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Iain M. Banks: The 'Culture' science-fiction novels and the economics and politics of scarcity and abundance

by Race Mathews

Paper delivered for the Nova Mob by Race Mathews, 6 November 1996. This was delivered on the same night as my own 'A Taste for Mayhem: Iain Banks's Non-SF Novels'. Both are preprints from *SF Commentary* 76.

In 1993, the American scholars Max Singer and Aaron Wildavsky made a much-discussed contribution to futurology with their book *The Real World Order: Zones of Peace, Zones of Turmoil*.¹ Their theme is the economics and politics of scarcity. The book argues that it will be roughly another hundred years before science and technology reach a point where the world's consumption requirements can be satisfied. Throughout the intervening period, the globe will be divided into zones of peace and zones of turmoil. The zones of peace will be those areas — roughly corresponding to the current developed world — where conditions of relative abundance take the sting out of social frictions and enable democratic institutions and relative social harmony to be maintained. The zones of turmoil are the rest of the world — roughly corresponding to today's lesser-developed countries — where life continues to be dominated by the struggle for scarce resources among individuals, interest groups, social classes and nations. Singer and Wildavsky argue that the challenge for policy-makers is how to contain and quarantine the tensions in the zones of turmoil so that the zones

of peace can as much as possible get on with developing the scientific and technological know-how which will ultimately — a century from now — enable us to come together as a unified and harmonious planet-wide social order.

Objection could be taken to this view on the grounds that it is — among other things — unoriginal, superficial, immoral and at variance with such observable facts as that the increasing aggregate wealth of the prospective zones of peace is not so far resulting in any appreciable diminution in the struggle for resources within them, or enhancing either democratic institutions or social harmony or preventing the emergence of an under-class whose deprivation in many cases is as great as could be found, for the most part, in any zone of turmoil. Science fiction readers may well suspect that social and political pathologies will result in a global future that more closely resembles the world of Ridley Scott's *Bladerunner* than John W. Campbell Jr's *Forgiveness*.

What is also apparent from the science-fiction perspective is that we have been here before. Singer and Wildavsky are one more instance of science playing catch-up with science fiction. That problems arise where societies characterised by abundance co-exist with those characterised by scarcity has been a science-fiction trope for as long virtually as the genre has existed. Moreover, it is in science fiction that the consequent moral and political complexities of the juxtaposition have the more successfully been identified and explored. For example, to what extent is quarantine or

1 Singer, M. and Wildavsky, A., *The Real World Order: Zones of Peace, Zones of Turmoil*, Chatham, NJ: Chatham House, 1993.

containment either a moral or a practical option? Is there an obligation on the part of societies characterised by abundance to assist those which are less well off, and, if so, to what extent and by what means? Where does alleviating scarcity leave off and intrusion by the donors on the cultural and social integrity of the recipients take over? Can intervention in the interests of averting loss of life and suffering be reconciled with respect for the independence of the society where they are being experienced and the need for it to make mistakes in order to learn from them, and, if so, what are the limits of intervention?

These and other related questions have nowhere been more effectively posed in science-fiction terms than in the work of Iain M. Banks. Banks's intellectual stock in trade in key respects resembles that of Singer and Wildavsky, albeit restated against a galactic backdrop. The major preoccupation of his science fiction is with whether — and, if so, on what terms — societies characterised respectively by abundance and scarcity can co-exist. Unlike Singer and Wildavsky, Banks also has interesting things to say about the advantages and disadvantages that living in an abundance economy and a utopian social order might be found to have. He is in every respect a more readable, engaging and thought-provoking writer than Singer and Wildavsky. Cynics might go so far as to say that his extrapolations are no less likely than those of Singer and Wildavsky to come true.

The Culture

The pre-eminent social order of Banks's universe is known simply as the Culture. Its inhabitants are human, albeit of non-terrestrial origin and in key respects genetically enhanced. Their homes are predominantly the General Systems Vehicles — planet-size spaceships — in which they move between the stars:

General Systems Vehicles were like encapsulated worlds. They were more than just very big spaceships; they were habitats, universities, factories, museums, dockyards, libraries, even mobile exhibition centres. They represented the Culture — they were the Culture. Almost anything that could be done anywhere in the Culture could be on a GSV. They could make anything the Culture was capable of making, contained all the knowledge the Culture had ever accumulated, carried or could construct specialised equipment of every imaginable type for every conceivable eventuality, and continually manufactured smaller ships. Their complements were measured in millions at least. They crewed their offspring ships out of the gradual increase in their own population. Self-contained, self-sufficient, productive and, in peacetime at least, continually exchanging information, they were the Culture's ambassadors, its most visible citizens and its technological and intellectual big guns. There was no need to travel from the galactic backwoods to some distant Culture home-planet to be amazed and impressed by the stunning scale and awesome power of the Culture: a GSV would bring it right up to your front door.

The ships are operated — and society more generally is largely administered — by Artificial Intelligences known as Minds.²

John Clute's entry on Banks in *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* rightly notes that: 'There are no Empires in the Culture, no tentacled Corporations, no Enclave whose hid-

2 Banks, I., *Consider Phlebas*, London: Orbit, 1987, pp. 220–1.

den knowledge gives its inhabitants a vital edge in their attempts to maintain independence against the military hardware of the far-off Czar at the apex of the pyramid of power.'³ Abundance born of science and technology has long since made redundant the need for the population to compete economically with one another. Inasmuch as the Culture has a political philosophy, it loosely combines the better elements of anarchism, socialism and communitarianism, in a manner broadly reminiscent of William Morris and *News from Nowhere*. 'The Culture', says Banks, 'is my idea of Utopia':

Or at least as close as you can get to Utopia with what we regard as recognisably human stock. I'd love to live there, and that's been the guiding principle behind the whole thing. Not that it always comes out that way in the books, because I'm trying hard not to make it look wonderful and goody-goody and all the rest of it.⁴

The Culture's preferred relationship with other species and societies is one of peaceful co-existence, tempered by the need to fend off such military challenges as may occasionally arise, and the urge to intervene — some within the Culture might call it meddle — where the predicament of local populations is felt to be intolerable. Intervention is the business of a Special Circumstances agency, which is frequently violent and unscrupulous in meeting its objectives. The activities of the Special Circumstances agency are what much of Banks's writing is about.

The State of the Art

The core Banks issues are posed in simplest and starkest terms in the novella *The State of the Art*, from Banks's collection of short fiction of the same name. The year is 1977. A General Contact Unit from the Culture — a spaceship of massive size and awesome capacities, but in turn only a minor component of the infinitely larger General Systems Vehicle which Banks describes casually as currently 'tramping a thousand years core-ward' — stations itself in the vicinity of Earth. The purpose of the visit is to enable the ship's Mind — and the wider community of Artificial Intelligences of which the Mind belongs — to assess whether mankind is at a point where contact should be initiated. Crew members travel widely on the surface to observe human behaviour at first hand and experience human society. One of their number is seduced by the relative variety and unpredictability of what he is seeing, opts to stay behind when the GCU leaves and goes so far as to have the Mind strip him of his genetic enhancements in order to approximate more closely to the race he proposes to join.⁵ At the same time the Mind is concluding that mankind is not yet ready for contact, and that the Earth should be categorised as a control world in a wider process of observing whether certain social pathologies inevitably cause the societies which exhibit them to self-destruct.

The downside of the Culture — the tug of decadence — is hinted at by Banks's description of an Earth-style banquet which takes place on the GCU. It reads in part:

3 Clute, J., 'Iain M. Banks', in Clute, J. and Nicholls, P. (eds), *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, London: Orbit, 1993, p. 88.

4 Banks, I. M., Interview with Stan Nicholls, *Interzone*, No. 86, August 1994, p. 22.

5 Renunciation of the Culture is also the theme of Banks's short story 'A Gift from the Culture'. See Banks, I. M., *The State of the Art*, London: Orbit, 1991, pp. 10–28.

Li walked purposefully to the head of the middle table, tramped on an empty seat at its head and strode purposefully on to the table top, clumping down the brightly polished surface between the glittering place settings (the cutlery had been borrowed from a locked and forgotten storeroom in a palace in India; it hadn't been used for fifty years, and would be returned, cleaned, the next day . . . as would the dinner service itself, borrowed for the night from the Sultan of Brunei — without his permission), past the starched white napkins (from the *Titanic*; they'd be cleaned too and put back on the floor of the Atlantic), in the midst of the glittering glassware (Edinburgh Crystal, removed for a few hours from packing cases stowed deep in the hold of a freighter in the South China Sea, bound for Yokohama) and the candelabra (from a cache of loot lying under a lake near Kiev, sunk there by retreating Nazis judging from the sacks; also due to be replaced after their bizarre orbital excursion) until he stood in the centre of the middle table.

The passage continues a little later:

'Ladies and gentlemen,' Li said, standing with a bowl in one hand and a silver fork in the other. 'A little taste of Earth . . . no; more than that: a chance for you to participate in the rough and tumble of living on a squalid backwater planet without actually having to leave your seat or get your feet dirty.' He stabbed a bit of the meat, put it in his mouth, chewed and swallowed. 'Human flesh, ladies and gents; cooked muscle of *hom. sap.* . . . as I suspect a few of you might have guessed. A little on the sweet side for my palate, but quite acceptable. Eat up . . . I had the ship take a few cells from a variety of people on earth. Without their knowledge of course. . . . Most of you over there will be eating either stewed Idi Amin or General Pinochet Chilli Con Carne; here in the centre we have a combination of General Stroessner Meat Balls and Richard Nixon Burgers. The rest of you have Ferdinand Marcos Saute and Shah of Iran Kebabs. There are, in addition, Fricaseed Kim Il Sung, Boiled General Videla and Ian Smith in Black Bean Sauce . . . all done just right by the excellent — if leaderless — chef we have around us. Eat up! Eat up!'⁶

The novella ends with the crew member who has decided to stay behind dying in a back alley brawl, and the departure of the GCU from the solar system. Observation machines have been put in place, but mankind is to remain undisturbed and free to work out its destiny for itself.

Consider Phlebas

Conflict between the Culture and another space-faring species — the Idirans, who see the 'repressive tolerance' of the Culture as a threat to their independence and religious faith — is the backdrop to Banks's first Culture novel, *Consider Phlebas*, which appeared in 1987. The spaceship of a recently created Mind is destroyed by more numerous Idiran forces, so obliging the Mind to take refuge on a nearby planet to which access has been generally closed-off on instructions from the Dra'Azon, beings so superior to — and remote from — either the Culture or the Idirans as to be regarded by both as to be given a wide birth and on no account provoked. Recovering the Mind becomes the task of Bora Horza Gorbuchul, from an endangered species known as Changers, who trade in impersonations on the basis of their ability to physically alter their appearances. Banks sees *Consider Phlebas* as having 'distinctly yarnish tendencies':

6 Banks, 1991, pp. 180–1.

I mean, when you come down to it, that was a story about a ship-wrecked sailor falling in with a gang of pirates and going in search of buried treasure.⁷

In fact, *Consider Phlebas* has far more to it than Banks's flippancies allow. As Banks elsewhere acknowledges, one of the ideas behind the book is that 'What usually happens is that people suffer and die and get involved in all sorts of mayhem and catastrophe and it doesn't make that much difference in the end':

There's a big war going on in that novel, and various individuals and groups manage to influence its outcome. But even being able to do that doesn't ultimately change things much. At the end of the book, I have a section pointing this out by telling what happened after the war, which was an attempt to pose the question 'what was it all for?'⁸

Consider Phlebas is also notable in at least two other respects. Banks's drones — autonomous air-borne minor artificial intelligences tasked to serve and protect citizens of the Culture — are a major addition to the long line of memorable alien lifeforms created by science-fiction writers, from Stanley Weinbaum's ostrich-like Martian, Tweel, to the Moties of Larry Niven's *The Mote in God's Eye*. Some drones are the pure stuff of P. G. Wodehouse humour, reminiscent in particular of the greatest of all Wodehouse's characters, Jeeves, but also of servants more generally as Wodehouse contrasts them with the lotus-eaters of his effete and ineffectual aristocracy. Others are arch-manipulators in the tradition of Machiavelli. 'It's wonderfully easy to get into the machine's mind,' says Banks. 'I think my best characters are actually machines.'⁹

Banks similarly is into *homage*, notably — if sometimes tongue-in-cheek — to the tradition of space opera pioneered sixty and more years ago by E. E. Smith. Space warfare as described in *Consider Phlebas* evokes nothing so powerfully as classic passages of space opera overkill such as in Smith's 1934 novella *Triplanetary*, which reads in part:

Far below, in number ten converter room, massive switches drove home and the enormous mass of the vessel quivered under the terrific energy of the newly-calculated, semi-material beam of energy that was hurled out, backed by the mightiest of all the mighty converters and generators of Triplanetary's superdreadnought. The beam, a pipelike hollow cylinder of intolerable energy, flashed out, and there was a rending, tearing crash as it struck Roger's hitherto impenetrable wall. . . . And speeding through that terrific conduit came package after package of destruction. Bombs, armour-piercing shells, gas shells of poisonous and corrosive fluids followed each other in quick succession. . . . Thus it was that the end came soon. A war-head touched steel plating and there ensued a space-wracking explosion of atomic iron. Gaping wide, helpless, with all defences down, other torpedoes entered the stricken hull and completed its destruction even before they could be recalled. Atomic bombs literally volatilized most of the pirate vessel; vials of pure corrosion began to dissolve the solid fabric of her substance into dripping corruption. Reeking gases filled

7 Banks, 1994, p. 23.

8 Banks, 1994, p. 22.

9 Banks, I. M., Interview with Alan Stewart, *Ethel the Aardvark*, No. 94, March 1992.

every cranny of circumambient space as what was left of Roger's battle cruiser began the long plunge to the ground.¹⁰

Few readers will doubt that Banks's inspiration owes something to Smith's example. As Clute points out, *Consider Phlebas* exposes the reader to a number of sly ironies, in that the losing Idiran side, which Gorbuchul initially supports, is remarkably similar to the standard backdrop Galactic Empire found in routine space opera.¹¹

The Player of Games

From the Culture locked in conflict with its enemies, Banks now moved on to intervention by the Culture in the affairs of the more unattractive of its neighbouring civilisations. Jernau Morat Gurgeh — the protagonist of *The Player of Games* — has become bored with defeating his competitors. His request for a greater challenge results in his being sent on a 100,000-light-year-journey to the Empire of Azad, where the Culture wants to bring down an exceptionally cruel regime. The nature of the Empire's unpleasantness is revealed in part when a drone attending Gurgeh — Flere-Imasaho — taps into an Imperial communication channel:

Gurgeh watched the screen. Flere-Imasaho watched Gurgeh. The man's eyes glittered in the screen-light, unused photons reflecting from the halo of iris. The pupils widened at first, then shrank, became pinpoints. The drone waited for the wide, staring eyes to fill with moisture, for the tiny muscles around the eyes to flinch and the eyelids to close and the man to shake his head and turn away, but nothing of the sort happened. The screen held his gaze, as though the infinitesimal pressure of light it spent upon the room had somehow reversed, and so sucked the watching man forward, to hold him, teetering before the fall, fixed and steady and pointed at the flickering surface like some long-stilled moon. The screams echoed throughout the lounge, over its formseats and couches and low tables; the screams of species, men, women, children. Sometimes they were silenced quickly, but usually not. Each instrument, and each part of the tortured people, made its own noise; blood, knives, bones, lasers, flesh, rip-saws, chemicals, leeches, fleshworms, vibraguns, even phalluses, fingers and claws; each made or produced their own distinctive sounds, counterpoints to the theme of screams. . . . 'This is no special night, Gurgeh, no festival of sado-erotica', explained Flere-Imasaho, 'These things go on every evening. . . . There is more, but you've seen a representative cross-section'.¹²

There is a conspicuous echo here of Li's banquet in *Consider Phlebas*.

Elevation to the office of Emperor of Azad goes to the winner of the game of the same name. That Gurgeh is victorious — that the regime is destroyed — is due in part to the Special Circumstances agency. Gurgeh returns home, troubled by a feeling of having been manipulated which he can neither explain nor dismiss. Banks has the doomed Emperor, Nicosar, speak for critics of the Culture

whose outlook is less benign:

'You disgust me, Morat Gurgeh', Nicosar said to the red glow in the west, 'Your blind, insipid morality can't even account for your own success here, and you treat this battle-game like some filthy dance. It is there to be fought and struggled against, and you've attempted to seduce it. You've perverted it; replaced our holy witnessing with your own foul pornography. . . . 'Repulsive' is barely adequate for what I feel for your precious Culture, Gurgeh. I'm not sure I possess the words to explain to you what I feel for your . . . Culture. You know no glory, no pride, no worship. You have power: I've seen that; I know what you can do . . . but you're still impotent. You always will be. The meek, the pathetic, the frightened and the cowed . . . they can only last so long, no matter how terrible and awesome the machines they crawl around within. In the end you will fail; all your glittering machinery won't save you. The strong survive. That's what life teaches us, Gurgeh, that's what the game shows us. Struggle to prevail; fight to prove worth. These are no hollow phrases: they are the truth'¹³

Use of Weapons

Banks stays with the theme of manipulation in *Use of Weapons*. Deziet Sma — a Special Circumstances controller — has recruited and trained a brilliant agent in Cheradenine Zakalwe. Zakalwe's warrior skills are used repeatedly to further the agency's projects. As often as his assignments result in his death, the agency resurrects him. As often as he is resurrected he resumes duty. He is also increasingly a prey to self-doubt: 'The Culture', he reflects in the aftermath of a significant intervention, 'would take him away from here, and put him down somewhere else, and this adventure would collapse with the rest into meaninglessness, and nothing very much would be left, as he went on to do roughly the same thing somewhere else'.¹⁴ In time, Deziet Sma discovers that she has known less about her agent than she has supposed. A replacement for him is selected, and the cycle of intervention is resumed.

Conclusion

Substitute for the Culture any of the major developed nations, either singly or aggregated as in the United Nations, and for Azad Somalia, Zaire or the former Yugoslavia. Banks is a richly talented writer, whose science fiction entertains while at the same time raising serious issues of public policy. How those of us who inhabit Singer and Wildavsky's prospective zones of peace conduct ourselves towards the prospective zones of turmoil whose inhabitants are in every respect less fortunate is a question which we can neither on moral nor practical grounds afford to ignore. What is needed in part is for us to better tolerate ambiguity and disappointment. That Banks makes the task easier — that he encourages us to care and think — sets him apart decisively from science-fiction practitioners of lesser stature.

10 Smith, E. E., *Triplanetary*, 1934, British edition: London: W. H. Allen & Co., 1971, pp. 222–3.

11 Clute, 1993, p. 88.

12 Banks, I. M., *The Player of Games*, London: Macmillan, 1988, pp. 209–10.

13 Banks, 1988, p. 283.

14 Banks, I. M., *Use of Weapons*, London: Orbit, 1990, p. 253.

My career goes bung

My worst fears about unemployment have proved to be justified. My last regular cheque from Macmillan was on 1 February. My meagre savings will need to last until I receive the first cheque of whatever freelance work I can find. There are certainly possibilities around, but nothing is yet sitting on the desk. 1997 is definitely not going to be my year. I just hope to survive it somehow. More importantly, I hope I can save *SF Commentary* and *The Metaphysical Review* from being the main casualties of 1997.

My computer goes bung

During the first three weeks of February I had no editing work, but I could not spend the time publishing fanzines. In the middle of January, the fan on the Pentium chip went bung. After six phone calls and a week's wait, Louie from Rod Irving Electronics arrived to fix it. All on the two years' on-site warranty, of course.

The trouble is, as we kept discovering, computers are no longer built to last two years. I was attempting to print a very large Word file when everything on the computer suddenly went slow. It was as if a 286 chip had been suddenly installed instead of the Pentium 75. A few false hopes made me think that software was the problem. But the computer went slower and slower. We rang Rod Irving Electronics. A week later Louie arrived. Luckily the hard drive failed while he was on the premises. Equally luckily, I had realised that the problem must be the hard drive, and had saved all my data files.

Louie worked on the machine for two hours, but could not make contact with the CD-ROM drive in order to put Windows 95 back on the machine. He said he'd be back 'early next week'. A week later he returned. He was becoming quite affable by this time. He's Rod Irving's only on-site technician for the metropolitan area. Considering what his workload must be like, he took things fairly well. After several hours work he discovered that a previous Rod Irving technician, in an attempt to solve some previous problem, had switched the cables inside the computer so that DOS could not talk to the CD-ROM player. He changed the cables. Now I could begin reinstalling. Right? Sort of.

The noble Dick Jenssen helped me begin the installation process. I kept at it for a few days, until it became obvious that the 3.5-inch drive had failed. Another phone call to Rod Irving Electronics. A week later, Louie returned. 'You mean this drive has lasted as long as this?' he said. 'I've been replacing them all over Melbourne.' Whoopee. A few minutes later, and a month and a half after the initial failure of the chip fan, the 3.5-inch drive was replaced. *Now* I could begin reinstalling.

Further thanks to Dick Jenssen for the second reinstallation. With any luck, he's left me with discs from which I can reinstall the system if anything else goes wrong. Several weeks later, I still haven't put back all the programs that disappeared when the hard disc went down.

I don't know what lessons one can draw from all this. Elaine's computer was working through all this, but she doesn't have a printer for it. When and if we get some spare cash, we must get a printer for her computer as well as mine.

The Tax Department now depreciates computers in a year. That's how long each computer is expected to remain useful before it must be replaced. Maybe they're now built

that way as well. Which means that Rod Irving Electronics is perhaps a bit foolish in offering two-year on-site warranties. All I can say is: better these failures happened before 1 July 1997 than after it.

Happy birthday to me! Happy birthday to me!

Since it was obvious that Elaine was not going to get sufficiently excited about my fiftieth birthday to stage a surprise party for me, I decided to do it for myself.

We couldn't hold any celebration at home. The house is not big enough, and Elaine was not going to allow vast crowds onto her precious garden. Since we already knew that we were facing imminent income deprivation, we couldn't afford to cater. I already knew that Mount Everest restaurant, in Johnston Street, could provide the food for such an occasion. I had to cross my fingers that people can still afford to eat out, and that the restaurant could provide the service on the night. I made the list of everybody who should be invited. It came to about 160. The restaurant could only hold 100. I crossed about 20 from the list (sorry, folks, whoever you are) and took a chance that from a list of 140, about 100 would accept. This happened, but it was a close thing. A few people left early on the night, and a few people left late, which means that 98 people actually paid for meals.

Thanks to everybody who turned up. Lots of people caught up with people they hadn't seen for years (decades?) and the restaurant did even better than I could have hoped — good food, more than anybody could eat, delivered promptly, plus the incredible birthday cake and present at the end.

I don't care how bad the next year (or decade) is: at least I had my fiftieth birthday party. Anybody else facing the Big Five Oh could do much worse than celebrate it at the same restaurant (11 Johnston Street, Collingwood; 9417-3960).

Night music

Cheerfulness keeps breaking in, as Brian Aldiss has been known to say. Thanks to Jeanette for a very jolly 50th birthday present — a night out at the National Theatre to see Loudon Wainwright III and Richard Thompson. Last time they appeared in tandem, eleven years ago at Her Majesty's Theatre, Loudon was more impressive than Richard. This time Loudon gave a rather offhand performance — not many of his best-known songs; lots of requests from the audience; a slightly glum flavour to everything. Loudon turned 50 last year; he's allowed his melancholy. Richard Thompson must have hit 50 recently, but age has just improved his songs and singing. On stage, accompanied by the magnificent double bass of Danny Thompson, he explodes and unfurls his songs. He gives many of them, such as 'Bee's Wing' and the one about the Vincent motor bike, a power they don't have on the studio albums. Amazing guitar work: these days Thompson turns his guitar into a complete band.

The other wonderful night in the theatre was the Melbourne Theatre Company's perfect production of Sondheim's *A Little Night Music*. Sondheim's music's not something I'd listen to on CD, but on stage the marriage of drama and song is irresistible. Ruth Cracknell, Pamela Rabe and Helen Morse are the stars.

ANGELS IN THE ARCHITECTURE:

The Mailing Comments

MAILING No. 173, DECEMBER 1996

Jenny Glover: THE TIME IS OUT OF JOINT

For awhile I couldn't work out which bits were by you and which by Tara, but gradually I sorted it all out. Tara has a great career ahead of her.

One reason why I've never been overseas with Elaine is that she would want to look at all the old buildings. My feet, eyes and head would get very sore. Even the thought of such an expedition gives me a headache.

Despite the best efforts of nearly everybody, there are still some fine Victorian buildings in Collins Street, one of Melbourne's two major shopping streets. One Sunday per year, the enterprising musical person can wander down the street, going from one building to another, as you did, admiring the architecture and taking in one concert after another. Maybe one year I'll try the Collins Street Musical Crawl.

Jean Weber: JEANZINE No. 112 WEBERWOMAN'S WREVENGE No. 50

Sorry to hear about the lack of work. You're not alone. Almost everyone I know who does freelance computer/editing/technical writing from home can find little work at the moment.

'Not enjoying travelling' a 'strange concept'! I can't work out how anyone could enjoy travelling. Travelling is pain: back's sore, head's sore, legs're cramped; can't sleep, can't read; will I be able to sleep in a strange bed? My own home bed is good (and long enough for me); my own home chair is comfortable. Never leave home without them.

But thanks for the your trip report. It would be great to see all those people, but it's unlikely I will until 1999.

Eric Lindsay: KINGDOM OF THE BLAND

Last year I (sort of) stopped buying books because I'd run out of shelf space. This year I've (mainly) stopped buying books because I have no money.

I never thought I would agree with you, Eric, on economics, but much of what you say agrees with my grand plans for reforming the Australian economy.

Terry Morris: HOLD THAT TIGER!

The news of what you were doing in 1996 was a complete surprise to me, because you and Hung hadn't been able to attend Nova Mob during the year. A nice surprise in the December mailing. I hope everything is still going well for you, Raphael and Hung.

Gerald Smith & Womble: RAMBLINGS No. 4

One of many reasons why I've never bought a car is that I couldn't bear to see what is really a large investment reduced to a heap of tin in an accident. I get upset enough when a \$20 3.5-inch drive on the computer goes down. Friends of ours also suffered the sudden destruction of their car (an out-of-control truck ran into the back of it); fortunately they were not in the car at the time.

I've actually read two books on your list: Leanne's *Bor-*

derline and Lucy's *The Peace Garden*. Both are recommended: *Borderline* as the precursor of what I hope will soon be a full-scale Frahm collection; and *Peace Garden* although Lucy is now writing much better than she did then.

Roger Sims: THIS IS SON OF BHEER IS BEST

When I was at school 'Australasia' was used to refer to Australia and New Zealand and all associated islands. But New Zealand is not even a part of the Australian continental shelf. Australia is both the country and the continent.

Of course cats mark their territory. Polly is particularly bad. She won't use the indoor cat tray, because she thinks that's TC's territory. Most of the time she will always wait to use the dirt outside. But sometimes she simply gets pissed off at us . . .

Sophie once disappeared for eight days. When she returned she smelled of machine oil, so we assume she had been shut in one of the nearby factories. We also assume it was filled with mice, since she lost no weight during the eight days.

You need Windows 95 if you want to run a program that will only run on Windows 95. Also, if you have any programs that crash all the time under Windows 3.1, you might find they stop crashing under Windows 95. On the other hand, I hear of programs written for Windows 95, such as Corel Draw 6, which crash all the time. If Publisher works for you, why change?

Lyn McConchie: FAN'ATIC No. 55

I like the idea of a cat becoming fit because it's scared stiff of a goose.

As I've written before, our cats have their own 'park'. They can't get out of the garden, but it's large enough to please all of them except Theodore, and even he has become much happier about staying home.

Cath Ortlieb: YOU REALLY KNOW YOU'RE HOME WHEN YOU FIND A WOMBAT IN YOUR BED No. 48

You say what I would want to say about Der Führer much better than I could. What I can't work out is how he maintains any electoral support out there in Suburbialand. Horrible cuts to schools, child care, hospitals, and all other services that most people depend upon: why does anybody put up with this? Maybe nobody in Glen Waverley or Knox has kids or is ever sick.

Marc Ortlieb: ENERGY No. 172

I'd like to see you in action as a teacher, Marc. Maybe that's why your personality works so well; if you are a teacher you have to keep your personality blown up and ready to bounce all the time. When I attempted to be a teacher my personality, such as it was at the age of twenty-one, cracked and split along the seams.

It's getting more and more difficult to discover new garage bands. I did that today; I finally got around to playing the first Bottle Rockets CD (called *The Bottle Rockets*). Highly

recommended. Their second CD, *The Brooklyn Side*, which I bought first, is more the work of a 'rock band' rather than a 'garage band'. No band seems to be able to maintain the essence of garageness for more than a year or two. Only Neil Young can get away with it for 30 years.

When I was deciding on a computer to buy, I didn't even consider Macintosh, because of the cost. To buy a Mac that fitted my professional needs would cost between \$7000 and \$9000, plus another \$4200 to duplicate my software (\$2000 for Quark XPress, \$500 for Microsoft Office, \$900 for Page-maker, and \$800 for PhotoShop). For \$3500, exactly the amount I paid for this machine, I could now have an MMX 200, with top-speed CD-ROM, 3-gb hard disc, etc. etc. It's only because I'm in publishing, where Mac is the official religion, that I've even had to think about it as an alternative. Since I currently have no money, I don't have to worry about buying options.

Leanne Frahm: BARELY A FROG'S BELLY BUTTON

Thanks for the paragraph about Jess Ringuet. Most people seem to achieve more than they ever let on, but it must be nice to find that you had another writer in the family. Everything conspires to stop people doing what they really should be doing; at least you've found the papers she did write. I hope you write a novel based upon her.

Re your little pamphlet: now I really know why I will never visit Northern Queensland. Remove your own ticks from their embedment in the epidermis.

John Newman: COLLOQUY

I enjoyed your saga about fixing the bug in your programs. But what do Causeway and SmartPOS actually *do*?

You are dedicated and were totally determined to fix what seemed like an unfixable bug. I doubt if anybody at Corel is as dedicated; perhaps that's why first versions of Corel products fail like the driven snow.

Sally Yeoland: LE CHAT PARTI No. 26

Before saying anything else: which typeface are you using for your main text? It looks like a Garamond. Is it one of the fonts that Word pops into Windows 95 during installation?

Last weekend you were describing your problems with Word. Somewhere it does have an option to turn off the automatic pagination function (i.e. the function that lets the bastard reformat pages while printing *after* you've looked at it for the last time on screen). Of all the nanny functions in Word, that's the most deadly.

I don't know what to do about Word's footers. Half the time they don't work for us, either.

I haven't tasted ice cream as good as that made by Race Mathews at home, but with any luck you'll give him some keen competition.

Cheryl Morgan: SCRATCHING POST No. 1

A big welcome to ANZAPA — especially as I'm one of the people who enjoined you to join. It sounds as if you don't like our style all that much. Sorry; that's the way ANZAPA has evolved over the infinite aeons of fannish time. Many years ago, I tried to run lots of super-serious book reviews and other Important Stuff in ANZAPA, but I was laughed into submission. Fortunately I've discovered the British apa Acnestis, a gang of people who are mainly interested in reading and writing about books.

I don't know what to say about your deportation. The Immigration Department gives the impression that it doesn't like anybody very much, but I thought that its

policies were on the side of people such as yourself.

But the worst of your deportation is that I will no longer see *Emerald City*, since at the moment we can't afford to get on the Internet. Maybe Marc would let you run the print version through ANZAPA.

Quote of the year (because I agree with it completely): 'Why is it . . . that in a city which has some of the best and cheapest restaurants in the world, Melbourne fans unerringly choose the most awful places to eat?' Alasya! K&M's! Erewan! And if you think K&M's and Alasya are bad, you should have eaten at Degraives Tavern, the fannish gathering place of the early 1970s. Its food made K&M's seem like Stephanie's. Melbourne fandom just keeps up the tradition of eating at ghastly (but very, very cheap) food outlets.

Taxes? Most of the taxes are being paid by salary and wage earners, not by rich persons. If you are a large (or even a small) businessperson, it really is astounding the number of ways in which one's tax accountant can reduce one's taxable income. If Kerry Packer paid tax at the same rate that you or most members of ANZAPA do, the legendary '\$8 billion black hole' would disappear overnight.

'Tax-bracket creep' occurred during the 1970s, but has since got worse. In 1973 I was on \$6200 per year (as an equivalent five-year-out teacher) when I last had a regular job. I was paying 17% income tax. As salaries plummeted upwards during the mid-1970s, almost everybody landed in the super-rich tax bracket (then 48 per cent). The rates were not adjusted for salary inflation. That's stayed more or less the position ever since. The actual equivalent of \$6200 in spending power is now at least \$65,000. However, five-year-out teachers are not on \$65,000; they're on about \$40,000. Today, school principals are on \$65,000, although in 1972 they were on the equivalent of \$120,000 (i.e. \$12,000). But today the tax rate on \$40,000 is about 35% or higher, isn't it?

There are historical reasons for everything you find in Australia, but perhaps not logical reasons.

The last thing I want is VAT, but that's because I'm one of the band of privileged small businesspersons. The VAT paperwork would make it almost impossible to make a living.

The main argument against VAT is that it hits the poorest hardest. Does it in Britain? I can't see how it can help but do so. That should suit Kennett, Howard and Costello, since they are determined to hit the low-income earner in any way possible.

The main reason that many Australian fans are unwilling to join overseas Worldcons is that those who have done so during the last twenty years have failed to receive most of their Progress Reports, and have rarely received their Hugo voting forms in time to participate. If the souvenir book arrives at all, it can be as long as a year after the event.

Ian and Karen's Basicon sounds as if it will be the type of convention I used to enjoy, i.e. those conventions held in the early 1970s before big hotel cons arrived in Australia.

Bill Wright: INTERSTELLAR RAMJET SCOOP

This is really a great ANZAPA mailing, isn't it? The return of Bill Wright, the fan who seemed to disappear from all fannish ken! Welcome back, Bill!

Thank you for your perceptive political comments, Bill. You're right: the return of the Business Party to most capital cities, including Canberra, seems to have made business interests about as happy as the years of Labor rule made the unions. It's not that the Conservatives don't make the right

killer-thug noises; it's just that their killer-thug legislative actions don't hide the fact that under successive governments Australia has effectively shunted itself onto an economic sideline. For 'level playing field' read 'up shit creek'. In the end, the few Australian businesses that are not overseas-owned are as badly affected as all the Australians who cannot find a job.

It's 'Terry Jeeves', Bill, not 'Jerry Jeeves'. He's umpty-umpteen years old, and his back's crook, but Terry is still turning out artwork and publishing *Erg* regularly.

Nobody has ever found deep, or any other, meaning in my works, Bill. I apologise for still tromping around all over the place. It's these big boots, you know.

I suspect Jeff's real role model is Tommy Bent, Victoria's Premier exactly a hundred years ago. It seems that he was a barrel of laughs and robbed everybody blind. He certainly didn't apologise. The main difference is that Bent left a legacy of huge monuments, umpteen public buildings and the Melbourne tramway and Victorian railway system, which stayed useful for most of a century until recent Premiers tried to destroy them. In 2020, when the petrol runs out, CityLink is going to seem rather useless.

I am currently a Consumer Without Income. Can I join your party, Bill?

Thank you for the first of Dick Jenssen's graphics *in colour*. Dick had given me files of quite a few of his best graphics (and is willing to supply them to other fan editors) but I can only run them in black and white.

In conclusion, I rejoice that a Higher Order of Whimsicality has returned to ANZAPA. All we need now is the ancient team of Edmonds-and-Stevens and ANZAPA attains its ancient magnificence.

Richard Hryckiewicz: ANYTHING BUT AVERAGE No. 14

Thanks for the news of Susan. I haven't seen or heard from her for what seems like a very long time, and I keep forgetting to ask how she's getting on.

Elaine has bought all the Kruszelnicki books she can find. He's at his best answering questions over the radio.

Alan Stewart: YTTERBIUM No. 43

I rather enjoy a short kip in the afternoon (especially when the work is boring). On Wednesday, 25 September, I slept right through the earth tremor. If I can sleep with an equal sense of relaxation through the Heat Death of the Universe I should be okay.

Both versions of *The Man Who Fell to Earth* were probably R-rated. The cuts to the version shown here in 1978 were

producer's cuts, and affected story continuity rather than scenes of sex or violence. I don't know whether the laser disc version was the first appearance of the complete film in Australia; I seem to remember that the complete 'director's cut' was shown at the Valhalla or Astor a few years ago.

Michael O'Brien: MODULE No. 123

You can get *F&SF* and *Alfred Hitchcock's* over the counter at McGill's Newsagency in Melbourne. Probably you could subscribe as well. And, of course, Slow Glass Books and Minotaur still stock them.

Thanks for your Year That Was. I've already described my 1996 — everything went bung, then my career went bung. 1997 is already much worse.

I must have watched *some* television during 1996, since I've seen *Breaking the Ice* (and even bought the video to catch up on some episodes I missed) and *American Visions*. I haven't seen anything else on your list.

Terry Frost & Leanne Frahm:

HOW DO THEY KEEP THE ANTS OUT?

While promising not to burden Leanne and Kerry with my guestship, I can see that Elaine and I must have a look at North Queensland at least some time during the next 20 years. (That's about how long I have left before complete decrepitude takes over.) Elaine will just have to see the ants' woven condominiums, not to mention the gun-toting echidnas.

Jeanne Mealy: LAND OF 10,000 LOONS

When I last heard from you, neither of you had jobs, and things were looking really down. At least your job situation seems to have picked up.

You people have real *weather*, don't you? All we've had since October is non-stop drought and a lot of heat (during January and February). The weather at the moment is very pleasant, but still rain-free.

Singular Productions: KALIEN No. 25

The last foolscap fanzine! Where did you get the paper?

Even if we could afford a photocopier, we don't have any room to put it. And I'm not sure that it would lower the costs on an average Gillespiezine enough to justify the initial cost. *Metaphysical Review* would still cost me the paper (36 reams), toner (enough for 36,000 sides of paper), and postage (\$800). How much would that (300 copies times 120 pages) cost you, using your photocopier?

MAILING No. 174, FEBRUARY 1997

Eric Lindsay: KINGDOM OF THE BLAND

The trouble with Aussiecon III seems to be that the people who could do the work are running like hell to make sure nobody spots them. And I could volunteer as much as I like, but there seems to be a protocol against employing the Fan GoH as part of the working team. Sooner or later Perry will have to decide how best to use the people who are available, and not worry too much about whether they are also people he likes and trusts. Somebody should give him an MBA for his trouble.

If I were making friendly gestures towards Greg Benford,

I'd take a Grange Hermitage rather than Bundaberg Rum.

I'd love to see your 'freeware Postscript routines' in action. Perhaps I could get you to tell me why running Adobe Type Manager 4, for which I paid real money, stopped my computer (Windows 95) talking to my printer (HP 4MP, i.e. has resident Postscript fonts). I had to find a copy of Adobe Type Manager 2.6 to put on instead.

I thought you Internet types were supposed to download *Bullsheet* for yourselves.

Thanks for referring people to my entry in the latest edition of the *Encyclopedia of SF*. When Peter Nicholls was

updating the entry for the CD-ROM version, he put in some unnecessary bits of egoboo which might impress readers.

Some people would still be using IBM Executives, but I bet they can no longer buy ribbon cartridges for them.

The main reason Australian conventions lose money is that their organisers insist on importing guests of honour. Basiccon II has not made this mistake, and the Aussiecon III committee has been pretty canny about this, too. They could probably wiggle out of providing Elaine and me a free room at the hotel, but I can see the advantage of having a room as a convention base. (I get pretty sick of dragging my bag around conventions.)

Lyn McConchie: FAN'ATIC No. 56

Sad to hear about the death of Tai, only five years old. We still miss Monty, who died when he was only six. As Tai was an only cat, they would make things much worse. At least we have reserve troops.

I didn't see that you had placed second in a Fellowship of Australian Writers contest. (But each FAW is very state-based, so your name probably didn't appear in the Victorian newsletter.) Congratulations.

To play with computer graphics you need at least 16 Mb of RAM, a Pentium processor, and a fair amount of space on your hard drive. That's just the start. The real problem is learning Photopaint, PhotoShop or PaintShop Pro, three of the best programs for creating computer graphics. It helps to install a fractals generator (e.g. Winfract) as well. Aw, forget it. You're probably much better to spend your free time on writing. That's what I tell myself, but I itch to play around with Photopaint just a bit to see if I can make some of those pretty graphics.

In 1973, long before the 'classic Coke' crisis, I found that Coke anywhere in America tastes bland compared to local Coke (which I presume is bottled in Victoria). Yet another important reason why I was glad to get home.

Thanks for all that inspirational stuff about your writing career. I just wish I could unblock my writer's mind in the first place. Apa contributions are the best I can manage at the moment, and they don't pay the bills.

Marc Ortlieb: STAIRWAY TO CLEVELAND No. 4

Ali had told me about her web page reviewzine, and has even given me a book to review for it (but hasn't asked for the review yet). What I didn't know was its name, *Festivale*.

Thanks for the lowdown on current Young Adults Lit. Lucy Sussex tends to speak about the genre in hushed tones, but then, YA is one of her better markets. I haven't read much of the genre, especially as I don't have to teach YA novels. I suspect I've read quite a few without realising it.

It's 'Delany', not 'Delaney'.

Thanks very much for reprinting the Nova Mob talks on *Sylvie and Bruno* and Colin Kapp. If I had had any hope of producing *TMR* or *SFC* regularly, I might have asked for republication rights. Since I haven't, and didn't, I'm pleased that these talks/articles are now being sent to the right people. I don't have the courage to read *Sylvie and Bruno*, so I'm glad you did it for me.

Alan Stewart: YTTERBIUM No. 44

Even if we had the slightest temptation to own a car, we wouldn't own one while living in the inner suburbs. If some stray truck doesn't crumple your boot, some stray thief will probably crumple your side window and steal anything not tied down.

The bloke requesting a glass of water might have been checking out the burglable possibilities of your house. I'm told one of the standard ploys around here (during the day between 9 and 5) is to knock on the door of one house. If nobody is home, knock on the door of the house two doors away. If nobody is home there, knock on the door of the house in the middle. If nobody is home there, you're probably safe in taking your time to do it over.

One midnight recently our petrol-head friend Philip had a mighty argument in the middle of Budd Street with his prospective (but no longer) in-laws. His fiancée is no longer his fiancée, and his strange prospective in-laws seem to have disappeared. Collingwood can be weirder than Richmond.

Of your book list, I've read *Borderline* (highly recommended) and *Bury My Heart at W. H. Smith's* (recommended because I'm mentioned; I hear that Aldiss is about to produce Part I of a *real* autobiography).

Of your TV and Video list I've seen Hitchcock's *Strangers on a Train* and the very good adaptation of Agatha Christie's *The ABC Murders*.

Michael O'Brien: MODULE No. 124

You should write a newspaper column featuring 'Kate from East Hobart'. Having created this character, you wouldn't need to stick accurately to things Kate has said or done. I wouldn't mind seeing those 'pornographic *Carry On* movies'.

Our local equivalent is 'Kevin from Collingwood'. He lobs into Neighbourhood Watch meetings occasionally, spouting inane right-wing crap, whether anybody is listening or not. Elaine and I get hot under the collar while trying to ignore him, but Jeanine, in her seventies, never says anything ruder than 'I think that man must have had a bit too much to drink'.

Yes, the 1997 radio scene is a bit dismal. Doug Aiton, ten years on 3LO, is said to be found on commercial station 3AW on Sunday afternoons. Terry Laidler has moved to the 4-6 p.m. time slot. I don't listen, but it seems that the time slot's ratings have gone up since Doug Aiton moved on. The new (non-local) 3LO program from 7.10 to 10 at night is uninteresting. The real star of the new 3LO line-up is John Faine, from 8.30 a.m. to midday. He's such a good broadcaster that somebody in ABC management will surely find a way to shaft him.

Bill Wright: INTERSTELLAR RAMJET SCOOP

And what a fabulous issue this is, with all these incredible graphics *in full colour!* Not to mention a Nobel-standard contribution from *the* Dick Jensen.

You should have had a 60th birthday bash that was vastly bigger than my 50th. Why shouldn't all the friends from all your compartments meet each other? You'd probably find that they know each other already. (This happens at our parties, where we try to mix unlikely groups of people.)

Anyway, thanks for sharing your 60th with us during a quiet night at the Ruan Thai.

I liked the Psychiatric Hotline. What would the Gillespie Hotline be like?

Why don't you make things easier by simply inviting Stephen Donaghy to join ANZAPA? Doesn't he do anything at work except write these pieces?

The expose of the Melbourne Casino is all too accurate.

The article about night burglars is the sort of sketch piece that might get Stephen into writing a column for *The Age* or *The Herald Sun*. It's certainly a lot better than most of

the stuff in either paper.

The other sketches would fit well in any of the high-quality fannish-style fanzines. Does Stephen know about fanzines, Bill? Does he need to know about them? Presumably he already has an audience on the Internet.

You seem to work at Kafka's Network (or is that Kafka's Web Site?)

The Aussiecon III GoH Speech: What's put the fear of hell into me is reading a recent interview with Connie Willis. For her Toastmaster Speech at last year's Worldcon, not only did she write a speech, but she memorised it. Not only did she memorise it, but she rehearsed it so that nobody could tell she wasn't speaking off the cuff! (That's what she claimed to do, anyway.) These Americans really work at public speaking!

The only solution is to stage a genuinely off-the-cuff event. With any luck Maureen Speller and Paul Kincaid will get to Melbourne in 1999. If this happens, I hope we can do some sort of interview session — a real live 'I Must Be Talking to My Friends', plus an audience-participation bit. ('Gimme alcohol!') Lots of ifs there, but I'm damned if I'm going to compete with the American ideal of public speaking at conventions.

No, Bill, I'm not 'falling victim' to any system I haven't worked under at some time in my career. What's pulverised me is the shock of going back to the system I worked under during the late 1970s and early 1980s: constant cheque-to-cheque poverty. What's scaring everybody else rigid is that they've been plunged into the same system.

But you're right about the constant threat of technological unemployment. If I earned \$60,000 per year, I could put \$20,000 a year back into annual technological updating, which is what I estimate is the minimum to stay up to date in the DTP game. But I did have two years in which I earned a bit over \$40,000, out of which I had to put at least \$10,000 each year back into hardware and software. But that's not nearly enough, because (as I explained last time) I really should have spent another \$13,000 on a Mac Powerbook and the software to run it. But I didn't, and now I can't afford to. I just pray that there are enough IBM-clone freelance projects to keep me occupied; or even editing jobs using good old-fashioned red pen and Liquid Paper.

Bill, don't deprive yourself. Iain Banks is a lot more entertaining than 99 per cent of other current authors. Just don't bother with his SF, that's all.

Yes, your characterisation of Australia ('personality disorder', 'sadists', 'mutilate') is accurate. Just think. We might well have had a real Labor government between 1983 and 1996, but we didn't.

I like the anagrams for 'Interstellar Ramjet Scoop'. 'Almost errant projectiles' is particularly good. A few years ago John Bangsund ran his anagram program for 'Bruce Gillespie'. He came up with 'Curly Bigsleep'. It fits.

We seem to share many prejudices. As I get older, I feel less and less friendly towards organised religion. Particularly illuminating have been the actions of militant Moslems during the last ten years; I realised that they use the same methods that militant Christians used to take over the Roman Empire in the third and fourth centuries. Not that the Roman Empire was democratic, or even particularly liberal, but at least it was diverse until the narky old Christians took over.

Until a few years ago, I would have also claimed fannish anarchism as the ideal for the organisation of human activity at all levels. That's until some of the media groups sprang up; they ain't fans, they're religious disciples! Scary.

Dick Jenssen's article is, of course, clear and brilliant, as are the illustrations. If he'd been a school teacher and I'd have been in his class, I might have learned some mathematics beyond Form 3 (Year 9) level. I wish Dick, or someone like him, would write *Mathematics for Dummies*, using the same approach as the other 'Dummies' books. Then I could pick up mathematics in a weekend, much as I was able to pick up the essentials of Word 6 in a weekend by using *More Word 6 for Windows for Dummies*.

Richard Hryckiewicz: ANYTHING BUT AVERAGE No. 15

Because of the peculiarities of my changing work situation, I found myself without any paying work for the first three weeks of February. Even odder, I had to relax. The computer was not working for most of that time, and the weather was so hot that I would not have been able to work even if there had been any to do. I get very nervous about relaxing. It was such a relief to get back to work, even if the project was only a mathematics textbook. If I were forced to relax for two months, the tension would bring on a heart attack.

Alan Stewart: RE: TERRY 'ANZAPA FUEHRER' FROST

86 Keele Street turned out to be a fairly narrow block of land. As I remember, a house on the block burnt down about ten years ago. I don't know how Collingwood Council came to take over the block. Perhaps the owner of the house died intestate, or didn't pay his rates. The block was sold; now two very narrow flats have been built on the block.

Thanks for the articles about the dreaded City Link. Has the blasting and drilling ruined your house, or is that trench in the bathroom just another fault in the plumbing?

To think that once I was a Vegemite addict. Maybe I'd enjoy licking Petri dishes.

Running a fanzine full of cuttings is instructive. This shows that average newspaper reporter spells even worse than the average fan. There's no sign of sub-editing in any of those articles.

Perry Middlemiss:

THE WOLLONGONG PIG-BREEDERS' GAZETTE No. 6

I always thought Leigh Edmonds initiated DUFF, not John Foyster. As Leigh told it at the time, he and Lesleigh Luttrell invented it so they could meet each other.

Thanks for the short version of your DUFF Report. I'm looking forward to the long version.

Charlie Brown has been putting up with the 'Loc-us' pronunciation for thirty years; no wonder he didn't appreciate hearing it again. Besides, he always looks straight through people. Unnerving person.

Best line of the mailing: [When meeting Harry Warner Jr] 'I realised that it is quite possible be as nervous about appearing in front of one person as three thousand'.

As usual, I hate to say the obvious, but: why did Irwin's article take more than two years to be published? I had thought of trying to capture the essence of ANZAPAc on in an article, but didn't get around to writing it. Irwin succeeded. A pity this article hadn't appeared a long time ago in one of the widely circulated fanzines, such as *Thyme*.

Cheryl Morgan: SCRATCHING POST

Geez, do I have to write 'Heavy irony intended here' underneath most of the statements in my fanzines?

Women's magazines: In the 1950s, when I looked at copies of *Women's Weekly* at doctors' waiting rooms, they featured Royals, recipes, gardening, and the *Mandrake*

comic strip. A year or so ago, when I looked at the latest *Women's Weekly* (now monthly) at a dentist's waiting room, I found a story on Elton's wild gay sex life. In the 1950s, 'homosexual' was a word that did not appear in the Australian press, let alone in women's magazines. Today? Has there been a huge change in the age group who read women's magazines, or have the readers of women's magazines themselves changed? If my mother picked up *Women's Weekly* today (and I noticed when I visited last that she no longer buys magazines, but that could be because she can't afford them) would she be greatly shocked? Or has 20 years of watching television changed her 1950s puritanical attitudes so much that she wouldn't bat an eyelid? I would certainly never ask her.

That's what I was trying to convey in one sentence. Sorry if the message didn't get across.

Everything you say on your Page 3 is a load of crap. I judge the economic system by its results, and I judge those results by the way they affect each person equally in that society. In 1971, when the economy was that which economic irrationalists dismantled, Australia had 1 per cent unemployment. After 'economic rationalism', the real unemployment rate is about 20 per cent. Some Australians returning from Britain report that Thatcherism has turned Britain into a dirty slum inhabited mainly by the unemployed. Kennett has already done this to the Latrobe Valley and most other country districts; now the description applies more and more to Melbourne and its suburbs. (For example, in the early 1980s, when the SEC was still a proud State enterprise, the people of the Latrobe Valley were employed and our electricity bills were a quarter of what they are now.)

The economic rationalists are thieves and social criminals. I don't believe a single word they say, because every day I see the results of their depredations. I just reel in shock and horror and try to survive as a human being.

Janice Murray: THE SEATTLEITE

Great cat story, especially with that SF bit at the end. Rescuing cats is something Elaine has done occasionally, but usually she's had to board the cat at the vet's until she finds a home for it. Our lot like to spit at strange cats. Sophie volunteered to kill a small cat that Elaine rescued a few years ago.

A tinge of jealousy because you have so many non-media conventions within striking distance. Nearly all Australian conventions are now media cons; we don't even have an equivalent of Corflu.

Since Cochrane and Gillespie work as editors, chocolate is a basic food group at the Cochrane-Gillespie household. When you get to Melbourne, we'll feed you Lindt from our local chocolate shop.

During the summer TC (our old, old cat) has been enjoying the hot sun. Now the sun is starting to lose its power, he totters around the garden yelling at us to turn the sun on. If we don't oblige, he comes inside to enjoy the electric cat mat.

Peter Singer is a remarkable, ferociously intelligent Australian who doesn't hide his opinions even when seeking public office. (Which is why he did badly in the last Senate election.) Probably he's already set up a Web page so that you can find more about his actual opinions. Needless to say, his opinions are rarely reported accurately in the local press.

John Newman: COLLOQUY

Thanks for telling us about planning and shooting your TV advertisements. Elaine and I haven't thought much about publicity and/or advertising (we're not even in the Yellow Pages as a company) because I had guaranteed work for twelve years. Now I have to think all over again about how to get my message out into Publishing Land. As you say, John, references and experiences don't count much anymore; visibility is all.

David Grigg: FANFARONADE No. 8

MMX Pentium chips are supposed to deliver us true Digital for Windows — but not quite yet. As far as I can tell from the computer magazines, MMX has not yet been combined with Pentium Pro. When this happens, the first MMX machines, which suddenly appeared in *The Age Green Guide* advertisements two weeks ago, will quickly become as primitive as 286s are now. DDV CD-ROM should be along soon, allowing us to watch films at 24 frames a second on the computer screen.

All of which makes me glad I didn't rush out to buy a Pentium Pro 200 during those last few months during which I had the illusion that I had a guaranteed income for 1997.

You're right about Keith Jarrett; it's Handel, not Haydn. Jarrett's CD of Handel's *Suites for Keyboard* is on ECM New Series 1530. It's one of my candidates for Best Classical CD of 1996. A close contender is Mikhail Pletnev playing 30 Scarlatti sonatas on a two-CD set (Virgin Classics ZDCB-5-45123-2).

Yes, watching the stars from the lookout at Mount Buffalo is one of my truly awesome experiences of the last twenty years. The worst of it is that I remember very clear nights in Oakleigh in the early 1950s when we could see nearly as many stars as that. Now you'd be lucky to see the Southern Cross on a clear night in Oakleigh, let alone Collingwood.

Tell us about Semedit. I'm looking for a very simple editor to use under Windows — perhaps not as simple as WordStar, but one that gives me as few worries as WordStar — that has a bit more going for it than WordPad. Word is too buggy to use as a dependable word processor. Richard H., tell us about WordPerfect 6.1. Perhaps that's what I need.

Sally Yeoland: LE CHAT PARTI No. 27

About twice a year Elaine and I see my mother, and Christmas Day was one of those days. We can only see her in Rosebud if my sister Jeanette drives us there; this happened; the weather was good. I'm not sure what next Christmas will be like. Mum has put her house on the market, and hopes she will raise enough money to move into the retirement village where her sister and brother-in-law live. But Mum will only be able to afford the smallest of the three styles of apartment offered by the village. As far as I can tell, there won't even be room for Jeanette to stay overnight — and that's if Mum can raise the price she wants for the house. Rosebud is now a huge retirement suburb of Melbourne (even if it's 80 km away), so houses are always underpriced.

The Dimplex is, of course, covered by a warranty. We took the faulty heater back, but of course there are no new heaters in the country until the next batch are manufactured in April-May. Therefore we received an even faultier machine in exchange for ours. The store exchanged heaters again, and even the 'new' one is obviously secondhand. The thermostat makes a noise after the heater has been on for an hour, but this machine doesn't leak oil, and it does heat the room. If it's going to develop its own faults, the

trick will be to exchange it before the guarantee on the first heater runs out!

You're right; my mother bought one of the original Dimplexes more than twenty years ago, and she's never had problems with it. Today? A different machine altogether, it seems.

Of your 1996 film list, the ones I've seen are *Orlando* (****, using your star system), *The Boyfriend* (*****), *The Lavendar Hill Mob* (*****), *Cool Hand Luke* (*****), *Arsenic and Old Lace* (*****; it has the best script ever written for a film); *Back to the Future III* (****), *The Shawshank Redemption* (*****), *Dial M for Murder* (*****; I've seen it five times), *Ed Wood* (*****), *The Maltese Falcon* (****), *Casablanca* (*****), and *Toy Story* (**). If I have room in this issue, I'll include my 1996 Favourite Films List.

Polly has learnt to piss like the big (male) cats, and does so inside the house when she's really annoyed at us. So don't be fooled by demure female cats.

Your story about the Mitre 10 person who recommended the Fowlers jars from the secondhand shop was unexpectedly moving. Many Australians do have a clear idea of what kind of society they like to live in, a society in which people help each other without asking too many questions. But somehow we've all been railroaded into the kind of society we don't really want. Maybe if all the country electorates turn in independent candidates next election, they might start the process of turning society around.

Thanks, Sally, for the birthday greetings, and thanks to

everybody who turned up to my 50th birthday bash. Now all I need to do is get to 60.

Marc Ortlieb: ENERGY No. 173

I've just noticed that you're putting out your hand for contributions to the *Bullsheet* Sinking Fund. Since I have no idea when the next *SFC* can appear, and therefore am hardly 'trading' at the moment, grab your \$10 next K&M's.

Cath Ortlieb: YOU REALLY KNOW YOU'RE HOME WHEN YOU FIND A WOMBAT IN YOUR BED No. 49

You let Michael deprive Derek Screen of a great big toy! Shame. Now Michael's addicted to bidding at convention auctions. That's worse than if he'd discovered the pokies.

I like the idea of adopting Justin as your 'son' just so that you could tell him to leave home very soon.

George and I are wondering whether we can get Greg Benford to join a *pas de trois*.

Thanks for the explanation of the 'Wombat in Your Bed' title. Fans are good at obscure derivations for the names of the fanzines, but that's the most obscure yet.

Cat alert Polly caught a mouse about half an hour ago. It's thoroughly dead, but is still being tossed up in the air. I just spoke to Polly through the window to tell her I'm here, so she's tossed the very dead mouse a few more times. Why is Theodore the only cat who eats the mice he catches? *End of cat alert*

BOOKS READ RECENTLY

These are books read since the end of November 1996. The ratings are:

** Books highly recommended.

* Books recommended.

** *The Detached Retina: Aspects of SF and Fantasy*
by Brian W. Aldiss (Liverpool University Press 0-85323-289-X; 1995; 224 pp.)

In this book's last paragraph, Aldiss quotes one of my favourite writers, George Borrow: 'There's day and night, brother, both sweet things; sun, moon, and stars, brother, all sweet things; there's likewise a wind on the heath. Life is very sweet, brother; who would wish to die?' The passage ends 'A Personal Parabola', a talk in which Aldiss seeks to sum up Existence, Writing and the RIL (Repressed Inner Life). Usually I flinch when Aldiss generalises, but I find in this essay a valid faith in life — its power to change, to reveal new facets of itself, to upwell into consciousness. Reach back to the beginning of the book and you find Aldiss's ebullience flowing through an appreciation of Salvador Dali ('Thanks for Drowning the Ocelot'), the British New Wave ('A Robot Tended Your Remains . . .'), Aldous Huxley ('Between Privy and Universe'), Olaf Stapledon ('The Immanent Will Returns — 2') and many more. The endless questions and assertions flow through this book, but Aldiss remains best when his eye is fixed on the works of individual authors. The pieces on Huxley and Stapledon are valuable, but even more so are remarkable readings of Orwell's *1984* ('The Downward Journey')

and H. G. Wells, always Aldiss's best subject ('Wells and the Leopard Lady'), and a tear-inspiring farewell to Theodore Sturgeon ('The Cruelty of the Gods').

** *If Morning Ever Comes*
by Anne Tyler (Hamlyn 0-600-20411-1; original publication date 1964; 187 pp.)

When life and books seem stale, I sit down to enjoy an Anne Tyler novel. Fortunately, a few of them remain unread. *If Morning Ever Comes* tells of a vague, unformed boy who decides that college study in New York is not for him. He returns home, south, unexpectedly, and realises that he is just as baffled by returning 'home' as by leaving it. It's Tyler's usual plot, but the details, as ever in Tyler's work, are fresh and arresting. I bought this book the last time all of Tyler's novels were reprinted; I notice that they have just all been reissued in a new uniform edition. Buy them all, and savour them over the years.

** *A Very British Genre*
by Paul Kincaid (British Science Fiction Association 1-870824-37-7; 1995; 63 pp.)

My first reaction to this book was 'It's a bit short, isn't it? And it's not telling me things I don't know already.' Which, as I came to realise, is the point of the book. Where else would anyone find a short history of British science fiction and fantasy, with all the right people mentioned in the right places and, despite the restrictions of length, all the things said about each that should be said? In *Trillion Year Sprees*? No, because in that book it became too difficult to separate the story of a national genre from that of the whole SF boom of

the 1970s and 1980s. *A Very British Genre* even has room in its last few pages for many authors whose books have never been distributed in Australia: a neat must-buy list. The book's only fault springs from that tricky word 'genre'; here is the story of *New Worlds* in all its guises, but Kincaid makes no mention of the role of the great post-War book publishers, especially Penguin during the early sixties and Victor Gollancz, with its 'yellow jackets'. The latter comprised almost the only SF read by Australian (and probably British) library borrowers during the 1950s and 1960s. Next the BSFA should advance Kincaid the money to write *The Trillion Year British Genre*, a thousand pages long, studded with footnotes and appendices.

** *Olaf Stapledon: Speaking for the Future*
by Robert Crossley (Liverpool University Press 0-85323-388-8; 1994; 474 pp.)

This is a rich and satisfying biography, a book that lets you feel you've met this strange, distant figure; a book that sends you straight back to the novels, because you feel you could never have read them properly before reading the biography. My memory of this book is dominated by two images: that of Agnes Stapledon, the author's widow, giving Crossley the keys to the author's room thirty years after he had died, whereupon Crossley discovers that everything has been left exactly as it had been on the day he died; and that of Stapledon in New York in 1949, reviled by the American press for attending a large Peace Conference, finding that the only people who know his works are the members of the Hydra Club. There Stapledon spends one happy evening meeting all his favourite SF authors. At last he is able to talk to people who had some idea of what he is on about. When Stapledon dies the next year, none of his books is in print. Pre-images and after-images of these events haunt this account of Stapledon's life and career. He pursued Agnes for many years, despite many difficulties, but in his last years was to insist on an 'open' marriage because, quite simply, he still looked and felt young while she now seemed old. Working within that isolation and detachment that marks every aspect of his life, Stapledon more or less invented modern science fiction, with Wells as his mentor, only to find in his last years that his real literary relatives were the American 'pulp' writers. And they repaid him by including him in SF's group memory. How many 'classic' SF works turn out to be based on Stapledon's ideas!

** *Dark Love*
edited by Nancy A. Collins, Eward E. Kramer & Martin H. Greenberg (NEL 0-340-65439-2; 1995; 402 pp.)

This original fiction anthology covers pretty much the same territory as *Off Limits*, which I reviewed unfavourably last issue, but it is a much more enjoyable book. The editors' prejudice seems to be: if you mix sex and horror, you might as well have some fun doing so. Of course, some authors, such as Kathryn Ptacek ('Driven') and Lucy Taylor ('Heat') merely enjoy getting down and dirty, without worrying too much about the quality of the fiction. The best writers in this volume take the subject matter as a challenge to their sense of subtlety. The best story is Stuart Kaminsky's 'Hidden', which seems to be about a child's capacity to commit mayhem, but turns out to reveal much deeper matters. Nancy Collins's own 'Hidden Things' also covers territory that is wider than the bloody

events described in the surface story. Stephen King's 'Lunch at the Gotham Café', on the other hand, could hardly be called subtle, but it is very funny. It just shows that if you arrange to meet your ex-wife for lunch, you should watch out for whatever's happening at the next table. Unclassifiable, and also very funny, is Bob Burden's 'You've Got Your Troubles, I've Got Mine . . .'. He actually admits that crazy people can have fun. *Dark Love* carries the usual burden of ho-hum stories, but its best pieces give it an air of distinction.

** *Unlocking the Air and Other Stories* by Ursula K. Le Guin (HarperCollins 0-06-017260-6; 1996; 207 pp.)

I keep thinking I know what Ursula Le Guin is up to. With a collection like this, featuring stories that don't quite fit the SF or fantasy categories, I feel I can lean right in and go along for the ride. Many of the early pieces are a bit twee and undeveloped; I found myself sneering 'New Yorker stories' under my breath. (That's because several of them were published first in *The New Yorker*.) Never underestimate Le Guin. Towards the end of *Unlocking the Air* two stories brought me up short. 'Olders' and 'The Poacher' are two astonishing stories, penetrating and clear and serious, yet revealing themselves in small unfoldings. 'Olders', set (it seems) in the Earthsea world, begins with a voyage, turns into a fantasy, and becomes a pained and burning love story. 'The Poacher' begins as a modernised fairy story, turns into a modern version of yet another fairy story, then transforms itself into a complex metaphor of the possibilities of life and art. Yet the surfaces of both stories seem all so simple. This is not just accomplished writing; these are stories that change your idea of what fiction can achieve.

** *Last and First Men*
by Olaf Stapledon (Methuen; 1930; 355 pp.)

Did *Last and First Men* really stop me in my tracks when I tried reading it in 1973? Armed with the Crossley biography (which demonstrates that even the most esoteric details of Stapledon's far futures are based on incidents and impressions from his life's experience), I launched into *Last and First Men* and found it a long but satisfying journey. Stapledon's style is slightly ponderous, but always readable, and occasionally lyrical. His perceptions are often astonishing. Humanity does not progress upward, but performs evolutionary cycles. We — the First Men — commit suicide, but the Third Men almost make it to Utopia. Stapledon doesn't believe in Utopia; even near-perfect humans sink under the weight of accumulated errors. Natural disasters send humanity off to Venus, then outward to Neptune. Stapledon is a true Darwinian, describing an endless, fascinating game of ping-pong between chance and necessity. My interpretation of his many stages of humanity is that they are a fictional way in which Stapledon can unpack parts of his own soul. What, he asks, are the many possibilities, good and bad, I might find in myself? Of great interest are the number of his SF plot ideas that were used by later writers (for instance, Stapledon's Martians turn up, virtually unchanged, in Lem's *The Invincible*). If Wells's great SF works can be kept in print, why can't the same privilege be given to Stapledon?

** *Requiem*
by Graham Joyce (Signet Creed 0-451-18434-3; 1995; 305 pp.)

After all the trouble I took to gain a copy of this book,

mainly because of massed recommendations in Acnestis, I found it very slightly disappointing. I can hardly fault the portrait of a man possessed by the ghost (?) of his dead wife, but even by novel's end I was not sure that that is what happens to him. Links to Mary Magdalene and yet another version of the Jesus Conspiracy are fascinating, but again, I was never sure of their connection to the main character. Ghostly apparitions and bumps in the night are beautifully written, but in the end it's all smoke. Some member of Acnestis must know what's going on here; please tell me.

* ***The Orchard Thieves***

by Elizabeth Jolley (Penguin 0-14-025211-8; 1995; 131 pp.) For more than a decade Elizabeth Jolley has been Australia's most successful senior woman writer, but I've never felt drawn to her work. For the first 50 or 60 pages I wondered why I had bothered to read this novella. (It's because I had promised Ali Kayn to review it for her Web Page.) Then the story comes to life. The rather dotty old aunt who tells the story proves to be more astute than the family realises; a gold-digging daughter who lumps in on the family proves to be so unsubtle that she destroys her own enterprise, which is to force her mother out of the family house. I feel that the last 60 pages forms the original story, whose beginning Jolley later padded. Given that warning, I can recommend this little tale.

** ***King Solomon's Carpet***

by Barbara Vine (Penguin 0-14-015691-7; 1991; 356 pp.) When I read *King Solomon's Carpet* I was left with no more Barbara Vine novels to read. Looks as if I'll just have to reread the others. This novel is all about the London Underground. One of the characters is nuts about underground railways. He owns a marvellous mausoleum of a house (houses are usually the main characters of Vine/Rendell novels) that sits between two London Underground lines. The other characters, most of whom board in the old house, are affected by the Underground, which embodies Life itself: remorseless, blind, multifarious, cruel. Vine was not feeling kind towards the human race when she wrote this book. Each character is consumed by some obsession, and each object of obsession is lost. The details about the Underground are luscious, making me want to read more.

* ***Meeting in Infinity: Allegories and Extrapolations***

by John Kessel (Arkham House 0-87054-164-1; 1992; 309 pp.)

Kessel's story 'The Lecturer' has been a favourite of mine since I read it in Michael Bishop's collection *Light Years and Dark*. I had hoped that the rest of the stories in this collection might match the quality of that story. (I suppose it's an allegory of some sort; Kessel's outdoors lecturer, unstopable for year after year, is certainly a memorable image.) Most of the other stories, although deftly written, have a mean obviousness about them; they're twisted to suit some ulterior purpose. Apart from 'The Lecturer' the only other standout stories are the novella 'Another Orphan' (Kessel's moving Nebula Award winner about the time traveller who finds himself on the *Pequod* just as Captain Ahab begins the final chase for that damn whale) and 'Buffalo'.

** ***Four Ways to Forgiveness***

by Ursula K. Le Guin (HarperPrism 0-06-105234-5; 1995; 229 pp.)

These stories, which give flesh to references in earlier Hainish novels, are really four episodes in a revolutionary war that affects two planets for several hundred years. The four sections add up to a novel that is more interesting than any particular story, as linked strands of the conflict are revealed in the lives of individuals. A companion novel to Le Guin's 1970s novels of revolution (*Malafrena* and *The Dispossessed*) except that in the 1990s most of Le Guin's heroes are female.

* ***The Second Ruth Rendell Omnibus***

(Arrow 0-09-936301-1; 1993; 458 pp.)

This collection includes three early non-Inspector Wexford novels by Ruth Rendell. Apprenticeship stuff, showing few of the writing skills that I've come to expect from latter-day Rendell/Vine. The first two novels in the collection, *To Fear a Painted Devil* and *Vanity Dies Hard*, I've forgotten already, although I read them only a month ago. *The Secret House of Death* has some of the cool originality of the later Rendell: especially her David Hockneyish depiction of the sterile housing estate in which one woman watches her secretive neighbours from her window and makes all the wrong conclusions.

** ***Confessions of a Failed Southern Lady***

by Florence King (St Martin's Press 0-312-05063-1; 1985; 278 pp.)

This book was much mentioned by various people who inhabit my other apa, Acnestis, but I had little hope of finding a copy. The wonderful Yvonne Rousseau, however, found a copy in Adelaide, and sent it to me for my 50th birthday. (What's this about no presents?) This will be hard to beat as Book of the Year; very funny; very serious. This is the one book any woman would want to give any man to show just why the women's movement restarted in the 1960s among intelligent American middle class women. Not that it's a theoretical tome; all the book does is show what it's like to grow up female, intelligent and out of step in the 1950s American society where everything was guided by a suffocating McCarthyism of the spirit. When Florence bursts out, she really goes. Failed at the dating game, she discovers love in the arms of a divine Southern lady, and suffers everything any of us have suffered from first love. But Florence is still fabulously funny, even when she's piquantly pained. Her father, mother and grandmother, more vivid than any characters in an Anne Tyler novel, are the stars of the book.

** ***The Fallout***

by Garry Disher (Allen & Unwin 1-86448-330-X; 1997; 209 pp.)

Is this the fifth or sixth Wyatt crime novel? I should be getting sick of them, but I don't. Each one is more relentlessly gritty and downbeat than the previous one, but I feel that Disher is drawing from the underside a map of 1990s Australian society that is more accurate than any sociological treatise. I suspect this is also a metaphor for writing as a form of guerrilla activity, but Wyatt is not a man to mess with metaphors. Not much hope here, but great entertainment.

Favourites 1996

FAVOURITE BOOKS 1996

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1 <i>The Prestige</i>
Christopher Priest (1995; Touchstone; 404 pp.)2 <i>Faith Fox: A Nativity</i>
Jane Gardam (1996; Sinclair-Stevenson; 312 pp.)3 <i>The Crow Road</i>
Iain Banks (1992; Abacus; 490 pp.)4 <i>The Blue Mountain in Mujani</i>
Aina Vavare (1988/1990; Penguin; 173 pp.)5 <i>The Brimstone Wedding</i>
Barbara Vine (1996; Vintage; 312 pp.)6 <i>I Served the King of England</i>
Bohumil Hrabal (1989; Chatto & Windus; 243 pp.)7 <i>The Keys to the Street</i>
Ruth Rendell (1996; Hutchinson; 310 pp.)8 <i>Distress</i>
Greg Egan (1995; Millennium; 343 pp.)9 <i>No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien</i>
Anthony Cronin (1990; Paladin; 290 pp.)10 <i>Olaf Stapledon: Speaking for the Future</i>
Robert Crossley (1994; Liverpool University Press; 474 pp.) | <ol style="list-style-type: none">11 <i>An Anthropologist on Mars: Seven Paradoxical Tales</i>
Oliver Sacks (1995; Picador; 319 pp.)12 <i>Dealers in Light and Darkness</i>
Cherry Wilder (1995; Edgewood Press; 166 pp.)13 <i>The Moth</i>
James M. Cain (1949; Robert Hale; 356 pp.)14 <i>Lilian's Story</i>
Kate Grenville (1986; Allen & Unwin; 211 pp.)15 <i>Whit, or Isis Amongst the Unsaved</i>
Iain Banks (1995; Little, Brown; 455 pp.)16 <i>In the Presence of the Enemy</i>
Elizabeth George (1996; Bantam; 477 pp.)17 <i>CivilWarLand in Bad Decline</i>
George Saunders (1996; Jonathan Cape; 179 pp.)18 <i>Unlocking the Air and Other Stories</i>
Ursula K. Le Guin (1996; HarperPrism; 207 pp.)19 <i>Espedair Street</i>
Iain Banks (1987; Futura; 249 pp.)20 <i>Ladder of Years</i>
Anne Tyler (1995; Chatto & Windus; 326 pp.) |
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FAVOURITE FILMS 1996

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1 <i>Terminator 2: Judgment Day</i>
directed by James Cameron (1991)2 <i>The Shawshank Redemption</i>
Frank Darabont (1994)3 <i>The Music Teacher</i>
Gérard Corbiau (1988) | <ol style="list-style-type: none">4 <i>The Big Country</i>
William Wyler (1958)5 <i>The Boyfriend</i> (complete)
Ken Russell (1971)6 <i>Mona Lisa</i>
Neil Jordan (1986) |
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FAVOURITE SHORT STORIES 1996

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|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1 'The Poacher'
Ursula K. Le Guin (<i>Unlocking the Air and Other Stories</i>)2 'Olders'
Ursula K. Le Guin (<i>Unlocking the Air and Other Stories</i>)3 'Hidden'
Stuart Kaminsky (<i>Dark Love</i>)4 'Lunch at the Gotham Cafe'
Stephen King (<i>Dark Love</i>)5 'Looking Forward to the Harvest'
Cherry Wilder (<i>Dealers in Light and Darkness</i>) | <ol style="list-style-type: none">6 'Isabelle'
George Saunders (<i>CivilWarLand in Bad Decline</i>)7 'Robert and Edith at the Song Festival'
Aina Vavare (<i>The Blue Mountain in Mujani</i>)8 'Mathias' Fortifications'
Aina Vavare (<i>The Blue Mountain in Mujani</i>)9 'Bounty'
George Saunders (<i>CivilWarLand in Bad Decline</i>)10 'His Angel'
Robert Lannes (<i>Off Limits</i>) |
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