

Weber  
Woman's  
Wrevenge



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Help with hand collation, stapling, folding and mailing, in addition to suggestions and general kibbitzing, by *Eric Lindsay*.

This fanzine is available for contributions, letters of comment, artwork, interesting clippings, uncancelled postage stamps, arranged trades, editorial whim, or A\$2 or equivalent per issue air mail extra). I prefer some sort of personal response.

## The Rubbish Bin

Most of my overseas correspondents will be receiving this issue in the same envelope as #45 (November 1993). Although I produced printing masters and a few copies of #45 in November, I wasn't able to do a full print run. And after about December 1, I'm reluctant to post overseas copies; they tend to disappear into the Christmas mail for months, if not forever. Then I finished a roll of film that had been in the camera since Easter, and realised that I'd be able to do #46 quickly, since I also had lots of leftover book reviews and letters that didn't fit in #45.

In #45 I noted that I was unemployed (which was why I had time to produce the issue) and that "by the time you read this, no doubt I'll be juggling 2 or 3 jobs again." That's exactly what's happened. In late November, someone from IBM rang to ask if I could start a 6-month writing/editing contract on the following Monday, and I agreed to do so. It's a project that I worked on earlier in the year, and one for which I would have liked the opportunity to do more than we had time for then. I'm writing the online help for the OS/2 portion of the software, writing the data administrator's guide for the VM portion of the program (where the database resides), writing the online help for the data administrator's functions, and editing the user's guide, which covers functions on both platforms. I'm really pleased to have the chance to learn more about OS/2 stuff.

As if all that weren't going to keep me busy, on December 21 someone called from the University of Technology, Sydney asking whether I'd be interested in teaching one unit in a graduate diploma course in the first semester (March-June) 1994. I immediately agreed to do this. (I'd known about this potential opportunity for about 6 months, because the regular lecturer is a friend of mine; she's taking study leave, needs a replacement lecturer, and recommended me. But it took that long for the bureaucracy to approach me.) Although there is a course outline and some lecture and tutorial materials available, I need to read the textbook and as many of the "recommended reading" materials as I can, organise my lectures and handouts, prepare any overhead transparencies I might need, and so on... all in my copious spare time. I'm planning to use this as an excuse to learn yet another computer program, PowerPoint for Windows. I'd really like to project my visual aids directly from the computer, rather than making transparencies. The university has the projection equipment (whether it will be available when I need it is, of course, a different question), but will I get organised enough to use it?

As most of you know, 1994 in the Sydney area started off with major fires. More on page 7. — Jean

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## Art & Photography Credits

Sheryl Birkhead, cover; Ian Gunn, 10,11; Robin Johnson, 3 (photo of animal costumes); Sue Peukert, 3 (photo of Roman); Bill Rotsler, 8,9; Jean Weber, all other photos

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Bill Rotsler, 17909 Lull Street, Reseda, CA 91335, USA

## The photo gallery 1: Swancon (Easter 1993, Perth)



Lucy Sussex

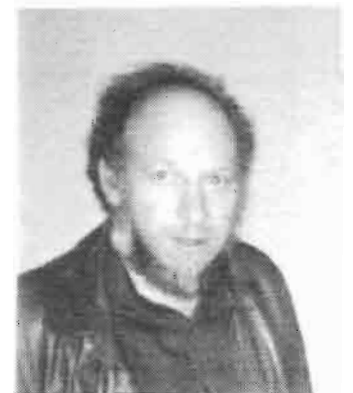
**Above:** Three masquerade costumes. The platypus (now mascot of the Australia in 1999 bid) is in the middle. I don't know who any of these people are, but I believe they are Western Australian fans.

**Below:** Roman Orszanski and me (Jean).



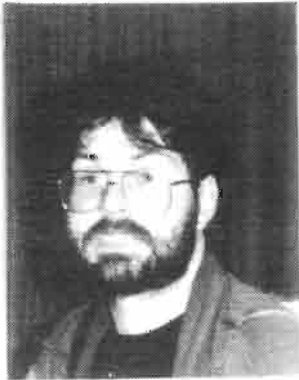
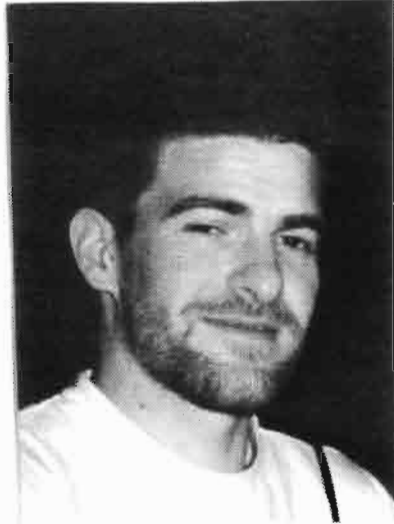
**Above:** The Eidolon editors (Richard Scriven, Jonathan Strahan and Jeremy Byrne) with their Ditmar. I don't know who is whom.

**Right:** Grant Stone

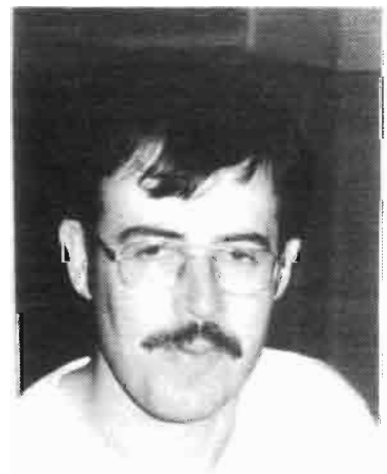
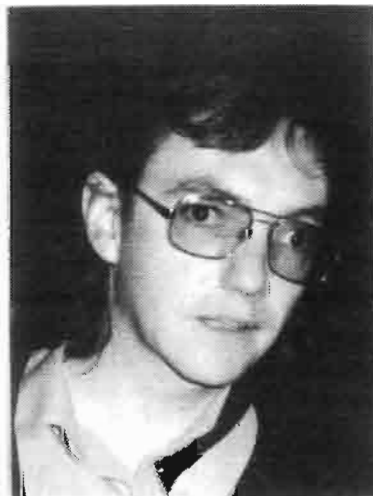


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## The photo gallery 2: Defcon (June 1993, Wellington, NZ)



**Clockwise from top left:**  
Lana Brown, Murray  
MacLachlan, Dan McCarthy,  
Rex Thompson, Tim Jones,  
James Dignan, Linnette Horne,  
Alex Heatley.

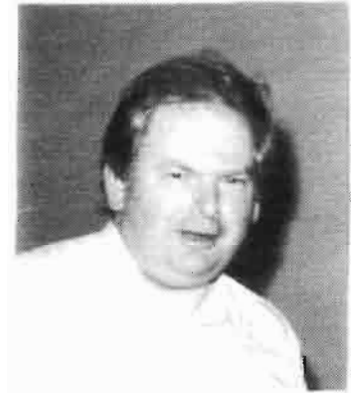


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## The photo gallery 3: Anzapacon (October 1993, Melbourne)



**Clockwise from top left:**  
Alan Stewart; Sally Yeoland &  
John Bangsund; David Grigg;  
Bruce Gillespie; Irwin &  
Wendy Hirsh & son; Michael,  
Mark & Natalie Ortlieb; Cath  
& Natalie Ortlieb.





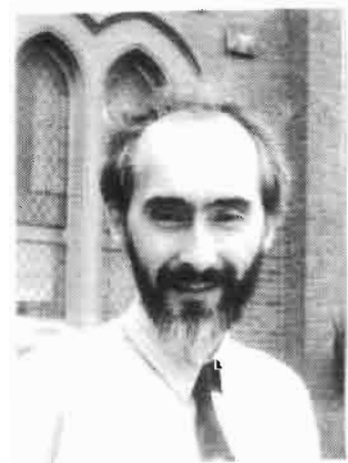
**More Anzapacon:**

**Top:** October mailing collation;

**Middle:** Gary Mason, Justin Ackroyd, ??;

**Bottom left:** Alan & Lesley Bray;

**Below:** John Newman, not at Anzapacon but photographed the day before in Ballarat.





# Fire!

I went out to the UTS campus (not the one Eric teaches at, but one in Lindfield, called the "Kuringgai" campus) to talk with the head of the department on Thursday 6 January. We had a useful chat and I went away with piles of stuff to read and do.

From UTS I drove to IBM, arriving there about 11 am. Soon after, we got the word that there was a major fire in the Marsfield area and that Epping Road was closed due to smoke. I had just driven over that road!

And so it began. There were other major fires in the Sydney area that day, and they only got worse for the next two days (now *there's* an understatement). Eric took the car up to Faulconbridge Thursday night, knowing that if any fires got started there, his house and (even more) his mother's house could be in considerable danger. They were lucky. The big Blue Mountains fire on Saturday missed Faulconbridge and swept through Winmalee, just a few kilometers away. Had the wind gone in a different direction, it could have been a very different story. As it was, Eric says they didn't even get much smoke that

day; it was all blown away from them. (Sunday the wind changed and the smoke came over his way, but the fire didn't.)

(Turns out the project manager on the IBM project I'm working on lives in Winmalee. His house didn't burn, but his backyard did. He has some dramatic photographs, with a gap in the sequence where – as he put it – "I was rather busy with the hose for awhile".)

Saturday I did something I normally never do – I left the radio and/or the television on all day (turned to a news station) and listened to all the bulletins. I was never particularly worried about my house, because it's quite away from any large areas of busy (but then, anything could happen). But I did want to keep an ear on the situation in the Blue Mountains. And, I suppose, there's a bit of voyeur in all of us. Also it's a bit creepy when some of the streets being named are ones where I seriously considered buying a house, just before I decided on this one. One street in particular I remember very well, because I had looked at the beautiful bush setting and thought "there's entirely too

many trees and shrubs here; it could be dangerous".

By Sunday the air was thick with smoke and all clothing, bedding, etc reeked of it. Burnt (but not burning) gum leaves collected in my backyard, and the sky was a weird colour most of the time. (Later a layer of ash covered everything, particularly noticeable on the car.) Later in the week I and lots of other people were complaining of sore eyes (obviously the smoke) and general lethargy (less obviously the smoke pollution). The pollution index was about 250 for 4 days in a row (50 is the highest acceptable level; and no, I don't know what the units are).

Yesterday (15 January) the area got some good rain. Today the sky is almost clear. My neighbourhood is full of people clearing burnable rubbish out of their back yards. I do this every year anyway, but perhaps with less incentive!

## Other news

In other news, I finally signed up with CompuServe, so you can reach me by e-mail:

100241.2123@compuserve.com

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## Letter

Eva Hauser  
Na Cihadle 55  
160 00 Praha 6  
Czech Republic  
24 September 1993

I am not producing a fanzine of my own now, but one of my SF stories appeared recently in a magazine published by the Americans staying in Prague. (Prague seems to be very attractive for young Americans, and thousands of them come here and stay here, as living is cheap for them and they can get work as teachers of English; they have created here their own "subculture".)

I stopped working at the SF magazine *Ikarie* one and a half

years ago, and I started to work as editor of Harlequin Romance – yes, Harlequin enters the new Eastern and Central European markets, and women in our country seem to be completely enthusiastic about the romances!

I like working for Harlequin, as the work is relatively easy and it brings me much more money than any other editor's job available here. But as soon as I was able to fully support myself and my kids, I discovered that I can't live anymore with my husband, and I got divorced two weeks ago! My new boyfriend is Cyril Simsa, who is an SF fan. His parents emigrated from Czechoslovakia in 1950, and he lived in London. But one year ago

he decided to move to Prague and he has a nice job at the Philosophical Faculty of Prague University.

Cyril pushes me into feminism, and so now I am writing book about the differences between the women's role in the Western and postcommunist countries, and I try to explain to Czech people what feminism really is. (The Czech people reject feminism because they think that it is some new totalitarian ideology, forcing people not to recognize any differences between men and women, or they think that it is a product of bored silly man-hating lesbian Western women.)

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## Letters

Pete Presford  
"Rose Cottage"  
3 Tram Lane, Buckley  
Clwyd, North Wales  
18 March 1993

{This was sent on Presford  
Electrical Services invoice  
letterhead. - JHW}

Thank you for sending me  
WWW over the last 18-24 months  
without a LoC. Work has been a  
real bummer in the building trade  
here in the UK. Just to survive has  
been a real tightrope walk, and no  
mood for much else.

I include a couple of articles. I  
would like to hear Jean's comments  
on the longer one.

{The shorter article was titled  
"Refuge opens for battered hus-  
bands", to provide protection for  
fathers and their children. It men-  
tions the problem of male victims  
of domestic violence, who fear they  
will not be believed and/or find it  
difficult to admit, and current  
research to gauge the extent of the  
problem.

{The second article, titled  
"Rape: How feminism betrayed a  
generation of women", is an extract  
from Camille Paglia's book Sex,  
Art and American Culture. A bit  
hard to sum up either the article,  
the book, or my reactions in a few  
words. I think Paglia has some  
good points to make about "date  
rape", as does Naomi Wolf in her  
new book Fire with Fire. Both  
Paglia and Wolf talk about the  
effect on women of the "victim"  
mentality that has been so popular  
in the US and other countries in the  
last decade or so.

{If you suggest that a woman  
has influence over a situation (that  
is, she has some personal power),  
then when the situation turns out  
harmful to the woman, you are  
accused of "blaming the victim", as  
if by suggesting that because she  
could have perhaps made the  
outcome different - then it was her  
fault that the outcome was as it



THAT'S  
A  
LOC  
?

was. However, even if a woman  
may have contributed to a situation  
by her actions, that does not in any  
way absolve anyone else of the  
responsibility for their own actions.

{I make a comparison to, say,  
hitch hiking. Most people know  
that in many parts of the world,  
hitch hiking has an element of  
danger, for both men and women.  
If hitch hikers come to harm,  
people will usually say they should  
have known better than to put  
themselves in danger like that, but  
people will rarely suggest that the  
hitch hiker was "encouraging" the  
attacker to violence - at least not if  
the "victim" is male. And certainly  
most hitch hikers don't come to  
harm, and the more experienced  
ones know how to defuse most  
potentially harmful situations.  
Dealing with a drunken, aggressive  
man on a date isn't fundamentally  
different, except perhaps for the  
fact that he may assume that the  
woman has consented to sex by  
merely agreeing to go out with him.

{The question of whether men  
(particularly young men) can  
control their behavior is another  
matter. In this article, Paglia  
claims that young men basically  
can't control themselves, and when  
feminists insist that men do so,  
rather than suggesting that women  
protect themselves (by, amongst  
other things, avoiding dangerous  
situations), then feminists are  
putting women in danger.

{I think Paglia has mixed up a  
couple of ideas here. I'm dubious

about the proposition that men as a  
group are victims of their raging  
hormones, just as I don't accept the  
idea that women as a group are  
victims of raging hormones (pre-  
menstrual syndrome, for example),  
although no doubt some men and  
some women are.

{However, I do agree with the  
statement: "Every woman must take  
personal responsibility for her  
sexuality... She must be prudent  
and cautious about where she goes  
and with whom. When she makes a  
mistake, she must accept the  
consequences and, through self-  
criticism, resolve never to make  
that mistake again." This is not the  
same thing as feeling guilty, dirty,  
and all that negative stuff. It is  
being powerful and saying, "that  
was a learning experience".

{Note that neither Paglia (in  
this article, anyway) nor I are  
suggesting that all unwanted sexual  
advances, harrassments and even  
rapes can be prevented by the  
woman\*, but we do recognise that  
many can be. Telling women they  
are victims does them a disservice.  
They become afraid, rather than  
careful; they expect others to  
protect them, rather than taking  
charge of situations themselves.  
(\*I do think non-violent date rape  
is really quite different from violent  
rape, group rape, your ex-boy-  
friend grabbing you in the carpark  
or climbing through your window  
and raping you, or a range of other  
situations.) - JHW}



**Brian Earl Brown**  
11675 Beaconfield  
Detroit, MI 48224, USA  
16 November 1993

Bernadette Bosky mentions in her letter academe's growing acceptance of multiple, subjective standards of value and wonders why fandom tends to persist with elitist, absolutist standards. Pardon my snarkiness but that's probably because fandom doesn't live under the "publish or perish" pressures of academia. By devaluing value and admitting to an endless succession of literary critical theories, academia opens the doors to hundreds of articles interpreting and reinterpreting every story ever written. And thus becomes an endless jobs program for professors and teaching assistants.

Sorry, I'm just being cynical. The problem when someone like Joseph starts bleating about standards is the suspicion that they have no more idea of what standards are but are converting their personal likes and dislikes into dictates.

{Regarding mental differences between men and women} I do believe that men and women think differently. Whether this is a biological or cultural phenomenon is harder to say. Reading books like Jared Diamond's *The Third Chimpanzee* fills me with many accounts of animal behaviour that sounds remarkably like that of humans, leading to the suspicion that human behavior is biologically determined... But what I thought was really interesting was an article (that) discussed male and female aggression among small children. Boys, it was noted, tended to be physically aggressive — hitting, pushing, etc, while girls were less physical but, the article noted, girls were just as aggressive as they boys, only their aggression was acted out on a social level. They made and broke off friendships with ruthless abandon, using cliques to define power.

*{Other books can lead one to the suspicion that much of human behaviour is culturally determined. I'm of the bit-of-both school myself. Boys may well be inherently more physically aggressive, but how they express that aggression is probably culturally determined. Then again, perhaps boys and girls are both aggressive, but express it differently. That article you mention supports that theory. (Lots of books note how aggressive females can be, at least in specific situations such as defending their young.) — JHW}*

The question of whether there are biologically determined mental differences between men and women will never be determined because of the fear that the results will be used to oppress one group or the other. Just as no one wants to investigate the origins of the disparity between black and white IQ test results for fear of providing fuel to the racists.

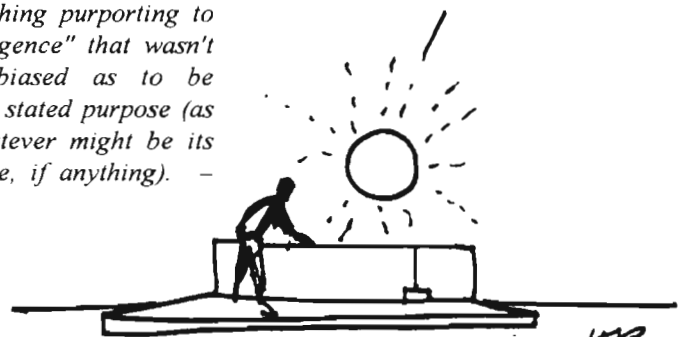
*{Despite the carryings-on of some people opposed to (or afraid of) studying the issues you mention, for the reasons you mention, I think (a) people will keep on investigating these questions, and (b) no definitive proof will emerge, but only because the topic is so complex. I'm sure there are no answers that apply to everyone everywhere all the time; human variability (both biological and cultural) is too great. But it's surely worth studying that variability. And I find it amazing that anyone other than a stirrer (and I don't mean you; I'm referring more to those racists etc you mention) still believes that IQ tests measure anything other than the ability to take IQ tests. I've never seen anything purporting to measure "intelligence" that wasn't so culturally biased as to be worthless for its stated purpose (as opposed to whatever might be its unstated purpose, if anything). — JHW}*

**Dave Locke**  
6828 Alpine Ave #4  
Silverton, OH 45236, USA  
December 1993

*{These comments appeared in Slow Djinn #85, in the December mailing of FLAP. — JHW}*

Almost any cat manual will tell you that a cat in a new home will often initially spend a day to a week hiding under a piece of furniture. That and a few other things in McConchie's story lead me to the conclusion that people should really learn a little bit about an animal before acquiring one. A little less time rereading the *Cat Who* books and a little more reading such things as Desmond Morris's *Catwatching* and the Eckstein's *How to Get Your Cat To Do What You Want* might help. Besides she and the cat being better off for it, we'd be better off for not reading such things as her attributing the cat's behavior to a deprived childhood. Overall, though I enjoy her writing, I think she displays a little too much innocence regarding the farm animals around her, too.

*{Having a grouchy day, are you Dave? I know you don't like cats, and so I can appreciate that you might not enjoy reading cat stories, but haven't you heard of poetic license and never letting the facts get in the way of a good story? Not to mention that Lyn's analysis just might be true. Lyn certainly knows a lot about cats and their behaviour, having lived with quite a few of the species over the years. And she also knows rather more about farm animals than her tales might suggest. Her "innocence" regarding them obviously sells, as witness the book of her farming tales. — JHW}*



**Nicki Lynch**  
PO Box 1350  
Germantown, MD 20875, USA  
December 1993

*{These comments appeared in Chuck-a-Luck #4, in the December mailing of FLAP. - JHW}*

I enjoyed Lyn's farm essay. I spent a number of formative years on my grandparents' farm and things haven't changed in farm life much in all those years. The only question I have is why isn't Lyn's book in her name?

*{Ah, but Elizabeth Underwood is Lyn's name - her birth name. She was adopted out as an infant and named Lyn McConchie. When she was reunited with her birth mother some years ago, she learned her birth name, which she uses on her non-s/f/w writings. - JHW}*

**Dick Lynch**  
PO Box 1350  
Germantown, MD 20875, USA  
December 1993

*{These comments appeared in Funnier than Siskel, Thinner than Ebert, in the December mailing of FLAP. - JHW}*

The Australia in 1999 ... bid got off to a very good start at the San Francisco worldcon - over 600 presupporting memberships! The only major expected competition for 1999, from Seattle, was impressed enough to change their bid to the 2002 worldcon.

**Arthur Hlavaty**  
206 Valentine Street  
Yonkers, NY 10704-1814, USA  
December 1993

*{These comments appeared in If Salted, Salt Added #50, in the December mailing of FLAP. - JHW}*

Harry Andruschak's loc: In Narcotics Anonymous, as I understand it, we consider ourselves "recovering", rather than "recovered" addicts. If we were "recovered," that would mean that we didn't have to do anything more about staying away from drugs. This does not mean that we refuse

to accept the consequences of our actions; we accept that we are accountable for what we have done (including things caused by the disease of addiction) and are responsible for our continued recovery and good behavior.

**Jeanne Mealy**  
4157 Lyndale Ave S  
Minneapolis, MN 55409, USA  
5 January 1994

{Re Bernie Klassen's article on garbage in #42} I keep dreaming about people using the Internet or somesuch communication method to let others know what stuff is available - "Hey, I just moved and have a ton of empty cardboard boxes perfect for your move. Just come and get them."

{Re fan funds} I half-seriously thought of going for DUFF but realized I don't want to do the administrative/fund-raising stuff and I'm leery of having to be "on" so much. Yeah, I'm a shy retiring fan (except with friends). A trip report would be guaranteed, but I don't think that quite enough these days.

*{You've touched on a topic I think many people don't consider when nominating, standing, or voting for fan funds: the winner needs to raise at least enough money to pay back the fund for their trip, keep good records, and handle the ballots and vote-*

*counting for the next contest. Some people aren't good at that, even though they might make excellent "ambassadors of good will" while on their trip. That's a major reason why I still look upon fan funds as a way of "rewarding" people who deserve recognition: in that context, the supporters of a winner should feel it's as much (if not more) their responsibility to see that the fund is repaid (and the administrative work is done), rather than expecting the winner to handle it. Such an attitude would also take care of situations where life, illness, or even death befall the winner before their obligations are fulfilled.*

*{Mind you, there's still the trip report, which may not be "enough" as you say, but is too often not done at all. One's supporters can also help with that, although some winners don't take advantage of offers made to them. - JHW}*

Oooh, can I sympathise with Sue Peukert about mess. John continues to fight a battle with his packrat habits. Me too, but I deal with mine better... I'm going to resist chiming in with my horror stories, but wait until you hear this: John's mother died in October 1992, leaving not one but TWO messy houses in St Paul that we need to clean up. Guess where he learned his packrat tendencies?



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## Books

Notes by Jean Weber

### Australian authors

First up, a collection of books by Australian authors. If you want to find out what's happening in Australian science fiction and fantasy, try some of these. It's not a complete list, but it will get you started. You could also subscribe to one of the quarterly magazines, *Eidolon* and *Aurealis*. Some addresses:

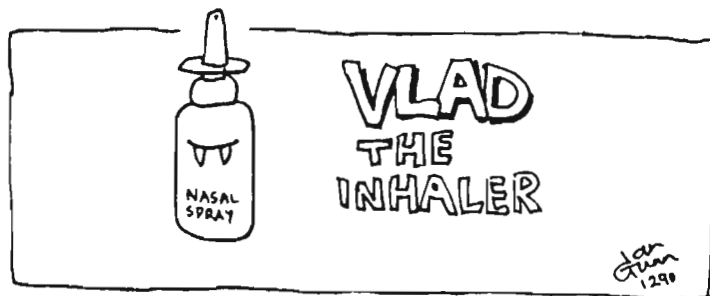
- Aphelion, P.O. Box 619, North Adelaide, SA 5006, Australia
- Aurealis, Chimaera Publications, P.O. Box 538, Mt. Waverley, Vic 3149, Australia
- Eidolon, P.O. Box 225, North Perth, WA 6006, Australia

(If all else fails in obtaining Australian publications, or if you want to make your shopping easier, contact Justin Ackroyd at Slow Glass Books, GPO Box 2708X, Melbourne, Vic 3001, Australia.)

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### George Turner, *Brain Child*, William Morrow, 1991

An impressive book. Turner sets his story in the near future, where some scientists have illegally experimented with cloning and enhancing humans. The resulting children are far superior to ordinary humans in some ways, and they know it. But why did some commit suicide? What, if anything, are the others plotting? Are all of the supposedly deceased ones actually dead? This story combines some psychology, mystery and drama to challenge some of our beliefs about the morality of tinkering with people, either socially or biologically. We also get some strong glimpses into the possible realities of the future, at both ends of the rich/powerful — poor/powerless spectrum. One can well be left wondering which is worse: going along the way we are, or tinkering. This sort of wondering is, I think, good for all of us to engage in, to



remind ourselves that there are no easy answers, or at least no easy answers that satisfy us.

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### Sean McMullen, *Call to the Edge*, Aphelion, 1992

A collection of short stories, only some of which have been published elsewhere. Readers of *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* may recall 'The Colours of the Masters' (March 1988) and 'While the Gate is Open' (February 1990). Others have appeared in *Eidolon*, *Aurealis*, and *Omega Science Digest*. All well-crafted, readable, enjoyable and thought-provoking. Cover by Nick Stathopoulos.

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### Terry Dowling, *Blue Tyson* (1992) and *Twilight Beach* (1993), Aphelion

Short stories set in the world of Tom Tyson and his sand-ship *Rhynosseros* (the name of the first collection in this series), in a far-future Australia. Not all the stories involve Tom, but each contributes to an overall slowly-growing understanding of Dowling's vision. Some answers to the mysteries, hinted at in the early *Rhynosseros* stories, are beginning to be revealed in the latest collection. Covers by Nick Stathopoulos.

When I first started reading Dowling's *Rhynosseros* stories, I found them hard to get into; I was too used to writers who explain everything (presumably to make sure the reader gets it). Dowling makes you do your share of the work, and it's well worth the effort. (In interviews, he says he writes for people who *want* to think about what they're reading.) I approve!

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### Rosaleen Love, *Evolution Annie and Other Stories*, The Women's Press, 1993

A collection of bizarre stories with a feminist perspective, some of which have appeared in publications like *Eidolon* and *Aurealis*. Several, including the longest ('The Daughters of Darius') remind me of some of my dreams: the kind where you go a short distance and find yourself somewhere entirely different, and the connection between the two (places? events? states of mind?) is rather tenuous at best. The title story, which first appeared in Dale Spender (ed.) *Heroines*, Penguin, 1991, is a hilarious look at human evolution from a rather different point of view than the prevailing anthropological ones. Not quite serious, but thought-provoking nonetheless. As are all the others in this volume.

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### Gabrielle Lord, *Salt*, McPhee Gribble, 1990

This book was not marketed as science fiction, but it is one of those if-this-goes-on near-future horror tales of life. It is set in Sydney and its environs in 2075. Central Sydney is a walled city, attempting to keep out the coming social and ecological catastrophe. Salt levels are rising, the ozone layer is ravaged, and daily temperatures reach 57 degrees C. Criminals are banished to an old prison complex to the west.

The main characters become aware of the corruption within the city and flee to the countryside, despite its real and presumed dangers. There they find many things they didn't expect, as well as more corruption, death, and madness.

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**Greg Egan, Quarantine, Legend, 1992**

Another late-21st-century book. To quote from the back cover, '...a time when bioengineering means that people can modify their minds in any way they wish; an era also shaped by information systems so vast that security, in any form, can easily be breached. ... And for 33 years, humanity has lived with the religious cults and terrorism spawned by fear of the unknown. One night the stars went out, everything disappeared from the sky. 'The Bubble' ... has isolated the solar system. Humanity has been cut off. Quarantined.'

I found this a chillingly believable book, with plenty of action and suspense as well as ethical issues to consider.

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**Damien Broderick, The Dark Between the Stars (Mandarin Australia, 1991) and The Sea's Furthest End (Aphelion, 1993)**

*Dark* is a collection of ten of Broderick's previously-published work, ranging from 1964 to 1988, each with an author's foreword. Hard to generalise about these, but I enjoyed them.

*End* is an amusing variation on the theme of 'you create your own reality'. Several interwoven stories are told in alternating chapters. Just how interwoven the stories are doesn't become completely clear until the end, but the reader has plenty of suspicions about what's 'really' going on. (But then again, what is reality, anyway?) Some of you reading this fanzine might recall my enthusiasm (not always entirely serious) for this theme.

**Other authors**

Discerning readers may wonder why my notes last issue on Carol Serverence's books came at the end of a section labelled 'Men write good stuff too'. Simply put, I goofed. Carol's books should have come just before that section, in the notes on 'New and interesting women writers'. Apologies to Carol.

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**Stephen Donaldson, The Gap Into Power: A Dark and Hungry God Arises, Fontana, 1992**

Yet another long, involved psychological study set against human corruption, alien encounters. If you like Donaldson (I do), you'll probably find this one interesting. It has more action than the earlier gap books, too.

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**Richard Grant, Through the Heart, Bantam, 1991**

A strange, often gruesome fantasy; 'a powerful and haunting trek through the uncharted realms of mind and spirit...' 'A monstrous vehicle called the Oasis moves inexorably across the wasteland. A human hive that symbolizes sanctuary... Kern cannot resist questioning the complex systems that govern life and death in this desolate world. And the answers are more shocking than he ever imagined.' The other Grant books I've read, *Rumors of Spring* and *Views from the Oldest House*, were rather bizarre and surreal; this one is only slightly less so.

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**James Morrow, City of Truth, Century, 1990**

What's like to live in a place where every adult is incapable of telling anything except the literal truth? Tedious, suggests this book. (Also fairly amusing for the reader.) The main character, driven to desperation by the impending death of his son (whom he doesn't want to find out the truth so the boy can enjoy life as much as possible in the short time he has left) finds the (literal) underground, the subversives who have broken their conditioning.

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**Michael Reaves, Street Magic, Tor, 1991**

A short, delightful fantasy. 'Danny was different from the other San Francisco street kids. Danny believed in Magic... Then one foggy night ... he came face to face with True Magic. He found a girl,

... a Scatterling: one of the elven-kind left trapped in the mortal realms when the Queen of Fairie locked the gates of her land to all but the Highest Born... he could open a gateway to the Fair Realm, if only she could find the key to unlock his memory and his power.'

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**Charles Sheffield, Brother to Dragons, Baen, 1992**

Job is born to an addict mother in a charity hospital ward, and raised in a orphanage from which he eventually escapes into a harsh urban world where he has no official identity. After surviving for some years as a street kid, he is eventually caught and sent to prison, which is a toxic and nuclear disposal installation. Here he discovers more hope than he could ever imagine, and finds that he can indeed make a difference.

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**Dan Simmons, Children of the Night (Headline Feature, 1992) and The Hollow Man (Bantam, 1992)**

*Children* is a most impressive book with lots of action and a supposedly 'scientific' explanation for vampirism. Some of the sequences of events seemed rather improbable to me, but that didn't interfere with my enjoyment of the story.

*Hollow Man*, on the other hand, I could not get into at all. Others have praised this book, and I could appreciate what the author was doing, but I couldn't sustain much interest. (It has to do with telepathy, and not being able to 'turn off' one's ability to read the emotions and minds of others; also with the workings of the mind of a severely retarded person.)

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**Brian Stableford, The Empire of Fear, Pan, 1988 and The Werewolves of London, Pan, 1990**

*Empire* is a particularly good vampire book, contrasting the habits, abilities, attitudes and bio-chemistry of the vampires of Africa and those of Europe, in the 17th

century. Not at all your standard 'horror' vampire novel. *Werewolves* is also different, but it was entirely too full of religious angst for my taste; I got bored in the middle and didn't finish reading it.

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**Neal Stephenson, *Snow Crash*, Bantam, 1992**

A fast-paced, bizarre, surreal, often hilarious, often serious look at a possible future America, combining 'virtual reality, Sumerian myth, and just about everything in between' (according to the cover blurb). Cyberpunk without the angst. My only quibble was that the author's attempts to drop great swags of history and myth into the story didn't quite work; I got bored in the middle of most of them. Other than that, I thoroughly enjoyed and was most impressed by this book.

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**Susanna J. Sturgis (ed), *Tales of Magic Realism by Women*, The Crossing Press, 1991**

A collection of stories, including one by Australia's Lucy Sussex (The man hanged upside down). I find magic realism to be weird, surreal stuff, which I usually enjoy, and this book is no exception.

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**John Varley, *Steel Beach*, Ace, 1992**

I was disappointed to discover that this 'novel' is actually a series of short stories, most of which I'd already read. The good news is that I like all the stories very much and was happy to have a collection of them, but I was rather looking forward to some *new* writings from one of my favorite authors.

These stories take place on the moon, after the alien invasion of Earth, and incorporate such visions as the frequent sex-change (which is no big deal, because so many people do it, but it does mean some interesting changes in people's attitudes towards male-female stereotyping); the disneyland, a dome devoted to recreating a particular time and place in Earth's

history, such as Texas in the 19th century; greatly lengthened lifespans and dramatic recuperative and regenerative abilities; and virtual reality through direct interface with the main computer.

And speaking of that computer – it seems to have a problem. The thread that binds these stories together is the unfolding of that problem and the efforts of various people to do something about it.

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**Joan D. Vinge, *The Summer Queen*, Warner (Questar), 1991**

Although this is a sequel to *The Snow Queen* (and *World's End*), I couldn't bear to put it in the 'sequels' section of these reviews. It's too good, and stands too well on its own. Nor can I summarize it briefly. All I can say is that Vinge deftly combines both sweeping issues and the details of her characters' lives in a most convincing manner.

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**Robert Charles Wilson, *A Bridge of Years*, Bantam, 1991**

'Tom Winter thought the secluded cottage in the pine woods of the Pacific Northwest would be the perfect refuge... But Tom soon discovers that his safe haven is the portal of a tunnel through time (to) New York City, 1962. Tom's journey back through time offers renewed hope in the form of a new life, a new love, and the chance to start life over in a simpler, safer world. But he finds that the time tunnel holds a danger far greater than anything he left behind: a human killing machine escaped from the bleak and brutal future.' A most impressive book.

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**Series and spinoffs**

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**Arthur C Clarke and Gentry Lee, *The Garden of Rama*, Bantam, 1992**

Sequel to *Rendezvous with Rama* and *Rama II*. To be concluded with *Rama Revealed*.

Clarke's books co-authored with Lee have more depth in their

characterisations than I remember from other Clarke novels: I like the combination. I continue to find the Rama series fascinating, and they are *not* repetitious.

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**C.J. Cherryh, *Hellburner*, Warner (Questar), 1992**

Continues the story of Paul Dekker, begun in *Heavy Time*, but mostly follows another character, Ben Pollard, who finds himself and Dekker in the center of a lethal mystery, while military, political, and corporate rivals on two worlds conspire to use them in a war against the breakaway human worlds. Set in the same universe as *Downbelow Station*, *Merchanter's Luck*, *Cyteen*, and others.

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**C.J. Cherryh, *Chanur's Legacy*, Warner (Questar), 1992**

Fifth in the *Chanur* series. Pyanfar Chanur's niece Hilfy has her own ship and is attempting to run her own life, but other people keep assuming that she's answering to Py. She gets drawn into a complex intrigue involving several alien species. Her situation is not helped by the presence of a young male hani (her own species) on her ship, because everybody knows how irrational and violent male hani are.

Cherryh always impresses me with the way she can tell a fast-paced, complex adventure story and also explore important social issues - in this case the question of gender-based behavior. How much of male hani behavior is genetic and how much is conditioning, or just living up to expectations (the self-fulfilling prophecy syndrome)?

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**Kate Elliott, *His Conquering Sword* (Book 2 of *The Sword of Heaven*), Daw, 1993**

I described the first two books of this series in *Wrevenge* 44. The action continues, mainly on the planet Rhui, where the nomadic jaran, under the leadership of Ilya Bakktii, are busy conquering the more settled peoples; the Earth

people are getting ever more involved with the locals; just about everybody find everybody else's cultural mores either 'barbaric' or incomprehensible; and Charles Soerensen continues his plans to liberate humankind from the Chapalii. The complicated plot continues to be well developed and believable, and the author continues to combine some very pointed commentary on human relationships with an intriguing tale of politics and strategy. A particularly nice touch is the use of a theatre company from Earth, which is touring Rhui, adapting classic plays (such as Shakespeare) to the local conditions.

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**Roger Zelazny, Prince of Chaos, Avon, 1991**

The final (??) book in Zelazny's Amber novels. This is one of those series that I enjoy immensely despite the repetitiveness of much of the action, but it wouldn't appeal to everyone.

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**Melissa C Michaels, Floater Factor, Tor, 1988**

A fast-paced adventure-mystery story without a lot of depth. Apparently the latest in a series: I haven't read any of the others (*First Battle. Last War. Pirate Prince. Skirmish*). An enjoyable read; I'll probably look for the others. 'Hot shot shuttle pilot, mercenary to the stars, world saver, and now protector of infants. Someone is dumping very special babies on Skyrider and someone else is determined to kill her and the babies. In a fight that spans several planets, Skyrider seeks the source

of these mysterious children. All queries lead to two diametrically opposed political groups, potentially dangerous fanatics... Before the forces of humanity regroup for yet another devastating war, Skyrider must unravel the mystery...'

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**Anne McCaffrey, Crystal Line, Bantam, 1992**

Sequel to *Crystal Singer* and *Killashandra*. As with many of the McCaffrey's series, the action gets a bit repetitious although the story is well enough told. In some cases, I like 'more of the same' from my favourite authors, but this isn't one of those cases. I'd probably have enjoyed it more if I hadn't read the first two books.

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**Elizabeth Moon, Surrender None: The Legacy of Gird, 1990; Liar's Oath, 1992; both Baen**

Set in the world of Paksennarrion (of the series *Sheepfarmer's Daughter*). Moon writes good solid action with an underlay of strong characterisation and psychology (her warriors have doubts, about both themselves and what they are doing).

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**Elizabeth Ann Scarborough, Last Refuge, Bantam, 1992**

Sequel to *Nothing Sacred*. 'The valley of Shambala, high in the mountains of Tibet, is a magical paradise.' It has survived a nuclear war that has apparently devastated much if not all of the rest of the world. 'Yet in this haven of peace and happiness, a mysterious illness is spreading. In search of a cure,

the young woman Chime courageously ventures outside the valley.'

Scarborough is best known for her series of hilarious books sending up various favourite fantasy themes. Two of her books (*The Healer's War* and *Nothing Sacred*) have, however, been rather more serious. This book startled me by taking its serious theme and running with it in a very non-serious way. The various ghosts, bad guys, yetis, and ordinary people all have a strong streak of smart-assery that characterises the author's other books. I quite liked the combination.

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**Tanya Huff, Blood Pact, Daw, 1993.**

This is the fourth book in a series which I have only just discovered (after several people encouraged me to try Huff's works). The other books are titled *Blood Price, Blood Trail* and *Blood Lines*.

This is a thoroughly delightful book with some characters with serious problems. Apparently the whole series has been taking standard pulp 'horror' themes and adapting them to a modern detective novel setting. The main characters are a female private investigator and a male vampire whom she has befriended and who helps her out occasionally. They have a very practical approach to dealing with major offenders against the public good, especially when those offenders are not always people that the authorities are likely to believe actually exist. In this volume, we have some scientists who are essentially duplicating Frankenstein's work.

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