

Post-GUFF

Introduction

What happens on a Fan Fund trip is self-evidently important in terms of the purposes for which the Fan Fund was established. To me, what happens after that trip is almost certainly more important, for it is here that the effect of the experience on the traveller is revealed.

I don't think previous Fan Fund reports have taken a longer and more reflective view of what happened — largely because the report appears so soon after the experience. In my case, where external circumstances have produced a delay of well over a decade (although when this sentence was originally drafted the period was less than a decade), I'm able to report those longer-term effects.

I propose to do this in two ways in this section, and so to describe how GUFF changed my life, and thus directly or indirectly say something about what Fan Funds do.

The two aspects of post-GUFF experience I shall write about in this chapter are my

developed interest in travel (and what that meant) and my interest in fandom on an international scale (and thus my return in the early 1980s to Worldcon politics).

The first chapter in this section is based upon articles I published in the Fantasy Amateur Press Association in 1982 and 1983; the second chapter was written mainly in 1988.

To Vienna and Back

In December 1981 and January 1982 Jennifer Bryce and I travelled to Canada and Europe. The reasons were essentially non-fannish, but as the reader will find out (if it isn't already realized), fandom is Everywhere. It may be helpful to recall that Martial Law was declared in Poland in the middle of December.

20 December 1981

Departure from Melbourne — early on a Sunday morning. The weather was fine, as I recall, and the journey made very much easier by the fact that Jenny's parents had taken us out to Tullamarine, where the airport is, the previous night and had also paid for us to spend the evening at the local Travelodge.

Gosh! (Colour telly!)

When the plane arrived in Sydney Robin Johnson (the infamous travel agent who may be remembered by the reader from an earlier chapter) met us and escorted us across to the international terminal, where we had to wait a fair while for our CP Air flight to Vancouver. We

filled in the time satisfactorily with booking seats and generally milling — come to think of it, there were quite a few other people milling, too.

But soon enough we were able to board the DC-10 (a plane which then justifiably induced shudders in the average passenger). On top of everything else, we now had to pay to escape from Australia.

(Later, briefly, the Australian government introduced an arrival tax to complement the departure tax, thus achieving the fundamental aim of government — to get you coming and going.)

I don't really recall too much of the trip to Honolulu. No doubt there was a movie — but I only complain about such stuff. On the other hand, I tend not to complain about airline food, partly because I don't think it appallingly bad, and partly because most of the people I know who complain usually subsist on TV dinners or something even lower on the culinary ladder.

In Honolulu there was plenty to talk about.

We arrived at around midnight. CP Air has two flight from Honolulu — one to Toronto, and

ours to Vancouver (since we were actually intending to go to Toronto, one would have thought we would be on that flight, but we were booked through Vancouver, with consequences). The ex-Sydney flight was a feeder for both. Therefore the passengers who have debarked (wonderful word!) from our flight are divided into two sections, depending on their destinations.

We sat around for quite some time, and then passengers for the Toronto flight were called. At 2 a.m. passengers for Vancouver had still not been called, and nervous nellys like me were reading their tickets closely and trying to work out how late they could afford to be and still make the onward connection.

Then the announcement came: there was a problem with one of the doors on the 'plane scheduled to fly to Vancouver. (I must point out to members of DC-10 Fandom that this was not one of the infamous rear cargo doors, merely a safety exit door for passengers.) The airline announcement revealed that it would be necessary to off-load all but about one-third of the 'planeful of passengers: CP Air asked for

volunteers who would like a day in Honolulu at CP Air's expense.

There was a mild rush for the counter, but when it was over there were still not enough seats to go around. *This is to be a moment of glory for me (since I've been told what to do in this situation) so please pay attention.*

Now CP Air began to load passengers in their priority order. This meant: first, families with small children, then persons with physical impairments of one kind or another, and so on, and so on. Members of each category queued up and emerged clutching — almost gloatingly triumphant — a piece of coloured card.

Finally (3 a.m.) the call list reached 'those with onward connections', and this was where my instructions told me what to do. We shambled forward, but only fast enough to reach the desk just as the airline ran out of economy seats.

Oh hell! We would just have to settle for the first-class seats which were left.

And that's how we came to travel first-class from Honolulu to Vancouver.

That's also how Jennifer came to accept an offer of a mai-tai at 4 in the morning; that's how I came to shiver at the thought (and how Jennifer did too, after she had a sip). But Jennifer did also get a breakfast of Eggs Benedict.

(By the way, it was still 20 December, no matter what you think, and it was still 20 December at around 10 a.m. as we drifted down over the Canadian coast and spiraled in to the Vancouver Airport).

As we were taxiing in I noticed another DC-10 taxiing out. I consoled myself that we still had a couple of hours up our sleeves to make the connection.

Getting through Customs and Immigration is almost always a painful business, especially when you are really only in transit, which we were.

'How long will you be staying in Canada, sir?'

'About two hours if I get through this system fast enough'

'In Transit' is what goes into the passport. Of course, by the time we reached the CP Air

rechecking desk things were no longer so simple.

Apparently that plane I saw departing *was* our plane; the ticket had the wrong departure time on it. 'No matter' says a *very* friendly CP Air ticket agent 'we'll fly you through to Toronto and you can take the next flight from there. And of course we'll look after your accommodation in Toronto.'

Ahem. This is all very well, but what about our arrangements in Europe?

Well, after we had gone upstairs and chatted with the CP Air chap about our rebooking, and been reticketed for Business Class travel through to Amsterdam — well, it didn't seem quite so bad.

'You'll have to collect your accommodation vouchers in Toronto' we are told: 'just present the ticket — it's all in the computer'.

We were properly grateful, checked our bags, and walked about the terminal a little (dropping in on Smith's Bookstore, and looking at newspapers and things) before deciding to accept a little of the Canadian sunshine (which

exists, even though the temperature is below zero Celsius).

We walked outside of the terminal building and stare at the snow-covered peaks. It's at just such peaceful times that one can reflect on the main events in our lives, which have occurred between the close of the previous chapter and the opening of this one: the birth and death of our son Christopher.

Such moments will recur from time to time during this trip, but fortunately we couldn't see into the future, and the birth and death of our second son, Angus, just three months into 1982.

But the sun, the sun was out. It was not fiercely bright, but it might have been earlier — when we landed, for example.

We looked about, but we couldn't stray far, because we aren't really in Can — but we can, *we can!* we've entered Canada without Immigration noting it. This is our chance to melt into the crowd, to get away from it all!

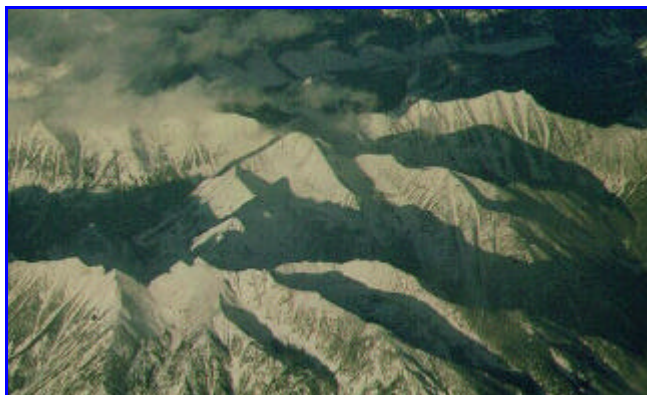
Perhaps one day, but not now, not on the way to Europe.

Back in the terminal, there was an opportunity to look briefly at what other

facilities were available, and then we must move onward.



We flew from Vancouver to Toronto by 747 — a sensible and solid aeroplane with sound doors. Passing over the Rockies at just about a perfect time of day wasn't planned, but it was most spectacular. I have half a dozen or so photographs taken at about 4 p.m. local time which I gaze at from time to time.



It was quite dark when we arrived in Toronto, and it took a very long time to get through Baggage. In fact, it was so slow that I went and telephoned John Millard and Mike Glicksohn for a chat while waiting for the luggage.

I had written to them both about the trip, saying I hoped to see them as we returned through Canada, but this particular transit stop was of course totally unplanned. I agreed to ring again as soon as I return to Canada.

Eventually the luggage arrived — and I ought to say that a lot of the delay was due to refurbishing of the lounge areas, rather than any indolence on the part of the airline (something you can't always genuinely offer as

an explanation) — and we tottered off to collect our transport and accommodation vouchers. It can take quite a while, I assure you, to find these, but then at last we got out to the 'bus, and to the Constellation — a motel which seemed to have relatively little to recommend it.

By the time we had settled down, ordered breakfast and reorganized our thoughts it was almost, at long last —

21 December 1981

Phew!

Jennifer had some supper, but I didn't fancy anything until next morning. What came then wasn't too bad at all: pancakes and maple syrup for me.

We figured we would have time to take our bags out to the airport, get into downtown Toronto for three or four hours and then catch our flight to Amsterdam. This is roughly what happened, with the roughness being introduced by my own stupidity.

Getting out to the airport by 'bus was straightforward, as was checking the bags. We had decided to get to downtown Toronto by 'bus

and subway, using the guide we had picked up at the motel.

In fact, since then, another method had been added, so that there was a choice of where to change to the North-South subway line. The out-of-dateness of the subway guide wasn't very helpful, but one comes to expect that things will be about that way.

Eventually we got out at Charles Street (as I recall it), just near the self-proclaimed World's Biggest Bookstore (I don't think it is). The World's Biggest Bookstore does have a *lot* of books, but we spent very little time or money there that day; we were mainly reconnoitring for the return visit.

Now we drifted south to the Eaton Centre, when Jennifer began a search — which was to last for a month — for Winter Clothing.

It was only after she had decided that there really wasn't anything just right, but that in any case she ought to change a traveller's cheque, that we discovered that I had left almost all of our travellers' cheques at the motel, from which we had so recently checked out.

Panic!

I rang the motel. The room had not yet been cleaned, and I should call back in half-an-hour.

There followed a rather nervous half-hour while we contemplated the various things we could do with a couple of thousand dollars in travellers' cheques. Then we thought about what other people could do with a couple of thousand dollars in travellers' cheques.

When I did call back we were *very* delighted to learn that the cheques were safe and sound, and that I could call for them any time in the afternoon. There were a couple of much-relieved Australians in Toronto that day.

We walked back down Yonge Street to Grandma Lee's, a cheap lunch spot we had noticed earlier. It *was* cheap, but just what we needed at the time.

After that we walked up along Bay Street, looking for some bank sufficiently naive (or sophisticated) to change my NZ\$ travellers' cheques. One bank got close enough to use up half an hour of our afternoon, but we had no success.

It began to snow as we walked (Wow!, which is the appropriate reaction for someone

who has never seen snow in a city before — but don't worry, by the end of this report there'll be more than enough about snow), and as we passed a place advertising Haagen-Das ice-cream we were very tempted to step in for a sample (but we thought it too cold then, and that we would try some in January, on our way back).

We were headed for a branch of Deak-Perera, which a thoughtful assistant in the most recent bank we had visited had assured us could handle my funny money. When we found them I was indeed able to change one soft currency into another.

This brought us near to the time we should go to the airport. For variety we took the East-West subway, changed to the correct 'bus, and arrived safely. (This is the kind of thing I like to do — travel around a strange city by different forms of transport, or at least along different routes. But the suburban views were quite monotonous.)

Jennifer then sat around there while I traipsed back to the Constellation to retrieve the travellers' cheques (and receive appropriate

chastising remarks from the manager). This trip wasn't entirely wasted because I took the opportunity to buy a few more US magazines in the motel lobby to add to the collection I had amassed in the morning, this time including, for example, the issue of *Atlantic Monthly* in which David Stockman spilled the beans on the sophistication of Reagan-style economics.

Perhaps that was the strongest single impression of these 24 hours in North America — I could read the magazines I normally read, except that they were current rather than four months out-of-date.

Well, we did at last get ourselves organized and onto the next DC-10 (why does this have to happen to me? I thought) passing through a mildly awful eatorium at the airport and noting (but not remembering in starkest detail) that the post-immigration facilities were more or less non-existent.

At last, late in the afternoon, we were again on our way to Europe — via Halifax.

Halifax?

Yep, that was the first port-of-call.

As the plane descended into Halifax the announcements were made in English, French, Dutch (each of which could easily be explained) and what sounded to me like Greek. Jennifer asked the flight attendant what the fourth language was, and after some prompting she admitted she thought it was Greek. Only much later did I recall that there are (I think) a fairly large number of Greek fishermen operating out of Halifax.

And so we left the New World for the Old.

22 December 1981

Early in the morning we passed over a large bank of cloud and smog. ‘England’, I muttered to myself, and it was.

Landing in Holland wasn't all that much more exciting.

Heavy snow had only just ceased — or not quite ceased, if you insist on precision. We came in over flat paddocks crossed occasionally by canals and roads; Schiphol Airport was almost a surprise.

Its size was also a surprise but here, as we expected, things went quite smoothly (except

for our bags being slow). We took the opportunity to get some currency — guilders for me and French francs for Jennifer.

I was asked how long I planned to stay in the Netherlands and was able to give an answer which almost duplicated that of the previous day in reply to the similar question at Vancouver — ‘Just as long as it takes me to get a train to Paris!’

Catching a train to Paris is *almost* easy at Schiphol because the railway station is under cover and a short walk from the air terminal. At the station we put our Eurail passes into action and I stared at the central lighting in the booking hall, which reminded me very much of the flying saucer in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*.

The trip to Paris can be recounted with some precision.

At 1224 we caught the train at Schiphol, arriving at Den Haag at 1256. (We shared the compartment with a Dutch girl who was interested in Australia, had travelled a lot, but had never thought of going so far south.)

The station is a pleasant one to look at; unlike Australian railway stations, but rather typically for Europe, it's rather like a vast hangar constructed of glass and steel. This is intended, I assume, to protect passengers from the weather, but to Australians who can still remember a southern summer it is rather cool.



At Den Haag station

At 1310 we caught the train to Brussels, arriving at Brussels-Midi at 1519.

The Paris train departs from Brussels-Sud, so since you might one day need the information, I'll mention that Brussels-Midi and Brussels-Sud are one and the same. There was a half-hour wait here, so Jennifer had a coffee and I had a Coke using some currency I

had changed on the train (no doubt at an unsatisfactory rate).

The Paris train was due at 1549, and we didn't have reserved seats (being somewhat delayed, as you'll have noticed). The crowd at platform 9 (out of about 20) was quite large — an ominous situation, I thought.

When the train arrived and we pushed our way aboard we quickly found *one* first-class seat, but by the time I realised that we weren't going to find a pair together, I couldn't find another *one* anyway.

So Jennifer took the seat we had while I rummaged around amongst the second-class carriages (eventually finding a seat — standing in a train for three hours is not my idea of fun).

About three hours later (at 1846) we arrived at Paris Nord. For some reason the platform was filled with Frenchmen wanting to get onto this train, which means that we had to do some pushing and shoving to get off, firstly separately and then together.

We pushed successfully towards the metro station, and took the train to St-Michel.

It was almost 2000 when we reach the Hotel Du Lys. Our old friend from 1979 was still on the front desk. The ground-floor room we wanted wasn't available, but he assured us that the one we now had was better (and cheaper). It was on the second floor, up a series of *very* narrow stairways. It proved to be just possible to get our bags around the corners.

After settling in we relaxed briefly, then wandered out into the slightly chilly evening air, and bought some Algerian sandwiches and (a new thing for us) crêpes at a streetside crêperie.

I don't really like the things, and this was the last one I was to have in Paris. But Jennifer more or less Formed A Habit. We walked back to the hotel, where we checked on possible mail (and discovered that there was none — which was mildly surprising).

We were now quite ready for our holiday to begin, but it was the end of the day, so we turned in instead.

23 December 1981

It was our intention to spend this morning exploring: my few days in Paris in 1979 had left

me with little by way of a useful impression of the city.

Up to a point we did just explore, though verging on experiencing Paris as well. We asked again at the desk about mail, and this time some was unearthed; most importantly an envelope of information from Pascal Thomas.

During the morning we telephoned Pascal and arranged to meet him for lunch. Before that we pressed on in exploration mode, relocating markets and supermarkets, checking out bookstores we just happened to pass, and thinking about what to do for the next week or so.

Pascal met us at the Place St Michel. This is one of those locations in a city which is always filled with people waiting to meet other people, but nevertheless we found one another. The large memorial provides some shelter, and the space in front can be occupied by both waiters (of the non-professional kind) and parked motorbikes.



Pascal then led us a merry chase across the Seine (pointing out how flooded it was — the flooding of rivers was something we were to become very familiar with over the next few weeks) into the Marais and around the Place des Vosges, but getting there took quite a while, for it was a circuitous route via narrow streets which, occasionally, owed their continuing existence to strong buttressing by solid wooden beams of the adjacent buildings. But not everything was narrow: we were surprised by the width of the pedestrian zebra crossing outside the *Tour D'Argent*, which must have



been at least 8 metres wide. We ducked out of getting any closer to that famous restaurant. While this may have been partly because the buildings were old, there seemed to be distinct signs of unconventionality; the building housing the *Relais de Varsovie*, decorated for Christmas, had a wall which bowed out at an angle which may be best described as jaunty.

Our destination was a restaurant Pascal had been to once or twice before, and was actually partway along this track, but it was too crowded when first we passed. When we finally got there it was, as we had anticipated, superb.



Afterwards we continued strolling about that part of Paris until Pascal had to leave us to pack; he was going back to Bordeaux for Christmas.

We agreed that we could come down to visit him in Bordeaux the following week, and that we would make final plans by telephone at the weekend.

Separating again at the Place St Michel, we followed Pascal's advice and bought a copy of *Pariscope* to check out what was on where. The issue we picked up ran to over 200 pages, so this took us rather longer than we had expected.

Checking through *Pariscope* was something we were to do several times over the next month.

First on *my* shopping list was Robert Altman's *Popeye*, which I had missed in Melbourne because of the usual appallingly short runs Altman films have there.

We saw this at a fancy cinema in the Boulevard St Germain at a latish afternoon session, and Jennifer was not too disappointed. For my part I was enchanted, in approximately this order, by Shelley Duvall's performance, by the direction, and by some of the songs.

Well, this seemed rather a good start, and the Maysles brothers' film *Gimme Shelter* was on later that night at a cinema called Videostone, so why didn't we go and see that as well? Apart from exhaustion, we didn't really have any good excuse, so after consuming a bit of the local version of fast food we made our way to this second cinema.

Videostone shows videos — to about 25 people at a time at a maximum. The theatre became rather smoky (and noisy) at times, but

it was worthwhile to go for a film we had both been wanting to see.

Besides, Videostone was also showing, at a different time, *John Lennon For President* and seeing *Gimme Shelter* gave us some practice at the unusual conditions. After *Gimme Shelter* we were ready to turn in.

Although this had not been a very long day, we had done a lot of walking which the description I have given here scants. There didn't seem to be much point becoming exhausted in the first week of a five-week trip. (Unfortunately we misjudged this quite often, and some later days involved a good deal of sitting around recovering.)

Back at the Hotel Du Lys we laid out broad plans for the week: go to Lyon on Saturday (Boxing Day in Australia), to Versailles and Chartres on Monday, and to Bordeaux on, say, Wednesday, then leave Paris on the Saturday. On such a framework we planned our holiday in Paris, listing relevant films, concerts, museums. And it almost worked.

24 December 1981

This was a quiet day, at least in the sense that the diary doesn't reveal a long list of things done.

In the morning we explored parts of a department store — Samaritaine — in search of a small water heater, which we eventually found and bought. One of the early lessons for a traveller is that there are many different ways of conducting financial transactions, and while you may manage the variations you come across in your own country, it's much more difficult in a foreign land. And there, I think, it's much more the social barrier than the language barrier which interferes.

That afternoon we went to see *Raiders Of The Lost Ark* which, like almost all the movies we went to, was in the Version Originale (which means with French subtitles, usually). I still like the film. Otherwise we did very little.

This gives me a chance to describe briefly another of our connections with France. Every second day, or thereabouts, we bought *Le Monde* which, so far as I can make out in my

tiny to negligible French, is the best newspaper in the world — which means only that it contains the kinds of news I think newspapers should carry.

It is, however, very difficult to read, as Pascal Thomas admitted to us when we talked about our struggles with its texts. More or less every day we bought the *International Herald-Tribune*, which was quite satisfactory for news, reviews of the right kinds of books, and comic strips.

In Sydney, before we left, we had bought a small AM/FM radio — something I would recommend to anyone travelling overseas — and in Paris we listened most days to France-Musique, a station somewhat like ABC-FM (round-the-clock classical music). Occasionally we tried another station or two, but always found ourselves coming back to France-Musique. Listening to the news in French helped a little with my mediocre vocabulary.

25 December 1981

Besides being Christmas Day, this was a day on which we did many things, and indeed the next three or four days were very hectic.

We started by walking to the Gare de Lyon. This meant going through the Marais area again; this was definitely worth a second look. We also passed through the Place de la Bastille, where we sat for a while and looked for Significant Things. I don't think we spotted any.

At the Gare de Lyon we made a booking to go to and from Lyon the next day. Even then the SNCF had computer facilities to allow you to book yourself onto the next available train, but we were quite anxious to take the 0915, and not some later train. As it happened the 0915 was fully booked, and we found ourselves instead booked onto a relief train — at 0920!

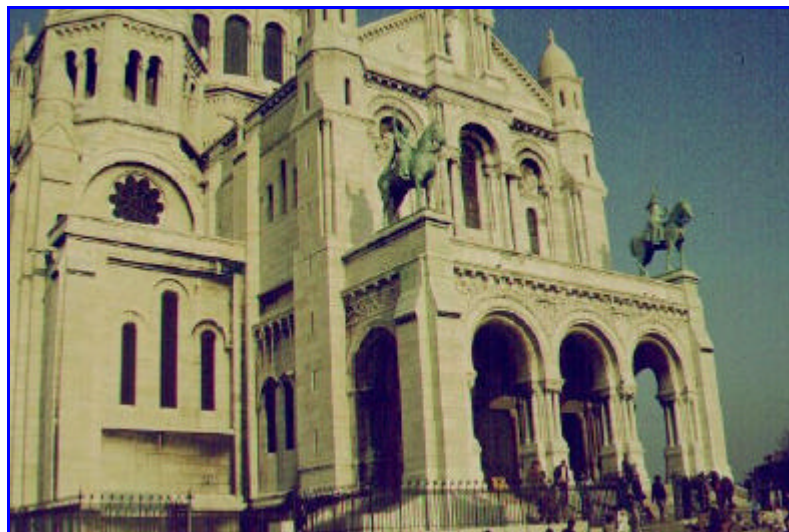
It was marvellous then, and is marvellous now, to reflect on the idea of a couple of long trains travelling at over two hundred kilometres an hour so close to each other. The physics is easy to handle; what's impressive is the

organisational skill involved. (We'll never see anything like that in Australia.)

The Gare de Lyon looked as though it had recently been redecorated and was certainly much more attractive than the other major stations in Paris. For the first time since we arrived the sun was now (almost) shining, and so we took the metro out to Montmartre, changing at Nation, with some optimism. Jennifer wanted to walk around that area; I was happy just to walk.

We got off at Pigalle and past the sex shops (which were not quite like the Melbourne variety, even in the morning) we marched, climbing the hill towards Sacre Coeur, albeit by an awfully roundabout route, and more and more the sun shone upon us and our endeavours, and we started to feel warmer.

We passed through an 'artists' area, with the usual rotten stuff for sale, and by the time we reached Sacre Coeur the clouds had lifted. But the haze had not. As a result, we had a fine view of the basilica — gold against a glowing blue sky.



But to turn to look out over Paris was to see only a few vague buildings embedded in a red-brown murk. Indeed, there were no obvious landmarks visible which would allow one to identify what was out there as Paris.

We stayed for around half an hour or so, gazing at all the wonders that were there, and then began to walk down the hill again, this time pausing for some fast food, which in my case was French fries and for Jennifer, another crêpe.

We ambled down to Clichy and took the metro to Opéra. There we stared at yet another ornate building (which I was to spend an hour or so on New Year's Day photographing) and then we decided that, yes, we *would* come back later in the day to see if we could get tickets to the ballet that night.

At around this time it became clear that there were considerable changes in your impressions of a place as the weather and lighting changed. After just two days we managed to see Notre Dame both under overcast skies and (later) with a very clear blue sky, late in the afternoon. Drab grey became daunting gold by movements of the clouds.

The afternoon was spent walking back to our hotel and around the Odéon area. Our dinner that evening was unremarkable, and I can recall having a notterriblygood Boeuf Bourguignon. We returned to Opéra around 1830. Jennifer bravely went in to look for a queue to stand in, and I bravely stood out in the cold. I'm not sure who had more fun.

Over the rest of the holiday I came to spend quite a lot of time waiting outside while

Jennifer did her shopping, but nothing could equal what I saw that evening.

At the vast roundabout which is the Place de l'Opéra, almost all the traffic moves clockwise at that time of night. The exception is one short portion, but this does fit in well with the general flow of traffic. This statement does not apply, however, to the one 'bus route which runs along the exceptional portion (no problems there) and then turns against and across the main traffic flow (problems).

This happened several times while I watched. Each time the 'bus became completely boxed in. Each time the driver got out and abused the motorists, and each time the motorists got out of their cars and abused the 'bus driver. This was so much more exciting than this mere verbal description that I shall leave the rest to your imagination, except for noting that sometimes the chorus of blaring horns was so loud that it drowned out the shouted obscenities.

But let me return to culture.

After half an hour Jennifer emerged triumphant; she had found a queue to stand in,

and it was the one selling tickets for that night. We now had two of the cheapest seats in the house.

As the show was due to begin at 1930 we began a stately entrance — or as stately an entrance as is possible for a stout person in jeans, in my case. Up and up we climbed, to the kinds of heights more commonly associated with mountaineering, until we reached the cheapest of the cheap.

The stairs were ornate, the decorations were ornate, all the way, but the higher we rose the plainer became the apparel of the attendants. Jennifer nevertheless divested herself of her coat at a suitable place, and we were shown into our seats from which it was possible, with only some slight neck-craning, actually to see the stage. Later in the evening this became less of an advantage.

By the time the ballet began the theatre had filled slightly. Immediately in front of us was a group of Chinese schoolgirls — perhaps a netball team getting some Parisian culture. Later in the evening one of them fondled my

knee in the mistaken belief that it was an armrest.

Don Quichottée (for indeed that was the ballet) could sensibly be described as disappointing, but at least we had managed to be inside the Paris Opéra on Christmas night, which is what we thought about as we reached our hotel.

26 December 1981

We went to Lyon for the day. Lyon is 456 kilometres from Paris. We went by train.

Now in a way that isn't too remarkable — when we went to Bordeaux we also went for the day, and it is nearly 600 kilometres from Paris. But that took much more of the day. Some arrival/departure times might help. We left Paris at 0920, and arrived at Lyon at 1210, then left Lyon at 1550, arriving at Paris at 1840.

(One might reasonably ask why we didn't spend more time in Lyon, and I suppose the short answer is that seeing the countryside was part of the reason for going. Travelling à la TGV is the quickest way I know to see a lot of countryside, and that was one of the reasons of

going — it was unbeatable and so nearly indescribable that I'm not going to try.)

The TGV (Train à Grand Vitesse) first came into operation in September 1981, so we were lucky to have planned our travels for this time. At the time there were 13 trains a day each way between Paris and Lyon — more or less one an hour during daylight. It is probably faster than aeroplane, city-centre to city-centre, is about as comfortable as an aeroplane (except that you don't have to wear a seatbelt), and it is certainly cheaper.

On this sort of run (between two large cities) I suspect that this form of transport could replace the aeroplane on journeys of up to about 1000 kilometres. At the time of our travel the TGV ran at a top speed of 260 kilometres an hour, though the top speed in trials was 380 kilometres an hour.

The reason the journey to Lyon took so long was that the high speed track hadn't then been completed. Travelling by train was only *part* of our intent, of course. We had both liked the look of Lyon when we passed through it by train

in 1979, and the availability of rapid transport just made it so much easier.

The day was a little hazier than we would have liked, and it stayed that way. One question in my mind had been whether it would be possible to take photographs from the train. (The answer is yes, but at 1/250 second or faster.)

On the way down to Lyon it was so gloomy that I didn't even try. But soon after we reached Lyon it brightened a little, and stayed that way all afternoon.

We didn't really do much in Lyon. The Saône and the Rhône meet there, so we had the chance to watch more flooded rivers. We walked along pedestrian malls and across squares (on the way we bought and ate



gruesomely sweet cakes — mine was shaped like a green frog — from a shop which proudly proclaimed of its products ‘Garantie au beurre’, and that is certainly the way they tasted...). We climbed a hill and looked at a cathedral or two. We rode down the side of that hill in a funicular railway. We walked past a Roman Theatre.

We walked past our first SOLIDARNOSÇ poster (‘Pologne Solidarnosç



Liberte’, high on the side of someone's house. We walked past a statue in memory of Ampère. It was an average sort of holiday day.



What was inescapable here — and I didn't mind it in the slightest — was the golden light which had so enchanted me in Florence two years before. There is nothing like it in Australia. It was particularly striking when we stood on a bridge over the Saône and looked up along the river to the brick and terra-cotta buildings

which cover the slopes down to the water. I won't ever be able to forget it, and have a handful of slides to remind me of it.



We walked slowly back to the station, our steps slow and laboured — not so much from exhaustion as from reluctance. We dawdled, we visited a bookshop where I, ever anxious to slow things down, even bought a copy of *Proust* in the *Génies et Réalités* series published by Hachette — a marvellous book.

A suspicious person might have suspected that we were angling to miss the train.



Not so!

We merely wished to take in as much of Lyon as we could in the available time.

See the statue!



See the fountain!
See the merry-go-round!



See the railway station!

Oh Hell!

The station was crowded. Trains leave Lyon in any of half a dozen directions, so this wasn't surprising. What was surprising was to see so many TGVs parked there, waiting to



make the trip back to Paris. No doubt they were quickly used up as the TGV service spread out over France.

Apart from the better light, the trip back was uneventful. We arrived back at our hotel in Paris quite exhausted, the first week of our holiday behind us.



Can you

And take a photo from a TGV?

27 December 1981

We should have been, I suppose, very tired after the trip to Lyon, but perhaps in tribute to the comfort of the TGV, we felt in excellent shape on this Sunday.

Sunday, of course, meant free admission to art galleries and such, and that is how we spent the day.

I had not been before to the Jeu de Paume, and we managed to get there by opening time (0900) — in fact we arrived a little early and



had to spend ten minutes or so in the gardens outside.

It was a very suitable time to reflect on what we were doing and why we were there. We found ourselves in agreement on the place of Europe in our lives.

The Jeu de Paume was not really crowded, as one might have expected, and this gave us an opportunity to look closely and without interruption at the works of the Impressionists therein.

I am not an enthusiast for the Impressionists generally, so it is not perhaps surprising that the work which had the greatest effect on me — GIRL IN A RED DRESS — was painted by Frederic Bazille who died in 1871 at the beginning of the Impressionist period.

At the time I thought myself to have been shocked by the painting, and that description remains the most appropriate. The girl is actually dressed in a red and white vertically-striped silk dress, and she is facing away from the viewer, looking out over a town or city.

I was unable to get a reproduction/postcard at the time, and having temporarily forgotten

the artist's name was quite unable, even consulting senior gallery staff at the Victorian National Gallery, to locate the name for some years. But what could not be forgotten was that first impression, which lives with me still in such detail that I can recall the angle at which the light struck the painting. This was one of a small number of paintings which had a lasting effect on me on this trip.

We next moved on to the Louvre. Here I was able to renew my acquaintance with all those works which had so strongly moved me in 1979 — Boucher, Poussin, Watteau, David, Fragonard, Ingres, the Nike, the Marie de Medici series by Rubens (where *is* the missing one?), and so on. There can scarcely be an end to the list. And all of this was completed by midday.

I wanted to get across to the Centre Georges Pompidou (aka Beaubourg) for the afternoon, so we walked fairly briskly via the Forum (ex Les Halles) — where Jennifer got some lunch in the form of a sandwich — and across the Boulevard de Sebastopol to Beaubourg.

It was a sunny day, and the book vendors on the streets were doing a roaring trade. We looked fairly carefully at the stalls before going inside, but we didn't buy anything, something I regret every time I recall it.

Inside we were expecting something special, and we got it. The bookshop inside Beaubourg is the best I have seen for Art and Theatre stuff; that in itself took up quite a large amount of our time, but our purchases were minor.

One day I will spend a thousand dollars in that shop — I can feel it even now. Outside the bookshop, Takis had a sound-and-mobile work operating which we observed for a while.

The exhibition which attracted me to Beaubourg was by Man Ray. This was *mainly* photographic, but there were a few objects as well.

It was while wandering around here that I saw a startling girl with flaming orange hair, electric blue eyes, and a permanent brightly-red complexion.

We finished off the afternoon at Beaubourg by finally going carefully through the modern art gallery there. The permanent exhibition was,

as I was to discover in so many places, far superior to the temporary one, with wonderful pieces by Ernst, Dali, and so on — every modernist you could think of (especially the ones I don't terribly much like, such as Picasso).

We were amazed, and would happily have spent a couple of hours more. Instead we went and had a coffee in the coffee shop, watched the queues waiting to get in to the movies, and finally left at around 1600.

Down in the square the performances of the acrobats and other entertainers were now at best desultory, and so, picking up a *Sunday Times* at a news-stand, we returned (via the metro) to the hotel. For me it was the end of a long day.

Jennifer was fit enough to go to a concert of Bach cantatas at St Julien Le Pauvre, a little church across the way from our hotel. What stamina!

28 December 1981

'Closed Mondays'. That's a sign you see in lots of places. But, anxious to get through our extended schedule, we had made up our minds

that this was to be the day to visit Chartres and Versailles.

We set off on an SNCF train for Chartres, departing from Montparnasse (from which station, following countless (unreported-here) attempts, I finally managed to telephone Roelof Goudriaan in Lelystadt!). It was on this trip that I began to appreciate the size and nature of Paris.

Most of my previous travel through the suburbs had been in the evening, or at a murky time in the morning; now it was possible to observe if not to admire the multi-storeyed blocks of flats in which the real folks live. Paris went on for *miles!* (And kilometres, for that matter.)

The train passes Versailles on the way to Chartres, which gave us a chance for a swift and unprofitable glance at our afternoon's destination from what was, to be honest, a rather decrepit train by comparison with the glories of the TGV.

By the time we got to Chartres it had become — let's be frank — cloudy. Nevertheless

we hastened to the cathedral which is really quite close to the station.

There's little point in giving here more than a few lines to a description of Chartres Cathedral. Chartres is better seen than described, and if it must be described then one satisfactory approach is to read Henry Adams's *Mont St-Michel and Chartres* and an alternative is to look at a guide-book; the one I have runs to 128 pages and has, apart from the photographs, only the grossest of details.

The building is vast within and without, and as the clouds gave way to rain we



persisted in our circumambulation, though I admit we did from time to time take shelter under parts of the building itself. There's another aspect to the cathedral that the visitor from the train doesn't know about; beyond the cathedral is a part of Chartres quite different from the old section interposed between train

and church. From the cathedral one may look out over the town, and though the view is almost entirely restricted to roofs the rotation of 180 degrees from facing the cathedral to looking out over the town is akin to time-travel, and very much a good thing to do.



In concentrating on the exterior I don't mean to suggest that there's nothing to be seen on the inside. On the contrary, we spent a long time in there, with many other visitors, and there's plenty to occupy *any* visitor (even if it isn't raining).

But the outside is overwhelming. By



midday it was time to find out what ‘Closed Mondays’ really meant. In Chartres on that Monday it meant walking around in drizzling rain looking for something to eat or drink.

Chartres is, we discovered, a wonderful place to visit — indeed, we wouldn't, we



decided, mind a week or so there — but don't try to buy casual food there on a Monday (unless, it appeared, you wanted something at a cakeshop, which at the time we did not). Perhaps it was the time of day, but we did not strike it lucky until we got back to the railway

station where Jennifer



was able to buy another of her sandwiches, just before we got back onto the train and off to Versailles.

From the railway station I managed to navigate us on a more or less direct route to the château (this is not very difficult when most road intersections are signposted ‘To the château’ and — as the only alternative — ‘Other directions’).



There, at Versailles Palace, we stared at a scene out of a landscape painting of two hundred years before — the palace beyond a vast square, with a magnificent blue (well, bluish) sky dominating the visual field — marred only by the acres of cars parked on that square. It being Monday, almost everything was closed.

But we were, in any case, more interested in looking at the gardens, which were indeed fine, even if the presence of winter drapery



on some of the statues lent a touch of realism which we could have managed without.

Within the gardens I managed some Marienbad-like photographs (not difficult in that place) and also photographed some of the statues which were uncovered. This series of photographs is one I find particularly attractive to look back upon.

We took a different train back to Paris — RER rather than SNCF — which meant arriving at the St Michel RER station, a much shorter walk than that from Montparnasse once we had

jumped the exit barriers. Our Eurail passes entitled us to travel on that train, but this was of no assistance in physically getting off the platform.

(At Versailles we were able to ask to be let out. Systems which operate without ticket-collectors or conductors are undoubtedly cheaper, and probably more efficient, but there are times when they make trouble.)

That night neither of us wanted to go anywhere. One main concern that night was to plan for a relaxed time the next day.

29 December 1981

As predicted and planned, this was a quiet day. We made reservations for the opera for Thursday night (*Don Giovanni*), went to FNAC in Montparnasse (if only Pascal had warned us how crowded it was, no matter how cheap the books and records might have been!) but didn't buy anything, and went to see *Phantom Of The Paradise*. This was a reasonable preparation, we thought, for the



next day, on which we were to meet Pascal and travel down to Bordeaux.

30 December 1981

The plan was that we should meet Pascal at the station about ten minutes before the train left.

We got to Austerlitz a little early and so looked around it before heading for the agreed meeting place. We waited there, at the entrance to the platform, until nine minutes before the train was due to leave, and then decided that we should set out along the platform in case Pascal

had arrived early (which he might easily have done, since we had been well away from the entrance while we explored). In doing this we ignored the length of the train.

From later evidence we are able to piece together what happened. Within seconds of our entering the platform Pascal had arrived and not finding us waiting, made exactly the same decision we did, and set out along the platform.

Now Pascal was returning home, while we were only visiting for the day, which meant that he was carrying quite a lot of luggage while we had almost nothing. As a result, as we marched separately along the platform Pascal, starting behind us, and being more heavily-laden, fell further and further behind; our mutual but unvoiced strategy was separating us, rather than bringing us together.

In addition, we were both slowed by the fact that every now and then we stopped to check both forwards and backwards for the other. Try as we might to get closer, we succeeded only in drawing apart.

The next step in the strategy was one on which, once again, we agreed. At about the

same time both parties decided that they had gone too far, and that it was time to turn back towards the platform entrance.

This time the strategy worked in our favour as Foyster and Bryce, not encumbered with luggage, closed rapidly on Thomas. Unfortunately, however, this was a situation which involved time as well as space, and so although in a different kind of world we would inevitably have caught up with Pascal, in the SNCF-world trains depart more or less on time, and when the train departed the two groups had not closed to within range of one another.

Now our strategies differed.

Pascal had to go home to Bordeaux anyway, whereas we were going *only* to visit someone who, so far as we could make out, was not travelling down there.

So Pascal caught the train and we didn't.

(Later that day Pascal telephoned from Bordeaux, and we reconstructed the events described in the preceding paragraphs: more importantly we made definite plans to go down to Bordeaux the next day...)

We decided to fill in the day quietly. I, at least, had not fully recovered from the previous week. In any case, this did give us an opportunity for Jennifer to buy some music.

Music for oboe (and indeed, music generally) is much cheaper in Europe than in Australia, and Jennifer was able to make much of this.

Earlier, during our wanderings around Paris, we had spent some time in Strasbourg-St Denis buying music; that is to say, Jennifer went upstairs into a small shop for half an hour or so while I waited in the street (Rue de L'Echiquier, if you must know) where I was accosted by many French persons seeking either my advice or my custom.

To get us to that shop I managed at least two wrong turnings. On this day, Wednesday, we wanted a shop in St Honoré.

Rue St Honoré.

Not Faubourg St Honoré.

I knew that these were not the same street (well, actually they are, but the name changes partway along), but somehow I didn't get around to asking Jennifer which one she

wanted, but assumed that she wanted Faubourg St Honoré.

Shouldn't've.

The long walk back probably did us some good, but Jennifer didn't seem very pleased about it at the time: on the other hand she had managed to buy a lot of music.

Now I haven't, in this account, yet made substantial reference to Good Bookshops. Paris has many of them, and our travels and wanderings were invariably interrupted by slight detours to check out a bookstore. Often, in the evenings, when remembering not to imitate the opening of a J G Ballard short story, we would spend an hour or two visiting bookstores which remained open to late hours.

The bookshop I regard as the best I have ever been in, La Hune in Boulevard St Germain, opened at ten in the morning and closed at midnight (most days), and although there was scarcely a book in English on their shelves I reckon we must have spent an hour there every second day.

Other bookstores carried strange mixtures of new and second-hand books, of 'serious' and

'other' books. At various stages of our Paris sojourn we visited the Bande-Dessinée shops a few times, and the SF shop in the rue Dante twice (though not buying anything, and regretting not having bought those copies of *Galaxy* back in 1979).

From newsstands we could buy papers from all over, though *The Village Voice* didn't seem to be on sale any more. And I've already mentioned that useful Whatzon, *Pariscope*.

From time to time, therefore, and unheralded in these writings, we would loiter for an hour or two in bookstores of one or more of these kinds; FNAC, mentioned above, is a discount shop which is fine for getting cut prices on mass-market books or records. The few English-language bookshops shocked us a little with their prices, which at times approached the kind of price Australians have to pay in their own country!

Thus, on this particular day, although I might report that we returned from the rue St Honoré to our hotel, the truth is that there was a great amount of shop-loitering of the kind

which most people do all the time. Consider it said.

However, in all honesty I have to report that I didn't feel so good after the morning's excitement, and spent the afternoon in bed.

That night we had an opportunity to see a film which, if you believe the publicity which was around a year or two later, does not exist. In 1927 Abel Gance made a film which used some techniques which were advanced for the time but which was a marvellous depiction of the life of Napoleon. A silent film, expensive and long, it didn't get much of a showing at the time.

Over recent years Kevin Brownlow has pieced together most of the original and late in 1980 Francis Ford Coppola (as he then was) released this fancy version (with music composed by his father) in the United States of America, to great and justified applause.

In 1971, however, Claud Lelouch had produced a version, with Abel Gance, which was dubbed, and had a few additional scenes included to improve the continuity. This film, titled *Bonaparte And The Revolution*, we saw

that night in Paris (out near Gobelins) for about four bucks (as opposed to the twenty-five bucks asked for in Melbourne to see the Coppola version).

We thought it was great. So did the intensely patriotic local audience, stirred by nationalism of a kind which will never be able to surface in Australia. It was a bit of a fleabag theatre, and you had to fight with the management to get in, but it was worthwhile.

Afterwards, as we stood in the pouring rain just before 0100 looking hopefully for a taxi, we for a moment doubted our wisdom in going out that night, but that feeling soon vanished: the taxi was easy to find, for a start.

Of course the driver didn't know where our hotel was, and we collectively were not good at giving directions in French because I would have to give them to Jennifer in English, and she would then translate. But we arrived, the taxi-driver charged us a monstrously low fare (so much for the stories we had heard about cabfares in Paris!), and we could scarcely have been happier as we walked along the rue Serpente to the hotel.

Although this was not a typical Parisian day for us, there were elements which made it more excitingly French. Perhaps it was because things went wrong occasionally, which we had to sort out, but in any case finishing the day sitting with a French crowd watching a French movie led me to at least begin to feel that I could now be a part of the place, rather than being a foreigner dumped there for a brief visit. It was on this day, perhaps, that my attitude towards Paris began to change.

31 December 1981

This time we did catch the train to Bordeaux.

The train left at 0900 and arrived at Bordeaux about four and a half hours later, a journey of 581 kilometres. It was a dark, gloomy day as we left Paris, and one could not see for any great distance early in the trip. Later, though not as early as we would have liked, the light lifted, and our swift views of such places as Tours, Poitiers, and Angoulême were sufficiently attractive to beckon us back (somewhat ineffectively so far).

Pascal met us at the station. A 'bus took



us towards the centre of Bordeaux, where we began with a quick tour of a cathedral which seemed to us unusual in that the steeple was detached from the main body of the building. (Pascal said that this style was quite common around Bordeaux.)

Apart from that, it was the kind of intricately-buttressed place we had come to



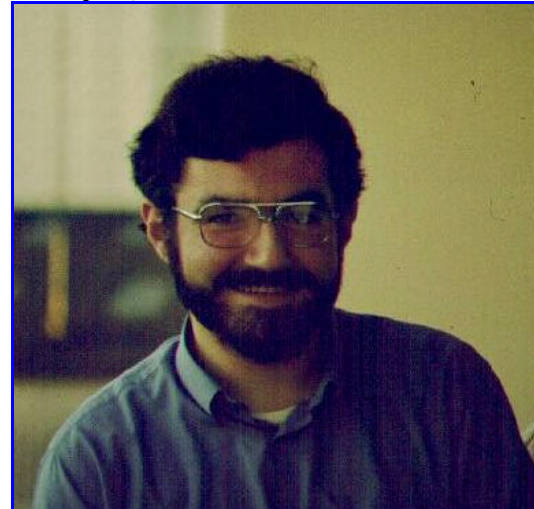
look forward to admiring. Next stop was the place where Francis Valery was staying. Francis was, in Australian terms, a sort of combination of the better points of John Bangsund and Bruce Gillespie, with a drop of Paul Collins and the vigour of Irwin Hirsh in his younger days... Or so it seemed at the time.

His office was piled high with fanzines and prozines and those funny things in the middle which are becoming increasingly common.

Francis had much less English than does Pascal (but more than I had of French).

He was planning to go to California in February 1982. He struggled with my accent and then became quite frustrated.

Pascal made life tough for him by pointing out that in California accents (i.e. deviations from mid-Atlantic English) tend to be stronger than mine. Outside we ran into Jean-Daniel Breque, a marvellously-talented



illustrator of whom I hadn't previously heard, and whose skills I didn't know about at the time. Jean-Daniel's English was quite good, and

he mentioned that he was reading Joyce Carol Oates's *Bellefleur* (in English), which I had just finished.

We seemed to like similar aspects of this work. I noticed later that *Bellefleur* had just been translated into French.

Pascal had a plan. We were to go to his parents' flats in the suburbs, and there Francis, whose energy still astounds me in retrospect, would do an interview with me. He did occasional sf shows on local Bordeaux radio, and this interview might be useful for one of his programs. Over at the flat where Pascal was staying we looked over the book collections — much more exciting in another country — and got down to planning the interview.

It was to go like this: Francis would ask the questions in French, Pascal would give me a free translation of the question into English, I would reply in English, and Jean-Daniel would give a simultaneous translation of my reply into French. As you can imagine from the description, there were plenty of opportunities for confusion here.

For example, quite often I would understand Francis's question, and would be



begin formulating my reply only to find that Pascal's wording in English required a somewhat different reply. In practice I answered a question about halfway between what I understood Francis to have asked and what Pascal actually asked, since my

understanding of the original question in French had probably been inaccurate.

Next, in providing an answer, I would try to structure it in bite-sized chunks which were easy to translate in the phrase-by-phrase style Jean-Daniel was using, trying to make the answer interesting if that was consistent with the other constraints.

Well, this was tiring stuff. We took frequent breaks, and soon Jean-Daniel was allowing Pascal to translate some of my replies.

By the time we got around to the stage where there were bilingual catchphrases used in a half-punning manner (I recall particularly ‘the tyranny of distance’) the interview was definitely getting out of hand.

It was a fair old strain all round, and what interested me most was the general direction of Francis's questions — they were substantially about the Australianness of Australian science fiction. Given the extent to which Australia has become Americanised, I thought I did well to come up with anything at all. But it set me thinking about my own attitudes towards the

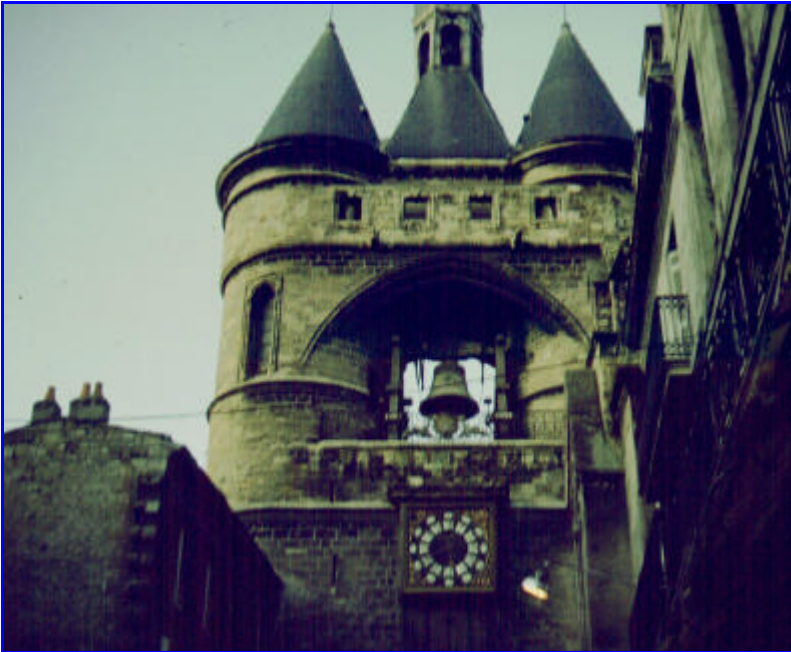
local sf published by Paul Collins, *Futuristic Tales*, and Nev Angove.

Even if it isn't any good, at least you can say it's Australian.

In Europe, perhaps, the notion that a kind of nationalist identification is essential seems a commonplace. In Austral climes there may be too easily a forgetting of differences of a trivial but *interesting* kind. If Australianness in science fiction is a virtue, I certainly spent most of that afternoon seeking virtue. We eventually got through to the end of the interview by talking about the Melbourne bid for the 1985 World Science Fiction Convention.

Jennifer found this all rather amusing to watch and listen to. After the interview was over, Francis and Jean-Daniel headed back for the centre of Bordeaux, while Pascal's mother drove us down to the river. We thanked her for the lift, and Pascal began a quick tour of the older parts of Bordeaux as the darkness came down rather more quickly than we would have liked. He was able to show us only a few of the local marvels, but included in the tour the site of a previous French SF con. My fascination

with building strengthened as Pascal showed us delightful and weird places we would never have found for ourselves.



Somehow Pascal navigated us back to the railway station where, after a quick nosh-up on pommes-frites, he headed back for home and we took the train.

This is where the story really starts. As you have gathered, trains in Europe are *always* on time. This train, which had come from Spain, was indeed on time. But at Poitiers, alas, the train stopped for an ominously long time before the station attendants passed the word to the train's public address system, whence we learned of the problem with the 'machine'. This problem lasted the best part of an hour. The train was unable to make up this temps perdu, and we arrived at Austerlitz just as midnight sounded.

Now I really do mean *sounded*. At Austerlitz there were a few firecrackers, a little tooting of horns. Austerlitz to Odéon is but a short journey by metro, and at Odéon the cacophony seemed out of control. To the honking of cars were added the futile sounds of police car sirens and, rather frequently it seemed to us, the crash of broken glass.

Back at the hotel the noise was much the same — for the next hour or so. The honking of horns continued, as did the occasional sound of breaking glass and the police sirens. This was followed by what seemed to be the sound of cars

crashing into each other, and perhaps gunshots. Eventually we did get to sleep, though with some uncertainty in our minds as to what we should find out there on the streets when we woke.