

cover is clever, funny, and beautiful (and gives me a chance to see what Elaine looks like). Both Elaine's fractal graphics are lovely too (I bet they are stunning in colour). What is it about fractals that makes them so beautiful? Is it partly the idea that there is pattern underlying *everything*? (Very magical.) Is it because the patterns are self-referential but not identical repeats (either because of variation of scale, or because there's a complex call-out sequence where pattern A calls B calls C calls A . . .)?

Is that fractal-drawing program horribly

expensive? I used to have (on my old computer, which only had a monochrome monitor, bless it) a copy of something called Fractint, which was apparently downloadable for free from the Internet, but the 'new computer' (which is, let's face it, a g-g-g-grandmother in modern IT terms) has a colour monitor, and I'm suddenly hungry for fractals again . . . I wouldn't have any means of printing them out (unless I make friends with a colour printer owner, which is not impossible) but it would still be nice to see them again.

(7 December 2001)

I've already explained to Sue that she can get a copy of DJFractals directly, and for free, from its author, Dick Jenssen (ditmar@mira.net). Dick is willing to pass on his own pieces of computer art to fanzine publishers who want snazzy covers.

ROBERT MAPSON

33 Westfield Road, Kelmscott WA 6111

If you are interested in illustrations for future zines, you might like to consider the attached thumbnails [see graphic above]. I've always had a certain artistic bent (but bent what?), which can now find some expression with the advent of 3D modelling packaging and accessible reasonable computing power.

(8 December 2001)

JOHN BERRY

4 The Chilterns, South Hatfield, Herts AL10 8JU, UK

Re your observation that I am the remaining member of Irish Fandom extant — exactly one year ago I almost joined them in Celestial Irish Fandom. I visited the doctor to complain about chest pains, which I mistakenly thought were incipient indigestion. He called paramedics from the local hospital. He later told me that I would have died if I had made an appointment to see him ten minutes later. I had a pacemaker fitted, and also suffered a severe attack of shingles, plus PHN, plus fluctuating hypertension. For several months I was inactive, not even opening mail. Recently I have made an excellent recovery, and have now returned to



most of my previous interests. I have commenced work on my army memoirs, *The Horsed Vassell*.

The front and back covers of *SFC 77* are particularly exceptional, well worth framing.

I was in Aussieland in March–April 2000 to visit my son and family near Gundaroo, north of Canberra. He has a goat farm, which is actually his hobby, as a rest from computerising.

(Late November 2001)

John has sent me, for *TMR*, an entertaining article about his most recent visit to Australia — but I've told him that Australian fans would really like to meet him next time he visits. John Berry (usually known as 'the English John Berry') is famous for being a member of Irish Fandom during the early 1950s. We've now lost all the other famous members of IF — Walt Willis, Bob Shaw, George Charters, and James White — except for Madeleine Willis.

MARTIN MORSE WOOSTER

PO Box 8093, Silver Spring MD 20907, USA

I have been a silent reader of *SFC* for decades. I was a subscriber in the late seventies and early eighties (when Hank Luttrell was your North American agent). In the past decade, Patrick McGuire has been kind enough to lend me his copies of *SFC* and *Metaphysical Review*.

I suspect your best correspondence will continue to come from people who receive your zine in the traditional way. You mention that you've posted and sent *SFC* in a .PDF format, to which very few people responded. I think that even technophiles don't like receiving lengthy publications electronically. I have had email for nearly a year, and read *Ansible* online. But I have little patience reading anything electronically that's longer than one page. Moreover, a .PDF file, however well designed, loses all the touches that make *SF Commentary* worth keeping permanently as part of a collection. When I read your George Turner issue (which, of course, is a book in disguise) I put it on my shelf, along with other serious works of SF criticism. I wouldn't have done that if I had received the zine as a bunch of loose pages that I would have to collate and staple.

There you are: looks as if I'll have to keep facing bankruptcy each time I want to publish a fanzine. I had hoped that within five years I could send every issue by .PDF, save myself a fortune on printing and postage, and return to monthly issues. But paper rules!

But if you want to save space in the future, may I suggest trimming the space you give to Colin Steele? What do you see in his work? He strikes me as a very glib reviewer, who probably gets given a thousand words once a month to report on as many titles as he can. But I don't find his work particularly insightful, and the lack of publication dates further reduces the value of his work. I had no idea, for example, that D. G. Compton was at all active in the 1990s, and would have liked to know when his novel appeared.

Colin Steele is the only regular newspaper reviewer of SF in Australia (weekly, in *The Canberra Times*). Others, such as Van Ikin (*Sydney Morning Herald*) and Terry Dowling (*The Australian*) receive spots irregularly. (I don't see Van's columns, but Terry seems to have been cut down to every two or three months.) Colin is the only person in the country who sees everything (although often by extracting books from publishers only with extreme difficulty), and he has to cover as much as possible in as few words as possible. Which I think he does remarkably well. No matter how slight a coverage he devotes to a particular book, he always gives me some idea of whether or not I would enjoy reading it. He sent me copies of his columns regularly for nearly ten years, hoping against hope I would get around to publishing them. I did so in *SFC* 77, but now I want to get away from short short reviews. I trust Colin will keep sending me longer articles he thinks might fit *SFC* or *Steam Engine Time*.

Devote more space to your own writing, including a more lengthy explanation as to why you chose the books on your Ten Best lists, and why in some years you expanded the list to 12 books or 14. In fact, you could produce a very interesting chapbook by publishing your Ten Best lists from the 1960s onwards in one place. Then you could a similar publication for your film list (unless you save that for *The Metaphysical Review*).

(26 November 2001)

Be careful, Martin. Massed armies of *SFC* readers out there will reach for their vomit bags if you suggest that I publish *more* lists. Lovely idea, though; something to do in my retirement, which I will never be able to afford to take.

TOM WHALEN

Hasenbergstr 15, 70178 Stuttgart, Germany

SF Commentary 77 made it to my new German address. I'm not sure how, but I'm glad it did. Especially glad to see the Sladek article. And all the lists and short reviews. *A.I.* I found quite interesting. Spielberg's intelligence may be artificial, but somehow Kubrick's cold inhuman humans managed to drive a stake through Spielberg's kitsch heart.

I retired from teaching (29 years is enough) and moved back to Germany ten months ago. My wife Annette Wiesner (MA on Nabokov) works in the IT field here for Trados, a translation software company. I tend house, write, read, watch movies, and travel. In late September I finished *Tales from the Hybrid Pool*, book four in 'The Encyclopedia Mouse Quintet'. Book 3, *Candelabra*, I finished two years ago. I hope to start the last one, *The Straw That Broke*, early next year.

Mostly criticism, though, of late for me. Just finished 5000 words called 'The Outrageousness of Melville's *Moby-Dick*; or, *The Whale*' for talks at the university here and in Braunschweig, and I'm enclosing my thoughts on Carpenter's *Ghosts of Mars*, as well as a review/essay on Tom Tykwer's *Lola rennt*, a German film you may have seen.

SF? Well, the Encyclopedia Mouse keeps me reading up on quantum and cosmological matters, among other things, and I finally read all of Russell M. Griffin's novels, all four of them. *The Blind Man and the Elephant* is still my favourite; next would be *Century's End*. An overlooked writer, as most writers are.

(27 November 2001)

The day that I typed this letter I walked into Reading Matters, the secondhand bookshop at the south end of Smith Street, and found a copy of the British edition of Griffin's *Century's End*. It was only \$3.50. 'Hmmm,' said the bloke on the desk, 'that's the cheapest book I've sold for a long time.' Which means, I suppose, that it's been sitting there forever. As you did, I found *The Blind Man and the Elephant* one of the best SF novels I've read in the last 30 years. After I had bought a couple more novels by Griffin, I heard that he had died of a heart attack at the age of 43.

ANDY SAWYER

1 The Flaxyard, Woodfall Lane, Little Neston, South Wirral L64 4BT UK

SFC 77 was waiting for me when I got home Tuesday night. It was interesting to discover that big article on Disch, because yesterday I took part (as internal examiner) in the assessment of a PhD thesis on Disch from Elliot Atkins here at Liverpool. A very good assessment of his fiction it was too, particularly of his Gothic/'Supernatural Minnesota' stuff. Once we'd gone through all the formalities and assured him of our decision, I pulled out *SFC* and said 'something you might be interested in . . .' Fortunately, I'd checked his bibliography and he had seen it (and other stuff that appeared in *SFC*).

(15 November 2001)

I've just come back from seeing the *Harry Potter* film. I am not a big Potter fan, thanks, I think, to my first exposure to the phenomenon being through a gushing review in the *Guardian* about this children's book with an amazingly original concept and a wonderfully imaginative use of language. It's quite clear, now, that the woman who wrote this hadn't a clue what she was writing about, but if you strip away the sheer silliness of the way adults who should know better (including, I was going to say, members of the 2001 World Science Fiction Convention, but I'll nip *that* train of thought in the bud straight away) have gone overboard for J. K. Rowling, the very effective marketing campaign, and the quite natural way people who obviously haven't read many books at all have become extremely enthusiastic when they find something that speaks to them, we get — what? Something that still stands up in way that earlier writers of books that children have taken to their heart (Roald Dahl, for example) stands up. Which is a kind of evasive way of saying that I was very impressed by the film, although I was prepared to be less so. The script and acting were excellent (the only thing that grated on me was the announcement that the 'Sorting Ceremony', in which the new recruits to Hogwarts School are allocated their houses, would take place 'momentarily'. In fact, it took an appreciable amount of

time. I know we have the American market in mind, but there are numerous words that mean 'in a moment' or, better, 'immediately'. The public-school elements, of course (much of the early part of the film is taken up with Harry's preparation for school and his settling in there), are as much, if not more, fantasy than the wizardry: magic is so often a 'given' in children's literature that it is almost mundane; simply, another vocabulary for stating what might be said, but perhaps with some difficulty, in realistic language. The settings are sumptuous, the special effects good, and I get the distinct impression that the original was taken seriously and the relationship the audience has with it was not treated with condescension, as is so often the case. The actors were allowed to act and ('momentarily' apart) given lines that didn't insult them. The only part I thought didn't work (which I don't think works in the book) is Harry's relationship with his appalling foster-parents, who are too like the caricature-parents Roald Dahl did so much more successfully.

We DVD addicts, who never get to the cinema, haven't watched *Harry Potter* yet because it was released in Australia in pan-and-scan (4:3) ratio, not in widescreen ratio. The 'Special Edition', wide screen and all, was released here recently.

Sladek on Disch made me realise how little of Disch I'd read. The Gothics, such as *Clara Reeve* (which I read only in the process of assessing the dissertation) and the later 'Supernatural Minnesota' tetralogy (of which I'd only read part, and not really considered as a series of linked works) show how much he plays around with ideas of genre and sub-genre (and probably even sub-sub-genre), while revisiting *334* only made it clear that it's one of SF's classics, a book that does fascinating things with the utopian/dystopian idea. Delany's *An American Shore*, a *tour de force* analysis of 'Angouleme', just one short section from *334*, may have made people wary about lengthy works on Disch, but reading the whole novel made me consider one aspect of Disch's work that he does particularly subtly, the matter of 'historical' references. I use the quote marks because these are the cases where a writer invents history stemming from his present: things that have happened to actual buildings, compositions by contemporary artists, etc. An odd thing happens when we read these texts, and I don't think too much attention is given to it.

Considering that we are now living in the future, in some cases *beyond* the time in which these texts are meant to be set, we need to be careful when rereading them that we don't overlook the 'invented' history. I have to admit that there are aspects of Disch's future New York that I do not know *are* fictional. I know that there is no day-long opera of *Orfeo*, because Delany says so. I would be quite capable of reading 'Angouleme' and taking this reference as fact. Reading a story written in, say, 1970, which refers to interplanetary space flight in, say, 1990, is one thing. But a more naturalist story referring to, say, a bridge that has been built, a bank in a location where at the time of writing there was no bank, a fictional make of car by a real car manufacturer or work of art by a real artist, along with references to the real geography or culture of the time of writing is bound to confuse. The point at which the reader realises the nature of the difference between the world the writer has extrapolated from the then present and the extrapolation we live in will be different for each reader, and certainly different from that of a reader when the story first

appeared. All science fiction aspires to the condition of alternate history, perhaps?

I was interested to see the reviews by Colin Steele, somebody I seem to remember from other issues of *SFC*, but for some reason I never connected him with the Colin Steele who gave the Follett lectures. I rarely go to academic library conferences, and never, so far, to international ones (it's tough enough keeping up with all the sf conferences/conventions I need to go to) but if I do move in such rarefied circles I'll keep an eye out. Damned if I know how he keeps up with academic librarianship, IT and science fiction. If he has a secret, maybe he could pass it on.

I liked the picture of your book mountain on page 14. I like the neat piles. Mine is more like mounds of scree. Every so often there's an avalanche and something gets lost. In fact, it's more normal that I can't find a book than I can (look, I'm a professional librarian *at work*, OK; at home I'm a slob like anyone else). In the course of writing this letter I phoned my daughter to see if she had my copies of the first two Harry Potter books. 'I think they're in the cupboard upstairs on the landing,' she said. 'Which cupboard?' I asked (because I thought I'd looked in the one she meant). 'The cupboard where we keep books,' she replied testily, as you do when dads are slow on the uptake. But this house is full of cupboards and there are books in most of them . . . (And yes, they were there, next to the Lindsay Davies and Doris Lessing books. There is probably a classification scheme there, if I could think of it.)

(3 December 2001)

Book avalanches are common around here as well. Not to mention CD avalanches, which damage to the plastic covers. I get red in the face and invent new swear words when this happens. Polly hides under the couch, but Sophie just ignores me, as usual.

RALPH ASHBROOK

303 Tregaron Road, Bala Cynwyd PA 19004, USA

On the assumption that something extraordinary happened in the SF of the late forties through the sixties, I am exploring the possibility of a high school curriculum based thereon. That imagined world has crept in on little mouse feet: ubiquitous PCs, emails, hyperlinks, Mars, cell phones, MP3 packets. It should be worthwhile for kids to read these extrapolations to find patterns of divergence and convergence, as well as having the fun we did. Encouraging the class to suggest current production would allow the program to jump outside of its own system.

The Dick-based film, *Impostor*, came and went. Clever and fun, but thin. *Minority Report* promises to be more ambitious.
(5 February 2002)

Aronofsky's *Pi* reminded me of early Jeunet (*City of Lost Children* and *Delicatessen*) and *Being John Malkovich* — what has come to be called Phildickian. I see mainstream (albeit independent) cinema catching up with the worlds that SF writers explored, starting in the late forties. Even some mainstream fiction is testing the same waters: *House of Leaves* (Mark Danielewski) and *Center of Things* (Jenny McPhee).

(26 February 2002)

When Cronenberg slips into many of his films the visual equivalent of thank-you notes to Philip Dick, and *Being John Malkovich* is several degrees more surreal than any Phil Dick novel, and *Sixth Sense* and *Fight Club* are also very

Phildickian, it seems as if the spirit of PKD is invading American cinema. When will some film or TV production company call itself Palmer Eldritch Productions?

FRANK C. BERTRAND

50 Lowell Street, Manchester NH 03101
USA

So there I recently was, perusing *SF Commentary* No. 77 (November 2001), one of but several items in a marvellous fanzine package that finally caught up with me, and in the 'Pinlighters' section came across a letter by *moi* dated 11 February 1994 (page 30)! While not exactly finding myself in a PhilDickian 'time-slip', I did experience a bit of 'conceptual dislocation' — to use a PKD phrase from a letter of his dated 14 May 1981. I mean, that's only a time-slip of some seven years, which in fanzine time is nothing to sneeze at.

But upon re-reading my letter, and your appended comments, I would like to wax metaphysical for a bit — or perhaps several bits. And that's because, sad to say, the situation I delineated has not changed for the better. As you aptly note, PKD's 'strange exegetical writings' have become 'more important for some critics than the lithe, brilliant earlier writings', then *and* now. It's as if Dick's *oeuvre* consists of *just* the so-called 'VALIS trilogy' and the *only* important part of his life is the so-called 'pink beam' experience. (Yes indeed, it is time for a new edition of *Electric Shepherd*, or another 'PKD special issue' of *SF Commentary*!)

I'm sure Phil's strong satiric/'black humour' sensibility would find this hilarious, if it wasn't so tragic. Such a narrow, selective approach by the critical/academic community does not bode well for him, or any writer, especially when most of it comes after the writer has died and cannot respond. (I mean, wasn't it Nietzsche who wrote somewhere in his *The Antichrist* (1888) that some persons are born posthumously?) And Phil did write, in a 1980 book review of Patricia Warrick's *The Cybernetic Imagination in Science Fiction* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1980), that: 'This book praises me by terming my writing important but it arrogates to itself the role of arbiter of viewpoint and proper concern. Viewpoint and concern in SF are a transaction among author, editor, and reader, to which the critic is a spectator. Don't dignify us. Our power to stimulate human imagination and to delight is intrinsic to us already. Quite frankly, we were doing fine before you came along' (*The Shifting Realities of Philip K. Dick*, pp. 97–8).

Or, does this point to, instead, the 'rise and fall of the critical/academic empire'? (a subject we very much need a modern Gibbon for!) True, they did creatively try their best to adopt Phil Dick as a 'postmodernist poster child'. But, as Sokal and Bricmont nicely state it, in *Fashionable Nonsense* (NY: Picador USA, 1999), 'not all that is obscure is necessarily profound' (p. 186). Why would any writer want this kind of attention or 'fame'? (see especially: David Lehman, 'The Questions of Postmodernism', www.zip.com.au/~jtranter/jacket04/lehman-postmod.html)

It's much more likely that the critical/academic acolytes struggling to win publish-or-perish tenure points are using Phil Dick, and 'postmodernism', to fabricate their own special brand of narcissistic fame. As Professor Leo Braudy incisively states it: 'Many seek fame because they believe it confers a reality that they lack. Unfortunately, when they become famous themselves, they usually discover that their sense of unreality has only increased' (*The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and Its History*, NY: Oxford University Press, 1986, p. 589).

A sense of their unreality can be gleaned from the fact that a conference was held on 18 and 19 May 1996, called 'Reconsidering the Postmodern'. More telling was a gathering at the University of Chicago on 14–16 November 1997 titled 'Conference on After Postmodernism'. Apparently the newer academic fads are not lasting very long. As Walter Laqueur explains, it's actually been since the middle 1980s that 'postmodernism has been in slow decline; its advocates have been unable to agree on many things. Its effect outside the university, to the extent that it had one, has been the opposite of what was intended' (in Derek Maus (ed.), *Postmodernism*, San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 2001, p. 161).

And long after all of them have faded away, I'll still be able to read, reflect upon, and discuss the pivotal and lithe *early* works of Phil Dick, especially *The Man Who Japed* and *Time Out Of Joint*. More than these, I continue to be thoroughly intrigued and fascinated by his first published short story, 'Beyond Lies the Wub'. Within it can be found embedded many of the 'philosophical seeds' that later germinate into his dominant themes and motifs, one such being, as Ralph Ashbrook notes, the 'oddness of morality' (his letter of January 1994, also *SF Commentary* 77). In fact, the Wub eloquently sums up what I've been trying to wax metaphysical about here: 'But how can any lasting contact be established between your people and mine if you resort to such barbaric attitudes?'

(23 March 2002)

STEPHEN THOMPSON

26 Mitchell St, West End QLD 4101

Vision magazine was initially the writers' group's newsletter (still is), but it came out sporadically and only as a photocopied paper copy, stapled in the corner. In the middle of last year I became interested in editing and publishing (rather, I decided to do something about my interest). So I took over the newsletter and set about expanding it and making it more interesting.

Essentially it still is about writing, but it also now occasionally includes articles about fannish things. I have to admit to not being into fan stuff; my connection to the genre is purely through writing. It's only through my publishing interest that I decided to drop in on fan sites, therefore I found the eastcoastsf list.

The zine comes in hard copy for financial members of the Vision group, and arrives by email for the rest of the world. My budget is very small, giving me just enough dough to get 30 copies printed for members. Because of the budget constraints (and the need to get it printed from disk), the zine isn't very big — 12 pages per issue. Recent issues feature Mr Dalrymple, Robert Hoge, Julian Warner, and Cat Sparks, all from the eastcoastsf email group.

(18 April 2002)

I Also Heard From

Sarah Marland, who sent a postcard from Japan in October 2001. With **Andrew Macrae** and **Audrey** the cat, she has hosted several meetings of the Nova Mob (Melbourne's SF discussion group) this year. She played drums in Andrew's band at his birthday party last year.

Matthew Davis has been a great help in arranging publication of John Crowley's article in this issue and tracking down the *Yale Review* version. Matthew's main interest is the work of Tom Disch.

Jeanne Mealy keeps sending me books and articles from

Minneapolis newspapers about Garrison Keillor and *A Prairie Home Companion*. She (and Melbourne fan **Murray McLachlan**) also sent me an article from *National Geographic* by Garrison Keillor. It is the best article about the art of fiction that I've read for a long time. The article includes photos of the original locations for what became Lake Wobegon. In Australia, weekly episodes of *A Prairie Home Companion* are still not played on radio. I keep meaning to see whether CDs of the programs are available, but never quite get around to surfing the Net to find them. Thanks, Jeanne, for the gifts, and apologies for not replying adequately until now.

Michael Waite and **Tim Marion** each produce fabulously expensive, well-produced fanzines for FAPA, and they are kind enough to send us copies as well. Both have adopted Australian fandom as a special interest; you could, for instance, read Dick Jessen's ConVergence report in Michael's *Trial and Air* long before you read about the same convention in my report.

Michael Waite is a busy man, so I don't know where he finds the time for *Trial and Air*. Nevertheless, he's sent us some wonderful books, including H. G. Wells's *An Experiment in Autobiography*, which I'd never seen before. He is also a music fan: 'I listen to music all day while I'm at work. At the moment I'm listening to Mozart's Horn Concertos (Dennis Brain/Herbert von Karajan: EMI). I can think of no other horn player who compares to Dennis Brain. The sound he creates transports me to another world. He is unique. What a tragedy he died so young.' Michael put me back in touch with **Robert Sabella** (now trading copies of *Visions of Paradise*), who was an *SFC* subscriber in the 1970s.

Tim Marion is beset by problems, which this year have included the loss of three of his cats to various diseases. We've lost two cats in less than twelve months, so we sympathise greatly.

Ken Bailey sent me from Alderney, Channel Islands, two collections of his works, *The Vortices of Time* and *The Sky Giants*. 'The *Vortices of Time* is a miscellany of haiku, senryu, triolets (a favourite form) and other verse, much of it snally oriented. Steve Jeffery did the cover illustration.' Ken is one of the amazingly erudite people I've met through Acnestis, the English apa with the eternal waiting list. He's written a sublime article on Coleridge that I would love to reprint in *Metaphysical Review* just as soon as I can revive that magazine.

During the last couple of years, **Bill Burns** has been the benefactor of many fanzine editors. He hosts the electronic version of our fanzines on **eFanzines.com**. Check it out.

Also check out the monthly fanzine reviews posted by **Ted White** on eFanzines.com. Thanks, Ted, for the generous March review of *SF Commentary* 77.

Dwain Kaiser enjoys *SFC*, and sends as a trade his own fanzine.

The overseas mailout of *SFC* 77 led to a discussion about non-cancelled stamps. **Rich Lynch**: 'The stamps on the copy we received were not cancelled, and I guess could be soaked off and reused, if you'd like them back again. (Assuming it's legal and ethical to do so in Australia.)' It turns out it's neither legal, ethical nor practicable. The stamps have been electronically cancelled by Australia Post, whether or not the cancellation shows.

Bill Bowers, on the other hand, seemed picked out for Special Treatment by the post office: 'What else would explain why the envelope containing my welcomed copy of *SFC* 77 (how'd the hell did he get ahead of me in issue numbers?) did indeed warrant postal cancellation?'

Eric Lindsay's *Gegenschein* is now only available electroni-

cally, except for people such as me (we're both members of ANZAPA): 'Now I'm not working, the cost of producing and mailing 300 copies of four minimum-weight fanzines a year would be half my annual income.'

Curt Phillips is one of many people I've met through the Internet lists during recent years. To the packet I sent him, he replied: 'You'll be glad to know, I think, that *SFC* 76 has caused me to search out some more George Turner books. *Beloved Son* currently awaits my attention on the to-be-read stack.' *Drowning Towers* would be a better start, Curt, but I'd be interested to hear what you make of *Beloved Son*.

Ahrvid Engholm sent me a copy of a very enthusiastic review he wrote about *SFC* 77 for a Swedish fanzine. One thing that worries me: he mentions that the table of contents was missing. Several other people have mentioned this as well. It seems that in several copies, page 2, which included the ToC and Ditmar's explanation of the cover art, was not printed. Sorry about that. I was in too much of a hurry stuffing copies in envelopes to check each copy.

Bob Tucker, who celebrated his eightieth birthday recently, received *SFC* 77: 'Now I have this trove to read this winter, I may reach page 82 by next March or April.'

David Cake sent greetings from Western Australia. He offered to write book reviews for me, but I've been so overwhelmed by incoming reviews recently that I haven't yet taken him up on his offer.

Arthur D. Hlavaty enjoyed *SFC* 77: 'Delightful, particularly Sladek on Disch. He even makes *The Genocides* sound interesting. Along with Michael Dirda, I wonder why the Serious Lit/Avant Garde establishment hasn't noticed that Sladek is one of theirs.'

Jan Stinson keeps me sending me *Peregrine Nations*, but has now been forced, because of a lack of a cash, to distribute it only on eFanzines.com. I still haven't sent her the bundle of Gillespiezines I promised her about a year ago.

Jenny Bryce is not an SF fan, but she always says hello when Elaine or I send her fanzines: 'I leave in five minutes for Canberra. But just wanted to say thank you for *SF Commentary*: it looks terrific, especially the front cover (I've barely got past it)!'

Judith Buckrich enjoyed *SFC* so much that she arranged a Morning Coffee of Comment: 'Marc Ortlieb's review [of *George Turner: A Life*] was fine. I kind of dread reviews of the biography these days. But his was not a bad one. And you are always recommending that people read it. Thank you.' Judy has recently had two launch parties for her book *The Long and Perilous Journey: A History of the Port of Melbourne* (Melbourne Books 1-877096 00 8; 240 pp.; A\$24 hb), which includes lots of wonderful pictures as well as a lively account of the history of Melbourne.

Paul Anderson from Adelaide sends regular emails to keep me up with news of his family and my old Adelaide friends, who are now scattered throughout Australia. Both Paul's parents have now died; I remember them fondly from the times I stayed at their place in Hawthorndene in the seventies.

Rowena Cory Lindquist, mentioned in my piece on Wynne Whiteford (p. 7), was at ConVergence (see photo in *brg** 33), and is married to **Darryl Lindquist**, a bloke I first met in 1969 in Ararat. Rowena wrote: 'Haven't had a chance to have a good look at the *SFCs* yet, but Daryl picked them up and smiled and said, "I remember when these were roneoed off!"'

Robert Lichtman, chatting about this and that, reminded me that I haven't yet run off extra copies of *The Great Cosmic Donut of Life*, my Acnestis fanzine. I haven't run

them off for **Irwin Hirsh**, either. **Ray Nelson**, whose 1960s short story inspired the title of the fanzine, got in touch, so I must run off a set for him as well. As soon as I find the time.

Tom Disch liked the reprint of the Sladek article about his SF novels (*SFC 77*) so much that he arranged with John Crowley to reprint the article that begins this issue. I have one question: does anybody know John Crowley's snailmail address, so that I can send him a copy?

Damien Broderick sent lots of nice bits and pieces throughout the year, including photos, and arranged with John Romeril to write the review that appears in this issue. Many thanks, Damien.

Paul Collins and **Meredith Costain** held the New Year's Eve party, 2001/2, that was the last time I saw Wynne Whiteford. Paul and Meredith also bought the Clifton Hill house that I lusted after on page 14 of *SFC 77*. I was disappointed to find they have not filled the nine-room house with books and CDs, as Elaine and I would have done. Paul writes: 'Life here is great: it's like a country property with all mod cons. Certainly the centre of the universe so far as public transport is concerned, what with trains, trams and buses all within ten minutes' walk. We have Jack the kelpie, Harriet the bitsa pussycat, four goldfish called Georgenella (we had two, George and Ella — one died but we didn't know which one, so we called the survivor Georgenella — now we have four, we figured it easier to call all of them Georgenella), and four chooks, Sibyl, Henrietta, Agnes and Doris.'

Jerry Kaufman, who has just returned to fanzine publishing, received his *SFC 77* 'just in time to take it along on another long drive. This time I took it as car and breakfast reading to Orycon, an annual convention just outside Portland, Oregon. 'Lovely cover graphics by Ditmar. I assume he's the inspiration for the name of the Australian SF Achievement awards? I'm glad you explained the front cover's meaning, as I would never guessed it. Furthermore, I would have been left in the embarrassing position of thinking that the shushing figure might be Ditmar, not Elaine!' Fortunately, there are plenty of pictures of Ditmar in the ConVergence Report that accompanies this issue. 'Despite having read Sladek's piece on Disch before (many years before), I still found it the liveliest and most interesting piece in the issue. I felt like I might want to tackle some of those Disch books again, especially *Camp Concentration* and 334.'

Moshe Feder, in his capacity as an editor at Tor Books, last year did me an enormous favour, which saved me well over \$A2000, so he's been placed on the Gillespie Lifetime Subscription list. (I don't offer such subscriptions officially, but some people are on the list anyway.)

Michael Levy thanked me for the magazines I sent.

Ian Sales has recently returned to Britain from Abu Dhabi, where has been working for some years. 'Can't say I agree with all the book reviews', but Ian and I enjoy disagreeing with each other's reviews in *Acnestis*.

Sherry Thompson recently retired, but is still finding it hard to find time to write letters of comment: 'I'm glad I'm not one of those people whose career defines them and their lives, and who becomes terminally bored upon retirement. I might add that I've never understood that kind of a mindset. If a person is reasonably healthy and has enough income to cover basic expenses, how can they possibly be bored or have time on their hands?' I have all my retirement activities planned out, but cannot ever afford to retire.

For those who are wondering 'Whatever happened to

Elizabeth and Peter Darling?', they tell us in a more-than-usually newsy Christmas card that in 2001 Elizabeth 'celebrated her sixtieth birthday by staging her second [art] exhibition (after a gap of 38 years)' and Peter 'almost managed to keep his resolution to work less than 40 hours per week (not counting work around the farm)', despite the fact that he officially retired a year or so ago. What used to be the barn at the Ponderosa (the farm near Kyneton, Victoria, where Peter and Elizabeth now live) was turned into 'Ponderosa Galleries', the site of Elizabeth's work in water colours and mixed media. Meanwhile, Elizabeth's cartoons about Australian fandom have recently begun to appear in John Foyster's *eFNAC*. Peter has been working on several major projects, travelling to Europe, and chairing convention sessions.

John Light (Photon Press, 37 The Meadows, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Northumberland, TD15 1NY, UK) offered to list my magazines for free in his annual catalogue *Light's List 2002*. He supplies the following details: '*Light's List of Literary Magazines 2002* contains the names, addresses, price, frequency, page count and a brief note of interests (for example, 'Traditional: poems to 30 lines, fiction to 2000 words, reviews, artwork') of over 1500 UK, US, Canadian, Australian, European, African and Asian small press magazines publishing creative writing and artwork in English. 17th annual edition: £2.50 including postage (US\$6 surface; US\$7 air); cheques payable to John Light. Email: photon.press@virgin.net.'

Robert Day sent a very long letter of comment to the most recent issue of *Metaphysical Review*, plus some scanned photos, but since then he has been busy. 'Highlights of the year: my first professional sale (an article on an Austrian rural railway), a new relationship, a holiday in Vienna. Lowlights: work, and a burglary at home. I was at an SF convention when I was burgled. Have these people no decency?'

I didn't hear from long-time Sydney reader and supporter **Annette Carter** during Christmas 2000–2001, but the end of 2001 brought news of a change of address and moving house. Alex Skovron, Lucy Sussex and we are still hoping that we can resume our dinners with her.

David Russell sent his usual fascinating letter of comment (as well as the unusually fascinating parcel he sends me on my birthday). He had hoped to catch me out by sending a letter before he received his copy of *SF Commentary*. He borrowed the Melbourne Science Fiction Club's copy, which I had handed to Alan Stewart. A mutual friend had seen David at the Club, so I was not surprised by his letter. He read my short review of Anne Tyler's *Ladder of Years*, then bought a remaindered paperback: 'Reading your zine, Bruce, causes me to read that which I would not normally read: mainstream fiction'. I could run a long list of books that David should read now he's broken the drought. Instead I sent him my favourite (non-SF) book of the last few years: Michael Chabon's *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay*.

Ron Clarke didn't make it to Aussiecon III in Melbourne, although I did mention him in my Fan GoH speech as one of the people who should have been standing there instead of me. Ron's *The Mentor*, if it's still officially being published, is 40 years old this year (makes *SFC* seem like a toddler). Of *SFC 77*, he writes: 'I really enjoyed the lead article about Thomas M. Disch. Sladek really gets into Disch's head for his works. The details of Disch's life were an additional bonus.'

Last Christmas **Susan Batho**, long-time Sydney fan and

A. Bertram Chandler Award winner, who was once married to Ron Clarke, sent us one of those round-robin Christmas letters that tells us all the things we would never have thought to ask, because we don't know any members of the Batho extended family other than Susan. She's very, very busy at the moment, but I look forward to her next electronic fanzine. I caught up with her at ConVergence in June.

Heather Johnson sent a card on behalf of her daughter **Karen** and son **Greg**. Karen never quite takes a long-hoped-for trip to America, but she continues as a member of ANZAPA. Heather attended ConVergence, but I didn't get to sit down and talk. Heather would be Melbourne's most active fan if she had the time.

Adrienne Losin sent some of her drawings, although not in a reproducible form, and a round-robin letter in which she says she has started selling her art overseas. Adrienne used to call in occasionally at the Friday night group when it met at the Myer cafeteria, but perhaps she hasn't found us since we moved to the Australia Arcade basement.

I've been swapping books with **Lizbeth and Paul Billinger** — or rather, sending them enough books to justify a continuing subscription to the British Science Fiction Association (whose quarterly package includes *Vector* and other goodies). I sent them the latest Kate Grenville novel the week she won the Orange Prize in Britain, and they did me the favour of turning me on to the novels of Christopher Brookmyre.

I had a very short note from **Colin Steele**, which ended: 'My wife is getting a bit uptight re boxes of books on floor! So's mine, Colin. My mighty collection of boxes of books stays right there on the floor, threatening to topple over, until we solve the Extra Room Problem (*Titanic* Deck Chairs Problem). I've been suggesting that the Canberra fans get in touch with you for advice about running conventions, since you ran the Canberra Word Festival successfully for many years.

William Brieding has sent me several encouraging notes, some American folding money, and his fanzine *Books Read, 2001*. If I reprinted it as a contribution to *SFC*, it would take up 10 packed pages. I'll merely note that William reads widely and wisely. Better, he alerts me to books I haven't heard of and would order if the house were not already full; for example, Wallace Stegner's *The American West as Living Space* ('speeches at U. of M. at Ann Arbor, dealing with human culture as affected by the lack of water and the endless open spaces of the West'), James Sallis's *The Long-Legged Fly* ('triumph of construction, literate, melodramatic, post-modern, and gloomy'), and a book I really should have known about and bought before writing my recent article about SF novellas: *The Arbor House Treasury of Great Science Fiction Short Novels*, edited by Silverberg and Greenberg. Bill is probably out of copies of this year's list, but you could write to him for next year's: PO Box 1901, Tucson AZ 85702, USA.

In an earlier note, William praises both *SFC* 76 and 77, and writes: 'I had a chance to meet **Paul Kincaid** early this year and really enjoyed the brief moments we had together standing about at the Potlatch parties. I also met **Jae Leslie Adams**. Of course, I am very shy, so they probably were puzzled'.

Erika Maria Lacey keeps in touch from Brisbane, although she hasn't done much fannish during the last year or so. She promises to get back into action soon, and might even rejoin ANZAPA.

Jerry Davis sent me money after he received the most recent *SF Commentary*, despite declining vision. He ends his letter, as we all should: 'Well, I had better feed the cat.'

Early this year, **Mary Sheridan** and **Lister Matheson** from the Clarion Workshop at Michigan State University at East Lansing toured Australia, hoping to find people who would help them set up Clarion South. Looks as if this will happen in Brisbane in 2003 or 2004. Lister and Mary sent me the *Clarion Newsletter* (No. 21, Summer 2002).

Vanessa Jacobsen received her copy of *SFC* 77 just before she took the bus to Melbourne from Canberra for ConVergence. 'I'm most interested in having a chat to you re fan history.' This didn't happen, as Vanessa and I said about two words to each other during the convention ('Hi!' 'Hi!').

I didn't even get to talk to **Cat Sparks** at the convention: 'I seemed to spend the whole four days yabbering with people, not that I can clearly recall anything much that was discussed!' Thanks again for the CD of convention photos, Cat. 'I would also be keen to contribute artwork to *SFC* at some stage. I seem to be overburdened with work this year, probably because I decided to do a Uni course as well as Agog! Press and a host of other things for other people's projects.'

Alison Barton was also kind enough to send some photos from ConVergence. So was **Rose Mitchell**. After surviving ConVergence, they sound as if they want to keep organising conventions. That's a worse addiction than fanzine publishing.

I'd lost track of **Gary Farber**, but it seems he's been hiding out in Boulder, Colorado, and keeping a weblog (or 'blog'). He tried to explain weblogs to me — daily fanzine entries accessed through one's Web site — but I couldn't work out why anyone would want to write so much so often about one's own life. I'll stay with the glacial art of the paper fanzine.

Lenny Bailes is, like many of the people mentioned here, someone I met only because of the Internet. His fanzine *Whistlestar* is recommended.

Gerd Maximovic (Am Wall 183, 28105 Bremen, Germany) would like to publish fiction in Australian magazines or anthologies, regardless of whether payment is offered. I sent him the addresses of the usual suspects (including the magazines and anthologies launched at ConVergence).

Garry Dahrymple is famous for trying to organise non-organisable Sydney fans, especially through Freecons. Some of his ventures work, and others don't. I was interested in the results of a survey he did among people who attended the recent Canberra regional convention.

Fiona Kelleghan is Book Reviews Editor of the *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*. Thanks to John Bangsund, she got in touch with me to write a book review. It sounds as if she would like to see other fanzines about science fiction and fantasy (Otto G. Richter Library, University of Miami, Florida 33124-0320, USA).

— Bruce Gillespie, 22 October 2002

And suddenly it's Christmas (26 December 2002): Thanks for all the cards from readers, especially those containing letters or (even) money. (Yes, thanks, **Gian Paolo Cossato**. May the floodgates of Venice be kind to you.) Some have had uppish years (including **David, Sue** and **Kathryn Grigg**, and **Sally Yeoland**) and some downish (thanks for the personalised card, **Leigh** and **Valma**). May things be better in 2003.

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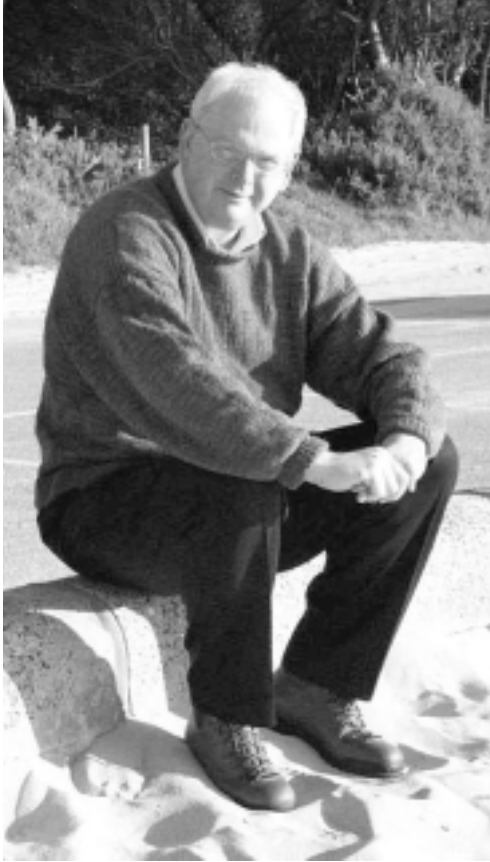


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