

Scratch Pad 69

November 2008



Memories of Myfanwy
(p. 3)



Jennifer Bryce at Victoria Falls — see 'African diary' (p. 15)

Scratch Pad

No. 69 November 2008

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pp. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15: Jennifer Bryce
p. 19: Ray Wood's hiking mate

In memory of Myfanwy

Myfanwy Jill Thomas (nee Foyster)

(20 July 1943–9 May 2008)

I can't remember when I first met Myfanwy Thomas. It wasn't during that second weekend in December 1967 when I met most of the rest of Melbourne fandom at the Ferntree Gully home of John and Diane Bangsund. There's a photo of most of that crowd — Tony Thomas was there, but not Myfanwy Foyster, the woman who would soon become his wife.

Probably I met her first at the 1968 Melbourne Easter Conference, as it was called. That was my first convention. I remember Tony being there, operating the tape recorder and organising the auction.

Truth to tell, Myfanwy seems always to have been somewhere on the horizon of my life, hovering like a genial spirit. Whenever I met her first, I thought, 'Lucky Tony!' Myfanwy was a beautiful woman. Her beauty was composed of distinguished qualities: humour, irony, grace, and reserve. Formidable, like her brother John Foyster and husband Tony Thomas. Essentially a friend, but also essentially reserved.

Until Monday, 19 May 2008, the day of the memorial service for her, I did not know the story of how she and Tony got together. I had always assumed that she had accompanied her brother John to the Melbourne SF Club, where she had met Tony. If so, she was courageous, as very few unaccompanied single women ever dared travel up the ancient water lift and enter the dingy portal of the Club. At the memorial service, Tony described how, in 1966, Myfanwy and her friend Lyn

began attending meetings on Wednesday nights, then gave Tony a lift home in Lyn's tiny Fiat. As Tony put it, 'We were both essentially shy people, so it took about a year for us to become close.'

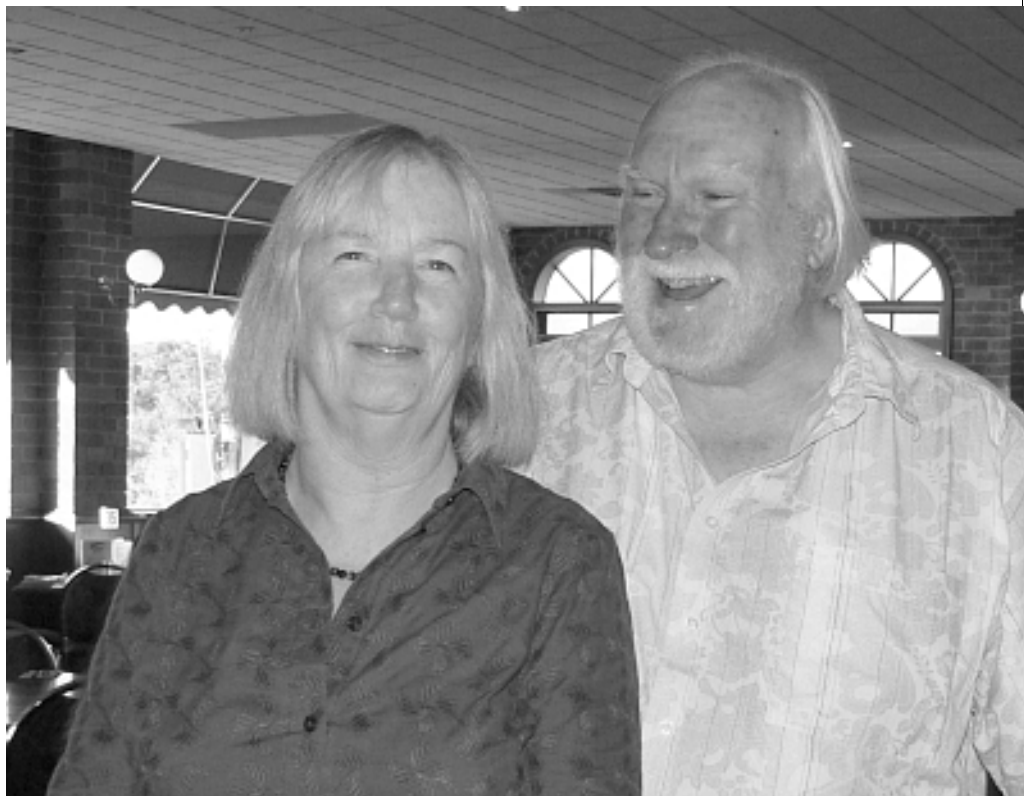
John Foyster's comment was: 'Fans are all right in their place, but would you want your sister to marry one?'

The very first meeting of the Nova Mob (Melbourne's SF discussion group) took place in August 1970 at Tony and Myfanwy's flat in South Yarra. I did not attend, as I was term time, and I was attempting to teach in Ararat. By the next meeting, in September, they had moved to Ferntree Gully, then a rural area, so the second meeting was at John Bangsund's flat in St Kilda.

Tony and Myfanwy formed an important part of Melbourne fandom during 1969 and 1970, but found it difficult to keep up with city happenings from Ferntree Gully. Lyndal and then Nick arrived, and both Tony and Myfanwy were very busy. Tony says that Myfanwy, he and their very young family attended Aussiecon 1 in 1975, but Aussiecon 1 was a bit of a blur to me.

I have a vivid memory of being introduced to Lyndal and Nick first at CineCon, Easter 1981, when Myfanwy and Tony brought them to see the showing of the specially imported copy of *The Lathe of Heaven*, a film based on Ursula Le Guin's novel.

We caught up with Myfanwy and Tony from time to time at fannish social occasions, and often they drove



Myfanwy and Tony Thomas, at my sixtieth birthday celebration, February 2007, Greensborough. (Photo: Helena Binns.)



Nick, Lyndal, Myfanwy and Tony Thomas, Christmas 2007.
(Photographer: unknown. This photo appears in the Order of Service for the Memorial Service,
held 19 May 2008, at Abbotsford Convent, Victoria.)

us home to Collingwood. Both of them travelled to Greensborough in 2006 for my sixtieth birthday. We could always take up the conversation with Myfanwy, but never reached some of the topics we might have discussed, such as music.

It was only in recent years that Elaine and Myfanwy discovered their mutual interest in Australian native plants.

We became much closer to Myfanwy, Tony, Lyndal, Nick, Brendan, Miranda and other members of the Foyster clan during the two years when John Foyster was dying of a brain tumour (2001–03), and through the memorial service at Linden, and the later celebration of John's life at Continuum in 2003.

The last time Elaine and I met Myfanwy was at an afternoon tea that we held for some friends last July at our place in Greensborough. Myfanwy did not look well, and she and Tony did not stay long. As she was going out the door, Myfanwy said: 'We must get together before I start chemo.' That was the first news we had of her illness. She had been told the month before that she was suffering from inoperable bowel cancer. During a difficult year of 2007, we did not travel over to Ferntree Gully, and we relied on Yvonne Rousseau and Jenny Bryce for news of Myfanwy's health. It seems that she was not too unwell until eight weeks before her death, but then became very ill. She was courageous and good-humoured about her ordeal until the end. Like Tony and her brother John, she had a nice line in black humour, and she did not like to cause pain to her friends.

On Friday, 9 May, Myfanwy's final very difficult weeks

ended. The family held a private cremation for her, and Tony also organised a secular service to celebrate her life at the Abbotsford Convent, which has been converted into an arts and community projects precinct. Community radio station 3MBS, from which Tony broadcasts every Tuesday night, has rooms in the precinct, and the station helped Tony to hire the old Bishop's Parlour for the celebration.

I was delighted that Tony asked me to speak on behalf of the science fiction community — and a bit apprehensive. There are several Melbourne SF Club lifetime members who have known Myfanwy much longer than I have. I thought I would be speaking for a minute or two, but when I arrived I discovered that I was to be one of the featured speakers. I can only apologise for being by far the least interesting of the speakers.

The afternoon was a revelation of the many aspects of life in which Myfanwy had been involved. I knew she had been the administrator of the Victorian Music Teachers Association for twenty years, but I had never had the opportunity to talk about music with her. She resigned in May 2007, and was made a Life Member of the Association. Her friend Elizabeth Mitchell gave an absorbing account of Myfanwy's extraordinary capacity for organising a wide variety of people within the VMTA. Elizabeth said that if she found herself at a loss at a meeting, she would find Myfanwy helping her without anybody else noticing. 'She was the master of sliding a message on a piece of paper across the desk. She would sit very still, and listen very carefully to what was being said. And then she would raise one eyebrow . . .'

Such was the fabled power of Myfanwy's raised

eyebrow that Bill Johnston, the MC, said at the end: 'There were five members of this family: Myfanwy, Tony, Lyndal, Nick and the Raised Eyebrow'.

After his retirement Tony had become heavily involved with the Shakespeare Society, and through it had become an actor. I had not realised that Myfanwy's interest in Shakespeare was as intense as Tony's, and as a couple they had been valuable assets to the group. Barbara Sharpe was one of several speakers who spoke of the transforming effect of their membership.

Two aspects of Myfanwy's life — music and poetry — were brought together in the exquisitely planned program of music (including a duo playing a C.P.E. Bach piece, and Bach's 'Air on a G String', and Angela Taylor singing 'Dido's Lament' from Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*) and poetry (including Bill Johnston's, Ross Williams' and Tony's fine readings of several of Shakespeare's sonnets, two pieces by Rilke and a section from the *Aeneid*).

The best evocation of Myfanwy's life, however, came from Tony, Lyndal and Nick, with innumerable stories of good times and bad. Tony told how he and Myfanwy got together, and how their life developed, and how the last year of Myfanwy's life brought the family close together. Nick and Lyndal told many fine stories, especially about childhood in Ferntree Gully, and the family's trip to Europe several years ago.

At the end of the program, people were invited to say a few last words about Myfanwy. Lyn Horn, who had accompanied Myfanwy to the Melbourne SF Club in the sixties, gave a vivid account of starting school at Coburg High on the same day. Their mutual love of poetry and music made them outsiders in the school. Myfanwy, it seems, would stand on a branch of a tree in the school-ground and act the balcony scene from *Romeo and Juliet*. After she left school, she was one of the first people to dress in tights and catch the folk music scene in the city. (Lyn travelled from Katoomba, NSW, to attend the service.)

The MC for the day was Bill Johnston, from the Chambers Theatre Company, and also a Christian minister. He told of his memories of Myfanwy, and confided that planning the service with Tony, an atheist, had only brought them closer together. Bill had found on the Internet John Bangsund's tale of selling to Tony and Myfanwy the car that was supposed to carry them

to their honeymoon in Port Fairy, on the southern coast of Victoria. The Humber Super Snipe took them to Geelong, where it blew up. Tony and Myfanwy had to finish their journey by train. (Unfortunately, John Bangsund could not be at the service to tell this and other stories.)

Elaine and I met many people we did not expect to meet again for a long time — at least not at yet another funeral. I had always thought of Myfanwy as about my age, which another reason why her diagnosis the year hit us deeply. (Another friend of mine, who is about my age, received a similar diagnosis only a few months later.) I only found out on Monday that she was four years older than me — but of my generation. Elaine and I would have expected to grow old along with her and Tony, but that won't happen. We must maintain memories of the good people, and Myfanwy Jill Thomas (nee Foyster) was one of the very best of them.

(Tony's Memorial Service thank-yous include: Jennifer Bryce: oboe; Anna Daniel; cello; Rosie Burn, violin; Angela Taylor, mezzo-soprano; speakers and poetry readers Bill Johnston, Barbara Sharpe, Ross Williams; Nick and Lyndal Thomas; Lillian Lewis; Elizabeth Mitchell; Owen McKern and 3MBS; Anne Lierse and the VMTA; Melbourne Shakespeare Society; Brendan Rea; and the Abbotsford Convent Foundation.

Elaine and I would like to thank everybody who attended and took part in the service, and Yvonne Rousseau and Jennifer Bryce for their special support of us during 2007 and 2008.]

— Bruce Gillespie, 20 May 2008

PS: I keep thinking of nice moments from the Memorial Service. Tony said that when Myfanwy was in hospital, she was interviewed by the resident psychologist. He asked her about her favourite type of music. 'High baroque,' she said. The psychologist looked puzzled. What rock group was that? Myfanwy offered her 'best take-no-prisoners expression' (as Tony put it), and would say no more. Eventually Tony took pity on the bloke, and said, 'Bach and composers from that period.'

Five years ago. Ten weeks ago.

by Irwin Hirsh



Irwin Hirsh

(left) reflects on the death of his mother, in 2007, and the meaning of everything while looking through her lifetime's memorabilia. Irwin was a member of ANZAPA for some years.

I was in Lorne, on Victoria's Great Ocean Road, on 12 October 2002, the first time terrorists struck Bali. Woke up the next morning to the news; had the TV on while getting ready to check out. That afternoon we listened to ABC Radio 774's coverage on the drive home. At the time I'd been to Bali twice, the most recent visit just the previous July.

We spent part of the fifth anniversary of the bombing listening to ABC Radio 774's commemorative broadcast while driving to Lorne. This isn't a coincidence. A film society my parents belong to hosts a film weekend in Lorne every October, and my parents always invite us (my sisters and I and our families) to join them. A weekend on the beach, exploring the Otway Ranges, a film or two, and some fine meals.

This year's weekend was very different from each of the previous Lorne weekends, and for good reason. My mother, Etta, passed away on 23 September, after a long battle with lymphoma. Her absence also intensified the link I have with Lorne and Bali, as both were among her favourite places in the world. None of us was at the cinema at the time, but at one session the film society's president announced that they'd dedicated the weekend to my mother, which was both really nice, and empha-

sised the differentness of the weekend.

Since mum's death, we've been occupied with sorting through her things. I've been trying to find the appropriate word to describe one of her traits, but can't locate the one that fits my need. Mum kept everything, but a lot of what she kept wasn't part of a collection. But she wasn't a hoarder, since there was system to what she kept. As I'm like mum when it comes to keeping paper (just ask Wendy and our sons, Adrian and Kieran). I've taken on the role of going through her files and book shelves. Working through the newspaper and magazine clippings, receipts, brochures, instructions booklets, etc., I now have another defence against the wife and kids: at least I do a periodical cull.

It's proving to be an interesting experience. The downside is the repetitive strain from turning so many pages, the raising of the dust of disintegrating newspaper clippings, and that so much of the stuff hadn't been needed for years. The upside is coming across the occasional treasure and the ongoing connection with mum's interests. There was a stack of newspaper restaurant reviews, and as I went through them I 'knew' that most of the reviewed places don't exist anymore, and a lot would never have been visited by my parents. But then I'd come across a review of what became a regular family haunt, and it was a delight to read the item that prompted that first visit.

One of the items I came across was a magazine ad for a range of slippers that my mother would never have worn. This one stopped me in my tracks, as for the first time I couldn't see why mum would have kept it. I put it aside and kept working. Eventually I spotted what it was that took her archival interest, and went around to the others and asked them if they could see why mum had kept the ad. None could make the connection, and inspired by the hard work they'd been doing, just sighed or rolled their eyes at the task mum had left us. I pointed to the front room and said, 'It was photographed in that room.' It's an important item, in that it helped them see something of what inspired mum.

I've enjoyed sorting through travel documents and pamphlets, checking out the places my parents have been to. Bali figured prominently in the stash, as she'd visited the island many times since her first visit in 1976. It took her 25 years (I held out for the longest before travelling there), but eventually she managed to convince all of us about the charms of the island.

Most of the items I tossed out, but not before noticing that once upon a time (1989) the Indonesian departure tax was 9900 rp (just less than 10 per cent of what it was in 2005), and that one Aussie dollar would get you 1350 rp (compared to ~7350 in 2005). An item I'm keeping is the guidebook (*Indonesia Do-It-Yourself 1976-1977* by Frank Palmos and Pat Price) mum took on her first Bali trip. Its Bali section occupies only about 15 per cent of the pages, but they are full of mum's additions and notes. Back then she liked the food at Murmi's but

Right: Kieran and Etta Hirsh in Bali, July 2002
(photo by Irwin Hirsh).



Below: Etta Hirsh (second from the right, front row) and her family
(husband, children and their spouses, and grandchildren), 11
February, 2007. (Photo by Peter Mack.)



not at Poppies, and was impressed by the artwork of Antonio Blanco, Han Snell and Gusti Lempad. A bemo (bus) ride from Denpasar to Ubud cost 125 rp; these days would there be enough 25 rp coins to not shortchange all those on a single trip? (Adrian and Kieran have souvenired every 25 rp coin we've come across. Two coins in four trips.)

Going though the sorting process has been a conversation with mum. The only problem is that it's a one-way flow. Something happens that I know she'd like to have known about, but the opportunity doesn't exist. So far, the biggest news we could have told her is that, two years after it closed its doors, our long-time family-favourite Chinese restaurant has reopened. It's been two long

years, as we've tried (and failed) to find a replacement. But now we have to look no more. It's back. The same management, the same venue, a slight change of name, a different chef and a very similar menu. We heard the news just eight days after mum died, by which time it had been open for a fortnight. So mum could have known the big news, though there was no way she would have made it there for a meal. But I know she would have been so pleased that it had reopened, and would love the image of a future which involves her family regularly getting together over a great meal at that restaurant. I'm happy with that image.

— Irwin Hirsh, 2 December 2007

New York Diary, December 2007

by Jennifer Bryce

In which Jennifer Bryce has a week's holiday in New York on her way to a breast cancer symposium in San Antonio, to which she won a 'scholarship' for consumer advocates. In return she must write up a given 'hot topic' from the symposium presentations.

Monday, 3 December 2007

I won't describe the trip over. It was about as bad as you can imagine, with missed connections, drug search, further delays and a day spent in a fairly unfriendly LA airport. But less than 24 hours after arriving in New York (at about 1.00 a.m. because of delays) I have pretty much forgotten the travel.

Woke up around 9.00 a.m. in Laurance's apartment in Manhattan on West 34th Street. Ate breakfast at a 'diner' — almost too much coffee (I asked for a medium) — everything is very big here. Decided to start using my New York Pass to various museums and tourist attractions. The Empire State is in Laurance's street — but at about 11.00 a.m. there was a long queue. Decided I didn't want to spend the day queuing, so set off down 5th Avenue instead. One thing I have learnt from travel is, don't dither — if you see something you are likely to want, or do, get it now. So — when I saw that an optical shop on 5th Avenue was having a sale I decided to get a new pair of glasses. I ended up with a compromise between some very glam ones and some very expensive ones. They could be made up (from looking at my sun glasses prescription) and would be ready in an hour!

Kept walking down 5th Avenue and recognising places — Saks, with window displays bigger and better than Myer — music and people queuing to go past; Cartier, Tiffany — looked at the beautiful jewellery displays. I had decided to go to the Guggenheim as it is

open on Mondays. Could have caught the subway, but by the time I was on 59th street, I thought I might as well keep walking to 86th. Central Park came into view. The wind sprang up and I was glad of the hood of my duffle coat — but it was nothing like as cold as London last year, or even Woodend in the middle of winter. There was snow yesterday.

What are the things that are different? People ringing little bells. Salvation Army collectors stand on street corners, dressed in red, rhythmically ringing little bells. I wonder, how long are their shifts? Does the constant, loud ringing impair their hearing? The smell of chestnuts roasting — and from other street vendors more exotic smells, possibly of Turkish delicacies. Maybe tonight I will dream of the red hands making a stop sign at every intersection, then the more familiar white pedestrian walking to indicate 'Go'. A lot of fur coats around the Tiffany area of 5th Avenue — some of them look 'real'.

The Guggenheim is a very friendly place. A couple of guides came up to me when I was staring at displays and asked: 'What does that do for you?' or 'What do you make of that?' They were very informative — had Fine Arts degrees. I decided to look at a special exhibition of European photography 1918 to 1945 — looking at the effect the war years had on the use of photography for news and advertising. There were a lot of interesting

New York from across the lake in Central Park. (Photo: Jennifer Bryce.)



Jennifer Bryce

proves that while travelling the world she can fit all her hand luggage into one small case. (Photo taken at Tullamarine Airport, Melbourne.)

collages — that was obviously a popular new medium at the time. (A couple I thought would make very good writing prompts.) Then I looked at the permanent collection known as 'Thannhauser' — the name of the benefactor. To my delight there were two Renoirs: *Woman with Parrot* and a still life. There were a lot of Kandinskys and Picassos — particularly liked *Woman Ironing*.

I was feeling a bit tired by 2.30, and was staring with rather glazed eyes at an arrangement of the works in the initial Guggenheim collection when one of the 'chatty' guides approached me. So I told him what I had seen so far and asked if there was anything important I had missed. He recommended seeing the Richard Prince exhibition. So I took the elevator to the 7th floor where there was a display of work where Prince had taken the covers of pulp fiction novels about nurses — such as *Man-Crazy Nurse*. Retaining the nurse in the cover picture, he has painted over other elements (quite often a man lurking in the background) and added other effects — frequently what suggested to me dribbling blood, which provided a sharp contrast (and yet the reality) of what the beautifully coiffed and naïve 1960s-looking nurses were likely to encounter in their work. I was grateful to the guide for suggesting this.

In the gift shop I realised that the *New Yorker* had a field day when the Guggenheim opened. Several drawings played with the spiral design — one I particularly like has a youth dashing out the front door on a skate board. It is evident that he has careered down the spiral ramp from the top floor, gathering tremendous momentum, to the consternation of the guard on the door.

I had intended to take a bus down to 36th Street where I would pick up my new glasses and then walk home. But, although getting dark, it was relatively early — about 5.00 p.m. — and it was nice walking. So I walked back down the other side of 5th Avenue, enjoying the illuminated Christmas decorations — some very extravagant and 'classy' — a sharp contrast to the neon Christmas trees and rubber Santas in Egypt a year ago!

Had a bit of a rest at Laurance's (though couldn't work out how to turn on the gas to make a cup of teal), then he phoned and instructed me to take a bus to Lexington Avenue from where we walked to an Indian restaurant. Laurance eats late — so it must have been after 11.00 when we got home.

Tuesday, 4 December

Breakfast at the Sky Light Diner — a low cholesterol omelette! — one made with egg whites. Good and plentiful coffee. It was snowing lightly when I came out of the diner, but skies were pretty clear — maybe a good idea to do the cruise around Manhattan Island while the weather kind of holds out. I did this. Amused by the American-speaking tourist who arrived in a taxi, didn't want to get in the queue, and thought that 'VIP Window' — where we had to show our passes and get them changed for tickets — meant that he should have a VIP window seat! Anyway, I got an excellent spot at the front of the boat next to a window on the Manhattan side.



Wonderful to see all these landmarks made familiar by movies and songs — the Brooklyn Bridge, the Statue of Liberty — lots of other beautiful bridges. The only annoying thing is that my camera is malfunctioning — I think it may be the batteries I carefully put in before leaving home (taking out the others that were working quite OK) — it takes some photos, but sometimes, just when you've lined up a good shot, it gives the message: 'no batteries' — which is untrue. (Indeed, none of these photos came out.) After the cruise I bought some new batteries: the most expensive I could find, in the hope they would be good. I have also found that my phone won't charge on this current — even with my Aus/US electricity adapter — having a few technological challenges! Laurance is teaching tonight, so we decided to go our separate ways for dinner. I went to another diner just down the road — I'm getting to like diners. Had an excellent penne with big chunks of fresh vegetables — broccoli and carrot — pretty much what I would have made at home.

Wednesday, 5 December

Got up earlier than usual and left the apartment before 9.00 a.m. with the intention of seeing all the Vermeers in one day — at the Metro Museum and the Frick. On the way managed to sort out the problem with my phone — have to buy a new charger that will take US current — did this for \$25 and left the phone charging in the shop while I had breakfast around the corner in a kosher pizzeria that served a beautiful fresh bagel (I think even better than Glicks) with cream cheese. Walked past an ice skating rink at the back of the Library, and soon found myself on the familiar 5th Avenue.

As I was halfway to the Metro Museum I decided I may as well keep walking, and soon arrived in the vast Greco-Roman entrance lobby. Exchanged my 'New York Pass' for an entrance ticket, and was then confronted with the huge array of things to see. I knew it would be impossible to work my way systematically through everything — tour guides give a statistic of some phenomenal amount of time (in years) that it would take if you looked at each item for 3 minutes. So I headed for 'The Age of Rembrandt', figuring that the Vermeers would be near there. I was right. It took some time to adjust to seeing, for example, a wall of Rembrandts — some familiar — such as the self-portraits. marvelled at the use of light. The first Vermeer I saw was *Young Woman with Water Pitcher*. The window is on the left — are there any Vermeers with a window on the right? The painting was much lighter than I had expected. The written commentary said that this was painted 'at the dawn of his mature style'. One that was, perhaps, my favourite was *A Maid Asleep* — it has a somewhat different composition with the subject on the left of the painting — it must be quite early, as dated 1656–57. As in other works by Vermeer, there is a suggestion that the maid has been entertaining her lover — wine on her lips, an open door in the background.

Among the Vermeers were several Frans Hals paintings — youthful exuberance — especially liked *The Smoker*. Then saw the Vermeer *Woman with a Lute* — the more familiar composition with light coming through a window on the left — again there is a sign that a lover

has visited — a musical instrument (lute-like) apparently of a kind that would be played by a man is left lying in the foreground, and a chair has been pushed back from the table. The young woman is wearing a pearl earring.

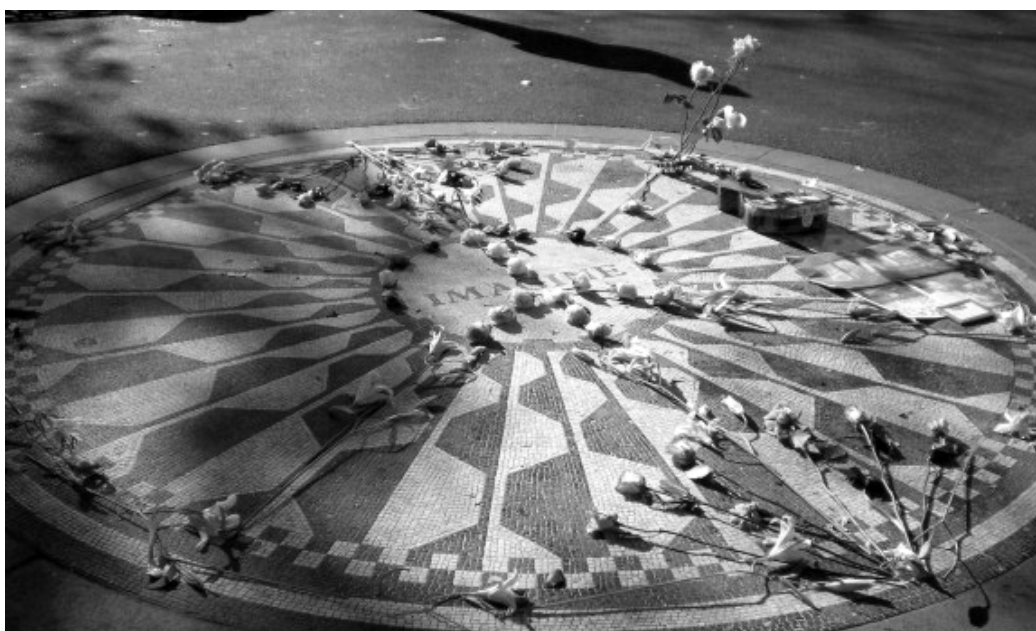
Vermeer's *Allegory of Catholic Faith*, a late painting (1670s), in subject matter is very different from the other paintings I have seen (unless something has completely alluded me and a secret lover has just slipped away from the woman in the centre enraptured by her faith). There are symbols of heaven, of the Catholic faith conquering the world (Vermeer converted to Catholicism), and of sin (an apple). Things that are similar to the other paintings are light coming from the left shining on curtains with beautiful folds and detail, and a painting of the crucifixion in the background.

The remaining Vermeer in this gallery is *Study of a Young Woman*. She is very, very pale, with a rather hauntingly beautiful face, containing, I think, a degree of wisdom in her eyes and smile. She is dressed in white, but seems to have the same headdress as the young woman (presumably the same subject) in the well-known *Pearl Earring* painting. The background is completely dark, bringing out the paleness of her skin and robe.

There was only time to see one other section after 'The Age of Rembrandt', so, for a complete contrast, I selected 'Abstract Expressionism and Other Modern Works'. Walked straight through huge collections of Chinese porcelain, through Greek and Etruscan pottery and sculpture, medieval Christian carving and battalions of armour! Again, I was overwhelmed by the number of paintings by particular artists. I liked a lot of the Juan Gris, also de Chirico's *Ariadne* and Dali's *Madonna* (very different from the style for which he is famous). Finally I looked at some of the nineteenth and early twentieth-century European paintings. It was like being in Musée d'Orsay. In fact, I could hear a number of French speakers. There were loads of Degas and Toulouse-Lautrec. I particularly liked one of Degas's *At the Milliner's* (there are two) and *Two Dancers*. Also many Renoirs, particularly paintings of my favourite subject in the Musée d'Orsay — young girls playing the piano. Also loved Renoir's *In the Meadow*.

Caught a bus home (always a bit of a triumph when you swipe your ticket the right way and catch the right bus), then Laurance and I went to a superb Japanese

Strawberry Fields: the John Lennon memorial, New York.
(Photo: Jennifer Bryce.)





View of Macy's (and the tops of several New York skyscrapers) from the viewing platform on the 86th floor of the Empire State Building. (Photo: Jennifer Bryce.)

restaurant ('Todai'— apparently a part of a chain) — never before have I seen such a spread of sushi, barbecued delicacies, seaweed delicacies, etc. Then by subway to Merrimack Theatre to see a play called *Secret Order* by Bob Clyman (who I'd not heard of). So this is 'off Broadway'. The play was about cancer research and faculty politics, so it was appropriate in various ways for both of us.

Thursday, 6 December

No way that I could have fitted in the Frick Collection and the Metro museum yesterday.

A beautiful morning. Extremely cold, with snow lying around, but sunny. Decided to walk up the west side of Central Park, and to spend more time in the park (on Monday I walked up the east side, but kept close to 5th Avenue, as was aiming for the Guggenheim). Lots of people walking dogs or jogging, but also a sense of tranquillity — quite surprising as so close to the hectic bustle of New York streets — where there is constant horn honking, police yelling at traffic, many ambulance and police sirens.

When I came to a sign for 'Strawberry Fields' I realised I must be close to the John Lennon memorial, and indeed, walked through a little garden area and there was a tiled circle with 'Imagine' in the centre. People had left tributes and others were sitting around quietly on surrounding seats.

By now I had walked up to about 79th Street and the walking was lovely — so I kept going, deciding to try to

find the Allendale apartments on 99 West (of *Mozart in the Jungle* fame). 99W doesn't come through to 6th Avenue (or whatever it is called there), so I walked to 100W and down that a block or so — interesting to walk in a more suburban neighbourhood. I was expecting to discover that the apartments had been knocked down, as there is a lot of new building. Also, I didn't have the number — only the street. When I found 99W it was a relief to discover that it is short! Walked down it and — within a block — came upon Allendale. A bit disappointing, really. It is supposed to be occupied by musicians, so I expected to hear scales being practised and violins being tuned. Heard nothing musical (or unmusical). And it is not a really old decaying building. Looked like 1930s or 40s. Anyway — I have now seen it.

Walked back along the upper part of Broadway for a bit, then cut through Central Park, around the lake, past rugged-up people playing tennis on snow-covered courts and ultimately to the Frick.

I was longing for a coffee by this stage — but to my surprise, the Frick has no coffee shop. So, I looked at the whole collection coffee-less. This was the private collection of Henry Clay Frick, who died in 1919. It is in his private house — a magnificent mansion, specially built for him, and in spite of the majestic art works there is still a feeling that it is a home. The paintings (and other art works) are arranged pretty much as he had them. Two of the Vermeers here are in the South Hall: *Officer and Laughing Girl* and *Girl Interrupted at Her Music*. I particularly liked the latter — another case of suggestive romance. The music teacher is looking over her shoulder in a tender manner — light from the left again, his arm on her chair. This is definitely not the *Pearl Earring* girl. There were a lot of Gainsborough and

Sir Joshua Reynolds — pale, porcelain-skinned women. A whole room of Fragonard, *The Progress of Love*. The famous paintings by Holbein the Younger of Thomas Cromwell and Thomas More. And El Greco and Titian! I particularly liked a couple of paintings by Turner — one of the Thames, the other of fishing boats — beautiful light. Then the last Vermeer — *Mistress and Maid* — a knowing bond between the two, sharing the tension of the contents of a letter about to be opened by the mistress. The mistress is wearing a very large pearl earring. There was a beautiful Renoir of a mother walking her daughters in the park — and she looks very young and strikingly like her daughters.

After visiting The Frick, I dithered — which is not a sensible thing for a tourist to do. It just meant that I retraced my steps more than needed. I was desperate for coffee and some food and there was nowhere in the close vicinity. Decided to go back to Central Park (across the road) where there is a zoo — surely at a zoo there is a café! So I walked down towards the shopping area, keeping to the east of Central Park, and indeed the zoo had a café, where I purchased a large takeaway mug of soup (not coffee, after all!) The time was now about 3.15 p.m. Maybe I would just have time to go to the Whitney. This meant walking back up past The Frick. I had to pay for entrance to both The Frick and The Whitney — not covered by my New York Pass. So in some ways it was silly to fork out \$15 entrance fee for a less-than-two-hour visit. Still — better to do that than to not visit at all.

I lined up at the Whitney. And when the woman at

the desk asked me if there were any concessions, and I hesitated for a moment, wondering whether I could be a Senior, the man behind me said, 'Hold it, make that two' — produced some kind of pass — and I got in free! I was expecting to find Edward Hopper paintings here, and indeed, because the gift shop was about to close, I purchased three Hopper postcards, assuming the paintings were in the gallery — but they were on loan to a gallery in Washington! with the exception of one painting of a naked woman standing in sunlight — the light coming in from an open window to her left in a bedroom.

In the evening Laurance, Anthony and I went to a superb concert by the Jerusalem Quartet at the Tisch Center for the Arts. They started with the Beethoven F Minor — I thought it a late quartet, but it is mid period. A vibrant opening — a promise of agile, sensitive performance. The cellist plays Jacqueline du Pré's cello. The second piece was by Avni: *Summer Strings* — I quite liked it, although sometimes felt it was just exploring all the things that strings can do. Then the final piece was the Brahms Clarinet Quintet, with soloist Alexander Fiterstein, who was utterly superb. An unblemished and warm performance — the best of performance of this that I have ever heard! We went off to a diner for a late dinner — I had moussaka. Walked back in a bit of snow with fairytale Christmas decorations.

Friday, 7 December

Still icy. A healthy breakfast at Tick Tock diner — granola with berries — almost more berries than granola — very good. Made a mistake with the tipping, which

Barbara Lamar and Damien Broderick in San Antonio. (Photo: Jennifer Bryce.)



was not well received. The check said, please pay at counter, gratuities included. But I should have left a tip on the table. How was I to know? Walked down Broadway for a bit, heading for the Museum of Modern Art. I had limited time as I was to meet Laurance at his masseur in the afternoon. So — once again, the decision of what to see as there is no way I can cover anything like the whole collection. Decided on the permanent collection. Walked into one room, and there was the famous Duchamp *Bicycle Wheel*. The original one was 'lost', but Duchamp constructed this one in 1951 and was apparently happy with it. Other familiar works, such as Andy Warhol's *Campbell's Soup Cans*. I think this is where I saw a huge Jackson Pollock. One painting that I loved was Munch's *Storm*. Raced back to 35th Street to meet Laurance and travel out to Queens to see the new apartment that he will move into at the end of January. (Went by train — still have trouble putting my ticket through the right way!) The new apartment is in a very nice friendly neighbourhood, and the apartment has a great view of the 59th Street Bridge.

In the evening we went to Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* at Carnegie Hall. It was performed by the St Cecilia Chorus and Orchestra — good soloists, particularly, I thought, the contralto, Hanne Ladefoged-Dollase. The most amazing thing is that the conductor, David Randolph, is 93 years old! He conducted the whole thing with tremendous vitality (no baton) and walked off at the end in quite a sprightly manner. From our initial seats in Row D, the performance was a bit lacking in depth, but we moved back into the middle of the hall (amazingly some vacant seats there) and the sound was much better. As a performance it was not memorable, although good. For me, the amazing thing was to be sitting in Carnegie Hall, thinking of all the other performances that have taken place there, and also my amazement that a 93-year-old could have such vitality. Afterwards had supper at a Jewish deli across the road from Carnegie Hall — chicken soup and gefilte fish.

Saturday, 8 December

A relatively quiet morning after a late night. Must confess that I went to Borders because Laurance had mentioned a DVD of P. D. Q. Bach that he would like, and I bought it for him as a present. Took advantage of the café for breakfast, although the coffee was nothing special (had imagined sitting with a coffee reading the *New York Times* — but the *NYT* didn't seem to be available there).

In the afternoon Laurance and I walked to Greenwich Village — secondhand book stores there that Tony would love — one with loads of first editions, such as *The Iceman Cometh*. Loitered in Washington Square — in the middle of the New York University — secondhand book stalls, people playing bolle. Thought of Henry James. Walked through Little Italy to Chinatown, where we met Anthony, Laurance had a massage, and then we had a great Chinese dinner — congee (like porridge) — I had a vegetable one to try to be healthy — also shared duck and delicious bean curd dishes. After indulging in an unnecessary Hagen Daas ice-cream, went back to Anthony's place where we watched a movie — the Canadian *Brokeback Mountain* (didn't pick up its actual title).

Sunday, 9 December

My last day in New York. I knew it would come around too quickly. Sad to think that I won't walk through Central Park again. Decided to do one final 'touristy'

thing — go up the Empire State Building even though the weather is a bit overcast. My New York Pass covers it.

Although the pass is meant to enable you to sidestep queues, which I did, I still spent more time queuing to get up there than actually observing the view — although once you are on the 86th Floor there is no pressure to hurry. However, I had said to Laurance that I'd be back around 1.00 p.m. in time for us to go to a play, so I started to get anxious when at midday we were still queuing for the lift to get to the 86th.

Anyway, all was well, and despite the overcast weather, there was, of course, a magnificent view. I walked around and looked from all sides, then joined the queues for the lifts to go down. A late brunch in a diner on the way back to Laurance's, then to see an off-Broadway play (on 42nd Street), *A Hard Heart*, by Howard Barker. It is a complex play that will have many interpretations. There is a central, powerful, 'hard-hearted' woman, who has a kind of oedipal relationship with her son. The hard-heartedness seems to be commenting on emotion versus genius of a certain powerful kind. On the way back we checked out the bus station — within walking distance — from where I can catch a bus to the airport tomorrow morning.

Monday, 10 December

Another day of travel best not remembered in detail. A grey drizzling day. Caught the bus to Newark without event. Had a fairly ordinary breakfast near the gate lounge, and the plane boarded pretty much on time. But we were delayed for an hour, firstly at the gate and then waiting to takeoff. So — a familiar story — in Dallas, I missed the connection to San Antonio. American Airlines were very good, however, and booked me on the next flight, but this gave me 10 minutes, in an unfamiliar airport, changing terminals — used the little train, an upgraded version of the one Mabe and I used in 1986. I caught the plane and had a very good window seat at the front of Economy. San Antonio is friendly, and the Hampton Inn is better than suggested by pictures on the Internet.

Tuesday, 11 December

The last day of 'freedom' before the symposium.

I got up fairly late and wandered over to the Institute of Texan Culture. It looked cold and dreary outside, but I was surprised to find it quite warm — around 26 degrees C — far too hot in a rollneck jumper, and no need for a raincoat. I know very little about the history of Texas, so the museum was quite informative for me, although very much set up for primary school children — there were a couple of classes there. There were some informative dioramas, but I could do without seeing Lady Bird Johnson's shoes or indeed George Bush's cowboy boots! The more conservative seem to claim Bush as a Texan, but according to the somewhat more leftwing hotel receptionist, he is not.

In the afternoon met up with Damien Broderick and Barbara. They came to the hotel, and I was able to entertain them to afternoon tea in the lobby. We chatted for a couple of hours — it was great to meet Barbara, who is some kind of taxation lawyer — she talked about buying companies. We discussed real estate (not what I'd expect to discuss with Damien) — and the inevitable topic for 60-year-olds: health.

In the evening I arranged to meet the New Zealand advocate, Libby Burgess. We had a Mexican meal with margueritas, then walked along some of the River Walk

— a balmy evening.

Wednesday, 12 December

Was awoken at 3.45 a.m. by a call from Jamie to say that Mum has been unwell — so didn't really go back to sleep. But it was reassuring to talk with her briefly.

Did some work in the morning, then headed over to register for the symposium a bit before midday. Met up with Libby and with Dianne Lindsay from ANZBCTG. So after registering we had lunch together, and had a bit of time to look at the Alamo museum and some Mexican gift shops, where I bought some jewellery.

Then at 3.30 p.m. the program started. The patient advocates met and were briefed and introduced. Everyone else seems to have a nursing or scientific background! At dinner, sat with Melanie Shouse (has reason to be extremely angry with the lack of universal health care system in the US), Bev Parker, who is a hot-line director for Y-ME, and Elizabeth Meyer, who has been involved in mammographic screening and other aspects of breast cancer support.

Thursday, 13 December

There are almost 9000 participants at this symposium. It is like an ANZBCTG Scientific Meeting magnified considerably. Everything is extremely well organised. At some large conferences it is difficult to choose what session to go to. Here there is almost no choice. A huge area for plenaries and shorter presentations, which are amplified/filmed, and PowerPoints displayed onto multiple screens so that it is easy for everyone to hear and see.

There is a newsletter each day, outlining the highlights of the previous day and each evening — the PowerPoint displays are put on the Internet. I was amused to find that, whereas at conferences in Australia, the morning tea choice of milk is elaborate — full cream, partial skim, skim or soy — here there is only one milk, but the choice of coffee is French roast, Italian medium roast, American roast or decaf! I went for Italian medium roast, which seemed quite good. I didn't ever see the lunches provided, because the advocate group was entertained each day by a drug company, but I was pleased to see that they don't indulge in huge scones with jam and cream, as we do in Australia.

In the evening there was a very pleasant dinner put on by a drug company. All the advocates had been invited, but there were a lot of spare seats. I sat with Elizabeth and Libby and a couple who live near New York. All very pleasant. (And wine at last — they don't serve wine at functions just for the advocates!) Americans are keen on iced tea.

Friday, 14 December

I am concerned about Mum — but the conference goes on. A cold and rainy day — only a problem for getting to and from the conference as we stay inside all day. I am grateful for my raincoat, but it is only drizzling. I walk to the conference each day — about 10 minutes. A bus is provided, but walking is probably quicker.

I do feel that I lack a lot of basic biological knowledge — thank heavens for Wikipedia — and I'm grateful to have very easy Internet access at the hotel. I think this was the day where we were entertained to lunch by a company (Novartis) that has developed a form of breast reconstruction after partial mastectomy — using the patient's own body fat. Another dinner in the evening (provided by Genomic Health). Some excellent papers. It makes one aware of the tremendous significance of

knowing the human genome. This leads to the ability to personalise treatment and target particular aspects of breast cancer disease. Also, with the ability to study networks of proteins and inhibitors, it is becoming possible to predict who will benefit and who won't benefit from a particular form of treatment.

Saturday, 15 December

Another busy day. In the afternoon, one of the papers for my report was presented. I must say that I felt little the wiser after the presentation, and felt that I had learnt as much from reading the abstract carefully. I look forward to spending time thinking about the slides when they are put on the conference website. The presenter is Danish. Some presenters, such as this one, I think of as very bright young researchers — often young women in smart suits with glamorous glasses. But equally often, they are slightly older women and men who don't seem to care about their appearance at all, and I imagine that they have devoted themselves to their area of research. This evening we 'graduated' — which meant that we received certificates saying that we had participated in the advocate program. The treat afterwards was ice-cream.

Sunday, 16 December

The last day of the conference. Walked over early. The second paper I am to report on is at 9.30 a.m. I am so impressed with the conference organisation — there is no way that you are aware of the 8000-plus people here. There are Internet facilities, ticket booking facilities, a post office, a seemingly efficient message system (I haven't needed to use it) and, because of the setup in the main hall with good amplification and screen projection, there are no queues of people waiting to get in. In fact, I have not been in a queue. The last two days have been blissfully sunny, although the wind is cold. The second paper for my report, on Pertuzumab, was reasonably straightforward, with clear slides. The conference finished at midday without fanfare, and we walked out to some 1940s jazz.

I decided to walk around the town a bit before returning to the hotel to start writing up my 'hot topic'. First, went to La Vilita (the old village), which is a bit of an artists' colony — and tourist trap! Looked at some pleasing local art, some enticing leather jackets and other garments and loads of jewellery.

Decided to go back to the Mexican market that I saw on the first day downtown. The jackets that I thought were terrific looked pretty ordinary, but I did end up buying another one for \$US46.00, which seemed pretty reasonable.

After this indulgence, I went back to the hotel and worked on my 'hot topic' report until about 5.30, when I left to meet Libby, Melanie and Luana for dinner. We met at Market Square, an older Mexican market area — the Spanish influence is very strong. I had expected a culture depicted by a Texan in a broad hat, sitting under a large cactus or driving a chrome-plated pink Cadillac. It has more of a South American-Catholic flavour. No Cadillacs. Had margaritas, then watched some delightful children dancing — versions of the Mexican hat dance.

Libby had heard of a religious parade. It is an annual event, and is associated with Christmas festivities — with the Spanish influence, this is a strongly Catholic city. We found the parade — I couldn't see exactly what they were carrying — but families were following the procession singing from sheets.

Melanie and Luana became hungry, so we left the procession to find somewhere to eat. Very uncharacteristically, we ended up in a place that described itself as a British pub — not exactly typical of San Antonio! But Luana and Melanie are particular about their food and they thought it would be good here. I had a glass of red wine and the others had bloody marys. So my last meal in San Antonio was the typically British corned beef and cabbage!

Monday, 17 December

Saw Libby at the post office that opens at 9.00 a.m. — we were both posting parcels home to lighten our luggage. I have still managed to keep mine at carry-on size. After packing I worked on the 'hot topic' paper again — no way I can finish it. The Danish speaker has not yet put her slides on the Internet, although the Pertuzumab speaker has. So I spent the morning writing about Pertuzumab.

Caught the bus to the airport at 12.30 — picked up from the hotel. Travelled out with a Canadian breast nurse. And so starts the long journey home. I am now

sitting in LA airport — so I won't miss the connection to Melbourne as I had feared. Have done a lot of 'people watching', but also bought the latest *New Yorker*.

I had planned to have a nice dinner here in LA as the plane doesn't leave until after 11.00 p.m. I have about \$US300 to spend! But — in this ghastly Tom Bradley terminal, all I could get was a sausage sandwich. Airports here really are like bus stations, and I have the impression that Americans live on frequent sandwiches. There were no Duty Free shops or other tourist traps. The trip home was mercifully uneventful. I had about the best Economy seat possible (2nd row, on aisle), but even so, it is impossibly cramped, and I couldn't open out my computer when the person in front reclined her chair. Gave up any thought of work or sleep, and watched all episodes of *The Chasers* and *Summer Heights High*. Whizzed through customs at lightning speed (with my carry-on luggage) and it was a delight to be met by Angela.

— Jennifer Bryce, January 2008

African diary

by Jennifer Bryce

2 February 2008

Here I am in seat 70G on the South African Airways flight from Perth to Johannesburg. I have just eaten what they sensibly call 'the meal' (rather than pretending it is lunch or dinner). Not bad, actually — chicken with some kind of basil sauce and there was a choice of white wine; chardonnay or sauvignon blanc. I went for the latter, a South African label that was completely new to me, but not unpleasant in these cramped circumstances. As I ate, I observed the forty-something man diagonally in

front of me who had selected the same meal. He didn't eat the bread roll (I did, but declined the butter), but I left the pudding — which he consumed. It tried to lure me, as it sat there, looking rather like a poached egg — some kind of white rectangle with a mandarin segment on top. Actually, I can't complain, although I'm right down the back of the aircraft in the middle, the seat next to me is free. It is freezing cold (the air con) and I am wearing my warm hoodie and wrapped in what they call a duvet — a light blanket. But some people seem quite happy in shirt sleeves.

I am on my way to Botswana to run two weeks of workshops for the Botswana Examinations Council. Unlike my recent trip to New York, I have no preconceived ideas as to what the country will be like. Tonight I stay in Johannesburg at an airport hotel called City Lodge. I'm not looking forward to that — I picture a rather isolated, somewhat dingy 1970s-type three star. Although the website pictured a smiling waiter offering people drinks in a restaurant, the description says that meals are available across the road. There wasn't much choice as I couldn't connect with a flight from Johannesburg to Gaborone, capital of Botswana, until the next day. I've felt slightly apprehensive about Johannesburg. People enjoy telling you their horror stories



of muggings (although never a firsthand experience). So I've imagined situations where I can't find the shuttle bus to the hotel and get ripped off by a taxi. I even prepared by getting some local currency, possibly at extortionate rates, in Australia. There will be a different currency in Botswana.

Having had 'the meal', the sauvignon blanc and watched a documentary on Pavarotti (the only thing that was slightly appealing from the array of entertainment), I am ready to do some preparatory work on the Botswanan curriculum. We are about two hours into an almost twelve-hour flight.

10 February

The fact that it is now more than a week since the first diary entry gives an idea of how busy I have been.

Johannesburg was not quite as bad as I'd imagined, although I was glad to be on the plane to Botswana the next day. The City Lodge was OK. It was difficult to find the shuttle bus and I was hampered by lack of small change to tip people. In fact, for the woman who loaded my heavy suitcase onto the bus (I wanted to do it but she wouldn't let me — probably wanting to extract a tip), I gave all my Australian change — understandably, she wasn't impressed. I was amazed to find that the hotel doesn't have lifts. I asked the hotel reception whether they could give change for a note, but that was not possible. So, now having no change at all, I carried my heavy suitcase down the stairs to my basement room (and up again in the morning). Within 10 minutes of being outdoors in Johannesburg I was bitten by a mosquito — my tropical-strength repellent was at the bottom of my suitcase.

Arriving in Gaborone was a very different matter. Although a Sunday, there were three people from the Botswana Examinations Centre to meet me: Spencer, Kes and driver Motlhale. I was driven to the Grand Palm and they made sure that I was safely booked in. The Grand Palm is on several acres of parkland. There are two hotels — I am in the better one, the Walmont. I think it is five star. It certainly seems to have all the five star facilities. There is also a conference centre and a casino. I knew that the hotel had an ATM, so I wasn't worried about getting the Botswanan currency — *pula*, the same word as rain. However, the machine refused my credit card, which I have used in ATMs from the Middle East, to France, the UK and US! Reception could not provide cash — so, breaking all the rules of sensible banking, I got a cash advance at the casino!

It's interesting how much better one feels with cash in one's pocket (no matter what extortion occurred to procure it). I started to enjoy the comforts of the Grand Palm and sat by the pool sipping a gin and tonic.

The week was unbelievably demanding and busy, although there was every concern for my welfare. The Botswanan people seem to be exceptionally thoughtful and empathetic. I am collected every morning by Motlhale at 7.00 a.m. (he is sometimes late, which is pleasantly reassuring — they are not a 'clockwork' kind of people). The first day started with a prayer where everyone, me included, prayed for the workshop's success. These people have gone to so much trouble, I don't want to let them down in any way at all. They seem to be able to understand me OK — I talk fairly slowly. But I have difficulty understanding them. They speak softly and quickly. Everyone wrote their name on cards — or at least, the name they wanted me to call them. They seem to have difficulty calling me 'Jenny' and it is strange to hear 'Dr Bryce' so much — is that me? Later someone

tells me that they have difficulty calling 'elderly' people by their first name — oh dear, I was hoping I didn't look so old! But I think 'elderly' might mean 'people in authority'; I hope so!

I am driven back to the hotel at the end of each day, arriving around 5.30. I try to go to the gym each evening, but have missed a couple because I am so tired. Venturing into the gym requires some courage. I am usually the only white person and the only person over thirty-five. Surrounded by beautiful lithe Botswanans I have to stare at myself in huge mirrors as I exercise (no way of propping up a novel, as I did in Jordan and not even a TV to watch). The disco music is quite helpful, although I have to try to set my machine to be in time with it.

There are three choices of places to eat at the Grand Palm; Livingston's — all you can eat for about 120 pule (probably about \$30), the Baron of Beef (beef is pretty much a staple in Botswana) or the Fig Tree bar by the swimming pool, which has mainly hamburgers but is cheaper than the other two. Since I usually have only one course, I thought that Livingston's would be extravagant (as I would pay for far more than I would consume) but it has become my favourite, as there is an excellent Chinese chef who prepares a very good garlic and ginger fish while you wait. Unfortunately in this kind of 'international' hotel there is little traditional food on the menu.

On Thursday evening Peggy's sister, Annie, dropped in to see me. A few weeks before leaving, I was having dinner with my former thesis supervisor, Pam Green. I mentioned my impending trip and she told me she knew of a PhD student from Botswana, known as Peggy (not her real name). We met up, and Peggy was an invaluable source of information. It was also my first experience of the Botswanan people's warmth. She was homesick, and delighted that I could visit her family — she is one of thirteen children. It was lovely for me to have some contact with people in Gaborone outside of my work.

So on Saturday morning, Annie (not her real name) collected me at 10.30 a.m. to drive me to the family's 'village' (of 45,000 people), Molepolole. It was clear that the cost of petrol would be a problem, and I felt bad that I hadn't thought of that. So I instructed Annie to fill her car at my expense and we set off, with her son Tony driving. I am starting to get a feel for my way around Gaborone even though all week it has just been a matter of being driven from hotel to Examinations Centre and back. On Friday evening, Spencer, the Public Relations Officer, arranged for Motlhale to drive me around the sites of Gaborone. Spencer came too, which I thought was generous. We visited 'the three chiefs', impressive statues of the Botswanan tribal chiefs who negotiated with the British to form a protectorate (around the time that the Boers were lurking). All of this information was conveyed clearly and with enthusiasm by a young man who accompanied us around the site. It was not necessary to pay him, but I did. The Botswanans are genuinely enthusiastic about their country and seem to share a pride in its growth and achievements. In 1947 there was only one short tarred road, which was built for King George VI when he visited. One can sense the shared community pride when told of the founding of the university. Every citizen was asked to provide a cow to help pay for it. Spencer, Motlhale and I also drove past the impressive parliament buildings and visited the museum and art gallery.

On Saturday, Annie, Tony and I set off to visit her family in Molepolole. We soon drove through an area of

endless used car sales yards — it reminded me of Dandenong. But apparently these cars are imported from Singapore. I am told that they are 'good' cars and they obviously fetch a price in Gaborone that covers the cost of importing them. At one point we saw a herd of goats obediently using a pedestrian crossing. There was no one in charge of them, but they seemed to know when it was safe to cross. We went past an imposing army base then into the countryside. Fences by the roadside to protect the animals — but most of the land is tribal and animals (mainly cattle) roam freely on it. It is common to own some cattle, even if your main work is in the town. There are 'cattle posts' where cattle are cared for — it seems to be organised through the tribal system. Anyone can approach tribal elders to request use of tribal land — it seems that this is usually approved. There are other bodies that will provide seeding money for setting up small businesses. Apparently this is often abused.

We arrived at the family compound, where the benefits of living in an 'extended family' arrangement are apparent. Although there have been the marriage break-ups typical of twentieth/twenty-first century living, the children are all together, and the grandmother is head of the household. Tony has a son living there, although he lives in Gaborone. I am treated to 'bush tea' on arrival (a favourite of the Ladies Detective Agency). I hand over Peggy's gifts to her family and some small gifts I have brought. The little koalas are very popular with the children — one boy of about nine recognises that he has some information about koalas on his toy computer. Everyone except the older women (there are no older men) speak good English. Instruction is in English from Grade 4 onwards.

Tony and the children take me for a drive around the 45,000 population village. I think that maybe 'village' means 'tribal centre' as everyone seems to have the same tribal origins — in this case the totem of the crocodile. One place we go to is the meeting house, where the elders make decisions on matters of local government. One of these matters is the punishment of petty criminals — I learn that it is a decision about how many lashes they will receive. I get permission from the elders (some of whom are sitting outside under a tree) to photograph the meeting house. I have been struck by the peacefulness and the sense of community optimism in Botswana (well — what I have seen of it — mainly Gaborone) and I wonder whether this is helped by the apparent seamless connection between tribal rule (the meeting house, the decisions of the elders, taking the role of local government) and the democratic parliament (which has a House of Elders), coupled with the obvious wisdom of the first president (in the 1960s) who encouraged the community to work together towards projects such as the establishment of the university — so there seems to be a kind of universal pride in the country and how it has developed.

As well as visiting the meeting house we go to the museum, which is very small scale. It is hard to gauge the community's wealth. The children are very excited, although they live in the village, they've obviously never been to the museum. I sense that there isn't money for such treats (I pay the seemingly meager amount — probably about 50c each, for admission). I am shown the new hospital — a source of great pride. Tony and I talk about the HIV/AIDS problem, which is huge. The problem is now openly recognised. The government subsidises the very important retroviral drugs, which are not accessible in many third world countries. The

grade seven science curriculum is explicit about sex and contraception (one of the questions on the Primary School Leaving Examination, taken at the end of Grade 7 asks, in MCQ format, which is the most appropriate contraceptive for John and Mary to use in a particular situation, the answer is condom).

I am also shown the entrance to a deep cave into which practising witches were thrown alive up to some time in the mid nineteenth century.

We then return to the grandmother's house for lunch — a traditional bean dish eaten on Saturdays — it is delicious. It is served with a glass of water, which I don't drink, having been advised by my doctor not to drink tap water (or eat salad washed with water, etc) because of our lack of immunity to various bugs that may be in it. Of course my lack of drinking is noticed and, although I protest, Tony is sent out to buy a bottle of coke. After lunch I am introduced to Peggy's aunts (her mother's sisters) who live across the road from the main compound. One is 79 and the other (the oldest in the family) is 98. They don't speak English but are extremely alert, asking (through Annie) many questions about Australia and my family. Annie and I sit on plastic chairs but the elderly aunts favour thin mats on the concrete verandah. On the way back to Gaborone (about 60 km) we drop into Peggy's brother's house. He is a retired bank manager, and the wealth is obvious — opulent furniture, a swimming pool. He and his wife are undergoing some kind of therapy and are not available, so we walk around the garden, then leave.

The next day is Sunday and I had thought about going to church to hear some African gospel singing. But having had no exercise to speak of, I started the morning in the hotel gym. While I was there, Spencer (the BEC Public Relations Officer) phoned to see whether I would like to accompany him and his wife to mass. I learned later that he doesn't go to church — he was doing this because I must have mentioned my interest in going.

We attended a service in the Catholic cathedral (it didn't seem to be designed in the shape of a cross, made of cream brick, it reminded me of a large church that one might find somewhere like Box Hill, built in the 1960s or 70s). The cathedral was packed. Everything was purple for the first Sunday in Lent. It wasn't especially hot, but there were lots of electric 'ceiling' fans in the walls that gave an impression of aeroplane propellers. The service was conducted in Setswana. I was the only white person there. Little children turned around and stared at me and their parents told them not to point. The singing was a thrill. And most of the service was sung. Completely unaccompanied (I don't think the church had an organ), the lead woman would sing a four bar phrase, then everyone joined in perfectly in four-part harmony. It all seemed very joyful. The priest really did seem like a father with a huge family whom he was embracing. As he preached, he walked about (with a contact microphone).

After church, I invited Spencer and his wife to join me for coffee at the hotel. While we were drinking, Annie arrived. She insisted that I must have a traditional dress made, and she wanted to take me to some distant cousin of hers who is a dressmaker. I didn't really want a traditional dress, but decided I should oblige. We set off to a dusty neighbourhood in Gaborone, children running barefoot on the unmade roads. The cousin had her dressmaking business in an outbuilding of her small home. I selected a traditional blue material, and to my great relief it was acceptable to have a jacket made rather than a dress. It would be finished by Thursday.

I had intended to spend most of Sunday preparing for the coming week as there would be 170 teachers attending the workshop (in the first week there were 35 officers from BEC). By the time I got back from the dressmaker it was about 5.00 p.m., so I settled down to a couple of hours' work.

23 February

I am now home. In the last hectic week there was no time to write in my diary. The workshop went well, although I was utterly exhausted at the end of the first day which was all plenary (just me talking to 170 people crammed into a room and there was no sound system). The pattern for the remaining days was not so strenuous: about two hours plenary from 7.30 to 9.30, then the teachers worked in subject groups, writing and panelling ('shredding') items. The Thursday was Valentine's Day. The Botswanans seem to celebrate this with great verve. They dress in red. Much fun was made of the fact that the workshops were on higher-order thinking (HOT) and each day we were getting 'HOTTER' — so of course by Valentine's Day, things were really HOT ('Oh, Dr Bryce, you are helping us to be so HOT!') That evening Dr Cele and his wife took me out to dinner. It turned out to be his wife's birthday.

On the last afternoon there were larger shredding groups (such as 'humanities', 'practical', 'maths/ science') so that good work could be showcased and given a more thorough scrutiny. The workshop finished at lunchtime on the Friday, then I had a meeting with senior staff members.

Each day we were all provided with a cooked lunch in the BEC cafeteria. This was when I had an opportunity to sample some local foods. I did not particularly like the staple maize food (used instead of rice), which reminded me of solid, cold porridge. A great deal of meat is eaten as Botswana is a big beef producer. I dutifully avoided the salad, but there was usually a stew of cooked vegetables. I also avoided morning and afternoon tea, simply because there was so much food! For morning tea participants ate plates of three or four sandwiches (for most of us a sustaining lunch) or a kind of flat bread/scone. For afternoon tea there were un-iced cakes.

On the final afternoon, Spencer insisted that he and Motlhale would take me to a game park. There is one on the edge of Gaborone. You drive through the park where the animals roam free. There are no lions, tigers or elephants. Apparently some people drive too fast and frighten the animals away. But we were fortunate, we saw zebras, baboons, impala, wild pigs and ostrich. Spencer invited me to have dinner with him and his wife but I declined as I had to pack and be ready the next morning for a 6.00 a.m. bus to the airport.

In some ways the two weeks had passed by very quickly. But I was tired and ready for my 'treat' — two days at Victoria Falls. I had decided to stay at Livingstone in Zambia, rather than in Zimbabwe, which I thought might not be safe. According to the LP guide, tourism is booming in Livingstone because many people have similar thoughts to mine. However, there wasn't

much sign of this boom. When I went on a tour of the Falls I was the only person. I asked the guide if he had more people that afternoon — no, I was the only person for the day. And it was a good time to visit — just after the rainy season, so the falls were magnificent. Such a 'wonder of the world' does leave one speechless. It is difficult to take in the amazing width of 1.7 km. Everyone wears raincoats as you are completely drenched by the spray — it is just like standing under a shower. A traffic bridge was constructed in about 1904, and it is in the middle of this bridge that you cross from Zambia to Zimbabwe. In Zambia the main currency (for the tourist) appears to be US dollars. I guess they are even more popular in Zimbabwe, where the inflation is unbelievably high.

I stayed at a guest house that was just right for me — the single middle-aged tourist. It is mid-range in price (the more expensive ranch-style lodges start at \$US300 per person per night). The owner-manager Richard Chanter collects you from the airport and is prepared to drive you down town or to connect with tours. The restaurant runs from 7.00 a.m. until late and you can order a cup of tea (or gin and tonic) whenever you want and the menu includes local cuisine. I particularly liked a dish made of crushed pumpkin leaves and white nuts (possibly almonds). My room was more than adequate with ensuite and a quaint wrought iron desk (at which I started to write my report). I had a little verandah that looked out onto the tropical garden and swimming pool. The cups in the room were dirty but the hot water jug enabled me to boil water for drinking and it seemed preferable to have cups of tea at the restaurant rather than use the one scraggy-looking tea bag provided. On the Sunday evening (my last in Africa) I took the *African Queen* sunset cruise on the Zambezi. I met up with somewhat likeminded people, Mike an IT person staying at the same hotel, and an extraordinary English woman called Antonia, who had been to Antarctica and drank triple shot vodkas with beer chasers.

On the Monday, Richard drove me to the airport and I farewelled Zambia and my luggage, which I didn't see again for five days (it was delivered to me here at home about an hour ago, having been lost by SA Airlines/Qantas). I saw more than necessary of the shopping mall that is Johannesburg airport, and was disappointed that the Frequent Flyer upgrade I'd requested didn't eventuate. But my companions in Row 53 were very congenial — the middle seat is marketing car wash that doesn't require water, the window seat works at the Alfred Hospital. I was grateful for the aisle so I could hold my computer out there every so often to read what I had written as it was impossible to completely open the lid and see the screen. The Qantas inflight entertainment is considerably better than SA Airways (which I flew on the way over), so the time passed unexpectedly quickly. On returning I didn't have jet lag, but I did feel stunned returning to the familiar after having been temporarily absorbed by such a dynamic and welcoming culture.

— Jennifer Bryce, March 2008



Ray writes: '14th February piccy of me on the top of the Mookra High Tower, which is in the wall of the Horseshoe Range between Quorn and Carrieton. The Horseshoe Range is a pound, and the High Tower is part of its wall. (I'm the antiquated one on the left; Clare, the woman on the right, is my regular hiking mate's friend, a Frenchwoman madly in love with Oz's outback. He's the one taking the pic, using his mobile.)

Exercises

by Ray Wood

I suffer from post-polio syndrome, and spondylosis, but I've also had a badly damaged spine from when I was eighteen, which in the last couple of decades has caused me increasing pain. In the end the pain caused by my spine overrode everything else, and was getting really bad. I was becoming so crippled by it that I could hardly get around any more. (I still went hiking, though — that was one of the few things I could still manage, though it was getting very bad even doing that.) So the exercises that I do were originally designed to combat that pain from my spine.

However, in doing them I've benefited in so many other ways as well. I began my present exercise regimen 3 years ago. Perhaps I should also mention that my whole skeleton was damaged by the polio that I had when I was fourteen. So here below is a diatribe on my exercising, just in case any of it might be useful to you:

There are so many exercise schemes around. It was merely coincidence that the physio I went to in Port Augusta was a Pilates expert. There are also Tai Chi, Qi

Gong (Chinese one), Alexander Technique, and so forth. And there's Yoga, too well, the physical exercise part rather than the mystical part. Anyway, you probably know more about those than I do. I'm no expert at all.

I remember some ABC-TV regular medical program that in one episode brought several people together, each expert in one area or another, to deal with people with bad back problems. What impressed me was a woman expert in the Alexander Technique. She walked in with such incredible grace and an almost unbelievable walking posture — so remarkably upright! I'd love to try that one (invented by a Tasmanian), but no one offers it in Port Augusta. But I have noticed since I began my present exercise regimen that my posture is remarkably improved; people have even commented that I seem to have got taller!

The only such scheme I've had any exposure to is Pilates, and as I said, I didn't get much benefit from those Pilates exercises that I could do, and eventually discarded them.

I'd been brought up on the old idea in exercising, 'No

pain, no gain', but when I first went to this physio, he said that if an exercise caused me pain I should discard it, though for a couple he's given me I do have to push towards considerable pain deliberately.

The 'Use it or lose it' mantra you often hear, in particular associated with arthritis, I apply to every single part of my body (and brain, too). So for any weakness in my body I work up an exercise to strengthen that part against it. I'm apparently lucky, in that I can distinguish single muscles inside my body and can target an exercise precisely at that muscle — the physio calls it something like 'core awareness', and says a few people do have this ability.

An example of specifically targeted exercises is that I've always had weak ankles that twist under me from time to time when walking. In recent years they've got far worse, until they were twisting badly three or four times every day, even when I was walking along a flat surface like a pavement. It was also getting so bad that it felt as if the twisted ankle were likely to break. So I began exercising my ankles to strengthen them. The response to that was dramatic, and I swiftly reduced the frequency of twisting my ankles to two or three times a year, and now when they do twist there's almost no pain from it at all.

Another is that I have very bad lordosis in my neck, so bad that unless I got to sleep rapidly after going to bed, my neck would start to hurt so much that I had no chance of getting to sleep any longer, and had to get up. As well, each time in my sleep that I turned over, the neck pain would be so bad that it'd wake me up. The physio gave me very simple neck-strengthening exercises, and now I suffer very little neck pain at all, rarely have trouble getting to sleep, and scarcely ever wake up from turning over.

The second thing that I learned from this physio is that, rather than simply doing general exercises not targeted at anything in particular, one should put together exercises specifically targeted at weaknesses in one's body. (I did find out from him right at the start that some of the general exercises I'd been doing all my life had been actually doing me more harm than good, which startled me!)

One thing that I've learned from this physio is that doctors think in terms of either drugs or surgery. When my back pain was getting very bad, the local doctor in Quorn offered drugs to control the pain, and also suggested letting a neurosurgeon operate on my spine, though he didn't recommend it. It was then that I decided to try physiotherapy, not expecting to get much out of it.

At the very first meeting with this bloke, he checked how limber my body is, checked my X-rays, and promptly gave me one simple exercise to do every time I walked past a chair! The result was astonishing and immediate. I'd been thinking sadly that I'd have to give up my hiking altogether because it was hurting me so much. This simple exercise improved me so remarkably in a single day that I went hiking for the next eight days straight, with scarcely any pain at all. I could hardly believe it.

The physio did tell me that he's been trying for years to persuade all the doctors in this region that quite often simple exercises can work more effectively than drugs or surgery. But he said that they don't seem interested. I suppose that it's the usual case of the 'specialist' seeing the whole world only through the eyes of his specialisation.

The weightlifting is solely my own idea. As I've said,

I've been an avid bushwalker all my life, so I most certainly was getting the one general exercise that's always been recommended, that is, walking. But over the last few years I've noted that we're more and more often being told that upper-body fitness is more important than the lower-body fitness you get from walking. And weightlifting was recommended as one of the best ways to get that upper-body fitness.

You can buy small cases of weights from sports stores. They contain two short bars, one for each hand, and a collection of weights to screw on to them. They cost around \$50-\$70. So I got some. At the start with only 3 kg per hand, I could only just lift them up half a dozen times. Now I'm up to 6 kg per hand and do around 400 lifts of various kinds each day.

The result I found amazing. It isn't just the upper-body strength that it gives me; it's also the huge charge of endorphins that results. I'd finish the weightlifting part of my exercises feeling as if riding a tremendous high, one that lasts for hours afterwards. Overall, I'm sure that I've gained more from this part of my program than from anything else at all. (Because of the damage to my spine I have to use these weights lying flat on my back.)

Now, on my hikes three or four days a week, I like to tackle extremely steep climbs, up through dense scrub and even scrambling up small cliffs. My hiking mates and I call such climbs 'heart-starters'. Typically my pulse would get up to around 180, and I'd be gasping for breath all the way up. But since starting this weightlifting regimen, I find that I can't get my pulse up over 120 for one thing, and for another I'm breathing almost normally all the way up.

I've always lived a very physically active life, have always been extremely fit, and I've learned something about fitness from it all. When I was younger, I'd reach a very high level of fitness (one bushwalking doctor called me 'super fit'), and that would remain with me for a long time. But as I've got older, I find that my fitness disappears faster and still faster.

I've also found that when I was younger, it was easy to zip up to a high level of fitness rapidly. The older I get, the harder it is to reach a high level of fitness, and I think that if you let your fitness get down to a very low level, it's almost impossible to raise it very high again, certainly not to the same level as before.

In summary: it's increasingly vital as you get older to exercise your whole body more and still more; and it's increasingly important to exercise constantly since otherwise (1) you'll lose your fitness very quickly, and (2) it's harder and still harder when you lose it, to get it back again.

I've heard many people, even quite old people who're retired, say that they don't have the time to exercise every day. But this is how I look at it. I sleep for six hours, so I'm awake for eighteen hours. If I spend four to six hours a day exercising (including my hiking), as a result I gain say, twelve to fourteen good hours. If I said that I haven't the time to exercise, the result would be I'd have the full eighteen hours for doing other things. But they'd be eighteen hours of much poorer health, and the output would be far less and the standard of whatever I did would be much lower.

So it's a false economy to say that I can't afford those hours to exercise in.

— Ray Wood, 13 March 2008

Letters ... Letters? ... Letters!

STEPHEN CAMPBELL

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As always, the results of your efforts and expense are received by me with pleasure and gratitude. You keep me in touch with a world of ideas and people that I enjoy knowing of, and my solitary reclusiveness (semi-voluntary) keeps me at a distance from. I am glad you people exist still. Not so with your mother, who departed. Please accept my condolences over your loss, Bruce. I remember your mum from younger days with some affection for her kindness towards the rather rough young man who I was back then. Also, congratulations on reaching the hearty age of sixty — you survived all those crushing blows through time, and still seem to possess rigour and perspective. I claim it as an honour to know you.

My comic strip continues now to 120 pages (a new chapter called 'Iota'), and a completion doesn't seem to be in sight. The making of pictures in panels (averaging five a page) and hand-lettering the dialogue fills in many solitary hours that I live in here in windy Warrnambool and my many walks alongside the wild Southern Ocean fills me with a perspective of humility. I can relate to myriads of shells and kelp and grains of sand even. I can only expect that this phase of my life will engender some self-understanding that may manifest in some paintings that will reflect some sort of embodiment of my self. I can only hope that they will not be too self-indulgent for the viewers.

I have spoken to a fellow, Christian Shaw, who likes the idea of us having a two-man exhibition somewhere in St Kilda if he can organise it, so that my work can be viewed, and maybe even sold. I have used a lot of time 'working in a vacuum', and feel a bit like Gully Foyle at the beginning of his adventure in *Tiger! Tiger!*, waiting for a passing spaceship to retrieve me and take me to an inhabited planet. Death is my destination, but I still have a lot to do in this corporeality in terms of trying to provide 'another way of seeing'. I need to do it myself first before I can pass it on, and this process seems to court a fine madness, so I must proceed cautiously.

Fans are the pioneers; what will their horizons unfold in the future? Something good, I hope, and not further nightmares in technology. There will probably be a university course established eventually that will call on fanzines for important information concerning the latter half of the twentieth century and the beginning of the new millennium. The ideas within science fiction fandom are all-inclusive of ideas in the evolving human consciousness — ideas that don't seem to be explored (or even tolerated) in the mundane world. Maybe they will help the sleepwalkers wake up to themselves, and stop paving the way to hell with their good (but blind) intentions). Maybe there will eventually be no need of that pseudo-science called psychology, and the intelligence of its practitioners will be put to better use than trying to define illness in every human who expresses unease at what is really a very uneasy world. So-called conspiracies are child's play compared to what the military-industrial mechanism does to us. If you are interested, I'll talk to you personally about this some-

time. I know you had discourse with Philip K. Dick by mail when he was alive. I would like to have met and talked with that man.

Give my love to Elaine and a pat to the felines for me, and I hope that all goes well with you all and food stays on the table.

23 October 2007

[*brg* I have an uneasy feeling I haven't yet replied to this letter, Stephen. Please take this as an inadequate response. :: I was very moved that you remember something I should have mentioned in my own tribute to my mother: her kindness to the various fan people who landed on the doorstep during the late sixties and early seventies. She had no interest in science fiction, but she did enjoy meeting people such as yourself, Peter Darling, Lesleigh Luttrell, Alex Robb, Robin Johnson, Bill Wright, John Bangsund, Lee Harding, and even those unlikely lads from Brisbane, Neil and Michael, who stayed one night in East Preston during BOFcon in 1971, then disappeared. :: I remember the destructive effect that loneliness (or even simple aloneness) can have on a person. It would be good if you could find some way to move back to St Kilda, and catch up with of the current fan crowd. Please call me if you get to Melbourne.*]

DOUGLAS BARBOUR

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I seem to be extremely busy in retirement, on these volunteer boards of arts, and NeWest Press. One of our books, *Icefields*, has been chosen for *Canada Reads!* on CBC, which should mean lots of sales, which a small press sure can use. You can check that out at <http://www.cbc.ca/canadareads/>, which has some interesting choices (although we're hoping for Tom's book: see <http://www.newestpress.com/catalog/virtuemart/559.html/>). I think you'd find it an interesting read.

11 December 2007

DAVID J. LAKE

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I have now read Le Guin's *Voices*, and agree with you. The plot is unsatisfying. All that really happens is that the raping, murdering, torturing barbarians turn out to be not all bad, and the people of Ansul are given some of their freedom back. There is no revenge, no victorious fight for freedom. It's as though a Nazi Gauleiter, having raped a French woman, comes to like her, and then arranges a sort of peace with Germany still dominant. No, this won't do. All the rest of the novel is just manner — well done, of course. I'm afraid Ursula has lost the plot — lost the ability to invent a strong plot. I don't suppose *Powers* will be much better.

I do like *Changing Planes* — I have owned a copy for years. But again, apart from the charming and whimsical basic idea, it's all anthropology, not plotting.

12 December 2007

[*brg* I thought *Voices* was well written, both as a narrative and as a poetic discourse, but in it Le Guin repeats her basic story about the method and progress of revolution, a story, almost a private myth, that goes back to *The Dispossessed* and *Malafrena*. Some of the stories in *Changing Planes* have the depth of stories by Borges and Calvino, but others seem a bit like exercises. What keeps me reading Le Guin is the fineness of her language and the precision of her perceptions about individual characters. To find that Something Extra, a real grandeur of vision, I still go to the 'Earthsea' novels and stories. Earthsea is Le Guin's true country of the mind.*]

MIKE MCINERNEY
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Thanks for sending me your beautiful fanzine *brg* 51. I truly appreciate your kindness, and still love paper fanzines. Now that I've said that, I will say that you don't have to send me future paper issues as long as you are posting them on efanzines.com. I say this to assuage my guilt at the expense of the paper version, and because I have already looked at your zine a few weeks ago when it was first posted. I was amazed to see that I had a loc in the zine, as I couldn't remember having written one.

I do want to comment on Tim Marion's article about NYC apas. I was glad that he was 'immediately impressed' with Apa-F, as I was one of the cofounders (along with Dave Van Arnam and Andy Porter). It was the world's first weekly apa, and inspired Apa-L, which continues to this day. I no longer have any copies to check, so what I write is the memory of one who was there. There were 69 mailings, alternating between Fanoclast meetings at Ted White's place in Brooklyn and my apartment in lower Manhattan. The main contributors were Ted White, Dick Lupoff, Andy Porter, Frank Wilimczyk, rich brown, Steve Stiles, John Boardman, Mike McInerney, Arnie Katz, Len Bailes, Earl Evers, Ross Chamberlain and probably a few others that I'll remember as soon as I send this letter.

My zine (contribution) was titled *Hydra*, Lupoff published *OPO (One Page Only)*, I believe Boardman's was *Dagon*, Porter's was I think *Degler*, and Dave Van Arnam's *First Draft*.

Dave Van Arnam worked at a copy shop. He had access to mimeographs and duplication machines. He basically started the whole thing by bringing a weekly zine to the meetings. He started it after the famous subway incident. I'd love to reread that story some day, or even reprint it if only I had a copy.

[*brg* Okay, Mike, what's the famous subway incident? In ANZAPA, Roger Sims has just told the true story of Room 770. Why not another fabulous fannish true story?*

By mutual consensus the mailings stopped after 69 weeks on a Halloween. Some got tired of doing a zine every week and wanted to stop (Lupoff, for one), but I think I missed one or two mailings, and would have liked to see it continue.

There were dozens of fans who contributed once or twice, and maybe Jon White, or Walter and Marion Breen did that, but they were not regular contributors.

If anyone reading this has any issues of Apa-F, I'd like to either buy them, borrow them, or pay your expenses to make me a copy of what you have.

21 January 2008

ERIC MAYER
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It's always interesting to see what folks are reading, watching or listening to, but my own consumption of such fare has been so limited recently I can't offer much in the way of discussion. Mary and I have actually got into writing fiction in recent years, but inconveniently our books are mysteries rather than science fiction, so I don't have a fanzine talking point there either.

I enjoyed Tim Marion's article. Tim mentions his lifting prowess in regards to the mimeo he discarded, and I can attest to the veracity of his claims. He helped me move many years ago. He arrived early and left late, and he virtually raced up and down five flights of stairs for hours, hauling anything he could get hold of, regardless of weight. I was astounded. Fans, in my experience (my experience, including myself) are not inclined to do much lifting, aside from a book or maybe a beer bottle, and might engage in pushdowns on a stapler.

I also recall going with him to see *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, one of the greatest movies ever made. It was the only midnight showing I've seen, and I am glad I had the experience and avoided being set on fire by all those matches. I fear I was a spectator rather than a participant. I think it had better stay that way, too. The world is not ready for a white-bearded, 110 pound Frankenfurter. You can see where I am coming from as far as musical sophistication goes; but really, can you do 'The Time Warp' to the Klemperer version of *Missa Solemnis*?

You do have a meaty loccol, and some of the conversations there hit home. Your comment about the elderly in the US having to face a future of dealing with a cruel health system really is true. Why we have allowed ourselves to be ripped off like we are, I can't say. The presidential hopefuls who claim we should have more widely available health care think that can be accomplished by requiring us all to buy health insurance. Yes, that's right. I guess too few people can afford to be robbed by private insurers. So our candidates want to make it the law that we must all submit to being robbed by private insurers. Why not just make being sick a crime? If cancer were a felony, that'd be the end of that problem.

Mary and I make our living doing freelance writing (mine is mostly legal writing), and it has been an adventure. Freelancing suits me, but it is a uncertain enterprise. There have been good years and bad, and during the bad years we try to tell ourselves that something will show up in time, and so far that's been the case. Mind you, I did not get into writing on contract by choice. After I lost my job following a typical corporate merger back in 1994, I immediately went looking for editorial work. It soon became obvious that, even in my mid forties, I was getting long in the tooth from the point of view of employers. Today there is absolutely no way I could find regular employment, so I certainly understand your concerns.

I don't know what sort of government help you might still have available. If worst came to worst I suppose I could qualify for welfare. One has to make efforts to find a job, of course. They send you out on interviews and so forth. I'm ready to work, I'd tell them. I'm nearing 58, haven't held a regular job in almost 14 years. I write legal encyclopedia articles. And by the way, here's the MRI of my bad back. Now bring on those potential employers. I'm eager to meet them!

Let's hope your new leadership makes a start at making things better. God only knows how long it'll take,

if ever, to clean up the mess that's been made of this country.

30 December 2007

[*brg* I don't have any hope of getting a job at the age of 61. But I'm not sure how our current business activities will look to a clerk at the unemployment office. I have a bit of work at the moment, but then, I had a huge amount of work at the beginning of 2007, but very little after 1 July. We can no longer act as if there is any *certainty* of income; that's the problem.*]

E. D. WEBBER

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Thanks for the fanzine, even if my all-time favourite film is *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*. A plus side to that, though, is that I'm becoming more of a big picture kinda guy.

As such, as well as one of the few members of the patient class published by a national health journal, the now deceased *Healthcover*, I'm not as optimistic as you say you are in your reply to Mike McInerney: 'the incoming Labor government might even restore Medicare to the effectiveness it had before 1996'. One reason I doubt this is because of my having read and reviewed *The Silent Takeover* about what happened in the Labor Party in the UK; another is that our new Health Mini-ster's background is in corporate law, and I've no doubt she knows what TRIPS is all about. It's all about making sure health is a commodity, and Medicare a safety net for those who can't afford it. This explains why Phillip Adams, in one of his more succinct moments, called our new PM 'Howard Lite'.

Sorry to seem cynical, but my MP used to think Health will improve under Labor, and now she's not so sure.

17 January 2008

[*brg* My original note said: 'All the new government has done so far is bawl about "inflation", which means they will cease spending even on things that need doing urgently, and will do nothing about anything that really needs doing.' That's true enough. The new government has been left enough billions of dollars in surplus to fix the national health system, deliver free tertiary education, etc., but it won't do these things. Today, however, Kevin Rudd, the new prime minister, lifted the dead weight of John Howard from the nation in one half-hour speech, as he finally said 'Sorry' to those many Aboriginal people who, when young children, have been removed forcibly from their parents during the last century. His speech, which was much more wide-ranging than I had expected, will remain one of the great Australian speeches, no matter what the practical consequences of the policies announced. This speech gives me particular pleasure because in 2007 I copy-edited Antonio Buti's biography of *Sir Ronald Wilson* (University of Western Australia Press). As joint head of the Stolen Generations Inquiry in the mid 1990s, Wilson died long before he saw the inquiry's conclusions accepted by an Australian government. Surely the evaporation of the spirit of John Howard's deep hatred of Australia's Aboriginal people can only benefit a people who lived on this continent, quite successfully, for at least 40,000 years before we arrived a mere 220 years ago? Let's see what happens.*]

CURT PHILLIPS

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I had to work all night last night, and since we only had one surgery to do, I had several spare hours on my hands. (I work in the surgery department at a large hospital, and because of another nurse being ill, I was the nurse in charge of surgery last night.) So I got on the Internet, surfed over to efanazines.com and downloaded several recent zines to read at my leisure. I printed out several, and *Scratch Pad 68* [the efanazines.com version of **brg** 51] was the first of these.

I spent most of my time last night reading several of the excellent articles that Greg Pickersgill has posted recently. Even though I'm convinced that Greg hates me (sob!), I still think he's a hell of a good writer. If he ever sits down and writes a novel, I want to buy the first copy.

And just because I know someone will wonder; the others I printed out were:

- *Sense of Wonder Stories* 1 (Rich Coad)
- *Prolapse* 8 (Peter Weston)
- *Prolapse* 9 (Peter Weston) (I'll eventually go back and print out all available issues of *Prolapse*, which strikes me as a wonderful fanzine.)
- *Argentus* 7 (Steven Silver)
- *All Our Yesterdays*: the Harry Warner collection published by Chuck Connors. I wish I'd known this before, as I have a Warner AOY article not included here. If a new edition is ever published, I'd happily send along a copy.

31 December 2007

[*brg* I second those recommendations, but am puzzled that I haven't yet downloaded the Connors collection of Harry Warner's pieces. Next week, when I have time.*]

TIM MARION

c/o Kleinbard, 266 East Broadway, Apt 1201B, New York NY 10002, USA

When *2001: A Space Odyssey* debuted, I was ten years old. I tried to get my father to take me to see it, but of course that was a no-go from the first thought. Too bad; it would have blown my mind.

I have *Barry Lyndon* on tape; find it to be one of the finest movies ever made (filming by candlelight...!) The criticism is that it's slow, plodding and boring, but that's a frequent (and to my mind, invalid) criticism of Kubrick movies.

Bruce, over the weekend I saw the new (late 1990s) version of *Gulliver's Travels*. I was surprised by how fabulous it is!! I will probably order the DVD, as I saw it on the (hack, ptui!) Sci Fi Channel, where it was chopped mercilessly for the commercials (despite the fact that it was originally made for commercial TV). Unlike the old movie version, or even the old cartoon version, this movie includes each land that Gulliver visits, and includes the social satire. Ultimately it makes a brilliant and sad story, despite the satisfying ending. I highly recommend this, Bruce!

3 January 2008

I haven't seen any Cronenberg movies that were just crime movies or dramas; I prefer the element of the fantastic. But I may watch them anyway, on your recommendation. You've seen *Videodrome*, right? And *The Naked Lunch*?

Haven't watched my copy of *The Simpsons Movie* yet, but thought you guys were fans because of Elaine referencing 'Itchy and Scratchy' on occasion.

Recent DVDs to arrive: *Gulliver's Travels*, starring Ted Danson (so I can actually watch it as opposed to seeing only 85–90 per cent of it on the Sci Fi Channel) and animé: *Karas the Revelation* (lots of beautiful super swordfighting and very little sense).

20 January 2008

Three books I've read recently:

- *Hiero's Journey* by Sterling Lanier: Lanier died this past year, so I figured it was time I finally reread this, a book I haven't read since the summer of 1976. I'm also rereading it in preparation for reading the sequel. Apparently I've had them both in one cheapie SFBC edition for almost 20 years. Now I'm over halfway through this first book, and find it fascinating. With a warrior priest of French-Indian descent travelling across western Canada with a slightly larger (than normal) moose and a slightly smaller (than normal) bear, all of whom are highly intelligent and in mental contact with each other, it almost seems like a science fiction fantasy version of *The Incredible Journey*. The only thing that I might criticise is that much of telepathy should not have been in understandable English, but more in terms of communicable feelings and images.
- *Greta the Strong* by Donald J. Sobol: Ned Brooks told me about this one as it is illustrated by Trina Schart Hyman. Sobol is also one of my favourite authors from childhood: the author of the *Encyclopedia Brown* stories as well as *Secret Agents Four* — lots of fun! Look forward to reading this as I suspect it will have a certain sense of humour to it.
- *Tales of H. P. Lovecraft* edited by Joyce Carol Oates! When I look through this book and see such titles as 'The Outsider' and 'Rats in the Walls', I realise that I've never read these stories! I have much familiarity with Lovecraft, due merely to being inundated with Lovecraft fanzines when I was a kid — I guess I began to feel as though I didn't have to read the stories. Reading reviews and derivative stories enough I may have begun to feel they were hackneyed and didn't give them enough of a chance. Will do so now. (I *did* read *The Dreamquest of Unknown Kadath*, however, which I don't really remember that well.) I also find Joyce Carol Oates an interesting writer, so will be glad to read her insights.

31 January 2008

[*brg* No sign of that *Gulliver's Travels* on DVD in Australia yet. :: I thought it a bit strange to limit one's consumption of the films of a director (Cronenberg) on the basis of subject matter. Never exclude; only include. Only the last two Cronenberg movies, *A History of Violence* and *Eastern Promises*, don't have fantasy elements in their stories. :: It's a pity *Barry Lyndon* is not reissued in the latest boxed set of Kubrick movies, as the new prints are superb.*]

GIAN PAOLO COSSATO

Cannaregio 3825, Calle Fontana, 30121-Venezia, Italy

In December 2006, I had a major operation: a bypass and a shunt. Besides, I have been suffering for the last 20 years (more or less) urethral strictures which have been worsening, so I've had to undergo urethral dilations, plus three urethrotomies and a resection of the

vesical neck. Now I have to make do with a suprapubic tube. Nonetheless, I am still alive, kicking and working. This will probably be my final year in the bookshop (I started working in 1960, going through a variety of jobs, and with the forty-ninth year of uninterrupted activity looming ahead, it's time to think different. My Macs nod in approval). Bookshop? More like a video shop, at least at first impact.

DVDs are the main staple (5000 titles — one of the widest selection available, and not only in Venice). Books in the shop (or even comics) have become more and more difficult, but we found a way out in Ebay. As librarians, we manage to sell stuff that was dead as a dodo on the shelves of the shop. I intend to spend my future time taking pictures of Venice (not the usual ones, of course), working on a map of Venice as it was when Napoleon took over from the Republic, scan some books I consider rare and important (belonging to my family), and few more things. Might not manage, but what matters is the pursuing of purpose.

My daughter Diana has crossed the thirty years line, and has always been very independent. She works as a translator/interpreter. At the moment she lives in Budapest, attending the local University for a Hungarian-to-English (and vice versa) course. Google Diana Cossato for more about her. Even I give some results if you Google my name. The beauty of the Internet. We all become globally famous . . .

Glad you managed to bring to conclusion your trip report: I can imagine how much you toiled to put it together. And you both seem to have finally found the accommodation of your dreams (dogs and neighbours apart).

3 January 2008

[*brg* When I hear about your health worries (and life-threatening conditions affecting many of our friends), our life seems very good indeed. Best wishes for your retirement, Gian Paolo, and thanks for your friendship since 1969.*]

IRWIN HIRSH

26 Jessamine Avenue, East Prahran VIC 3181

Thanks for the egoboosting response to the article about my mother. It received no response in LiveJournal (though it did in the other places I posted it).

Other the years, some of the members of ANZAPA may have met my mother. I wish you would revive *TMR*, if only because I had an article in the last issue and would like to see what response the issue generated.

I've sent you a slight rewrite, to put in the names I deliberately avoided using, because of the public nature of LJ. I've also sent two photos. One is lifted directly from the LJ posting (though I'll send a larger file), and the other is a nice one taken in February 2007 of my whole family (three generations) taken at Kieran's Bar Mitzvah reception.

3 January 2008

[*brg* I want to revive *Metaphysical Review*, too. I can do this as soon as I can get used to the idea of posting it only to efanazines.com, and not printing or posting copies. I have at least 100 pages of material on file for the next issue.*]

SUE BATHO

6 Bellevue Road, Faulconbridge NSW 2776

[*brg* I hadn't heard from Sue for awhile, and missed her

at ConVergence in the middle of last year, because I was able to attend only a few hours of the convention. We rejoined conversation after I heard that Marea Ozanne, wife of Ken Ozanne, had died recently. Marea had been a well-known New South Wales fan for many years, and is also Jennifer Bryce's cousin. I hadn't met Ken and Marea since 1985, when they attended Aussiecon II in Melbourne.*]

Ken and Marea Ozanne continued their world travels all the way until last year, but rarely attended anything here in Australia. They did visit a lot of fans overseas I know. Marea had been confined to a wheelchair for many years now. She had a genetic disorder that caused the wasting of different groups of muscles, and was really dreading the time when her eyesight went. It appears her diaphragm muscles went before then. She knew what was coming, and spoke of it to me. She found out about the genetic disorder after Eugenie died . . . she was born with an advanced case of the disorder, and her diaphragm muscles did not work, and she would have spent her life in an iron lung if she had survived.

Alex, when he was quite small, was sitting up near the carport which was near the road, and a woman drove straight over him. She was heading for the tree, trying to commit suicide, and did not see him. She went over both his legs, and he spent a lot of time in hospital, with bolts and contraptions to save his legs. The fact he is a tall man with a long lope now is evidence that they succeeded, but a lot had to be said for the fact that this small child (at the time) was very courageous, despite the pain and trauma. We all spent a lot of time doing colouring in and all sorts of things with him. It said a lot that Ken and Marea gave Alex his freedom to choose his own path. They had a lot of trust and faith in him. Mind you, when he wants to tease me, he still stands next to me with his hand on the top of my head, looking down and saying 'Hello, Auntie Susan'.

You will have seen Eleanor's art in *Andromeda Spaceways Magazine*. She is getting quite popular with their editors. We're doing quite well, except there is a problem with getting the money I am earning over here . . . Homeland Security and all sorts of bother, so its not helping us financially over here very much. However, it is providing us with loads of travel we would never have done otherwise. And between family, friends and animals, I haven't had time to chase a semi down the highway in years . . . much less bring one home (they are a bugger to bury in the back yard).

I am still writing articles. And finished the PhD. No idea how I did in it and no word . . . it's getting on for a year now since it was submitted. I think I am almost up to writing some fiction again . . . one day.

Ron is well, and he and Ana Jean seem to get on okay. Young Albert, his adopted son, is a real handful and keeps them both busy I suspect. Must be strange for him to have to go through the going along to school concerts etc. again. I certainly wouldn't want to tackle that again. Taking the grandsons out each week is enough of a handful for me, bless them. I'd say I prefer a quiet life, but that's never the case around here.

18 January 2008

[*brg* In this way I found out that Sue and her family spend half the year in Alaska these days, for business. The things I find out by sending out stray emails from time to time.*]

STEVE JEFFERY

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

Belated thanks for *brg* 51, which arrived a week or so back.

I have much sympathy with Tim Marion's archiving problems (and also for the loss of his beloved cat).

Last year was the year we stared at the piles of books accumulating on the floor and up the wall of the living room, in the study and in the spare room, to the point where we decided it was really time to Do Something. Which would probably have been as far as it got, had it not been that Vikki was off work for an extended period, and after a couple of weeks in front of the computer decided to embark on a Project to stop her life being taken over entirely by Pinball and mailing groups. The first inkling, from my end, was a bright shiny white porch when I arrived home from work one day. Then things moved inside, with the entrance hall being stripped, cleaned, repainted and then shelved up one wall. This now houses an arcane, eclectic (or just plain weird and indiscriminate) selection of books, from Bill Bryson and Alan Coren to the biographies of John Dee and Giordano Bruno, via Douglas Hofstadter and Pop and Rock Encyclopias (-pediae?). It definitely gives the right impression to people who visit that Book Nuts Live Here.

After that, Vikki decided that a proper Project Manager needed a proper budget, so we held an intense negotiation with my cheque book and things started to Get Serious. As Tim and his flatmate found, you only resolve chaos by creating even more (and at times worse) chaos on the way, and there were times when I did wonder whether there was any space in the house for me any more. But gradually it all came together, including the disposal of an astonishing number of duplicate or never-to-be-read titles to the local library, friends and the stock for the church hall's annual book sale (8 March: Graham reckons the stock currently stands at around 14,000 books). Entire walls in several rooms have been shelved, floors cleared, and I no longer go hunting for a half-remembered title with the faint thought that I could be crushed to death if it happens to be at the bottom of a particularly precarious pile rising chest-deep against the spare room wall.

Not sure whether to be impressed or discouraged by your lists of best books, music and films of 2005-06. Discouraged not by your reading and listening tastes, but what it says about my not so gradual slowing down. Without the monthly prod of Acnestis, I've even stopped keeping tab on my reading, discovering six months of my little notebook blank for February-August 2007, during which period I must have read *some* books; I just cannot remember what they were.

My reading has slowed now to the point that I still have books on the unread shelf not just from last Novacon, but that Vikki bought me for my birthday last March. And I've completely missed Gwyneth Jones's *Life*, which I must look out for. And Kaaron Warren's *The Grinding House*, which I wasn't aware of until the last *Steam Engine Time*.

And keeping up with music hasn't fared much better. I don't buy anywhere near the amount you do. We won a £25 Virgin voucher at a pub quiz in the middle of the year. It's still in my pocket. Though I did buy Radiohead's *In Rainbows* this morning, because it was going for under a tenner in the supermarket. And Robert Plant and Alison Krauss's *Raising Sand* a couple of weeks back. (It's really odd to listen to a CD in which every

track is so completely different.)

Apart from those, nothing really grabbed me from last year, with the notable exception of Arcade Fire, which I taped (on both audio and later on video) from a live set broadcast from Glastonbury 2007. Excellent stuff. I don't think I've seen so many people on stage making such a joyous racket since the Polyphonic Spree.

The only other band I've heard who are doing something completely different and of their own are perhaps Sigur Ros, who sing in a made-up language (unlike Lilly Allen or Kate Nash, who just sound like they do). I'm tempted to look out for their album *Heime* (?)

My sole request for a CD at Christmas was something I heard on the radio. *The Imagined Village (Real World)*, which could either be described as a folk concept album (not the first: Fairport did *Babbacombe Lee* back in the 1970s) or a modern version of the radio ballads that, I think, were originally done by Pete Seeger. It's practically a who's who of the English folk crossover scene: Martin and Eliza Carthy, Billy Bragg, The Copper Family, Benjamin Zephaniah, Paul Weller, TransGlobal Underground, Sheila Chandra, Johnny Kalzi.

I have a copy of Peter Carey's *The Fat Man in History*, along with *Collected Stories*, which I read some time ago. I'm going to have to go and revisit those some time, given your description of some of those stories as SF.

27 January 2008

Just finished Jonathan Barnes' *The Somnambulist* (2007, Gollancz) — borrowed from the library — a debut novel and a deranged cod-Victorian conspiracy murder mystery that has strong echoes of Blaylock mad fantasies like *Homunculus* and *The Digging Leviathan*.

[*brg* Steve has sent me a long review of *The Somnambulist*, which is highly recommended by both of us. Also, look out for James Lovegrove's *Provendar Gleed*, which is just as kooky as Barnes's book. :: Moving to this house gave us shelf space for everything that had been in boxes for anything up to twenty years. A few more buying expeditions to Slow Glass Books will give me back the old problem: which books will stay on the shelf, and which will be banished to storage boxes?*

28 January 2008

ROBERT ELORDIETA

20 Custer Circle, Traralgon VIC 3844

It was great having lunch with Elaine and you, and it was also great talking to you both about films, Japanese Anime, books and music. Thank you again for the DVDs. I didn't have them before in either video or DVD format. I do love Alfred Hitchcock movies. I remember seeing some of his movies on free-to-air TV. Two movies that come to mind are *The 39 Steps* and *The Lady Vanishes*.

One of my favourite Westerns was made by William Wyler: *The Big Country*. It has quite a star lineup of Gregory Peck, Charlton Heston, Burl Ives, Chuck Connors, Charles Bickford, Carol Baker and Jean Simmons.

The French Canadian movie I told you about... the English title is *Seducing Doctor Lewis*. The French title is *La Grande Seduction*. It was made in 2003, and filmed somewhere in French Canada.

I've seen three German-made movies at the cinema at Morwell. They are *Mostly Martha*, *Goodbye Lenin* and *Downfall*. The first one is a drama, the second one a comedy, the third one a war film.

Mostly Martha is about a cook who has to take care of her niece because the mother (cook's sister) dies in a

car accident. Both the niece and Martha have problems.

Goodbye Lenin is set during the fall of the Berlin Wall and the reunification of Germany. It centres on a family of a mum, son and daughter. The mum has a stroke but does recover. The doctors tell the son 'no sudden surprises', or she could have a relapse. The son fools his mum into thinking that East Germany still exists and that it hasn't joined up with West Germany.

Downfall is set during the last days of the Third Reich during World War II. It shows what happens to Hitler and his cronies, and the civilians of Berlin.

I recently saw a French movie on SBS called *The Choir* (2004). The French title is *Les Choristes*. It is set during the 1950s, I think. In the countryside. In an boys' orphanage. The headmaster is very strict and is heavy-handed in punishment. The film is told from the perspective of a new teacher. All of the boys are troubled. In the end the new teacher forms a choir. The singing is beautiful. I really do recommend it.

28 January 2008

YVONNE ROUSSEAU

PO Box 3086, Rundle Mall, Adelaide SA 5000

I thought you might be pleased to read the following extract from Christopher Milne's *The Path Through the Trees* (Eyre Methuen, London, 1979, pp. 207-8) about arranging for a 'locum' to look after the Harbour Bookshop in Dartmouth when Christopher (Robin) Milne and his family went away for a holiday. The Booksellers Association recommended John Martin as a suitable locum. When the Milnes mentioned the need to look after their cat, Hodge, John Martin said he would bring his Aunt Audrey with him.

As we had only one spare bedroom Aunt Audrey's arrival had to be delayed until we were on the point of leaving, and this meant that John had to have lessons on cats as well as on books. We had to take him out at night, just before bedtime, and teach him the particular squeak to which Hodge, who usually spent the evening with friends, would respond. We had to show him the yards, building sites and so on where the friends would meet, and instruct him in the various lures that could be used if Hodge was in no hurry to return. Happily he enjoyed this side of his work as much as the other. Perhaps today one might hesitate to ask a young man to go squeaking through the streets at 11 o'clock at night. But in those days the town was quieter. Indeed if one heard anything at all at that late hour it was probably the miscellaneous warblings and croonings of other cat owners engaged on the same business.

4 February 2008

HENRY GASKO

COA: 36 Hadley Drive, Wallan VIC 3756

I just got around to reading your 2007 Christmas newsletter. As mentioned in my Christmas letter, we moved into town just before Christmas after nineteen years on the property. No hillside views, which is very sad, but we are very happy to have a house and land that requires very little maintenance. We would love to have you around some time, but transport could be difficult. There is a country train station in Wallan. Otherwise we could pick you up after work on a Friday evening and

take you back that night or the next day.

Only other bit of news is that we have bought another house — this one is in Bendigo, and is for daughter Emily and her partner Ollie to use. She is doing teacher's college there this coming year, and Ollie has decided to take the three-year Outdoor Education course. So rather than subsidising their rent we decided to purchase a house, mostly covered by the proceeds from the sale of the old place. They move in later this month.

Also by the way, Anne is lead singer in a Celtic group called Beltane. They have sung at Port Fairy and are doing the National Folk Festival at Canberra in March. They also have a few gigs around Melbourne in March and April. I can send you the details if you are interested.

4 February 2008

[*brg* Since my sister Jeanette seems to know everybody in Australian folk music, I assume she's heard Beltane and met the members. I'll ask her next time I see her.*]

CHARLES TAYLOR

just moved to Western Australia

[*brg* Charles Taylor, longtime Melbourne fan and one of our oldest friends, has finally achieved the promotion he's deserved for a long time: Assistant Principal of Taylor's College in Perth. A pity he and Nic will now live 4000 km away.*]

I actually left Melbourne for Perth on 2 December 2007, then returned for Christmas, then Nic and I drove back in the time between Boxing Day and New Year's Day. The last part of the journey was gruelling, because the bushfires closed the route we were taking, and we had to take a massive detour.

There isn't any point sending people our current address, as it is only being rented on a fortnightly renewal until we find a place that we can move our furniture into. We had hoped to buy a house here, but the house prices are astronomical — \$506,000 was the median house price when we arrived here, and houses near where I work are in the millions. We simply can't afford anything we'd be willing to live in.

We are having all our mail forwarded from Ringwood to my work address, so we received your newsletter — thank you!

We are putting in an application to rent a place in Applecross, about 20 minutes drive from work for me, about the same for Nic. She has taken a job at the Australian Islamic College here, which she feels will be good for her CV, but it is hard work. You will be the first to know our snail mail address. We won't know whether we get it for a while — the agent said he'd like to have us as tenants, but he will have to persuade the owner about the cats. Diana has been taking care of them since we left.

We have just organised an Internet connection at home — wireless and comparatively slow, but we will be able to take it with us when we leave.

Come and see us and Perth some time!

6 February 2008

MURRAY MOORE

1065 Henley Road,
Mississauga ONT L4Y 1C8, Canada

In commenting about Peter Carey's *The Fat Man in History*, you say that you bought your copy in 1974 and

read it in 2006: 'That's why,' you explain, 'Elaine and I have built a library; we never know when we might feel like reading a book bought thirty-three years ago.' Well put, Bruce. Or, a wonderful rationalisation of obsessive behaviour.

A behaviour, I hasten to add, which I too have. As evidence I present this list of books purchased on the two previous successive evenings at the BMV (books music video) store in Toronto's Annex neighbourhood.

- For younger son Dennis, a request, *Catch-22* (tpb)
- For Mary Ellen, for Valentine's Day, *Figures of Speech* (hc) by Mervyn Peake (drawings representing a saying or proverb)
- For me, *Kickback* (hc), written and illustrated by David 'V for Vendetta' Lloyd; *Foul Play!: The Art and Artists of the Notorious 1950s E.C. Comics!* (tpb) by Grant Geissman; *Krazy Kat: The Comic Art of George Herriman* (tpb) by Patrick McDonnell, Karen O'Connell, Georgia Riley de Havenon; *In Joy Still Felt: The Autobiography of Isaac Asimov, 1954–1978* (tpb); *Book of Longing* (hc) by Leonard Cohen; *Keats* (pb), selected and with an introduction by Philip Levine; *Whitman* (pb), selected and with an introduction by Galway Kinnell; *Shakespeare* (pb), selected and with an introduction by Ted Hughes; *Wordsworth* (pb), selected and with an introduction by Seamus Heaney.

[*brg* That seems a fairly typical buying list for a reader and writer of fanzines. I could make a real impression, too, if I published lists of what I *buy*. Makes me look erudite. The list of what I *read* in any year (50–60 books or fiction magazines at most) is less impressive.*]

I cannot claim I bought the above books because I have nothing to read. Earlier this week I received an envelope from Rob Jackson heavy with fanzines, the majority of them very-rusty-staple copies of *SF Commentary* 35–37, 47, 48–50, 51, 58, 59, 60–61, 62–66.

[*brg* Do I weep because Rob Jackson got rid of them, or cheer because the right person gained the copies? They are from the best period of *SF Commentary*.*]

In the list of choices from BMV, the graphic novel, the EC retrospective, and the Herriman study are established interests of mine. I have been reading reviews of diaries lately, and the Asimov was cheap and looked interesting. As well, it contains a photo of Asimov accepting his Best Novel Hugo at Torcon 2.

You must have seen Asimov during Torcon 2, Bruce. One of my Torcon 2 memories that quickly comes to mind is my encounter between floors with another young fan. I was descending, he ascending, on the escalators. 'Is Asimov here?' he asked excitedly. More slowly I recall being in the audience during a panel during which Asimov drew hisses and boos for suggesting, because of the overpopulation that was going to be the end of civilisation, women might have to be limited in the number of children they could bear.

[*brg* I was in the audience for Asimov's speech, which seemed to be attended by most people at Torcon 2. It was the best speech I've ever heard, both for style and content. At that stage, Asimov and Phil Farmer were among the very few SF writers warning against the shape the future has actually taken since 1972. Asimov first expressed his attitude toward birth control in a little column in *F&SF* in the late sixties: he said then that we should be encouraging

every form of sexual expression that does not produce children. It's taken awhile for (some) general opinion to catch up with him.*]

But why the poetry? Poetry is one of the arts to which I am blind. Music is a bigger blind spot. I read your CD reviews, Bruce, and I am reminded that I am missing out on a major art form. Ballet and opera are other forms of culture for which I do not have an emotional bond. Storytelling (visual: movies; comics and graphic novels; print, mostly fiction but also non-; live theatre; television) is the candle around which I helplessly flutter. I realise that music is storytelling, but I lack the pleasant noise appreciation gene.

Back to the purchase of the best of great poets and the Cohen. I bought these books on the basis that I would make an effort to read them and, hopefully, find the key to crack open the door into appreciation and enjoyment. I will take them with us tomorrow in the car.

[*brg* Even so super-aesthetic a person as Henry James could not listen to music. I still believe that all the other arts aspire to the condition of music, both for the enjoyment of abstract aesthetic qualities, and for enjoyment of drama. I find I *remember* only forms of art that have the shape of a story, which is why I also find it very difficult to retain poems, even my favourite poems, in my memory.*]

Mary Ellen and I are driving to my parents' house. My sister will join us there. We are slowly sorting the contents and emptying the house. My father died in September 2003. My mother died in late November last year. So starting in December, most weekends, one of the two days, Mary Ellen and I spend driving three hours round trip and making progress in the house. In addition, most weeks Mary Ellen and my sister go to my parents' house on a week day while I go to work. Tomorrow I will try reading aloud poetry to Mary Ellen when she is driving.

[*brg* After her father died in 1990, Elaine had a period of six months during which she had to carry out some task concerned with the estate. I was much more fortunate after my mother died. My sisters, especially Jeanette, put in a huge amount of effort to wind up the estate and Mum's house.*]

BMV also sells used vinyl. As another attempt to widen my experience, I recently bought a Glenn Gould recording. Gould plays Bach; Concerto in F Major (Italian); Partita No 1 in B-Flat Major; Partita No 2 in C Minor (Columbia Masterworks LP ML 5472). I have listened to Side 1.

My interest only in printed objects has one benefit: our house is filling less quickly than if I also bought DVDs and CDs. Movies I go out to see, on a big screen in a big dark room.

Today is Saturday. I scraped the snow from the driveway earlier today. Real winter (snow: not just cold) arrived in a big way in the past week. In a few hours I am off to the party chez Rob Sawyer and Carolyn Clink, a party which coincides with Hugo and Aurora nomination time.

Some smoffing might occur: who to encourage to run to be the CUFF representative this year at the 2008 Convention, being hosted by Keycon in May during the Victoria Day weekend in Winnipeg.

10 February 2008

[*brg* Commiserations on not winning DUFF this year, Murray. We were looking forward to catching up with you and showing you around Melbourne. However, the Francises, who won, will arrive in March with warm recommendations from various fans.*]

[*brg* At the end of 2007, Charles and Nic Taylor, local Melbourne fans, astounded us by announcing they were moving to Perth. Charles had been successful in gaining the job of Deputy Principal of Taylor's College there, after many years teaching at its Melbourne school. Congratulations, but we do hope you return to Melbourne soon.*]

CHARLES TAYLOR

52 Glenelg Street, Applecross WA 6153

I actually left Melbourne for Perth on 2 December, then returned for Christmas, and then Nic and I drove back in the time between Boxing Day and New Years Day. The last part of the journey was gruelling because the bush-fires closed the route we were taking and we had to take a massive detour.

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We are putting in an application to rent a place in Applecross, about 20 minutes drive from work for me, about the same for Nic. She has taken a job at the Australian Islamic College here, which she feels will be good for her CV, but it is hard work.

We didn't know whether we would get the Applecross house for a while — the agent said he'd like to have us as tenants, but he would have to persuade the owner about the cats. Diana has been taking care of them since we left.

I notice that your email address has changed from Mira to Pacific: I may have sent an email to you at mira. Come and see us and Perth some time!

(3 February 2008)

[*brg* Both email addresses still work.*]

ROBERT LICHTMAN

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Tim Marion mentions Bill Rotsler's art fanzine, *Voyage*, and writes that the issue contained 'surely the most beautiful art I have seen by Rotsler'. I wonder which issue he came across — there were at least fourteen of them, and I have seven of the lot. Each varies considerably in the type of Bill's artwork that he chose to showcase. Tim also mentions Apa-F, the New York weekly apa done more or less in reaction/response to Los Angeles fandom's Apa-L, which as you probably know (since undoubtedly you receive regular hits of John Hertz's *Vanamonde*) still goes on today. I have some scattered Apa-F zines in my collection, including a few from Dave Van Arnham. And on eBay recently one seller was offering copies of the Apa-F zines of a member Tim didn't note, Dick Lupoff, and I dutifully copped the front-page scans of each one. Since most of Dick's contributions were only two pages, this was a nice way of capturing some of his writing, albeit with the caveat

of many pieces ending in the middle of a sentence.

Your list of 2005 favorites were interesting and challenging — the latter in that of the books and novels you list I've read exactly none. Of the films I've done better: seen *Kansas City* (by far from my favorite Altman), *Monsoon Wedding*, *The Company*, *Kiki's Delivery Service* and *Wallace & Gromit: The Curse Of The Were Rabbit*. Read none of the short fiction, heard only pieces of the CDs on the radio. I do marginally better in 2006 with books, having read *Gilead* and *Absolute Friends*. Seen *Senso*, *Crash*, *My Neighbor Totoro*, *The Prestige*, *Inside Man*, *Beyond the Sea*, *A Prairie Home Companion*, *The Life Aquatic* and *Sideways*. And of the 'watched again' I know *Where I'm Going*, *Vertigo*, *Triplets Of Belleville*, *A Wedding*, *Tales Of Hoffman*, *Top Hat*, *Three Women*, *The Producers*, *Saboteur* and *Heaven Can Wait*. I think I've read some of those Paul Bowles short stories.

In the lettercol you spoke right when you wrote to Marty Cantor that greater LA is 'just too big and complex for a tiny mind like mine to comprehend'. I lived there for fifteen years and have gone back to visit many times, though much reduced in frequency since my parents and certain fans died, and I don't pretend to know all of its vastness. Many of the parts I do know (in terms of being able to get around in them without having to refer to maps) have changed drastically in terms of what's there.

Sweet potatoes: I mostly don't like them, either, although one company manufactures a sweet potato chip that I occasionally enjoy. There were some hard-times periods on The Farm when the main vegetable available was sweet potatoes, grown in profusion and stored in a climate-controlled barn for the winter months, and during those times I learned that one could smother them in enough other flavours that their taste

was well-masked.

Nice exchange between you and Murray Moore about Carol ...

Regarding American health care, Mike McInerney writes, 'Every six months or so at work they change the health care coverage and increase the costs and the deductibles get bigger and the co-pays increased.' So far I've been lucky in this regard, and am now on Medicare, which provides a little more of an umbrella over the situation.

To Lloyd Penney you write, 'I've still never seen a copy of *Opuntia*.' Since I get duplicate copies sent directly and in the FAPA mailings, I'm going to remedy that. Watch for a batch to arrive soon.

John Purcell writes about potential membership in the AARP: 'Getting discounts on rental cars, hotel rooms, meals, plane fare, etc., sounds like a great deal for a fan.' Indeed, I joined in 1997 in order to get a substantial discount on my hotel room for that year's Corflu — even with the cost of a membership it netted some savings. And it's been helping out here and there ever since, well worth the membership fee of around \$10 a year (when bought in three-year increments).

(28 February 2008)

I also heard from:

Gregg Trend, Jennifer Bryce, Casey Wolf (whose health has been pronounced okay; but who won't be able to visit Australia this year, as she planned to do). and **Dora Levakis** (back from Central Australia, but lying low for the time being).

— **Bruce Gillespie**

ABC FM's top 100 concertos we couldn't live without

ABC FM keeps doing these annual lists. The 'Top 100 Concertos' poll was conducted during 2007.

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| 1 | Beethoven: Piano Concerto No. 5 in E flat Op. 73 ('Emperor') | 17 | Brahms: Violin Concerto in D Op. 77 |
| 2 | Rachmaninoff: Piano Concerto No. 2 in C minor Op. 18 | 18 | Tchaikovsky: Violin Concerto in D Op. 35 |
| 3 | Beethoven: Violin Concerto in D Op. 61 | 19 | Beethoven: Triple Concerto in C Op.56 |
| 4 | Bruch: Violin Concerto No. 1 in G minor Op. 26 | 20 | Brahms: Piano Concerto No.2 in B flat Op.83 |
| 5 | Elgar: Cello Concerto in E minor Op. 85 | 21 | Mozart: Concerto for Flute and Harp in C K299 |
| 6 | Mozart: Clarinet Concerto in A K622 | 22 | Haydn: Trumpet Concerto in E flat Hob. Vlle: 1 |
| 7 | Rodrigo: <i>Concierto de Aranjuez</i> | 23 | Chopin: Piano Concerto No. 1 in E minor Op.11 |
| 8 | Bach: Concerto for 2 Violins in D minor BWV1043 | 24 | Brahms: Piano Concerto No. 1 in D minor Op. 15 |
| 9 | Tchaikovsky: Piano Concerto No. 1 in B flat minor Op. 23 | 25 | Bach: <i>Brandenburg Concerto</i> No. 3 in G BWV1048 |
| 10 | Rachmaninoff: Piano Concerto No. 3 in D minor Op.30 | 26 | Mozart: Horn Concerto No. 4 in E flat K495 |
| 11 | Grieg: Piano Concerto in A minor Op. 16 | 27 | Mozart: Piano Concerto No. 23 in A K488 |
| 12 | Mendelssohn: Violin Concerto in E minor Op. 64 | 28 | Ravel: Piano Concerto in G |
| 13 | Mozart: Piano Concerto No. 21 in C K467 | 29 | Mozart: Piano Concerto No. 20 in D minor K466 |
| 14 | Dvorak: Cello Concerto in B minor Op. 104 | 30 | Bach: <i>Brandenburg Concerto</i> No. 5 in D BWV1050 |
| 15 | Sibelius: Violin Concerto in D minor Op. 47 | 31 | Schumann: Piano Concerto in A minor Op. 54 |
| 16 | Beethoven: Piano Concerto No. 4 in G Op. 58 | 32 | Sean O'Boyle and William Barton: Concerto for Didgeidu |
| | | 33 | Vivaldi: <i>The Four Seasons: Spring</i> RV269 |
| | | 34 | Chopin: Piano Concerto No. 2 in F minor Op. 21 |
| | | 35 | Elgar: Violin Concerto in B minor Op. 61 |

- 36 **Albinoni:** Oboe Concerto in D minor Op. 9 No. 2
37 **Beethoven:** Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor Op. 37
38 **Vivaldi:** *Four Seasons: Winter* RV297
39 **Vivaldi:** *Four Seasons: Summer* RV315
40 **Mozart:** Piano Concerto No. 24 in C minor K491
41 **Shostakovich:** Piano Concerto No. 2 in F Op. 102
42 **Glass:** Violin Concerto
43 **Haydn:** Cello Concerto No. 1 in C Hob. 1
44 **Mozart:** Sinfonia concertante in E flat K364
45 **Paganini:** Violin Concerto No. 1 in D Op. 6
46 **Addinsell:** *Warsaw Concerto*
47 **Gershwin:** *Rhapsody in Blue*
48 **Mozart:** Piano Concerto No. 27 in B flat K595
49 **Brahms:** Concerto for Violin and Cello in A minor Op. 102
50 **Davies:** Piano Concerto No. 1 ('Mennonite')
51 **Gershwin:** Piano Concerto in F
52 **Hummel:** Trumpet Concerto in E Flat
53 **Weber:** Clarinet Concerto No. 1 in F minor Op. 73
54 **Bartok:** Concerto for Orchestra BB123
55 **Mozart:** Violin Concerto No. 3 in G K216
56 **Ross Edwards:** Violin Concerto ('Maninyas')
57 **Litolff:** Concerto Symphonique No. 4 Op. 102
58 **Saint-Saëns:** Piano Concerto No. 2 in G minor Op. 22
59 **Bach:** Concerto for Oboe and Violin in C minor BWV1060
60 **Handel:** Harp Concerto in B flat HWV294
61 **Bach:** Brandenburg Concerto No. 4 in G BWV1049
62 **Beethoven:** Piano Concerto No. 1 in C Op. 15
63 **Mozart:** Piano Concerto No. 22 in E flat K482
64 **Rachmaninoff:** *Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini*
65 **Rieding:** Violin Concerto in B minor Op. 35
66 **Tchaikovsky:** Piano Concerto No. 2 in G Op. 44
67 **Vaughan Williams:** *The Lark Ascending*
68 **Barber:** Violin Concerto Op. 14
69 **Marcello:** Oboe Concerto in D minor
70 **Vivaldi:** Flute Concerto in D RV428 ('Il gardellino')
- 71 **Bach:** Brandenburg Concerto No. 2 in F BWV1047
72 **Berg:** Violin Concerto
73 **Hummel:** Piano Concerto in A minor Op. 85
74 **Shostakovich:** Cello Concerto No. 1 in E flat Op. 107
75 **Vivaldi:** Lute Concerto in D RV93
76 **Mozart:** Piano Concerto No. 9 in E flat K271
77 **Prokofiev:** Piano Concerto No. 3 in C Op. 26
78 **Shostakovich:** Violin Concerto No. 1 in A minor Op. 77
79 **Bach:** Violin Concerto in E BWV1042
80 **Mozart:** Horn Concerto No. 1 in D K412
81 **Telemann:** Concerto for Flute, Oboe d'amore and Viola d'amore
82 **Mozart:** Oboe Concerto in C K314
83 **Bach:** *Brandenburg Concerto* No. 6 in B flat BWV1051
84 **Bruch:** *Scottish Fantasy*
85 **Bach:** Harpsichord Concerto in D minor BWV1052
86 **Glazunov:** Saxophone Concerto in E flat Op. 109
87 **Haydn:** Cello Concerto No. 2 in D Hob. 2
88 **Korngold:** Violin Concerto in D Op. 35
89 **Liszt:** Piano Concerto No. 1 in E flat
90 **Vivaldi:** Concerto for 2 Trumpets in C RV537
91 **Bach:** *Brandenburg Concerto* No. 1 in F BWV1046
92 **Ross Edwards:** Oboe Concerto
93 **Giuliani:** Concerto for Guitar and Strings No. 1 Op. 30
94 **Saint-Saëns:** Piano Concerto No. 5 in F Op. 103
95 **Mozart:** Bassoon Concerto in B flat K191
96 **Shostakovich:** Piano Concerto No. 1 in C minor Op. 35
97 **Telemann:** Viola Concerto in G
98 **Vaughan Williams:** Tuba Concerto in F minor
99 **Carl Vine:** Piano Concerto
100 **Vivaldi:** Concerto for Two Mandolins

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"Ditmar (Dick Jenssen) writes: 'The illustration was inspired by Stanley G. Weinbaum's short story "The Lotus eaters"'. The latest reprinting will be found in *Interplanetary Odysseys*, which is volume 1 of *The Collected Science Fiction and Fantasy of Stanley G. Weinbaum*, Leona Press, 2006.'