POST-GUFF

1 January 1982

I suppose the first thing we noticed was a car which had run into a pole (not a Pole: that was much further north). Then the rows of shops with trashed windows — not restaurants for some reason.

Later, when we went to the movies, the streets were notable for being crowded with macho-looking private armed guards who seemed to be very attentive to those few large and fashionable stores which had not been attacked. Unfortunately the newspapers we read didn't go into detail about this sort of excitement.

It was an almost painfully sunny day. I had been hoping for this, because I wanted to take a lot of photographs of that over-decorated cake, the Académie Nationale (aka Opéra).

We took the metro to Opera and emerged onto the sunlit Place de l'Opéra, along with twenty or thirty other photographers who all seemed to have the same idea as me. We got along well enough with one another, but the professional photographers didn't do much trade selling their photographs to passers-by.

After taking those photographs we turned back towards our hotel. We hoped that the sunny weather would last until we got to Notre Dame, but it didn't, and my desire to take photographs there was almost utterly frustrated. I did take some of the square in front of Notre Dame, but these are somewhat less than inspiring in their impact.

In the afternoon we visited another of the local cinemas, where we saw an excellent print of *The Big Sleep*. There were almost no scratches. The short, of which we saw part, was an early Chaplin, and it seemed an appropriate sort of

finish to this stay in Paris — a quiet walk back from the movies.

Although I've mentioned in this account the movies we saw, I haven't by any means given a fair and detailed report of what we *could* have seen. This isn't the place to go into the fine detail either, but I should provide a slightly better impression than I have done so far.

Our hotel was close to the boundary between the 5th and 6th districts, but was actually in the 6th, Luxembourg. By my count the 6th boasts 50 cinemas. Some of these are in those multiple affairs with one or two ticket offices to half a dozen theatres (salles, rooms...), although the largest in the 6th only has five rooms.

And in this particular week you could see English-language movies at ten of those cinemas. (You could see many more than ten different English-languages movies, however, since it is quite common to show different movies on different days of the week, or at different times of the day.)

And the 5th, just across the road, had almost as many cinemas; we probably did go to the movies more often in the 6th than in the 5th, but only just.

I have already mentioned how small VIDEOSTONE was. I think the largest cinema we were in would have held 500 people.

The only way to give a complete picture of the movies would be to list them all, and I don't intend to do that. But what can be said, quite simply, is that in choosing a movie we would select something we thought looked close enough, and was showing soon enough after we decided to go, and we then went to that cinema.

On the way I might take note of any interesting movies showing at other theatres so that if we couldn't get in to our first choice we would have a fall-back theatre, but this was never necessary. The nearest we came to using that strategy was when I would draw up a list of possible films with starting times at intervals of ten to fifteen minutes, and we would then go to the movie which corresponded most suitably to the time we finished in the restaurant. Eat your heart out, Bruce Gillespie.

Restaurants. We did not do anything adventurous in that line, nor anything

expensive. The most comfortable food, I suppose, we found in a Chinese restaurant near Notre Dame.

The other major excitement associated with our stay in Paris I have thus far neglected completely. This was 'dealing with the Post Office'.

For example, I wanted to send a parcel to Joseph Nicholas. With my luck, it turned out to be over two kilos, which means it had to be taken to a special post office — this I knew from previous experience.

I also knew exactly where to go in the post office to which we were directed, having been there before — except that when I arrived I discovered that renovations were in progress.

Scaffolding was everywhere, and all the signs, implicit and explicit, seemed to say 'Keep Out'.

But an inquiry around the corner at a small post office elicited the response that no, one had to go around the corner to the main post office to lodge a two-kilo parcel.

I stumbled through several doors and around concrete-mixers, meeting many people who had no interest in two-kilo parcels of fanzines. I eventually gave up and resolved to go to the main post office near the Louvre.

Same gimmick: 'sorry, this is over two kilos, you'll have to go upstairs'. I *thought* he said to go to the second floor, but it turned out to be the fifth.

On the fifth floor was one of those long counters which are partially subdivided — obviously so that the different subdivisions may comfortably carry out their different functions without interference — with no indication of the various purposes served by each subdivision. Unerringly I chose the right subdivision and indicated in my execrable and unintelligible French that I wanted to send my parcel to England

Can't be done — or so it seemed was the reaction. Having played this game before I knew that all this meant was that some paperwork was involved and that the parcel was, to tell the truth, over two kilos. So I reached across the counter and took the forms which I knew had to be filled in, scribbled on

them to the best of my ability, and passed them back across the counter.

This time all was acceptable, and the lady behind the counter indicated that I should now wait at an adjacent counter because I *might* be able to get a cheaper rate.

(She hasn't realised that the parcel is over two kilos, I muttered to myself.)

Well, in time the gentleman at the new counter checked my parcel and began to explain, in somewhat expressive but gentle French, that there was a problem with the parcel.

My face must have revealed my boredom, for a lady standing at the counter asked very kindly if I understood what was being said to me. Then, without waiting for a reply, she told me the news which she was sure would be painful to me: my parcel was over two kilos. (I know, I know!)

So back I went to the original counter, paid over a large pile of francs for the privilege of sending stuff to Joseph which (as it happened) reached him long after the time it would have reached him had I sent it direct from Australia at a lower price. The European Community is a wonderful thing.

At the end of this day, the first of the new year, we were able to look back and regret that we would be leaving so soon. I haven't written at all about what could be bought at the local supermarket, or at the cake shops; I'll leave that for my description of our return trip. For we were to return for several days, cancelling our planned revisit of Florence.

Now our overall plan called for us to separate for a couple of days. The next morning Jennifer would take a trip to Basel, while I would head north, Jennifer visiting her friend, while I would meet with sf fans in Belgium and Holland — then we would join up again in Frankfurt and stay with Cherry Wilder and Horst Grimm for a couple of days.

We packed that night, having spent a bit of the afternoon sending a parcel back to Australia.

This was the part of the journey that was going to be most difficult in terms of moving baggage, and we didn't want more excess junk than was absolutely essential. I would be getting

rid of many copies of *The Antipodean Announcer* — but that meant I had to carry them until I got rid of them. When we finally divided the bags it seemed as though Jennifer might have slightly too heavy a load, but there didn't seem much of an alternative. The main problem was that her train left the Gare de l'Est a couple of hours after mine left the Gare du Nord. Thank heavens for the metro!

Ghent 2 January 1982

The weather was fine for our joint departures from Paris. We had been at the Gare de l'Est on the previous day, so had been able to check from which platform Jennifer's train for Basel would depart.

But I hadn't really decided exactly which route I was going to follow. I could go to Ghent by train via Lille, which I hadn't seen, or Brussels, which I had. I could even do both if I wanted a genuinely round-about route. But I had to be in Ghent by 2.30 p.m..

In the end I followed the conservative path, via Brussels.

What was this all about? Why Ghent? Why, for that matter, Europe? What were we doing here?

Nowhere in what I have written earlier in this chapter have I made a deliberate attempt to explain it all, though there are occasional hints. To understand why I am going to Ghent it is necessary to understand longer-term plans.

An extended parenthesis is therefore desirable.

[At SEACON in 1979 the group of Australian fans who were present made substantial efforts to boost the Sydney bid for the 1983 world SF convention (I ought to point out that Sydney fandom was not generally represented at SEACON, and most of the pushing was being done by fans based in Melbourne). No effort which involves getting both George Turner and John Foyster into fancy dress can be regarded as trivial.

But Sydney fandom's efforts before and after SEACON were not enough to win against any competition at all, and this was obvious by early 1981, with voting to close late in August 1981.

As this was clear by mid-1981, I and a number of other Melbourne fans felt that a bid from Melbourne for 1985 had a chance of success. Whereas our bid for 1975 had been successful partly on the basis of the novelty of it all, any bid for 1985 (to be decided in 1983) would be on the basis of a track record. With that record and the experience we had had boosting Sydney, we thought 1985 was a genuine opportunity, and accordingly we launched a bid for 1985 at the 1981 Worldcon. With the experience we had behind us in running the 1975 convention, we could afford to devote a much larger proportion of our effort, in the early days of the bid at least, to drumming up support for the bid from quarters which had tended to be ignored by most previous bidders. In particular, those of us at SEACON had been taken by the interest of the European fans and, with Roelof Goudriaan working on creating links between European fandom and non-European fandom, the time seemed right to work with the Europeans.

By the middle of 1981 I was ready for a decent holiday; both Jennifer and I had had a rough year and I was going to change jobs at the end of the year. We had been wanting to return to Europe as a result of our 1979 experience, and this was a good time to do it. At the same time I could try to meet with European fans and talk about the Australian bid. Through Roelof's and other contacts I had a list of people I wanted to see, and this to some extent dictated our itinerary.

When we travelled in late 1981-early 1982 we had no idea that we would be returning to Europe later in 1982 (see the next chapter). That return visit provided us with a quite unexpected opportunity to see again many of those we had visited in winter.]

But now, back to Ghent!

Andre De Rycke was my main contact in Ghent. We had agreed to meet for the Saturday afternoon in a hotel opposite the railway station in Ghent — hence my specification of 2.30 p.m. as the time I was due in Ghent.

As it happened I arrived at just about the same time as Andre and half a dozen other local fans. We then spent a few hours discussing fandom and science fiction in the way that new acquaintances do, but reverting to more general subjects, like the differences between Belgium and Australia, as the opportunities arose.

Late in the afternoon the group broke up and a smaller subgroup arranged to meet for drinks in a local bar.

In fact we only lost one or two from the original group, so this was really a continuation of the 2.30 p.m. gathering. This bar had been chosen, I suspect, to create a particular impression on me, which was certainly the effect when I was faced with an eight-page beer menu. The Belgian fans were lamenting the fact that there were now only a couple of hundred breweries in Belgium (by comparison with the 'good old days').

In Australia at that time there was also some reduction of the number of breweries going on, but on a quite different scale, since the number of breweries in Australia was only about one hundredth the number in Belgium.

'Scale' was probably the main subject of our conversations — or rather the differences in scale between the two countries. Although the populations are significantly different (a ratio of two to one, say), the size, and distance from Europe, of Australia were areas which were to dominate all my discussions in 1982 with European fans (since I was usually talking about the possibility of European fans coming

to the 1985 convention), and it was in Ghent that I first got strong reactions.

In general, not just Europeans but most people Australians meet when travelling think of Australia being much smaller geographically than it is. It seems unthinkable, somehow, that some 16 or 17 million people living in a Western-style country could be spread out over an area about the size of the United States, or 50% bigger than Europe.

This problem manifests itself most seriously when people visit Australia, and are not prepared for the distances one has to travel between different cities.

But the killer idea for Europeans, at least, is the notion of the distance one has to travel to reach Australia. Because we in Australia are used to the idea of a three or four hour flight which doesn't take us out of our own country, travelling for over 24 hours to reach Europe doesn't seem too bad; see, for example, my description of travelling to Europe — either the one at the beginning of this chapter or, for sheer foolhardiness, the one at the beginning of the next chapter, in which I complete the travel to Europe with a day's travel through Europe! (By contrast, my own understanding of the size of Europe was substantially enhanced later in this month when I flew from Milan to Amsterdam one day and then from Amsterdam to Rome the next. It took hardly any time, yet each trip overflew several countries!)

So when I talked to the fans in Ghent about coming to Australia for a convention it seemed a much bigger excursion to them than to me. One or two of them had relatives who had travelled to Australia, and thus had at second-hand some information about the country, but for the most part Australia was still *terra incognita*.

This gave me the chance to talk about some aspects of the country, but not much. I was more interested in persuading people to come and see for themselves. I had a few leaflets and oddments to hand around, but at the end of the day didn't feel that I had managed to attract any visitors.

The end of the day was still, in fact, some distance off; because I was leaving early next morning by train to meet Roelof and Kees Van

Toorn, Andre suggested that I should stay near the railway station; he would arrange it. But before that, perhaps a short tour by car of Ghent?

It was already well into twilight, so what little I could see had relatively little opportunity to make an impression on me. But this short excursion made me regret that I was moving on so quickly (this was not the only time I was to have this impression, of course). Ghent is a place deserving of extended study, and this whetting of my appetite is a matter which will have to be attended to one day.

Andre arranged a cheap room for me about 200 metres from the station (the cost was about $4 Australian for the night), and we talked about the likelihood that we would meet again (which we did in August). I slept well that night; the next day involved Dordrecht and Amsterdam, and then after a short break in Amsterdam I would be travelling down to Langen to meet Cherry and Horst (and Jennifer!) again.

Dordrecht 3 January 1982

(Ghent-Brussels 0933-1010 61km
Brussels-Roosendaal 1013-1120 99km
Roosendaal-Dordrecht 1123-1147 38km)
This was — and in retrospect I'm grateful for it — a quiet day.

The pub I stayed in overnight (a Saturday) had as its main advantage its proximity to the railway station, something which was important given the time I was catching a train on the Sunday morning.

The morning itself was grey, almost a reminder that this was, after all, winter, and that our time in Paris had protected us from the extremes of weather we were about to encounter.

The trip north was quite short, as the table at the head of this section indicates. There was actually a change of train at Brussels, so the three-minute break there was used productively. Roosendaal was not a change of trains, merely a change of countries — travelling around Europe, even so long pre-Community, makes one awfully casual about international boundaries.

Roelof Goudriaan and I met at a railway station near Dordrecht. While I travelled from Ghent he was travelling south from Amsterdam, so we met just before noon and, as is always the case, science fiction fans had no troubles recognising one another.

We took a cab to Kees van Toorn's place. I had not met Kees or Angelique before, but Annmarie and Leo Kindt, who were also there, I had met at SEACON in 1979.

We spent most of the afternoon talking fan politics; the Australian bid for 1985 was now well under way — after all, this was part of the reason I was visiting — and the Dutch bid was starting to warm up.

There was much we had in common with respect to strategies, so it is not surprising that both bids were successful.

But the people involved in the bids were very very different. In Australia, at this time only one member of the bidding group had anything to do professionally with science fiction; we were not science fiction professionals, but when it came to running conventions we had all been involved in the 1975 Worldcon.

Most members of the Dutch bidding group had some professional connection with science fiction, although this did not interfere with their status as trufans. This led to lengthy discussions about the different possibilities for science fiction fans in non-English-speaking countries. At that time the translation opportunities were more or less one way (English — or should I write American? — into Dutch), although now there have been a couple of translations of novels and collections into English.

As a result the bidding group members were well-known in their own country and to the authors they had translated. This gave them

some organisational advantages, especially when it came to local publicity.

But the working conditions of translators were unattractive. While you could make a living at it, you had to turn out very large wordages because the rates were so low. I'm not sure many people would want to earn their living from science fiction in this way. Kees also did some translations for radio, which I suppose provided some variety.

(Five years later I would do a radio adaptation myself, and thus discover in practical terms what I had previously suspected only theoretically: radio dialogue is not easy to write if you want to make it sound convincing.)

Early that evening we all went out together to enjoy that interesting consequence of Dutch colonisation, the rijstaffel. After a good meal with more talk Roelof and I were driven off to the Rotterdam station to catch a train north to Amsterdam. This meant driving through the Europoort, the vast Rotterdam wharf district which, even by night, was impressive in terms of its extent.

In Amsterdam Roelof thought it would be relatively easy to find a room for me before he went back to Lelystad. In a way it was, though I think it took a little longer than we had both thought. But down a small street near the station Roelof found a place which could offer me a room. There I settled, while Roelof returned home.

Amsterdam 4 January 1982

In Amsterdam I had one specific task and some general ones.

The specific task was to try to make contact with my colleague Jan Timmer. The general tasks related to visiting art galleries and road-testing chocolate.

Back in the middle 1970s I had carried out a national study of innovative education programs in Australia. One result of this was making some contacts with people around the world who were also trying to analyse what was going on in the ‘different’ educational climates we came across in association with these programs.

Jan Timmer had been doing some similar work in the Netherlands, and we had briefly corresponded. When I realised that I had an opportunity to meet up with him in Amsterdam I wrote, but had not heard back from him; in Paris I had been waiting for calls from both Roelof and Jan.

Now I could put in a morning checking out what was going on, on the spot. This wasn't too unpleasant, as it turned out, though not immediately fruitful.

I was staying in a spot just off Damrak, in the centre of Amsterdam, and Jan's office was adjacent to one of the nearby canals. Jan's work had been done at the Research Institute of Applied Psychology at the University of Amsterdam, and seemed to me to be capable of more general application than I had seen.

I had to walk west across several bridges over canals to reach the office, which was on Prinzengracht. Walking to that office was a delightful way to be introduced to daytime Amsterdam.

Jan had not replied to my letters because, just after the first one arrived, he had had to leave for a period in India. His secretary was very helpful, even providing hot chocolate rather than the coffee I am usually offered in such circumstances, but one thing she couldn't be sure of was exactly when Jan would return. She thought it would be in two to three weeks, but made it clear that Jan was very interested in meeting me. I left my various anticipated telephone numbers and said that I would continue to try to make contact. Three weeks, however, was about the outer limit so far as I was concerned.

This left me with the afternoon to myself. I had planned this in any case, and expected to spend most of the afternoon in the Rijksmuseum, which is exactly what happened.

The Rijksmuseum was about a mile from

where I was staying, so I had a reasonable chance to explore more of Amsterdam on the way. At the same time I could carry out that other important task, road-testing Dutch chocolate.

This I did as well as I could under the circumstances; it was cold, but not so cold that you could justify a really high-calorie diet. In fact, it was warmer than it had been when we had arrived a couple of weeks before. I can remember working up quite a sweat on the walk out to the Rijksmuseum, mainly through shopping areas, but with some pleasant grassed areas as I neared the gallery itself.

Because I am not much taken with dark paintings of Dutch burgers I felt that there was a fair chance I would find the Rijksmuseum disappointing. I was both right and wrong.

The 'big' painting on display at the time was *The Night Watch* and although I do admire many of Rembrandt's paintings this is not really one of them. Indeed, in the main display area I found only a couple of Italian paintings which really attracted my attention.

But elsewhere in the Rijksmuseum I found more than enough to justify the visit.

For a start, the works of painters of Vermeer's period or thereabouts seemed much more impressive than I had expected from the reproductions I had seen. I was able to spend quite a long time with paintings I already knew of and through this extended exposure I became much more aware of their qualities, something which would stand me in good stead in a few weeks (although I didn't know it then).

But then there was Paulus Potter. Obviously I had been reading the wrong art books, and Paulus Potter was completely unknown to me. What struck me, as I suppose it must strike

many who see it for the first time, was the sensual impact of Potter's painting of the Bull.

I had not any clear idea of when landscape painting moved from classical, Arcadian styles to almost photo-journalistic realism, but I supposed this must be close to it. Instead of animals being a minor part of a landscape, the bull occupies the centre, and about one-third the area of the canvas. Billed as a landscape, this painting brings animality into the foreground. It was one of several shocks of this kind I was to have in 1982.

Elsewhere in the museum I found other paintings to admire, but something which stands out in my memory is the room or so devoted to the history of Amsterdam and the Dutch. This kind of historical display, when juxtaposed with the art of the period, certainly helps to give the viewer a setting against which to admire what the artists have done.

Quitting the Rijksmuseum, I headed further south down Paulus Potterstraat, but not to the Vincent Van Gogh National Museum (I find van Gogh too difficult) but beyond that to the Stedelijk Museum.

Here there was a display which reflects and emphasises the point I have passingly made reference to above about the relationship between artist and society: DE KUNST VAN HET PROTEST, the title of the exhibition, needs no translation. The collection of posters from the period 1965 to 1975 ranged from Provo pieces to — and I suppose this is a reasonable contrast — Peter Max, Tomi Ungerer and Ron Cobb.

This was more than an ample day of culture. I headed for bed early that night, as I was to travel quite early the next day to Frankfurt to link up with Jennifer, and to re-visit Cherry and Horst Grimm.

Langen 5-6 January 1982

The distance from Amsterdam to Frankfurt is 495 km, and accordingly this trip involves a very early departure from Amsterdam; I caught the train before 8.00 a.m.

The journey is via Köln, and the train line follows the Rhine as far as Wiesbaden before continuing east to Frankfurt.

I quite looked forward to this journey along the Rhine, but somehow things didn't turn out as I planned. The journey across to Köln is about 250 km, and while some of the early parts of the trip through the Netherlands are interesting (and industrial!), by the time we reached Köln I was becoming bored. There was barely time for a glance out the window of the carriage before we were moving again, towards the Rhine and towards Frankfurt.

I was the only person in the compartment, so I settled down to stare at the various marvellous castles and towns along the river; I woke up just after the train passed Bingen, about 30 km before we reached Wiesbaden and thus I managed to miss seeing just what the journey was planned around!

Nevertheless it was a relief to arrive in Frankfurt just after midday to be met by Jennifer and Cherry; Jennifer had arrived from Basel only a short time earlier. Cherry guided us out to the Grimm apartment in Langen — but I am sure that I could have found it again by myself, having been there as recently as 1979.

The remainder of the day was spent

quietly recovering.

And so was the next day, for that matter. Cherry, Jennifer and I went out for a Chinese meal for lunch. Cherry and Jennifer went on ahead to the restaurant and, while waiting for me, told the waiter they wanted to wait until their friend, a man with a beard, arrived. Unfortunately for them, this was the day when something like 20 men with beards arrived for a Chinese meal. Eventually I appeared to sort out the confusion and we ate in comfort.

After that there was some supermarket

shopping in Langen before we returned home — which is the way we came to think of the Grimm's apartment in Langen.

It had become distinctly colder since I had left Amsterdam, and we wondered what the future held in store from the climatic point of view; we had been out in the snow in Toronto, but it looked certain that we would now find out what snow was *really* like.

München 7 January 1982

We travelled down to München (437 km) in just over 4 hours. As we travelled south and east during all the morning the signs of snow, and of flooding, increased steadily.

From the back of the train, looking out over the receding tracks, there was a curious

dislocation; it was a matter of looking back at a past we had not actually experienced. Snow and flooding on this scale were both things we were unfamiliar with, although we had seen plenty of snow in the non-urban environment when we had visited the south island of New Zealand in mid-1981.

As readers of science fiction, however, we could adjust to managing a past which belonged to someone else.

It is probably also important to write something about the München railway station, not just because we saw quite a bit of it, but because as an institution it plays a much greater role in public life than do railway stations in Australia. (Much the same sort of remark could be made about other railway stations in Europe, particularly, in my view, large stations such as those at Frankfurt and Basel.)

The difference is one of temporal shift, at least in my perception. While European cities are without exception more *modern* than their Australian counterparts (as if any Australian cities *could* be counterparts of European cities!), both functionally and

culturally, the railway station in most European cities appears to retain a place which in Australia was long ago surrendered. The railway system in Australia, like that in North America, is of much reduced significance. Throughout Europe, or so it seems, a different perspective has led to the retention of rail as means of travel of importance; systems are being developed, not demolished, and as a consequence there's a life about major railway

stations which is absent from their Australian equivalents. But by casting my mind back to the early 1960s I can reconstruct an Australian world in which the rail system had some significance; to visit Europe is thus for me to travel both into the future and, in this one particular, simultaneously into the past. It's a strange dislocation.

Waldemar Kumming had arranged for us to stay with Gary and Uschi Klupfel out near the airport in a suburb named Ascheim. But we had arrived in the middle of the day, and wouldn't be travelling out to Ascheim until later in the day. This left us with a few hours to fill in, which we had no trouble managing at all!

For example, Jennifer had been continuing the search, inaugurated in Toronto, for a suitably warm coat, and she had not yet found one. So we did the obvious thing and checked out appropriate shops as we walked through the centre of Munich along the main pedestrian area or, as the German puts it so much better, the Fußgängerbereich.

This particular search was not successful, although walking in and out of heated shops did draw forcefully to our attention one of the difficulties of living in the cooler Northern hemisphere: this internal heating of buildings is okay, but you are forever shedding and then re-donning clothes as you go from shop to shop.

We were not to spend the whole afternoon in this fruitless pursuit, fortunately, and after a snack Jennifer and I walked around to our first BIG German art gallery, the Alte Pinakothek.

For my part, I had one particular reason for wanting to visit the Alte Pinakothek — to see Albrecht Altdorfer's *Alexander's Victory* — but one short afternoon changed my whole perception of this great museum.

For a start, getting a look at *Alexander's Victory* wasn't as easy as I had hoped it

would be; the painting was surrounded by students making copies of it, or portions of it. While this was disappointing in itself, it did allow us to redirect our attention to other parts of the gallery.

Much further on I shall describe my own extended visit to the Deutschesmuseum in München. That later visit was frustrating because the museum was so vast that it was not possible to even approximately encompass it in an afternoon. The Alte Pinakothek, by contrast, is not vast in size, but even three visits have left me wanting more time there.

Part of the attraction of the Alte Pinakothek must be the *average* quality of the paintings; I can't recall seeing any there to which I was not attracted, although I had seen reproductions of relatively few of them beforehand.

To try to describe, within a limited compass such as this, any considered imaginings about such paintings seems almost impossible. It makes more sense to move slowly and cautiously.

For example, Albrecht Altdorfer, once merely known to me as the painter of the original used for the cover of the British paperback edition of Norman Birnbaum's *The Birth of the Millennium*, now seems a giant figure. For *Alexander's Victory,* no matter what its many merits, scarcely compares in *impact,* for me, with *Susannah and the Elders* or the Danube landscape or the *Birth of the Virgin Mary*.

Susannah and the Elders (*Susanna im Bade*) must surely, for example, have influenced strongly M. C. Escher some five hundred years

later, so artificial yet so forceful is its perspective. Most of Altdorfer's paintings in the Alte Pinakothek appear to have been painted as though viewed through a wide-angle lens on a modern camera. Seeing the Altdorfer landscape *Donaulandschaft bei Regensburg,* which also has this effect — with vast trees flanking our view which extends back through the forest to a castle and mountains beyond — was to be on the end of a sort of double whammy after the Paulus Potter experience in Amsterdam. (Paulus Potter's *Peasant Family with Animals* is to be found in the Alte Pinakothek.)

The *Birth of the Virgin Mary* (*Die Geburt Mariae*) is remarkable not only for the perspective noted above, but the unusual geometric order brought into the painting: above Elizabeth and the newborn Mary is a vast circular halo of carefully painted (hyperrealistic, in fact) cupids. (Because of the richness of the collection in the Alte Pinakothek you can compare Altdorfer's geometric obsession with that of Botticelli in *The Lamentation*.)

But it does thus return to *Alexander's Victory* (*Die Alexanderschlacht*). *Alexander's Victory* is the work of a mad miniaturist; details of the whole painting show how carefully Altdorfer composed each section, yet it is the whole work which has the greater impact — wide-screen baroque at its most extreme.

But there's more to the Alte Pinakothek than Albrecht Altdorfer. For example, two of Dürer's great and intense portraits (of himself and the one of Oswolt Krel) are to be found here. The sketches Rubens did for his Marie de Medici series are here. On and on for two floors stretch galleries of exciting paintings which cannot be even tentatively appreciated by a fleeting visitor. Perhaps this is why we were back here the next day and why I returned a few months later.

It was still cold when we stepped outside, and it was time to travel to Ascheim, there to be protected from temperatures we had not previously experienced and to talk with the Klupfels. We were also introduced to Spetsi, a combination of orange juice and cola which is very pleasant but which is also an acquired taste.

8 January 1982

Next day was to be a very full one.

Waldemar Kumming picked us up in his car, and we visited a PX, clearly a benefit to Waldemar of being in the spying information-gathering business. Waldemar bought a few books, as did we, before going off for an Indonesian meal at midday.

That afternoon we tortured poor Waldemar — or at least that is what I felt we were doing at times — by dragging him around the Alte Pinakothek (no further description needed now) and then, across the road, to the Neue Pinakothek.

The Neue Pinakothek houses paintings from around 1800 onwards, and had re-opened after rebuilding only in March 1981. As a result, the edition of the catalogue we had bought for the Alte Pinakothek actually included some paintings now found in the Neue Pinakothek. But, as I have indicated, it's just a matter of crossing the road anyway.

The Neue Pinakothek is substantially an art gallery devoted to the nineteenth century. This means that it includes some extraordinary paintings (an 1820s landscape by Caspar David Friedrich, for example — but I am too much an admirer of his paintings to have much power of discrimination as between them), but somehow many of the paintings feel as though they can be appreciated only by some kind of acquired taste which I'm not sure I've got. Before coming here I would never have expected to admire — even want to explore further — painters such as Ferdinand Georg Waldmuller or Hans Makart, yet that was the result, and even now, years later, only a strong effort of will can fend off unjustified praise of these very ordinary painters.

They are in company at a different level for the Jugendstihl at the end of the nineteenth century makes its appearance and is represented by, for example, Klimt. There are also many Impressionist paintings, and all in all it's a delightful way to spend an afternoon, except if, as was I think the case for poor Waldemar, it's not really your cup of tea. Waldemar was to have his revenge later, but in

the afternoon stoically followed us around the gallery. But eventually we had to move on.

We were going to a meeting of a local SF group, but there was some spare time before that started, so Waldemar suggested we walk over to his flat in Herzogspitalstraße. This proved a remarkably short walk (in terms of what you normally expect when visiting a science fiction fan and start from the downtown area), but it was getting pretty cold, so brisk walking seemed to be the most desirable mode.

When we arrived there was really only a short time before we would have to move on to the club meeting. Nevertheless there was time for Waldemar to play us some of his recordings of the German radio version of *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, something which would have meant much more to us if we had been familiar with the English version. I guess we were pretty unusual in knowing a great deal more about Douglas Adams than about his writings!

Eventually it was time to set off. It had become even colder.

Let's just put this in perspective. Australians are used to temperatures in January of over 30 ºC, not less than 0 ºC. This was quite an adjustment to make. What we didn't know then was that the weather was deteriorating quite rapidly, and that our travel to Vienna the next day would be affected. But we set off from Waldemar's south towards the meeting place, which was only a kilometre or so. The trouble was, it seemed so much further. (The following summer I would walk along parallel roads basking in the sun and thinking it was all quite marvellous.) We started off chirpily enough but it soon became sufficiently cold that we preferred not to talk and keep as much heat as possible inside. If only Jennifer had been able to find a coat! (I, at least, was protected by a synthetic fur cap which Bruce Pelz had insisted I get in Los Angeles back in 1976 when I was about to travel across into blizzards on the east coast of the USA.)

I think we would have welcomed any corner in a wall, but we finally reached a shop which doubled as a meeting place, and we were

warmly greeted by around a dozen SF fans, few of whom spoke English.

The greeting was warm in more ways than one: we were offered something to help us recover from the cold. Mulled wine and hot black tea was just the thing for a night like that — except for me, whose teetotal status does not include drinking either tea or coffee. But on that night hot tea was just the thing. Jennifer had the mulled wine.

Although most of the München fans did not speak English we managed to enjoy a pleasant hour or so of conversation before Gary drove us back to Ascheim.

On the way, he told us as we drove that the traffic was unusual because this was the first of the environmentally-friendly winters in which salt was *not* spread over the road. Accordingly everyone appeared to be trying to drive more carefully, but some weren't managing it too well. This made for an interesting drive, but fortunately Ascheim wasn't far. And when we got there the Klupfels' house seemed the warmest we had ever been in.

Vienna 9 January 1982

This day was to be one which included more adventures than we had planned. What we were due to do was take what was then called the Orient Express to Vienna. It didn't turn out that way.

The Orient Express was due to arrive at 9.33 a.m. (and then depart at 9.45 a.m.), so this meant an early departure from Ascheim; Gary drove us down to the local train station for the short journey to the city. There was a lot of snow around, so we were dressed as warmly as we had ever been.

At the main railway station there were large crowds milling around, and it quickly became clear that the weather was affecting the trains. The loudspeakers boomed at regular intervals as potential passengers bustled round looking for somewhere to go; us too. But the Orient Express was a major train: surely it would not be affected.

But it was. At twenty to ten we got the feeling that the Orient Express, if it arrived, was going to be rather late — and there was no way

of telling how late. What to do? Take out one's copy of Thomas Cook's International Timetable, of course.

Since we would have to travel via Salzburg, the logical thing to do was take any local train to Salzburg and then look for any other train going to Vienna. According to the timetable there might be such a train at around 10.15 a.m.

By following the information from the loudspeakers (which, as is the case in almost all countries, would be difficult to follow even if you were fluent in the language of the country, which we were not) and that available on the television monitors, we worked out that a rather ramshackle set of dull green carriages being dragged reluctantly into a platform at one end of the station must be some sort of relief train travelling to Salzburg. The Thomas Cook timetable was not useful for accurate details of when trains would travel, but it did indicate which combinations of destination name were likely to get us where we wanted to go.

We piled onto the local for Salzburg along with other travellers willing to take a chance and eventually set off slowly in a train which looked like one of those you see in 1950s movies which are taking refugees from

one part of Europe to another just after World War II. In fact, on reflection, like all the European trains we ever travelled on it was warm and comfortable, but the bleak conditions outside made things seem miserable.

As we travelled south through Bavaria things didn't improve. The stations we passed through were almost always deserted, as though the local inhabitants were too smart to venture outside. Sometimes you

could only just make out the station buildings when the train stopped, so heavy was the snow. But the train ploughed on (not quite literally) and in about two hours reached Salzburg.

The Salzburg railway station was smaller and simpler than I had expected it might be, which made it easy to find the platform for trains to Vienna. But it wasn't at all clear what schedule trains were following that day. There was nothing to do but stand and wait. It was pretty cold.

We felt confident that we would be able

to get to Vienna that afternoon, but it was not possible to predict how long we would have to wait, so wandering around Salzburg and getting a meal was not a sensible option. We stood and we waited.

Eventually a local train arrived and some four hours later we arrived at the Westbahnhof in Vienna. We were greatly relieved, not only because we had arrived, but because this was, in many ways, our real destination.

We took the subway to the Pension Nossek on the Graben, where we were pleased to have any room at all, although the room we got

wasn't as good as the room we had had back in 1979. We took some time to warm up and then went to visit the small local restaurant we had sometimes used in 1979, the nearby Stadtbeisel, before collapsing into bed and sleeping very soundly.

10 January 1982

We were now to settle down for almost a week — to try to establish ourselves, however fleetingly, as residents of Vienna.

In 1979 Vienna had been a place where we had felt immediately at home, although we knew other Australians who had found Vienna to be quite uncomfortable. We had been certain then that we would return, but had not expected that it would occur so soon.

Whatever the other attractions of Vienna, one must have been the scale, because it was and is so walkable a city — at least the inner city! The difference this time, of course, was that it was winter, and although we had begun to sense what this would mean while we were in München, we still had no idea of just how cold it would become.

The other difference was that we were returning to a city we knew. Although our time in Paris had also been a return, we had had different feelings about Paris on the earlier trip in 1979, whereas Vienna had been instantly attractive to us both. Vienna was a place about which we knew enough to plan our own explorations (or so we thought), so that it had the attraction of being both known and unknown.

This first full day we therefore took rather quietly, acclimatising and planning. Part of the planning involved telephoning Franz Rottensteiner and learning something quite exciting which is to be revealed below.

Part of the planning was accidental; the Upper Belvedere, down to the south past the Schwarzenberger Platz, was one of may favourite places to visit (and I think Jennifer enjoys it too), so it was our first port of call. Although I have a bad habit of brushing past stalls with tourist brochures for some reason we stopped at one outside the gallery and found a brochure which was a very comprehensive

guide to art galleries, exhibitions, and so on; hence the planning.

The Upper Belvedere is one of the baroque creations of Johann Lukas von Hildebrant, designed for Prince Eugene of Savoy at the beginning of the 18th century (no problems with gays in the military then...). Mentioning this raises a problem which should be dealt with now.

Visitors to Vienna who reflect upon their impressions — and even those who are more than visitors — cannot help but be struck by the richness of this small city. It's the richness of the cakes in the conditorei of which much is made in travel books, but there's more to it than that. As a centre for art, architecture, music, literature (and of course psychology) Vienna seems heavily overendowed.

As a result of our brief visit in 1979 we were aware of this, and of the risks of being overwhelmed — so, consciously or unconsciously (fateful words in the city of the Old Fraud), we focused our attention in this second, longer visit. This time most attention would be given to art (including the associated architecture), whereas on the first visit the focus had been upon music (if it is possible to identify a main theme in so short a visit). And having limited ourselves to such a small goal we should be able to pace ourselves and thus enjoy more fully one aspect of Vienna.

This theory didn't work out, as our activities of 15 January, reported below, will show. But at the time it seemed an appropriately modest goal.

Now back at the Upper Belvedere the tourist is torn between the contents and the container. The Grolier Encyclopedia remarks about the Upper and Lower Belvederes and Lukas von Hildebrandt: ‘Perhaps the high point of his secular architecture was the twin palaces of the Belvedere (c.1714-24) in Vienna, whose ornamental richness, spatial fluency, and harmony of parts are distinctly Hildebrandt's own’ and certainly those three elements are what strike the eye in the Upper Belvedere (I've never been in the Lower Belvedere, so I'll take the encyclopedists' word for it).

If you can layer gold onto building elements, it seems to have been done here! But this is

where contents and container blur into one another; does the building appear richer because of the art works it contains, or vice versa?

The Upper Belvedere houses 19th and 20th century art, mostly Austrian and German, and it's here that you find Gustav Klimt's *The Kiss*. This building is probably one of the few settings in which Klimt's gold-laden masterpiece would not look ostentatious. There's an added benefit in that some works of the late 19th century precursors of Klimt, such as Makart and von Alt, are exhibited here. While there might be elements of High Gloss in the Upper Belvedere, it's also a place which repays close study.

That took a solid half day, so we spent the latter part of the afternoon wandering back through the streets to the Pension Nossek in the inner city, passing a few books and record stores which were noted for later attention.

That night we thought we would be experimental and, following the success with Cherry in Langen, we tried Chinese food in Vienna. The menu was not particularly baffling, but when it came to the fine detail of what each dish contained — well, that was a matter of chance.

Because Melbourne is a fine place in which to buy Chinese food it may be unfair to make comparisons, but this was definitely an aspect of Vienna which fell short of a similar experience in Australia: tolerable, but nothing to write home about.

11 January 1982

This was a day which continued our wandering activity.

But it also included some more purposeful things.

Firstly, in the morning we made our musical arrangements for the week. Whereas in 1979 we had toughed it out in standing room, this time we wanted something more comfortable. From the cultural program we had picked up the previous day we knew that there were more concerts we wanted to go to than we could fit in (probably a year-round occurrence in Vienna). It was therefore just a matter of making a booking for the item of our choice.

As it turned out, this was not quite so simple. Jennifer had more or less decided what her priority was, but at the general booking office when I asked for tickets for that concert I was turned down, and had to tell Jennifer we would need our second choice which was...? 'Er, Trio Di Milano', she said. That booking we were able to make.

We walked back to the Graben and as we passed Dorotheergaße Jennifer noticed a music shop she really felt she ought to visit. We picked up some extra clothing at the Pension Nossek and walked back to Dorotheergaße.

We had picked up extra clothing because it was now very cold. The temperature outside was -20 ºC to which ought to be added (or subtracted) the wind chill factor which I didn't want to think about.

Jennifer said she would not need a lot of time in the music shop so I thought about it for a moment and decided to stand outside and wait for her.

Now what Jennifer was interested in buying was music scores, in particular classical arrangements for small chamber groups; what could be bought in Australia was very limited in range, so opportunities like this were not to be missed.

So while Jennifer went inside I stood out in the slightly windy street. I examined all the posters, which were the usual kind of thing one finds outside such stores all around the world: announcements of forthcoming concerts and of newly released records.

After about ten minutes I began to run out of posters to read. Jennifer had said that she would not be long, and after all the store looked quite small, and would scarcely have all that much music for oboe.

After about fifteen minutes I began to wonder whether perhaps Jennifer had managed to leave via another door. I walked up and down the street for the length of the store; there was no other door. I began to wonder about the icicles forming on by beard; is it acceptable manners to break these off and cast them down into the gutter beside the footpath? and if not, what is acceptable behaviour?

After twenty minutes I looked inside the store. From the door I could not see Jennifer,

nor could I see anywhere else she could have gone. But could I go in and ask about her? I didn't think so. I could ask about mein frau, but after that — well, my Deutsch is not really good enough to describe someone in a recognisable way (I am pretty sure). So I went back to standing outside, walking up and down, stomping my feet to keep the circulation going and drawing short breaths through a thin veneer of ice.

And so it went on until, thirty minutes after she had entered, Jennifer emerged triumphantly weighed down by a pile of scores. The store had been a spectacular success, and the reason I hadn't been able to spot her from the door was that the proprietor, quickly realising that Jennifer was a serious customer, had taken her out to a storage room at the back where the real treasures were. She had not been able to buy everything she wanted, so this had been a much more successful excursion than the similar one in Paris.

At least now we could return to the Pension Nossek and warm up slightly.

After lunch Jennifer decided to sleep for a while, in preparation for our afternoon visit to Franz Rottensteiner but I, buoyed by my demonstration that I had enough fat to survive what seemed very low temperatures, decided that this was the time I would take the walk I had been wanting to do for some

time — a walk around a significant fraction of the Ring.

As it turned out it was too cold to do serious walking, but by early afternoon there was a blue sky (significantly absent earlier in the day) and a walk like this would be just the thing to set me up for the later walk out to Franz's flat. It also

meant looking at a different kind of architecture, for the buildings around the Ring were 150 years

more recent than those we visited on the previous day.

For a reader in English there still seems to me to be one best source for understanding the Ring — the long chapter titled 'The Ringstrasse, Its Critics, and the Birth of Urban Modernism' in Carl Schorske's magnificent *Fin-De-Siècle Vienna Politics and Culture*, which appeared in paperback just a year earlier than this visit to Vienna, and reshaped my ideas about the city. Just to walk around the Ring without understanding, or trying to understand, its

historical context seems more feckless than is absolutely necessary. This wide-ranging construction plan, which followed so closely the revolutions of 1848, is very different from Baron Haussman's more or less contemporaneous plan for Paris. But as you trudge around in the snow you tend not to think

too much about it, at the time. On longer reflection, the scene changes.

My original ambition had been to walk the full length of the Ring, but what I really did was walk down the Graben and then continue more or less west out to Schotten Ring. At that stage the snow was deepish — a foot or so — but there were clear pathways through it all.

This brought me out more or less opposite the university, and then I turned left and walked the length of the Ring around to the state opera house, which meant passing the Town Hall, parliament, theatres, museums and the Hofburg. The Ring itself carried more motor traffic than I had expected, but the snow meant that it travelled slowly; I don't feel nervous when traffic in modern cities passes me by at high speed, but there's something relaxing about traffic moving at a sedate pace.

The weather ensured that I didn't move at too sedate a pace, although I would have liked to linger. But the purpose of this exercise was to have done it, to be able to recall the impressions (visual and otherwise) generated by this cityscape which was both planned and unplanned.

It took about an hour and a half for me to complete this walk which makes it clear to me that I couldn't have been hurrying *much*.

On the way back down Kärtnerstraße I veered off to the left, seeking an alternative route, and passed an English language bookshop and, easily tempted, went inside. That's where I bought Carl Schorske's book, just mentioned above. I escaped with just the one book.

Later in the afternoon we revisited Dr Franz Rottensteiner's flat, which was now rather more densely inhabited than when we had first visited in 1979, for the now Mrs Rottensteiner had just given birth to Jan Joachim, freshly home from hospital. JJ's mother Hanna, whom we had also met in 1979, and grandmother, whom we had not previously met, were also in residence. It changed the way we saw the flat, but the books were still the overwhelming presence — well, almost.

We agreed to go out together for a meal a couple of days' hence, back to the restaurant we had eaten in in 1979.

We walked back into the inner city, looking in at various shops on the way. Jennifer's experience in buying stuff served as a sort of inspiration, and we seriously looked at the possibility of buying vast quantities of discount records, but inertia and a touch of good sense prevailed. In the end we bought only a few books, and nothing that was very heavy.

12 January 1982

This morning — loosely speaking — was our first serious attempt at art gallery visiting since our arrival; although the Upper Belvedere can count, it was really only an exploratory visit, and doesn't count in quite the same way.

The gallery we visited (and what we did cannot be described as anything more than a visit) was the Kunsthistoriches, a short walk from Pension Nossek.

This is a vast museum of art, in which the emphasis on historical works makes an exploration in depth almost impossible. The kind of mental change you have to make in going from the ancient (Roman and Egyptian) to the near modern (decorations by Klimt, for example) make this museum feel like excess more than most I have been to. But you can spend a long time in such a place. And we did.

We then returned to the Graben and visited a small supermarket (actually part of the large Julius Meinl chain). We just wanted to buy a few things and thought it would be straightforward, but it wasn't quite, and this was where we experienced our first and almost only example of mild discourtesy in Vienna.

There were two checkouts and, so far as we could see, there was no difference between them. Naturally, we joined the shorter queue. But when we got to the head of the queue it was made very clear to us that we were in the Wrong Queue. Yet we bought the same quantity of goods, and paid in the same way, as those just in front of us. It was one of those strange experiences foreigners have for which there is no doubt a perfectly obvious and simple explanation — but you never find out what it is...

That night we went to listen to the Trio Di Milano. What we didn't know at the time was that they would be visiting Australia later in the year, but I don't think we would have swapped the experience for anything.

In Australia, listening to classical music, especially chamber music of this quality, usually means sitting in a large theatre-style house which stuffed chairs and, if you are not particularly flush with the readies, sitting on them a long way from the performers.

But this was Vienna, and things were different. So we sat in a small hall, perfectly box-like, which held perhaps 300 people, on what looked like kitchen chairs, and perhaps ten rows from the front. Those hard wooden chairs were quickly forgotten for the next two hours, and we walked back through a cold evening convinced that Vienna was just about the right place, in all the world, in which to live.

But that isn't the way the world turns out. And we hadn't really become serious about sightseeing.