Dear Cousin,

I returned to London and found a job in the Berkeley restaurant, as a pantryman. I started work at six o'clock in the evening, and finished any time between two o'clock and four o'clock in the morning. I washed coffee cups and saucers, wine glasses of all shapes, and decanted wine after it came up from the cellar.

Working with me was a retired colonel from the Polish cavalry. He was one of those intrepid soldiers who had opposed Hitler's tanks, and later the mechanised cavalry of the Russians. He was a member of the Polish government in exile. Every night he would arrive before me, dressed in immaculate dark trousers and white shirt. His hair was carefully trimmed in the Prussian style. He was a dour unsmiling man in his late fifties. We worked amicably enough, although I suspect he didn't approve of my rather casual approach to the job. I found it impossible to take the work seriously. We were at the arse-end of the catering business, and although the Berkeley's clientele was of the monied class, I assumed there was no social distinction between the cockroaches that infested the place, and those that infested the working-class cafe that I frequented.

The language barrier between George (for that was his name) and myself gave us both a degree of anonymity for which we were grateful. We were two exiles, he from his native Poland, and I because I had no passport. There was little of George's country to return to. Battered over the centuries by opposing armies and occupied by barbarous hordes, it had been the meat in a political and military sandwich. The Poles were the scapegoats of history. George's cavalry was now the cups and glasses he lined up on the bench in precise military rank and file. The only time I saw him lose his temper was one evening when I inadvertently upset his formation. What he said to me in Polish as he re-adjusted the displaced glasses, I would never know. He lived in a past that had no future, and remembering him now my heart goes out in memory of his sadness.
The Berkeley was a fashionable restaurant in Piccadilly and a very

expensive place to eat. Its customers were film stars and wealthy people of industry and commerce. Through the swing doors from the pantry leading into the restaurant proper, it was possible to view the antics of a privileged class. Alcohol has the ability to break down restraints and social barriers, irrespective of class. Champagne was spilled and tables danced on.

During the night we were given a meal by the management as a kind of gratuity to supplement our low wages. In the kitchen I had a friend in a wonderful Greek chef who saw to it that I ate as well as the "buggers" in the restaurant. Had the management known what went onto my plate, a very fine Greek would have been looking for another job. The commis waiters whose job it was to bring the wine and champagne up from the cellar had many cunning ruses to bypass its movement to the tables of the rich. Because of them I was able to enjoy some of the best wines of Europe.

On the pantry side of those swing doors, a kind of revolution took place against the privileged beyond. Every opportunity was taken to distribute more equitably the wines that came up from the cellar. The waiters, especially the commis, were a cross-section of displaced people. They were Italian and Spanish and a few Cockneys. They all lived and worked in the dark hours. Their days began at nightfall and ended as a new day dawned.

The kitchen was in a cockroach-infested basement, and the stairs leading up to the pantry were steep and rather narrow. Several times I saw trays of Aylsebury duck and tureens of vegetables spill onto the coconut matting as the commis waiters slipped coming up. It was only a matter of dusting off the duck and rearranging the vegetables by patting the mashed potatoes and green peas into shape and picking off the pieces of coconut fibre, and then it was into the restaurant to be placed before the customer.

In many ways it was a dark decadent world that I found myself in. I lived with people of the night, and for a time I became one of them. Somewhere beyond my ken during that time the sun must have shone somewhere. I only saw intimations of it as I walked in the early morning light to my room in Princess Square.
Walking through those early mornings, feeling the effects of good

wine, being propositioned by prostitutes working either very late or very early, being questioned by policemen, and generally being a part of the metropolitan night, I felt that I was a long way from my origins in Timaru.

During that time at the Berkeley I had enrolled at the Anglo-French Art Centre in St. Johns Wood as a full-time art student. After a few hours sleep, I would find myself with other students in a very relaxed atmosphere of learning. There was no rigid pattern of work in that school; so different from the routine at St. Martin's. The students were allowed to follow their own direction under the guidance of the tutors. Occasionally we had visiting tutors from Paris who contributed different concepts and skills to the class. It was a wonderfully creative period for me, which culminated in a successful exhibition.

One night when I wasn't working at the restaurant I went to a dance at the Cricklewood Palais where I met a woman who was to share my life for the next ten years. She came to live with me in a small basement room I had shifted to in Hampstead. We were in love, and when summer turned to winter she was pregnant. I suppose that my Presbyterian upbringing got the better of my judgement when I agreed to marry her. I won't go into any detail about the way my life changed from then on. Suffice to say that I don't think it was greatly different on the surface to any other life under the same circumstances. I continued working at the Berkeley, and spending as much time as I could at the art centre. We moved to a better room in Paddington and tried to plan for the future. We were very poor and it was a struggle to meet our meagre commitments. I continued my visits to Grete and walked with Ernst.

At about this time Keith Horrocks and his wife arrived from New Zealand. He had vowed years ago that he would follow me to England. I think he was rather appalled at my circumstances when he realised that I was soon to become a father. I had to remind myself that he had always been a fairly conservative and cautious person. I think he regarded my impulsive behaviour as being somewhat dangerous, or at least having uncomfortable conclusions. But having made my bed, so to speak, I was prepared to lie on it. Many years later I was to read a letter he had written to Karl

Wolfskehl in which he described what he called my parlous state. The letter was found in the Schiller Archive in Marbach along with all the letters written to and by Karl during his ten years of exile in Auckland.

It was obvious that Keith and I had grown apart and that the days in Wellington were behind us. I found it difficult to reconcile the past with a most demanding present. After a few weeks we saw little of each other, he and his wife were off to Scotland and were later to do a tour of the Lake District. They had come as tourists, I was there as an emigre, forced by circumstances of my own doing to make the most of it.

I suppose what I had in those days was not too bad after all. I had a job, menial though it was; I had a wife, and I lived in a kind of happiness looking forward to the birth of a child. I continued to attend the school at St. John's Wood where I had made new friends. Summer had come and there was little reason to feel depressed.

Dear Cousin,

Yes, this correspondence has gone on much longer than I intended at the beginning. It has somehow gained a momentum of its own, like a runaway bus that's careering out of control down a hill. It's to be hoped that the hill will soon level out and the bus will come to rest.

If I am to relate all that has happened as episodes in a journey of discovery; a journey undertaken in all innocence in respect of what might lie ahead, and believing that the destination was less important than the journey, then you might realise what everything so far has meant to me.

At the Berkeley was a Cockney commis waiter who attached himself to me, and apart from keeping me well-supplied in wine and champagne, wanted me to meet a friend of his who would soon be arriving from France. He intimated that this friend was looking for someone to do a job on the continent, and that it would be well paid. Of course, I was interested. My circumstances were demanding more money than my job in the pantry provided.

Eventually a meeting took place in the back bar of a pub around the corner from the restaurant. I met Ronald Chesney. He was a big man, black bearded and dressed in a black duffle coat. In one ear he wore a gold earring. I had met the modern equivalent of an Elizabethan pirate. His proposal to me was that I drive a car across the border between Belgium and France for which I was to receive twenty-five pounds a trip, which was about six times more than I was earning at the restaurant. The car I was to drive was said to be a large American one, fitted with hidden compartments welded onto the chassis. I understood that the contraband was to be coffee and tobacco, goods that would fetch a high price on the black market. In the meantime I was to cool my heels and wait for the word to go.

Chesney was a New Zealander who had been in England and Europe for many years. He had served with distinction as a

commander in the British Navy, earning a commendation for his daring seaborne raids on occupied France.

I waited for the car to be fitted out and made ready for its clandestine mission. Reflecting back on that period, I think I must have been very desperate, or totally unaware of the consequences of my involvement. I don't think that I was ever a pirate by nature. I was attracted by a sense of adventure and the opportunity to make some money. I carried on at the Berkeley while I waited to hear from Chesney who had returned to Europe.

The weeks passed and nothing happened, and then one night in the pantry my Cockney friend came to me with a newspaper which contained the news of Chesney's death. It appeared that Interpol had been investigating him for some time and had finally caught up with him in Germany. In a wooded area outside Cologne he had shot himself. Several years later I was to learn that he had been a prime suspect in the brutal murder of his mother in Christchurch when he was a young man. I consider now that I was extremely lucky that my career as an international smuggler was nipped in the bud by fortuitous circumstances. I think that Chesney's way out may have saved me from disaster. It was the only time in my life that I had been tempted to operate on the wrong side of the law; that temptation being due to the circumstance I found myself in at the time. I put it all down to another episode in a strange journey.

My circumstances in London showed no sign of improving. I was caught in a system that had been created over a long period of privilege and protection. The class system had been designed to deny the proletariat from advancing its lot, at the same time ensuring that privilege was protected for those who had it. It was a far cry from the more egalitarian system I had once known. I needed to break away from the rigidity of that class system that would have me forever subservient to its commands. I decided to leave London with my wife and work in the country.

We went to Dorking in Surrey where I found a job milking cows at Leith Hill. The farm was a part of the Vaughan-Williams property and was leased by another ex-navy commander by the name of St. John Baldwin. We were given an old stone cottage with a dairy

underneath. The top floor had been a painter's studio, and along one wall was a large bookcase with leather-bound volumes of somewhat esoteric writings. Just before we arrived St. John had burnt a stack of nude canvasses that he had found in the studio, and which he objected to. It was my first intimation of the type of person he was. He was a busy florid faced little man who was trying to be a country gentleman. His knowledge of farming appeared to be minimal. The two of us together must have made a rather comic team. Several times during my stay there he attempted to boost his herd numbers by attending stock sales and bringing back cows with large bursting udders only to find they were riddled with mastitis. No injection of penicillin cream seemed to cure them and they eventually found their way to the knackers yard. Learning to be a farmer was a costly exercise for Mr Baldwin.

Attached to the Vaughan-Williams property, and separate from the farm, was an Arab horse stud run by a groom and his young assistant. In my spare time I used to wander over to the stud and admire the beautiful horses. There was a young Arab stallion named Rahal who had been saddled and only just broken into being held on a lunging rein. He was ready to be ridden but George the groom was too old to try, and his assistant too frightened to even attempt to get into the saddle. I stood there looking at the splendid animal, admiring the restless way it followed round at the end of the lunging rein. I asked if I might get in the saddle, and after a while the groom reluctantly agreed. I then asked the lunging rein to be removed from his bit. Again, after some hesitation, this was done. My only riding until that time had been on country hacks back home in Canterbury. That stallion took off and tried every trick it had to throw me and to rub me off under tree branches and against fences. Somehow I stayed in the saddle and the stallion eventually settled down to a beautifully smooth gallop, I was riding the wind with a splendid animal and there was a oneness between us with the magic of movement we both shared. Later I saw other people riding him, and I felt I had lost something. For a brief encounter he had been my horse.

My friend Keith had returned from his tour and he and his wife turned up one day to stay with us. As there was only one bedroom in the cottage, I spread bales of straw on the living room floor for

them to sleep on. With a blazing open fire it didn't matter that snow was falling during that winter week. I don't remember much of their stay. My mind was on the imminent arrival of our first-born.

One night, not long after Keith and his wife returned to New Zealand, I had to rouse Mr Baldwin from his sleep to tell him my wife's time had come. He drove us to Reading hospital where my daughter Vivienne was born. To suddenly find that there was an issue of our loins in the form of another human being was in itself a marvel of creation, at the same time visiting upon us a sense of responsibility toward the tiny fair-haired creature that we would need to nurture and protect.

Mr Baldwin, due to circumstances he couldn't understand, but which were obvious to the outside observer, had to relinquish his lease of the farm. Leith Hill had been a good place to live but there was no way we could stay there. I found another job at a Georgian mansion in Fifield near Maidenhead, where I worked as a chauffeur-handyman-gardener. A substantial two-storied cottage was ours, along with an old Morris truck. The mansion had extensive grounds and it was in them that I did most of my work. The owner of the house was an elderly shipping man who spent most of his time in North Shields, where his business was.

In many ways it was a good place to work. We were treated well; as well as any servant of a master could be treated. I remember being happy there. My daughter was growing and the magic that was born with her gave another meaning to my life, as if I was fulfilling something greater than I had previously known. Life was asserting itself for all it was worth and I was the recipient of its magic.

In my feelings then, I suppose, I had for a period at least, answered to the response of parenthood. I had contributed to a biological pattern that through countless generations has ensured the survival of a species. In spite of any intellectual denial to the contrary, I had answered to the prompting of my heart. That it wasn't to last became indicative in later years that there is a perversity in the human spirit that is difficult to comprehend. But more of that later.

I tended the garden, I weeded the beds and raked the leaves. I drove

the cars when required and stoked the boiler for hot water. I ran messages and obeyed orders. I had become a servant along with the housekeeper and the maid. I continued painting in the evenings at the cottage. I joined an art group in Cookham where Stanley Spencer lived and worked. I showed several of my paintings in an exhibition and received good mention in the local newspaper. I think that at this stage I was becoming rather provincial, I very much identified with my surroundings. You may think, Cousin, that I should have been happy with what I had found in that part of Berkshire. And in a way I was. I had a job that paid me reasonably well. The cottage where we lived was comfortable, my daughter was a delight to us both, the people at Fifield House were civilised and treated me well. Why then the restlessness? Why was some insidious worm gnawing inside my guts, an unwanted visitor who was playing demon tricks with my well-being?

That summer passed, and we were into another winter. Looking back, I think it was the experience of English winters that made me long for remembered summers back in New Zealand. That longing could have been the tail of the worm, its head another component of myself, dictating a mindless journey to God knows where.

One evening I found myself in the local pub drinking with some friends I had made in Maidenhead. I was very late in getting back to Fifield House. I slept late, and when I finally surfaced I realised that I hadn't lit the boiler for the house's hot water, one of my first jobs of the day. As I was struggling to get the boiler going, the upstairs bathroom window was thrown open, and the master of the house bawled down to me that the water for his bath was cold. My answer didn't please him, and a slanging match ensued. Perhaps I should have been humble and apologised, for after all, he was rightly aggrieved by not having his hot water on tap. I am afraid the cold of that winter morning and the slight hangover I had did not auger well for acquiescence on my part. Later in the day it was suggested that I should resign and be on my way. He did not fire me, but suggested that my attitude was not conducive to a good future relationship. By leaving it to me to take the necessary step he absolved himself from being responsible for throwing us out onto the country roads. It was suggested that I wasn't good servant material after all, and that I was a disappointment to himself and

madam. In some perverse way this pleased me. After all, I hadn't travelled twelve thousand miles in order to become a successful servant.

However, I look back on that Berkshire experience with some pleasure. The people I had worked for were kind in their squire-achical way. I learned a great deal about the English system of class separation. There was an ordered pattern which dictated where you belonged in accordance with social status. A master and mistress were to be addressed as sir and madam; the servant was summoned by his or her surname. There was always an invisible wall between the two levels, and it was only possible to pass through that wall by some miracle of changed circumstance. Those were the conventions that made it impossible for me, a New Zealander, to feel that I really belonged, in spite of the attempts on my part to do so. Such conventions were no doubt laid down and reinforced in the corridors of Eton and Winchester.

Dear Connie,

You have been responsible for a certain routine in my life lately. I refer to these fairly regular letters that I send you. Somehow you may have unwittingly established a degree of discipline in my life that I find at times to be onerous, but which is in many ways good for me. Through the exercise of writing these letters, I find that I am better able to understand what I had been about all those years ago. I see the past in some kind of perspective: the view I get seems to make more sense now, the events appear more meaningful.

When you compile your family tree you will have some flesh to put around my bones. You haven't mentioned lately how you are getting on with your project. I trust that it is going well for you.

From Maidenhead we moved back to London where we found rooms in Paddington. It was winter and many times in the following months I regretted that I hadn't been more diplomatic with my previous employer. Our comfort had undergone considerable change. London in winter was symbolised for me by the old men in ragged overcoats who walked the streets with long sticks with pins in the end, with which they picked up cigarette butts on the pavements and transferred them to bags under their arms. I admired the skill that was required. They were masters of their trade. I often wondered what fate had done to them in the process of their living, and I wondered how far away from them I was during that period.

I was in the hemisphere from whence my Irish and German ancestors came. I was close to the ports from where they had departed for their new life at the other end of the earth all those generations ago. Perhaps they had been motivated by the same dreams that sent me on my own journey. They had dreamed of a new world on the other side of the earth; and the world they had created was the one I had escaped from. Something of the puritanism they had transplanted on to that antipodean land, had instilled in me a rebellion against the puritan provincialism they had established. My

journey was an escape from it, and the price of that journey was yet to be assessed.

I had left New Zealand in order to find an answer to what I felt had been a failure of my ancestors to fulfil the dream that had motivated them to make their journey. What they had achieved was a transplantation of a European reality with all its attendant values, and in the process they had placed fetters on the spirit of their descendants.

I had wanted a greater freedom than what was offered, and there I was in London trying to adapt to greater restrictions that had everything to do with birth and privilege, class and ownership. I hadn't come very far at all on my journey. And there was the paradox.

I had found work at the Decca Navigator Company as an engineering draughtsman. Every morning found me walking over the Southwark Bridge to the factory where I applied my drawing skills and knowledge of electronics to the business of producing service handbooks for the users of the navigation equipment the factory produced. For a period we were able to live reasonably well; the pay, slightly up on what I had received at the Berkeley, enabled me to pay off some of the debt I owed from the Paris excursion. But there was always for me that other hunger; the desire to know; the desire to find something different, and God knows what that was. That hunger was always there, lurking in a shadowland, ever ready to disturb the tranquil moments, ever emerging to persuade and frighten.

One day I was stopped by an old art student friend I had known at the Centre. It was good to see him, until he asked me what I was doing, and why I had left the group. I told him that I had married and had a child and was trying to make ends meet. He told me of an exhibition he was having, while pointing quite scornfully at the difference in our respective choices. He walked away with some kind of dismissive gesture, leaving me feeling that I was guilty of betrayal. So you see, Cousin, there were not only shadows of the past to haunt me, there were also messengers of the present to tap me on the shoulder and remind me of where I was, and where I might be going.

I can't remember how long I stayed with Decca. I remember that it was during that period that I received news of Karl Wolfskehl's death. A re-addressed letter from Margot Ruben eventually found me, telling me that he had been buried in the Jewish part of Waikumete Cemetery. I immediately went to see Grete Pohl-Collin. She already knew, having also received a letter from Margot. Together we talked about him, and the effect he had made on our lives. We both felt a great sense of loss. The fact that he was old, nearly blind and in poor health, didn't alter the fact that we felt cheated by the inevitable; that death had deprived us of a very dear friend; and that death itself was the enemy.

Sometime after that I took my family back into the country where I felt we could have a better life than we had in London. In a small village called Wisley in Surrey I found a job on a farm milking cows. We were given shelter in a row of stone cottages, "two up and two down". The cottages were very old, having housed many generations of farm labourers. Our next door neighbours, separated from us by a stone partitioning wall, were an Irish family by the name of Ravenhill. Patrick, the father, worked on the farm as a general hand. His eldest son, Jim, worked in the cowshed with me. There were two younger brothers and a sister. The mother was a large raw-boned, strictly Catholic woman who held sway over the entire household.

It was a large family for such a small dwelling. The living room also housed several pigs during the winter months. There was great sense in this, in that the winters were harsh and the cold seeped through the old stone walls. The warmth from the pigs' bodies, with a blood heat several degrees above ours, rose to the upstairs bedrooms. The family benefited from the close relationship with their animals.

I became very friendly with the Ravenhills, especially Jim, who seemed to latch onto me and my atheistic approach to life, and would have wished to emulate it, if it wasn't for the strong influence of his mother. On many occasions when he dropped into our cottage for a chat, the conversation would invariably be interrupted by his mother banging on the dividing wall to summon him for evening prayers. It was a summons he could not ignore, in spite of

his protestations.

The circumstances of that family, poor education, lack of opportunity, and the Roman Catholic Church, had fashioned it into accepting their lot without much questioning. Only Jim showed any signs of being a rebel. What little they had, they shared with us. Periodically a slaughter of a pig took place. A large part of the garden was given to growing potatoes, and these with the pork was their main diet. In spite of their circumstances, I was convinced that they had, somewhere in a distant past, been related to a noble line of Irish kings.

Church Farm, where we worked, was leased by an absentee Canadian Jew named Kopenhagen. He spent most of his time in London where he had a factory making small two-stroke engines. He visited the farm only occasionally, leaving the running of it to his bailiff, a short, dour Yorkshireman who seldom smiled and who spent most of his time looking after a large poultry run. He was content to leave the operation of the milking to Jim and myself. The farm was bounded on one side by a slow running river that linked onto the system of canals that ran through that part of the country. There were about twenty acres of woods on the road boundary, and part of the adjacent field formed a "shoot" which was let to a wealthy London business man who came down with his friends for a day of slaughter of pheasants, grouse and rabbits.

The "shoot" was looked after and zealously protected by a gamekeeper who never became our friend for the simple reason that Jim and I were operating in competition for some of the spoils of the copse. We were able to supplement our small wages with poached rabbits which we sold to the truck driver who collected the milk. We had become outlaws by poaching, the penalty for which could have been, even in those days, a fairly hefty jail sentence. A few hundred years ago we might have been on a convict ship bound for Tasmania.

Jim had learned his poaching skills from his father when they were still in Ireland. With snares and ferrets we took more than our share of what was offering. Apart from the money we made, there was the adventure which to me was more important, and certainly more

gratifying. It was ironical that I was in a country which placed such a high value on an animal that was regarded as vermin where I came from. I was in the country where the furry little beasts came from. That they had been afforded the protection of a gamekeeper was anathema to both of us, and was a challenge to our sense of social justice.

Do you remember the rabbits on your uncle's farm, and the night excursions on the back of a truck, shooting them as they appeared in the torch light? On the farm at Wisley we hunted surreptitiously, playing a running game with the keeper; twice swimming the river to escape; letting down the tires of his bicycle; climbing trees to hide, and generally enjoying the spirit of the chase. One night in the local pub the keeper came up to us and offered to buy us a drink. He told us he knew what we were doing and that one day he would have our balls. However, I detected a degree of admiration in his voice as he spoke to us. I think our activities somehow lightened the routine of his days.

During the winter the cows were housed in the shed where they were milked. Straw was laid for them, and in the morning before milking we had to "muck out", which meant forking the dung-laden straw onto barrows and heaping it in the yard where it was to be picked up later by a horse-drawn cart and spread onto the fields prior to ploughing in the spring. This was heavy work and I longed for the summer to come.

One day the farm received a visit from Mr Kopenhagen. He was a small man in his late fifties whose walk and movements were rapid, as if he was in a constant state of nervous tension. He walked around the farm with the bailiff, speaking only briefly to me. He didn't look directly into my eyes, but kept glancing sideways, as if wary of some threat lingering behind him.

The next morning I delivered milk to his house. There was no reply when I knocked at the door, but I could hear a dog barking inside. I opened the latched door and set the pail of milk on the table. A small terrier came tearing down the passage, barking and whining at my feet. Then it ran back up the passage. I turned to walk out the door and it came back, pawing and cringing at my feet. I patted its

head, and again went to go out the door. It took hold of my trouser cuff and tried to drag me back. I followed him as he led me up the passage and into the bathroom. He sprang up with his paws on the side of the bath, whining piteously. Lying in the dark crimson water was the body of Mr Kopenhagen, his pale features set in a marble-like repose, contrasting with his nervous agitation of the previous day. I don't know how long I looked down into those grisly depths. I had seen death before, but never had I gazed on such a macabre scene. I thought afterwards that there was some obscenity in a Jew taking the Roman way out.

It transpired that his business had collapsed and the police were investigating his involvement in a rip-off scheme concerning the distribution of Christmas hams. We were able to stay on in the cottage, although the farm operations had ceased. I was able to find casual work in the district, mainly labouring on other farms. I have memories of cold, bitter days during that winter. New Year's day found me cleaning a drain and trimming the hawthorn hedge that grew alongside it. Rain and sleet were falling and the temperature was below freezing. Although I was dressed in several jerseys and an overcoat, no matter how hard I worked I couldn't get warm. I cursed that blighted English New Year's Day, and thought longingly back on such days, back home when it was holiday time in summer. I finished that day in the shed where the pig tucker was being cooked, trying to thaw out a tired body.

A kaleidoscope of memories comes flooding in as I try to recall the events of that period. There was my brother's arrival and my hitch-hiking to Tilbury to meet him; being picked up by the police on the way because no one of honest intent walked through the East End of London at three o'clock in the morning, but being treated well by them when they knew what I was about; the departure of Keith and his wife for New Zealand; trips to Cornwall to see my brother who had settled in Porthvean; the motor accident in Devon, the car in which I was a passenger colliding with another car at a cross-road; the subsequent appearance in court in Launceston as a witness; the mad cold night ride over the Bodmin Moors on the pillion of a high powered motorcycle on a return trip from Cornwall.

Viewed in retrospect those events would appear to be rather frenetic, but when placed against a time scale they assume an ordinariness in perspective. They have been compressed by a process of memory that omits all other detail.

Great Barrier Island

Dear Connie,

I suppose that it is not really so strange, that the business of writing to each other as we have been doing all these months, should have brought a wider understanding to our relationship. I feel that I should retract some of the things I said in my earlier letters. I feel that I know you better now, and I regard that as a good thing.

I sit here in my small room. Heavy drops of rain fall from the branches of the pecan tree growing alongside the house. It is winter and I long for the sun. The weeks drag on with a cold, wet persistence; they are endured only by the promise of the summer to come.

Outside my window I see the small boat that I have been restoring. I anticipate the day when I can return it to the water. Already I can see myself drifting on idle days across the harbour that lies a few hundred metres from my gate.

To float on the water, with only a thin skin of timber separating me from the depths, is a sensation of excitement and wonder. I have faith in that thin layer to hold me buoyant in body and spirit. With the timber between me and the ocean floor I am above the earth as if flying; my spirits no longer tied down to earth and all the problems upon it.

I have been living on this island for many years. One day I will tell you how I came to be here. It has been described as a beautiful wilderness by those whose ideas of beauty have been modified and somewhat corrupted by the accepted ugliness of what has been created in an urban environment. When they leave that environment and come to this island they are faced with such contrasts that they can only think of a wilderness beauty, without realising that the island too has been modified by man's desire to alter nature.

Some of the forest that once grew to the water's edge still remains, having escaped by some miracle the axe and flame. The sea breaks

on beaches and rocky headlands rarely visited by people. Great pinnacles of conglomerated rock rise out of the forest remains, stark monuments to the time when violent activity formed the island from the bowels of the earth.

Valleys and hillsides that had once been cleared for farming are now reverting back to scrub and if left alone will once again be covered in forest. Many dreams were shattered for the pioneers who tried to wrest a living from land deficient in nutrients.

Not far from where my house stands are grassed indentations on the bank above the stream. They mark the site of a one-time Maori encampment. Where once the sea lapped below the house, an estuarine wilderness of new growth has been formed by centuries of sediment washed down from the hills above. The sea has withdrawn as the hills erode. Where once the canoes were launched my garden grows. From my window I believe I can see half naked brown skinned people going about their business of survival. I see them moving; I hear their voices; I watch the children play and I wonder what happened to them. By some strange juxtaposition of history I have inherited their territory, and I too, in my own way, attempt to survive. There are other voices as well, calling me back from my reverie. Other voices, from other places, are playing games with my memory. And that memory is all I have to help me understand the reason why we are on this planet hurtling through time and space on a mad journey to the end of the universe.

Although I find it difficult, I will try and continue the story of my journey. I answer your request, dear Cousin, not knowing in my heart of hearts whether what remains of the past should be open to scrutiny; whether or not it would be best if it remained buried; whether the shadows of that past should not be allowed to fade into an obscure forgetfulness. I do not know.

Soon after we left Wisley my second daughter was born and it became imperative to me that I must, for the sake of my family and my own sanity, find a way out of the trap I found myself in. I had finally paid off my debt to the British government and was making plans to return to New Zealand. With the help of money loaned by my brother I booked a passage back. It was 1951. Before I left I

arranged passages for my family to follow in six months time. The only way I could pay for their passage was to arrange with the shipping company to pay their agent back in New Zealand from money I hoped to earn when I returned. Looming behind this decision to return was the spectre of remaining an expatriate and being tied to a God-awful existence on a lower-runged segment of English society. I could see no future for my family in remaining in a country that was becoming increasingly hostile to my expectations. I know that in a sense I had failed to realise my dream, and that I was responsible for not achieving what I had set out to do. Perhaps it was a lack of ruthlessness on my part that I was unable to open certain doors into other rooms that might have welcomed my presence. And I know now what I didn't know then, that seeking love and finding it demands a price.

I boarded the *Rangitane* on its maiden voyage. Was there some irony in being transported back on a virgin liner, when in essence it might have been more appropriate to be returned on a rusty old whore of the sea?

Little is remembered of the trip through the Panama Canal. The usual shipboard acquaintances were made and soon forgotten. There was little to celebrate. I was almost penniless and much of the social life on board was denied me because of it.

I arrived in Auckland on a grey cloudy day when all the islands in the Gulf stood out like dark sentinels indifferent to my arrival. The seaside suburbs, etched in red and white above yellow strips of sand, spoke of a familiar life revisited.

I journeyed by train and ferry boat to Christchurch and settled with my parents in the seaside suburb of New Brighton. I think they were glad to see me, if only for the occasion it granted them to say: "I told you so". Nothing had changed for them in the four years I had been away. It may be comforting for some to know that some things remain the same. They had been claimed long since by a suburban routine which I was to become a part of, at least for the next six months if I was to achieve my goal of paying off the shipping agent. You might think that I was something of a hypocrite to have accepted the conditions that I had so vehemently rejected four

years previously. I would agree with you if you said so. I was eating humble pie because there was no other fare offering at the time.

I often found myself thinking about Thomas Wolfe's great sprawling novel, *You Can't Go Home Again*, and drawing some comfort from its main theme, explicit in the title. I had changed during the years away, but what I had come back to was the same as before. I had looked forward to sharing with my parents some of the experiences I had undergone, but they didn't seem to want to know. The loneliness of the past was with me again.

My father sat in his little room, a skull cap on his short cropped white hair, rolling his cigarettes and toying with a new transistor radio he had found. What he thought while he sat there hour after hour, I will never know. He was locked in his own sad memories, a prisoner in a cell of his own making. My stepmother, ever the faithful servant, met more tiredly the demands of my father. I had returned to my beginnings.

I found a job as a radio repairman at Tricity House in Manchester St. At night and at weekends I worked as a pool attendant at the municipal baths. My days and nights were completely taken up by the task of making enough money to see my family again.

Peter, my friend of the homemade shoes in St Elmo Court, had gone to Dunedin and entered medical school. I saw him only occasionally when he came up to see his parents. Essentially I was alone during that six months of waiting. I had adopted a policy of appeasement in respect of my parents, trying not to introduce any topic that may have led to argument. There was a sadness in not being able to share with them, and they with me. Whenever the atmosphere in that little house became strained, there was always the long stretch of beach a hundred metres away, where it was possible to communicate with the sea birds and the wind.

Great. Barrier Island

Dear Cousin,

Your letter was received yesterday. I suppose I must agree with you when you say that my last letter to you was somewhat gloomy and devoid of what you call "a sparkling lightness". How the hell could I embroider that period with sweetness and light and remain honest in respect of what the waiting was really like for me. I was at one end of the earth and my children at the other and in between were twelve thousand miles of uncertainty.

Did you expect me to give you a Mills and Boon treatment whereby all is sweetness and froth? You must remember that during that period I had little thought for anything but achieving a reunion with my family. My head was down and my arse was up.

Eventually the ship was due to arrive. I said farewell to my parents and travelled to Auckland. The *Oronsay* docked, and I saw my family emerge, still drowsy from the tropical heat and the confines of their voyage. Six months of labour had rewarded me with their arrival.

Before their arrival, I had rented an old farmhouse in Birkdale with about seventeen acres of abandoned orchard and market garden, and it was there that a new life began for us. We set about ploughing up paddocks and planting crops. A vegetable garden was established and what remained of the old orchard gave us fruit for our table.

We set about planting a crop of late tomatoes; some five thousand plants. The idea was to catch a market when the price was high. Even now I can recall the labour that went into that crop; the ploughing of the ground; digging the post holes for the supporting fence; the planting out day after day, and the tying to the fence as they grew; the fertilising and the spraying against disease and pests. And accompanying that labour was our expectation of a successful harvest.

Many people came to visit me: some to work with us in the field; others to while away the hours and cause disruption to the routine. About that time I had been published in a few of the small magazines, and I suppose I had established something of a small reputation. I remember *Numbers* established by James Baxter and Louis Johnson, and there was *Arena* published by Noel Hoggard. The people who came were all on the fringe of society; some with literary and artistic pretensions; others content to be vicariously attached.

Somewhere about this time Robin Dudding and Tony Stones, regular visitors to the farm, set up the small magazine called *Mate,* and I found my way into it with a few short stories. Life was very full for us in those days. For me to be recognised in print and to have about me my family and friends was reward enough for the long hours of labour in the field. Looking back on that period I wonder where all that energy came from; I ponder the reason for its disappearance and know that it can never return. It was absorbed by the soil we cultivated, and a great deal was dissipated in activities that turned out to be much less productive. I had bought an old Pontiac roadster and a group of us would travel around the harbour to the Henderson vineyards where we had become quite well known to a few of the winemakers. We travelled back to the farm with flagons of wine and prepared for a night of warm friendship and music. For a while the demands of the soil and our survival were put to one side.

I remember Robin Dudding who was in the Air Force and stationed across the water at Whenuapai; Kevin Jowsey who later changed his name by deed poll; Tony Stones who was modelling his clay heads and trying to come to terms with his Catholic upbringing.

I remember one day going to Kevin Jowsey's home in Takapuna where he lived with his parents. Before he was allowed to come away with me, his father, Barney Jowsey, insisted that he finish cutting the lawn. Kevin was furious and he attacked that grass with all the hatred that he could muster in his high energy rounds of that lawn. I remember his father some time later, having shifted house to another part of Takapuna, cutting down a huge pururi tree that overhung the driveway, because the birds feasting on the berries

above had splattered the roof of his new car with white and purple shit. Some time after that Kevin changed his name to Ireland. I mention that episode because it illustrates graphically the kind of philistinism that prevailed around us. Birds had no right to eat pururi berries and shit on the roofs of motor cars.

One day Kevin took me to meet Frank Sargeson. With bowed heads we made our way through a wildly growing honeysuckle hedge and down a narrow path through a garden of tomatoes, green peppers and potatoes, to the back door, where on the wooden step was an old earthen-ware jar with a note under it. On it was written, 'gone shopping, back soon'. While we waited, a small stocky man came down the path dressed in shorts and with an old army haversack over his shoulder. On his head was a pith helmet, the type worn by the British raj in tropical colonies of long ago. We followed him into the cottage where he offered us a glass of Lemora, a sweet wine made from citrus fruit.

There was a wooden counter between the kitchen area and the main living space which was walled by shelves of books that spilled out onto the floor. A couple of old armchairs and a bed; a tall black radio set that I learned later had been built by Bob Gilbert, made up the furnishings. The mantleshelf above the fireplace contained an assortment of photographs and paintings. I remember a painting of a seagull perched on a wharf pile, done by Keith Patterson. There was one garish sketch of an old woman, and one of James Baxter who had been my friend at one time in Wellington.

I don't remember what we talked about that first meeting except that Frank asked me many questions concerning my background and what I had done. I detected a hint of scorn when I mentioned that I was married with children. He gave me the impression that I had done the wrong thing in opting for the responsibilities of parenthood. I was to learn later something of his ambivalence toward women. That first meeting is remembered for the way in which Sargeson probed into my background as if I was in a witness box and he was counsel for the prosecution. I found out later that he had trained as a solicitor. I sensed an 'on-guard' suspicion in his approach which may have been his defence when faced with a stranger. At the same time there was an almost facile way of

shrugging off matters that didn't really interest him. He was adept at changing the subject.

Over the years I was to be a regular visitor and a friendship developed. He was interested in what I was writing, but I don't remember him expressing any real enthusiasm for my efforts. It was as if he was on guard against anyone who might threaten his position as the doyen of New Zealand letters. The threat was imagined, and it illustrated something of the paranoia that was part of his character.

He confessed to me that he had not written anything for a long time and hinted that he was finished as a writer. He thought that he had nothing more to say. He was very interested in what was happening at Birkdale and expressed a wish to visit.

He came one day and was transported by the surroundings. In those days Birkdale was still a rural area of orchards and market gardens. The blight of subdivision was yet to reach it. He came the following day, and for the next six months he would bus from Takapuna and spend the day weeding and working about the place, returning back to Esmonde Rd. in the evening. He wouldn't stay and join in the relaxation that followed our day after the chores were over. I don't think he approved of our rather Bohemian approach. In that respect he was something of a puritan and conservatively cautious by nature.

During that time I had written a full length play, that was later produced for radio. Frank assisted me in getting my script into presentable shape by taking it, an act at a time, back to Esmonde Rd. in the evening, and typing it out on his machine with the 'wonky e', and returning it to me the following day. Eventually the play was presented in the Auckland Art Gallery by the New Independent Theatre, a group that Frank was instrumental in establishing with Colin McCahon and Chris Cathcart. During that period Frank had written two plays, *A Time For Sowing* and *The Cradle and the Egg*, and they were later staged at the Gallery.

I like to think that my excursion into the field of theatre may have played a small part in Frank's return to writing. Perhaps the stimulus he gained from meeting and working with such an odd

assortment of people at the orchard was enough for him to embark on a series of long prose works that were to be a significant departure from his earlier work.

In all it was a fruitful period. The bottom trusses of the tomatoes were ripening, and as we harvested them our spirits soared. As we sorted and packed them into boxes and sent them to market, our debt was being reduced. What we gained from those first trusses met the cost of establishing the crop. The remainder, the great bulk of which was yet to be harvested, was to be our profit.

Then one morning in early May I rose from my bed to be greeted by a crisp white frost. The rows of tomatoes were covered with a layer of frozen dew. As the day progressed, the dark healthy green of the leaves had changed to a dark sickly colour, that seemed to signal death.

Another frost struck the following morning and by afternoon there were blackened vines and scarred fruit. Death had arrived and with it came the death of all our dreams. We gathered to survey the damage, pondering the cruelty of nature and its total disregard for the efforts of man. Was it our arrogance that made us think that we could gamble with nature and get away with it? Or had we been carried away by our dreams of profit? I am reminded of the words of Karl Marx in his *Selected Writings on Sociology*: "The first historical act is the production of material life itself. The quest for a sufficiency in eating and drinking, for habitation and for clothing were man's primary goals at the dawn of the race, and these needs are still central when attempts are made to analyse the complex anatomy of modern society. But man's struggle against nature does not cease when these needs are gratified. Man is a perpetually dissatisfied animal."

Were we wrong in trying to take from our land more than we needed to satisfy our needs?

Certainly we could not ourselves have eaten the fruit of five thousand tomato plants without incurring some dietary disorder. Undoubtedly there is a price to pay for everything, and by pitting our pathetic resources against the indifference of nature, we had

made ourselves vulnerable not only to its foibles but also to the market forces that awaited our contribution to its machinations. We were unable to meet the demands of the bank which had been supporting us in anticipation of a return. The court bailiff became a regular visitor, and paradoxically a friend, who was able to give me advice as to what options were open to me.

What emerged from his ministrations was the conviction that I was in shit street and that I would need to file for bankruptcy. This he helped me do. Eventually, in the court, I was to face my bank manager in a somewhat different atmosphere than that which had prevailed six months previously when I had sat in his office, both of us anticipating a propitious outcome to my project.

My friends who had been regular visitors were unable to offer any assistance. Their circumstances, because of their fringe attachment to society, were no better than mine. Frank retreated to Esmonde Rd. to write his novels, Kevin went to Europe, Robin Dudding went to Christchurch to edit *Landfall,* Tony Stones became a designer for television, some completed degrees at university, others disappeared, merging into anonymity. I became a bankrupt.

Everything that could be sold was put under the auctioneers' hammer. The Pontiac was bought by a friend for £25, and was handed back to me in an act of kindness that I will never forget. Having the car gave me the mobility that I would need if we were to find the means to start again.

I am afraid I have got ahead of myself in respect of the time sequence of events that took place. You will have to understand that the period I describe happened over forty years ago Before the crash of frosted dreams fell upon us, to supplement my income I had become a teacher trainee. I entered a one year 'pressure cooker' course at Teacher's College in Epsom for which I was paid £25 a week. I travelled every day from the orchard by bicycle, crossing the harbour on the vehicular ferry.

There isn't a great deal to tell you about that time, except to say that I learned something about Thomas Dewey and William James. I confess I found most of the lectures rather dull, and I spent a great

deal of my time in the art studio throwing clay pots. I'm afraid the government's investment in me bore little fruit. Just as my investment in tomatoes bore little fruit for me. I eventually found that I was faced with a class of unruly little brats, and a headmaster whose right-wing beliefs created an impossible atmosphere to work in. The values in that school were to ensure that there was no departure from the accepted norm, that had been set by an established order, and which formed the basis of the social structure. I didn't belong and in that respect I could be considered a failure.

Dear Connie,

After the sale of everything that had value to the creditors, we packed what was left into the Pontiac and set off for the Bay of Plenty. I don't think there was any significance in the choice of that area of the country, nor did it signal to us that ahead lay the promise contained in the name.

I had no trouble in finding a place to live and work. We settled into a small house on a large coastal property. The farmer and his wife were kind people and made us welcome. I worked as a labourer, digging post holes and grubbing tree stumps from land that had been cleared and burnt of native bush. The old pattern of early settler methods of clearing land for pasture still prevailed in parts of the country. It was as if there was a great hunger to remove the last vestiges of the indigenous cover. The challenge was still there for farmers who saw only the opportunity to increase stock numbers.

In essence, by working as I did on that farm, I had come no distance from my Westphalian ancestors. I was doing what they had done all those years ago. Somewhat reluctantly I was carrying on a tradition that had been established when the first Europeans arrived with their axes and saws.

But we had shelter; we had food; our basic needs were met, and the disaster of Birkdale was slowly losing its effect on our well-being. We were recovering both financially and spiritually. The wealth of our surroundings with wonderful views out to sea, and the proximity of remaining pockets of forest, should have been enough to satisfy all the longings of the heart. There was a sandy beach where my children could play, and in the upper reaches of the bay there were rich cockle beds that added another dimension to our diet.

But there were tensions in my marriage which were no doubt due to a growing boredom with one another. A diet of porridge for breakfast every morning was beginning to pall on both of us. It became apparent to me that all was not well when my wife started seeing a

great deal of one of the local school teachers. I began to wonder about all the effort I had put into getting my family to New Zealand. A disrupting spectre had entered our lives.

One of my friends of the Birkdale days had taken a job as a fire-watcher in the Pongakawa State Forest which was not far from the Whakatane area where we lived. He lived in the look-out hut that was on one of the peaks in the forest. From its windows you could look out over the vast area of pine trees that grew as far as the eye could see. It was on one of my visits to him that I was stricken with some kind of brain disorder that was later tentatively identified as encephalitis.

I remembered my period in Japan where an outbreak of the same disease was warned about. I had been careless then of not always sleeping under a mosquito net as ordered by the Army authorities. Had I been infected then, and had it taken all that time to manifest itself? It would be impossible to tell. I only know that whatever it was it had a devastating effect an my physical well-being. After several weeks in the Whakatane hospital where numerous tests were done by very puzzled doctors with no conclusions, I staggered out into the real world to face a very uncertain future.

After some weeks of indecision I returned to Auckland with a broken marriage behind me. I am not going into the details of that heart-rending time. It meant the collapse of everything I had worked for since leaving England. It was a bankruptcy of the spirit, no less. To apportion blame would be pointless, but suffice it to say that I will always carry with me the shadows of what might have been.

I must have moved about in a state of numbness for a long time, because of the black hole into which the essentials of my life had fallen. Gradually I managed to pick up again and resume contact with some of the threads of the past. I returned to old friends and tried to start again, endeavouring to forget that which I had lost. Even writing to you now, after all the years that have passed, I still feel subtle stabs of pain.

I started again my visits to Sargeson, and some humour again

entered my life. I needed the sort of levity that his wicked wit offered. His impish lack of reverence for established values was a tonic to my depressed state. Gradually some of the lost energies returned. The past slipped slowly away under the urgency of new forces. The inexorable demands of getting on with life dictated that the past be refocused and placed in some kind of perspective.

It is strange, dear Cousin, how circumstances are forced upon us without our consent or judgement. If God is responsible, he is certainly some kind of dictator. Consensus does not exist in the world he may or may not have created. The planet itself was organised out of a turmoil of exploding gas. We are the product of a gigantic cosmic fart.

I returned to the world of electronics, taking a job at the Devonport Naval Base repairing and rebuilding radar systems for Her Majesty's naval ships. I had entered a near moribund establishment of a colonial past that had its origins at Trafalgar and beyond. It was kept alive only by the lobbyists who still thought in terms of Empire and Royalty.

It was in that Dockyard that I learned a great deal about industrial waste and consumerism. Whenever one of the ships came in for a refit, it was stripped down to the bareness of its hull, and all the systems were removed to the workshops and further stripped prior to rebuilding. All componentry, valves, resistors, capacitors and wiring, were buried in a rubbish dump, ironically, adjacent to the naval stores which supplied the replacement parts. I saw perfectly functioning systems that needed no repair find their way into that dump. I am not sure what was being perpetuated in that place, except to say that I believed it to be a part of an industrial plan that extended far beyond these shores. We were part of it through some industrial cabal that dictated policy for governments who wished to trade within the global market place. The price for obedience to that policy has yet to be paid. The creation of waste for the sake of the continuance of production from the industrial machine must eventually be paid for in terms of human misery.

While I filled in my days by being a part of that decadence I was able to continue writing. I had married again and had set about re-

directing my life. I was able to have contact with my children, and by being with them briefly, I felt that everything had not been entirely lost.

The friendship with Frank Sargeson continued. I don't think he entirely approved of my fresh venture into marriage. I think he was unable to visualise a relationship between a man and a woman, and in spite of his considerable imagination, this remained an impediment to his full understanding of the human condition.

In the 1940's we had both known Karl Wolfskehl. Frank was rather surprised and miffed that I had figured so prominently in the poet's life, and that I had had an essay on him published in German. I know that Frank regarded me as something of a primitive, and couldn't understand why I should have had such a deep friendship with such a giant of erudition. In this respect Frank was a literary snob.

To this day I do not know the circumstances of the fall-out between them. I know that Karl was deeply hurt by Frank's rejection of him, and couldn't understand why the friendship faltered. There was an enormous difference in their respective backgrounds. Wolfskehl, the Doctor of Philosophy, a one-time privileged Jew from a wealthy family, the lion of Munich living in the centre of European art and culture; and Sargeson, from a middle-class puritan background, schooled in the law and removed from the origins of literary tradition by an antipodean isolation, were disparate partners in exile. I believe that Frank felt threatened by Karl's erudition, and also his massive physical presence. Under Frank's veneer of puckish bravado was a small man who needed to get out from under an overpowering influence.

I came close to a similar rejection myself, but under very different circumstances. An amateur theatrical group had undertaken to perform Frank's play, *A Time For Sowing*. I went with him on the first night and was so appalled by the ham-fisted way in which the play was treated that I walked out during the first act, embarrassed that it had been reduced to the the level of farce. It was many weeks before Frank forgave me for what he regarded as a personal slight. In spite of his excursion into writing for the theatre, I don't think he

really had the feel for what made good dramatic sense.
Our association continued in spite of the fact that I couldn't respond to the overtures he made to me after a few glasses of Lemora. There was a predatory aspect to his nature that no doubt stemmed from his desire to be accepted and loved, but which, because of social taboos, placed him also in a defensive role.

However, apart from this side of his nature, there was his sense of social justice, and his kindness to people who were down on their luck. His offering of food and wine meant that there were times when he himself went without. Many people visited him during the years I knew him. If Maurice Shadbolt had been one of them he would not have said what he did of Sargeson in his *One of Ben's* book and I quote, "a vain, preening and rather paranoid man, he held court among a mafia of mediocrities." I won't list the people I knew who visited him and enjoyed his company. They were far from mediocrities, and Shadbolt wasn't one of them.

I went with Frank several times to visit Ron Mason who lived a few streets away. We spent many hours talking, Ron, his rather lugubrious self, unwell from a heart condition, and Frank, bright and brittle, showing off his rather limited knowledge of Latin.

I remember a trip to Mahurangi to visit Terry Bond in his house of many small rooms and narrow stairways perched in the pine trees on a hill above the water. It was like a fairy house built by a child from play blocks. I remember Frank trying to devise a scheme whereby he could purchase the place. There certainly was a gnome-like magic to the place, and it may have suited Frank very well. I remember the Friday evenings when Ian Hamilton, Karl Stead and Billy Mitchell (my one time French master at West High), and others who dropped in to talk the time away. The warmth of friendship that was generated in that small cluttered room remains with me to this day. If those who had never met Sargeson wished to know something of the man or if those who knew him wished a re-acquaintance with an old friend, a visit to the Literary Section of the Auckland Public Library and a meeting with Alison Duff's sculpture of him, would perhaps convey something of the character more accurately and more directly, than any words of mine.

Dear Cousin,

Yes, I agree with you when you say that I seem to have been "willow-the-wisping" over a fair period of time. And that's not the end of it. It's true that I have been moving over marshy ground, and the light that comes from my wanderings may seem more than elusive to you, and its ephemeral qualities show nothing in respect of the direction it may take. But be patient.

My work at the Naval Base was becoming so routine and habitual in its day by day enclosure in an artificially induced environment, that I longed for other spaces, other work for my hands to do. Even leaving the confines of the workshop on occasions and being able to wander over the vast expanse of that industrial complex, and to see something of the sun and watch the sea birds soar over the buildings, was not enough. One of my favourite breaks from my workbench was to go into the boat shed and watch the men working with their tools on wood. The trade they followed was an ancient one, unlike the one I followed. Their trade was one of tradition, thousands of years old, mine was one whose existence was born when I was a child. Before that, there was nothing. I wonder, if in a thousand years time, there will be men who will be playing with electronics.

I resigned my job as a radar technician, and for a while returned to the outdoors and tried to make my living as an itinerant gardener. I tied my gardening tools to the bar of my bicycle and spent the rest of that summer going from garden to garden, digging, weeding and trimming, and generally enjoying a sense of freedom that didn't exist in the Dockyard. One of my gardening calls was to a convent in Herne Bay where I mowed the lawns and weeded the flower beds. Sister Mary was the nun who was in charge of my work, and took a keen interest in the convent garden. She was a pleasant-featured woman, hiding in the dark shroud of her habit. I remember her as being very kind to me, and I often wondered how such a woman became imprisoned in a faith that, in its strictures, was a denial of a life that might have been more fruitfully spent. Be that as it may,

the gardens in which I worked were a beautiful place. The flowers themselves often told me that I was wrong in assuming that Sister Mary had denied herself by choosing the life that she led. No doubt her daily life was more serene than any other life she could have had outside that convent.

I don't remember when or how I met a German named Odo Strewe. But he remains for me one of those enigmatic people who arrived on these shores, bringing with them a style and exceptionality that added an exotic colour to an otherwise drab landscape.

During the early years of the war he had been interned as an enemy alien on Soames Island in Wellington Harbour. On his release he established himself as a landscape gardener at Titirangi with his wife Joclyn and their beautiful blond children.

If the God Hermes was a prankster, as the legend has it, then Odo surely qualified as the son of Hermes, for his wit and behaviour at times was as irreverent as Hermes stealing Apollo's heifers and laying Penelope in the thicket. He was a breath of ebullient air, sometimes dangerous, sometimes impish. He was able to communicate to those who knew him well a sense of ridicule in respect of established attitudes. I worked with him on various outdoor projects in the well-to-do gardens of Titirangi, and I recall with great fondness the hours I spent with him, and at the parties held in his Titirangi home.

Although working outdoors was good for my well-being, the spasmodic nature of it didn't return a great deal to my pocket. I was still supporting my children of the broken marriage, and I needed to find something to give me a regular income. One day I saw an advertisement in a newspaper asking for shipwrights and boat builders. I turned up at Lidgards boat yard at Bayswater Point, and was interviewed by the foreman who asked me what experience I had. After telling him that I had worked in carpentry and was familiar with woodworking tools, he told me to turn up the next day with my tool kit. Then began the search for my non-existent tools. Under the house where I lived I found a rusty saw, a hammer and a few chisels. I turned up at the boat yard the next day and was put to work on a trawler that was being built for a fishing company in

Gisbourne. I joined a gang of tradesmen, and by taking cues from those I worked with, I was able to make a fair contribution to the building of that ship. The overall construction was organised by Roy Lidgard, a man in his seventies who at one time had been a house builder and who had established a boat building business in Fanshave St. Joining a consortium of other boat builders he became very much involved in a war-time contract to build a fleet of Fairmile gun boats for the war effort. A few of these craft are still to be seen around the Auckland waterfront.

The work at Bayswater Point was full of interest for me, and if it had not been for the tragedy that was to befall the Lidgard family, I may have still been there. But the story of that comes later.

In the meantime I had agreed to purchase a sailing boat: an eighteen foot gaff rigged sloop which had been abandoned in the Bay of Islands. My wife and I and Neville the Greek drove up to Russell, my wife returning to Auckland the next day. We found the boat, very much neglected but in good order. Apart from a makeshift stretch of canvas over the foredeck it was essentially an open boat. After cleaning out the remains of half rotted food and scrubbing out the bilges, we hoisted the sails and set off.

No matter how hard we tried, it was impossible to make progress in the light breeze that was blowing from the direction that we wished to take. The boat had what is known as 'lee helm' and because of that we were not able to make way into the wind. After some hours of frustration we were towed by a friend in his launch toward Cape Brett, where we picked up a breeze across our beam. We were sailing at last. Between Piercy Island and Cape Brett the breeze died and we had to paddle with oars until we found wind again. My friend Neville the Greek was an experienced sailor and I owe much to him for our survival on that trip.

As darkness fell our spirits rose, and with a moon above us and a school of dolphins playing and singing alongside we opened our bottle of brandy and sang with them. Some time later that weekend we sailed into Leigh harbour, tired from the wind and sea spray, but grateful that we had made it so far in that cranky sail boat.

Later, sailing into Auckland, we were met by the whole of the A-Class yachting fleet bearing down on us. Men in their caps and white duck looked down as they passed. They were the very professional elite of the Auckland Squadron, out for their day in the sun. When I called out to one of them as they passed and asked if this was New Zealand, I don't know what might have gone through their minds as they looked down on our scruffy shape, but judging by the white-capped stony stares, I don't think they were greatly impressed, especially when they had to give way to avoid us. Eventually we got the boat into Lidgards yard where I worked on it to cure its eccentricities.

Tied alongside the wharf at Bayswater was an old Fairmile named *Ngaroma,* on which lived an old man in his eighties. His name was Jim Lawler. Lidgards had been approached by an American geophysical survey company to charter a ship for a survey of the sea bed off the coast of the South Island. Negotiations between Jim Lawler, the Lidgards and the American company were undertaken and completed. The *Ngaroma* underwent an overhaul of its engines and machinery and was made ready for sea. The electronic survey equipment was installed and the ship set sail. I sensed that it was a reluctant Jim Lawler who stood and watched his home and possessions disappear down the harbour. I only learned later of the chicanery that persuaded him to part with his ship.

After several weeks the *Ngaroma* reached the port of Bluff where it was placed on a slipway to check the underwater fastening that held it together. One day Jim Lawler came to me in the yard and asked me if I would go down to Bluff and find out what was happening, and if necessary bring the *Ngaroma* back to Auckland. I flew down to Invercargill a few days later. It was winter, and if it hadn't been for Bluff oysters and Scotch whisky, my stay in Bluff while I was waiting for the boat to come off the slipway, may not have been as pleasant as it was. It was discovered that corrosion had all but eaten away some of the vital fastening bolts.

I rang Jim Lawler in Auckland and told him what I knew of the condition of his ship. He was adamant that he wanted his ship back in Auckland. The American scientists and technicians were in the meantime holed up in a hotel in Invercargill. When the *Ngaroma*

eventually left the slipway I contacted the American in charge of the geophysical team and told him that the *Ngaroma* was to return to Auckland. His response was to tell me that I had no authority, that the goddam ship was to remain under his command. I was in a nonplussing situation. On the one hand was an arrogant and abusive American to be dealt with and on the other was the owner's wish to have his ship returned. I knew where my sympathies lay. I ordered that we set sail for Auckland. We left Bluff in the early afternoon and had soon cleared the confines of the harbour.

Then about an hour later a small plane buzzed us, circling low around the ship. Leaning out of the cockpit was the American who had abused me. He was signalling that we should return to Bluff. We continued on. After about half an hour of his circling and frantic waving he left us to it. On board was the electronic surveying equipment, and in a sense I was guilty, if not of actual theft, then of a form of misappropriation. I suppose the American had good reason to be concerned.

Some time during the following night, when we were approaching Banks Peninsular, we received a radio message ordering us to put into Lyttleton. No doubt the authorities had been aware of our movements. I decided to obey the directive, and at about three o'clock in the morning we were tied up to a wharf in Lyttleton harbour. We were met by a couple of curious policemen who asked me a few questions. I told them that I was returning the ship to its owner in Auckland. They seemed quite happy and left, wishing me a safe trip the rest of the way.

The next day the local paper displayed a headline," Piracy on the High Seas" and a brief account from the American point of view of what had transpired. In many ways it could be seen as a comic situation which might have lent itself to a Gilbertian treatment. Later that day I flew back to Auckland where negotiations took place between the American agents and the vessel's owner; the outcome of which was the cancellation of the charter and the release of the *Ngaroma* to return to Auckland.

Work continued for me in the shipyard and the building of another trawler got underway. It became apparent that the Lidgards were in

financial trouble. Everything hinged on the completion of the new trawler which was begun as a speculative venture. I remember the truckloads of demolition kauri timber that came into the yard to be cut down and thicknessed for the building of that boat. The timber had come from the demolition of the old flour mill in Auckland. There was something strangely poetic about the final destination of that kauri timber. Last century splendid trees were felled from the forests on Great Barrier and a flour mill was built from their hearts. And now those timbers had taken on another shape and would end their life floating like so much other human jetsam on a sea that had once carried the mother logs to the sawmill on the other side of the Gulf.

Some time toward the end of my employment, Roy Lidgard made a trip to Fiji and returned with the old fuelling tender from Luthala Bay. How he managed to get that rusting hulk back to Auckland still amazes me. By this time the Lidgards were in deep financial trouble. The trawler sat on the slipway uncompleted. Credit from the various chandlers had dried up; the banks were refusing further credit. In what can only be regarded as sheer desperation Jim Lidgard, Roy's son, had devised a scheme to recover scrap metal from the reefs around New Caledonia, and the old fuelling tender was to be used for this purpose.

One day Roy, his son Jim, grandson Geof and a young man whose name I have forgotten, set sail from Bayswater, their destination New Caledonia and its reefs of scrap metal treasure. About a week after they left, a north-east storm hit the top of the North Island. Three generations of the Lidgard family and another young man were never seen again. I visualised that rusty hulk and the terror of those on board, as merciless seas pounded them to the bottom of the ocean.

And so, Cousin, here is another episode for your family history. For me it was a period of well-being, full of the kind of change that my nature demanded. It was also a time of sadness. Along with many others I had lost contact with a family who had taken me to their hearts. For me it had been no ordinary employment situation. I remember the kindness of Grandma Lidgard, a dignified Island lady who looked upon me as a son.

Had I not had other responsibilities at the time (my son was living with me while he attended high school) I would have accepted the invitation to join them on their mad desperate journey.

Dear Connie,

Thank you for your letter. I agree with you when you suggest that I was tempting fate, and exposing myself to all sorts of dangers by turning my back on a safe and easy ride through life. However, I think there are more dangers lurking in that sedentary way of living that you suggest might have been better for me, had I made better use of my talents and stayed in one place for a while. I returned to the Dockyard and once more took up the struggle with magnetrons, flip-flops and saw-tooth generators. Nothing had changed except an industrial unrest was rife throughout the establishment, which was later to culminate in strike action. I had been visiting Frank Sargeson about once a week, and maintaining contact with various friends during that period with Lidgards. Several short stories and poetry were published in small magazines. Sargeson on several occasions offered his views on what I had written. Most of the time his words had a dampening effect on my spirits.

However, one day, some time during that period, I received a letter from John O'Shea of Pacific Films. He had heard of my play *Lest we Resemble* from Betty Curnow, who had seen it performed in the Auckland Art Gallery, and he wanted to know if I would write a script for a full-length feature film he was planning to produce. A few weeks later we met and so began about six months of part-time work writing the script. There was much consultation between Wellington, where John lived, and myself. Many changes were made before the final draft was ready. In the meantime John O'Shea was busy raising money from sponsors who might be sympathetic to the project. Eventually everything was ready. Shooting began in the Hokianga. A seventeen year old Maori girl named Kiri Te Kanawa was chosen to play a small romantic part. I doubt if the part she played launched her onto the world stage as a diva of great distinction. I have the impression now that she prefers to forget that single episode in her life.

Apart from Kiri, other local talent was given the opportunity to strut their stuff before the camera. A couple of overseas actresses were

given main roles, one was a blonde surfing queen from Australia, the other was from some European country, and hired, no doubt, to impress the box-office with her dark beauty.

I remember John O'Shea, with his frame indicator squarely glued to his eye, surveying the scene for the best camera angle, like some antipodean Fellini, giving directions with his shy stuttering voice. He and his crew moved slowly down the country, acting out the drama against a backdrop of splendid scenery. Many fine shots of the scenic wonders of our country were woven into the film. The denouement was reached at the foot of snow-clad mountains in the South Island. As it was, it did have the distinction of being the first fully scripted film made in this country.

For some reason known only to John O'Shea I was not invited to more than one episode of the shooting sequence, and that was in the garden of a Remuera home.

I recall the opening night in the Civic theatre in Auckland where evening dress dominated the sartorial scene. I recall my disappointment at what I witnessed on the screen, and how I walked out in angry embarrassment after about half an hour of what I regarded as a travesty of what I had in mind when I was writing the script. I remember the darkness of the aisle as I walked up the slope to the door. I remember the lights of the streets and the reality of another world about me which was in stark contrast to what was being shown on the screen in the darkness of the theatre. I recall crossing the road, dodging traffic, and going into a pub and in solitude proceeding to get drunk.

Looking back on that period I think I might have behaved rather badly. Because I was unable to appreciate fully some of the better parts of the film due to some romantic notion of how it should have been handled overall, I had managed to hurt some people I would not have wished to hurt. But for months I had lived in a state of high expectation, hoping perhaps for some recognition that the film might bring me. I believe I had allowed myself to be truly screwed up over an unrealistic prospect that had its origins only in my mind. Some years later I sat through a screening of the film on television, the anger gone and a quieter mood prevailing.

Another small irony. To this day I have not received final payment for my script. So much for verbal agreements and trust. I do wonder sometimes in my impecunious state of the present, how much two hundred pounds is worth in today's currency. So be it, dear Cousin. I tell you all this so that you may better understand this distant, and at times, confused relative of yours.

Perhaps the experience of film making was for me a break in the routine of my days spent in the Dockyard, and in stark contrast to the industrial military atmosphere in which I worked. There were two worlds in which I lived, so diametrically apart that I wondered who I really was. One world gave me money for getting by, the other world satisfied my search for something different to what I had inherited through the mores of society. You might say that confusion was the monkey on my shoulder.

I mentioned that the Dockyard was in a state of industrial unrest. The unrest was due to the problem of pay inequality between the various trades who worked under the same conditions. At a stop work meeting I was appointed staff representative for the members of the Pubic Service Association who represented the permanent staff of tradesmen. The rest of the tradespeople were represented by their various unions. The demand was for pay equity for all trades so that an electrician, say, would not earn more than the fitter who worked alongside him.

Management and the State Services Commission refused to meet the demands, and so a rolling strike took place. We waited until a ship was placed in the dry dock and held it there. Then began months of travel for me to Wellington to meet with the Commission and a Cabinet Committee on State Services. Nearly every week I rose at dawn to catch the early flight to Wellington. The arguments went on and on, and in the meantime the Auckland Harbour Board, who had a vested interest in the operation of the dry dock, were all but tearing their hair out. There were several ships waiting to use the facility and their frustration grew by the day. Meetings were held in the yard to inform the men of the progress of negotiations, and I found that in dealing with some of the tradesmen from England I was facing an entrenched suspicion, almost verging on hatred, for the employer class. The most vocal were the Liverpool

Irishmen who mostly made up the ranks of boilermakers and welders. It was an interesting period and thanks to the opportunity my job gave me, I was better able to understand the relationship between the boss on the one hand, and the people he controlled on the other. The tradition of suspicion on both sides had its origins in the industrial revolution and in the feudal world before it.

Eventually the stoppage ended. The dry dock was filled with water and the beleaguered ship was released. The tradesmen had their demands met, and I went back to my bench and chased electrons. Then a job was advertised in the Gazette for a person to look after a research laboratory on Great Barrier Island. The laboratory was run by the Defence Scientific Establishment an adjunct to the Naval Dockyard, and involved in underwater detection techniques. I applied for the job and was successful.

My wife and I left Auckland and took up residence at the field station set above the coast, and for the next seven years we maintained the functioning of the laboratory.

Although we were still tied to an industrial system, we were able to reach out and enjoy the greater freedom that an unpopulated, almost wilderness, background offered. There was the coast of many magic inlets and bays, the mountains heaved up aeons ago, forest covered and remote. There were the long stretches of beach, nothing beyond them but the vast expanse of ocean. We were in another world, the lost world of our childhood before the demands of growing up changed the pattern forever. Away to the west was the mainland we had left behind, where people struggled with the complexities of their lives. We had run away.

I am unable to give you much information on the functioning of the field station. I believe I am still bound by the Official Secrets Act which I was bound to before taking the position. But that was before the cold war ended. I really don't know what the situation is today. Anyhow it gives me the excuse not to burden you with the details of my work there. What my period there did was to convince me that there would be no going back to the world we had left behind.

After a couple of years we were able to buy a block of land and begin to plan some sort of retirement. During the last few years at the field station I began to build a house in my spare time. And it is from here, dear Cousin, that these letters to you are written.

I know that I have covered a great number of years in a few short sentences. I don't think you need to know how every day was spent and what we had for breakfast each morning. I don't think you want to hear how my life achieved a certain routine of a settled state, which in essence was not greatly different to that of all other people who were attempting to survive on this little piece of the planet.

I finished building the house and we planted a garden and established trees for a small orchard. We drew water from a stream that flowed through the property, and drew energy from the sun through solar panels for our lighting. We are living frugally on a state pension. Throughout my life I had given no thought to old age and making provision for it. I had never believed in creating a surplus of money to be set aside for the indecency of retirement. I had never taken out an insurance policy, suspecting the motives of that branch of capitalism which essentially preyed on fears of the unknown.

And so, Connie, you can see that through my intransigence, I have been left to the mercy of the state. And there's another point to consider. I didn't believe that I was ever going to grow old. When one is twenty, one does not contemplate the end of the journey and see the skin wither and the muscle tone vanish. It is only possible from this end to look back and wonder where the hell all the years have gone, and why it took so little time to place them out of reach of any kind of change that one may wish on them; of any acts of redemption for the mistakes and waste that one is only aware of when it's too late.

From 37,000 Ft.

Dear Connie,

One day, about a year ago, I had a visit from a German film maker. His name was Gerd Pohlmann. Somehow he had managed to learn that I had known Karl Wolfskehl. Gerd was in the process of making a documentary on his life and was in New Zealand to cover the ten year period of his exile. Gerd asked me if I would contribute my reminiscences. I agreed, and a few days later some footage was shot. Apart from the actual filming we spent some time together talking and drinking wine. He was very agreeable company and I was sorry when he finally departed back to Germany. I didn't expect to hear any more about the film, and put the entire episode down to just another of those strange happenings that really have no beginning and no end.

Then, the other day, I received a phone call from one of Gerd's friends in Auckland. He told me to get ready to fly to Germany within the week; that all expenses were to be paid. I was overjoyed. I have just returned from the city where I had my passport renewed. I have packed a few clothes and a book or two. I am ready to go. Tomorrow I will leave the Island and set out on another journey, so different to the one I took nearly fifty years ago.

I write this letter from 37,000 feet. It comes to you from high above the clouds, as I journey through darkness to the other side of the world. Suspended between the earth and the firmament by the injection of fossil fuel into four great engines tied to the wings of a long aluminium tube that contains me and three hundred other people and their baggage; speeding toward a planned destination in the hope that it will be reached, I can only place my trust in the ingenuity of man. The last time I went in this direction, all those years ago, was by ship across the ocean; a leisurely, assured journey, with none of the nervous tension that this present trip is fraught with. I am led to wonder what the human animal has really achieved by his inventive spirit. I wonder what we have done to ourselves, and what price will have to be paid ultimately for these mad feats of engineering. Speed for the sake of saving time, seems

to leave us bewildered and groping in a self- created darkness. I regard the rest of the animal kingdom, of which man is only a part, and wonder at its constancy. Only man has been able to express his dissatisfaction with his place in the natural order.

I am sitting in the rear of the plane where people with smaller bank accounts are separated from those who are travelling with higher priced tickets, which belies the myth that we are a classless society. On a large screen on the dividing bulkhead, the progress of our journey is graphically displayed. There is the outline of the nearest approaching land, and the winged symbol of the plane getting nearer as the painful hours pass. There is a graph showing the distance in miles of distance yet to be travelled, and I notice that the nose of the plane is closer to the land mass than is the tail by perhaps 400 miles, which means to my somewhat disordered brain, that the passengers in front of the plane will arrive at least an hour before I will.

The graphed journey disappears and a film comes on which seems to remind me that I am still a part of the real world. It is a Hollywood film about an American family with all the schmaltz that only Hollywood could produce. Do the airlines pick up these films at bargain prices, and is their presentation designed as some sort of soporific to half dead travellers?

I cannot watch and instead settle deep down in my seat and listen through the headset to the music of a Schubert symphony. The incongruity of the Berlin Philharmonic playing at 37,000 feet, and the temperature outside at minus 54 degrees, is so great that I am transported into an incongruous world of make-believe. For a time I forget where I am or where I am going.

I am reminded when the music finishes that I have, for the time being, left my familiar world far behind and am careering through a dark night into the unknown. If it wasn't for the expectancy and excitement I felt, the journey might have taken on the dimension of a nightmare. Any contact with my known world was severed when I stepped onto this craft. I sensed the space between my feet and the earth I once trod. The great depth of a night sky separates me from where I really belong.

Below me ,oceans and islands are going backwards into their own time, as we defy gravity and hurtle ahead of time, playing a kind of macabre game with this part of the universe. We stop at Honolulu, and again Los Angeles; neither place giving rise to any sense of discovery. There was the usual standard type of facility, designed for herding human cargo in the most efficient and impersonal manner. We are confined to the concourse and can only view through the darkness the lights of the city beyond. Finally, after taking on more fuel we leave the gateway to the American dream and head north over Canada.

Trolleyed sustenance comes to us down the aisle, and for a while we have a diversion in exploring the contents of a plastic wrapped package containing what I believe to be food. It is so cleverly done that I could believe that no human hand was involved in its creation. Surely it was spawned by some computerised production line; a line programmed by an accountant who had a diploma in home science. The package was designed to satisfy a hunger that for me wasn't there. The real hunger is for the plane to reach the end of its journey, and to have the half-awake discomfort of cramped space behind me.

Soon we enter a grey dawn, and then suddenly a crimson sun rises above the far bank of cloud and floods into the cabin lighting up our weary morning. There is magic in this dawn. Through the small porthole I can see, far below, the vague form of land which is Greenland. There is no discernable movement, only the passing wisps of cloud that pass between my eyes and what I attempt to focus on. Below it is a fairyland, laid out on a blue-green board by a consummate artist. And soon I see the tip of Iceland, stark white where the sun hits its peaks and then into the glaciered valleys. And all about is the dark green ocean. I marvel for a while that I am able to look down from this great height and see what until recently could only have been seen by migratory birds.

For a while the vision is lost beneath acres of cloud. Again I see on the screen the outline of land which is Scotland. I look down again, and through gaps in the cloud, I catch glimpses of roads and parts of towns. Then Scotland disappears, and we are over the North Sea. I can now see parts of land that I judge to be Europe. Looking at

the screen I again have the impression that the people in front of the plane will disembark long before I will. The impression is all a part of the unreality I feel surrounded by. I feel a strange elation as we sweep down to land at Frankfurt. I am bone weary after thirty-six hours of unnatural confinement, yet I am excited by an anticipation of what awaits me. Somewhere I will find a German stamp, and this letter may reach you one day.

I am met at Frankfurt Airport by Tina, a friend of Gerd Pohlmann, presenting me with a bunch of flowers. I have been welcomed to Germany. Tina is a tall, slender, good-looking woman, and together we travel by train into the city. I am still half dead and so disoriented that I wonder how I am ever going to recover the ability to think clearly again. Tina tells me that I am to be the guest of the Darmstadt Academy and that I will be expected in Darmstadt in two days time. In the meantime I have been booked into the Mercator Hotel in Frankfurt. Gerd in the meantime was working on the finishing touches to his film and would be calling on me later. Tina left me at the hotel and I was alone in a strange city and with people of another language.

Dear Cousin,

I am wondering how best to tell you about my experiences here. I certainly don't wish to burden you with all the mundane details of what is happening to me; to make something of a Cook's tour kind of thing of each day as it happens. I have decided to keep a brief diary, and it will be excerpts from this that will come to you from time to time. You will be able to read between my lines and gather what you may by your own conjectures.

Sunday: My first full day here; feeling lousy; tried to catch up on sleep; still disoriented. Gerd came toward evening; good to see him again. Went with him and Tina to a small restaurant and sat outside. A warm evening.

Monday: Breakfast in hotel, rolls, salami and cheese. Went walking; covered miles and miles looking for the river Main. It is wide and sluggish brown; eight ducks in file. Walked over bridge and back. Found Römer, sat with tea outside cafe. The Römer is very old, 1541. Some new building alongside in contrast. Back to the hotel, bought postcards and stamps. Very warm; humid and overcast. Had short siesta. Rang Tina and walked to her flat, drank coffee and talked. Gerd rang. Said I was to go to Darmstadt on Wednesday.

Tuesday: First signs of a head cold. Bloody hell, I don't need this. Tried to walk it off. Found a small park, wandered about, very hot and humid. Down through streets again, a very old quarter, a survival of the bombing raids. Found a fine old Lutheran church, stonework eroded by the years, the door twisted with age. Got lost on my way back to the hotel, had taken wrong turning and was on my way to Holland. Took taxi back. Tina rang, invited me to eat with her. Gerd still working on film, last minute editing.

Wednesday: Lousy cold in head. Our day to travel to Darmstadt. Caught a train with Tina. 40 minute ride through peaceful countryside, a contrast to Frankfurt and its motor car madness. Darmstadt, another city, haze-covered and very warm. Booked into

Hotel Maritim near the station, a large new place. My room is large, on the seventh floor overlooking the outskirts of the city. Bowls of fruit and flowers on a table, compliments of the Oberbürgermeister. What have I done to deserve this? Tina caught the train back to Frankfurt. Had lunch alone. Returned to my room. Found books and brochures and a printed itinerary of events that I was to attend during the next few days. Tonight I attend a function to honour Karl Wolfskehl. A car called for me, through the city to a large hall, many people, young and old. Readings from Karl's letters by Christian Bech, a well known actor, and poetry read by Paul Hoffmann. Gerd's film followed. A good piece of work, sensitive, bringing back fond memories for me. Later, meeting people who came up to me. Embraced by Paul Hoffmann, one time resident in New Zealand, now professor of German Literature at Tübingen University. Introduced to Cornelia Blasberg his associate at Tübingen, and many others. Invited to Tübingen by Paul Hoffmann. Later a large group of us went into a drinking cellar. Very crowded, but good company, and much talk. Back to hotel and bed, buggered after a long bewildering day.

Thursday: Awake at 4.30, too early for coffee in the hotel restaurant. Around the corner from the hotel I find a stall and join workmen drinking coffee. Some are drinking beer and buying small bottles of spirit. Very early morning topers needing a stiff shot before the day begins. Back to hotel.

Car called for me. I'm to have breakfast with the Oberbürgermeister. Present are Christian Bech, Dr. Claus Wolbert, director of the Arts Academy, and a city administrator named Mr Mueller. Bread, cheeses, cold meat and coffee. Oberbürgermeister, name of Metzger, presents me with books and a silver medal.

Then Wolbert, Bech and I went by car to a jazz exhibition, its history and sociology from the beginning in slave days in America to its influence in Europe, Django Reinhardt and Stephan Grapelli. Brilliant nostalgia.

Then to the Wolfskehl Gardens, a childrens' playground now where once the mansion, built in 1888 by Karl's father, stood before it was destroyed by allied bombing in 1944. Only the teahouse remains.

Did Karl spend time here? Children laugh and play on swings and roundabout. A peaceful place. Back to the hotel with Claus Wolbert, a quiet drink with him and then siesta.

Later, I am called for again, and taken to a square in an old part of the city, seemingly spared from the bombing attacks. A large stage is erected, microphone and loudspeakers, speeches of welcome including one for me. Twin city people gathered from Poland, Turkey, France and Great Britain; much dancing and singing in national costume, very colourful and lively. Then across to a huge marquee to open a beer festival, speeches again and much umppa-parring from a band dressed in folk costume. Much noise and merriment. Back at the hotel later I watch Gerd's film again, broadcast on television.

Friday: Early morning coffee again at the workmen's stall. Feel more at home here than in the hotel restaurant with affluent-looking people. This morning I go to another reception where more speeches are made, and a prize is presented to a Spanish painter named Isabella Quintella. The Germans seem to love making speeches. We are then entertained with a beautiful buffet lunch. I return to the hotel.

At three o'clock I am taken to a park where there is a display of modern sculpture. I am with Mr Mueller and Claus Wolbert. After strolling round the park and seeing all the sculptures, some very strange and dark in their expression, we are given tea in a very old house adjacent to the park.

Waving goodbye to all the people, I followed Mr Mueller to cross the road and was run into by a large passenger bus. Thrown against a stone wall, jacket torn, glasses smashed, picked up lenses miraculously still intact. Deep cut to my forehead. Much concern, police and ambulance arrive. I protest, but am bundled into the ambulance and taken to hospital. Mr Mueller took my lenses with him. Examined at hospital by a doctor who pronounced me sound; I believe the Mercedes Benz bus could be a write-off.

Returned to hotel by hospital car. Everyone so kind. Later, Mr Mueller called with my glasses. Lenses had been set in new frames.

Another gift from more than kind people.

Again a car calls for me. I am to dine with the Oberbürgermeister at his home. A long trip to the outskirts of the city. About fifteen guests, mostly associated with academia.. A Spanish lady is present. A splendid meal, many dishes. Good wine. Language something of a barrier. Much is made of my collision with the bus. A late return to the hotel in a mini-bus. Isabella very affectionate beside me. We say a reluctant goodbye.

Saturday: Gerd and Tina arrived in a rental car. Went driving through Mainz area and crossed over the Rhine, a dark, sluggish river, several laden barges going up and down. Lunch at a small restaurant on the river bank. On to a village called Oppenheim, stopped at an old church built in the 12th century. Headstones of ancient notables, one of a Hans von Wolfskehl. In a caged-in ossuary, a grotto, heaps of white human bones, it's necessary to conserve sacred ground. Eventually we go back to hotel. Gerd and Tina depart for Frankfurt.

Sunday: After breakfast I catch the train to Stuttgart. Railway system precise and fast. German efficiency. At Stuttgart, I have seven minutes to find another train to Tübingen.

Arrived Tübingen. Taxi to Am Schloß Hotel, high above town and alongside Hölderlin Castle. Ancient stones, monument to a bloody past.

Paul Hoffmann called for me. We walked along the bank of the Neckar, beautiful and very peaceful. Arrived at his apartment, greeted by his wife Eva. Also present was an actor from Paris, a New Zealander who said he knew me, had met me somewhere in the past. His name is Murray Grunwall. I do not remember him.

We eat a splendid lunch, much talk and good feelings. Such a contrast to my everyday life on the Island, where little more than the weather governs conversation. I feel I belong here.

Tübingen, a centre of Swabian Germany. The people more Latin in appearance than their cousins of the North. Girls with olive skins,

fair-haired and fine-featured. I am reminded that this is the land where the Celts came from prior to their migration across Europe and into Great Britain.

Monday: Awoken early by street-cleaning machine. My room at Am Schloß is small, up three flights of stairs. The hotel is very old, a seventeenth-century building, much refurbished. Small shuttered windows, just room for a bed and writing table, washbasin, dunny and a shower, cunningly constructed in a corner under the roof eave. Much bending of head and swivelling of body to get in.

Paul called again to take me to lunch. Cornelia Blasberg was present. My romantic spirit takes fancy when I look at her. I can't help thinking of Rhine Maidens, the Song of the Lorelei, and the doomed boatmen. For a while I am far away, dreaming.

Cornelia accompanies me back to the hotel. We walk along the bank of the Neckar, and through wooded gardens. Students stroll by with their books and satchels. We say goodbye at the hotel and Cornelia wanders back through the Hölderlin Schloß. I will miss her long after my stay in Germany.

Tuesday: Walked to the station early this morning. Bought ticket to Hamburg. I have eleven days left of my stay in Germany. It will be sad to leave Tübingen where I have found so much, but have promised to meet up with Gerd again; perhaps in Berlin.

Paul calls for me; tried to change my mind about leaving; wants to show me other parts around Tübingen. Went by car to restaurant in tennis pavilion. Wolfgang, I think a student, joined Murray Grunwall, Eva, Paul and me in a fine lunch. Eva especially, sad to learn that I was leaving them. I gave her a bone carving I had brought from New Zealand. They saw me off at the Haupt-Bahnhof.

Settled into compartment. Time to reflect on why I am here. Because of a friendship with a German Jewish poet all those long years ago, and because of what I had had published in Germany, my essays on Karl Wolfskehl. I am humbled to know that not even death has the final victory. Something remains of his presence, and

my being here is some small proof of that.

At Stuttgart I change trains. Share a compartment with a Polish lecturer in Civil Engineering at Benghazi University. A very agreeable person. Says he would like to take a position at a New Zealand university. Showed photographs of massive tunnelling work in Libya for water supply. Incredible engineering.

We parted at Hanover. He to visit his daughter who had married a German much to his disappointment and chagrin, I to go on to Hamburg. Arrive about 10pm, still twilight. Found taxi and asked to be taken to a reasonably priced hotel. Down an alleyway into a strange looking building, found a small office and booked in. Given a room overlooking the main street. Night noise, traffic, sirens, drunken laughter and singing. Not possible to sleep.

Wednesday: Tried to find my bearings in the hotel. Found the breakfast room. The architecture of the place suggested that it had originally been built as a car park, and some time later converted into a hotel. Thousands of small rooms opening off dark narrow corridors.

Outside on the street I discovered that I was on the Reperbahn, the notorious red-light district of Hamburg, where all tastes in sexuality are catered for. I think the taxi driver must have misunderstood my needs. Or did he think he was doing me a favour? I don't think I look like a sailor home from the sea and in need of a tender breast. I see the humour in my situation.

I wander past the gay hotels and bars, the strip joints and hard porn film houses, all flamboyantly lit up and ready for business.

Walked for miles and found the port area, canals with all manner of ships, warehouses on the banks, ships loading and unloading; two large square-rigged sailing ships at anchor. All this built on the river Elbe, the river where the American Army halted to allow the Russian Army to enter Berlin.

And wandering around the port I thought of great-grandfather Westphal when he set sail from here for the unknown land at the far

end of the earth. A part of him had come almost full circle back to his origins. He may never have dreamed that one of his descendants would return to almost haunt a place where he had once trod. It is a strange feeling that I have, as I wander about wondering what it must have been like all those years ago.

Later that day I caught a train to Bad Bramstedt. Was determined to go even further back to where he had come from. I had imagined a small village set in farmland. Found a town that had grown into a dormitory suburb of Hamburg. Modern houses and buildings had buried the village and little of it remained. Found the Lutheran church where he was baptised. A cool, quiet place, a sanctuary from the oppressive summer heat. There on the clerestory were the commemorative plaques honouring those who fell in the Great War. There were several Westphals. I wonder how many fell to bullets from New Zealand soldiers.

Up a side street I found a cemetery. Wandered through, looking for signs of a past life that may have in some way given me reason for being there; I felt an intruder in that quiet lonely place. No voices came to me; only the song of a distant thrush.

Went down a tree-lined lane and saw fields of ripening corn, and wondered if they were the same fields where generations of Westphals laboured, before they broke away from the yoke that bound them to rural poverty, and took that long journey to freedom at the other end of the earth.

And so, Cousin, I will leave you with these few extracts, hoping they may convey to you, brief as they are, some idea of what has been happening to me. I will post it here in Bad Bramstedt. I trust it reaches you, and you will be able to share with me the wonder that has been with me since I arrived in Germany. As I said earlier, it is because of Karl Wolfskehl that I am here. It is as if he himself has invited me and I am his guest in his country, the Germany that he loved, and which betrayed him.

Tomorrow I go to Berlin. I have tried to find the place where my great-grandfather came from, but it no longer exists. Time and progress have buried it under an avalanche of concrete and bricks.

The modern town has pushed the village that was, deep into the ancient soil. It will rest there forever, the only sign that it existed at all can be seen on the inscriptions on the stones in the cemetery.

Dear Connie,

Hamburg was so noisy and hot; mad motor traffic and the hazy stench of exhaust fumes made me long for a place where there was a clean cool breeze. I would have given much to wander along a deserted sea coast and have been a companion to the sea birds. I could not help making comparisons with my Island back in New Zealand. There is nothing to hold me in Hamburg. I know no-one here. I decide to leave for Berlin the next day.

Thursday: At the railway station in Hamburg, while waiting for the train to Berlin, I was approached by a young man and a young woman who asked me for money to buy something to eat. Their dazed half-awake state and almost incoherent speech told me they were suffering the aftermath of some drug-induced state. I gave them what change I had, and watched them move, not toward the restaurant, but toward an elderly couple. I wonder if they managed to collect enough money for their next fix, whatever it was. I felt for them in the sadness and agony of their withdrawal.

On the train, I shared a compartment with a German who was very talkative. He was a devoted communist and was travelling to some trade union meeting in Berlin. After a while it became something of an ordeal to listen to him. There was the same fervour and commitment in his discourse as one might hear from a born-again Christian who wished to share his discovery with all and sundry. I was more interested in the countryside that we were passing through.

On the outskirts of Berlin we passed through Spandau, and there, quite close by, were the ruins of the prison where Heß spent his last days. The prison was torn down lest it become a rallying point for the neo-nazi movement. But knowing something of the growing strength of that right-wing movement I have no doubt they will find other places where they can vent their message of hate. The German communist with me sagely mentioned that the threat of a new fascism was very real, and that expanding corporate structures

could produce the same sort of climate that reparations did after World War I, and that another Führer could rise from the ashes. I trust he is wrong in his prediction. Everywhere I look, I see the scars of the catharsis to that awful dream of the man who led the Third Reich, and I can't imagine that human kind would be so mad as to have it happen all over again.

Gerd met me at the Tiergarten Station. Again I had someone I could talk with. Over coffee we caught up on each other's activities since Darmstadt. We walked through brilliantly sunlit streets to his office where I met his friend Helmut, a huge, amiable German. Later we walked a few hundred metres to Kleistpark where we found this Pension where I am staying while in Berlin, and from where this letter is written to you.

I have a large room with a huge bed, a writing table, washbasin, and a large window and small balcony overlooking a kindergarten in a quiet street. It is cool in my room, where I am glad to rest after the hot pavements and frenetic motor traffic. The motor car dominates all movement in German cities. Pedestrians, in order to survive, give way to the supremacy of Mercedes Benz whose logo can be seen on top of the tallest buildings, dominating the skyline.

Friday: I sleep well; the best since I arrived. The Pension is unique in my experience. I have a key to the heavy street door. I walk up four flights of stairs; the lift broken-down on the ground floor, cables and wires hanging in disarray; another key which opens the door to my landing. I enter a clean, newly decorated area, greatly in contrast to the rest of the building.

Going downstairs later, I step over a pile of smashed crockery outside a door on the ground floor. All is silent. I wonder at the drama performed, and wonder whether the silence indicates that all is now well for the protagonists.

Around the corner in the main street I found a Turkish restaurant where I ate a good meal. Back to the Pension. Gerd rang. Said he would call for me. We walked down toward the east side of Berlin until we came to the Wall. A monstrosity of political idiocy, a barren strip between two concrete walls four metres high, the no-

mans land in between clear of any vegetation, a clear shot from the guard houses overlooking the desolate scene.

Adjoining the Wall on the western side were half-abandoned apartment buildings where squatters took shelter with another itinerant disadvantaged people. This was the Turkish quarter. After the war, Germany needed labour to reconstruct, and found a source of supply in the cheapest labour force in Europe. Now there was little work, and the immigrant peoples had become the innocent targets of the new right. We were wandering around an area of Berlin not mentioned in the tourist brochures. And yet children were playing and bouncing their balls against the Wall. If they played long enough maybe the wall would collapse.

Walked alongside a canal. Passed men with rods, fishing the dark sluggish water. If there were any fish in that canal, to whom did they belong, for the bank on the other side was in the eastern zone. Perhaps, unlike us, the fish were impartial, and unaware of the dangers of transgression. Unlike humans, they are not to be herded into a segregated madness.

Gerd believes that the Wall will stand for at least another ten years. In the meantime, Germany will remain divided.

Saturday: My shoes are showing signs of wear, the soles are parting from the uppers, and in need of repair. Dog shit and acid rain have exacted a toll on them. Have noticed a small repair shop not far from the Turkish cafe where I eat. Rain in the morning and distant thunder.

Gerd called for me. With him is a friend with a car. We go sightseeing. Visit the Reichstag, a grey stone building pockmarked by cannon and machine gun fire. Somewhere near were the ghosts of Hitler's past. Close by here, there emanated the decisions that involved the world in a crisis of survival. The outside of the Reichstag has been restored, except for the dome and the signatures of battle, etched for all time on the grey stonework. Close by, we are underground, and in Himmler's interrogation centre. Records and files, and photographs of the reign of horror. An unholy testament to the evil that can emerge from the heart of man. From the

darkness of his soul comes a dark shadow that extinguishes all light. And here in that underground place I witness something of those dark shadows that spread across the earth. I was in a museum of almost unbelievable evidence that what I was seeing did take place, and was perpetrated by the same race that produced Goethe and Beethoven.

I couldn't remain in that cellar. I needed daylight. Down there I felt that I was a voyeur, vicariously identifying with both the victims and the perpetrators. I left my friends and waited in the sunshine for them to emerge.

Sunday: Awake to the sound of church bells. I shut my window to muffle the sound, the voice of the Reformation, the call to worship, insistent and demanding. I take the underground train to the Zoological Garden. Meet with Gerd and Tina. Walk past the lost and lonely people lying and lounging about the rail station, half-empty bottles in hand, and dazed and resigned faces peering out onto the Sunday world.

Up the Ku'Damm and into the Berlin world of prosperity and optimism, bright lights and opulence. We leave behind those lost people for whom the splendour of consumerism is but a hollow travesty, and whose consumption is of a substance which gives them, if only temporarily, relief from whatever it is that makes them the sadder and darker side of the German economic miracle. I leave something of myself with them as I progress with my friends into the world that I don't really belong to either.

I don't think that I am a very good tourist. Things pass me by without really registering. I have no tourist book with me to tell me what I should be looking at. I have no camera hung about my neck. All I can do is breath in the difference, and feel that I am in a strange land whose history is of more interest to me than all the pretty postcards.

I see the city now, and try to picture it as it was in the tenth century when fishermen established their villages on the rivers and lakes. Where did they come from, and what events of their past made them put down roots and eventually build their towns and their

protective walls against ambitious raiders? Were they Berliners then? And even before that, when the ice age came down and swept the fur-clad savages before it. Seeing Berlin as it stands at the present time, I see it as occupying only a few minutes in its total history.

Strange thoughts, you may well say, my dear Cousin. But in spite of these somewhat cursory observations, I must confess that I am caught up in the sheer exuberance of the place. Everywhere I go with my friends I feel alive, and it is through their youthful eyes and enthusiasm that I am able to sense that this was once a great capital city of Europe. Everywhere I wander with them there is something different to make demands of my senses. I am forced to take notice and put to one side my imaginings as to how it all came about, and to put to one side of my vision the scars of war that remain as reminders of a hideous past.

It is almost carnival time as I put to one side the darker moments of my perspective. Thousands of Berliners walk through the Sunday warmth, eating and drinking at the many stalls; listening to the bands playing nostalgic tunes; making the most of their short holiday before the Monday begins.

We take a lift to the top of a tower, and from the platform we have a view overlooking the city. The Tiergarten is below and for miles around there are oases of green; avenues of trees and small parks; even the haze of exhaust fumes seems to be losing the battle against the sunshine and the afternoon breeze.

I walk back to Kleistpark; lie on my bed and ponder the events of the day and wonder about tomorrow.

Monday: Had breakfast; am now waiting for Gerd to call. Today he plans to buy a motor car. I should buy a new jacket to replace the one torn by my bus accident in Darmstadt. Counting what money I have left, I decide that I can't afford it if I have to travel by train back to Frankfurt. In many respects I don't know how one day will follow the next. Gerd, dear person that he is, is somewhat erratic in his behaviour, and I am often nonplussed by his mercurial nonchalance. He talks of buying a car so that we can travel

together, I to Frankfurt to catch my plane, and he to go on to Karlsruhe to see his parents. I am at the mercy of someone elses planning and incertitude.

He finally arrived some hours late but with a friend's car, a 500 c.c. Bubble car in which we wove like demented suicidal madmen through the streets of the city in search of secondhand car yards, which must be the same the world over; overseen by shady characters whose body language tells a different story to the one that emanates from their mouths.

In one yard we called at, there was a line of the largest and most opulent of the cars that Detroit would have produced in the late forties and fifties. They were immense, the chrome and paint work gradually disintegrating in the Berlin air. They would have been driven by their American colonels and generals of years ago, and now served as reminders of that period when a great city had undergone political division. Again I was able to witness a somewhat whimsical piece of history in those cars, which were ultimately destined to lie on the scrapheap of man's arrogance and folly.

As the day wore on, Gerd became more and more frustrated. The way he drove indicated that he was making no progress in his search for a suitable car. We called it a day and I was glad to get back to the Pension at Kleistpark.

Tuesday: Today I wish for a day that will be less hectic than yesterday. Gerd arrived about mid-morning with a friend. His name was Axel, a German who had been teaching at Massey University, and was on a visit to his home city. I found him to be a dour, humourless person who was dismissive of Wolfskehl's poetry. I think his attitude to poetry in general had something to do with my slight aversion to him. However, it was decided that we would visit Pfaueninsel, or Peacock Island as it is known. We cross the Havel by a motorised punt. We walk for miles through the park-like grounds; great old trees and wide meadows. There is a castle built in the 18th century by King Friedrich-Wilhelm for himself and his consort. In the garden I wandered where once kings and their mistresses had strolled, and I had the dubious pleasure of sitting on a bench that had once supported a succession of royal arses. Royalty had long

departed the place, and it is now a museum, a reminder that even regal folly must have its day.

It was a beautiful part of Berlin, which surely must raise the spirits of the most misanthropic of men. I was glad that my companions had found time to show me a little of the other side of their amazing city. I returned to my Pension, tired but renewed.

Wednesday: Gerd and I decide to go into East Berlin. We emerge from the U-Bahn, the underground railway that runs through the West and join the S-Bahn, the surface train that is to take us to the checkpoint at Friedrich Straße.

As we pass from West to East I notice the enormous difference in the upkeep of the stations we pass through. From clean tidiness and order we enter a kind of third world that makes me believe we are not in the same city. From wealth we enter poverty. There is no gradual transition to allow an adjustment to the mind as we face the abrupt confrontation with a regime that has all the austerity of a rundown orphanage. Immediately we enter the East we know we are in another world.

At the checkpoint we are met by armed guards who examine our documents. The guards are unsmiling, and there is no hint of welcome as they allow us through.

We walk beside grey stone buildings until we reach the Unter den Linden, the beautiful avenue of lime trees; the original trees being cut down for firewood during the siege; but now replanted and growing well.

I need to find a toilet, and do so in a small restaurant. I use the paper in the dispenser and am troubled and discomforted by its coarseness. I take a sample with me, and when I return to my friends I show it to them and remark on the stoicism of East Germans. The difference in the texture of toilet tissue between the East and the West symbolised the difference between the two states. The simplicity of that symbol denoted more than words could convey.

We walk through what was once the centre of Berlin, past buildings that once housed the real culture of Germany. There was a shrine to the unknown soldier, guarded by two Russian soldiers. At first I thought they were wax dummies, so smooth and polished, so still and lifeless were they, until I saw the flicker of an eyelid. How long they stood there in that almost inanimate state I do not know. But I wondered about the discipline that they must have undergone in order to appear as much a part of the stonework they guarded as if they had been sculpted from stone itself.

Thursday: Gerd has managed to purchase a car, and we prepare for our departure from Berlin. We make our way onto the Autobahn and after passing through the checkpoint we are out into the open country, although still in East Germany. Gerd's car is an Opel, about three years old, but alongside the smoke-belching Brabants we are a limousine of some opulence. We have a way to go before we reach the West and the other world of Mercedes Benz.

The countryside is rich-looking, fertile and well-managed. As the Autobahn runs through open country we only see towns and villages in the distance. I wish to stop and deviate toward them but am told by Gerd that this is impossible. We have permission only to travel the road designated by the authorities.

Later in the afternoon I see in the distance the outline of a large city. This is Weimar, the city that became a seat of democratic government after the collapse of Imperial Germany in 1919. During its brief fourteen year history, it was the centre of enormous creativity in the arts and sciences. The Weimar Republic had been seen as the hope for a new Germany, until it was destroyed by political romanticism and Adolf Hitler. But this is no place for a lesson in history, dear Cousin. Although what happened to Weimar eventually affected the entire world.

It is dark when we arrive in Frankfurt. We book into the Mercator Hotel. I am back where I started from all those long days ago. It will take me some time to assess fully all that has happened during the past few weeks. I am loaded down with books and memories. Tomorrow I will board a plane and return to New Zealand. In the meantime we are both buggered and ready for sleep.

It is the last day, and Gerd will drive me to the airport. In a way I am glad to be leaving; even if it is only to take stock of what I have been experiencing, and to be able to sit quietly somewhere where there are no people. I know that I will only find that state when I return to my island. It will be winter when I return; a time of no growth, and a time to reflect. I believe I have undergone a hemispheric change in more ways than one.

Frankfurt

Dear Cousin,

As I sit here in this vast terminal waiting for my flight to be called, I try to understand something of this land and its people. If I can decode some of the impressions of the past few weeks, I may have a better insight into my own nature; for after all, a great part of me springs from the same source that produced the people who throng about me in this terminal. And yet I feel a stranger. Although there have been times since I arrived in this country that I have felt that I have come home, that I belonged, at this moment I feel like an alien. Perhaps the generations, that have passed since my great-grandfather walked these soils, have placed a remove between us. Or is it simply the effect that crowds have on me, irrespective of what nationality they are.

I have been reading a book that Gerd gave me about the myths and legends of Germany, and I can't help thinking that in those legends and myths there is to be found a clue as to what makes up the German national psyche. The mythology that seems to have captivated the collective heart of the nation, is all pervasive, and is overlaid with a conflicting Christianity. There are the stories of dragons and warriors, of beautiful maidens and chivalrous knights, of dungeons and castles, of dwarfs and demons of the dark ages.

These myths and legends figure prominently in the poetry and literature and music of Germany. I think of the operatic works of Wagner, the poetry of Heine, and the tales of Hoffmann.

There is a romantic tradition that reaches into every aspect of the nation; even into the past political structure; for wasn't it political romanticism that destroyed the Weimar Republic and gave rise to National Socialism?

I hope that I won't be considered arrogant when I suggest this. It is my attempt, faulty though it may be and incomplete in itself, to understand the force of that romanticism that involved the entire world in its obedience to a mythology. The arrogant assumption of

a philosophy to create a master race and the dream of a Third Reich, to last a thousand years might be traced to those myths of the past that so dominated the German heart.

We too have our myths, but they are of a pious nature. We are too young to have a history that might have created legends. Unless of course we consider rugby football and the quarter acre paradise.

So much, dear Cousin, for the speculations and my own assumptions. I trust that this may allow you to better understand something of the country I am just leaving, and also to understand that streak that is an essential part of me. I think that I know now where it has come from; that restlessness that is part of the wanderlust that seems to have been the main ingredient of my life. It's there and I can't eliminate it.

The call has just come over the loudspeaker system telling me that my flight has been delayed by an hour. I am confined to this vast concourse, feeling trapped and unable to be anywhere else that I would find more agreeable to spend my time . I am caught in a great impersonal machine that processes an itinerant population with cold precision. The place is alive with a kind of frenetic activity; people who are not sitting and waiting move in and out of the shops and offices, while outside in the unseen distance are the engine sounds of aircraft landing and taking off.

I wander around the museum section looking at a range of planes from around the world, and wonder how many of them were engaged in the air battles of long ago. I can't help being amazed at man's ingenuity at defying gravity. I trust that ingenuity prevails when I step onto the craft that will take me back home.

The call for me to board my plane has come. I gather my book and papers and stuff them away in my bag. I will join a few hundred other people who will be making the flight with me. I will try not to dwell too much on the ordeal that awaits us; the long cramped hours of a rush through space, defying, almost arrogantly, the gravity that would hold us to the earth below.

Dear Cousin,

Several letters from you awaited me when I returned. I am at a loss to give you an answer to the questions you raise when you ask what it has all meant to me, and where do I go from here. I take it that "by all" you refer to the entire German experience, and not to the circumstances that preceded it. I don't think that anything can be seen in detachment if one is looking for the truth. There are interconnecting strands that must be taken together if one is to form any sort of meaning to any singular event. Nothing exists in isolation.

I believe I told you in one of my earlier letters to you that when I recovered from that illness in my youth, I was determined to live life to the fullest. I suppose you might say that that has been the pattern of my life; the leitmotif so to speak. I have responded to what has been offered, and the German experience was only a part of it. In a way it can be said that I have not betrayed that promise I made on my sick bed. There no doubt have been other betrayals. I live with them, knowing that they are to remain with me, and not to be shared with anyone.

Also, my early letters referred to a journey. I wasn't talking of going from one place to another. I was hinting at the whole inexplicable journey of life that started with being born. It is easy to talk of the choice of free will, but that choice is all but taken from us as we adjust to the orders of society. Only on the edge is it possible to exercise a modicum of free will. And there is a price to pay.

You know, on reflection, I wonder if I really have lived life to the full as I intimated. If I had, why is it that I am now living in my old age. Should I not have kicked the bucket before now? We may well bless or curse our genes.

Visiting the place where my great-grandfather came from was like a strange intrusion into a kind of ghost-like mystery. There are no words to describe the quality of that experience. There was more

than the mere physical fact of being there that has left me more than quietly disturbed. Some segments of my life here in this country are a direct result of his decision to leave his native country and try his luck at the far end of the earth.

There is with me, since my return, a strange ambivalence in respect of his decision. If there is such a condition as genetic memory, then it may explain why it was, when I was in Germany, that I felt that I had come home. How far, and for how long must the human spirit wander before it finds peace? I will never know if my great-grandfather found his.

The attending of the Wolfskehl commemoration of the fortieth anniversary of his death granted me a reacquaintance with the man who had a profound effect on my early life. Again, in a different way, I was revisited by the remembered past. I don't think there is much more I can tell you. Somewhere between the lines of my letters you may be able to arrive at something of the truth. In the meantime, I will take up my life on the island again, and try to rest easy. I don't expect it will be that simple. However, I look forward to the quiet times on my small piece of land where I can watch the seasons pass and mark their passing on a quiet landscape.

And so, Cousin Constance, this marks the end of a journey; a journey that we have shared through our correspondence. In respect of your family history, I will have to leave it to you as to what you include. There is much that I haven't told you. As I mentioned in one of my earlier letters to you, I have been guilty of deliberate omission of certain details. There are times when selective memory is justified. There is a natural reluctance in all of us to share the episodes, the nature of which we are not proud. After all, I don't believe that I have been lying on the analyst's couch. If I had been, that might have revealed a very different story.