
brg No. 14 is a magazine written and published by Bruce Gillespie, 59 Keele Street, Collingwood, Victoria 3066, Australia (phone (03) 9419-4797) for ANZAPA and a Few Select Others.

EVERY BEAR THAT EVER THERE WAS:

The Mailing Comments

Leanne Frahm:

YOU PROBABLY EXPECTED THIS . . .

No, I didn't expect *this*. I haven't noticed anybody else gaining quite so much *fun* from a computer. Even people who seem to be masters of computer software wear a furrowed brow when speaking of their obsession. They'll never admit to pleasure from the toy.

But not you, Leanne. You go *mad*. 'Fonts! Fonts! I don't have enough!'

But fonts fill up the memory, and slow down Windows. Finger-biting time. Have I installed too many fonts? Have I opened too many programs? When will the whole thing spit 'General Protection Fault' at me and ditch the whole thing? Computers are for people who love anxiety, Leanne.

I'm jealous. I've had Corel Ventura on the system for over six months, and I know that I should be able to get the fancy heading effects you get on your Page 1, but I still have no idea how to do those effects. Your brilliance makes me feel just a teeny bit stupid. But congratulations, anyway.

And what *are* the fonts you've installed? The Names of Fonts has become an important issue to me. The people at Macmillan not only want me to learn Pagemaker (impossible task) but also use only Adobe Type 1 fonts. But the proper Type 1 fonts are copyright. When I received umpteen dozen Type 1 fonts with Corel Ventura, they all have substitute names. Which funny-name font corresponds with which real font? David Grigg might know the answers.

You need a CD-ROM, Leanne, so that you can actually have millions of fonts and bits of clip art just sitting there waiting to be sucked into your machine. Your hard drive will fill very quickly, no matter how large it is.

Did you get the letter, answering your letter, that I sent you a month or so back?

Jenny Glover:

THE TIME IS OUT OF JOINT

Thanks for the moving story, Jenny. The sense of panic sounds familiar, although our most recent move was in March 1979, we moved only three streets away, and we had a third as much junk as we have now.

We had 70 boxes of books when we moved in '79, but I'm sure the tally would be at least 232 boxes now. For this reason we have no plans to move.

We've just put Word 6 on the machine, and I don't have

a clue how to learn it, although it seems a lot more compatible with Windows than any of the other wp/dtp programs we have.

We guessed that having a baby was much as you describe it, which is why we've never had any.

I'm glad you asked 'What's happened to the Australia in '99 bid?' There are plenty of people in Australia who are also asking that, not to mention the people in America who are working their guts out for the bid.

Jeanne Mealy:

LAND OF 10,000 LOONS

You're people, like Mark Linneman, we would like to help, but can't, because you're over there and we're here. Needless to say, our collective politicians are trying to turn our society into something like America's, where nobody has decent or secure jobs anymore. Nobody will get up and say: 'Will this madness never stop!' Instead, we have parliaments, like yours, that are responsible for much of the madness.

I would like to have attended a Minicon in the early 1970s when they were still mini (about 200 attendees). 3400! Torcon (Worldcon 1973, the only non-Australian Worldcon that I've attended) was considered vast at 2400.

Terry Morris:

HOLD THAT TIGER!

There was a whole collection of fanzines called *The Wedding* for a while in the late seventies and early eighties. (Ron and Sue Clarke, now separated, started the trend, and Elaine and I continued it.) Then lots of people married, everybody got used to the phenomenon of fans marrying each other instead of swapping beds or flats, and nobody bothered about fanzines called *The Wedding*. We needed another good old-fashioned Wedding Report. Thanks.

I suspect I was one of the first people in Australia to buy *Miss Smilla's Feeling for Snow*, but I still haven't found time to read it.

I haven't seen any of those films.

Sally Yeoland:

LE CHAT PARTI 15

Well, we know, although perhaps a lot of ANZAPAns do not know yet, that the cat (Dylan) really has departed this time.

But he had a grand life: 21 years. And it was only during the last year or so that he seemed to lose his essential fannish sparkle. In the next *TMR* I'm running the 1974 photo of you, he and Donovan.

My Medical Condition of the Year is my sore foot, which refuses to get well, despite the strong impression I gain from several practitioners that it really should get better after all the effort *they* have put into it. It doesn't get better, so phooey. At least the Tooth Saga seems to have finished now.

My Auntie Betty put together a lot of family history about the Gillespie side of the family, but only back to the arrival of my great-great-grandfather from Scotland in the 1850s. My Auntie Daisy traced the Triplett side of the family back to the Huguenots. The Triplets were then Triplots (or Triplots) and escaped to Cornwall from France. I prefer to think of myself as Australian, or possibly Victorian, because all sides of the family were living in Central and Northern Victoria by the 1860s. I can't get too worried about who was Scottish, Irish, and Cornish, although my own prejudice is to have a mild curiosity about things Scottish and a great yen to visit the Shetland and Orkney Islands.

Which is only a way of saying that you write superbly about *your* family history, Sally.

When and if I get a scanner, I'll put even more incredibly ancient fan photos in ANZAPA. But I can't afford the equipment or the software for a few months yet.

Alan Stewart:
YTTERBIUM 35

I've just received a small fanzine from an American fan named Barnaby Rapaport. He spends three pages complaining (justifiably) about Andy Hooper's less-than-consistent fanzine trading policy. I can't get any fanzines out of Hooper.

Nick Cave 'a real little shit'. Sounds like an ideal prescription for a rock music genius (or whatever Cave is; his antics certainly gave a lift to the film *Wings of Desire*).

As usual, I haven't seen any of the video items on your list (except *Blade Runner: The Director's Cut*) or read any of those books.

Just to keep up the tradition, I've listed my Novels Read Since Last Time at the end of this issue.

Lyn McConchie:
FAN'ATIC 46

It's a bit boring to say each time: congratulations, Lyn, on that vast swag of new sales you make between ANZAPAs. The congratulations are meant sincerely enough, but I can't add any other comments.

If you just can't sell to a particular market, you can't. Go the direction that the buyers of stories want to take you. Plenty of people, like Jack Wodhams, became sf writers because that's the market they sold to, rather than because they had their hearts set on sf. If anybody has proved that serendipity and good luck work for a writer, you have.

My sisters and I had to walk a mile each way to primary school. Sometimes, if it was very wet and my father had left work early, he or my mother would pick us up from school. Later, during Forms 3 and 4 (Years 9 and 10) I rode five miles each way to high school by bike. Quite enjoyable in winter: by the time I had ridden to school I was one of the few kids whose fingers had warmed up enough to write comfortably during Period 1.

Jean Weber:
JEANZINE 105

The only way we could purchase a new computer (Pentium 75 clone) and remain sane was to beg Richard Hryckiewicz to set it up for us. (We offered him money, but we got the impression that what he really liked was the fun of playing with someone else's new computer.) There was only one real hassle, but it still took him nearly 12 hours to finish. This involved not only installing the hardware, but transferring all the information files, reinstalling all the programs, and adding lots of useful bits of software. (Thanks, Richard, again.)

Pentium speed is just as breathtaking as it's said to be; the problem remains recent programs (like Corel Ventura) that are snail-like compared with their earlier versions (Ventura 4.1, which now runs at instant speed; that's why I'm using it instead of Corel Ventura).

The real problem with a superspeed computer is the extreme dumbness of the human operator: me. And that dumbness is shown mainly in a mental block that stops me experimenting in an inspired way, and an inability to find what I want in manuals.

Terry Frost:
TWO QUICK PAGES
MIMEZINE FLASHBACK 2

'The Universe is shaped like a learning curve.' Best line in ANZAPA for some time, Terry.

Congratulations, again, on the Ditmar, Terry. I would wonder that you take the Ditmar so seriously if I didn't remember the emotional clobber of receiving my first one in 1972. You can't ever repeat such a moment — just hope that something like it happens again.

'Political correctness' is just the result of one currently powerful group of the bloody upper middle class beating up on us yobbos yet again. In Britain they still call it 'having perfect manners'. It's all the same: powerful people find excuses to think they are better than less powerful people. Nobody is better than anybody else. All humanity is a slime mould, and pretty soon Gaia will scrape us all off. Tell 'em *that*, Terry.

Since all fandom is bullying me to join the Net, Terry, I'll call you for advice when finally I reach the Electronic Emerald City. Meanwhile, I'm waiting to see the ways in which Big Money or Collective Governments manage to nobble the Internet before it gets much bigger. As you say, they will stop the free flow of information somehow.

I haven't seen any of those films or tv shows. I never watch award ceremonies.

Weller:
BURY MY SOUL AT EXIT 63 No. 26

You make your family sound delightfully wacky enough to star in a tv series, Weller. My parents didn't get to their fiftieth wedding anniversary (which would have been in 1992), as my father died three years short of it. My Uncle Bill and Auntie Doris (mother's side of the family) celebrated their golden anniversary in 1988, which turned out to be a farewell party for my father and my Uncle Ern. Of my mother's three sisters and three brothers, all are still alive except my Uncle Len, who died in his fifties. Each of the sisters is now a widow. They get together quite often. I suspect that in their view of themselves they are still the Triplett girls who used to cycle around Victoria together.

The only author who can write about families like yours is Anne Tyler. Her view of the family runs from zany (*The Accidental Tourist*) to sad and sour (*Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*), but fundamentally it's the same family.

Are you coming back to Melbourne for Arcon, Weller? I hope to see there some of the people I didn't meet at either Aussiecons I or II.

Noel Kerr:

THE EYES AND EARS OF THE WORLD

As I'm sure the bloke teaching the computer course told you, Noel, you'll get DOS and Windows on any PC system you buy, and ghod-knows-what on any Mac system you buy. The important thing is to get an effective word-processing system. The trouble is that nobody can agree on the best word processor. I still use Wordstar, which is now regarded as primeval. WordPerfect held sway for a long time; now Microsoft Word seems to be in vogue. Whichever you choose, take a course to learn it, learn directly from people who know it, or learn to decipher computer manuals.

The Met ticket scheme introduced during the eighties made it easy to visit out-of-the-way railway stations, but we've never done it because we're always too busy working. We've been up the Eltham line several times, because Elaine's sister and her family live at Diamond Creek; but now you remind me, I've never been to Hurstbridge. There are also some entertaining tram rides, especially the hair-raising

ride through Royal Park on the West Coburg line. (Traditionally it has been the one occasion when a tram driver could get up real speed without endangering the lives of pedestrians; now it's become hair-raising because the line has been allowed to deteriorate.)

Thanks for the photo from the 1968 Melbourne Conference (as it was called) of all those wonderfully clean-cut young persons. I'm not in any of the photos from 1968 because I was very much a lowly neo at that convention. Does anybody still see Dimitrii? I met him on a tram about ten years ago, but he didn't offer much information about what he's been up to. English fandom collectively would break up laughing if they saw that photo of John Brosnan (although he still looked like that in 1974 when I saw him last).

Cath Ortlieb:

YOU REALLY KNOW YOU'RE HOME WHEN YOU FIND A WOMBAT IN YOUR BED 39

Reading two years of ANZAPA at one go (as I did a few months ago) convinced me that life at the Ortliebs is nothing but one great crisis after another: useful material for writing a family melodrama series, but a bit of a drag otherwise. And now a cyst on the finger! Yell at the universe to stop picking on you!

BOOKS READ

Since My Last 'Books Read' Column

(end of November 1994)

The ratings are:

- ** = Books highly recommended.
- * = Books recommended
- ☹ = Books about which I have severe doubts.

* *A House in the Country*

by José Donoso (1978; King Penguin; 352 pp.)

Ambitious, but self-congratulatory Latin American Gothic novel.

** *Cross Kill*

by Garry Disher (1994; Allen & Unwin; 209 pp.)

As usual from Disher, a perfectly made crime thriller told from the criminal's viewpoint.

** *Australia's First Fabians: Middle Class Radicals, Labour Activists and the Early Labour Movement*

by Race Mathews (1993; Cambridge University Press; 284 pp.)

More interesting, perhaps, for the personalities, rat-bag and idealist, than for the very muddled Australian politics of the late nineteenth century.

* *Love Lies Bleeding: Crimes for a Summer Christmas No. 5* edited by Jennifer Rowe (1994; Allen & Unwin; 173 pp.)

A few promising stories and a lot of ordinary stories;

all put in the shade by Garry Disher's 'Scrapings', a masterpiece of Gothic unease set in Venice.

** *The Crocodile Bird*

by Ruth Rendell (1993; Arrow; 359 pp.)

A 'Ruth Rendell' novel that is as at least as accomplished and unease-provoking as any of the 'Barbara Vine' novels. Why does Mummy have a penchant for a murder? Ask Daughter; but remember that it's Daughter who's telling the story.

** *Collected Poems 1942-1985*

by Judith Wright (1994; Angus & Robertson; 436 pp.)

Yes, Judith Wright is as great a poet as I had always been led to believe; but only some poems are very great, and most of the truly memorable pieces were written before 1950.

** *Einstein's Dreams*

by Alan Lightman (1993; Sceptre; 179 pp.)

More a fanciful essay than a story, *Einstein's Dreams* is both a blithe satire of the Swiss and a compendium of great unused science fiction ideas.

** *A is for Alibi*

by Sue Grafton (1986; Pan; 253 pp.)

This, the first of Grafton's highly successful 'Alphabet' mysteries, is, as the author has admitted, an act of ersatz vengeance on one particularly unpleasant hus-

band. Given that this makes the ending a bit predictable, the book stays in the mind as fusillade of wonderful Californian language. Who gives a stuff about the plot in an American hardboiled mystery story?

👉 ***The Pure Land***

by **D. M. Foster (1973; Macmillan; 235 pp.)**

I've always wanted to read this book because it won (I think) *The Age* Book of the Year award against the competition of (I've always presumed) Gerald Murnane's *Tamarisk Row*. Either Murnane's publisher didn't enter it, or the ABY panel must have had an attack of blindness, because of *The Pure Land* is awful: that icky self-conscious bad-imitation-Joyce Cary style that seems to have largely disappeared from Australian writing. To think I had this in the house for 22 years before I could give myself the pleasure of getting rid of it!

** ***The Judgment of Eve***

by **Edgar Pangborn (1966; Avon Equinox; 159 pp.)**

A gorgeously vivid fable set in Pangborn's post-World War III New England in the days before things got going again. Further evidence that Pangborn is one of the most underrated sf writers.

👉 ***Cutting Green Hay: Friendships, Movements and Cultural Conflicts in Australia's Great Decades***

by **Vincent Buckley (1983; Penguin; 315 pp.)**

A very peculiar book. Buckley speaks about his own tiny patch of ground — Catholic intellectuals during the 1940s and 1950s — as if it occupied the whole Australian continent, which would have been all right if Buckley had been able to give any indication of why anybody outside that world should have been interested in it. Surely Buckley the poet was not entirely the funny old duffer that one meets in this book?

** ***The Man Who Fell to Earth***

by **Walter Tevis (1963; Avon; 189 pp.)**

A complex, meditative book about a drunken alien. Bowie was perfect for the part in the film, but only a few scenes from Roeg's baroque film match the dry brilliance of this tale.

👉 ***Castle Keep***

by **William Eastlake (1965; Michael Joseph; 355 pp.)**

I bought this book thirty years ago because of my fond memories of Sidney Pollack's brilliant first film *Castle Keep*. I still hope to see the film again one day, but now I've ditched the book after reading 50 pages.

** ***God Bless the Child***

by **Robert B. Parker (1974; Penguin; 169 pp.)**

This, the second of Parker's 'Spencer' mysteries, is a lot better than the first. Whiplash dialogue and remorseless commentary on Parker's financially over-endowed main characters give solidity to the narrative.

👉 ***Red Dwarf***

by **Grant Naylor (1989; Penguin; 298 pp.)**

I trust the tv series was better than *this*.

** ***A Window in Mrs X's Place***

by **Peter Cowan (1986; Penguin; 278 pp.)**

Cowan has been writing short stories in Western Australia for more than forty years, and he's still pretty good, but some of his earliest stories (especially 'Living') have a compressed gritty desperation hardly matched by any other post-war fiction in English. This collection has stories from each period of Cowan's writing.

* ***No Night Is Too Long***

by **Barbara Vine (1994; Viking; 326 pp.)**

A bit dull for a 'Barbara Vine' novel, although the major twist in the plot is genuinely surprising. Perhaps Rendell should give 'Barbara Vine' a rest for a year or two.

** ***Somewhere East of Life: Another European Fantasia***

by **Brian Aldiss (1994; Flamingo; 391 pp.)**

Hugely enjoyable, although I'm not sure that Aldiss ever decided what kind of a novel it is. In the near future, a man has ten years of his memories stolen from him, and spends the rest of the novel tracking down the computer software to which they have been transcribed. Is this novel a monster political travelogue of the near future? (Much of its material is too close to comfort; the book's publication preceded the Chechnya war by only a month or so.) Is it a science fiction novel? Yes, but the sf element is never allowed sufficient play, which is a pity. Is it a love story? For me, the love story fails entirely.

** ***Feels Like Going Home: Portraits in Blues and Rock 'n' Roll***

by **Peter Guralnick (1971/1978; Omnibus Press; 256 pp.)**

So this is Whitey waxing on about the great black blues players, but somehow the book works. Guralnick tells of his personal search for the stories of the great blues performers. The result is often moving, since most of these people have never been rewarded for their efforts, or they died young and remain only as legends in the memories of people who learned from them. Robert Johnson is mentioned a lot.

* ***An Axe to Grind***

by **Robert Wallace (1989; Angus & Robertson; 237 pp.)**

This is the second in Wallace's series about Essington Holt, an amusing art forger and knobbler of criminals. It starts brilliantly, but almost disintegrates during its final pages. Some vivid Riviera scenery and action, but I can't remember what it was actually about.

** ***The Tin Can Tree***

by **Anne Tyler (1965; Hamlyn; 189 pp.)**

Having kept up with Tyler's novels since the mid-1970s, I'm gradually catching up on her earlier works. It's a poor sort of book that doesn't include at least one funeral scene, but this begins with one. People stagger home from the funeral of the youngest member of the family. Gradually we find out about the people themselves, but only in brief reflections do we find out anything about the child who died or why her death leaves the family rudderless. Like all Tyler's work, this is funny as well as sad and powerful.

* ***Collected Short Stories***

by **Ruth Rendell (1987; Hutchinson; 546 pp.)**

Rendell knows the mechanics of writing short stories, but her heart is not in the form, as this collection shows. Rather predictable sting-in-the-tail crime stories, plus some very pedestrian Inspector Wexford short pieces, illuminated only by the odd spectacular flash of pieces like 'The Orchard Walls' and 'The Vinegar Mother', which read like preliminary sketches for later novels. The best story is a fantasy, 'The Green Road to Quephanda'. I'd like to read the novel that's developed from this one.

** *Voices in the Night*
by Sean McMullen (1994; Aphelion; 306 pp.)

** *Mirror Sun Rising*
by Sean McMullen (1995; Aphelion; 332 pp.)

These two books add up to one novel. It's hardly perfect, but it's original and vivid, and the characters have a sit-up-and-take-notice-of-me quality which is unusual for this sort of narrative. In a far-future Australia, people have rebuilt a non-electronic civilisation, despite the difficulties of working with such technology and the fact that they are confined to the interior of the Australian continent. This is a story of a society in change, but I liked best the accounts of the society before it began to change.

☞ *New Worlds 4*
by David Garnett (1994; Gollancz; 223 pp.)

Garnett does much beating of breast in introducing this, the last of the current series of *New Worlds*, complaining of the failure of the public to support noble enterprises that seek out great new writers. The trouble with this argument is that Garnett has a keen eye for the concrete-booted story: drop it into the swim and it sinks without trace. Only one story here, Lisa Tuttle's 'And the Poor Get Children', has much going for it, unless you count Elizabeth Sourbut's 'The Last Phallic Symbol', which must be a pseudonymous (John Brosnan or Leroy Kettle?) raspberry to what many men see as the feminist movement. Most of the other stories are unreadable British attempts at cyberpunk.

* *Reading by Starlight: Postmodern Science Fiction*
by Damien Broderick (1995; Routledge; 197 pp.)

I whinged out this last time, so I won't again. If you can get past the postmodern argot that Broderick feels obliged to use, you will probably find some useful insights into science fiction. It's just that I don't wish on anybody the sheer labour of searching for them.

* *The Killing Doll*
by Ruth Rendell (1984; Arrow; 237 pp.)

The Killing Doll is potentially one of Rendell's best books, with its penetrating observations of two psychotic personalities under great strain. Somehow she never brings all her bits and pieces together into an entire structure. 'Is that all there is?' is how I reacted to its end.

** *Mars*
by Fritz Zorn (1977; Knopf; 241 pp.)

This purports to be the memoir of a Swiss writer working under a pseudonym. 'Fritz Zorn' is supposed to have finished this book at an early age, then died of cancer. You can see why when you read the book. He and Life don't get along too well at all. But this narrative could also be a clever put-on, a parody of the middle-European novel. Oddly compelling, because it's written in a limpid prose that reminds me of Hermann Hesse, who was a cheerier writer than Zorn.

* *Victory Over Japan*
by Ellen Gilchrist (1984; Faber & Faber; 277 pp.)

Contemporary American short stories, by an author who owes more than a little something to fellow Southerner Eudora Welty. Most of the stories don't quite work, grouped as they are in little bundles. Some stories work independently, and others only as a set, adding up to a novella. Uneasy stuff about daffy women characters, some of whom (Miss Crystal) are forever memorable. Not a bad read, but I won't be searching for any more Ellen Gilchrist books.

* *Divided Soul: The Life of Gogol*
by Henri Troyat (1971; Minerva Press; 489 pp.)

** *Dead Souls*
by Nikolai Gogol (1842; Signet Classics; 278 pp.)

Elaine had tried reading Troyat's biography of Gogol some time ago. She gave up on it because of Troyat's writing style, and would have thrown it out. However, we have an agreement that I must give the okay to selling a book, and she must give the okay to me selling any book I want to chuck out. Before I could read the biography, I thought I should read Gogol's most famous book, *Dead Souls*, which has been sitting on the shelf for more than 20 years. *Dead Souls* is a sparkling, bitter realist comedy about a bloke who tries to conduct a neat little swindle in a Russian provincial town in the early nineteenth century, only to find himself bested by the dumb cunning of the locals. An extraordinarily vivid picture of the backblocks of Russia at the time, plus some vital social comedy, with that edge that keeps reminding me of Voltaire's *Candide*.

I can see why Elaine did not like Troyat's *Divided Soul*. Gogol himself is perhaps the most repellent writer whose biography I've read; a superprat among prats. Halfway through the book, I didn't care much what happened to this supremely self-destructive fool. To make his point, Troyat writes about Gogol with that slightly over-the-top frenetic style typical of nineteenth-century Russian writers. (Much of the biography is based on the diaries of Gogol and his contemporaries.) If you don't like this style anyway, or don't see that Troyat is taking the piss out of his subject matter, you would find this a hard slog. Entertaining enough, but I wouldn't want to read any more *about* Gogol.

** *Axiomatic*
by Greg Egan (1995; Millennium; 289 pp.)

This is Greg Egan at his best. There are the few duds here, of course, stories that are not stories but lists of ideas. But 'The Caress' is still moving, even on my third reading of it, and 'The Safe-Deposit Box' is a classic story based on an idea that's probably been used before, but never to anything like this effect. A few odd omissions in this collection, such as 'The Extra'.

** *Our Lady of Chernobyl*
by Greg Egan (1995; MirrorDanse; 111 pp.)

A well-produced chapbook of four more Greg Egan stories for those of us who believe that *Axiomatic* should have been much heftier. 'Our Lady of Chernobyl' is the best of the four. Where, still, is 'The Extra', or 'Dust', which I'm told I should seek out?

** *Strange Fruits: Tales of the Unexpected*
edited by Paul Collins (1995; Penguin; 235 pp.)

A much better collection than *Metaworlds*, Paul Collins' sf collection from last year for Penguin, mainly because Collins has spread his net very widely for *Strange Fruit*. It's because of the Auslit heavies that the collection spreads out from a base of conventional horror stories (Robert Hood's 'Peeking', say, or Steven Paulsen's 'Old Wood') to take in genuine 'tales of unease'. The collection is divided between the stories that telegraph their endings, and those that don't. My favourite story is 'Back of Beyond', Cherry Wilder's deft combination of crime story and supernatural thriller, a horror story with real impact.

— Bruce Gillespie, 3 August 1995