world-building; like *Dune*, only better.
- 17 *Galapagos* (Kurt Vonnegut)
A gentle apocalypse, with fated but endearing characters.
- 18 *Far Rainbow* (Arkady and Boris Strugatsky)
The most melancholy and elegaic apocalyptic on the Folly of Science ever written.
- 19 *Memoirs of a Spacewoman* (Naomi Mitchison)
An extraordinary journey into the heart of love and empathy, by J. B. S. Haldane's sister.
- 20 *The War with the Newts* (Karel Capek)
A nineteenth-century apocalyptic by the creator of 'robot'; imaginative, clever and endearing.
- 21 *Childhood's End* (Arthur C. Clarke)
An archetype-destroying apocalyptic of human transcendence.
- 22 *Gateway* (Frederik Pohl)
Fun and exciting psychological space-fear, second only to *Beyond Apollo*.
- 23 *Collision Course* (Barrington J. Bayley)
A most extraordinary exploration of time conundra.
- 24 *The Palace of Eternity* (Bob Shaw)
A PKD-like 'broken back' novel of spiritual discovery, illustrative of Haldane's Law.
- 25 *The Technicolor Time Machine* (Harry Harrison)
The most fun and frivolous and clever use of a time machine, ever.

TIM MARION,
266 East Broadway, Apt 1201B,
New York NY 10002, USA

I very much look forward to reading the meaty-looking article on Alan Garner. I had no idea he was still writing after *Red Shift*, or even if it was worth reading. I guess I'll have a hint toward finding that out when I read Bruce's article. It's a pleasure to read something about Alan Garner after so many years.

13 September 2005

Originally Garner was one of my favourite children's fantasy authors, as his books had all the traditional elements (children encountering magic), but with a slightly untraditional, more dramatic approach. His books would start off with a bang (!), very dramatically, and then end very abruptly, almost immediately after the climax. In *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen* (published in America as just *The Weirdstone*), as soon as young Colin and Susan arrive in England to stay with relatives, they are menaced and given a harrowing chase through the countryside by the 'svart-alfar' (dark elves) who desperately desire to possess an heirloom that Colin has (memory very approximate.)

In *The Moon of Gomrath*, Colin and Susan are somehow hapless witnesses to a predestined revival of the Old

Magic, and all who comprise such.

Elidor has a totally different set of children accidentally crossing into another kingdom, where they become involved in some sort of magical struggle. They bring back some symbols of the battle, bury them in the garden, and eventually denizens of that other world come back to retrieve them.

I gather from your email that you are also unfamiliar with the original Welsh myth that inspired *The Owl Service*. A lonely young man who cannot find a bride insists that the wizard make him one. The wizard, in turn, creates the most beautiful woman he can, and makes her out of beautiful flowers. However, she turns out to be such an exquisite creation that the wizard falls in love with her himself. Thus the triangle began, which Garner posits was repeated thru the ages, and is repeated here, oddly enough, in children in Alan Garner's strange book. (Perhaps it was also repeated in *The Bride Of Frankenstein*.)

11 October 2005

JERRY KAUFMAN,
3522 NE 123rd Street, Seattle WA 98125, USA

Thanks for sending all these issues of **brg** (the name of which I always think is some kind of sound effect). I'm only sorry you didn't have spare copy of issue #40 to stick in the packet.

Boy, they are just full of domesticity. I'm glad you found a nice place to move to, and in a way that it needed so much work. It gives you *lots* to write about, doesn't it? Too bad it drains off some of the money you need to publish the writing.

I found your writing in these issues generally pretty interesting, even unpublished articles on Alan Garner. I wish I remembered the books better — I think I read them all well before you wrote the article. The last book of his I read was *The Guiser*, and I read it on my way to Australia in 1983. Been a long time gone, that trip.

2 October 2005

CHRIS GARCIA,
1401 N. Shoreline Blvd, Mountain View
CA 94043, USA

Good on ya for going back to native plants. It's a trend that is getting big in California, though several of the plants that are native here are also being banned in neighborhoods because they are almost as bad as kudzu when it comes to covering fences and houses in greenery.

You know, I have a bunch of stuff with Collingwood on it in my wardrobe. I'm a big footy fan, and though Geelong is my team, my friends from that hemisphere kept thinking I was a Magpie fan!

I don't read as much as I should, but I read *The Time Traveler's Wife* and *A Map of the World*. I totally agree with the thoughts you shared about *The Time Traveler's Wife*, though I think I liked it less than you did. I thought that *A Map of the World* was an ambitious novel, and I liked the DVD too, but it was less a success than the book.

Ah, *The Polish Boys*! I love *Twin Falls Idaho*, and *Northfork* was even a bit better. The two of them are great, and seem to have studied John Sayles, who is my idea of the perfect director. The lead female in *Twin Falls*, whose name always escapes me but IMDB reminds me

that it's Michelle Hicks, doesn't work nearly enough. She's great in *Twin Falls* and is wonderful in *Mulholland Drive*.

Wit is a powerful film, but I really like Nicholls in general. Lots of Sergio Leone. *A Fistful of Dollars* is one of my Dad's all-time faves. My Russian friend Natasha and I have had many a battle about the version of *Solaris* that we prefer.

Excellent CD selections, starting with Calexico. I'm a huge Alt Country and Roots fan. My hero is a fellow named Johnny Cash. I have so many of his works, but it always ends up with me listening to the Prison albums over and over. A guy I met a while ago, Gene Bealey, was a good friend of Mr Cash, but is also a friend of a certain Mr Bradbury. I said 'You know, you're the guy whose friends are some of the tops in the worlds that I love.' He said, 'I get that a lot.'

Miles Davis is another Cash issue. I own almost everything that's ever been released in the US by Miles and I always end up listening to two albums: *Kind of Blue* and *Bitches Brew*.

Very good stuff, Bruce!

27 October 2005

JULIAN WARNER,
13 Frederick Street, Brunswick VIC 3056

I can see the wisdom of your giving lists of favourites by year of consumption rather than year of production. It's a shame that we can't run awards that way! (Let's not start a conversation about retro-Hugos, please.)

I don't think that I read enough novels each year to make a favourites list very meaningful. My reading of late has been characterised by my disillusionment with favourite authors of the past as I get more and more critical about minutiae of technique and wary of padding and scornful of boasting — and I would rather skirt around expository lumps than choke on them. I am a bit timid about reading untried new authors. It's easy to be wary when so many of the review books which pass through Lucy's hands are so unexceptional. You possibly know more authors than I do but I find myself worrying about reading a book by someone I have met and then thinking less of them for having written a bad book. Maybe I should write a bad book myself so that I can feel at one with the *hoi polloi* of writing.

Books I have wanted to like lately have been a biography of Vivian Stanshall (*Ginger Geezer*) and an armchair companion to Nick Cave's music. Viv Stanshall was a very fruity cake of a person who has been turned into a dry biscuit by biographers Lucian Randall and Chris Welch. Music writer Amy Hanson's treatment of Nick Cave is baffling and passionless. Perhaps I've read too much fan writing to be able to put up with colourless descriptions of emotion-filled subjects. I don't get as excited about the music of Julian Cope as Sue Ann Barber does, but I do rather like Cope's website of over-the-top reviews of music (<http://www.headheritage.co.uk>). Like-minded loons gather there to gush, waffle, or carp over music both old and new — with perhaps a leaning towards krautrock, prog rock, hippie freak-out rock, and the latest, oddest stuff from Japan. I like passionate writers — I just don't want to be around when it's time to administer their medication.

Otherwise, my reading life is a parade of *Uncut* (which keeps me better informed on recent film and DVD releases that I would otherwise be), *Mojo*, *ICE*, *The Wire* (and most emphatically not *Wired*), *Viz*, *PC User*, *Aus-*

tralian *Personal Computer*, *Winestate*, and sundry other mags. Ghu forbid that I should try to rate best issues of magazines.

I felt that *American Splendor* would make a good double-feature with *Crumb*, but this might engender the idea that all cartoonists are purging the sickness and madness from their lives by vomiting on the page *im ganzen farben* (to quote from the cover of old German porno mags), in full pen-and-ink (to quote an old Cockney expression). These films would also match up with the biopic of Joe Boussard, the manic 78 collector. I haven't bought the second CD of Joe Boussard's collected recordings (*Medicine Show Music* this time) but it is on my want list.

I would probably like the restored *The Court Jester* and the original *To Be or Not To Be*. My experience of the *Court Jester* was punctuated with commercials and possibly even more edited than normal. I've only seen the Mel Brooks version of *To Be...*, which was funny enough in itself, but the context of the original would certainly add some piquancy. The Clooney *Solaris* was disappointing for me. A lot of the point of the novel seemed to be lost in this perhaps 'simplified' version of the story. Both versions of *Solaris* seemed to share the sense of isolation which Kubrick conveyed in *2001*.

Whilst I might debate the state of the short story with various Clarionistas (or more likely the state of the short story writer — 'I think she's a bit pissed') I am usually most unlikely to actually *read* the things. Where do normal people read short fiction? Serialised in *The Age* or *The Women's Weekly*?

Praise for Margo Lanagan in various quarters might just be enough for me to seek out some of her work (probably already on the shelves if I bother to go and look).

Your favourites of 2003 seem to put you squarely in the alt.country camp, with only really Weiss and Road-knight dissenting. Okay, so Ray Charles is in an alternative country of his own but it still kinda holds. I've liked everything of Joe Ely I've heard, but there is so much more to find from the Flatlander and his ilk that it is daunting — and that's not even touching on Los Super Seven and all of their chums and history.

The finer points of much of classical music still elude me. Whilst I can appreciate the simple melodic delights of the sort of stuff that gets played at the Proms, there is a large body of classical music which does nothing for me. Having said that, I find myself exploring music which occurs at the odd intersection of the avant garde, the purely improvised and the somewhere-beyond-jazz.

There seems to be a bit of a revival of twentieth-century composers going on at present, with the likes of Feldman, Cage, Berio, Scelsi, Nono, Cardew, Xenakis and Ligeti being reissued and rerecorded. The slightly more modern chaps like Adams, Glass and Nyman seem to be selling well. It is only the chapettes who are sadly underrepresented. Mentioning Pauline Oliveros or Eliane Radigue will only draw puzzled frowns in most circles.

2004 must have been slightly more rock and roll for you — 'twould be hard to be otherwise when including the Faces. *Ascenseur Pour L'Echafaud* features the bass of Pierre Michelot, who appeared to be the ubiquitous bassman-for-hire in Paris in the sixties — playing along with drummer Christian Garros in Jacques Loussier's trio. Kenny Clarke had a bit of a reputation for being an old-fashioned Swing drummer but there's no sign of that in this 'improvising to the screen' performance. Both *Tribute to Jack Johnson* and *Ascenseur* are oddities in

the Miles Davis catalogue, but are diverting and satisfying ones nonetheless. As you may know, I am quite a fan of Sonny Sharrock, the originally uncredited second guitarist on *Tribute* . . . It is hard to reconcile the hard free jazz that Sonny played with the fairly straight-ahead blues of *Tribute* and the sweet tootlings of Herbie Mann — his other well-known employer.

I'm sure that I would like a lot of Dan Hicks' stuff but have not got around to hearing much of it yet. Ditto the Loretta Lyn with Jack White on board. Lucy and I have been listening to a lot of fuzzy scuzzy garage rock from Jack White's part of the world lately — most likely from bands who have shared bills with the White Stripes in the past.

Given that I am commenting on things published in the October 2005 mailing of ANZAPA, I assume that I may have some time to wait to comment on your bests of 2005.

I can get in early with what will undoubtedly be a favourite for 2006: *Congotronics No.2 Buzz'n'Rumble from the Urb'n'Jungle*. This is a collection of Congolese groups who have adopted primitive methods of amplification to be heard in urban Kinshasa. Electric thumb pianos, megaphones and improvised percussion mingle with more usual instruments in a hip-swayingly funky and rhythmic mix. The CD is complemented with a DVD showing several of the groups in performance in what appear to be informal settings.

Some impressive dancing accompanies a few of the groups. Any CD which gets Lucy dancing at first hearing is going to rate highly! The French language and the rhythms suggest a direct connection with the Zydeco musics of the Southern US creole diaspora, and the use of an accordion in one piece cements the idea. We will have to locate a copy of *Congotronics No.1* now.

In 2005 I was able to track down some early German electronic music that had been eluding me for some time. I now have all of the early Kraftwerk albums on CD, which is no mean feat, given that the group seems to have disowned its first four albums, or at least refuse to reissue them officially. Cluster are not as revisionist about their past, but their CDs have been almost as hard to find. I picked up *Cluster '71* and *Cluster II* in 2005, which largely completes the picture I have of early Cluster. As Neu's back catalogue was reissued in 2003, it seems that La Dusseldorf's works were up for the same attention in 2005. I will try to track down copies of their first self-titled album and *Individuellos* in 2006. And then there's all of the Klaus Schulze and Edgar Froese material which is being re-issued, and Amon Duuls I and II, and Popol Vuh, and . . . and . . . and. You might actually like some of this stuff, Bruce.

Lots of great reggae got reissued in 2005, but I know that you are the wrong person to be talking to about this. Goodness knows what you are going to make of Willie Nelson doing reggae versions of country songs. One of these days, I will have to buy a decent copy of Johnny Nash's early reggae excursions, if I can find one that isn't on a cheap and nasty budget label.

The renewed recent interest in folk music has moved in some odd directions. Obscure folk artists of the sixties and early seventies have been revived, such as Vashti Bunyan and Linda Perhacs and Bill Fay. New folkies, like Davendra Banhart, have arisen and hippie freak-out groups have de-electrified to produce a more acoustic bongo fury. At some point, my tolerance for quavery voices and twee lyrics is reached. No-one has been touting a resurrection of Ian and Sylvia yet. Yes, that man at the market in a pixie hat with a tin whistle and

a guitar is being really modern. *Hmm* (or should that be *omm*?).

The best part of any folk revivalism is the delving further back in history to bring the likes of Hobart Smith, the Carter Family, Dock Boggs, and Washington Phillips back into the light.

Old jazzers are also being revived a lot lately. You can buy pretty well most of what Albert Ayler recorded during his lifetime now — certainly more albums than you could have every bought before. The Ayler of the current era, Peter Brotzmann, has more albums out than you can poke a sharp stick at. It seems that in every field, there are those who intellectualise their music more than others. In mathematical terms, there could be said to be simple arithmetic music, the algebraic music which deals with subtleties and unseen things and then there's the higher math music which befuddles most and makes even the cognoscenti scratch their heads. Cecil Taylor has a higher math relationship with mainstream jazz and is therefore subject to those 'it's not really music' arguments. I've bought a few Cecil Taylor albums and I don't claim to have decoded the secrets yet. But it is definitely music and it is enjoyable. Gil Evans' albums go in and out of print rapidly so it is hard to amass a representative collection of his music. I picked up a couple more of his albums in 2005 and I've never been disappointed with his ability to orchestrate sumptuous large-group modern jazz.

I highly recommend the *Penguin Guide to Jazz on CD*, but I sympathise with Richard Cook and Brian Morton's attempts to keep up with the quicksilver jazz CD market. Albums appear and disappear rapidly. What is out of print in England is infesting the bargain bins in Melbourne and vice-versa. No sooner does Richard Cook write wistfully about the absence of a masterpiece from the market than someone in Finland or South Africa decides to reissue it. Unfortunately, this means for people like me that if you see it, you had better grab it now because it may disappear for decades.

I wish I had listened to my old boss and bought albums by Bert Jansch (and by extension, John Renbourn and Dav[e]y Graham) much sooner. Jimmy Page pinched a lot of material from Bert, and Bert in his turn, pinched from other people like Dav[e]y Graham. And Paul Simon pinched from all of them. It seems that everyone from that scene and period had to cover 'Reynardine' and 'Nottamun Town' and 'Blackwaterside'. And every guitar player had to have a bash at making their fingers bleed by mangling Dav[e]y Graham's 'Anji'. There's a lot of great music from that very English group but I'm sure that it's a lot more romantic to look back on than to have experienced first hand.

My ongoing 'sad lad' project is to collect the complete series of volumes of John Lee Hooker's early work. A French label, Body & Soul, has been steadily publishing double CDs of everything Hooker ever recorded. They're up to volume 6 so far, but I'm sure that there's much more to go.

I found some nice old Zydeco by Clifton Chenier and the Balfa Brothers in 2005, and I kept exploring groups who produce very heavy and very slow rock — Boris and Electric Wizard and High on Fire and Teeth of Lions Rule the Divine (!! and Sunn 0))) and Earth and Blue Cheer (les anciens!) and Sleep and Godflesh and Orange Goblin and . . .

A lot of the stuff that makes Lucy dance seems to come from Africa, and Tinariwen are no exception. I've heard many claims about groups playing 'African blues' but Tinariwen are the genuine article. Certainly Tinari-

wen's *Amassakoul* would have to be one of the best albums I bought in 2005. Highly recommended.

And that's it. Now your turn for 2005's best. Julian.

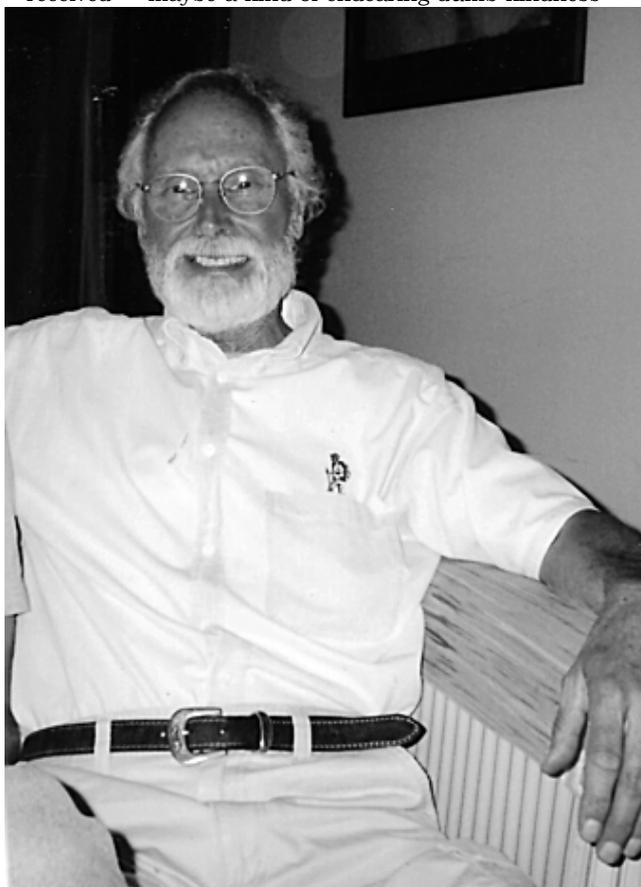
BRG: You might not believe it, Julian, but I still haven't worked out some of my 2005 lists. A project to be completed by the August mailing.

My income keeps going down each year, in actual and relative-value dollars, so all I can buy these days are must-have CDs. These are usually the new releases of my favourite performers, so I have little scope for experimenting. But sometimes somebody new to me keeps pointing to him- or herself, saying 'Buy me! Buy me!' Hence my favourite CD for 2006 so far is Roy Harper's *Both Sides of the Gun*. Good blues music still makes it into the pop charts! So do I spend lots of money buying Roy Harper's earlier CDs? Probably

DAVID BOUTLAND,
RMB 5464, The Ridgeway, Holgate NSW 2250

Thank you for making contact. When I had the internet I looked you up, but couldn't get an address. For interest, I enclose a photo of me as an old bloke (now 66); enjoyed seeing yourself not much changed, and Harding ditto. J. Baxter I would not have recognised, but then I never did know him well.

Thank you also for the two fanzines. I have to confess that they are a bit rarefied for me these days. I'm still stuck in the past, just finished rereading *Triffids*. I was delighted Rob Gerrand chose 'Parky', especially for the nostalgia trip. Some great stories in his selection — personally I loved 'Dancing with Gerontius'. Can't say I've ever really understood why 'Parky' was so well received — maybe a kind of endearing dumb kindness



David Boutland, 2005.

shown by the carny boss (a bit like my old friend David Rome, who is also kind of dumb); also, we could do with a 'Parky' then, now, and in the future? Thank you too for your very kind comments about my story, and my writing.

I've definitely quit TV forever, about one step ahead of it quitting me. Tried writing short stories for the American market and actually did get some real interest from *Ellery Queen* — but too many writers and too little space available in the mags. Three months waiting to hear, one sign of interest after a lot of submissions, uh-uh. I've just now completed a novel, *Pelican Dance*, 140 thousand words and trying to find an agent. It's the toughest work of all this book-length fiction — and again, an overcrowded market. Guess I was lucky to find a way to make a good-enough living writing tv drama.

On the personal side, my partner of 34 years Cheryl — you may have met her once in Melbourne — is now helping to keep me in the manner I've become accustomed . . . working part-time at DJs. We live in a rather jerry-built old house on a couple of acres a few miles inland from the coast. Still poor, like most writers' families (never did earn those huge fees everyone thinks we did in telly). Have a son, Matthew, aged 21 just finishing his trade (sign-writer).

Health's good. Might live til 90. Mainstream reading: have discovered Virginia Woolf. But as always, writing is the thing. Compulsive masochism.

21 September 2005

MARTIN MORSE WOOSTER,
PO Box 8093, Silver Spring MD 20907, USA

Thanks for sending me *The Great Cosmic Donut of Life*. OK, Bruce — why do you need to drink coffee just before you go to bed?

20 September 2005

BRG: To make sure I sleep well.

ALAN SANDERCOCK,
2010 Desmond Drive, Decatur GA 30033, USA

I should mention how sad I was that I wasn't actually able to make it to the West Coast while you were in the country. We had a couple of things happening, one of which was a trip to Idaho in June for a relative's wedding. Of course that was not at the same time as your trip, but I'm having to watch my pennies considering that my daughter's attending the most expensive college in America — Boston University! We also happened to be down on a Georgia Barrier Island at the same time you were convention-going out west.

Anyhow, your comments on coffee drinking habits in this country struck a chord with me. I am always having problems getting my after lunch coffee at the state cafeteria where I work. It seems like the whole coffee-making operation is closing down shortly after 1 p.m. I always want an after-lunch coffee, but at least here in the south people are more likely to be drinking gallon (slight exaggeration) containers of coke. Atlanta is the home of Coca Cola. And I'm with you as far as drinking coffee later in the day. This drinking habit just doesn't seem to affect Australians in the same way as it does Americans, who always worry about insomnia as a result of a hint of caffeine passing over the lips at too late an hour. Oh well, I'm sounding old and cranky and maybe I need more coffee . . . after all, it's only 9:45 p.m.

I got a kick out of the page 6 photo of senior members of the Melbourne Science Fiction Club. I still remember these people as they looked some 35 years ago at my first science fiction convention. Those were the days. Here in Atlanta there is something called DragonCon, which is a huge professionally run (I gather) media convention that doesn't tempt me in the least. There's certainly a place for an event that attracts many thousands of attendees, but I actually prefer the smaller conventions that were (or still are) just run by enthusiastic amateurs. That also reflects the difference between events that attract consumers as opposed to active participating members.

23 September 2005

BRG: Thanks for the encouraging thoughts. Very few people got from the East Coast to the West Coast for Corflu, mainly because of the foul weather in the East. I, of course, took with me great weather during all but two days of my trip.

I hope you will want to buy the Trip Report when it appears, although you might already by a One Per Center for the BBB Fund, in which case you'll get it free.

How's everybody at your place? I trust your daughter is taking advantage of that vastly overpriced education and doing brilliantly.

Nothing much to report, unless you ask about particular people. I tracked down David Boutland (David Rome) — see previous page. James Styles turned up in Sweden recently — he told all the Swedish fans about how he might get back to fanzine publishing. Hah! Yvonne Rousseau is over here this week — we catch up with her tonight.

Speaking of foul weather in the East, I have to say that some parts are definitely in for another battering, although this time it's going to be more to the South. I just read a report in *New Scientist* in which the suggestion is made that the hurricane frequencies cycles might be natural, but the intensity of the storms is definitely increasing as a result of Global Warming.

Of course you were taking about really cold and miserably wintry weather, and now I'm concerned about heating oil price increases as winter approaches. I'm not so much concerned about our costs here in Atlanta, as I am about accommodation costs rising for Maria in Boston. We'll see. By the way, Maria's doing well — getting straight As in marine biology, which is her major. She actually got a half scholarship to Boston University, which is why it was even a consideration. The rest of the tuition is being paid for out of money which we inherited from my mother. In any case, I've always thought that education was a good investment, and of course I didn't have to pay for any of mine, including graduate studies for PhD.

Sue is apparently not getting better or worse with her MS, and I believe this is probably because she has affordable medication has much as anything. She's quite grateful that (so far) the disease has mainly caused her weakness in the left leg and generally hasn't been an issue of reduced mental faculties.

23 September 2005

BRG: I did not know that Sue [Alan's first wife] has multiple sclerosis. This has happened to another friend of ours, similar age, and it is also very slow in its progress but causes many problems nevertheless . . . Thanks for further news from your part of the world. On 3RRR this morning, Brian Wise phoned in from Austin City Limits, the annual music fair in Austin. A gigantic cloud was approaching the city, and might rain out the outdoor events, but nobody's

talking about evacuating Austin. The traffic is awful there, though — fifteen-hour traffic jams as people arrive from Houston.

Sue found out about her MS some five years ago now, I would say. We'd been apart at that point for a couple of years and she'd remarried not that long before. The big worry around here with any type of sickness is health insurance, since it's really only available through work. Luckily she had that coverage through her university employment. The insurance company still wanted her to pay \$1000 a month for medication, but Sue's a good writer, and got an indignant letter (I gather) seen by the right people to ensure proper and continuing drug coverage.

I haven't been travelling out of the country since our trip to Australia in 2002. At this point in time I'm debating on whether or not to take the plunge and become a US citizen. It's always frustrating not being able to vote in US elections when I have to pay taxes, etc, but the process is quite time consuming and not particularly cheap.

I suspect that Hurricane Rita treated Austin kindly compared to the devastation/rain that was and is inflicted on points further to the east of the eye. Bruce Sterling lives in Austin, and I know that he takes a rather jaundiced view on bad weather and public policy concerning global warming. I seem to remember reading *Heavy Weather* a few years ago by the author.

I've been keeping up with David Brin blog recently (Contrary blog at davidbrin.blogspot.com/), and this reminded me that I needed to re-read *The Transparent Society*, which he published in about 1998. I don't know what Brin's like in real life, but he cultivates a sort of contrarian attitude in his blog that makes for some stimulating conversation in the comments section, although it's all fairly civilised compared to some sites that I've seen.

Well, I see the mailman has brought us rented DVDs to watch, so we'll be able to continue following the adventures of the *Six Feet Under* family. We're only up to season 4 on DVD, although the whole thing's finished now as of about a month ago. Please don't reveal anything if you know about this show, as we've managed to *not* read about future plot developments. This puts us in a strange position but it's a show that definitely doesn't need to have spoilers.

25 September 2005

DOUGLAS BARBOUR,
11655-72 Avenue NW, Edmonton Alberta,
Canada T6G 0B9

Hoping the new house only gets better. And work.

I thought the little essay about indexing really interesting. I remember doing my own index for the Ondaatje book, which worked as far as I could tell measuring it against others in the series; but the publisher had someone do one instead, charging it against my royalties (which therefore didn't happen that first year), and the new index left out George Bowering, whom I had quoted a couple of times, and also referred to in the Works Cited! while entering some abstract references that I really found egregious.

I am always amazed by your Best of the Year lists. I should try, but never do that sort of thing.

I say that partly because I think I should save money a bit more now I'm retired, but also because I no longer

want to have records (as I still tend to call them) that have only one song I like. I now borrow a lot of CDs from the library, listen to them for a few weeks, and see if I need to borrow them again. I'm hearing some interesting contemporary classical music that way, as well as various roots stuff, among which are ones you mention often.

On the other hand, I also find some people I've never heard of: just decided for some reason to try Alison Moorer, and was really glad I did.

Of course, we have CKUA radio here. It plays a lot of music you never hear elsewhere. You can try it at

<http://www.ckua.com/>

Anyway, thanks for the lists. Someday I'll track down those Australian SF books and stories, especially if we manage to get back there . . .

1 February 2006

About Alison Moorer: I'd recommend both *Miss Fortune* and *The Duel*, her last two, before a pretty good live one, but I had some problems with the live one's choices . . . She wrote, with her then husband, some pretty dark songs, but has since left and gone to a smaller label, where we will eventually hear her own work. She is now the new squeeze of the remarkably thinned-down Steve Earle. I really like the timbre of her voice.

If I did get an i-Pod, I have the computer to do the thing, but so far I haven't felt the need.

Ah Australian poetry: I'm not sure about a lot of the younger ones, many of whom I just don't know. M. T. C. Cronin is good. Jill Jones. And Alison Croggan (whose fantasy series is also terrific; although I know you don't do fantasy, just SF).

That sounds like a great edition of Rexroth. I haven't seen (nor heard of) John D. Berry for decades, it seems. So that's what he does.

I did take about a week, just before xmas holidays and exams, to put together 'my' index, and it was a damn good one, much better than the one I had to pay for, which some poor slave had to do I understand. . . . I was really pissed off, not least that it meant I lost much of the royalties I might have received.

BRG: Are you sure the publisher didn't impose an arbitrary page length on the index for your book? This happened to me when compiling the *Latham Diaries* index — confined to a mere 7 pages. The limitation meant that more than 100 items were deleted at the last minute, although I had included them.

I am making a few CDs of my own from the ones I borrow, but not all. I have the three main Natalie Merchant CDs, but have borrowed her live one. As some of the songs are different from their originals I will copy it. Although I think a lot of the singer/songwriters you mentioned are good, I find that I'm drawn more to the women than the men these days. There's a fine CD of other singers doing Dolly Parton's songs, and one of the things it shows is that she's written some fine ones. I tried her live CD, and, although she has a fine band (I like her recent bluegrass CDs), as it's at Dollywood, her chatter just ruins the thing, too much, too cute, aargh.

One of the reasons I still take the *London Review of Books* is to find out about books I'll never get around to reading . . .

I do hope you are finding some more work. And do try *Collected Works*; I keep getting rave reviews of the place . . .

2 February 2006

JENNY BRYCE,
Elwood VIC 3184

Thanks very much indeed for including me in the ANZAPA mailing — much good reading!

It is fascinating to know that you indexed *The Latham Diaries*, Bruce. I've only read the various excerpts, but my sister was given the book for Christmas, so I'll lend her *brg* 44 as I'm sure she'll find your comments interesting.

One of my Christmas presents (from Myf and Tony) was Blair Tindall's *Mozart in the Jungle* — have you come across it? It made me very angry, as it gives a warped view of the professional music scene (admittedly, in the US, so what would I know?) and implies that there is no substantial intrinsic value in studying music (i.e. if you don't make it into the big scene as a performer, you've wasted your time) — I disagree. Anyway — I wondered whether you'd like a review of it for something-or-other. I've written a bit, but have now (probably unwisely) leant my copy of the book to my former oboe teacher. So I can't complete the review without checking a few references etc. But I doubt that you would be in any great hurry for it, if, indeed you would like it. Is there a word limit?

15 January 2006

BRG: I would love to publish anything you write for me, Jenny, and this particular review sounds as if it will be very interesting. As you are somewhat busier than I am, I take it that you haven't had time to write the review yet.

ANDY SAWYER,
Science Fiction Librarian, Special Collections
and Archives, University of Liverpool Library,
PO Box 123, Liverpool L69 3DA, England

BRG: Andy, could you enquire from Janet Bailey's niece Marion Hayes what her attitude would be to reprints of Ken Bailey's writings, including an anthology? I presume somebody *Over Your Way* has at least tentative plans for a K. V. Bailey anthology, but presumably there are matters of literary executorship to be kept in mind. I had already asked Ken if I could reprint in *Metaphysical Review* (if the beast ever again raises its head) his gorgeous article about Coleridge from *Acnestis*, but there were plenty of other valuable articles and reviews of his that should have had wider circulation.

I'll do that, Bruce. Oddly enough, I was thinking the same thing. I don't know of any plans for a KVB antho, but I'd like to see some of his poetry available (I'd already asked Marion of there actually were copies of his various booklets still available, but she didn't know at the time), and I was wondering about talking to Steve Sneyd about this. And as you say, there is a lot of his critical work that cries out for wider circulation. I don't know if Marion would be Ken's literary executor, or someone else, but it needs sorting out.

I've been meaning for *months* to say how much I appreciated the revival of *Steam Engine Time*, especially

the piece by Gregory Benford. It's always slightly disconcerting to realise that many of the people we know have real lives, and the sudden realisation that '*Shit!* I know someone who knows *Stephen Hawking!*' is actually more disconcerting than outright dislocating. But then again, the news about Chris Priest's *The Prestige* means that we know someone who has Michael Caine (and now David Bowie) in a film of his book, and the six degrees of separation get even wider.

7 December 2005

ANDREW M. BUTLER
1 Henry Court, Gordon Road, Canterbury,
Kent CT1 7NX, England

BRG: Without *Acnestis*, I feel very bereft. I haven't heard any news of you for most of this year — and didn't get the email you sent out a week or so ago.

It's kind of been a mad year but a good one, as I've refound the kind of community I had in Hull by discovering the Doves pub and its staff, and I hope I've made at least two life-long friends as a result. I need to cut down my drinking, but there is the sense I'm making up for lost time. And I've agreed to run the program at work for a year to cover maternity leave. Must be mad. But I sense I'm getting my shit back together.

BRG: Are you publishing any personal news anywhere? Is there any substitute for *Acnestis* arisen in the land?

Not really publishing personal — unfortunately it's impossible to talk publicly about the most personal and most important stuff — but will maybe get a fanzine together to deal with the other half of the personal stuff.

I really don't know where Maureen Speller is at right now — she's in Canterbury twice a week and doesn't swing by, sees movies here etc. No idea where *Acnestis* went. *LiveJournal* seems to be where all the shiny ones hang out these days.

Sorry to hear about financial woes — it never seems to get any easier does it? Hope Elaine is fully recovered — and that your new property is proving to be a home from home. (Not so new now, I guess). Just had a note from Andrew — first word in a year. And the ways of the Mondy are exceeding strange.

3 December 2005

MICHAEL HAILSTONE
8 Durie Street, Lithgow NSW 2790

At last I can tell you I have a couple of websites where you can read some of my work: *Busswarble* on members.dodo.com.au/~crux, and some of my fiction on www.busswarble.dragnet.com.aubut. The latter is incomplete and unsatisfactory, but I can't update it.

I'm wondering whether you have an idea of a better way of publishing an E book than just publishing on the web like this.

28 November 2005