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JOHN FOYSTER AS CRITIC

Cover: Ditmar

brg 37

A fanzine for the **April 2004** mailing of ANZAPA and a few others
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Front cover: 'Foyster Universe' by Ditmar (Dick Jenssen). Dick prepared this cover for the upcoming Foyster Issue of *The Metaphysical Review*, but just in case *TMR* is delayed yet again, here is a sneak preview. The photo of John Foyster is by Mervyn Binns. Back cover photos (p. 32): Sarah Endacott, Sarah Hazell and Elaine Cochrane. Interior phots: [p. 24]: Peter Darling; [p. 25]: John Litchen; (p. 29): Yvonne Rousseau. Cartoons: [pp. 23–4): Elizabeth Darling; (p. 31): David Russell. Painting (p. 13): Joe Szabo.

Contents

Ditmar (Dick Jenssen)

Cover: John Foyster: 'Well, it's only mathematics, after all — wake up and enjoy!'

Actually I never heard John Foyster ever say that, but he might easily have done so. At one stage he tried to encourage me to write a short article for Bill Wright's *Interstellar Ramjet Scoop* on the ideas of mathematician Gregory Chaitin and his 'ultimate' random number *Omega* — so random that it can never be computed. John believed that science fiction fans — all science fictions fans — would be intrigued by such ideas, and that these concepts should be promulgated as widely as possible. To my regret I never wrote the article, even though I bought two of Chaitin's books with that intention in mind.

The cover graphic is, in a small way, an attempt to redress that omission.

All the floating objects — well, apart from John, of course — are *minimal surfaces*. One of my favorite Web sites is Eric Weisstein's *MathWorld*, which is part of the Wolfram (*Mathematica*) area (http://mathworld.wolfram.com/). Here we find that such surfaces are defined as *surfaces with zero mean curvature*. A soap bubble is such a surface (it also minimizes the energy). Weisstein adds that:

> Finding a minimal surface of a boundary with specified constraints is a problem in the calculus of variations and is sometimes known at Plateau's problem. Minimal surfaces may also be characterized as surfaces of minimal surface area for given boundary conditions. A plane is a trivial minimal surface, and the first nontrivial examples (the catenoid and helicoid) were found by Meusnier in 1776).

For those interested, search the *MathWorld* site, and/or read about soap films and minimal surfaces in *What is Mathematics?* by Courant and Robbins (OUP, pb).

The convoluted objects in the lower part of the graphic are *Weierstrass* surfaces (see http://library.wolfram.com/infocenter/Demos/133/) and the two 'birds' are *Catalan* surfaces (see http://math-

world.wolfram.com/CatalansSurface.html). The formulae for these were downloaded from *MathWorld* and turned into *Mathematica* notebooks. I tweaked the equations a bit and exported the 3D objects as dxf files, which were then used in Bryce to generate the graphic.
— Ditmar

Kittens and the slow catastrophe

2003 was spent waiting for the catastrophe, which didn't arrive until February 2004. What did arrive during 2003 were five kittens.

Around the corner in Wellington Street is the oldest house in our section of Collingwood. It is the only heritage-listed house in the immediate area, as it dates back to the mid nineteenth century. It was owned by an artist, Charles Sumner, who lived there until the mid 1990s, when he died. When the place was auctioned, Elaine and I took a peek. The house had not been repaired for many years, and was in terrible condition, with obvious water marks down each of the inside walls, and the outside brickwork crumbling and in places disintegrated by invading virginia creeper. It sold at auction. Nothing happened. A year or so later, the new owner pulled down all the rooms that had been added since the original house had been built. Nothing more happened. Because the building is heritage listed, the council refused his application to knock down the whole building and put up offices.

That situation has remained, except that the owner allowed squatters to take over the building and destroy its interior. Half the block was overgrown. In September 2003, the owner threw out the squatters and bulldozed the grass and took away the accumulated junk. The result was that two stray cats were suddenly left without sustenance. No more rats and mice on the property. The black cat started appearing in our back yard, which upset Polly and Violet. Polly usually sends any invading cat packing, but she was afraid of the stray black cat.

Around at 'the squat', which is how we came to think of the place, a little tortoiseshell cat stood at the front of the block and begged food and cuddles from passers by. Elaine went around there with some food, and met a bloke from further down Wellington Street. He was feeding the little cat because he had discovered that she had kittens inside the squat. He tracked down the owner. They decided that the best course of action was to feed the mother while she was feeding the kittens. (The last lot of squatters had been evicted when the block was cleaned up.) He said it was difficult to reach them because the squatters had pulled down the staircase to use for firewood during winter. Elaine decided to feed the tortoiseshell, but the same day it disappeared. Probably somebody scooped her up and took her off to a 'good home', not knowing about the kittens.

Elaine managed to track down the owner of the house (which took quite some detective work), and asked him to let her in. He turned up the next day. Elaine took a carpetbag with her, and came back with five three-week-old kittens. Their eyes were hardly open, and they had not taken food for three days, but they were otherwise healthy. Elaine took them up to the vet, bought some kitten milk formula, and learned all about what it takes to be a mother cat. Four feeds a day, each about one and a half hours long, with a dropper and formula milk. Elaine did little paying work during the first two weeks.

After a fortnight Elaine decided to start the weaning process. (Why can't some mother cat write a textbook about a kitten's first six weeks of life?) Two kittens, including the smallest, started nibbling on kitten-formula mince, but the other three still wanted their milk from mummy! Very loudly. The next day they were all eating mince. Elaine now had some time to herself.

Elaine hired a cage for the kittens. They started exploring the living room, but when tired they bundled together for warmth, either back in the cage or on one of the chairs. At night we put them all in the cage, and moved the cage to my room.

The kittens are: two female and three male; one tortoiseshell, one tabby, one black all over, one black with white feet, and one all ginger. Elaine had no trouble in finding future owners, who collected their kittens after they were vaccinated. Two people from Harcourt, the publisher from which Elaine gets much of her work, each volunteered to take a kitten. Charlie and Nic Taylor, of fannish fame, asked for one. So did Sarah Endacott and Tony Oakman, of *Orb* fame. They took the two sisters.

The real surprise has been the reaction from the other cats. We thought Polly would want to kill the small invaders, but she found them rather interesting. The smallest kitten, the tabby we called Titch, boodled up to Polly and demanded to sniff noses. If Titch had stayed at our place, he and Polly would have been good friends. Sophie mainly ignored the kittens, although she did hiss a bit when one of the kittens stood on its hind legs and hissed at *her*. Violet, who could swallow the five of the kittens without any trouble, was frightened of them for several days, but later she became curious about them. Eventually she decided that their cage was a useful source of extra food. The three big cats became used to the kittens, only to have them disappear. Only Polly was a bit worried by their absence.

The stray black cat remained very timid. Elaine would take out its meat every night, then have to retreat to the house before it would approach the plate. The food was always gone in the morning. We called the cat Flicker, because that's all we saw of it — a flicker in the grass.

One night I put down the food for Flicker, only to have him bowl up to me, purring and demanding pats. I told Elaine about this. She went out to see this miracle. 'That's not Flicker,' she said. 'That's another cat. It's got white socks, white bib and white whiskers.' So now we had another young, very thin tom to feed.

We kept feeding both cats, until gradually Flicker began to approach Elaine. Eventually he was willing to be patted. Most nights he went home to the squat, but he had a limp and didn't get through the fence easily. He began to stay permanently in our back yard, much to Polly's annoyance.

Elaine took him to the vet to be neutered and chipped. When he returned, he decided that our place was his, and he hasn't left the yard since. A few days after that, he began to feed inside and sleep overnight in a basket Elaine had made up for him on the floor. Flicker suddenly became a smoochy pet cat. He adopted Elaine as

his mummy, and usurped Polly's role as Elaine's shadow.

We called the small black-and-white cat Harry. At first we thought he must be the other father of the kittens. We soon realised he was much younger than Flicker, so was probably the half-brother to the kittens.

Harry remains a puzzle. He still never stays in our yard during the day. Elaine has seen him rolling around in the overgrown grass in the yard of the squat. He comes in for his food every night, and romps around the garden with Flicker.

One night over a week ago, he returned with a note on his collar. The note said that 'Harry"s real name is 'Sox', and his home is across Wellington Street and almost a block away! This was embarrassing, as we had just had him chipped and snipped.

We didn't think much of these 'owners', as Harry had been very thin, scraggy, unregistered and unneutered when he began visiting us. Elaine went to see his 'owners'. The two adults were willing to let us become Harry's people, but wanted to consult with their children. They had done little for Harry except feed him occasionally, and had not allowed him inside. The children were just as indifferent. So Harry became officially ours, but still goes 'home' to the squat every night. Elaine put up mesh around the fence, but nothing kept Harry in.

The kittens, meanwhile, are having a great time with their new people. We visited Charlie a few weeks ago, and found that Rascal, the black kitten, had taken over the house. He sat on each of our laps, and trundled around the place. Sarah and Tony tell us that their two (the 'naughty ones' of the litter) take part in a permanent riot. Sounds like fun.

Slow catastrophe

There were few signs of rain in 2003, until a monstrous rainstorm one night in December. All the surrounding streets filled with water. Cars were swept backwards. It was bin night, so a long line of wheelie bins and recycling crates floated down the street. Elaine caught up with the news from several neighbours while they retrieved bins at 3 a.m. Fairfield shopping centre, near us, was inundated, and quite a few people had floods through their houses. Fortunately our house is high enough above the street to avoid an internal flood.

One storm does not a drought-breaker make. Not even that drenching rain could save our house from wall replacement. One end of one half of the east wall has actually slipped off whatever small foundations it was sitting on. For several months, the situation didn't become worse, but now the crack in the wall is visibly widening every week. (There was almost no rain in March.)

We spent all of 2003 waiting for the catastrophe. Plans have been drawn up, applications submitted to the city council, but eight months after deciding that the east wall had to be replaced, nothing had happened. Yarra Council finally approved the planning permit late in 2003. Our planning person produced the final drawings. At last we could hold a meeting with the builder.

When Elaine first talked to the builder, in February 2003, she was quoted a price for replacing the side wall. Let that amount be x. Because she could afford that amount, she made a wish list of all the other things that needed doing to the house while the wall was being replaced. She assumed that the cost of the extras, her wish list, would be $2x$.

In February this year, she submitted the full wish list to the builder. The sum he quoted was $5x$, well over twice what she had in her savings account. So Elaine concocted a revised wish list — those things that absolutely had to be done while the wall was being replaced. The builder's quotation on that work was still more than she can afford.

We were faced by the unthinkable — moving house. We have the perfect location: an inner-city suburb with much public transport, two non-neighbours on either side (one an office block, and the other a house that faces away from us), the side garden (one of the few in the inner suburbs) . . . everything. We had assumed when we moved here almost exactly 25 years ago (26 March 1979) that we would live here until carried out to a funeral parlour.

But the house was built in 1914, and like an old piece of machinery, it's dying on us. The builder looked under the floor, and could not work out what was holding it up. The floor as well as the stumps need to be replaced. The roofing iron should be replaced. And the wall must be replaced urgently. The house itself is not worth anything. Only the double block of land is worth a lot.

However, the block is not worth the price of the sort of house we want in the inner suburbs. We have to go to the outer suburbs — outer darkness. Elaine has written down an elaborate wish list of the sort of house we need, but we also know the sort of price we can expect for our property. We will probably have to go not to the middle suburbs, such as Coburg or Preston, but to the livable outer suburbs. Elaine has researched house prices on the Internet, and we've discussed with a reputable estage agent a plan for selling this place. Who knows what will have happened, even by the time you read this piece?

Treasure hunt

We have assumed for a year that all we would have to do is empty two rooms at a time while house repairs took place. We hoped to be able to stay in the house during renovations, or at worse, move out for a couple of months. Therefore every weekend for most of 2003, one or other of Elaine's sisters has arrived with a car (or sometimes two cars), which we have filled with boxes. Either Margaret and George or Valerie and Fred have taken the boxes back to Margaret and George's place, and they have continued filling their spare room. Over five tonnes of our stuff has already gone to their place, and the wave of boxes there rises higher. It's become increasingly annoying to reach for a book that I really must consult — only to find that it's been packed. Bits of my life are being hacked off and put in cold storage.

I have refused to let any fanzine get packed until I have looked at it in order to retrieve favourite articles, especially those written by John Foyster. I've yellow-tagged the particular fanzine or apa mailing, taken it into Copy Place in Melbourne, and photocopied the particular article, often making extra copies for Yvonne Rousseau and/or Robert Lichtman. Then I've packed the documents and tried to find somewhere to store the photocopies.

I also have a stack of Ultra Precious Documents, such as my complete runs of *ASFR* (both series) and my own fanzines. I did not plan to pack them.

During all this treasure hunting, I've found documents I had forgotten about, such as the program of *Joe Phaust*, the fan opera that Melbourne fans put on for the Melbourne Easter SF Convention in 1973. It was written by Minny Hands, the leading two of which were Leigh Edmonds and David Grigg.

I've also found Early Gillespiana, which from time to time I will reprint and bore you with, plus fragments of Very Early Gillespiana, apazines that are not reprintable. In my first apa pieces, I was trying to imitate fabulous fannish writers such as Bangsund, Foyster and Edmonds. I was trying to Be Funny, and wasn't. Suddenly in 1970 I started writing real fannish stuff, real 'personal journalism', that I would be quite pleased to be writing now (but the subject matter has dated a bit). My critical writing improved somewhat after discovering fandom. Any further improvement was a result of writing professionally for Publications Branch during 1971, 1972 and 1973. Since then it's been downhill all the way.

The work scene has been patchy since September 2003, with only three smallish jobs during the end of 2003, and a month of work in January 2004. Each job came out of the blue, when I thought nothing was in sight. During February I was quite sure that I had reached the point of 'involuntary retirement'. Elaine was willing to support me, but not my expensive hobbies. I've stopped ordering CDs from Readings. I've even cancelled my subscriptions to *The Gramophone* and *Mojo*. I published *SF Commentary* 79, because it was the Tucker Issue, and it just had to be published. But I had no savings when that was posted.

At the beginning of March a client that had not given me any work for nearly three years suddenly rang and started offering me bits of work. If this flow continues, perhaps I will have an income for the year. But never again will I make the mistake of *relying* on freelance income.

How does this situation leave *SF Commentary* and my other fanzines? In a perilous position. My temptation at the end of February was to give up on paper publishing altogether. I would tell everybody to download my magazines from Bill Burns' superb Web site efanzines.com. I sent a note to that effect in many copies of *SFC* 79. (If I published only on the Web, I could publish much more often than at present.)

Lots of nice people wrote back to say they don't want to download the magazine. They want the real thing, the paper artefact. Enough people have sent money to make the next issue of *SFC* a real possibility — providing quite a few people are willing to download issues. In other words, if I can cut the print run by more than half, I can continue to publish. If not, I abandon the print version. To continue receiving the print version, you must send money, written or art contributions, or traded fanzines.

JOHN FOYSTER AS CRITIC, PART 1

This is the alternative, longer version of the talk I gave at the Nova Mob on 7 April 2004. This version is also scheduled to appear in Earl Kemp's *el*, which is downloadable from efanzines.com.

Bruce Gillespie

'Wake up, you lot!' John Foyster as SF critic

Why speak about a period in the history of science fiction in Australia, especially a period in the mid to late sixties and early seventies before some people in this room were born?

First, because events in science fiction today in Australia in many ways are a direct result of events in that far-off era. In 1966, John Foyster began a range of activities in Australian SF that led to the holding of the first Australian World Convention in Melbourne in 1975, and that in turn generated the vast ripple of SF enthusiasm that has spread out continually during the last twenty years.

Second, because one of the most important events of the late sixties — the rise of SF criticism in Australia — has become very reduced in importance since the 1970s. Most SF activity today in Australia is devoted to the writing and publishing of science fiction itself, not reviews and criticism of the field. Thirty years ago, the opposite was true. We had a few writers, some of whom had a little bit of success. Our SF critics were known throughout the world, and John Foyster was one of the best known of them. Today, Britain is the hotbed of SF criticism, and Australia has slipped behind. In losing John Foyster in 2003, we lost one of the great leaders in our field here. In this talk I want to give some idea of what he achieved.

I

At the end of the 1960s, John Foyster was known throughout the science fiction world as one of its best critics, yet today it would be hard to find evidence of his work. *Exploring Cordwainer Smith*, a booklet of criticism and interviews based on Foyster's investigations, is still mentioned in bibliographies of works about Smith, yet Foyster's most extensive body of writing dealt with the

work of Samuel R. Delany and J. G. Ballard. Only readers who have access to both series of *Australian Science Fiction Review* (1966–70 and 1986–92) and several other publications of the late sixties and early seventies (especially *SF Commentary*, *Science Fiction Review* and *Speculation*) can gain an insight into Foyster's contribution to SF criticism.

Foyster's approach, which is the subject of this essay, would now be regarded as old-fashioned because he expected science fiction writers to write well-made stories and interesting prose and readers to be able to judge whether or not a story was much good. Foyster didn't think most SF writers were much good at writing, and he said so. Because of his refusal to 'run a line' — to back any particular theory of literary criticism — his work could not be categorised. It does not fit within today's world of grand theories that reduce writing to merely a type of 'cultural signs'. His heirs are rare, but fortunately one of them, David Langford (especially in *Up Through an Empty House of Stars: Reviews and Essays 1980–2002*, Cosmos Books, 2003), is still writing vigorously.

Foyster's work is hardly likely to be kept alive by the writers whose works he wrote about. Foyster pulled no punches, and was as severe on the writing of his friends (especially Lee Harding, Damien Broderick and John Baxter) as on unmet persons from overseas. Harry Warner's protest that writers are 'delicate organisms' only strengthened Foyster's scepticism.

By 1966, writers and other critics believed that critics should be polite; John Foyster, in print at least, was never polite. He had before him the example of James Blish, whose collected criticism as 'William Atheling Jr' was issued in 1966 in *The Issue at Hand*. In 1967, the collected essays of Damon Knight, an even more impolite critic, were collected and issued as *In Search of Wonder*. A similar collection of Foyster's work issued in the early 1970s would no doubt have secured his reputation, but unfortunately no such publication occurred.

Not only was Foyster impolite, but he did his best not to make generalisations about science fiction. As the 1970s proceeded, the practice of the new breed of academic critics was to crush a vast butterfly collection of SF books under the steamroller of critical theory. As SF works suffered under the armies of categorisers and theoreticians, it became increasingly difficult to work out which books were worth reading. Foyster, by contrast, concentrated his critical mind on particular works and authors, leaving one in no doubt as to which were worth reading, and which were not. George Turner, who made his own splash as an SF critic in 1967, called this 'technical criticism', and was proud of writing it. Foyster didn't give a name to his own method; he just invited people to read books carefully.

I'm writing this essay to make people aware of what they might find if they find and read Foyster's work. Also, I'm expressing a debt of gratitude. Not that John Foyster ever took me aside and said, 'Listen, Gillespie, you really should write this or that way.' Lee Harding, who was better at explaining John Foyster to people than Foyster ever was, once said to me: 'Listen, Bruce, why don't you stop writing academic-style criticism? Look at John Foyster's writing; he says more than you do, says it better, and never uses any academic jargon.' Lo! I looked, and saw that Lee Harding was correct, and that it was possible to explain what you want about a work of fiction without using any academic jargon. Not that my work resembles that of John Foyster, but it quickly cured me of writing English III essays for fanzines.

II

John Foyster's writing for fanzines falls into two main categories: 'fannish' writing (about fan activities and personal concerns), and reviews and criticism of science fiction magazines, stories and books. The first category makes up most of Foyster's non-professional writing. The second category, SF criticism, occupies two relatively short periods: (a) from 1966 to 1970, in *Australian Science Fiction Review* (the original series) and *exploding madonna/The Journal of Omphalistic Epistemology* (*JOE*), and (b) from 1986 to 1991, in the second series of *Australian Science Fiction Review*. Yet those periods of intense activity provide a rich lode of material for the discerning reader.

Australian Science Fiction Review began as a result of a discussion at the science fiction convention in Melbourne during Easter 1966. There had been no such convention in Australia since 1958. It was felt that the enthusiasm generated during that convention could best be kept alive by the production of a nationally focused 'small circulation magazine devoted to the discussion of science fiction'. Pressed to become editor of such a magazine, Lee Harding nominated John Bangsund. With John as editor, Lee Harding and John Foyster became the staff of the new magazine, *Australian Science Fiction Review* (*ASFR*). The first issue appeared in June 1966.

Rereading my copies of *ASFR* nearly forty years later, I get the impression that at first John Foyster did not expect to write a large number of reviews for the magazine. It was obvious that the staff hoped that most of its contributors would be writers such as Brian Aldiss, Michael Moorcock, Langdon Jones and John Baxter, the headline acts in No. 1.

Lee Harding writes a fair number of the pages in No. 1 (including the delicious article 'Communist Chulpex Raped My Wife!', a long review of Avram Davidson's *The Masters of the Maze*), and John Foyster opens his account with a review of Philip K. Dick's *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, which had just been published in a British edition. John does not so much review the book as review the other reviewers, a practice startlingly different from reviews to be found in the overseas professional SF magazines (prozines). As a fanatical Philip K. Dick admirer, I was not much taken with Foyster's dismissal of the book itself (including his assertion that Jack Vance used the drug-reality theme more effectively in 1958 in a story called 'The Men Return'), but was amused to find him wiping the floor with P. Schuyler Miller's review in *Analog*, Judith Merril's review in *F&SF* and Algis Budrys's review in *Galaxy*. It was this sort of scepticism that was completely absent in the prozines. At last! I thought, I've found intelligent people who write about science fiction.

In *ASFR* 2, August 1966, a reviewing format for the magazine began to take shape. Between them, John Foyster and Lee Harding wrote 10 of the 36 pages, with four more pages written by 'K. U. F. Widdershins' (later revealed to be John Foyster) and 'Alan Reynard' (later revealed to be Lee Harding). Foyster's main piece was a lengthy discussion of four short novels by an author I had never heard of: Dwight V. Swain. My reaction: why bother?

On page 26, K. U. F. Widdershins reviewed Harry Harrison's *Bill, the Galactic Hero*, which has just been released in British hardback. It is not clear whether or not Mr Widdershins likes the book, since the final lines of the review are: 'All in all, this novel must be extremely

highly rated, for its entertainment value is "tops". I recommend it strongly to all readers.' This is the tone adopted by reviewers in the prozines of the time. Even the Bruce Gillespie of 1966 could detect some insincerity in the recommendation. John Bangsund writes as a footnote: 'Some readers have complained about Dr Widdershins's reviews, on the grounds "that he obviously doesn't like sf". I trust the above review will put their minds, so to speak, to rest.'

As the letters of comment, somewhat delayed by the six weeks it took to reach anywhere on the other side of the world, began to pour into *ASFR*, it became clear that the salvo fired constantly at Widdershins and Foyster would be that they didn't like science fiction very much. Playing with that concept became the hallmark of the Foyster/Widdershins persona.

In *ASFR* 5, Widdershins reviewed what would eventually become Keith Roberts' novel *Pavane*. It was appearing as separate stories in the British magazine *Impulse* (the revamped *Science Fantasy*):

> The . . . stories . . . [each] deal with an episode in the history of Roberts's England. They cover a couple of generations, and each of them suffers the fault of appearing to be truncated; for each the resolution is unsatisfactory . . . As the series now stands, many questions are unanswered: who are the 'people'? Is Brother John the same man as Sir John the seneschal? (And if not, why not?) We may never discover now the secrets of Cordwainer Smith's world, but let us hope that Keith Roberts will reveal, in time, just what makes his delightful world tick.

In his letter of comment published in *ASFR* 9, April 1967, Keith Roberts writes, among other things:

> I've just got to take exception to the Widdershins report, or review, or whatever he calls it, of *Pavane* in issue five. Whoever is lurking behind that noxious pseudonym really should have his head immersed in a vat of treacle, or sheepdip, or whatever bizarre fluid comes most readily to hand Down There. I've read bad reports of my work and I've read downright vindictive ones but I've never come across such an absolute masterpiece of misunderstanding; I'm well aware that widdershins traditionally go backwards but this is really too much . . . Mr Ditherspin successfully confuses the whole issue, with I must admit great skill and economy, before moving on to What I Have To Say . . .

To which Widdershins replies:

> So that's how Keith Roberts reacts to a review fairly oozing with praise! May I construct the essence of the review? I suggested that the *Pavane* stories were the best things to come out from *Impulse*. That all the stories were worthy of expansion, and that I looked forward to this. And that I look forward, in general, to seeing more of the same. I did complain that the stories almost seemed cut off in the middle . . I am, of course, quite shaken by this. I feel, and felt then, that my review was straightforward unabashed praise. I admit no other interpretation. Roberts has, almost paranoically, misinterpreted and confused what I wrote.

Had Roberts known it, he would be one of the last correspondents to receive a contrite reply from Widdershins or Foyster.

ASFR correspondents, especially well-known SF writers, reacted more and more strongly to reviews by the *ASFR* team (which, after No. 10, included George Turner). John Foyster began to think about reviewing science fiction in a quite different environment, which led him, a year later, to the secret publication of *exploding madonna*.

III

The task of reviewing the SF books that flooded into the *ASFR* offices had deflected Foyster from his true path — writing full-length criticism. The first evidence of the true Foyster can be found in Issue No. 4, October 1966. An etching of Don Quixote bestrides the cover. In that issue, Foyster devotes 19 pages to 'The Editorials of John Campbell'.

To say that I was dismayed when I received that issue is an understatement. But I did for the first time glimpse the possibility offered by the serious fanzine— as a forum for long detailed articles about single subjects.

I was dismayed, then more than now, at Foyster's taking the SF magazines seriously. True, in 1966 the prozines were still the only sources of short fiction in the field, but they were all at such a low ebb, in the quality of both their fiction and non-fiction, that *ASFR* seemed a mighty bolt of inspiration by comparison. John Campbell's *Analog* consisted of little but very boring technologically based stories and dreary right-wing diatribes by the editor or his writers. Production values were high, and *Analog* was the only magazine paying 10 cents a word to authors. But by the mid 1960s, it seemed unlikely that any ambitious writer would send his or her work to Campbell, except for the money.

However, Foyster wrote:

> I think this article does make clear my admiration for the man who has edited the best science fiction magazine for almost thirty years. And in his own writings we can see just why his work has been so outstanding.
>
> Campbell is a maverick: he just won't conform to any mould. The result is that somewhere, sometime, he must offend everyone. But he is always interesting, always challenging. One may think that a given article is meaningless twaddle, but one must always admit that it is well-written, interesting twaddle.

I had long since given up on Campbell's editorials as boring twaddle that pandered to his right-wing audience and challenged nobody. The value of Foyster's long article lies in that giveaway line: 'Campbell is a maverick: he just won't conform to any mould. The result is that somewhere, sometime, he must offend everyone.' Did Foyster ever more accurately summarise his own writing career?

IV

Through the end of 1966 and into 1967, I found that I disagreed with Foyster and/or Widdershins most of the time, but also found that his work, and that of other *ASFR* writers, shone as the only light in the murky wood of 1960s science fiction. In particular, I couldn't agree with Foyster's admiration for the works of Samuel R. Delany, an author whose earliest short stories had left

me spluttering with exasperation, and whose novels proved unreadable beyond the first page.

Nevertheless, the Foyster–Delany correspondence is one of the most satisfactory aspects of these years, especially as Delany steadfastly refused to be offended by Foyster's taunts and jibes.

Foyster's review of *Babel-17* (*ASFR* 10, June 1967) falls into two parts, a review of the book itself, and a critique of some of Delany's earliest published opinions about SF criticism. Says Foyster of *Babel-17*:

> Delany harks back to the old days of sf, when ideas were a dime a dozen and a decent author was not afraid to spend a penny. By comparison with many modern writers, Delany is a positive spendthrift; the material in this novel would provide eight or ten novels for other writers. It has.
>
> Delany's ideas are not new, at least in the sense that they are familiar to readers of sf. At the same time there is a certain freshness about the way they have been handled, as though the author had a deep regard for the stories in which the concepts first appeared. This is not say that Delany has copied, but rather that he has taken several old strands of ideas and used them to weave a new yarn. As a result, there are strong pieces and weak pieces . . .
>
> Whichever way you slice it, though, *Babel-17* is good reading, as sf. Delany has more than average control over his writing, though a few novels published in *Startling* would have sharpened up a few remaining weaknesses in his writing: a tendency to verbosity, a mild desire to show off, and very occasionally, definite fuzziness around the edges . . . The tendency towards using as many words as possible is understandable when one is paid by the word, but that is not how I understand Ace's method of payment. Nevertheless, no matter how good the author's work (and Delany writes very well), in a story which is basically an adventure yarn, too many words can get in the way. Too many words can slow the action, or at least throw the reader off the track. I may like what you are writing, Jack, but I've forgotten who is training the ray-gun on the Saturnian grulzak.
>
> And when I say that Delany tends to show off, I really mean that sometimes there's a little too much embroidery, too much cuteness. This, too, one can take in small doses. It may well be that my tolerance is low.

Delany replies in *ASFR* 14, February 1968:

> I've never put any hard-science into a tale without checking on it. The 'science' section in *Babel-17* that John Foyster got so upset about a few issues back was merely a dramatization of Fredrick Kantor's rather brilliant solution to what was considered a classically insoluble problem — up until 1965: the totally internal determination of location from within a free-falling system. It's a problem that classical relativity maintains is impossible . . . the Kantor solution was hot news at the time. But that was '65. . . .

Foyster replies:

> You may imagine my chagrin at not having heard about Dr Kantor's wonderful discovery. This was tempered by the further discovery that neither *Physics Abstracts* nor *Mathematical Reviews* had heard of this 'hot news'. None of the 20 or so other journals in the area (aerospace, astronomy, mathematics and physics) which I consulted for a couple of hours seemed to have heard of it, either. So if Mr Delany can tell us where we can read all about it . . .

An author took his chances if he patted himself on the back in the presence of John Foyster. However, Delany did *not* reply to the much weightier comment from Foyster, that his prose shows 'too much cuteness'.

In the second part of his review of *Babel-17*, Foyster takes on an editorial by Delany in *New Worlds* 172, which appeared at about the time that Michael Moorcock decided that Delany was actually a New Wave writer, and Delany was pleased to be so anointed.

> The editorial presents, one presumes, Delany's views on sf. He draws comparisons between music in general and fiction in general, perhaps unwisely, compares forms of music as an analogy with the forms of fiction, i.e. sf and mainstream. The unwisdom comes, perhaps, in suggesting that the quartet might stand for sf and the symphony for mainstream. The objection — and I regard it as an insurmountable one — is that while one composer may write quartets and symphonies, there has been, as far as I can see, only one sf writer who has also written in the other field — Cordwainer Smith.
>
> This general assumption, then, seems untenable to me. But there are specific points in Delany's article which further suggest his intense concern with the oneness of sf and mainstream. He wants a critical vocabulary for sf and claims that no one has yet been able to build the bridge between sf and mainstream. I would submit that the need is not for a bridge, but a ladder. I further suggest that the inability of critics to examine sf in the way Delany wants is due to the absence of the kind of sf he supposes to exist . . .

This is almost the first general discussion about the relative merits of sf and 'mainstream' into which John Foyster was ever drawn, and occurs in the same issue in which George Turner published his first article, which protested about the 'double standard' in SF. As Foyster later confessed to Turner, he was rather in favour of the 'double standard' — that is, he thought it difficult to compare works of sf and the best works of literature.

Delany and Foyster continued to argue about such matters during the next couple of years, culminating in a long letter–article that Delany sent to *exploding madonna* in 1968. In reply to this nine-page letter (*em* 5, January 1969), much of it in defence of the New Wave, Foyster replies, in part:

> Consider the critical performance of *New Worlds* this year. Sladek's review of Barthelme failed to get much across to me. Sallis's review of *Hump* is an example of the worst kind of one-upmanship (the sort of thing to which *New Worlds* is much given, in fact). Sallis reviewing (?) poetry (No. 181) is simply laughable, while Shackleton/Aldiss does a fair job on Hillegas. Notice that it is clapped-out, nearly orthodox Aldiss who does most nearly approach a decent job. The rest can be wiped, with no loss at all.
>
> There is so much in both literature and science

that it isn't really possible for any one person to get a good hold on the lot. I don't know that I entirely approve of your approach to literature (dig the critics), but in science things are really tough. I suppose that a full-time reader could keep a broad grasp of the situation, but scarcely enough to claim genuine familiarity.

While you write about the invention of a spaceship (as an example) you forget that science fiction is written as wish-fulfilment for juveniles. This was then and will remain for some time the basic selling point of science fiction: it is simply unfortunate for older readers that they happen to like it too. Whether they have failed to grow up, or do have Broad Mental Horizons, is something on which I'm not prepared to cast judgment. But that's why I find it hard to take seriously the claims of sf as literature — it's basically written as adventure stories, and people like yourself who try to make sf 'mature' are voices crying in the wilderness. I also find it hard to forget Mike Moorcock's origins as an editor, for example.

V

So why — as those *ASFR* letter writers complained — did John Foyster read science fiction, let alone write about it?

One short answer is that he *didn't* read a lot of current science fiction, except when reviewing books for both series of *Australian Science Fiction Review*. I gained the impression that he often riffled back through his collection of the SF magazines of the 1940s and 1950s, which led to writing his interminable 'Long View' articles for *ASFR*, Second Series.

The other short answer is: for enjoyment. What appeared to annoy John Foyster was the constant scurrying by SF writers and critics to find pedestals to climb on in the hope that somebody would worship them while they were standing there.

In his introduction to the *SF Commentary* 19, January 1971, which brings together six issues of *exploding madonna* and three of *JOE*, Foyster writes:

> The trouble with writing about science fiction is that one becomes serious about it . . . One way or another, people get serious about science fiction, the most frivolous form of entertainment yet devised . . .
>
> However . . . I might remark that you are receiving this fanzine because, unwittingly and perhaps unwillingly, you have given me the impression, to quote Widdershins, that you discuss science fiction seriously . . . If a couple of you are interested, let us stagger into the darkness together. You are, by the way, Mr Brian Aldiss, Mr James Blish, Mr Red Boggs, Mr Algis Budrys, Mr Sten Dahlskog, Mr Samuel Delany, Mr Damon Knight, Mr Franz Rottensteiner and Mr Harry Warner . . .
>
> I do not agree with Mr Warner entirely when he writes: 'A writer is a delicate organism; equally automatically, a reader may be as neurotic as a writer; his criticisms, though mere personal fads, may harm the delicate mechanism' (*Horizons* 113, page 2204) . . . Writers are *not* really delicate organisms, in general . . . While many science fiction writers are interested in discussing what is going on in the world of science fiction, there are also quite a few whose epistolatory endeavours are directed solely towards the extraction of egoboo: in a word, you gotta have a proper respeck. I don't, comrades.

Which brings us back to Widdershins' initial clash with Keith Roberts, as well as many other writers. Having found through two and a half years of writing for *ASFR* that, above all, writers want their 'proper respeck', Foyster decided to speak only to fellow critics, who, except for Franz Rottensteiner, in the end proved as prickly as the fiction writers. This so exasperated Foyster that, in January 1969 he wrote to the recipients of *exploding madonna*:

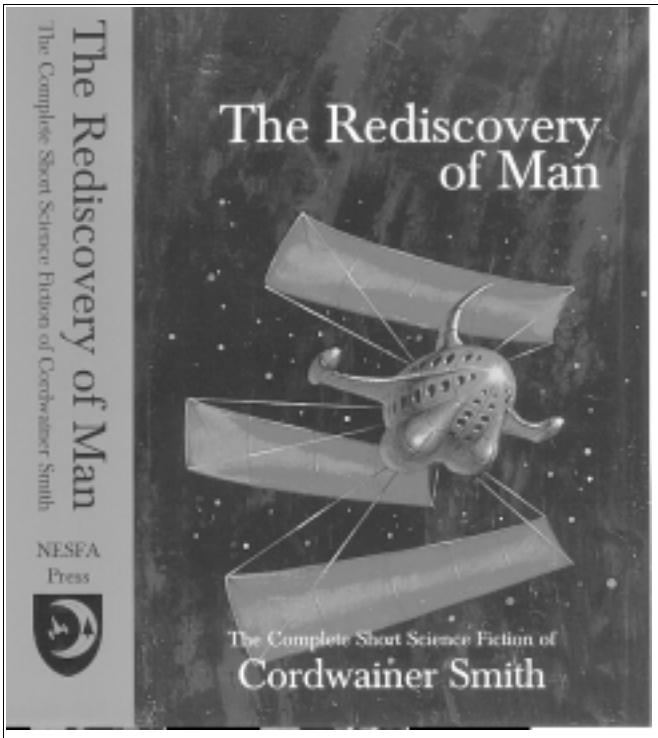
> *Wake up you lot!* Here I am with my critical faculties hanging out in the cold and I haven't interested a single soul in talking about the *way* stf should be approached. Not one. Probably no one cares: it certainly *look*s that way.

Which, in turn, might explain why, not too many months later, Foyster turned over the whole lot to me. (I had by then, with a few other people, begged my way onto the mailing list). I reprinted *exploding madonna* and *JOE* as a 132-page issue of *SF Commentary*, and by early 1971 Foyster returned to publishing (with Leigh Edmonds) fannish fanzines with such ringing titles as *Boys' Own Fanzine*, *Norstrilian News* and *Chunder!*

Epilogue I: John Foyster and Cordwainer Smith

John Foyster was (and still may be) famous for his admiration of the works of Cordwainer Smith (Dr Paul Anthony Myron Linebarger, who died in 1966 at the age of 53). Foyster at his best can be found in the special issue of *ASFR* about the work of Smith/Linebarger. It was always my impression that John Foyster discovered who Cordwainer Smith was, using various detective skills and travelling to Canberra to meet the people who had known Linebarger. However, not long before he died Foyster sent me the enigmatic message that 'it was Damien Broderick who did the detective pilgrimage regarding Cordwainer Smith', not Foyster. This was the first hint that Damien Broderick had ever had anything to do with the Cordwainer Smith project. Through Yvonne Rousseau, Damien sent an email clarifying the situation:

> Towards the end of 1965, I read *Space Lords* shortly after it arrived in Oz. There I learned that Smith lived in Canberra, attended the Anglican church (or something; this is from memory), and his broker was Mr Greenish, whom readers might approach to discuss Smith's credit rating (or whatever; some whimsy). I wished to apply for the Stanford Writing Fellowship, a year's well-paid stint in the States (something both Rory Barnes and Jean Bedford won in subsequent years); I had *A Man Returned* in my hand, nasty little squib that it was, and felt I might impress the judges if I could get a note from Mr Smith endorsing my cause (I was a naive child). So I flew to Canberra on a venture and a prop jet, located Mr Greenish's office, had a flea put in my ear, wandered disconsolately to the ANU, came upon Bob Brissenden via Dorothy Green's daughter Harriet (whom I'd known at Monash); Bob told me that oh yes, this must be Paul Linebarger, but he was currently in the Pacific islands doing research. I stayed at Dorothy's house overnight . . . then I went home *and forgot Linebarger's name*. This is



> almost incomprehensible, but I was a pragmatic child; the plan had come unstuck, I'd used up all my money fruitlessly, so why clutter my mind with such stuff? When I told John Foyster this tale he was, perhaps, and understandably, a little indignant. So he subsequently went forth and repeated some of these evolutions, or at any rate his own version of them, and thus encountered Arthur Burns, and presumably *wrote the name down*, and the secret was out.

Except for John Bangsund's original introduction, the Cordwainer Smith material has been reprinted several times, first by Andrew Porter as a leaflet called *Exploring Cordwainer Smith*, then as the last issue of Peter Weston's famous British fanzine *Speculation*, and then in the second series of *Australian Science Fiction Review*, No. 21, Spring 1989.

In the Cordwainer Smith special issue of *ASFR*, Foyster wrote a critical essay on 'Cordwainer Smith', and extracted an article from Dr Arthur Burns about Linebarger, and also interviewed him. Foyster's and Burns's approach to Smith was so original at the time that it influenced, perhaps even warped, all later discussion of Smith.

Foyster quotes Robert Silverberg, June 1965, summarising my own feeling about the Cordwainer Smith stories:

> 'I think that Cordwainer Smith is a visitor from some remote period of the future, living among us perhaps as an exile from his own era or perhaps just as a tourist, and amusing himself by casting some of his knowledge of historical events into the form of science fiction.'

Foyster's own view of Smith is very different:

> If we examine the stories a little more closely we find that Smith was very much a man of our time, and that his feelings and thoughts were very much those of his contemporaries.
>
> In 'The Dead Lady of Clown Town', 'The Ballad of Lost C'mell' and 'A Planet Named Shayol', to choose only three stories from his collection *Space Lords*, he writes strongly and with great feeling of the racial problems which surrounded him in his own land. His love of Australia is revealed in the Rod McBan stories. It isn't fair to Silverberg, but there is one way at least in which Smith shows himself very much tied to his time. His story 'On the Storm Planet' deals with an attempt by Casher O'Neill to assassinate the turtle girl, T'ruth. If one turns to page 38 in the February 1965 *Galaxy* or to page 69 in *Quest of Three Worlds*, one finds, despite the interference of both editors, the acrostic KENNEDY SHOT. Several pages later a second acrostic appears: OSWALD SHOT TOO. (Mr Arthur Burns, who had it from the author, is responsible for this information.)

This revelation, with many other examples provided in the Arthur Burns interview, set off the Cordwainer Smith industry, best characterised by the work of John J. Pierce, and which led eventually to the publication of the *Cordwainer Smith Concordance* by NESFA Press. Unfortunately, this has given the impression that Smith is mainly interesting for the number of hidden references he could pack into each story.

Foyster has a much wider view of Smith than Pierce and most other commentators:

> Cordwainer Smith was the first writer to write science fiction which could possibly be accepted as 'Literature'.
>
> I do not make this claim for him. His work does it for me, and for anyone who chooses to look . . .
>
> Smith's approach to the revelation of the future is almost unique. Most sf writers have difficulty in convincing readers of the reality of the future they create. Some ignore the problem, and hope the reader can accept their ideas. Others attempt to make them credible by explaining what is occurring, as it happens . . . Smith reveals the workings of his world in a natural manner. In 'Scanners Live in Vain', for instance, the nature of the scanners and the habermen is made plain to the reader by the recitation of a ritual or catechism which is vital both to the character Martel and to the plot. It is not something tacked on 'to make it all seem real'.
>
> Robert Silverberg writes of Smith's world as being 'so tiresomely familiar to him that he does not see the need to spell out the details'. This is not quite true. The details of Smith's future are only made clear as this becomes necessary, and those who have read the bulk of his work will realize that it is filled with cross-references which help to give the whole a remarkable unity . . . Thus any given story by Smith may seem to contain things not seen, not explained. To see, to understand, one must refer to another, perhaps remote, story.

This is one of the first Foyster essays in which he concentrates on the style of the author as well as the structure of his or her stories:

> And what of the general style of the stories? . . . He is talking to children; in his stories he is producing history as fairy tales. This is explicit in one story, 'The Lady who Sailed "The Soul"', where the familiar

old story is told by a mother to her daughter. But it is implicit in many of his verbal mannerisms, in other stories. This is not to demean, in any way, the intelligence or maturity of his readers; myths and legends have always been told in simple language, by father to son, and to do otherwise would spoil much of their magic.

Because of the casual approach to the opening of a story, and because of the child-like language used, Smith's technique could easily fail; in writing thus he walks on one side of the narrow gap between beauty and fatuity. But his foot is sure. As an indication of his masterly control — indeed, to use the two sentences by which I would be prepared to let his reputation stand or fall, I will quote the ending of a story sometimes forgotten: 'The Burning of the Brain': 'Magno Taliano had risen from his chair and was being led from the room by his wife and consort, Dolores Oh. He had the amiable smile of an idiot, and his face for the first time in more than a hundred years trembled with shy and silly love.'

Assuming that any other sf writer had written the story, it would have ended with the word 'idiot'. Go further; try to find any writer who would have finished the sentence more or less in that way. It would not be the same. For the words 'and silly' are unique with Smith. In these words, these two words, he transcends the petty world of science fiction and reaches out into the world of reality.

Foyster also quotes my own favourite Smith sentence, the first sentence of 'The Dead Lady of Clown Town::

> You already know the end — the immense drama of the Lord Jestocost, seventh of his line, and how the cat-girl C'mell initiated the vast conspiracy.

This still gives me goose bumps — the suggestion in the first line that we are sitting there at the end of the time listening to a storyteller retell a legend that has already been around for thousands of years.

Epilogue II: Foyster and Ballard

The writer about whom John Foyster wrote the greatest number of words was not Delany or Smith, but J. G. Ballard. Anybody who can offer a summary of Foyster's findings on Ballard would be doing us all a favour. Again, this material should be reprinted rather than filleted. At the very least, Foyster offers a less worshipful view of Ballard than David Pringle did a few years later. Watch this space.

— Bruce Gillespie, June 2003

JOHN FOYSTER AS CRITIC, PART 2

And what better lead-in to the next article than the last paragraph of the previous article? The following has appeared in *el* 13, published by Earl Kemp, downloadable from efanzines.com. It was written first for a panel at Continuum in July 2003, and will also appear in Van Ikin's special John Foyster issue of *Science Fiction*.

Bruce Gillespie

J. G. Ballard and the New Wave: An Australian viewpoint

James Graham Ballard was born in 1930, so he will be 74 this year. He was born in Shanghai and interned in a Japanese civilian POW camp during World War II. This became the background of his novel *Empire of the Sun* (1984), his bestseller, filmed by Steven Spielberg.

His first stories were 'Escapement' and 'Prima Belladonna' in Ted Carnell's *New Worlds* and *Science Fantasy* in 1956, which was eight years before Michael Moorcock took over *New Worlds* and changed *Science Fantasy* into *Impulse*.

Ballard always said his main influences were Surrealist painters and early Pop Art artists. The main themes and images of his stories were of deserted landscapes and wrecked technology, that is, near-future decadence and disaster. The imagery was not that much different from what we find in the early works of Jack Vance. Ballard's early successes included 'The Waiting Grounds', 'The Sound-Sweep' and 'Chronopolis'. 'The Sound Sweep', about a chap who goes about sweeping up sounds in a vacuum cleaner, still reads well.

In 1962, Ballard began to use the phrase 'inner space' about his work: his famous quote about his own work was: 'the only truly alien planet is Earth . . . "The Voices of Time" (1960) is his most important early story, an apocalyptic view of a terrible new evolution faced by the human race' (*SF Encyclopedia*, p. 84).

In 1966, John Foyster expressed a slightly different view:

> I cannot really comprehend what all the 'inner

> space' is about. Doubtless some kind soul will be able to take up six or ten pages of a future issue of this magazine explaining it to me in simple terms and then I too shall be able to grovel at the feet of the master . . . If 'inner space' as opposed to 'outer space' is simply an investigation of the character's psyche then why not say so, and admit that it is only an attempt to join the mainstream, and not sf. (*Australian Science Fiction Review* (first series), No. 5, December 1966, p. 16)

Ballard began a series of stories set in a decaying resort called Vermilion Sands, where, as David Pringle puts it, 'poets, artists and actresses pursue perverse whims', which was another way of saying that the motives and actions are often just a little incomprehensible.

His first novel, in 1962, was *The Wind from Nowhere*, based very much on the British disaster novel model made so popular in the 1950s by John Wyndham. In fact, each of the three early novels fits that category — British disaster novel — except that the source of the worldwide disaster is not particularly well explained, and the explanation doesn't matter much. In *The Drowned World* (1962), the world heats up and the seas rise, but the explanation for the physical action is not what interests Ballard. What is really different about this book is that the main character, Kerans, welcomes the disaster. Instead of heading north, as the rest of the humanity has done, he travels south towards the equator, into a region of steadily increasing heat and wateriness.

What's different about Ballard? The language, first and foremost. Quiet, steadily advancing sentences, almost no overt climaxes or melodrama until late in the book, with the emphasis on the thoughts of the main characters. Ballard is not concerned about what is happening, but about how the characters react to what is happening. What is different about Ballard's characters, though, is that they experience everything as intensely as possible, and make that experience into a work of art. Ballard put himself directly counter to everything that had happened in SF until then, and especially against the very dull landscape of SF during the early 1960s. The point of life, the Golden Age writers seemed to say, was to solve problems and overcome adversity. Ballard's characters, by contrast, take to adversity like a duck to water, and try to make things more difficult, not less difficult, for themselves.

The extraordinary thing about Ballard's career is that he sold his short stories at all. Ted Carnell, by then the only English SF magazine editor and Britain's most powerful SF agent, was, from all descriptions, not a man who cared much about art. He was an old-time fan who liked a good old-fashioned story, yet he published every Ballard story that, as Ballard's agent, he couldn't sell to an overseas magazine. In his magazines *New Worlds*, *Science Fiction Adventures* and *Science Fantasy*, he continued to publish Ballard stories regularly. He was also publishing some very intense and literary stories by Brian Aldiss. Between the two of them, Ballard and Aldiss showed up most of the other British SF authors of the time as being just a bit pallid.

By the early sixties Ballard began to acquire not just readers in Britain but disciples. Those disciples overturned the old money-changer and took over the temple. At about that time Ballard's 'The Terminal Beach', an almost completely surrealistic mood piece, appeared. More than anything, it signalled that Ballard was writing stories quite different from anything that had ever appeared as science fiction. Coincidentally, Nova Publications sold Carnell's magazines — or rather, they proposed to drop them altogether, but a group centred around Michael Moorcock bought them. In 1964, Moorcock, in a series of editorials for *New Worlds*, proclaimed the magazine was setting out in a bold new direction. Ballard was the prophet of the new direction, and Moorcock was his disciple.

As Australia's John Foyster noted sarcastically some years later, 'Who will believe that he is Gabriel when he has already been assured by a close friend that he is Ghod?' Ballard seems to have taken Mike Moorcock's crusading editorials more and more to heart, and decided to boldly go where no SF writer had gone before. Fortunately he had already published, *for Ted Carnell*, most of the stories for which we best remember him.

The rest of Ballard's career is the story of moving away from SF, then returning to it. He rode with *New Worlds* during its most experimental period, that is, from the end of 1967 — when it was the first SF magazine to change to quarto size and feature a wide range of pop and surrealistic artwork and photography — to 1969, when Ballard began to be adopted by British literary people. He published in the little magazines, such as *ambit*, and stopped appearing in *New Worlds*. In the meantime, he began writing what he called 'condensed novels', that is, stories in short segments with odd, emphatic little episodes that, for most readers, did not add up to much. Such pieces included 'The Assassination of John Fitzgerald Kennedy Considered as a Downhill Motor Race' from 1967, and 'Why I Want to Fuck Ronald Reagan' from 1968. At the same time, however, he was still writing Vermilion Sands stories, such as the superb 'The Cloud Sculptors of Coral D', by now for a newly opened-up American market. During the sixties Frederik Pohl published some of the dullest fiction ever produced by the human mind, but he also published Cordwainer Smith, and he introduced J. G. Ballard to America.

Ballard's later directions included very successful dips into straight realism, such as his wonderful *Empire of the Sun*, in which his prose becomes very readable and he tells convincing stories.

Ballard and the New Wave

Every age has its New Wave. Since the New Wave that we're talking about, there seem to have been several in the arts in general — especially in pop music in the mid 1970s, and in SF in the 1980s (the cyberpunk movement). All new waves share the same characteristic — they kick against the former practitioners of the genre, the golden oldies, the old farts, the fuddy-duddies — no matter how good or bad their work actually is or was. The new kids on the block must fire shots at the older guys.

The term New Wave (*'nouvelle vague'*) comes from French cinema in the early 1960s, and was led not by film-makers but by film critics. Francois Truffaut, Jean Luc Godard and the other main film-makers of the French New Wave began as critics writing for the French magazine *Cahiers du Cinema*. The old farts against which they were reacting were rather unlucky, for they included film-makers such as Jean Cocteau and Jean Renoir, who are now seen to be much more interesting and adventurous film-makers than most of the New Wave directors.

In science fiction, the real push for a new wave came

Painting: 'Landscape 93' by Joe Szabo.

from the writers who gathered at the Ladbroke Grove home of Michael Moorcock. They were the people who took over *New Worlds* in 1964. They hated not only most of the writers that Ted Carnell had been publishing, but also all the Golden Age writers the Americans held up as models for good SF. Clarke, Asimov and Heinlein were particularly denigrated, as were most of the writers of their generation. The only exception that Moorcock mentioned was Alfred Bester. The writer he really liked was British surrealist Mervyn Peake (the Gormenghast trilogy).

The English New Wave was stridently anti-American, but paradoxically it depended for most of its vigour on a whole group of Americans who had moved over to Britain in the 1960s to take advantage of a strong dollar. Pamela Zoline, John Sladek, Tom Disch, James Sallis and Judy Merril were all living in London at the time. Judy Merril, the only one of them who already had a reputation as an SF writer, was promoting what she called the 'new thing' in her review columns in *F&SF* and in the stories she selected for her annual *Year's Best Science Fiction* collections.

So what was the New Wave all about? More than anything it was a feeling, an itch to scratch, an acute need for good writing and new, non-technological ideas about the future. The New Wave writers also had the feeling that the new university-educated group of young people in Britain would form an audience for a new SF that was at least as well written as the literary fiction of the period. They would flock to *New Worlds* and make it a best-selling magazine. For thirty years the older generation of American SF writers had been saying: why won't the literary establishment recognise how good SF is? The New Wavers said in reply: because you old guys, publishing for the pulp magazines, didn't write very well — the writers for *New Worlds* are as good as any of the authors reviewed in the *Times Literary Supplement*.

There were many peculiar results of this debate. One was that the only New Wave writers who delivered the goods were people such as Ballard and Aldiss, whose careers were well established before Moorcock took over *New Worlds*, or writers like Tom Disch, Roger Zelazny and Samuel Delany, who were already making a splash in America before they began to publish in *New Worlds*. All *their* first stories had appeared in *Amazing* and *Fantastic* when they were edited by Cele Goldsmith, so she should be known as the founder of the New Wave. The best pieces of fiction during the heyday of *New Worlds* were Tom Disch's serialised novel *Camp Concentration* and several of his best short stories, such as 'Casablanca'; Brian Aldiss's serialised novel *An Age* (later released as *Cryptozoic!*) and many of his best short stories and novellas, especially the *Barefoot in the Head* stories; and some of J. G. Ballard's weirder stories, including those that were incorporated into the novel *Crash*.

How successful were the masthead New Wave writers, the writers whose works were praised beyond belief by Moorcock? When I looked at Langdon Jones's website, I discovered that he has settled down to a quiet rural existence somewhere in England, and has written little since the early 1970s. All his stories are collected in one collection, *The Eye of the Lens*, which is very good and probably now unobtainable. James Sallis disappeared, then turned up back in America as a mystery writer. John Sladek went his own merry way, with hardly any financial success during the rest of his life, but at least he kept being published. He had a belly-laugh sense of humour, a welcome and rare quality in the pages of *New Worlds*. M. John Harrison, the only writer of the time who was really influenced by J. G. Ballard, has had some successful mainstream novels and collections and short stories, but has only recently received universal acclaim for his new novel *Light*. Harrison is the last New Waver: a very arty and artful writer, sometimes compelling and sometimes impossible to read. Giles Gordon, another New Wave writer I liked very

much, stopped writing, became Britain's most successful literary agent, and died last year.

Meanwhile, the New Wave writers who had real *careers* were the same people who were publishing before the New Wave was proclaimed. They include Aldiss, Ballard, Disch, Zelazny and Delany. Christopher Priest, as a young fan, is credited as having labelled the New Wave as such in Peter Weston's fanzine *Zenith* (later *Speculation*). Priest did not really start his writing career until the New Wave was almost over, yet today he is one of the few writers who demonstrates the qualities the New Wavers claimed for themselves: a genuine love of words and fine writing, and an eye for brain-twisting plots that are intriguing and memorable. His new novel, *The Separation*, has just won the Arthur C. Clarke Award and the BSFA Award in Britain.

Whatever happened to the New Wave? In America, it was quite extraordinarily hated. Isaac Asimov preached a mighty thunderous sermon against the New Wave some time in the 1969 or 1970, but I've never actually come across the piece he wrote. It must have been in the *SFWA Bulletin*. Brian Aldiss never forgave him for what he took as a personal attack on himself, whereas Asimov was obviously just covering his own back, and probably didn't know an Aldiss from a Disch. After all, if the New Wave actually caught on, who would read old fuddy-duddies like him?

The situation could have been very bad for writers like Asimov if readers had started buying New Wave novels in large quantities, but that didn't happen. Within a year or three, the Old Wave writers had arisen like mighty phoenixes. In 1973, Asimov's *The Gods Themselves* became the first SF novel to make to the top of the *New York Times* bestseller list. Shortly after, Heinlein's *Time Enough for Love* also made it to the top, followed by Arthur C. Clarke's *Rendezvous with Rama*. For the first time, SF writers could make real money from writing SF. That one fact alone changed SF more than all the sermons from New or Old Wavers.

All the battle about New Wave versus Old Wave took place in the letter columns of the great fanzines of the time, especially in Dick Geis's *Science Fiction Review*. Harlan Ellison appointed himself as the guru of the American New Wave, and published in 1967 the collection *Dangerous Visions*, following it with *Again Dangerous Visions*. The problem with both anthologies is that many of the stories were not nearly as adventurous as Ellison claimed, and most of them were pretty badly written. You can see this for yourself by buying the recently re-released *Dangerous Visions*. Since then, Ellison has made himself a laughing stock by failing to produce *The Last Dangerous Visions*, some of whose stories were first bought over thirty years ago, and many of whose authors have died since selling stories to the collection. Nothing that was dangerous in 1970 would be thought of as dangerous now.

The real hero of the American New Wave was a quiet, unassuming man with a dry wit, who was in 1969 best known as America's best writer for fanzines. Terry Carr was then working as an editor and dogsbody at Ace Books, under the mighty thumb of Donald A. Wollheim. Wollheim didn't like New Wave, and said so in letters to fanzines, but he allowed Terry Carr to begin publishing the first series of Ace Specials. These little paperbacks, with their fabulous Leo and Diane Dillon covers, featured the most experimental and daring manuscripts that Carr could find. R. A. Lafferty was one of his first discoveries, and *Past Master* quite a success. So was Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness*, a novel that was very literary without owing anything to the British New Wave. That one novel made the Ace Specials essential buying. Joanna Russ's novel of the time was *And Chaos Died*. One of the last of the first series of Ace Specials was Brian Aldiss' *Barefoot in the Head*, filled with Joycean puns and surrealistic landscapes.

The New Wave and me

I bought the first of the issues of *New Worlds* to be issued in the larger, more pictorial format, and I stayed with the magazine as long as possible. Every time Merv Binns sold me a copy at McGill's Newsagency, he complained about the magazine: 'I don't what they're doing these days. I don't know why people are reading this rubbish. But if you really want a copy, I can get it for you.' *New Worlds* was a shared secret among the Australian SF fans who thought of themselves as really in the know.

Suddenly one day Merv said: 'I can't get *New Worlds* this month. It's banned.' Horror! I had just begun publishing *SF Commentary*. The same week as *New Worlds* was banned from entering Australia I received a letter of comment and a subscription from an Italian reader called Gian Paolo Cossato, who was living in London. I must have mentioned the *New Worlds* ban in my letter to him, because by airmail a couple of weeks later Gian Paolo sent me the banned issues of *New Worlds* in a plain brown paper envelope.

What was all the fuss about? I never could work that out. Our censors were very peculiar in those days. A serial called *Bug Jack Barron*, by Norman Spinrad, featured, according to the Chief Censor, one scene of horribly reprehensible explicit sex, so the censor banned the five issues of *New Worlds* in which the book was serialised. Within two or three years, the paperback version of the book was imported and was sitting on the front counter at Space Age Books.

In reading *Australian Science Fiction Review*, I had already discovered that its main critics, John Foyster, John Bangsund and Lee Harding, were as fascinated by the peculiarities of *New Worlds* as I was. John Foyster was so incensed by *New Worlds* and Mike Moorcock overpraising Ballard that he wrote a series of long articles about Ballard's work, sometimes praising him and sometimes exposing him as an emperor without clothes. It was the constant sanctimoniousness of *New Worlds* that got under Foyster's skin. As he asked a number of times: what is there in the prose to demonstrate that an average New Wave story is better than a good story by Henry Kuttner or Robert Sheckley from the 1940s or 1950s?

By 1975 the New Wave was dead. Those hotshot British literary types proved not to be interested in a literary SF magazine. Arts Council grants kept *New Worlds* going until the beginning of 1971. When the grant was withdrawn, the magazine disappeared. It was revived as a paperback quarterly for three or four years, and David Garnett kept trying to revive it yet again in the 1990s. The puff had gone out of the soufflé. The only real achievements of the early years of the seventies were a series of stunning stories by Keith Roberts, some brilliant pieces by Josephine Saxton and M. John Harrison, and a regular column of startling, word-drunk critical essays by a new bloke called John Clute. He exuded literary flash, and he seemed like a New Waver, but in the end he proved to be interested in the whole field of science fiction, and has outlasted the New Wave.

In America, the Ace Specials died in the early seventies, Harlan Ellison turned to writing film scripts instead

of promoting the New Wave, Judy Merril moved to Canada and never published another word of science fiction or about science fiction, Roger Zelazny stopped writing experimental fiction and churned out the abysmal Amber series, and Samuel Delany turned out a book called *Dhalgren*, the first page of whose quarter million words I nearly managed to read. American Old Wavers triumphantly preached the coming of the Permanent Wave, and we all went back to sleep again. Well, not quite. Up in Canada, William Gibson was quietly working away at a novel called *Neuromancer* while publishing articles in other people's fanzines. In terms of unreadability, *Neuromancer* was for me the ultimate New Wave novel, but it was called cyberpunk. A *new* New Wave had started. We're probably about due for another one.

— Bruce Gillespie, July 2003 and February 2004

JOHN FOYSTER AS CRITIC, PART 3

While sorting through ancient fanzines in October last year, I remembered that Foyster had once written about his predilection for anarchism, and that article also took awhile to find. I believe that his model for an ideal form of anarchism was fandom, rather than any aspect of 'real world'.

John Foyster

Why are they always badmouthing the anarchists?

The two obvious answers — 'Because they're there' and 'Because they don't have a good pressure group going for them' — may even contain some elements of truth. But they do not contain the whole truth, mainly because *anarchy* can be, it seems, all things to all men. Consequently it seems advisable to strip away some of the advertising copy, some of the misrepresentation, before trying to discover just what it is that is so objectionable.

In 1901 Theodore Roosevelt said: 'Anarchism is a crime against the whole human race and all mankind should band against the Anarchist.' It is just possible that Roosevelt was prejudiced against anarchists, his predecessor, McKinley, having been shot by Leon Czolgosz, an 'anarchist', almost three months before. Whether Czolgosz was in fact an anarchist is perhaps debatable, since he had only recently been denounced as a police spy by an anarchist newspaper and doesn't seem to have belonged to any anarchist groups. Since some of the bombs thrown around this time were almost certainly the efforts of *agents provocateurs* (put it this way: does a bomb being held while the officials pass and thrown into the following crowd fit in with your image of an anti-authoritarian bomb thrower?), it is possible that in fact *no* US president was assassinated by an anarchist.

But many rulers in Europe were assassinated or had attempts made on their lives in the thirty-odd years before the First World War. And it was in this period that the picture of anarchists as bomb throwers became firmly established. What is the reality behind this appearance?

The prophet of murder, as George Woodcock describes him:

> a mild-mannered and long-suffering teacher in Madame Gropius's Berlin Academy for young ladies. He was called Johann Caspar Schmidt.

but he called himself Max Stirner. Stirner represents one extreme of anarchist thought, and in *The Ego and His Own* he advocates the ego as the only source of law. Men have no rights and no duties, but to themselves. Through this belief Stirner comes to anarchism — the hatred of the state. Stirner (like the later Objectivists) was anti-intellectual, and in the years after his death in 1856 he had many followers, both theoretical and practical: this distinction is worth making, for while anarchism manifested itself in explosive action itself in some small areas, it spread worldwide through the writings of its theorists. While some of these writers did take anarchic action, many did not.

But even before Stirner there were 'anarchists' who were violent in practice. Heretics such as the Brethren of the Free Spirit practised a sometimes erotically inclined collectivist communism/anarchism. Somewhat later, such leaders as Jan of Leyden were involved in creating purportedly anarchist states that rapidly devolved into the more popular political form — tyranny. The interested reader is referred to Norman Cohn's *The Pursuit of the Millennium* for a detailed description of these sects.

But what of anarchy today? When the politician or university administrator refers to 'the threat of anarchy', is he thinking of this Stirnerite individualism? Hardly. Recent history makes clear that anarchists, as such, are not really dangerous to present governments. Consider how many political coups in recent years have been organised by (i) anarchists, (ii) army officers.

The answer is obvious. And compare the number of deaths caused by the efforts of (i) anarchists, and (ii) citizens in good standing who are 'merely obeying orders' from their military superiors, whether in war or peace.

(The trouble is that anarchists think for themselves, and don't kill the people they are told to kill.)

The anarchist is accused of being a merchant of violence. At a time when most, if not all, the military and political violence is caused by persons and parties with distinctly non-anarchic political tendencies, such notions ring hollowly.

Consider the words of Stokely Carmichael at the Congress on the Dialectics of Liberation in 1967:

> I'm a political activist and I don't deal with the individual. I think it's a copout when people talk about the individual. What we're talking about around the US today, and I believe around the Third World, is the system of international white supremacy coupled with international capitalism. And we're out to smash that system. And the people who see themselves as part of that system are going to be smashed with it — or we're going to be smashed.

Later, Carmichael went on to discuss some of the acts that lead and will continue to lead to the attitude he has taken: he refers to bombing by 'white terrorists'. Note that — not 'white anarchists'.

This is the crucial point. Just as there are terrorists of the left and of the right, so there are and have been anarchists who were political terrorists. What politicians usually condemn is not anarchism but terrorism. This, at least, is the first distinction that has to be made. We shall see, however, that politicians do not in fact fear terrorists as much as they fear the doctrine of anarchism. To discover why this is so, we shall have to examine some of the varieties of anarchist thinking.

Consider the views of the Russian nuclear physicist Andrei Sakharov. In 1968 he circulated a document that detailed his views of the changes necessary to create a viable society today. The first of his two basic requirements was the avoidance of the present threat of nuclear and ecological destruction, which need not concern us here. And then:

> The second basic thesis is that intellectual freedom is essential to human society — freedom to obtain and distribute information, freedom for open-minded and unfearing debate and freedom from pressure by officialdom and prejudices . . .
>
> Freedom of thought is under a triple threat in modern society — from the opium of mass culture, from cowardly, egotistic and narrow-minded ideologies, and from the ossified dogmatism of a bureaucratic oligarchy and its favourite weapon, ideological censorship.

We could term this a 'proto-anarchist' viewpoint. The author still feels there is *some* form of government which can allow intellectual freedom. The remainder of his essay is devoted to describing the sort of governmental society that would allow all the necessary freedoms. The author has not yet come to the viewpoint that *no* 'government' will permit such freedom.

Many men have suggested that 'that government governs best which governs least', but only anarchists go so far as to suggest that governments shouldn't exist at all. It is worthwhile contrasting this view with that of Plato, who approved of rulers lying to the citizens, proposed minimal social fluidity, state-supported racism, restriction of travel and other totalitarian measures. Yet Plato is regarded by many, in 1971, as having advocated an ideal, nor nearly ideal, state. Of course, those who idolise Plato tend to ignore the nasty aspects of his system. Plato's views are important because of their influence, not their content. As with so many social phenomena, the status quo tends to acquire sanctity, and is regarded as 'natural'. Since government and rulers have 'always been around', it is 'natural' to have them. Philosophers' arguments tend to reinforce this view.

The extent to which this belief may get its hooks into man might best be illustrated by the late Lenny Bruce's views of laws and the role of the police. Though Bruce had many entanglements of various kinds, he continually emphasised his belief that there was a definite place of Laura Norder. One of his bits starts off like this:

> 'Let's see. I tell you what we'll do. We'll have a vote. We'll sleep in area A, is that cool?'
>
> 'OK, good.'
>
> 'We'll eat in area B. Good?'
>
> 'Good.'
>
> 'We'll throw a crap in area C. Good?'
>
> 'Good.'

And everything goes well until some guy wakes up with a face full of crap. So they bunch together and decide that anyone who craps in the sleeping area gets to sleep in the crapping area. A great plan. Then, in Bruce's sketch, it happens again. So it goes. Lenny Bruce divides Church and State in this sketch, and finally gets around to suggesting that it is necessary to hire someone to enforce the law.

Sounds *natural* enough, doesn't it?

But this is precisely what one must guard against. The situation and the solution seem natural only because those considering them have lived in a particular kind of society that has been in existence for many generations. The situation described by Lenny Bruce is just as *natural* as that moving objects *naturally* stop without any obvious impediment. The physical friction that brings these objects to a halt may well have a social analogue that creates the situation described above. Or so an anarchist might argue. We need merely to note that the obvious ain't necessarily so. Just as Aristotle's high standing was responsible for false scientific beliefs being widely held for over 1000 years, so it is probable that Plato's high standing is responsible for a misconception that has lasted, generally, for over 2000 years — the misconception that government is necessary.

Up until about 1800, those who opposed a particular government generally attributed the faults to the kind of government it was, not to the very concept of 'government' itself. In practice, this continues down to the present day, so far as activists are concerned. Thus the American and French Revolution merely replaced one form of government with another, which may have been better or worse. It was during the French Revolution that 'anarchist' and 'anarchism' acquired their present condemnatory tone. Even then, 'anarchist' was used to describe both Robespierre and such *enragé*s as Roux and Varlet, though only the latter were 'anti-government'.

It was at about this time that William Godwin, ex-cleric, began the line of theoretical anarchists whose work can help make clear all that is involved in the word 'anarchy'. (At the same time it should be remembered that for people later caught in anarchic social movements, theoretical notions were not always of great significance; we will examine this below.)

Godwin took the bull by the horns:

> we should not forget that government is an evil, an usurpation upon the private judgment and individual conscience of mankind; and that, however we may be obliged to admit it as a necessary evil for the present, it behoves us, as friends of reason and the human species, to admit as little of it as possible . . .

While this does not seem very far from 'least government', Godwin emphasises 'a necessary evil *for the present*' (my italics); later anarchists would delete the last part of that suggestion, and omit the word 'necessary'. Some of the sentiments in the paragraph quoted above are probably echoed widely today: but would many feel, as Godwin did, that voting ('the deciding upon truth by the casting up of numbers') was an 'intolerable insult upon all reason and justice'? And so one could go on, merely selecting facets of Godwin's thoughts. But this is not the aim. However, one further item may be particularly appropriate today. Godwin was also opposed to persuasion by numbers, rather than persuasion towards the truth by direct and personal contact. At a time when political affairs are conducted and opinion swayed at a distance (not to mention persuasion on a more worldly level), Godwin's remarks have unusual strength.

What is property?

Property is theft.

So Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. Like Godwin (and contra Stirner), Proudhon believed that while men had particular rights as individuals, they could cooperate to mutual profit (whence 'mutualism' — and Proudhon's followers tended to call themselves 'mutualists'). Proudhon, however, was pleased to call himself an 'anarchist'.

After Proudhon, anarchist theoreticians are largely concerned with the means of implementing the anarchic anti-state — the ways that may be used to assist this. Tolstoy and Kropotkin are typically pacifist, and one generally finds activists to be more in favour of violent revolution (though this is not to suggest that Kropotkin was not an activist!).

But at the moment we are concerned with anarchism as a theoretical construct, so we should pause and see just what constituted the theoretical anti-state. Godwin and Proudhon are, at any rate, reasonable representatives of individualist anarchism.

Godwin was rather more authoritarian in his attitudes — perhaps that sprang from his schoolteacher upbringing — than was Proudhon. Furthermore, he regarded anarchy as a temporary state (admittedly when contrasting it with despotism as a permanent one). His interest in education, which as will be seen, is common in anarchist thinkers today, led to his first publication, a school prospectus that seems in fact more like a political treatise. Godwin's early attitude is summarised by:

> The state of society is incontestably artificial; the power of one man over another must always be derived from convention or from conquest; by nature we are equal.

Godwin's most influential work may be short-titled *Political Justice* (1797). The basic notions here are that men are born neither good nor bad, that government is bad both in practice and in principle (it might be worth remarking that, although many if not all political systems seem to work wonderfully in principle (i.e. if human begins just live by the designer's rules), something goes wrong in practice *every time*), and that (well, a nice schoolmasterish thought, this):

> perfectibility is one of the most unequivocal characteristics of the human species, so that the political as well as the intellectual state of man may be presumed to be in a course of progressive improvement.

Godwin was hung up on education, in a phrase. Once citizens could be directed towards the truth, political problems began to dissolve.

In an essay on Swift ('Politics vs Literature'), George Orwell makes some remarks about this problem that are worth quoting *in extenso*. He is discussing Gulliver's situation in the land of the Houyhnhnyms.

> The General Assembly of the Houyhnhnyms 'exhorts' Gulliver's master to get rid of him, and his neighbours put pressure upon him to comply . . . Gulliver's master is somewhat unwilling to obey, but the 'exhortation' (a Houyhnhnym, we are told, is never *compelled* to do anything, he is merely 'exhorted' or 'advised') cannot be disregarded. This illustrates very well the totalitarian tendency which is explicit in the anarchist or pacifist vision of Society. In a Society in which there is no law, and in theory no compulsion, the only arbiter of behaviour is public opinion. But public opinion, because of the tremendous urge to conformity in gregarious animals, is less tolerant than any system of law. When human beings are governed by 'thou shalt not', the individual can practise a certain amount of eccentricity: when they are supposedly governed by 'love' or 'reason', he is under continuous pressure to make him behave and think in exactly the same way as everyone else. The Houyhnhnyms, we are told, were unanimous on almost all subjects . . . They had apparently no word for 'opinion' in their language, and in their conversations there was no 'difference of sentiments'. They had reached, in fact, the highest stage of totalitarian organization, the stage when conformity had become so general that there is no need for a police force.

How would Godwin tackle such an argument? He would probably start by reminding Orwell that his belief is that *all* government is evil (whether by public opinion or any other method). And he would add the argument we have discussed above — that persuasion should be only by direct and personal contact, and that this should be persuasion towards truth (not towards a course of action). We *could* add that Godwin himself (as has been remarked) is at the authoritarian wing of anarchism, that the 'urge to conformity' might be illusory. We might also express surprise at the last sentence quoted, which hardly seems relevant. The 'in fact' covers a multitude of sins and 'in fact' disguises Orwell's hasty running to his conclusion.

How does Proudhon compare with Godwin? At the centre of Godwin's philosophy lies Reason. But for Proudhon:

> Justice is the central star which governs society, the pole around which the political world revolves, the principle and regulator of all transactions.

Nevertheless, reason is an important ingredient in

Proudhon's recipe. A significant difference may result from the kinds of society in which the two men lived: Proudhon's world was quite industrial, whereas in the late 1700s the Industrial Revolution was only incipient.

Proudhon, unlike Godwin and many of the later anarchist theoreticians, sprang from the working class:

> Born and brought up in the working class, still belonging to it, today and forever, by heart, by nature, by habit, and above all by the community of interests and wishes . . .

and was proud of the fact. This lent an air of practicality to his theorising. Thus Proudhon envisages an anarchy from which collective associations emerge — and here he diverges from the more or less contemporaneous communists, whose intent was to *impose* collectives. If property was theft, then communism stole men's independence, and was equally intolerable. Writing to Marx, Proudhon says:

> I make profession in public of an almost absolute economic anti-dogmatism . . . let us give the world the example of a learned and far-sighted tolerance, but let us not, because we are at the head of a movement, make ourselves the leaders of a new intolerance, let us not pose as the apostles of a new religion, even if it be the religion of logic, the religion of reason . . . On that condition, I will gladly enter into your association. Otherwise, no!

No prize for deducing Marx's reaction!

Proudhon's background also played a role in his overall attitude: he saw the anarchic state as existing *far* in the future. His place was to struggle towards that goal, but in the immediate present no 'success' could be optimistically contemplated. Nevertheless Proudhon did speculate on the workings of that anarchic state:

> In place of laws, we will put contracts . . . In place of political powers we will put economic forces . . . In place of standing armies, we will put industrial associations. In place of policy we will put identity of interest. In place of political centralization, we will put economic centralization.

There are many flowers in the garden: anarcho–communists, anarcho–syndicalists, various kinds of pacifist. All of these flourished in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But none of them differs *greatly* from the systems outlined above: the ideas take different guises, yes, but they are not much more than disguises.

What of the non-intellectual anarchists — those who didn't commit their ideas to books? From the twentieth century we have an example that almost meets this criterion — the letters of Niccola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti:

> it does not trouble me at all as it would have not trouble any other free soul that have dream and walked straight towards the radiant pathway for the integral conquest — for the joy of liberty of all the exploit and the oppressed class . . . (Sacco, 5 July 1927)

> and I am glad to be on the doomed scaffold if I can say to mankind, 'Look out; you are in a catacomb of the flower of mankind. For what? All that they say to you, all that they have promised you — it was a lie, it was an illusion, it was a cheat, it was a fraud, it was a crime. They promised you liberty. Where is liberty? They promised you prosperity. Where is prosperity? They promised you elevation. Where is the elevation? (Vanzetti, 9 April 1927)

'A good shoemaker and a fish-peddler' were executed on 23 August 1927, and many believe that their anarchist beliefs, rather than any actions they might have taken, were the cause of this execution. But revolution is much the same to all men, and it is not always easy, at first sight, to seek out the genuine anarchist, the man who abhors government. This is nowhere made more plain than in the Spanish Civil War. Noam Chomsky devotes no small part of his essay *Objectivity and Liberal Scholarship* to the thesis that the communists worked actively to suppress the apparently successful anarchist movements that set up collectives — in factories and elsewhere. Franz Borkenau, in *The Spanish Cockpit*, reports on the success of the Spanish collectives, which appear to have been at least as efficient as the methods previously employed. But the collectives were allowed to last only so short a time that no real measure of their success is available. Thus we have no opportunity to examine at leisure an anarchist society in action. All one can say is that the appearances to date seem at least satisfactory.

What of the anarchists today? One can begin with the trivial, for completeness. That dreary failure, Timothy Leary, advocates starting one's own political system. But since Leary has advocated just about anything else you would care to name at one time or another, this can probably be ignored. Readers may care to reflect upon Proudhon's words concerning apostles and religion.

When one comes to more serious thinkers, it is convenient to distinguish between those who continue to work out anarchist principles and those who apply existing beliefs.

In the first class should be included anarchist educationalists like A. S. Neill, whose Summerhill schools might better be described as experimental anarchy (of a rather special sort — the sort of which George Orwell might not have approved), and Paul Goodman who, in books such as *Compulsory Miseducation* and *The Community of Scholars*, sets out to examine both the faults of the present systems of schooling and the possibilities inherent in 'freer' systems.

Paul Goodman, however, also works at the practical level, and although the title of the book *Utopian Essays and Practical Proposals* may seem to give the game away a little, it does, however, include such typically anarchist ideas as doing away with motor cars in the centres of large cities and the problems revolving around pacifism, pornography and so on. In the essay 'Getting into Power' (*Liberation*, October 1962), Goodman examines the consequences of the present political systems:

> The only possible pacifist conclusion from these facts is the anarchist one, to get rid of the sovereignties and to diminish, among people, the motivations of power and grandiosity.

(To be continued at a later date. No, it doesn't really seem likely that readers of *Man* in 1971 would have enjoyed the above.)

— **John Foyster, *Oh Bloody Hell! (Australian Edition)*, ANZAPA Mailing No. 52, October 1976, pp. 1–10**

Favourites of 2003

My favourite films seen for the first time in 2003

1. *Once Upon a Time in America* (restored, complete) (Sergio Leone, 1984)
2. *Election* (Alexander Payne, 1999)
3. *Secretary* (Steve Shineberg, 2002)
4. *Spirited Away* (Hayao Myazaki, 2001)
5. *The Road to Perdition* (Sam Mendes, 2002)
6. *Kiss Me Deadly* (Robert Aldrich, 1955)
7. *Catch Me If You Can* (Steven Spielberg, 2003)
8. *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (Chris Columbus, 2001)
9. *Mystic River* (Clint Eastwood, 2003)
10. *One Hour Photo* (Mark Romanek, 2002)
11. *Chicago* (Rob Marshall, 2002)
12. *Donnie Darko* (Richard Kelly, 2001)
13. *Contact* (Robert Zemeckis, 1997)
14. *The Quiet American* (Philip Noyce, 2001)
15. *Hard Eight* (Paul Thomas Anderson, 1996)
16. *The Man Who Wasn't There* (Joel Coen, 2001)
17. *Get Carter* (Mike Hodges, 1971)
18. *Comedie de l'innocence* (Raoul Ruiz, 2000)
19. *Femme Fatale* (Brian de Palma, 2002)
20. *The Big Lebowski* (Joel Coen, 1998)
21. *Ghost World* (Terry Zwigoff, 2001)
22. *Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* (DVD Extended Version) (Peter Jackson, 2002)

Other five-star films, in order of viewing:

Death to Smoochy (Danny de Vito, 2002)
Portrait of a Lady (Jane Campion, 1996)
84 Charing Cross Road (David Jones, 1992)
Broadway Melody of 1940 (Norman Taurog, 1939)
O Lucky Man! (Lindsay Anderson, 1973)
The Red Badge of Courage (John Huston, 1951)
Burnt by the Sun (Nikita Mikhailov, 1994)
Winged Migration (Jacques Perrin, 2003)

2003 was a spectacular year for film-watching for me mainly because of the films that Dick Jenssen showed or lent me (at least fourteen of them) or gave me, or showed at his place. And I couldn't have enjoyed any of them without the TV set that Dick gave us in 2002. Thanks also to Lee Harding, who lent me three or four from the list, and to Race Mathews.

I bought my own copy of *Once Upon a Time in America*. I have an image in my head of the whole film: it's a huge ocean liner, filled with life and death and murder and malarkey, steaming into the night, but slowly, slowly, it turns around and heads straight back at the viewers, taking us by surprise and crushing the main characters. It's all very *epic*, the more so for its sudden bursts of bitter delight and idiotic humour. Robert De Niro has never been better than in this film, but it's the mocking mercurial face of James Woods and the smoky voice of Elizabeth McGovern that I remember best. And the scene with the garbage truck.

Election and *Secretary* show that American independent filmmakers can 'do comedy' as well as anybody in the world. The scripts for both films are near perfect — but it's the cinematography (especially the strange office interiors of *Secretary*) and quality of acting that lift them to Nos 2 and 3.

I don't have the time to talk about every film on the list. *Spirited Away* is the best animated feature I've seen (except *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and *Fantasia*). Yes, it could easily be No. 1, but I do insist on playing with rank orders, so it comes in at No. 4. What I remember is the sheer amount of invention in each scene, as well as the sense-of-wonder quality of the artwork. Any film with a train trundling along underwater has to be a masterpiece.

Commentators — journalists who are forced to see every film released in a year — complained about the poor quality of theatrical-release films last year. But if they had stuck to DVD releases, and only those films that looked interesting, they would have raved about the high quality of American independent films during the year. I keep wondering how the producers raised the money to make films such as *Secretary* and *One Hour Photo* and *The Man Who Wasn't There*, so original, even compared with European arthouse movies. Why, for instance, are Australian films consistently second rate? It's not just the fact that there is less money in Australia for films than there is America or Britain; I've just seen the Polish Brothers' *Northfork*, made in Montana on almost no budget — perfect script and total dedication to quality.

My favourite films actually seen during 2003

1. *The Leopard* (Luchino Visconti, 1962)
2. *Seconds* (John Frankenheimer, 1966)
3. *Once Upon a Time in America* (Sergio Leone, 1984)
4. *The Gypsy Moths* (John Frankenheimer, 1970)
5. *The Manchurian Candidate* (John Frankenheimer, 1962)
6. *The Band Wagon* (Vincente Minnelli, 1953)

A new list, just to put my main film list in perspective. Thanks to DVD, many of my favourite films and directors are available for the first time in thirty or forty years, and in perfect prints. All heaven has broken loose.

The Leopard alternates with several other films as My Alltime Favourite. (If asked, I usually name whichever I saw most recently of *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *It's a Wonderful Life*, *The Birds* or *The Leopard*.) The new print, dragging in the crowds at the Lumiere Cinema in town, is not by any means a full restoration of the original Technicolor, but the print is clear and the film all there. The colour might be a bit faded, but Claudia Cardinale in *The Leopard* is still the most beautiful woman ever to appear on screen. And the forty-minute ball scene is worth all of *Lord of the Rings* put together.

As you can see from my list, John Frankenheimer was the best American director of the sixties. A pity about his career in the seventies, when he produced one second-rate blockbuster after another. His commentaries on the new prints of his films are illuminating.

Another triumph for the Astor Theatre was the two-week double bill of *The Band Wagon* and *Calamity Jane*. I enjoyed *Calamity Jane* a lot, but on another plane is *The Band Wagon*, so melancholic and valedictory for both the life and career of Fred Astaire and the entire

musical era he represents that it bears a weight not found in any of the other great musicals (except *It's Always Fair Weather*). Pity about the prints of both musicals. Surely the restoration boffins could have got the colour better than *this*?

My favourite popular CDs bought during 2003 (very provisional list)

1. Calexico: *Feast of Wire*
2. Tom Russell: *Modern Art*
3. Emmylou Harris: *Stumble Into Grace*
4. Margret Roadknight: *Silver Platter: Collection 75–84*
5. Ray Charles: *The Genius After Hours*
6. Chuck E. Weiss: *Extremely Cool*
7. Ray Wylie Hubbard: *Growl*
8. Neil Murray: *Going the Distance*
9. James Luther Dickinson: *Free Beer Tomorrow*
10. Joe Ely: *Streets of Sin*

Most of these CDs fall under the alt.country category — if you prefer, the singer–songwriter category.

Calexico is a bit better than the rest because the group mixes Californian alt.country with Mexican mariachi music, and instrumentals with rock ballads. As one commentator said, *Feast of Wire* is a western movie made of sounds not images. It is also more interesting than earlier Calexico albums.

Tom Russell, Emmylou Harris, Ray Wylie Hubbard, Neil Murray and Joe Ely are all brilliant singers and instrumentalists (Murray is Australian), but the strength of their albums is always the songs.

In *Modern Art*, Tom Russell features story epics from the whole range of American history.

In *Stumble Into Grace*, Emmylou Harris writes all her own songs, each of them a small masterpiece.

Ray Wylie Hubbard mixes some rather standard country songs with some with personal, intense lyrics. *Growl* has more impact than his early albums. I always read the lyric sheet while listening to a Hubbard CD.

James Luther Dickinson, as 'Jim Dickinson', has been one of the leading session drummers of the last thirty years, but *Free Beer Tomorrow* shows that he can write good songs and assemble a powerful band to highlight his own work.

Except for two albums about fifteen years ago, Joe Ely is always brilliant.

If you don't know Margret Roadknight's work, my recommendation isn't going to help. I found *Silver Platter* in an obscure folk-music CD shop in Northcote (Rhythms and Views, now facing closure). It had been released two years before. No news of it had ever escaped to the press, and it had never been played on radio. Australia's best blues/folksinger, Roadknight made a series of outstanding LPs in the seventies and early eighties, then almost disappeared from sight in Melbourne. She's been working continually in Sydney, and somebody other than me must remember her earlier albums, as this collection features nearly all my favourite Roadknight tracks. It's a pity the original albums themselves (especially *Ice*) weren't re-released, but *Silver Platter* is nice to play until that happens.

Chuck E. Weiss is perpetually condemned to remain the name mentioned in the title song of Ricky Lee Jones's first album. A pity, as he is one of the last of the great uncompromising rock and roll performers. The tracks on *Extremely Cool* are nice, hot, and hard.

The Ray Charles album? From 1960, it features Ray the pianist and sax player, the master jazz performer and arranger, almost forgotten these days, although his blues and rock and roll albums are still available. For a short time at the end of the fifties and the beginning of the sixties, his jazz albums were better, and better known, than his blues and pop albums. By 1970 Charles had almost stopped playing jazz. Last year Atlantic began, very tentatively, to re-release a few of his jazz albums.

My favourite novels read for the first time in 2003

1. *Wonderland* (Joyce Carol Oates; 1971; Vanguard)
2. *The Drowned World* (J. G. Ballard; 1962; Penguin)
3. *Phases of Gravity* (Dan Simmons; 1989; Bantam Spectra)
4. *Shutter Island* (Dennis Lehane; 2003; Bantam)
5. *The Crystal World* (J. G. Ballard; 1966; Avon Equinox)
6. *The Secret of Life* (Paul McAuley; 2001; Tor)
7. *Consider Phlebas* (Iain M. Banks; 1987; Macmillan)
8. *A Ticket to the Boneyard* (Lawrence Block; 1990; Orion)
9. *Small Town* (Lawrence Block; 2003; Orion)
10. *P Is for Peril* (Sue Grafton; 2001; Ballantine)
11. *Taylor Five* (Anne Halam; 2002; Dolphin)

My favourite books read for the first time in 2003

1. *Wonderland* (Joyce Carol Oates; 1971; Vanguard)
2. *The Drowned World* (J. G. Ballard; 1962; Penguin)
3. *The Pangs of Love and Other Stories* (Jane Gardam; 1983; Abacus)
4. *The Man and the Map* (Alex Skovron; 2003; Five Islands Press)
5. *Phases of Gravity* (Dan Simmons; 1989; Bantam Spectra)
6. *Shutter Island* (Dennis Lehane; 2003; Bantam)
7. *The Crystal World* (J. G. Ballard; 1966; Avon Equinox)
8. *The Secret of Life* (Paul McAuley; 2001; Tor)
9. *Gathering the Bones* (ed. Jack Dann, Ramsey Campbell and Dennis Etchison; 2003; HarperCollins Voyager)
10. *Tales of Earthsea* (Ursula K. Le Guin; 2001; Harcourt)
11. *Forever Shores* (ed. Peter McNamara and Margaret Winch; 2003; Wakefield Press)
12. *Wonder Years: The Ten Best Stories from a Decade Past* (ed. Peter McNamara; 2003; Aphelion/Mirrordanse)
13. *White Time* (Margo Lanagan; 2000; Allen & Unwin)
14. *Up Through an Empty House of Stars: Reviews and Essays 1980–2002* (David Langford; 2003; Cosmos/Wildside)
15. *Consider Phlebas* (Iain M. Banks; 1987; Macmillan)
16. *A Ticket to the Boneyard* (Lawrence Block; 1990; Orion)
17. *Small Town* (Lawrence Block; 2003; Orion)
18. *P Is for Peril* (Sue Grafton; 2001; Ballantine)
19. *A Pound of Paper* (John Baxter; 2002; Doubleday)
20. *The Little Disburbances of Man* (Grace Paley; 1956/1959; Viking Press)
21. *The Size of Thoughts: Essays and Other Lumber* (Nicholson Baker; 1996; Vintage)
22. *Sirens and Other Demon Lovers* (ed. Ellen Datlow & Terri Windling; 1998; HarperPrism)
23. *Taylor Five* (Anne Halam; 2002; Dolphin)

I've discussed all these books already in ANZAPA during the year, or will do so when I update my lists.

Wonderland seems to be unobtainable, but I've noticed that more and more Joyce Carol Oates novels are being re-released by both British and American publishers. This might reappear soon.

The Drowned World was my great surprise for the year; entirely my own fault that I've left it 42 years to read it. I can't think of any other SF book from the sixties that is as well written, although I can think of Aldiss short stories and novels that I've liked more. *Hothouse* is still my favourite SF novel.

Shutter Island is a Phildickian jaw-dropping suspense story that begins as a mere police procedural. I tell you no more. Find this novel and read it.

Alex Skovron is a friend, and one of Australia's better-known poets. I wasn't able to attend the launch of his book, so had to wait five months to find a copy of *The Man and the Map*. Worth the wait, it fulfils all the potential that I could see in individual poems in earlier separate collections. Now all his strengths can be seen in one collection. I suspect the only way to make sure of a copy is to put 'Five Islands Press' into Google and go to the publisher's site.

All these books from No. 8 downwards are pretty much of equal quality, so I hope Dave Langford is not miffed by what seems like a lowly position. But then, the four listed short story collections (Le Guin, the two McNamaras, and the Dann/Campbell/Etchison) are among the best short story collections I've read.

The following list is rather tentative. Most of the books mentioned are packed away in boxes 10 miles from here, so I can't check a lot of the stories. For the time being . . .

My favourite short stories read for the first time in 2003

1. 'Stone Trees' (Jane Gardam) *The Pangs of Love and Other Stories*
2. 'An Unknown Child' (Jane Gardam) *The Pangs of Love and Other Stories*
3. 'The Boy Who Didn't Yearn' (Margo Lanagan) *Forever Shores*
4. 'White Time' (Margo Lanagan) *Wonder Years*
5. 'The Dove Game' (Isobelle Carmody) *Gathering the Bones*
6. 'On the High Marsh' (Ursula K. Le Guin) *Tales from Earthsea*
7. 'Attachments' (Pat Murphy) *Sirens and Other Demon Lovers*
8. 'Mirrors' (Garry Kilworth) *Sirens and Other Demon Lovers*
9. 'The Bone Ship' (Terry Dowling) *Gathering the Bones*
10. 'The Easter Lilies' (Jane Gardam) *The Pangs of Love and Other Stories*
11. 'The Phoenix' (Isobelle Carmody) *Forever Shores*
12. 'Blake's Angel' (Janeen Webb) *Gathering the Bones*
13. 'Bedfordshire' (Peter Crowther) *Gathering the Bones*
14. 'Players in the Game of Worlds' (Damien Broderick) *Forever Shores*
15. 'Mr Sly Stops for a Cup of Joe' (Scott Emerson Bull) *Gathering the Bones*
16. 'Mother's Milk' (Adam L. G. Nevill) *Gathering the Bones*
17. 'Memento Mori' (Ray Bradbury) *Gathering the Bones*
18. 'The Eye of the Storm' (Kelley Eskridge) *Sirens and Other Demon Lovers*
19. 'An Irrevocable Diameter' (Grace Paley) *The Little Disturbances of Man*
20. 'In Time Which Makes a Monkey Out of Us All' (Grace Paley) *The Little Disturbances of Man*

As I read each collection, usually long after publication, I find yet again that Jane Gardam is the best living short story writer in the world. But I've told you that before. The stories I've placed Nos 1 and 2 are more than usually cryptic, but hidden within them are entire novelsful of perception and heartbreak. The other stories in *The Pangs of Love and Other Stories* are also brilliant, especially 'The Easter Lilies'.

Gathering the Bones is the big winner among collections for 2003 — I hope it did as well as it deserved. Lots of good stories here, with Isobelle Carmody and Terry Dowling contributing the stories that stay most clearly in my mind.

Discovery of the year for me is Margo Lanagan. Peter McNamara reprinted one of her stories in *Wonder Years* and another in *Forever Shores*. I sought out the collection they both came from, and it really is a lot better than most other single-author collections I've read in recent years.

Ursula Le Guin's *Tales from Earthsea* stays in my mind more as a novel than as a collection of stories. This collection shows, more than any of the novels, that Earthsea was never a utopia world, but merely a balance between uneasy antagonistic forces, like everything in our own world.

— **Bruce Gillespie, 1 April 2004**

We get letters . . .

ERIKA MARIA LACEY BARRANTES,
Flat 10, 8 Prince Street, Woodridge QLD 4114

I received both *SF Commentary* 77 and *BRG* 31 in the mail today. It was a welcome break away from painting the back garden gate.

You asked if I would ever write up an account of travelling on *Pampero II*; I don't think that it's very likely. I don't tend to like to revisit what's happened in the past, but if you're interested I'll do my best.

My mother is Jesus Leonor Lacey, once a high school biology teacher in Peru. My father is Philip George Lacey, carpet layer. He's never written a book; apologies for the confusion. I meant to say that he was an avid reader when travelling, and I'd take the books he owned off into corners to read, regardless of what genre they were.

We set off travelling because my father decided he wanted to. I don't know the whole story, only that he bought *Pampero II* for about $30,000, then piled us all aboard her and promptly set off. All it takes for one to start a voyage like that is to get oneself a vessel. It's cheap living from then on, providing that there are no major disasters

with the engine or anything similarly catastrophic.

I manage to read a lot by going to the library and getting things that interest me. Then sit down and read until I finish. An average book will take me 2.5 hours; doorstopper fantasies take me about 4 hours. I don't always read a book a day, but I try. One week might go by without me touching a book, then the next week I'll read three a day. I try to — at least, since I left ANZAPA — read about 30 books a month, and so far have been succeeding admirably.

Laughing at your description of your cooking. I, too, have rather hazardous experiences with cooking. Somehow whenever I do something for *me* it comes out okay, and I eat it just fine. But if I try for the family it comes out all botched and they refuse to eat it. They generally make me eat the stuff for the next couple of days.

Philip K. Dick's a writer I've had both a marvellous and a hard time reading. Some of his books I can read cover-to-cover and make perfect sense of, and yet others I'll read and come away with only the faintest hint of what happened in them. It reminds me that I have *Dr Bloodmoney* sitting in my personal library, which I have as yet not read. I believe I've read everything of his in the local library. At least, everything that wasn't borrowed out when I pass by the 'D' section.

The photograph of your room in 1979 and now are so very different! No books! No CDs! Goodness. I ought to take a photo of my current library and then 20 years from now see what my book collection is like. Or my CD collection, which at the moment is sitting next to my computer and comprises of five store-bought CDs and four ones burnt for me by friends. I generally listen to stuff on the radio or MP3s.
(14 November 2001)

KIM HUETT,
Flat 29, 63 Pearson Street, Holder ACT 2611

Borrowed *The Man Who Laughed*, the Mungo MacCallum autobiography, from the library and read it. Not a bad read but still a bit of a disappointment. Far too short on detail and not nearly enough anecdotes to truly satisfy me. Also all his appallingly dull parody songs should have been cut out. Basically good as far as it goes but without going near far enough.
(8 June 2002)

PAUL ANDERSON,
17 Baker Street, Grange SA 5022

I thought Richard Cowper's *The Twilight of Briareus* was better regarded than that when it was first issued. Cowper did have a very good reputation for a fair time. Certainly much more readable than either Delany or Compton. I found DGC's characters to be relatively OK but I could never care less whether they made it or not.

I am in two minds still about Connie Willis's *Passage*. I read it a while back from the library. I think I was one of the first to borrow the book. Of course the repetition was intended to make a strong point that you miss the first time around. I am not entirely sure that she brought it off, but there are similarities to *Report on Probability A*.

Possibly her main character could have been killed off a lot earlier; most certainly it was inevitable. The hospital itself was rather Escheresque — or is it Kafkaesque? — and this adds an element of unreality and pointlessness to what seems to be a story about real life.

The main pre-death story did come across as being similar to the post-death sequences. The question then comes as to whether this section is the previous death/transition from an earlier existence? Of course I am probably reading too much complexity into a simple tale of a research project.
(9 June 2002)

MATTHEW DAVIS,
15 Impney Close,
Church Hill North, Redditch B98 9LZ
UK

Very much enjoyed your essays on Avram Davidson (*Cosmic Donut* 28). I've read 'My Boyfriend's Name is Jello' about twelve times, and half the pleasure is seeing how Davidson masters all his materials in about three pages without ever being obvious or clunky.

I liked your point about Scythia–Pannonia–Transbalkania being Davidson's ideal state. About half of Davidson's SF novels usually end with the theme of the disparate population of his fictional planet working in mutual cooperation and equality like some sort of futuristic kibbutz (even his Ellery Queen novel *On the Eighth Day* is set in a utopian commune). The dark side of this is that in Davidson's analysis of the power of community and tradition there is always the fear that the impulses behind these will lead to stasis, isolation and retrogression — hence the frequent appearance of inbreeding in his novels and stories.

Well spotted is the vein of discomfort that runs through Davidson's work in dealing with women. His modern women always come off a bit shrill, which only ever leaves him with positive portrayals of matrons and old women. He handles his planet of the Amazons novel *Mutiny in Space* without being patronising or offensive, but I've always wondered whether there might not be ever the slightest snub in Ursula K. Le Guin's protagonist in *The Word for World is Forest* having the name Davidson.

I agree with you about the obliquity of Wolfe's introduction to 'Polly Charms'. I was rereading the story only last week. What use his first two hints are is beyond me, I'm afraid. Polly Charms already appears to be awake *before* her hair catches fire, so his first hint seems immaterial. The third one about Endymion suggests the nature of the mistreatment of Polly Charms by Murgatroyd. From Dr E's phrenological analysis we know Murgatroyd is a man of untold depravity, and in his treatment of Charms we can see that while overly solicitous of her wellbeing ('Please Father Murgatroyd') he refuses to release her from her trance. Wolfe's hint about Endymion makes concrete all our suspicions about the appalling Murgatroyd, when we remember that in myth Endymion was put to sleep and then raped by the goddess of the moon.

When I was tracking down materials by Disch, I came across two essays by Davidson in *Science Fiction Review*: 'Clarion Call' and 'An Essay, Ostensibally on the Fantastasy Cinema, With at Least One Word Mispelled (in) the Title, and Much of the Rest Having No Real Relevance to the Subject, You See'. Would you like me to send you copies of these as well? I have lots of Davidson's uncollected stories, so I may have some of which you may be looking for.
(20 May 2002)

DAVID RUSSELL,
196 Russell Street, Dennington, Victoria 3280

I too thought ConVergence was wonderful. I'd place it as the third best convention I've been to. Hongcon in Adelaide and Aussiecon III are first and second for me.

I noticed a couple of errors in your reporting of ConVergence. For instance, I was the eyes for Les Robertson from Moe, *not* Les Peterson from Canberra (whose house survived the bushfires of January 2003). From the eleventh issue of the new series of *The Australian SF Bullsheet* I'm given to understand that Les Petersen is an artist and writer, so I guess he isn't blind. You also misspell Mr Petersen's surname as Peterson on page 9.

Thank you for writing that one of your most pleasant memories at ConVergence 2002 was lunch with Edwina Harvey, Gerald Smith and Womble, myself and Les Robertson. Meals meld into each other, and sadly I have to point out that Gerald Smith and Womble weren't at *that* lunch, but Sally Beasley was. You were the last to sit down at the table, and because you had to be back at the con you were the first to leave. You had to rush your meal. You answered my question 'As a panelist which would you prefer — that an audience member fall asleep or leave?' by answering that you always preferred someone to leave on the assumption that they had something really important to do, rather than having them doze off while you're talking.

So I'm left wondering if that pleasant memory was of another meal entirely and that maybe there's only reflected goodwill from the other lunch.

You're not reading the copies of Ethel the Aardvark that the Melbourne SF Club sends you, Bruce, because if you did, you'd know that pretty much everything that Danny Heap said about the early eighties and his memories of the MSFC at the New Wave Fandom panel had been written down as his first column in *Ethel the Aardvark* 102, pp. 9–11. This came out just before ConVergence, so a lot of people were being very polite and biting their tongues when you were urging him (as well as 'Jocko' Allen and Susan Batho) to write the stuff down. (14 February 2003)

Everybody was so polite, David, that nobody else has ever mentioned my *faux pas*. It's a pity nobody did so during the panel, as that could have led to an entirely different discussion altogether about recording the history of the Melbourne SF Club. In searching for John Foyster articles, I did find my copy of *Ethel* 102; and you're right, I had never read Danny's article. The issue must have reached me just before the convention. :: Apologies to Les. Both of them. :: And I had great pleasure from several lunches and dinners at that convention. Perhaps I'd better not catch up on my memoirs by writing up my Torcon 2 report after 30 years.

GEORGE FLYNN,
PO Box 426069, Kendall Square Station,
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02142, USA

This is a bit late, but I've done some research, and I think I've found the first sfnal use of 'novella'. It seems to have been in the ToC of the February 1951 *Galaxy*, designating Ray Bradbury's 'The Fireman'. As supporting evidence, the *preceding* issue mentioned the same story as a forthcoming 'novelet', suggesting that the name change was decided on that month. Furthermore, there's no abbreviation for 'novella' in the Day *Index*, implying that no magazine had used the designation up to 1950.
(24 September 2002)

GIAN PAOLO COSSATO,
Cannaregio 3825, 30121 Venezia, Italy

Last month Venice was under water almost continuously for some twenty days (not that disastrous compared to the floods that hit other parts of Italy and Europe, not to mention the rest of the world, of course), then came a furious wind, a couple earthquakes, etc. And I hear that fires are ravaging some areas of your country. Oil gets regularly spilled in the sea, chemical plants do explode (it happened here just across the lagoon ten days ago; a narrow escape from something that might have spelled the end of Venice) fairly frequently. Nice to see a lot of SF turning into reality.

Business: a bit shaky. Books are on the wane. Italians read much less and phone more. Cellular phones are sprouting from every pocket (not mine; I haven't got one) and the time they spend glued to them steals from that they might have spent reading. Playstations, Internet, videos in general do contribute greatly to the debacle. Inevitably we are now aiming at an audience DVD dependent.

Something brighter: my daughter. She's doing languages at Trieste University (the last year): Dutch, Hungarian, German, English, with full marks.

Last visitor at the Solaris Bookshop: Alan Dean Foster, 1 November.
(15 December 2002)

ELIZABETH DARLING,
PO Box 1072, Kyneton VIC 3444

Please find enclosed a view of the next convention. Held at the Degraves Assisted Living Unit for the Elderly, you may be able to discern Christine Ashby, Robin Johnson, David Grigg, Carey Handfield, Kitty Vigo, Paul Stevens, Helen Swift, Steven Solomon, Rob Gerrand, or many of the others who were active in the sixties and seventies.

You'll see by the cover of this note that Peter has been experimenting with digital photography: the leg of lamb is *not* one of the the ones we have been pasturing, although the last dozen of these are going to market in the next few weeks, the drought having reduced our lake to *two* big puddles, and we have very little food left.

Peter asks why you publish postal addresses and not email addresses. If other people's postal service is as bad as Kyneton Post Office, snail mail seems on the way out.
(January 2003)

People are becoming increasingly wary about fanzine editors publishing email addresses. Suddenly they find themselves on spam distribution networks and need to change email address. This has happened to several friends.

I hope the puddles expanded a bit during the bit of rain we had at the end of 2003, but they are probably drying again. Elaine and I figure that the last real rain in Melbourne was during the summer of 1992–93, after that drought broke.

DICK JENSSEN,
PO Box 432, Carnegie VIC 3052

Yet *another* (!!!) error . . .

brg: page 10, 2nd column, line 6: 'infindibulum' should be 'infundibulum'.
(22 October 2003)

PETER AND MARIANN McNAMARA,
PO Box 619, North Adelaide SA 5006

I received a number of slim but rather interesting publications from you this morning re John Foyster — and have just completed the read-through.

Two things struck me. One was John's generosity towards me across the progress of my own 'illness'. I remember when the hospital finished cutting bits out of my head and I was moved from the Critical Care Unit to a ward room of my own — and duly set up in the sunshine on its balcony — that moment, almost immediately, a couple of people came strolling along to see me (and wish me well) — John and Yvonne. They made several visits over the next week or so, and followed up again when I got home.

It was very helpful to me, especially as I knew John was in poor condition himself (not that he let on, mind you). I'd heard stories about what a grumpy and reclusive old bastard he was, but he proved just the opposite: always cheerful, inclusive and optimistic, and testing me as to where I thought I might be headed in the time remaining. He was a breath of fresh air. He even wrote an excellent piece (I think you've seen it) for *Forever Shores* — though Yvonne warned that it might be beyond him at that stage of his own decline.

The other thing to capture my attention from the articles and photographs in your publications was that the SF (or Speculative Fiction) community in Oz is very much at a 'change of generation' stage. The Binns, Baxters, Hardings, Mathews (and Turner, Bryning, Whiteford and Foyster, of course) generation has largely passed. The newcomers are still carving their niches, and, in between times, people like myself, Jonathan and Jeremy in the West, Rob Stephenson, Bill Congreve, Broderick, Sussex and Dann (hmm . . . those

last three are almost past generation, but they're hanging in there, providing a bridge), Sean McMullen, the Blackfords, and maybe yourself (another bridge) are plugging holes.

I'm too far removed from the loop to offer anything more than this sense of it all, and I'd be most interested to see somebody quantify and qualify my vague ideas. Not that I'm hinting . . .
(22 October 2003)

The newer people are not interested in fandom and writing fannish and personal material — they are really only interested in fiction, either writing or promoting it, and to me most of the fiction written and published in Australia is not worth the trouble. There are just no good fanzines coming out in Australia apart from a very small number, including Chris Nelson's *Mumblings from Munchkinland*, which actually comes from Samoa! Most of the actual fanzines published each year are available only to members of ANZAPA, and we tend to be of the older generation. I don't regard magazines running mainly fiction as fanzines, because one learns almost nothing about the personalities of the people involved in publishing the magazine.

Foyster, as was his wont, had a slightly rarefied idea of fandom, but it's one I agreed with — i.e. fandom is a worldwide anarchy of like-minded people who are dedicated to the idea of communicating with other fans across the world.

JOHN LITCHEN,
3 Firestone Court, Robina QLD 4226

I've just staggered back from the letterbox with a big fat envelope in which I find a number of fanzines dedicated in one way or another to John Foyster.

I will get to read them over the next day or so but I glanced quickly through them just to look at the photos and I see one in the Continuum Tribute on page 11 which is of John ordering Bill Wright off the field. It's most like one I took amongst many on that day. It could have been taken by Lee Harding, who was also running around with a camera at the same time; however, in the photo I've inserted here Lee is behind John Foyster and is wearing red trousers and a striped shirt. I don't see how he could have got to the same position as me to take the same photo without anyone in the background and without John or Bill changing expression or position. I think the photo is one I took as the camera was most likely on motor drive and took several shots within a second, which was enough time for Lee to move out of the way. Just something to ponder.
(23 October 2003)

MARK PLUMMER,
14 Northway Rd, Croydon, Surrey CR0 6JE, England

A quick note of thanks for the latest bundle of Gillespiezines which arrived here yesterday. I see that the envelope started life in Folkestone and made its way down to Melbourne where it was then re-used to despatch **brg*s back up to Croydon; I wish I'd opened it with greater care now so I could send it back your way again and we could see just how much mileage we could get out of it . . .

The tale of the crack of doom at 59 Keele Street instils a strong sense of guilt. I've been telling everybody that the waves of inactivity emanating from 14 Northway Road are largely, if not entirely, attributable to the recent redecorating project in which Claire and I — with occasional assistance from both sets of parents — have been compensating for my failure to do any kind of redecorating for, oh, about the last decade now. As a result, an awful lot of key items are still packed in boxes which are in turn jammed in the bottom of wardrobes; it's just not conducive to fanning and leaves me feeling a little disconnected from fandom right now. And here's you, undergoing a far greater upheaval, yet still publishing. We are not worthy, Bruce . . .

As your envelope only arrived yesterday, I have yet to properly read the contents. I will however note that I'm pleased to see somebody else speak in praise of Paul McAuley's *The Secret of Life* (**brg** 36).

I've been buying McAuley's books since the start of his career, but for the most part never really got on with them, with the notable exception of the splendid — albeit atypical — *Pasquale's Angel*. Really, I'd be hard pushed to explain why I continued to buy the things.

I'd also seen McAuley at conventions for fifteen years or so, and he seemed typical of his generation of professional writers in that he'd come to the community as a pro without having first been a fan. I always got the impression that he was distant — and maybe even mildly contemptuous — of fandom; he went to conventions because it was a business obligation, and the whole experience was only bearable so long as he wasn't required to fraternise with any of the nasty fans. Kim Newman, a contemporary and good friend of his, seemed to share this viewpoint.

So I was rather surprised when McAuley was announced as the guest for Seccond in 2001. This was a follow-up to Seccon in 1999, where the guest of honour had been Steve Baxter. Now Steve's a friend of the organisers, Bridget and Simon Bradshaw, and whilst he doesn't have a fan background either he seems entirely comfortable in the fan environment. But I wondered how McAuley would get on with it: Seccond was to be a small, fannish, convention — 100 people or so — with hardly any other professional attendees (although Steve Baxter came back, and even registered as 'Steven R. Baxter' in recognition of a Dave Langford/Greg Pickersgill joke from that year's Eastercon), which just didn't seem like his scene at all.

But of course it was all fine, and McAuley seemed a lot more sociable than I'd expected, and indeed I found I was changing my opinion of him as a person.

A couple of months later I went to a signing at London's

Forbidden Planet bookshop. Steve Baxter was there — that man again! — and I thought I'd get a signature on my copy of *Omegatropic*. Paul McAuley was signing too and, as is often the case with these things, there weren't that many punters about; I felt a little guilty only asking Steve to sign things so I thought I'd get one of McAuley's books too and the only one they had that I didn't have already was *The Secret of Life*.

A few days later I had to take a business trip by train — several hours round trip — so I took *TSoL* along with me. And it seemed that, just as my estimation of McAuley the individual had risen in the light of that convention, my opinion of his fiction had gone up too. This really wasn't at all bad, and indeed by the time I'd finished it I'd come to a similar opinion as yours — that it's one of the best real SF novels I'd read in years, albeit one that didn't garner anywhere near as much attention as it deserved. I wonder if this is a good recommendation for the jaded SF readers on Wegenheim?

The Nicholson Baker review in **brg** 35 . . . I've not read this collection (although I will certainly seek it out), but if you liked the essay 'Discards' you may want to check out *Double Fold: Libraries and the Assault on Paper* (Nicholson Baker, Vintage, 2002, £7.99), which must be a book-length expansion of the essay's theme.

The book at least was initially prompted by old-time LA fan Bill Blackbeard. The name was unknown to me at the time I read the book, but I've since discovered that he was the man who commissioned Alexei Panshin to write an article about Heinlein for *Shangri-L'Affaires*, an article which was eventually published by Redd Boggs under the title 'Heinlein: By His Jockstrap', and which became a contributing factor to the subsequent animosity between the author and subject of *Heinlein in Dimension*. So maybe Blackbeard has a habit of kicking off things that just grow.

And this story does grow, rather like one of those *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* books where a rather enigmatic clue quickly leads to something bigger, exposing a vast edifice that's more involved and far-ranging than you initially thought. Fortunately this particular story is all too ordinary and mundane for the Baigent and Leigh treatment, but it's a fascinating story nevertheless.

The central argument of the book is that the drive by libraries to preserve paper records by converting them to other media is based on a flawed premise and, worse, that it is ultimately destructive. This drive is founded on the belief that old books and periodicals are literally crumbling and 'turning to dust', so something has to be done before the source material vanishes. Baker counters that this is wrong, that the original hard copy is holding up perfectly well and shows every sign of continuing to do so for a good many years so long as some care is exercised in its storage and use. Yet the political will is to microfilm and the alleged crumbling serves as a convenient excuse, masking the real driver which is the desire to save space and money by ditching the originals. It's preservation that only concerns itself with the content rather than the artefact itself, as microfilming almost always involves guillotining the binding of the original, and as there's little will to pay for rebinding, the act of preservation is simultaneously an act of destruction. And this is a policy that Baker thinks is dangerous as it's leading to the destruction of history, that something very real is being lost in the process.

To be honest, I've no real idea of the validity of Baker's argument, but I suppose it appeals to me on an emotional level. I understand the passion he exhibits for the physical artefact and in some respects his case is almost made — and thus the need for the rest of the book negated — by a plate opposite page 180. This shows a bound volume of the New York *World*, open to the issue for 11 February 1912. The piece — a story? — is titled 'The Man in the Silk Mask: A Tragic Unexplained Mystery of Fifth Avenue Mansion'. It's illustrated by what looks like a water colour painting of the eponymous man in full evening dress against a cityscape — the eponymous Avenue? — which runs along the top and down the right-hand side of the page with three columns of neat text in the lower left quarter. The browning paper even enhances the appearance. Below this is a picture of the same page on microfilm, the illustration reduced to an undifferentiated smudge, all subtlety of shading removed. You can barely make out what it's supposed to be. I don't doubt that it's been chosen specifically for effect, and that maybe the microfilm does not reproduce well in this format, but it does rather suggest that something very real is being lost in this transfer to film. Yet for all that the argument for genuine preservation of the artefact is compelling, my administrator's background tells me that Baker is oversimplifying, that he's understating the cost of storing and conserving.

And I'd love to know what a librarian thinks of it all.

Your brief review of Iain Banks's *Dead Air* (also **brg** 35) seems to pretty much echo the other opinions I've seen and heard; I've not read it myself, but I'll probably get the book for all this, although I'll be waiting for the almost inevitable remainder. You say, 'Won't somebody at Little, Brown tell Banks to take a holiday . . ?' Umm, if I remember correctly, he did just that, taking a year off from writing, and the result was *Dead Air* . . .

Sorry to hear you didn't like *Cities*. Pete Crowther is still publishing novellas under the PS imprint, but I fear he's getting greedy: he's also publishing more longer works at truly wallet-shattering prices. I can understand the desire to milk the collector market, but it rather gets in the way of the poor folks who simply want to read the damn books . . .

This will have to do for now, although I haven't actually said anything at all about the Foyster material, so I will simply note that I'm very pleased to see it so thanks for doing this.

As I think you know, we actually made it to Worldcon this year — isn't the Royal York a splendid place? — followed by a week down in Haverfordwest with Catherine and Greg. Tomorrow we board a flight to Dublin in Ireland for 'They Came and Shaved Us', a sort-of convention run by the radical wing of British and Irish fandom; to be honest, I'm not at all sure about this one, which may just be a little too far towards the manic end of the spectrum, but we get to be token old farts for the weekend, watching from the bar as the young people break things and — probably — each other . . .

And then, two weeks after that, it's Novacon and a visit from Justin Ackroyd.

Feeling more fannish already . . .

(23 October 2003)

GREG PICKERSGILL,
3 Bethany Row, Narberth Road, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire SA611 2XG, Wales

I do hope some of you may be pleased to learn that I am not dead yet. Even the ones who might materially benefit from it. After a considerable time of weediness and outright pain I can finally say that for the first time in a couple of weeks I

feel comparatively normal. Apart from a rather disconcerting tendency for my heart to pound violently — as if during or after great exertion — when all I have been doing is sitting there leafing idly through something like the new issue of *BRG*. Our Bruce is an attractive and stimulating writer, but not *that* much . . .

So we continue. In fact today's arrival of *BRG* 36 and a variety of exceptionally interesting tribute-fanzines to John Foyster (which apart from anything else make me wonder why, when I have yards of dull fanzines by nonentities taking up space in my home, I have *no copies at all* of Foyster's apparently excellent fanzine *exploding madonna*) has been a great pleasure. If anyone reading this is *not* getting this stuff then I urge them to do anything up to and including sending money to Bruce to get them.

In *BRG* Bruce includes a review of John Baxter's *A Pound of Paper*, which confirms everything I have heard about it as a good read and has shunted it to the top of my must-buy list. In it, though, is a throwaway line regarding the lack of mention of Baxter's scifi-fannish background in the book. This reminds me of something I was wondering about a while back, in those days on the sunny uplands of life before I was plunged into the painful dark pool of pleurisy.

In short, what's the deal with Tuckerism? No, not what *is* Tuckerism; everyone knows that, but why is it something that is viewed so antipathetically, violently so, in science fiction publishing circles? Donald Wollheim, if I recall correctly, disliked it with an obsession, and it seems to have become 'normal' for any suspicion of it to be rooted out by those editors who have moved (up? down? diagonally?) from the mud of just-us-fans.

Why is this? Is it simple fear of lawsuit for defamation? Is there an idea that an author using a 'ready-made' character will not put sufficient effort into creating a well-rounded 'fictitious' character that the reader can appreciate as 'real'? (Does this sound as much like rubbish to you as it does me?) Is there some primitive fear or detestation of the in joke that afflicts SF publishing specifically, because of the already inbuilt stigma of SF being a 'genre' rather than 'real writing'? Or that the reader will actually be put off if they pereieve that there is some kind of secret joke going on to which they are only partly privy?

I am sure there are other options, but you get my meaning, I hope. Is this something that afflicts only the hoers of the sci-fi row, though? Fictions of other kinds have included 'real people' and no-one bats an eyelid — in fact the books sometimes seem elevated as a result. In fact there is in some literary circles a positive enthusiasm to discover who has been used in this way. Science fiction, though, seems to me to be the only one where it has both been openly acknowledged as happening and also condemned with unusually specific vituperation.

Why did Bruce's review of *A Pound of Paper* remind me of all this? Because of the apparent lack of commentary of Baxter's fannish life. This is something that seems a given in many writers' biographical essays. It is as if any time they spent as a science fiction fan is something they would prefer to gloss over or omit entirely, no matter how relevant it might be to their present state. (Robert Holdstock is a good one here — try to find *any* mention in any commentary on him that he was an SF fan, fanzine editor, convention attendee and runner.)

Is it because it's just all too weird or ingroupish, or just not 'outsider' enough? Is the assumption that the reader cannot or will not understand and take an interest? You get the impression that having been a Hell's Angel running drugs from Afghanistan to Amsterdam would be good copy, but hanging around with SF fans and writers over the Easter weekend is something to be ashamed of. Well, frankly, I know which I'd prefer to read about.
(28 October 2002)

CATHY PIPER,
109 Radford Road, Hither Green, London SE13 6SA, England

Thank you very much for the magazine you sent containing the tribute to Dad. It was a lovely piece — but I made the mistake of reading it on the train and it made me blub!

You are right. The rest of the Piper family aren't really into science fiction, but my fiancée Adrian is quite interested, and Dad used to lend him quite a lot of his books.

Mum, Sara and myself are not too bad — although I think we are all finding it harder without Dad as the months go on. Mum had an accident at the beginning of the year and was off work for a while with an injured leg, which set her back a bit.

Adrian and I are getting married in October, and planning that is taking up a lot of my time. We got engaged in June last year, and were originally planning a quick wedding so that Dad could come, but after he died we decided to wait till this autumn. I am looking forward to being married but am quite apprehensive about the day itself! Adrian has a very large family — 67 first cousins — while my family amounts to a grand total of three. However, I am insisting on an equal split of the wedding invites.

Thank you again for thinking of us and for the smashing tribute to Dad.
(18 February 2003)

ED WEBBER,
21 Eyre Crescent, San Remo NSW 2262

Thanks for thanking me for being the kind of person for whom you publish your magazines, and for keeping my views of the work of Peter Beagle on file. As I said to a friend of mine lamenting the fact of his not being able to find a publisher for a work of his on sports in Australian culture, the thing to do is to write what you want to say and publishing is after that fact rather than before. All too much published work is, in fact and effect, a statement of pre-existence, and the trick is to stay ahead of both the game and the gamesters. Thank you, then, for not being a gamester.

The Beagle piece you have is part of a book-length study of Beagle's overall work, albeit not necessarily of a so-called fantasy writer. Publishers noted for their vested interest in the fantasy genre — whatever that may be — won't touch it because of its non-vested interest approach. To me, *The Last Unicorn* is the only true fantasy work Pete's ever written. In fact, Pete's in agreement even if his publisher isn't.

It gets even weirder. Pete and I have known one another for quite some time. Malcolm Cowley may have made the introductions, vis a vis my study of Ken Kesey — who I never liked as a person — but Pete and I were born but miles and months apart in NY City and share similar views of just about everything. such should and does have nothing to do with lit crit, of course. In fact, it often gets in the way. That said, what I find decidedly weird is that as soon as Pete saw my lit-critter's view of his work he broke off all contact. I can see his agent's reasons, sort of, but not his.

We are in agreement that 'Gore Vidal says it best

throughout the essays in *United States*' and/or elsewhere, though it's interesting to note that he and/or his work is now buried and presumed dead. And not just here on the off-shore island of the empire that ostensibly doesn't exist either. The reason why America's lesser shareholders, called citizens, are taxed so much for something called defence after all is because its major shareholders, its owners, amounting to less than 2 per cent of the population, put the national economy on a permanent war-time basis as far back as 1948. The superhighways of which you speak were a copy of the German autobahns and, love this one, the student loans that kept so many students off the job market during the sixties were called National Defence loans. As to why defence and defence industries are 'in the national interest' when clearly in the state's interest, while education and health are not, as Confucius put it, 'the first thing we must do is rectify the language'. Vidal used the line when last in Sydney, and one of the members of the audience had to ask him what it means.

The text of Vidal's address in Sydney was interestingly prophetic — a citing of Vico's summation of history as a cyclic progression of Theocracy to Aristocracy to Democracy to Chaos, then a repeat of the cycle all over again — in that it predated Clashical Sam Huntington's quasi-prophetic view from the mount of Harvard, and it has not gone unnoticed by some that all the socio-econo-political movements and/or events of the twentieth century were essentially secular, and that god's quasi-chosen ones have been fighting back ever since.

As for America being 'right in the middle of a war', we called it Sam's War — yes, another essay of mine — when I was a soldier, and nothing much has changed since a dubious deity was enlisted back during the not exactly civil war.

Australians feeling gratitude for FDR's entry into World War II and 'saving' the place in 1942 strikes me as a bit of counterfeit history, in that ruling the Pacific and acquiring offshore islands was more accurately what they were about. The 'Cocacolonialisation of Australia' is an ongoing fact.
(23 February 2003)

GERALD MURNANE, 2 Falcon Street, Macleod VIC 3085

It was probably soon after I received your stuff that I dreamed I was visiting you. It happened in this dream, as in so many others of mine, that the house-in-the-dream was quite unlike its real-life counterpart. In other words, you were the same old Bruce but you lived in strange surroundings. But it gets stranger. Your front room was like a doctor's waiting room. All around the walls were seats and benches. Most of these were occupied by male persons who were all, so I understood in the way that one understands things in dreams, writers of science fiction. Moreover, each of these writers was waiting to go into the adjoining room, there to inspect his newborn child. Your house, it seems, was some kind of birthing-place. (And yet, at no time during the dream did I see any female persons. Even the babies were all males.) Anyway, I would have been satisfied just to peep into the adjoining nursery of whatever-it-was, only that you, Bruce, insisted that I accompany you to the farthest corner of the place so that you could show me *your* male child. His name was Richard, so you told me. And although he was supposed to be newly born, he looked to me suspiciously like a boy of three or four years disguised as an infant.

When I was brooding on the dream next day — not trying to interpret it; just brooding on it — I found myself thinking of an anecdote I had read years before about the childhood of Thomas Carlyle. I strongly suspect it is no anecdote but something apocryphal. By the way, I've never read a word by Thomas Carlyle, who was sometimes referred to in his own time, I believe, as the Sage of Chelsea. I tend to be put off reading the works of those regarded as sages in their own time. Anyway, so the story goes, Thomas was such a dull- seeming, glum, inert child that his parents, nanny, whoever, began to think he might be a simpleton. Throughout his first year he was more often silent and inactive when he should have been gurgling and thrashing about. Then, one day, he gave the first sign of his true abilities. Mummy or Nanny crept into the room where Tommy, no more than nine or ten months old, lay staring at the ceiling and frowning, as I suppose the teller of the anecdote would have had it. In the same room was another infant, a perfectly normal infant, it seems, since he was keeping up a continuous howling. During a pause in this howling, young Master Carlyle, he who had never hitherto tried even to burble or coo, called out from his cradle his first recorded utterance: the fully formed and clearly enunciated sentence: 'What ails there, Jock?'

On some other day recently, my thinking about you and your latest publications and the passing of time and other weighty matters brought to my mind a long-forgotten detail from the last part of *A la recherche* . . . I must have been thinking of the photos of you and other science fiction notables, some of whom I saw once or twice in the 1970s and haven't seen since. I recalled the Narrator (in Proust's novel) peering through a window at people he hadn't seen for many years and thinking that they seemed to be the people he had formerly known *disguised* as old persons.

These are not disguises that you and I are wearing, are they? And yet I can say what I often heard from the elderly in the years when their concerns were remote from me: that 'inside' I don't really *feel* elderly.

My body is lasting rather well compared with some. Still, I found last year that I was losing my eyesight. Typically, I had often heard of cataracts in the eye but had never supposed they might afflict *me*. I had one removed (the whole lens is replaced), and the effect was remarkable. Soon, I'll get the other removed, after which my eyesight, at least, will be a younger man's.

Last comes perhaps the most important item. Our first grandchild was born in December 2002: Ella Holiday Murnane, daughter of Gavin Murnane and his partner Anne Atcheson. She promises to be intelligent but has not yet uttered any sentences. Ella is unusual in this respect. As far as I can ascertain, *all* thirty-two of her great-great-great grandparents were Anglo– Celts who lived most, if not all, of their lives in Australia. (Ella's mother's folk were mostly Scots and English.)
(15 April 2003)

My penname, if I had ever written a novel, would have included 'Richard' in it. My second name is Richard.

Many of those SF personalities whose works you enjoyed in the seventies have died recently — in particular, Harry Warner Jr (at 80, last year) and Walt Willis (at 83, several years ago).

Prescient dreams: long before the crack in the wall threatened our house, I had a vivid dream of us living in a huge house with no floorboards, mere mounds of dirt as the floor. We were camped in one corner of the house.

Left to right: Jane Sandercock, Maria Sandercock, John Foyster and Alan Sandercock, October 2002. (Photo: Yvonne Rousseau.)

LEANNE FRAHM,
272 Slade Point Road, Slade Point QLD 4741

Gosh, Bruce, I'm sitting here and I can't think of anything interesting to send! Life has just continued, a maze of figures and worry; incomes and outgoes; relief when last month's bills are finally paid, agitation as the next one's pile up. The usual hassles of the small business.

We were actually starting to really get on top for a while, then Kerry shot himself in the foot again and made another bad decision. I said to him, 'You're a great salesman and a great tradesman, but you're a shitty businessman.' So we're trying to pick up the pieces and aim for that top again. I'm pretty sure there are no more mistakes for him to make . . .

Thus writing, even for ANZAPA, is a distant dream again. Even with time, a constant niggling mild depression fueled by resentment and hopelessness makes it impossible. I sobbed and sobbed when John Foyster died. What is the point of anything if such a great mind and person can be snuffed out so needlessly? And I'm sure I'm the very first person to have had such thoughts . . .

What else? Lots of small delights, still. I'm not totally inert. The drought forced a million trillion ants of several species to take refuge within the house, seeking water, and now that the drought, while not broken, just slightly bent, is not quite as severe, the ants seem reluctant to leave the undoubtedly huge nests they've built behind the walls, from when they issue through the cracks beside power points or cupboards in long thin lines. The least hint of food or water (they prefer fatty protein, it seems) on any surface and they are there in hordes. It has done my karma no end of good in avoiding as much collateral damage as possible, although there have been times when (still psychically damaged, no doubt) I've cried over their tiny unavoidable deaths.

And with a bit of rain comes a bit of froglet invasion. One brief shower and tiny bodies are hopping frantically down the hallway, drawn by the lights that draw the moths. Where are the tadpoles, I ask? What has happened to that well-documented section of the life cycle? How do they emerge fully formed in miniature from dry sand? Answers to this life mystery will be gratefully accepted.

I'm also very grateful to Jack Herman for sending me his contributions. Excellent to see how well and how thoroughly he is encouraging les autres. I even mean to do a Mailing Comment RSN. Promise, Jack.

To Cath Ortlieb, I really truly meant to write and thank you for my birthday card. I even have it in the special pile for special attention, but er, um . . . Thank you all anyway, it's lovely to be remembered.

I see from Jack's mailing comments, as thorough as always, that there seem to be a few new members? Or are they old ones in disguise? Whatever, I trust Anzapa will still be active when I have the time and the will to return, Bruce.

My love to all,

Leanne.

(21 April 2003)

YVONNE ROUSSEAU,
PO Box 3086, Rundle Mall, Adelaide SA 5000

I'm not sure which fans knew Alan Sandercock in ancient fannish days: Perry Middlemiss, perhaps? Marc Ortlieb? Anyway, the attached photo, shows Alan Sandercock's daughter Jane, his wife Maria, John Foyster and Alan Sandercock in the living room at Klemzig on 31 July 2002. (27 October 2003)

DAVID LANGFORD,
94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire RG1 5AU, England

Yes, *A Pound of Paper* came out in Britain in 2002 and was shelved among the bestsellers in our local Blackwell's (since, alas, closed) — I treated myself to a copy for Christmas that year and enjoyed it very much.

I responded to your kindly review in, as noted, excessive haste. A few more cheerful comments:

- I wouldn't call *The Complete Critical Assembly* 'a wide variety of reviews from many sources' — rather, it's the complete run of a regular review column which at least in my eyes retained its identity as it moved from one UK games magazine to a second which went under and was revived as a third.
- The 'long essay on all of Priest's work', along with another on Bear, remains in print in the Scribner's *Science Fiction Writers* (2nd edition), edited by Richard Bleiler. As usual with reference books, these were work-for-hire assignments and the rights are outside my control. I did manage to get permission for a long extract from my essay on Rob Holdstock's fantasies (in the companion *Supernatural Fiction Writers*, along with lengthy pieces on McCaffrey (argh), Pratchett and Stableford) to be used on his website. Other Langford work-for-hire appears in *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy* (80,000 words of entries) and four tomes edited by David Pringle: *The Ultimate Encyclopedia of SF* (5000 words), *The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Fantasy* (20,000 words), *St James Guide to Fantasy Writers* (21 essays), and *St James Guide to Horror, Ghost and Gothic Writers* (11 essays). Most of these volumes are hideously expensive!
- I take the point about your wanting more on George Turner. Unfortunately I read *Beloved Son* before I had

anything resembling a regular review platform, while (despite my request) Faber chose not to send *The Sea and Summer* to be reviewed in a low games magazine — I didn't get hold of a copy for some time. Shocking, I know, but I spent too much time exhausted and overwhelmed with crap in those days. At least I eventually got a book out of it.

(31 October 2003)

STEVE JEFFERY, 44 White Way, Kidlington, Oxon OX5 2XA, England

While I was finishing reading the new issue of *Foundation*, Vikki picked the first of the Sean Williams books off the table, decided it looked interesting and took it off to read. Since she's particularly choosy about fantasy, this sounds promising for when I get around to it.

In the meantime, have been reading **brg** and the two splendid John Foyster tributes from your package. Interesting piece of synchronicity at work here. Both Dick (in his piece in **brg**) and Foyster (as apparently one of the works he was reading just before his death) highly rate Proust's *Remembrance* as one of the most stimulating and intellectually satisfying novels ever written. And Peter Wright, in *Attending Daedalus: Gene Wolfe, Artifice and the Reader* (Liverpool University Press), cites Proust as one of the inspirations behind Wolfe's complex *Book of the New Sun* and later sequels. (I'm not sure 'sequels' is the proper word for what Wolfe is actually doing with the Long, and then Short, Sun, but the real work, if it exists, escapes me.)

I'm not sure what to make of Wright's book. I feel he goes rather out of his way to elevate Wolfe by downrating other SF writers as delivering psychologically or intellectually inferior fare. (This is something of an affront to writers like Chris Priest and M. John Harrison who I think are at least the equal of Wolfe in that regard). And I cannot help a sneaking feeling, after Wright's analysis, that much of Wolfe is deliberate obfuscatory tactics intended to sidetrack the reader into blind alleys, of thinking 'to what purpose?'. But then Priest also sets things up to invite his readers to jump to conclusions that are later revealed to be erroneous and misguided. And part of what Wright argues is that, by doing this, Wolfe reveals to the reader *how* she or he reads a text, and how her or his assumptions force their reading into particular patterns. I think.

I may have to go back and re-read the *New Sun*. It's been mumblety-mump years, and my main perception of it now is largely derived from the critical metatext that has accreted around it.

Which leads me back to the point that I think it may well be time I tackled Proust's multi-volume magnum opus. Though probably not once a year.

There are perhaps a handful of authors I would, and do, re- read every few years. Priest (as recently, when I was invited to write something for the Eastercon program book), M. John Harrison, and John Crowley. (I will probably re-read the whole of the Aegypt sequence once more when the fourth book is published). And probably Brian Stableford's *Werewolves of London* trilogy, and (though I seem to have been distracted half way through) Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet*.

Another point of sychronicity is that both Ditmar and Pete Young, in *Zoo Nation* 4 (given to me a Novacon last week) both mention Lovecraft's *Dream Quest of Unknown Kadath* for the sheer pleasure of the sounds of the words on the page. I don't ever recall reading this, and I'm not sure we have a copy. Maybe something to rectify.

But Novacon was expensive. Mark and Claire put a whole lot of beautiful things out on the Cold Tonnage dealer table and I bought quite a lot of them. I couldn't resist two hardbacks of Jeff Vandermeer's *City of Saints and Madmen* and his *Thackery T. Lambshead Guide to Discredited Diseases*, and a copy of *Conjunctions 39* (finally). I regret now resisting picking up both Blish/Atheling's *The Issue at Hand* and *More Issues at Hand*, but the credit card was starting to smoke. And I wanted to bid on a couple of Jae Leslie's calligraphy pieces in the art show and auction later on. (I got one.)

Back in Oxford on the Monday and after work Neil Gaiman was in Borders in the evening to read his new children's book *The Wolves in the Walls*, answer questions and 'sign things until my hand drops off'. Vikki got big kudos from a couple of her patients who had also turned up when they discovered we had known Neil for years. I thought it prudent to limit myself to two or three things for signing (I could easily have filled a holdall). I'm sort of wondering what a signed *Sandman* issue #1 (*Master of Dreams*) might be worth.

I hadn't realised how much first edition hardbacks of Pullman's *Northern Lights* were going for. Brian Ameringen had an ex-library copy on his table at Novacon for 800 pounds and would be able to shift one without the stamp for 4 grand. Silly money.

We were talking about SF and films on a panel at Novacon — word and/or image — and we mentioned *Dark City* in the same context as Ditmar as one of the few examples where the film works as a good SF movie on its own merits rather than as an adaptation. What's also belatedly occurred to me (in that typical *l'esprit d'escalier* you always get after the panel, or convention, has closed) is that in film it's often the combination of image and soundtrack that achieve a particular effect. It would be hard to imagine the opening sequence of *Blade Runner* with something other than Vangelis. (Or *Jaws* without Williams' 'bom-bom bom-bom' score). Which raises an interesting question — writers often talk of writing to a soundtrack (sometimes, like de Lint, they even credit them in the books), but do people add their own soundtrack when reading? I don't think I've ever particularly caught myself at it.

Hey, what not to like about *Fargo*? I admit, we haven't seen very many Coen Brothers films (certainly less than we ought I suspect), but that one is always fun to watch again.

(16 November 2003)

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

A loc for *BRG* 36:

I am always amazed at the detail of the Ditmar covers. The ship coming out of the portal is reminiscent of the Eagles on *Space:1999* . . .

There are times when I think I might take on an apa or two . . . I used to be in several apas many years ago, but left them to get more involved in fanzines. TAPA, APAplexy, The Final Frontier . . . all Canadian apas, and I think APAplexy is the only one left. I was CM of The Final Frontier for a year. I'm certain people have been talking about an eAPA, where zine files are sent to the central e-mailer for .pdfing, and sent to all members of the eAPA. Just won't be the same, though.

I also believe in chiropractic. Yvonne has told me that she had scoliosis when she was little, and if her father hadn't taken her to a chiropractor, she'd probably have spent the rest of her life in a wheelchair. She used to go to the Canadian Chiropractic College in Toronto regularly for treatments, and she's fine now.

Vegemite is, of course, imported everywhere, and is readily available in most places in Canada. I have tried it, and it is an acquired taste. I haven't acquired it. However, at one Worldcon he attended, a fannish friend who also lives in Etobicoke tried Vegemite, and absolutely fell in love with it. He now orders it by the box through his local supermarket. Kraft of Australia will be pleased.

Great photos. I hope the Foyster family were suitable impressed and pleased by the way John's friends held him in high esteem, and the way they were willing to demonstrate it at conventions.

The Wiggles and *Bananas in Pajamas* are here as well on TVOntario, the provincial educational channel. We used to go to the annual open house for TVO, and find people in Bananas costumes. TVO shows a lot of British children's shows, as do two channels we don't get because they are pay-extra digital channels, BBC Canada and BBC Kids.

Phases of Gravity was Dan Simmons' first novel, I believe, and I got a copy a few years after it first came out. I remember it because it parallels some experiences of my own, about achievements you're proud of, and failing to get anyone else to care, and then trying to either reclaim that grand moment, or find another similar moment. I remember the Tuckerisation, too.

When I was much younger, my Scottish grandparents would send newspapers over to our Canadian home north of Toronto so my mother could keep up with what was happening. Mum would get *The People's Friend*, and portions of *The Ayrshire Post* and the *Glasgow Post*. I'd get *The Beano* and *The Dandy*, and later on, *The Hotspur*, *The Wizard* and *The Rover*. Perhaps that, plus the SF anthologies my mother would bring home from the library, got my started on my SFnal career. (Just a few months ago, my mother proudly informed me that she doesn't read that silly stuff any more. Thanks, Mum, for that vote of confidence.)

I remember reading the history of the Melbourne SF Club, and remember the part many of Australia's most experienced fans played in it. Race Mathews must be pleased that the club is still continuing, even with people he's probably never met. I'm also glad that you've been contributing to current issues of *Ethel* (I recently received a package of the past four issues). I barely recognise the zine since a complete turnover (or two) of club executive.

PDFs are no problem. In fact, about half of the zines I get are now .PDFs. My precarious finances mean that I can't afford to print them out, but I do intend to let some of the bigger zines pile up, and I'll burn them onto a CD-R. (27 February 2004)

Cartoons by David Russell.

Kitten Update

The kitten collective, before they all went to their new homes: the black and white kitten is now Miss Smith, joined by the tortoiseshell (we called Tassie), who is now Leela (new home: Sarah Endacott and Tony Oakman); ginger kitten is now Yoda (new home: Jenni Johns); black kitten is now Rascal (new home: Nic and Charlie Taylor); and Titch, the tabby kitten, is now Sampson (see photo above). (Photo: Elaine Cochrane.)

Top graduate from the Cochrane–Gillespie Kitten School is the one we called Titch. He's the one I wanted to keep, and the one Polly made friends with. His new name is Sampson. (Photo by his new person, Sarah Hazell.)

Other top graduates: Leela (above) and Miss Smith (right), now living at the home of Sarah Endacott and Tony Oakman. (Photos: Sarah Endacott.