

POST-GUFF

13 January 1982

Now it was time for serious tourism.

Several important things happened this day. The first was that we decided, finally, that we were not going to Florence from Vienna, and that instead we would go back to Paris, to which I had now become addicted. Whatever the attractions of Paris itself might have been, they were magnified by just how comfortable we felt together in Vienna. We had now felt comfortably at home in two very different cities, and perhaps it was time to explore this feeling further, rather than going on to Florence, which though we knew and loved it well, had not had the same effect on us as Paris and Vienna. (Besides, we were planning to go to Milan and Rome as well on this trip...)

As we hadn't yet booked anywhere to stay in Florence there was no need for any action there, but Jennifer did have to ring the Hotel du Lys to

make sure there was a room for us there. That wasn't a problem either.

That out of the way, we moved into more serious museum-going mood.

Our major stop in the morning was the Stadt Wien Historisches Museum. This reminded me of the part of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam which had dealt with the history of the Dutch, but was far more firmly focused on the life and evolution of a city. What worked particularly well here and wasn't really tried in Amsterdam was the integration of 'formal' art into the historical panorama. Another difference was that the exhibitions here worked steadily through to the twentieth century, not stopping arbitrarily some hundreds of years ago.

This was really the place we should have visited first, to give us the long view of the history of the city, but it really was a case of better late than never.

Then we walked back towards the Danube and towards the Prater gardens, not so much for what we might experience in there but rather just to walk through that part of Vienna. That's the sort of thing tourists can really 'afford' to do.

Walking back through narrow streets I noticed a post office and decided to mail some of our collected goodies back to Australia; they had been piling up steadily as we travelled around, and now was the time to reduce the load.

Unthinkingly, I had picked *the* post office in Vienna, if not in the world, Otto Wagner's Postal Savings Bank. My excuse for not recognising it was that it was undergoing a major facelift, both externally and internally, and that we approached it from one side.

I bought a posting package and sat down to fill out the associated forms, surrounded by scaffolding. Filling out the three forms necessary for posting large parcels to Australia gave me no cause for alarm, because I had been trained by an expert; back in Langen Horst Grimm had worked with me as I filled in the four forms necessary for sending large parcels from West Germany, and I figured this had to be a little easier, even without Horst to oversee my work.

I proudly presented the completed forms and parcel to a clerk, who studied them

carefully and then pointed out that I had not completed one section on one form. Trying to read upside-down, I thought I had worked out what I had omitted, but no, I was wrong. What *did* he want me to fill in? I was puzzled. The clerk became insistent: 'städt? städt!' he said. What a pity it is that 'städt' in German sounds like 'state' in English! Eventually I cottoned onto what was needed, and blurted out 'St. Kilda' and wrote it down. The mail got to St Kilda, despite my efforts to send it somewhere else, and we stumbled outside, walked a hundred metres or so and then looked back: 'Wait a minute' I said 'that's *the* Post Office', which of course it was, except that you couldn't really appreciate anything other than the bulk and weight of Wagner's conception because of the scaffolding. It was *Alexander's Victory* all over again.

In the afternoon, inspired by this 'discovery', we thought we would look in on the Sezession building, back near the Stadt Wien Historisches Museum. But no, it was closed. This seemed very much like a plot to lure us back to Vienna at some later time.

You can spend a long time doing this walking-around stuff, and it was late afternoon by the time we were getting back towards the Pension Nossek. Having unloaded book purchases from several countries on an unsuspecting Post Office, we were now free to do some more buying, which is exactly what happened, even if it wasn't exactly *intended*.

It was becoming dark as we walked past this particular bookshop and, since there was no great hurry, we window-shopped quite carefully. And that's where I found what I hadn't exactly been looking for, but which I was very pleased to see far up in the left-hand corner of one window: the two volumes of Stanislaw Lem's *Fantasie und Futurologie* in splendid German hardcovers. And the price wasn't too bad either.

Into the shop. An attendant comes to help.

Now here's how things can start to go wrong. You can always buy things in a shop in any country if you can pick them up and give them to an attendant. but this I couldn't do. So I explained in pidgin German what I wanted,

emphasising *zwei*. He came back with one volume.

I went over my request, again, having to make clear that no, there was nothing wrong with the book he had brought and, no, don't put it back but there's another book I want as well with the same title (but a subtle II on the cover as well), and I really want both books, not one rather than the other.

Eventually everything went okay. The man at the cash register explained that it was the attendant's first day on the job. I guess that between us we didn't do too bad a job, in that case.

That night it was back to the Städtbeisel for dinner, where I managed to evoke another negative reaction from a Viennese citizen.

I didn't think my request was at all extraordinary, but the waiter certainly did: 'mit *spinat?*!' he almost shouted, and I, thinking there was nothing wrong with having a side dish of spinach with goulash emphatically replied, 'ja, mit spinat'. At least I got what I wanted, again, even though there was a lot of headshaking.

14 January 1982

The next day was decidedly peculiar, at least in the sense that some of it was unexpected.

This was the day we decided to visit a less well-known gallery; at the Palais Liechtenstein there was an exhibition of modern American Art, and we felt like being a bit adventurous. We went there by subway mid-morning, and spent a pleasant two hours roving over a two-storey building of some antiquity which was housing a very well-laid out collection of American paintings. There wasn't any individual work which was outstandingly exciting, but looking at Andy Warhol's work in Vienna is quaint — or perhaps odd. Anyway, it was a couple of hours well spent.

That afternoon was our return visit to the Rottensteiners'. Whereas previously I had spent my time talking to Franz, the visit to the Palais Lichtenstein had got me going and I spent the late afternoon talking to Hanna; completely ignoring the fact that she had a new-born child as a main interest, I raved about how exciting the exhibition at the Palais Lichtenstein was.

That got us talking about art, and led quite naturally to the Alte Pinakothek and how wonderful *that* was. By the end of the afternoon I was ready to plan an expedition to take Hanna to Munich to see the galleries there.

But we had other matters to attend to. Franz had correctly sensed that we had enjoyed our night out with him on our previous journey, and so had arranged for us all to go out to the Antiquitätskeller again, with Hanna's mother doing the baby-sitting.

This evening was more relaxed than the meal in 1979. We had plenty to talk about based on what had happened in the few years since we had last seen one another and had extensive opportunities to talk. The food was just as we had remembered it, and the pancakes just as excessively rich. Even now I worry about how many calories were consumed that night.

Fortunately for all of us we were able to make it an early evening; the Rottensteiners because of their child and Jennifer and I because, although we didn't know it at the time, we had a very full day ahead of us.

15 January 1982

This was our last full day in Vienna.

We had found the Pension Nossek to be a wonderful base to work from. In the heart of



Vienna, it meant that there was no escape from, on the one hand, the pressure of tourism, and on the other the inevitability of foreignness. The proprietors were wonderfully friendly and helpful, and the breakfasts meant that the day always started well. On this day, we needed to have everything working for us.

Recognising that this was to be our last day, we spent a long breakfast planning just how much could be squeezed in. We began, not for the first time, to regret some of the morning

when we had not hurried, some of the afternoons we had rested rather than get on with the business of being tourists. It was all rather frustrating. But it did mean we planned carefully, even if we had to leave out some places we would have liked to visit.

When it came to the crunch, we managed to see what mattered most to us, given the restrictions of time.

Two things were at the top of our list; seeing the Imperial Apartments and visiting an exhibition at the Modern Art Gallery over near the Sudbahnhof. Other things would be fitted in where possible. This was the one day in Vienna when we tried to operate by the clock.

As usual, when you spend a lot of time planning, you cut down on the amount of time for *doing*, but we managed to make this a relatively minor fault on this day.

We walked up the Graben to Köhlmarkt and past Demel's (where elaborate cakes carved out into the visages of Brezhnev and Reagan were threatening one another) to the Hofburg.

We started with the Imperial Apartments in the late morning; careful planning gave us the

opportunity to visit the Neueburg, which houses musical instruments, and the Ephesos Museum, with antiquities, at more or less the same time.

Where the problem arose was in the guided tour.

Tours of the apartments in the Hofburg are guided, and these tours are conducted mainly in German and English. Unfortunately, at this time of the year, there are relatively few non-German visitors, so the tour was available only in German. In our party (two Americans, two Brits, two Italians, and two Australians) only one had any acquaintance with German — and I've made plain in the pages above just how deficient my German is.

So we wandered around the apartments for two hours, our guide muttering reverently about Franz Joseph in the kind of tone that Franz Rottensteiner loves to parody and drawing attention to features of the rooms which none of his listeners could understand (although I did understand what he was talking about enough to sometimes think he had it wrong). But it was a memorable experience not so much for the guide's words as for his

surroundings. I was surprised that we hadn't paid our respects in 1979.

The Neueburg was of greater interest to Jennifer than it was to me, but seeing old musical instruments is still worthwhile; why do we not use old instruments the way we use old books? The Ephesos Museum was lacking in excitement beside some of the places we had visited.

Next came the long walk over to the Schweizergarten and the 20th century Art Museum where I was due for a large surprise.

Even before we got in there, early on a Friday afternoon, we saw something unexpected. An international bus terminal operates near the Sudbahnhof and there, in long queues, waited eastern Europeans returning to their homes after a week's work in the west. They seemed to be pleased about it at the time.

The 20th century Art Museum had two surprises, actually. The lesser of the two was that there was another exhibition of modern American art (rather better than the one at the Palais Lichtenstein, though more crowded).

This you could enjoy for itself or because of the contrast with the major exhibition.

The main exhibition was of the Art Club of Vienna, founded just after the second World War by Albert Paris Gutersloh, who had earlier in his life been part of the Sezession movement. This was a direct link with Gustav Klimt, whose works increasingly came to define my attitude to art, or at least art in Vienna.

The member of the Art Club I first became aware of was Paul Flora, whose feather-light drawings I was attracted to probably around the same time that I became interested in science fiction. Some time later the horror fantasy paintings of Ernst Fuchs began to appear in various places, and their forcefulness ensured that they were paid attention.

And as more cultural emphasis was given to fantasy in art, paintings by Rudolf Hausner and Wolfgang Hutter also fluttered across my consciousness.

To discover that all of these artists (and many more one wouldn't immediately associate with them, such as Friedensreich Hundertwasser, aka Friedrich Stowasser) were

part of a group was quite marvellous. The exhibition, which managed to include quite rivetting works from many members of the Art Club, was not the sort of discovery one wants to make at the last moment, but this was definitely a case of better late than never. It was difficult to leave, but we had two more galleries to visit that day, and it was already late in the afternoon.

Our main target was the Town Hall, which was featuring a Major Exhibition, but on the way (I persuaded Jennifer, since I wasn't too interested in the subject of the Major Exhibition) there was a gallery with a small show that we could just fit in before closing time. I'm glad we went to the exhibition of some of Max Klinger's works.

Possibly the best-known works of Klinger's are the drawings making up his series *The Glove*, which (logically enough) follow a glove through the society in which Klinger lived (i.e. just pre-Sezession, late 19th century). This exhibition had the complete set, as well as a broader sampling of Klinger's works. The forty-

five minutes or so we spent there filled in some gaps in our background knowledge of Vienna.

The Major Exhibition was a quite large one covering most of Picasso's life. I haven't ever seen so many Picassos in the one place, but since I don't care overmuch for Picasso I must admit that I found it all rather too much. At this time in the late afternoon to early evening there were still modest queues to get in, and the exhibition space itself was quite crowded; it was possible to shuffle around fairly quickly if one worked at it, which I'm afraid I wanted to do, whereas Jennifer, who admires Picasso's paintings much more than I do, didn't seem at all inclined to move at high velocity. We compromised our way out of it with my feelings about Picasso unchanged (which says more about my taste than I ought to admit).

We had earlier spotted the Café Budva as a place to try, which gave me yet another opportunity to try goulash, but after that it was an early night because on

16 January 1982

it was back to Paris by train.

This was a long journey: our train left Vienna at 8.20 a.m. (whence the early night on the previous day) and we arrived in Paris just before midnight after travelling almost 1400 kilometres.

Of this trip I can remember only passing through Strasbourg early in the evening. We must both have slept most of the way, making up for our exertions of the previous few days. But at the end of the day we were — and this is just how we felt — at home again. In Paris.

Paris 17 January 1982

Returning to Paris was like returning home in more than one way.

After the cold of Vienna it was a great relief to return to conditions in Paris which were more like those in Australia in January — a warm sun, blue skies, a general holiday atmosphere.

We were thus in a home away from home which was not at all like our real home. It was familiar yet surprising.

One result was that we spent much more time just wandering around, trying to be like

citizens. Being in Paris meant being in a home that was not home. It meant sitting around in parks or cafés, it meant wandering, rather than rushing, through bookshops, it meant exploring for out-of-the-way places.

But we were also very plainly far from home. Throughout this period of travel, the coup d'état of General Jaruzelski in Poland dominated headlines. Wherever we went, the signs of rising tension were unmistakable.

Our timing in returning to Paris could not have been better. Only a couple of hundred metres from the Hotel du Lys, just across the St-Michel was place Paul-Painlevé, in which was situated the publishing house of François Maspero. Much later Maspero was to become famous also for his fiction, but a core activity at this time was the publication of a political bimonthly magazine, *L'Alternative*, which specialised in political articles (mainly translated documents) dealing with (as the magazine's subtitle put it) rights and democratic liberties in Eastern Europe.

This magazine had begun in late 1979 and so was quite well-established by 1981-2. The

January-February 1982 edition might once have been planned around Solidarity's October 1981 platform, but the lead article was titled *After the coup d'état*. In addition, before we left Paris, I was able to buy a copy of a special edition of *L'Alternative* which summarised the last 16 months of events in Poland.

We were, although we did not know it then, politically a long way from home. (By the time we got to Canada, just over a week later, interest in developments in Poland in the press was still high, but a fortnight later, in Australia, there was nothing. We knew by this that we had returned to the fantasyland that was Australia in the early 1980s.)

Reading about events in Poland made clear to us just how close we were to the 'real world', and how far from that real world Australia was. It wasn't clear then, and it isn't clear now, that this is a very comfortable feeling.

There was more to do, of course, than just wander through bookshops.

The Louvre was even more crowded than on our previous visit. The deliberate tourist finds this depressing, for a visit to the Louvre may

happen to be focused on seeing particular works. Seeing what you want to see is less than likely if a few thousand others want to see the same items.

What's worse, it may be that what you want to see is not popular with others, merely adjacent to something popular. Trying to see almost anything in the same room as the *Mona Lisa* was almost impossible, and in the same room were quite a few other paintings of great quality. (In March 1994 many of these problems were reduced somewhat in magnitude when it became possible to visit parts of the Louvre via WebLouvre. About 200,000 computer users 'visited' the Louvre in this way in the first six months of operation.)

Other aspects of the Louvre are resistant to crowds, and luckily for me the Nike Athena from Samothrace is one of them. This used to be near some stairs and was brushed past by most visitors, but I suspect there'll always be some place from which you can study it uninterrupted — thank heavens!

So visiting the Louvre almost became a chore — and quite a change from Vienna, where

the only dense crowding occurred at the Picasso exhibition.

The crowding made us pleased (and at the same time disappointed...) to leave and walk about outside in the sun. The sun was so warm, and the sky so blue, that we almost felt ourselves returned to our own hemisphere where it was glorious summer, until we noticed that the puddles of water were frozen solid. Being reminded like this of the adaptability of mankind to different climatic conditions is heartening, until you begin to worry about how much you rely upon your perceptions.

The only notable food excursion of that day was a Chinese lunch. By Australian standards it was ordinary, and we didn't worry too much about Chinese food again until we got to Toronto.

We visited a few bookshops for the remainder of the day.

18 January 1982

This was a movies day.

We had picked out a couple of films to catch up on, using the mostly-reliable *Pariscope*, so in

the morning we took in Joseph Losey's *The Damned* and in the afternoon, at Videostone, it was time for *John Lennon for President*, which I remember as being mildly disappointing.

It was also a 'we ought to try it' day; we visited Les Deux Magots for afternoon coffee (chocolate in my case) with a musician friend of Jennifer's. With Café Flore, Les Deux Magots used to be the place for the literati to sit, drink, talk, and write. There wasn't much going on in the hour we were there.

19 January 1982

In the morning we visited the Museum of Modern Art of the City of Paris. This was modern art in a building which can only be described as modern architecture.

I'm afraid that the building seemed a bit



basic to me, so much so that the paintings in it seemed almost to be not so much decorative as necessary to the existence of the building. This may have been a clever ploy on the part of the architecture, but it was a relief to get outside and look across (under somewhat cloudy skies) to the Tour

Eiffel. This, alas, was another construction



which does not appeal to me much, and I've never been nearer to it than this — across the river and under the trees.

By now in Paris we were much less interested in dining in restaurants than in seeing what delights we could put together ourselves from the local shops; much more like tiny supermarkets, to be honest.

On our first trip to Paris in 1979 we had visited a fruit and vegetable market near the Gare du Nord, but on this occasion we never ventured so far; in small streets off the bde St Germain there was plenty of variety in the shops and markets, even though the prices were not the cheapest.

There was a fruit and vegetable stall from which we occasionally bought fruit, but it was a 'convenience' store which we made most use of. The fruit and vegetables were ordinary, but almost everything else did very nicely. Cheese was something we could make a fuss of, since it was so portable, but the range of other small items was just right for tourists (I wonder why...).

As a result, our hotel room was always stocked with snacks, and with the natural and inexpensive refrigeration offered by quite wide window ledges we only had to shop every few days. We were, whether we wanted it or not, in a home away from home.

This was also the day on which the telephone call came — the one from Amsterdam.

Jan Timmer's secretary rang the hotel and left a message asking me to ring back. This I did in the afternoon, to be told that Jan would be arriving back in Amsterdam from India at the end of the week, and could see me the following week.

This placed some minor constraints on what could be arranged, since we were leaving Rome for Toronto on the Wednesday of that week. But we quickly settled on Monday as the Day. All I had to arrange was to fly from Milan to Amsterdam and then back to Rome, while Jennifer went straight from Milan to Rome. It sounded easy.

20 January 1982

This was the day of Jennifer's great adventure.

Because she plays the oboe, Jennifer (a) is always on the lookout for good reeds, preferably cheap ones and (b) is always having to declare at customs that she is importing vegetable matter. The first causes the second, but it always seems worthwhile.

One of the best places in the world for buying oboe reeds is France, and in particular

the Glotin factory at Ezanville, just north of Paris, had made some of the best reeds Jennifer had used. An excursion to Ezanville hadn't been included in the plans on our first pass through Paris, but one factor which led us back was that Jennifer would visit Glotin. By visiting the factory she could inspect the cane before buying it, and thus select out the best pieces for the kind of reed she cuts.

I, on the other hand, do not play the oboe, and the only time I have blown an oboe reed was when I felt an urgent need to get a headache. (Playing the oboe — or indeed most such wind instruments — has one side requirement which occasionally is embarrassing: the need to buy cigarette papers without needing to buy tobacco. Tobacconists seem suspicious of people buying papers without buying tobacco.) So I was not going to go to Ezanville. I was going to stay in Paris. Even so, it was really only a little over a half-day trip up to Ezanville, so there would be a final half-day of other activity.

Jennifer's day can be described as a triumph of success in difficult circumstances. Because of

the location of the Glotin factory at Ezanville, the trip normally meant changing from the Metro at St-Denis to another train — and exactly the best way of proceeding was not clear from downtown Paris. Since, however (shades of 79!) the trains were not running, Jennifer's travel was to be even more of a challenge.

It was easy enough to get the Metro to St-Denis. And at St-Denis there was waiting an impressive array of buses and taxis. Jennifer started with the bus drivers, asking whether they could take her to Ezanville, and each one said no, though in slightly different ways. This left only the taxis — an expensive alternative.

But when the first taxi-driver Jennifer approached also said no (or rather, NON!) she was nonplussed: what to do?

One of the bus drivers who had said no had done so in a somewhat elaborate way, so she returned to him to find out more about what was going on. It turned out that (a) the taxi-driver had only said no because Ezanville was out of his zone and (b) this particular busdriver had actually said that while he could not take

her to Ezanville he could take her to a point at which she could change to a bus that would.

After that everything was easy. But it illustrated the risks of not pursuing a line of investigation thoroughly.

Otherwise the trip went smoothly and Jennifer returned to Paris in time for us to do some shopping in the Galeries Lafayette, and wander through the Tuileries, before having a Greek meal that evening. I had built up my strength for this by spending the morning sitting reading in the Luxembourg Gardens, an activity much to be recommended.

To Milan 21 January 1982

0832-1815 (actually 1845) 821 km

This was another of those days spent mostly travelling. We left at about the same time of day as we had left Vienna to come to Paris — around 8.30 a.m. — but fortunately we did not have so far to travel — just over 800 km. In addition, we were not quite so tired, so we were prepared to spend the day looking at the scenery.

But so much for sightseeing! After days of sunshine in Paris, we now had a cloudy, dull

day for travel, and although this was almost the only day we had which was like this, and although if you do have to have a cloudy day, it may be better to be spending it travelling rather than visiting interesting sites, the truth was that we had really been interested in seeing southern Switzerland (or at least I had — Jennifer had seen much of this part of Switzerland on her previous travels).

As we travelled through France towards Switzerland the weather gradually worsened, so that before we reached Switzerland the train was surrounded by mist and fog. I stayed optimistic, against all the approaching evidence. There wasn't only the weather obscuring the view, since night seemed to be arriving a little ahead of the schedule I had had in mind.

As a result, all I saw of the Alps on that train journey was a little from Montreux when the mist lifted a little, and then it was on into the darkness and Italy.

The train raced on through the early evening and then began to slow. We must have entered Italy, and indeed this was confirmed as the next station, at which we slowed to a halt, was

Domodossola. We arrived a little late, according to the train timetable, and departed even further behind schedule. We did hope that our reservations in Milan were not going to have passed their use-by date before we got there.

In fact we were only half an hour late arriving at Centrale station, and 8.45 p.m. was still really early in the evening. Except that Jennifer was not feeling too well.

At the station we therefore didn't spend much time looking around for alternative means of travel, and straightway took a taxi to what we hoped would be our pensione.

As it turned out, not only was this no great distance from the station; it was only two stops on the underground (something we would very much appreciate on later days). We were welcomed warmly, even though we were late, and I was sent on a Mission. Jennifer really wanted some milk to settle her stomach.

My familiarity with Italian derives almost entirely from half-remembered Latin — not a sound base in any case — and I hoped to spot a supermarket which would remove the language barrier: no such luck.

But almost opposite our pensione was a small store which in New Zealand would have conveniently been called a dairy. This was the next best thing.

It looked even better when I entered; there was a queue of citizens lined up to receive their dairy supplies, and I took my place at the end of it.

I then had an instant course in Italian. Pretty soon I knew about volumes of milk, the difference between pasteurised and non-pasteurised milk, the difference between glass and cardboard containers, and so on. The woman selling the milk interrogated the customers as to their needs, so all I had to do was listen to the questions and answers.

When I got to the head of the queue I had it made — uno litro etc., etc. But I wasn't going to get away with it; I was asked an additional question, one which none of the other half dozen customers had been asked. Was this because they had submitted to the interrogation and I was trying to avoid it? Or was there a genuine need for further clarification? I'll never know, but it seemed to be something about the

source of the milk. I shrugged a bit, handed over what I already knew the price to be, and escaped back to the pensione.

But I figured I was going to be able to cope with shopkeepers in Milan.

22 January 1982

We had been advised a little about what to see in Milan. Although it probably isn't known as a tourist town (except for fashion tourists, who hardly count), Milan can easily supply the sight-seer with an overabundance of goodies, and of course the main problem is remembering after you've left that you overlooked something.

For our first day we had a very modest schedule. A friend of mine had told me about the Leonardo Da Vinci Museum, which was a technology museum (aka the Museo della Scienza) a short distance from the centre of the city. A very well-planned tourist brochure made it obvious that Da Vinci's *Last Supper* was no great distance away, making a handy double.

By now we knew about the underground, something which was hard to avoid since one entrance was on the footpath at the front door

of our pensione.. We took this down to the centre of Milan, from which we would walk to the two Featured Attractions. (The Milan underground proved to be absolutely wonderful — frequent, cheap, clean, and safe. Well, relatively.)

From the central square, which is dominated by the cathedral, it seemed like a short walk to the places we were interested in, both of which lay somewhat to the west of the cathedral.

What surprised us as we walked was how relatively narrow the streets were, but then it was time to be surprised by the location of *The Last Supper*. It was in a quite small building next to a church but the only surprise when we got inside was just how little we could see.

It wasn't just that, following the script of just about every tourist guide written, the fresco was in the process of being restored. We also found ourselves standing at the far end of a room (admittedly small) most of which seemed to be filled with scaffolding. Despite all this it was all worthwhile, and demonstrated once again that looking at reproductions in books is a

poor substitute for seeing the real thing. Trying to describe adequately *The Last Supper* in words, however, would be a full-time occupation.

Next we went on to the technological museum. This was more impressive at the time than it was to become later, after I had seen a larger one elsewhere (see below), but it was certainly breathtaking. The artefacts of Da Vinci's were not great in number or quality, some of them being almost tucked away out of sight, but Da Vinci's technological mind and spirit were ever-present. The exhibits outside the main building (larger airplanes, for example) were worth looking at, too, but the trains were not in immediate line of sight from the main entrance and we therefore overlooked them.

This was a long enough day for us; we needed to build up strength for the next two days.

23 January 1982

This was an art galleries and museums day. But it was also the day on which I missed out on a great opportunity.

We hadn't been too well-prepared for Milan, in terms of what to see and do, but we did know that we would not be able to get in to La Scala to see an opera performance because we had not planned ahead. (In fact, this is not strictly true; there are ways of getting in at more or less the last minute but I'll not trouble you with them now.) But we did want to see the museum which is in the theatre, so we planned to add to that excursion a couple of nearby art galleries, the Brera and the Poldi Pezzoli.

This was ambitious, but we had a busy schedule for the next day as well. If two galleries and a museum seems a small load by comparison with the busiest days in Vienna, it should be remembered that we were now over a month into our travels and were in a city with which we were unfamiliar. There was one additional small task to be carried out — I had

to make the travel arrangements for going to Amsterdam.

We stopped off at a subway station short of the cathedral near a travel agent I had noticed while walking back to the pensione the previous day. Almost opposite was a bank where we could change some travellers' cheques. (There's nothing like the feeling of security you have in a foreign land when dealing with a large and substantial bank, and this one was backed by the Vatican. A couple of years later, when one of its directors was found dangling beneath a bridge, the Banco Ambrosiano was found to be a little less substantial. But who was to know???)

The people in the travel agency were very friendly and helpful, and the booking couldn't have been easier. The most stressful thing was carrying the bale of banknotes (with the lire at about 1100 to the Australian dollar) across the street. (We had more luck there than we did when trying to organise Jennifer's train booking down to Rome; it was not possible to get a seat at the time she wanted, and it took some doing to even get down there on the right day.)

Next, the La Scala museum. If you want to say you've been to La Scala, and either haven't the patience to sleep through an opera or the money to pay for the ticket, a visit to the museum is to be recommended. Part of the tour is a glance inside the theatre itself, so a quick study could easily prepare an accurate but fictional description of what it is like to see an opera there (from the back of the stalls).

The museum itself was dominated by exhibits related to Verdi and Puccini. But I couldn't help thinking that it was in some ways enough to be in the place where these great men had worked.

But the galleries called. Both the Brera and the Poldi Pezzoli were just along a tramline from La Scala, but we walked anyway (why miss any details?).

The Brera is probably the better-known of these two galleries, but the periods covered are similar (up to the end of the 18th century, although concentrating on earlier times); the main difference at the time we visited was that the Poldi Pezzoli was much more restricted to Italian painting.

The Poldi Pezzoli was in some ways more attractive because it was more like a house filled with paintings (and, on the ground floor, armour and other decorative stuff which we didn't pay much attention to) than an art gallery. From the front entrance it hardly looked like a gallery at all, but as you moved inside it rapidly became a most attractive example of a 'modern' (in the sense of security, temperature control and so on) art gallery.

The Brera was larger and more obviously an art gallery. Anyone visiting Milan should take them both in, anyway.

We now walked back in the mid-afternoon to the Galleria to do some window-shopping before returning to the pensione.

On the side of the Galleria near the cathedral were stalls and tables and from some of these political pamphlets were being distributed. I picked up some and, extending my tiny Italian to its fullest extent, I deduced that a political rally was about to take place at a nearby sporting ground. There would have just about been time to get out there. I wondered

whether it would be worth going out there just for the experience.

But as I've indicated my own Italian was minimal, and Jennifer had even less. So we just walked back to the pensione. And that's how I came to miss being there when Errico Berlinguer announced the divorce between the Italian Communist Party and Moscow.

24 January 1982

This was the day which tested our stamina. It was also one of the most enjoyable of the whole trip.

The schedule (!) called for us to finish off our tour of art galleries during the day and then visit Karel Thole at night.

The Castello Sforza was where we were to start. Provided we could make an early start there would be no problems. And it was only as we walked out the front door and down the stairs to the underground station that I remembered a problem: today was Sunday. In the backblocks (i.e. Australia) public transport tends to be at a minimal level on Sunday mornings and without necessarily carrying all

one's own cultural baggage there is a tendency to assume that things don't differ much from country to country. Attitude towards public transport is of course one of the cultural factors most subject to variation amongst outwardly similar countries, and I discovered to my delight that the frequency of trains on the Milan underground is quite satisfactory and, with the price then at 200 lira a trip, quite a bargain.

We were to walk to the castle from the downtown area, a distance of just under a kilometre. It was cool but not cold. Although the Via Dante, which led out to the castle, was a fairly important road the footpath alongside it plainly was not regarded as a significant thoroughfare, and negotiating it meant dodging around holes and puddles. But it was worthwhile.

Visiting the castle itself was one of the oddest of experiences. It was one of those castles for which the word 'massive' might have been invented, and although it has been restored from time to time it still looked to my untutored eye as though parts of it were about to fall down (or rather collapse into a pile of

rubble). But once you got inside the building it quickly became obvious that nothing was going to be collapsing for a few more centuries.

Outside a sort of medieval faire was taking place, and it seemed somehow more out of place here than in a more contemporary setting, perhaps because the castle was a reminder of the reality of the medieval world as opposed to the fantasised world of knights and chivalry upon which so many 'medieval fairs' are based.

We walked around an upper floor, looking down on the fair inside the four walls and upon the outer side of the castle as well. The original occupants were indeed able to isolate themselves from the real world, and the builders made sure of it.

Now we walked back down towards the centre of Milan again. Here we wanted to spend some time at the Ambrosian Art Gallery before going on for the afternoon's main activity. The planning had not been good; I felt just about medievalled out, and wasn't able to appreciate what was there (mainly works of Leonardo Da Vinci), and the library was closed. This one had

to be put onto the list of places to visit again one day.

But there was plenty of contrast at our next destination, the Gallery of Modern Art in the public gardens, more or less on the way back to the pensione. We didn't know what to expect, and got more than we bargained for (at least I did).

There were three outstanding items here, in a small space that seems underrated to me. In one area I found some work by Segantini, the Italian who was associated with the Viennese Sezession, of whose work I had seen all too little. That took my attention quite strongly until I discovered a large canvas or two by Gerhard Richter in his photographic style. And that led on fairly naturally to a small exhibition of photographs by Lewis Hine. Discovering so many wonderful pieces in so small a space was a delight, and a welcome change from the excellent but somewhat unvarying artistic diet we had been on.

Leaving the modern gallery near to closing time left us just time to get back to our pensione and get ready for our visit to Karel Thole, who

lived about a kilometre south of the cathedral. Because we had not been to that part of Milan we decided to take the underground to the city centre and then walk; we were due at about 7.30 p.m.

It was cool but not cold as we walked south, and it was definitely growing dark as we walked alongside the park over which Karel's apartment looks, but it was certainly peaceful enough.

But Karel wasn't too happy when we told him we had walked there: 'it's so dangerous', he said. There were junkies and so on all around, especially near the park. Perhaps living where we did in Melbourne made us not worry much about such things. Certainly that part of Milan was very quiet and lacking in action compared with our part of St Kilda.

Karel had a favourite restaurant back in the city which he wanted to take us to, so we were driven back, more or less along the roads we had taken, to a restaurant which served fabulous food, even if it was expensive.

There were just the three of us, which was just as well because the restaurant was very

crowded. Anyone talking with the man who for years was the leading SF illustrator in Europe probably ought to be cautious, but whether it was our experience of the afternoon or Karel's courtesy we found ourselves talking quite a lot about art, about which Karel was obviously an expert while Jennifer and I knew almost nothing. Somehow it all worked out. And then Karel suggested that he should pay for the meal and give us a lift back to our pension.

Here was a further piling up of courtesy we could not resist; and then Karel suggested that we should stop off for supper at one of his haunts, the Bar Basso. And so it came about that, long after midnight, I found myself lecturing Karel Thole about the different ways Vermeer and the Australian painter Fred McCubbin handled light in their paintings of women. Fortunately for me Karel seemed to understand what I was struggling to say, perhaps because, having been to the world convention in Melbourne in 1975, he knew the difference between European and Australian light from direct experience.

Soon enough it was time to get some sleep for Monday's adventures.

Amsterdam 25 January 1982

This day was more of an adventure than I really wanted. My various efforts to contact Jan Timmer had at last been successful, and for a mere 650,000 lire I was flying to Amsterdam to meet him for the day!

Recovering from the previous late night was not something about which there was much of an option, since the plane was to leave quite early in the morning. Jennifer at last had a train connection to Rome, so we would be able to meet there the following day.

I went out to the airport using a bus from the city terminal. It was slow getting out there, but never so slow that there was any chance of missing the plane. One of the reasons it was slow was that it was quite foggy.

And it was even foggier out at the airport. The fog was, however, just about the most interesting thing at the airport. Not much was going on, although one plane landed. Then, when the time had passed for my plane to leave,

I began to think about alternative transport — and the cost of it. Several other flights were announced as having been cancelled, but ours was not. Eventually, more than half an hour late, we were called to board.

This meant boarding a bus to get out to our plane, and the fact that the fog made it hard for the bus driver to find the plane was scarcely encouraging. Then, once we had drawn up alongside a plane, we sat (or more precisely, in my case, stood) and waited in a bus which rapidly cooled. After cooling us down to near-freezing, the driver returned us to the air terminal. This was not at all encouraging, but nor was the alternative of taking off in dangerous conditions.

Back in the terminal we sat around waiting to be told of our fate which was, eventually, to be returned to the bus and thence to the plane which, this time, we boarded. I thought, perhaps optimistically, that it was a little lighter, though I was not brave enough to believe that the sun was coming out.

But the pilot and the airport officials were brave enough and we took off. For the

passengers there was no such thing at that time as visibility but there soon was (and gloriously so). When we did emerge from the cloud it was to soar over the Alps (which I had never seen before) in bright sunlight. If only I had had my camera!

A little less than an hour later (but more than an hour late) we landed at Amsterdam (Schiphol). Back in December Jennifer and I had taken the train to Den Haag, so this time I thought that I would take an airport bus into downtown Amsterdam. It was a pleasant enough journey, but I must have been distracted by something because when I collected my baggage together at the railway station and set out to find a room for the night I noticed that I had left behind, on the bus, the purple and white beanie which Bruce Pelz had insisted I get, back in February 1976 when I was setting off for the US East Coast; I have had a cooler head than I would like ever since.

I had time to find a small room in which to stay that night quite near the station ('small' is an inadequate word; this was more like a cupboard with a bunk — but it was cheap and

available), and then a salad roll before walking once again to Jan Timmer's office — this time certain that I was going to meet him at last.

In 1977 I had spent a year investigating innovative educational programs throughout Australia (and as a result seeing more of Australia than I had ever anticipated) and about the same time Jan had been studying the successful (or otherwise) implementation of such programs (mainly in the United States). Somehow we had come across one another's work and exchanged a letter or two, to the point where it seemed to me like a good idea to meet him.

We were able to talk at quite some length about the nature of educational innovation (his perspective was rather more theoretical, mine more practical — and indeed I was about to spend five years working in a progressive and certainly innovative school) and Jan gave me drafts of some reports he had been working on. He then invited me out to dinner that night and suggested — with rather a lot of hesitation — that we eat at the railway station. This was hardly an attractive-sounding idea, but Jan said

he had a special reason (but that salad roll for lunch sounded as though it might have been inadequate).

I then spent an hour or so wandering around parts of the city I had not seen before (although not so far as on my previous visit of a few weeks earlier). I also listened to various Amsterdam radio stations on my portable receiver, but they sounded just like English or American stations to me.

I had not at that stage explored the main railway station at all closely, so I simply waited where Jan had asked me to wait, trying to look as though I was not hanging around the entrance to a railway station. When Jan arrived he started by saying that he would not have invited me here except that this was a rare (and soon to end) opportunity. ‘The restaurant upstairs’, he said, ‘is something special by comparison with other railway restaurants.’

This was certainly true. In quality and style it was rather like a restaurant car on a plush modern train, with silverware, obsequious waiters, and quite good food. The reason Jan wanted to bring me here to this large room

above the main concourse was that the restaurant was scheduled to close that week. Apparently the citizens of Amsterdam no longer appreciated an old-fashioned place like this.

This gave us an excellent environment in which to continue our discussions, since the restaurant was indeed sparsely populated; but there had to be an element of sadness in our meeting since it was not merely the closing of this old tradition, but also it was unlikely that we would see one another again.

I slept well that night, in preparation for my return to Italy next day.

To Rome 26 January, 1982

It was an early morning flight — well, fairly early, so while there was plenty of time to get out to Schiphol there really wasn’t time for anything else. I hoped that the flight would present fewer problems than the one which had brought me to Amsterdam — and here I was extremely lucky because of the kindness of the person seated next to me.

He worked for British Aerospace, and routinely made trips of this kind. For no

obvious reason I could think of he offered me his window seat, which was on the right hand side of the aircraft (I had also had a window seat up from Milan).

From Amsterdam down to the Alps there was little to be seen from the window except cloud (which is common enough, I suppose) but then, just as we passed the Alps and headed down the western side of the leg of Italy the sky cleared and I (and all the passengers on that side of the plane who cared to look) had a splendid view of the Mediterranean; I hadn't expected to see so many islands (large and small) so clearly.

I wasn't quite sure what to expect when we arrived at the Rome airport at about midday, except that Jennifer had said that she might come out to meet me. In fact, there was a surprise, but not quite what I expected; going through Customs appeared to be an almost non-existent exercise, and I probably looked a little foolish standing around waiting for someone to clear me through. Eventually a young man waved me through authoritatively and I hurried through wondering whether there

were any customs officials in uniforms and whether they ever bothered to check papers.

Jennifer had indeed come out to meet me on the airport bus and so, since she was now returning to Rome, getting to the right place and onto the right bus was very easy. On the way in (in bright sunshine, in great contrast with what the weather had been like in Milan) I suppose I was rather childishly excited because I anticipated with some eagerness seeing some of the antiquities which had interested me when I was much younger. And so seeing an aqueduct, and later rounding the Colosseum on the way to the main railway station, was rather like taking a trip into the past.

From the railway station it was only a short walk to the YMCA, where Jennifer had stayed overnight and which was to be my base for just 24 hours. As soon as my bags were stowed I wanted to be out and about.

Because of the location of the YMCA this meant walking (or mostly walking). It was hot only for a Roman winter, which doesn't mean much to an Australian, so walking quite a long way was very comfortable.

What we did was walk down to St Peter's Square via a series of stops to admire bits and pieces. One serious mistake was to not look at the Forum more closely; we peered down on it from a side road but didn't feel we had time to ramble about inside. This is one of the tourist's most common errors, I suppose — glancing at, rather than exploring, interesting sites.

It was just after we passed the Victor Emmanuel monument that I first felt the strong press of history, and this was through something very ordinary: crossing a cobbled road, I noticed a manhole which, in the traditional way, was labelled with the initials of the responsible civic body. In this case the initials were SPQR; after all these years the senate and the people of Rome still rule!

Much much further along and across the Tiber (even though it isn't called that any more) we reached St Peter's Square (which isn't square). Jennifer went into the Basilica while I stayed outside and gazed up at the circle of columns surrounding the square. The area was, it seemed to me, relatively uncrowded. It was an

opportunity to appreciate weather which was not so cold as I/we had become used to.

The second cultural shock occurred while walking back to the YMCA when we realised that some of the names of places were more than just familiar from street maps but rather from our schooldays when we learned the names of the seven hills of Rome. There was a redefined sense of scale once we appreciated that we had to think of these mild elevations as having those historic names.

We had a light evening meal and then wandered around briefly before going to bed early. It wasn't just that we travelled to Toronto the next day — we had to visit the Vatican in the morning. It might mean that we would sleep on the plane, but we certainly ought to be prepared for some rapid movement early in the day!

Rome 27 January 1982

We had breakfast at the YMCA, in a large hall filled with potential sightseers even at that early hour. But at least it was cheap.

I could make no pretence that this was going to be a relaxed day with a trip to an art gallery

or so, since even by my standards things were going to be rushed; we had to be back for our bags by about noon if we were to catch the flight for Toronto.

We scuttled down to Vatican City, having somewhat indistinct understandings about how to get to the Sistine Chapel and the Vatican Art Gallery. We thought of the entrance as being around the corner from St Peter's Square, but how far around the corner was not at all clear in our minds when we set off; it was further than we had expected.

It also involved walking along what appeared to be side streets, though of course they weren't — it was just that they were so quiet by comparison with what we had experienced elsewhere in Rome for, just as everyone tells you (but you can't believe it), the car traffic *seemed* to be chaotic. Thus to find a street with only a few cars, moving in a more or less orderly way, was unexpected. The parked cars were laid out with the flair we had seen elsewhere, however.

I suppose the Sistine Chapel is *always* crowded. Perhaps we had expected too much,

assuming that early morning would be relatively uncrowded (as perhaps it was) but the result, without doubt, was that we moved right along pretty smartly.

Years later I don't feel particularly guilty at having done the entire tour of the Sistine Chapel and Vatican Art Gallery in less than two hours. This was certainly an acceleration over the rate at which Jennifer and I had come to move through art galleries during this trip, but the painful reality for me (at least) is that I can't absorb a great deal about a painting at first sight; I think, or at least I rationalise, that I need time to adjust from any reproductions I have seen to the 'real thing' (which might in any case have been restored beyond recognition). Later I may be prepared to get to know a painting (or perhaps a piece of sculpture) more thoroughly).

There's a sense in which it is true for everyone, not merely the very rich who can afford to buy paintings, that great art is lived with rather than looked at. I have been lucky in the cities in which I have lived (Melbourne and Adelaide) that there have been great paintings

which I could come to regard as part of my mental furniture, although in Adelaide there seems to me to be only one Great painting — Stanley Spencer's *Hilda Welcomed*.

And so our rapid transit through the Sistine Chapel and then slightly more leisurely passage through the Art Gallery was nearly in keeping with what we had done before. The Sistine Chapel exceeded my expectations — my anticipations, rather — while the Art Gallery was less awesome (in the old sense) (and the Raphael Rooms were rather disappointing; but then I have often definitely felt guilty that I am unable to be as enthusiastic about Raphael as are others).

The Art Gallery itself was overly organised (for me) with carefully defined paths to be followed. At least this made it possible to scoot rapidly about on our accelerated schedule, gathering impressions as best we could before returning for our bags and then taking the bus out to the airport.

If Customs seemed too relaxed on my arrival, how great was the contrast in officialdom on our departure! Getting boarding

passes was straightforward, but going through immigration to the gate lounges was a surprise — neither before nor since have I been confronted, as I was then, by two men levelling submachine guns at the soon-to-depart passengers as they emerged clutching their carry-on baggage! Had there been some political emergency of which we had been unaware? Or was this a standard procedure? We never found out, and meekly boarded our plane for Toronto — which meant that we were on our way home, with Toronto being but a stopover with which we were now slightly familiar.

But the great adventure, the discovery of new sights and sounds, was over.

Toronto 28 January 1982

Even though we were now very much Going Home, there would still be new things to see and do. After all, when we had passed through Toronto over a month before it had been unexpected and we were not prepared to make much use of the time — we had been just filling in time.

If we had had plans of any kind for this stopover, they would have been changed by the preliminary transit and by what we had experienced in the past month, for this time would no longer be one of discovery but one of re-acquaintance. Nevertheless it wasn't to be a boring time at all.

This time we were staying downtown, rather than out near the airport, and we had a full uninterrupted day to Do Things. The Holiday Inn Downtown overlooked the city offices, and was appropriately centrally-placed.

We were pretty tired, but a few telephone calls were in order. By the time those were completed our program was In Place.

29 January 1982

Next morning we needed to put that program into action.

Because we had had the earlier (though unplanned) stopover in Toronto we didn't need to get used to the city, but we did need to find a few new places. Fortunately we were now sufficiently tired not to try planning anything elaborate.

So an early step was to complete the bookings for the opera that night. *Lucia Di Lammermoor* as performed by the local company was playing, and this seemed a pleasant way to finish off the travel. Getting the tickets brought us down towards the lake, and so we continued that little bit further so we could say we had seen it. But this didn't work because all we could see was snow and



ice — quite a change from Rome!

For the afternoon we had settled on seeing *Reds*, newly released, at a cinema up near where Bloor and Yonge meet. Being up in that part of Toronto allowed us to visit a couple of places we were interested in, as well as

following up tips from John Millard, whom we were to see later in the day.

That's how it came about that, as well as visiting the Hudson Bay Company store (just to say we had been there), we passed quickly through the lobby of the Metro Toronto library (just as impressive as John said it would be) and then around to Yorkville Village where we found, amongst the other interesting stories, the one John Millard has told us about — a shop devoted just to magazines. This wasn't a newsstand, but rather a place which sold just magazines which are likely to hang around for a while (deliberately) such as quarterlies. I had described to John my excitement at some of the things I had been able to buy earlier in Toronto, so he followed up with this suggestion. The store was owned, according to John, by an Australian. I made a few purchases, safe in the knowledge that the carrying from now on would mainly be done by someone else (namely CPAir).

We both liked *Reds*, but by the time it was over it was certainly getting cold. But we still had a whole evening to go, starting with going

with John Millard to a Chinese restaurant, then going on with John to see *Lucia Di Lammermoor*.

The Chinese meal was all right, but we lingered perhaps just a little too long and as a result had to hurry off to the theatre.

Lucia Di Lammermoor was okay too, but the Toronto Symphony, at least on this occasion, didn't seem up to the standard of the major Australian orchestras, with some of whom Jennifer had played.

But it was a fine conclusion to the trip. Spending time with other fans, especially when you discover mutual interests other than science fiction, is always fun, and it was great that we were able to have so much of John's time.

That evening we started packing. It was too late now to regret all those things which we hadn't done, and all the people that we hadn't met. But later there was one thing I did regret — it would have been so easy to have walked past Massey Hall where, on May 15 1953, one of the great jazz concerts was played by Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Bud Powell, Charlie

Mingus and Max Roach. But I didn't think to do it.

We finished packing the next morning and found ourselves at last at that point on a journey at which you begin to look forward to going home.

As it happened, it was useful that we had already had a departure from Toronto airport. It meant that we knew from the previous construction work that any purchases there would be difficult. They were, but then if all you are interested in buying is the paperback edition of Italo Calvino's collection of Italian fairy tales you can be relatively focused. The seats in the waiting lounge were so hard that we were relieved rather than disappointed when, at last, we were called to board our plane for home.