

Martin and I lived together for a year... 1972. We had a flat above an op shop on Enmore Rd. The rent was \$15. There was a mattress on the floor, a desk with a chair, bookshelves made of planks supported by bricks. At a Bloomsday party, the bookshelves fell down on the crowd – the bricks didn't seem to do any damage to anyone.

To support himself, Martin wrote book and film reviews which he'd rattle off in a splurge when he absolutely had to. I was a distracted and half-hearted student, worked as a barmaid, but mostly I orbited Martin in a daze.

Martin was brilliant. I was overawed, but thrilled and delighted by every day. Life was full of excitement and interest with Martin at the centre, opening up new unimagined worlds. Compared to him, everyone else was ordinary. And he wasn't just brilliant, he was lovable.

Martin could be condescending, especially if he felt threatened in some way, but he was normally kind and generous in a tentative and nervy way. He always thought highly of friends – he would inflate whatever small virtues one had. He was courteous and rather absurdly chivalric – so unlikely at the time. And he had a sort of innocent sweetness.

In about the middle of the year, Martin received an advance of \$1,000 from his inheritance. Always practical, I extracted enough to pay three months' rent. The rest lasted about a week. Martin bought himself a fabulous Afghan fur lined sheepskin embroidered coat, a long Indian silk scarf, and he bought me a painted dress. Martin liked to describe himself as a popinjay, and in that coat with his hair and scarf flying in the breeze, popinjay was just right. The rest of the money went on a week-long binge with me and whoever else would keep him company.

Less happily, simple things, like banks, paying rent, seeing someone he owed money, even entering a new shop to buy Alpines, left Martin rattled and quivering. He avoided stresses whenever possible, and I guess booze reduced such constant tensions. It was impossible to imagine Martin not drinking, but impossible to imagine it ending well.

Our flat had a large main room, with polished wooden floors. I didn't expect to live with Martin for long, but I wished I could always keep that room. When we parted, I expected the rest of my life to be dull and colourless; keeping the room would have kept a connection with the wonderful year.

Ten years later, Martin stayed over with me in Bangkok where I was living. He was on his way home from some years in Greece. I was working and busy, and unable to spend much time with him. Martin's drinking was way beyond youthful exuberance, and I worried about him, always fuddled or much worse, being out alone. Sadly, it was a relief when he left.

My life turned out to be interesting and full of meaning in ways I didn't anticipate when I was 21. Martin's life should have been fabulous for himself and all who came into contact with him, or read his work. Such a talented and sweet person, but his life was limited and diminished by alcohol.... yet alcohol was so much part of him, probably since childhood, it was impossible to imagine Martin not drinking.