



Issue The Eighth, November, 1999.

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Poet Laureate \$100.00 Millenium Competition - the winner is----

See 1st January issue of PixelPapers 9. (I'll try to raise the first edition on Christmas Eve.)

Editorial

Pondering about the future of the artform of writing is a recurrent theme in this

magazine and others devoted to writers and writing, as new technologies impinge. Submission of work by e-mail, or File Transfer Protocol (FTP), or disk, is increasingly common. Even letters to the editor may be submitted electronically.

As editors become computer literate and computer linked, they doubtless become aware of the many advantages of electronic processing.

Manuscripts may be read in a comfortable type size and font, spell-checked, amended, displayed, finally formatted and readily sent on to a sub-editor or department. The writer may be advised of the status of the work without the bother of addressing an envelope and preparing a letter, simply by keying "reply to message", typing a short note and pressing the "send" button. (It is a pity that few seem to take the trouble to do this, whereas in the days of formal letters and snail mail, it was a common, if belated, practice.)

In spite of Jose Borghino's optimism about the future of the novel (See PP4), as Sherry-Anne Jacobs has shown in her article in PP7, e-publishing is becoming common, a trend which may grow if computer/television hybrid hardware develops and people are able to read text from the comfort of an armchair.

The future of newspapers and magazines in hard copy is likely to be limited, not only because of the hybrids, but also because ordinary computer technology is advancing in speed, with desktop models running up to 500 Mhz with a massive increase in both RAM and ROM. This avoids the drawbacks inherent in maddening delays in waiting for text and pictures to appear. When electronic pages can be turned as fast as paper pages, the newspaper as we know it, will disappear. Already, News Ltd newspapers may be accessed on the internet for digests of news stories, together with comprehensive lists of all their classified advertisements, Australia wide.

The short story seems to be disappearing from print, almost as if script development for television is taking over, but there are stories read on radio. Perhaps there will be a niche found for story telling on television, as voice over appropriate images, for a much cheaper format than dramatisation, probably on the fringe channels.

Poetry in Australia has been kept alive on the teats of the Australia Council's Literature fund, through the various literary journals which have catered for a narrow readership. There is so little published in the public domain, that I was recently asked, at a forum of U3A, whether it was still being written! My answer was to speculate that we may be looking in the wrong places, and the poetry of our times was perhaps being presented in pubs, often as the lyrics of popular songs, including the execrable rap, and bush poetry, or on screen in advertising copy. There does seem to be disenchantment with the fashionable mode of vertically written sentences.

I suspect that writing scripts for film and television has long outstripped writing for the theatre. It seems that new stage plays re rarely performed.

It is easy to be pessimistic, but comforting to think that perhaps there are some exciting developments in train, with perhaps the completely new literary artform that experimental writers have been groping for, waiting to be born!

If I may be forgiven for bragging, provided that a bookseller comes through with the money for five more books sold, my first self-published book at last has moved into nominal profit. This vindicates not only my judgment, but also that of Penguin and Fremantle Arts Centre Press, who rejected the MS in encouraging and kindly terms. (My special thanks to Judith Rodriguez.) There is no way that they could have turned a profit on it because they would have had to pay for typesetting and other services that I performed. At the hazard of losing my modest return from previously published poems, all I have gained is the credit for a book that has received moderate critical review. It would not otherwise have seen the light of day.

I have the impression that mainstream publishers are not keen on publishing poetry because it usually does not pay, but like the prestige of having the occasional work of a major poet in their lists.

I suspect, too, that partner publishing, with poets bearing some of the costs and risks, is becoming a popular mode.

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Poetry - Virgin Verse and Verse From the Pros

A Question

It is a question:
Who rides the waves
-- last violence of distant, forgotten storms --
with a skill that should astound even gods
(who sadly exist not)
and with the supple genius of flesh
that comes only from
the one-thousand fine fingers
of a heart without bones?

Answer: The young surfers?
grandiose infants of the spraying wind,

somehow yet to be born? . . .

Or, the silent watchers on the beach
-- black glasses like blindfolds --
dreaming of past oceans;
and who were young once too,
and believed as well
(perhaps rightly)
that they rode their own,
once in a lifetime
breaking,
curvatures of water?

Patrick West

Poverty Bush

The desert cries out for love
and no shrub answers
with more heart to return it

Than this vast sisterhood
is far from the name
and seeming of poverty.

Poverty of mind rather
was theirs who crammed mouths
on the pastoral reaches

and who when the ground feed died
so named the shrub, it
being no browser's standby.

But someone came, someone saw
it lacquer its leaves
against the wind's rainless lips,

scatter its seeds and thrust roots
to the rust-red sand,
saw how it decored itself

in wool, a ripple of scales,
a mantle of hair,
or posed sepals as petals,

its means, and its miracles,
for coming to terms
with skies and their gaze of stone.

Someone came, The name blossomed,
'Eremophila,'
he said, 'or Desert Loving.'

Alec Choate
FROM 'MIND IN NEED OF A DESERT'

Kimberley Rainforest.

Here, near noon, it is twilight.
Past the jungle-veiled entrance
the chasm's walls hem us in,

sheer, high, not fifty paces
apart, the sky they channel
meshed lightly with leaves and boughs

of the trees whose naked roots
we step through, along with rocks,
a small creek, and fetid earth.

Keep looking upward, we say,
give hearts to the glad morning
of the Little Wood-Swallows

and other birds as they stunt
in an out of the cliff tops,
wings briefly dipping the shade

but more often ascending
to a sun we cannot see
and beading the sky with gold.

The twilight is pre-human,
green and weird, It smothers us
closer than creepers and ferns.

Only slowly, step by step,
do we understand our way
is one of retreat through time,

and that this fragile remnant
of rainforest is calling
us back to Gondwanaland.

Alec Choate
From 'MIND IN NEED OF A DESERT'

Portrait in Oils

My daughter lowers her brush
and my portrait is breathing.
It is not the face I see in a mirror,
the stranger's face with the eyes
uneasily searching mine,
the stranger I cannot reach,
the anonymous
and extrinsic man.

After many sittings
she has caught on her canvas
what my art-wise bones
can cry to as true.
How she ever unriddled
the masks that my moods put on,
masks I was unaware of
mostly, I admit
I shall never know,
and how she dispersed those masks
to reveal my self's image
is beyond asking.
I am without words
to salute a skill
which has given light to what
I thought was beyond the light.

What I also see
is how she has slipped
herself in the finished work.
How, without giving it thought,
she could not remain
for long outside me.
A call from our blood's concord
and our shared art sense? If so
her fine touch doubles,
firstly through this, then
through those free running
characteristics of style,
those chance signatures
springing up almost
unseen, wayside, surprising
seedlings that artists implant
when their breathing is velvet.

Alec Choate
From 'ASHES TO WATER.'

People Lining A Jetty

They colour the length of the jetty
with neat slacks and dresses
or casual T-shirt and shorts,
swimsuits and shouldered towels,
people all ages but young in their sunlight,
and with their ferment of words
rippling the play of the beach wash,
they are looking as one downstream
to the bend in the river
where the tall and branch-interforking trees
screen off the breadth of the tidal shallows.
They have waited all morning.
Someone or something is due.
The swimmer who heels off all challenge,
the leading sculler, the swiftest windsurfer?
A like coil of tension could not be tighter
in a people waiting
the re-birth of a river god.

A stone-pitched embankment
ramparts the curve of the opposite shore,
yachts are moored, a thicket of masts,
and, above them, a mirage-gauzed
hillslope of trees and houses.
There is drowsiness, a charm of remoteness,
but should the waiting eyes waver
towards it, they would at one notice
a contrast such as an artist's brush
frets to capture, and how it heightens
the bold of the moment.

Apart, on a post not far from the jetty's end,
and above the offhand signature
of its scribbled reflection,
a cormorant looks upstream.

Alec Choate
FROM 'MIND IN NEED OF A DESERT'

Surfer As Toreador

A wave rears horned peaks
and charges the shore,
the surfer rises to challenge,
turtillian carapace transforms
from clumsy flippered thing

to flying platform for nimble feet,
deftly twisting, flaunting threat,
winding a tracery of defiance
across the face, balance a miracle,
with subtle feints and veroniques
daring with strength and cunning,
until the wounded wave falls to froth
and triumphant surfer, turtillian again
paddles seaward, to fight anew.

Walter Vivian
(FROM *SAPPHO'S DELIGHT*, PIXELPRESS 1999.)

Summer

A young girl runs,
glissading white sands
along the morning beach,
teasing her reflection,
so lightly, gracefully
charming, that
every move is a dance,
joying at sea and sky,
celebrating beauty,
gladdening the day.

Walter Vivian
(FROM *SAPPHO'S DELIGHT*, PIXELPRESS 1999.)

Only the essentials

packs
full stops, paragraph indents
into back-pack
a couple of colons for the road
singing 'comes a time'
with that Neil Young twang
happy
as sunshine on steaming pickets
steps away
weatherboards wheezing.

off the platform
doss-house foyer
waits
whispers like communion

first floor window onto roadworks
no hot water
chipboard mattress
cheap
unpacks
sits
arranging commas on cold linoleum.

Kevin Gillam

Peak-hour

honk and
throb through
silver veins

wipers blurring
blood-nosed
road rage

whiff of
freeways and
drive-thrus
and break-down
trucks and
take-aways and
fries with that?

Kevin Gillam

The Poet You Were (for Chao Guo Hui)

There's a certain curve
you can make to your
garden's edge, your lawn.

Trim it, inscribe it
with your red brick rows
and it's your signature!

And it's a question mark
a red querying slash.
That's where he came in.

In the morning light
early he took a chair

a frail-seeming poet, to make

of himself the living dot
beyond the curve. And birds
sang in the trees, ants walked

in the grass, on the path,
and bees came peering
in the flowers like poets.

Now the dot, the man
is gone. The question
can't be asked. Poet?

Glen Phillips
February 21, 1999 Eccl.3:19

Today

(in the Scottish highlands, May 1998)

The mist on the hills today
does not resemble the haze
folded over Jakarta.
The fires in the Chinese enclave
have no relation to the clouds
drifting up from Inverness.
Who can say why the idea
of food riots comes in unwelcomed
to a kitchen in Teavarran ?
The frosted glass outside my window
would not interest a masked looter
and the newspaper folded to hold hot chips
has smeared an inky oil over stories
of rape in Indonesia. I find how hard it is
to wash black ink from fingers later.
A family fleeing a burning home
walks up a tussocked slope
toward the sounds of laughter coming
from a Scottish farmhouse only because
my pen pushes their presence
to the surface of this page.

Shen

Mayne Island

The sea grey and still,
as the wind ceased the heron waited
his dark eye ready for the silver flash
I watched the swift ending
from where the dark log sheltered me

I began to move, clamboring over ancient rocks
and twisted timbers
white bones bleached by summer sun
and winter tide. Ropes of dank weed
writhed on sand, and tracks
of some small animal I didn't not know
ran to darkened holes.

No sun
no cloud
All those once live pieces lay
leaving no shadow
nor did I as I moved.
Even the tide retreated
And I, alien
moving out of time
and space

I marked the place
and left

Frances Arnett Sbrocchi

Red Blossoms

Timor
the mad singer
laughed
while on the streets
the dead
lay silent
and all the flowers there
were
everlastings

Frances Arnett Sbrocchi

Taster's Report, Red

It's the wine for a dinner party
or to boost an executive lunch.
It's big , it's bold and it's hearty;
you might say it's the best of the bunch.
It's a blend of Cabernet and Hermitage
with Grenache and some Pinot Noir,
the pick of the crop of the vineyards
on the South side of Chateau Loire.
The color's as red as a stop-light
and as deep as the Mariana trench
with a bouquet of licorice and vegemite
and a nose that reminds us of french.
The palate's ripe plum and dark cherry,
black pepper, cigar box and spice;
lots of tannin and oak and it's very
good value in spite of the price.
It's well crafted and structured and complex
and your guests will be thrilled and enchanted.
(In several more years it has prospects,
if chambréd and carefully decanted.)

Jim Cornish

Wine-taster's Report, White

A special cuvée to be savored;
it's big and intensely flavored
with a bouquet of melon and lemon
and hints of peach and persimmon.
There's a subtle suggestion of pine
like you'll find in Old Empire Rhine
and a soupcon of mint on the palate
redolent of grass when you smell it,
with overtones of sarsaparilla,
gooseberry, kiwi fruit and vanilla.

The aroma is clean on the nose,
slightly spritzig and fresh and it shows
some infusion of limousin oak
that remind you of hickory smoke.
The color's a rich apple green
or meadow yellow plus aquamarine.
It has years of cellaring potential
and serving it chilled is essential:
we recommend that you try it
if you can afford to buy it.

Jim Cornish

Wine-taster's Report, 4 litre cask

This isn't the worst of the cask wines,
(some call it wine in a box.)
not so much like the usual bulk lines,
aromatic as gymnasium socks.
If it's flavor you want you will get it,
it has character and body as well;
not the bouquet of bottled wine yet it
is more like a nose than a smell.
It's a workmanlike juice of the berry,
the taste of the grapeskins comes through
reminiscent of cheap port or sherry
but not nearly as bad as a few.
It's good for a weekend of quaffing
or a party with friends on a Sunday:
with a couple of casks you'll be laughing
if you don't have to go to work Monday.
If you're not into vintage or bouquet,
it's not a bad drop on the whole
and pricewise you'll find that it's okay
if you're trying to survive on the dole.

Jim Cornish

Virgin Verse - Words and Music

Kate Lucas

If the lyricist dies will the musician keep playing,
Or will the spark be lost like a picture storybook left only with the
illustrations
Can the singer still sing so leggiro that the melody lingers in our hearts
Can the notes still crash like Vivaldi's winter if we have only known music
to explain its cause.

If the musician dies will the lyricist keep writing,
Or will he be left with futile poetry, with remnants of a four bar rhyming
pattern
An angel with wondrous secrets to share, but no voice to sing her tune
A piece of magic waiting to be discovered, but no magician to show the
world.

Can one divine incarnation of beauty function without the other, when our
ears are so unforgiving that they refuse to hear silence.

Kate Lucas

Inside Belongs to Me

Unshed tears fill my eyes and threaten to overflow
I fight so hard to hold them back, and try not to let them show
Inside this private world of mine, I'm safe, secure and free!

Do what you like with my outer self, but inside belongs to me!!

All through my life I've stumbled, fallen, and wished that I was dead,
But I never gave up on myself oh no, I moved on with my life instead.
What I thought was love, was nothing more, than someone's attempt to control
My mind, my heart, my body, my life, But, they`ll never get my soul!!!
My private thoughts are mine to keep, nothing can take them you see
Do what you like with my outer self, but inside belongs to me!!!

The abuse I have suffered, my dreams that were shattered,
Lay smouldering in my mind, to think of them only brings heartache,
They'll fade, no doubt, in time!
So I'll live my life from day to day, that's as far as I can see,
And I'll have love, peace, and happiness,
'Cause inside belongs to me !!!

My soul is my own, it's mine alone and the one thing that keeps me alive,
I won't sell it cheap or give it away, I need it too much to survive.
And I won't let my tears, my pain and my fears blind me to things I should see,
Everything I need I have, cause inside belongs to me!!!.

Debbie Hill

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Shorts - old and new

Fallen Angel

by Janet Woods.

It was nearly midnight when Gabriella landed in Mrs Perkins' garden, her body sounding like a fist hitting a cushion as it landed in the drift of snow by the shed.

Mrs Perkins wasn't asleep. She was lying in bed, propped against her pillows and sipping Irish coffee. The bedroom was as cozy as an oven, tucked as it was under the thatched roof of her cottage. Her bed was in its winter position, bed-head against the brick chimney that carried the heat up from the kitchen range below.

If it wasn't for her tabby cat, who curled against her stomach, purring and kneading threads from the eiderdown, and making a rather good book-stand for one of the Mills and Boon romances she was fond of reading - she wouldn't have heard a thing.

Leonardo lifted his head and meowed a complaint. As a result, the book fell sideways to the floor in the middle of a rather crucial scene, where the hero was about to declare his love - and slid under the chest of drawers.

If Leonardo hadn't kept on staring towards the chintz-curtained windows, and if his hair hadn't ridged all along his back like one of the hairy caterpillars, who appeared in the spring to devour her lettuces, Mrs Perkins would have put the noise down to snow falling off the roof. She admitted to a twinge of alarm as she rose from her bed and slid into the sheepskin slippers her daughter Sheila had given her for Christmas. It had been naughty of her to open the gift in advance, but as

she could tell from the shape of the parcel exactly what was in it - and taking into account that the slippers she'd been wearing were threadbare, trodden down at the heels and disreputable - well, she didn't see any point in waiting.

Not that there was anyone to tell her off. She'd be spending this particular Christmas alone in her isolated little cottage. Samantha, her beloved granddaughter, had gone into labour early ... so neither she or Sheila could be with her. She was thrilled to think her first great-grandchild would be born on Christmas Day, though - and they'd rearranged the celebration for New Year, instead.

Twitching the curtains open a chink she peered out into the garden. Not to be left out, Leonardo leapt on to the window sill and pawed the crack wider so his head would fit through it and he could satisfy his own curiosity.

For a moment Mrs Perkins didn't see anything, especially what she was looking for, the tell-tale footsteps in the snow to signal an intruder. She took a moment to admire the scene. It was so Christmassy, with snow plastered on the tree branches like icing sparkling on a cake. It had been ages since they'd had a white Christmas, and it seemed fitting somehow, when her first great grandchild was due to be born. It also reminded her of her childhood, then Christmas cards were magical concoctions of stage coaches, robins, angels and sparkle dust.

"Good, grief!" she exclaimed when snow flurried up from the drift. A small winged creature crawled out from a hole and sneezed, sending a shower of golden sparks shooting upwards. When they settled, Mrs Perkins saw that the creature glowed. It was also injured, crawling across the snow and dragging its wing behind it.

Leonardo growled deep in his throat, rear-ended himself swiftly to the

floor and took refuge under the bed, his yellow eyes glaring out from the darkness like alarmed lanterns.

"Don't be such a cowardly custard," she said, and reaching for her glasses, exclaimed, "Why, I do believe it's a fairy!"

Mrs Perkins was rather pleased. She'd believed in fairies since she was a child, when her father had taken her to see, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, on stage. Mrs Perkins believed in lots of odd things. Ghosts, goblins and elves, trogs in the bog, magic of all types and communicating with the forest animals. She helped the squirrels gather acorns in autumn, and put out strings of seeds, bacon rind and suet for the birds in winter. As she'd explained to her daughter. It didn't hurt to give one of God's own creatures a hand when it was needed.

She'd never expected to see a real fairy though, and felt rather excited about it. Wait until her great-grandchild was older. What a wonderful tale she'd have to tell.

Nevertheless, she decided on caution, picking up the wooden spoon as she shuffled past the Christmas tree with its coloured lights and tinsel, and the gaily wrapped parcels underneath. The spoon wasn't much of a weapon, but better than nothing, and one couldn't be too careful these days.

The night cold was bitter after the warmth of the cottage. Her breath puffed out in a cloud of vapour. She shivered, pulling her beanie down round her ears and drawing her shawl a little tighter when the church clock in the village struck twelve.

The creature was a cute little thing, the size of a small doll. She had bedraggled blond curls and feathery wings, and if she hadn't had such a peevish expression on her face she would have been quite pretty.

"Don't just stand there," she snapped. "If I don't get warm soon, I'll perish."

Mrs Perkins eyed the thin, white shift the fairy wore. "You do seem unsuitably dressed for this inclement weather," she said, and she lifted her gently from the ground and into her shawl. "You must let me look after you."

"Not too tight, one of my wings is already damaged. If it doesn't heal I won't be able to get there in time for the birth." The creature looked glum for a few seconds. "Then I'll have some explaining to do."

Mrs Perkins retraced her steps, and secured the door behind them. She placed her small charge on the kitchen table with a table napkin for a shawl, then pulled up a chair and stared at her. Suddenly, she remembered the story of sleeping beauty. "I hope you're one of the good fairies."

The creature put her hands on her hips and sizzled with red sparks.

"Fairy!" she snorted, stamping a bare foot. "My name's Gabriella and I happen to be an angel, one of the cherub types. Also, I'm in a hurry, so if you're going to help me let's get on with it. Oh dear." Her temper evaporated and she began to cry. "I miscalculated badly. If I don't get there on time the baby will have no soul and I'll be disgraced. She began to look around her in panic. "Have you seen my soul bag? I had it in my hand when I hit the tree branches."

Mrs Perkins put all thoughts of going back to bed from her mind. "If you don't mind me saying, you don't seem ... well ... competent enough for such an important task."

"It's my first assignment since my exam," Gabriella said miserably.

"If I fail, they'll send me back into the nursery, and it will be another hundred years before I can attempt to graduate. This is my second time.

Last time I gave the wrong soul to the wrong child. They wouldn't take the fact that I suffer from dyslexia into account."

"Goodness, that seems a bit harsh," Mrs Perkins said, having no idea

what dyslexia was, but hoping it wasn't infectious.

"This time I have to succeed, or die in the attempt."

Mrs Perkins felt quite sorry for her. "I expect your bag's still in the snowdrift. I'll go and look for it, then perhaps I can sew your wing back on for you, or something."

The bag was lying in a puddle of melted ice near the gate. It pulsed with blue and white light and seemed warm to the touch. Mrs Perkins felt quite calmed by it.

"It's a wonderful little soul," Gabriella explained when she went back in. "I was lucky to get it, because this colour is rare and they're in high demand. The baby will be equipped to become a healer - if its body survives the birth and if the soul doesn't run out of energy. It should enter the host body before birth, really, but there's a bit of leeway."

Mrs Perkins felt quite anxious as she remembered her own great-grandchild. "My granddaughter, Samantha, is in labour right at this moment."

Gabriella smiled slightly, and taking a bit of paper from her pocket, squinted at it. "It's against the rules to tell you who the soul's intended for ... but I can tell you it's not for Samantha's baby, which will be a boy. This is for a baby called Mary Saint." She clapped a tiny hand over her rosebud mouth. "Forget I said that."

Mrs Perkins tried to forget it as she sewed the wing back into place with the neat hemming stitches she learned as a child - but she couldn't help being a bit envious that the rare healing soul wasn't destined for her grandson. The operation must have hurt, but Gabriella didn't make a sound, which was rather brave of her. She appeared exhausted, and rather faint afterwards.

"I'll rest until dawn," she said. "Then I'll try and finish my journey."

The child should be born about six am."

Mrs Perkins made Gabriella a bed in the shoe box her sheepskin slippers had arrived in, and kept watched over her, mainly because Leonardo had come downstairs, and having lost his fear, was very interested in what the box contained - going so far as to biff it a couple of times with his paw. He had a look in his eye, the one he got when he thought he was still young, and stalked birds.

"If anything happens to that angel I'll throw you out in the snow," she warned, and he jumped on her lap and rubbed his chin against hers and purred because he knew she'd do no such thing, and he'd got what he was after, anyway - her undivided attention.

Just before six the phone rang and Mrs Perkins snatched it up." It was Sheila, telling her what she already knew. "The baby's a little boy. He's very small and the doctor doesn't think he'll survive the day."

Tear sprang to Mrs Perkins eyes. Give Samantha my love.

"They've transferred her into Saint Mary's, they've got a specialist baby unit there."

Mrs Perkins eyes snapped open. "Saint Mary's!" It had to be more than a coincidence. "Tell Samantha not to give up hope," she said. "It's Christmas, when miracles happen."

She gently shook Gabriella awake and explained the situation, but the angel wasn't very responsive. Her eyes were dull and she was trembling.

"I'm afraid I've caught an infection of some sort. I'm too sick to fly."

A very strange idea had formed in Mrs Perkins' head, one she wouldn't have acted on if the circumstances had been different. "Oh, you won't have to fly," she said, "I have transport."

She'd kept Frank's old motor bike shiny and clean, but hadn't been able to bring herself to part with it. Now and again she kick-started it, and

until five years ago had ridden it to classic vehicle shows. She just thoped she could still remember how to drive the thing - her reflexes weren't exactly what they used to be.

The leather flying jacket, hat and goggles - which had once belonged to her husband, and had flown all over Europe in a Spitfire during world war two - fit her with room to spare. Frank would have a fit if he knew what she was up to. Though perhaps he did. She'd always known he watched over her. Sometimes, he unexpectedly dropped by the cottage for a chat. "Frank," she said out loud, when she was pushing the heavy bike out of the garage. "You'd better help me with this thing. Our great-grandson's life is at stake."

The motor bike kick-started after a couple of backfires, which left sooty black rings in the snow. Mrs Perkins let the engine run for a while, gazing down at Gabriella, who was tucked into the depths of the side-car, where she'd be out of the wind. The angel had lost some of her glow. Mrs Perkins ran her hand over the bike's tank, remembering the summer days of her marriage, when she and Frank had toured the countryside on it. They'd had a wonderful fifty years together, their only regret being an absence of more children. She still missed Frank, even though he'd been gone for the past eight years.

These days, marriage didn't seem to matter much. Her granddaughter wasn't married, yet she and her partner seemed very much in love with each other. Mrs Perkins couldn't understand why they hadn't made a commitment to each other - she couldn't understand it at all.

The handlebars wobbled as she put the bike into gear and moved off in a cloud of smoke, but by the time she'd cleared the village - waving to an astonished vicar on the way past the church - she'd gained a little confidence.

The roads were clear of snow, and the traffic was light. The dawn was cold, the air crisp. Soon, Mrs Perkins's fingers and feet were numb, and her cheeks were glowing scarlet from the cold like a couple of ripe plums. Behind the curtains of the houses she passed, she imagined children waking to excitedly delve into Christmas stockings. Turkeys would be stuffed and fitted into ovens, port decanted, carols sung and brandy flamed on Christmas puddings decorated with sprigs of holly.

Smoke curled up from chimneys. She waved at everyone she saw, shouting out, "Merry Christmas." Bursting with seasonal cheer she drove into the hospital grounds and parked her vehicle in a space reserved for the hospital administrator, a Mr Merryweather, a name which conjured up a jolly plump face smiling with benevolence, and who was, no doubt, still curled up in his blue striped pyjamas and fast asleep at this hour of morning.

She had a moment of doubt about Gabriella, who seemed quite spiritless. "Are you all right, my dear? You seem to have run out of sparkle."

Gabriella gave her a wan smile. "The soul has lost its lustre, and I'm trying to conserve the little bit of strength I have left. We should say goodbye now, Mrs Perkins, and don't let anyone see you when you go to the nursery. They might try and stop you."

"Oh, I thought you'd be spending Christmas with me, to recuperate before your journey home?"

"It's impossible now, I'm afraid."

When Mrs Perkins realised why, it was already too late. She'd sleuthed her way into the nursery and was gazing down at her tiny grandson. Born a month early, he was wired up to an extraordinary machine which bleeped rather erratically. He wore a little white beanie on his head,

which was rather sweet, and which brought a lump to her throat. He was totally captivating, and he resembled his great-grandfather, her late husband, Frank, right down to his skinny, wrinkled legs.

She sensed Frank beside her now. "He's going to make it, you know."

"Yes, I know, Frank." She'd seen the miracle herself, the almost imperceptible stream of life that had rippled through his body when Gabriella had anointed him with the soul. The light had grown too bright for her eyes and she'd closed them for a moment. When she'd opened them again the angel had gone.

They watched together, as the erratic bleeping of the baby's heart strengthened. Her great grandson's eyes opened and he seemed to stare up at her. She thought she caught a glimpse of Gabriella in his eyes.

"Thank you, Gabriella," she said, and smiled.

It was a long journey back, but the cottage was warm and welcoming.

Leonardo had become bored with his own company and had knocked a few coloured balls off the lower branches of the tree to amuse himself. She poured herself a well-deserved glass of sherry, and was in the process of hanging the balls back on the branches when a laugh tinkled from somewhere above her.

"Gabriella?" She stopped what she was doing and stared. In place of the dusty fairy Frank had won at the funfair several years before, was a tiny glowing angel. It twisted and turned in prisms of light. "Gracious!" she said and stared suspiciously into her glass.

The vicar dropped by later. She sensed he was as alone as she, so she invited him for lunch and told him about Gabriella, showing him the empty shoe box as evidence. He didn't laugh at her, but said she must be very special to have seen an angel, then asked her about the motor bike.

She told the vicar all about her life with Frank, and let him ride the

bike up and down the road. My ... he did look dashing on it, she thought.

She drank rather a lot of sherry that afternoon. So did the vicar -

for his voice was slurred at the evening service, which didn't really

matter because most of the congregation had slurred voices as well. So,

"While shepherds watched their flocks by night," came out as, when leopards

washed their jocks so bright, it was sung with great gusto and laughter.

Mrs Perkins began to giggle. The vicar smiled broadly at everyone, and

when the carol was over, he preached a fine sermon about Christmas

miracles, and angels who watched over new born babes.

Mrs Perkins became over confident with the motor bike and drove it

over a bank and into a ditch outside the vicarage. Luckily, the ditch was

full of snow, so the only injury she got was hurt feelings.

The vicar, who hauled her out, said it might be a good idea if she

sold the bike, which, when converted into an offer to buy over a glass of medicinal brandy at the vicarage - sounded like a very good idea indeed.

Sheila rang her later in the evening, and she was jubilant. "The baby's

going to be fine, the specialist said. They're going to call him Francis

after dad, and Samantha and Joe have decided to get married. Isn't that

wonderful?"

"Wonderful indeed," she said, knowing nothing else could surprise her

this Christmas. It was the best one she'd ever had. As she told Frank a

little later, when she was having one of her private chats with him.

"Who would have imagined a fallen angel would land in my garden at

Christmas?"

He winked at her and said. "No one but you," and they smiled broadly

at each other.

by Janet Woods

BELOW IS A SAMPLE OF AN E-BOOK WRITTEN BY SHERRY-ANNE JACOBS AS SHANNAH JAY.

THE SWORD OF AZARAY (YA fantasy)

Shannah Jay

PROLOGUE

LEGEND SAYS: When the world was young and troublesome, the Halashi, gentle inhabitants of the True Vale, grew tired of the war and mayhem around them, so they created a magical sword and gave it to the brave young King of Azaray. With its help, he and two loyal companions brought peace to the land. Since then, the sword has sung all true Kings of Azaray to the throne. In this cycle of events, the Halishi are creating a ring of new worlds around Azaray, in the hope that if land is plentiful, people will not need to battle for it. They are bringing these new worlds gradually out of the Shadows.

In Azaray itself, peaceful for a long time, children are the only ones who remember the ancient legends and they play games to an old, old rhyme:

Three in One shall save the day

When danger threatens Azaray

Evil rode through the city, hidden by a cloak of blackest night. The light of the two moons was smothered beneath dark clouds, which had blown up

suddenly from nowhere, and every gate lantern had been snuffed out by the same magic.

As the six riders approached the palace, the man leading them snapped his fingers and mist rose around them like a blanket of dirty grey wool. So thick and choking was it that the few other people still about hurried home. 'Demon's weather,' some called it, and rightly so.

Even the men who rode with Pavros the Sorcerer glanced sideways at him from time to time, fear showing clearly on their faces. And although a path opened for them through the mist, the glow that lit their way was not that of the moons above, but rather a reddish sullen light that came from below the horses' hooves.

When they drew near the palace gates, Pavros held up one hand and everyone stopped, then he chanted a short spell before the guards could question their presence. Sleep at once fell upon everyone inside and outside the palace.

Another snap of Pavros's fingers and the great iron gates creaked open of their own accord. The sorcerer gave a tight smile that barely curled the corners of his lips and nodded just once in satisfaction. Dismounting from his horse, he led the way inside the Palace of Azaray, black cloak billowing behind him. He did not even glance at the people sprawled everywhere in false, uneasy sleep. He knew exactly where he wanted to go. Inside the palace they found only two men still awake. One was waiting for them impatiently near the entrance. Lord Yezroll was very tall, dressed in black leather and steel. His forehead was slashed by a jagged scar and he scowled out at the world from deep-set eyes, overhung by thick drooping eyebrows. From time to time, he patted his sword hilt and when he spoke, he offered words as if each one were precious. 'He's waiting. Hurry.'

Some of the mist had crept into the palace and in the Great Hall it had

gathered to knee height, covering the patterned marble floor and hiding the tumbled bodies of those who had been standing there when the spell fell upon them.

Everything seemed so unreal tonight that even Pavros's companions exchanged worried glances and their hands twitched nervously at their daggers - as if daggers could ever touch a sorcerer as powerful as this one, as if daggers could ever hold back his dark magic.

Ronan, King of Azaray, lay sprawled on the floor in front of the throne, unconscious. On the great carved throne itself sat the second person whom the spell had not touched - the King's brother, Thanis. He greeted the newcomers with a scowl as Yezroll went to stand behind him, arms folded. 'You're late!' Thanis snapped. He pushed his brother's body with one foot and shot a quick glance at the wall where the magic sword of Azaray hung. From it came a muffled, moaning sound, and every now and then it twitched against the wall like a live thing. 'It's trying to escape,' he said accusingly.

Pavros shrugged. 'It won't succeed.'

'And why are you so late?'

'It took me longer than I had expected to bind the sword. We're here now, so hold your peace and let me complete my task.'

Thanis blew out an angry puff of air. 'Can I kill him? We don't want anyone to rescue him.'

Pavros glanced down at the figure on the floor and smiled. 'Be patient, my friend. You can kill him in a little while.'

The sword groaned aloud and twitched again.

Thanis gestured to it. 'You'd better destroy that thing quickly, then.'

'I can't destroy it. I told you that before. The magic is too powerful. But I can and will render it helpless. Then you can deal with him.' For the

sorcerer hated the young King for banishing him from the kingdom five years before, hated him with a passion which had grown stronger with every year of exile to the barren mountains beyond the borders of Azaray.

Pavros walked across to the sword, spread out his arms and chanted the final incantation. The noise died away. Satisfied that it could not now defy him, he lifted it down, holding it at arm's length and smiling.

For a moment, it seemed to the watchers that the sorcerer vanished. When he reappeared, the sword he was holding had a blurred look to it. Within seconds he had vanished again.

The next time he reappeared, the sword in his outstretched hands seemed transparent, like clouded glass. He was still chanting, but no one could hear his words, only see his thin lips moving.

When he returned, the sword had disappeared from his hands and he seemed so filled with dark power that one of the guards shivered and took a step backwards.

'Where is it now?' Thanis asked eagerly.

'It lies scattered across three nearby shadow worlds. Thus are its powers sealed from his use.' He gestured scornfully to the King. 'You can kill him now, while I rest and regain my powers.'

Thanis undertook this task himself, staring down at his brother for a moment, then stabbing him three times with a harsh cry of triumph.

Afterwards, he wiped his bloody dagger on the king's jerkin, then turned back to Pavros. 'What about the three infants? Shall I kill them now as well?'

Pavros closed his eyes for a minute. Binding the sword had drained his powers more than he had expected.

Thanis moved towards him and repeated his question impatiently.

The sorcerer blinked, as if not quite understanding what was going on around him. 'The - infants?'

'His children.' Thanis jerked his head towards the royal chambers, which led off from the rear of the throne room. 'I'd have killed them already if you had not strictly forbidden it for fear of rousing the sword. Pity their mother died bearing them, or we could have had the pleasure of killing her, as well.'

Pavros shrugged. 'Be content with your brother's death, Thanis.' His words came slowly, for even thinking was hard, so weary was he after casting his greatest spell ever.

Thanis stared down at the body with a smile. 'I'll be very content with his death. And with his throne. But we'll kill the infants all the same, just to be safe. I want no rebellions to put them on the throne.'

'You will not kill them. That might rouse the sword, even from across the shadows, for one of the infants is now the true king and is bound to it.'

He waited for Thanis's nod of agreement, then added, 'Leave them to me. I shall hold them very safe, do not fear.'

Thanis scowled. 'Dead is safest of all.'

Pavros snapped his fingers and lightning zipped across the room. 'Do you really question my decision?'

Even Thanis was not brave enough to do that. He fell silent, scowling down at his brother's body and avoiding the burning evil in the sorcerer's eyes.

'To me!' Pavros held out his hands and the men who had accompanied him that night moved into a circle around the King's body, Thanis with them.

Stretching out their arms, they touched each other's fingertips and waited for the sorcerer to add their life energy to his own, which he had done many times before.

As Pavros began to chant a new spell, somewhere in the distance metal screeched, a faint echo of pain.

Thanis jerked round. 'That's the sword. Can it get out?'

Pavros shook his head. 'No. Not now. I'm just moving the children into the shadow worlds. Be silent and let me complete the spell.'

He began to chant again, his voice rising till it seemed to fill the room with sound. There was a twisting feeling, which made some of the men gasp in fear, then the sorcerer loosened their hands and staggered back to lean against the throne.

'It is done.'

'Ah.' Thanis smiled.

Pavros looked at the man who had gone back to his place behind the throne.

'The younger son has gone to your care, Yezroll, in that mountain keep you have claimed in the nearest shadow world. You will find him waiting for you when you return. Let one of your maidservants rear him. He should make a good scullion when he grows up.'

Everyone laughed.

'The female child has been sent to my sister Alwynna's care in her summer house in the second shadow world. When the girl grows up, Alwynna will know how to make use of her and will keep her obedient, too. My sister can be very - demanding.'

Thanis nodded in pleasure, for Alwynna was famous for her shrewdness and sharp tongue, and had got herself a husband of a similar nature.

Pavros continued, 'The elder son has gone to Lord Nezzrim in his new castle in the furthest shadow world. He will be brought up there as an unlettered country lad who knows nothing of swords and fighting.'

Thanis frowned, but did not dare question that plan.

Pavros nodded, well satisfied with his night's work in spite of his exhaustion. 'Thus shall we hold the Sword of Azaray helpless and you, Thanis, safe on this throne. And now,' he made a mocking bow, 'I shall return to my home. I hope no one touched it while I was away in exile?'

'No one could even open the door,' said Thanis. 'And those who tried perished in a ball of fire. But I dare say you will find it very neglected inside.'

'That can easily be remedied. I shall find myself an apprentice.' As Pavros walked out, his cloak billowed behind him again, even though there was no breeze blowing that night. Those left behind breathed a sigh of relief that he had gone, then turned to do the new king's bidding.

In the morning, the inhabitants of the palace were slow to wake and when they did, terror filled them. Cries, groans and screams echoed down the corridors. For the King of Azaray was lying dead in a pool of dried blood on the floor of the throne room and the three royal infants had disappeared with no sign to show how they had been taken.

Someone went to wake Thanis and he seemed muddled, unaware at first of what was happening. When they told him his brother was dead, he wept loud, bitter tears.

'But what about the sword?' he asked. 'The Sword of Azaray always protects the rightful King.'

'Your highness, the sword has gone, too.'

'Gone? Only darkest magic could do that,' Thanis whispered. 'Oh, my poor brother. I said he should have kept a sorcerer at court to protect him.'

Then he looked round at them. 'I shall do my best to rule this kingdom in Ronan's place. That is clearly my duty, for I am the only one left of the High Family now.'

They shuffled their feet and cast worried glances at one another. The magic sword should sing out the new king, but it had vanished. What could they do but nod agreement? Thanis was watching them carefully, and he was a man who never forgot an insult. First one, then another bent their knees in a low

bow and vowed to serve the new king faithfully all the days of their lives.

A few protested, only a few. And when they vanished without trace, no one dared complain or seek them, for the sorcerer Pavros had returned to stand behind the King, smiling the tight smile that was more terrifying than other men's scowls.

All the other sorcerers fled from Azaray when they heard he was back, for they had helped Ronan banish him many years before.

When Pavros walked the streets, black cloak flapping around him like a live thing, it seemed to the citizens of Azaray that they could sense the evil festering within him, could feel the power that burnt within him. The mere sight of him filled them with terror. It was safer, far safer, to make no protest, just get on with their lives as best they could.

Thus did Thanis become King in Azaray. And within a few short weeks armed men were brought in from the mountains to serve him and force his will upon the people.

As the years passed, his rule lay heavy on the land, but the few who tried to rebel failed dismally, and paid for it with their lives.

After a while, people stopped trying to stir up rebellion, for Pavros seemed to know what was happening before a man could blink. Those who found no favour with Thanis retired to their country estates and lived there quietly. As time went by, many lost even the hope that something would save them from the new king's cruel ways.

And since no one ever saw a sign of the three royal children, everyone was sure that they too had been murdered.

MORRIN

As soon as he saw the look on his lord's face, Morrin froze where he stood.

The serving boy knew he hadn't done anything wrong, but something had put his master in a towering rage and that was enough to make his heart pound with fear and his knees shake.

The jagged scar on Lord Yezroll's forehead was burning red and his eyes seems to glow with rage. All the servants were treading carefully that day. They would suffer for his rage, they always did. He banged his massive right fist on the table and roared, 'Fetch him in!'

The Sergeant at Arms nodded and two men marched in a third, who stood between them, stiff with fear.

Any servant who could do so crept out of the hall or hid behind something, but Morrin was trapped behind the high table where his master sat. He could only stand there, with his back pressed against the chill of the grey stone wall, trying desperately not to attract attention to himself.

Lord Yezroll beckoned to the three men with one finger and they came a little closer.

When the Sergeant poked the prisoner in the ribs, the man took a reluctant step forward, trembling visibly.

Yezroll stood up and strode round the high table. He was big enough to pick up the terrified prisoner by the scruff of his neck and shake him like a dog shakes a rat. As he did this, anger rumbled in his throat. Then he held the man at arm's length. 'No one,' his deep voice boomed through the keep and when he stamped his foot, the floor of the Great Hall seemed to shake, 'no one is allowed to touch that sword! It belonged to my grandfather.'

Sometimes Morrin could sense trouble brewing and stay clear of it, but he

had had no warning of this.

All the other servitors were still standing motionless as statues, waiting for their master to speak. They would have stayed there for hours, if necessary, rather than disturb him.

'I was wrong to bring in an outsider,' Yezroll said at last, glaring at the man. 'Be out of this keep within the hour, you. And be off my land before dusk. The Sergeant will see you through the gates and on the road to Azaray. Do not set one foot off that road till you get to the city, if you value your life, for it is the only safe route through the Shadows.'

Yezroll settled back against his chair and gestured to his goblet. Morrin filled it carefully and gave his best bow as he backed away, relief shuddering through him as he looked for something to do that would take him out of the hall.

He found a half-empty platter to carry back to the kitchens and there he exchanged glances with Tam, the scullery lad, but neither spoke. This was no time for fooling around. Everyone in the huge stone keep that guarded the entry to this shadow world would be treading carefully for days, terrified of further angering their master.

Later, when he served his lord with more wine, Morrin was cuffed about the head for filling the goblet too full, though it had been just as his lord usually liked it.

In the evening, when he set down the lord's platter of meat with hands that shook from fear, he spilled a drop of gravy on the white tablecloth and a blow from one huge fist sent him spinning backwards into the wall. He slid helplessly to the floor, the breath thumped out of him by the impact.

'Stay out of my sight, you dolt!' roared Yezroll. He glared over his shoulder at the dazed boy. 'You're getting too big to be a serving lad. I should send you to work in the mines.' His voice lowered and he muttered to

himself, 'About time we did something about you, anyway.'

Morrin scrambled to his feet and fled, still gasping for breath and rubbing his bruised arm. He wished, oh, how he wished he served another lord.

Anyone must be a better master than Lord Yezroll. And any other keep must be a happier place than this lonely spot that guarded the way into the stark grey mountains rising out of the mists and shadows on this new world. If he could, he would flee from here tomorrow.

Enderlands was surely the loneliest place there ever could be. Lord Yezroll had claimed this world and that dread lord would become one day be King here, when enough fertile land was available to create farms. But so far only barren mountains had been revealed as the mists crept slowly backwards and the new world emerged further from the Shadows. And each time a new range of mountains was revealed, instead of farming land, Lord Yezroll fell into a fury, for he wanted to bring in more settlers, poorer folk looking for a better life.

The men who came from Azaray every few days with provisions spoke to no one as they unloaded their carts and they never lingered at Enderlands, not even to satisfy their hunger. They were clearly terrified of coming here.

It seemed to Morrin a strange spot in which to build a keep and he could never understand why his lord had laid claim to this world in the first place. The only benefit to be gained from owning it would come to Yezroll's grandchildren or great-grandchildren.

If they kept hold of their inheritance.

If there was fertile land somewhere behind the Shadows.

But when he asked the steward about that, Cedrith said it suited Lord Yezroll to live here and one day good land would surely be revealed.

Meanwhile, the keep was there to prevent other people from Azaray coming to this new world.

'And if you ever speak of such thoughts again, lad,' Cedrith added, ' you will be beaten until you can no longer stand.' He leaned forward and poked Morrin in the chest to emphasise his point. 'In fact, I shall take great pleasure in doing that myself. You're getting too uppity lately. Leave thinking to your betters and concentrate on doing your duties quietly and well. That's all we ask of a servant like you.'

So Morrin went back to listening at doors or reading the scrolls in the library whenever he needed to find something out, and very skilful at it he became, too. Somehow he always seemed to find just what he needed and no one guessed where he was. His duties as a serving boy were not really hard, for Lord Yezroll spent most of his time in Azaray. And when the lord was away, everyone in the castle took life more easily, even Cedrith.

Morrin had never been to Azaray, and if it was full of people as vicious as his master and the friends who visited him occasionally, then he had no desire to go there, either. Surely, he thought sometimes, there must be somewhere happier than this to live? The scrolls talked of such places - but perhaps they were just tales?

A messenger arrived the next afternoon from King Thanis in Azaray summoning Lord Yezroll to the palace, and he was gone within the hour. Like all the other servants in the keep, Morrin breathed a sigh of relief. He had been dreading serving the evening meal, absolutely dreading it.

With no other duties, he begged an hour's leave from the steward, coaxed a hunk of bread from the cook, for he was growing fast and always felt hungry, then escaped through the small side gate for a breath of fresh air. 'It's not fair,' he muttered as he walked up the rocky slope. 'It wasn't my fault that man touched the sword. Why should I suffer for it?' But he always did suffer when Lord Yezroll grew angry. Nothing was fair.

He sighed and shook his head, feeling miserable and alone. As a foundling child, discovered, the steward said, at Lord Yezroll's gate in Azaray, he had no relatives and all he knew was this keep. Morrin reckoned he knew it better than anyone else, too, for he had crawled and trotted round its passages from the time he had first learned to walk and seen new parts added one after the other.

Like all the other servants, he was bound to the lord's service for life and would be breaking the law if he left. They would whip him for even trying. Or worse - for if Yezroll was in a bad mood, they might kill him. And even if he did get away, he would be leaving the safety of the keep and might get lost in the dark Shadows and mist that hovered beside the road leading to the castle. For the road crossed the place where this world touched the next and you dare not leave its safety. He could see the Shadows now in the distance, grey and shifting restlessly. No one knew what lay beyond them, only that the road through them was safe, in daytime at least.

Morrin sighed again, with relief this time, as he arrived at the big black rock at the top of the hill behind the castle. He sat down on it and curled his arms round his knees. This was his special place. No one else from the keep ever came up here. The other servants said ghosts haunted the hilltop, and many claimed to have heard or seen them.

As for the gleaming black rock, bigger even than Lord Yezroll's bed, folk said it was unnatural, a place of darkest evil. Morrin ran one fingertip over the surface. So smooth and glassy. He smiled. It did not feel evil to him. He had touched it many a time and no harm had ever come to him. He'd been coming here ever since he was small, drawn to it by something he didn't understand, and he'd never seen any ghosts, either. But he wasn't going to tell anyone else that. Let the other servants believe in ghosts if

it kept them away. He liked having the place to himself, and always felt happier when he was up here. And even if he did see anything strange, no ghost could be worse than Lord Yezroll in a rage.

On a sudden whim, he went to the edge of the cliff beyond the rock and stared down. In the valley far below him a river tossed its way between huge boulders. The rushing sound of the water and the gleam of sunlight on the big pool in the middle always made him feel better, for some strange reason.

He stuck two fingers in his mouth and whistled. Within a few minutes the dog arrived, as she sometimes did, a large hunting hound that stood nearly as high as his shoulders. She came up to him, grinning and wagging her feathery, red-gold tail. Kneeling down, he put his arms round her neck and buried his face in the long soft fur. Hally was his only real friend. He didn't know why he'd chosen that name, but it seemed to suit her and she answered to it.

'You're beautiful,' he whispered in her ear. But this time Hally did not lick his nose and let him cuddle her. This time she stiffened, pulled away from him and threw back her head to yowl - on and on, unearthly cries, so shrill they hurt the ears.

'What's the matter?' But Morrin's words were lost in the noise and strangely, he was finding it hard to move, hard to think, even. He blinked his eyes, but everything stayed blurred around him.

Within seconds, the sky grew dark and he cried out in fear as lightning split the clouds and thunder boomed across the valley. With great difficulty, he hauled himself to his feet, intending to return to the keep before the storm hit the hilltop, but before he could take a step, something seemed to snatch at his body and drag him down.

Expecting to land on the rock, he yelled in terror and shock as he tumbled

instead into a hole, and then yelled again as it turned into a dark tunnel that went down and down, a tunnel that seemed to have no end.

With a groan, he lost consciousness, unaware of the great golden creature floating down the tunnel beside him, unaware when Hally's paws turned into hands - still covered in red-gold fur and having six fingers, but hands nonetheless.

As the tunnel curved to a more gentle end, she bore his limp body through the special portal that barred the way into the True Vale, a place none might enter without a guide.

Looking not at all like a dog now, though she was still covered in long silky fur, Hally set Morrin down gently on the soft cushiony grass and stared at him. 'You are too young, child,' she whispered, 'but if we don't start you on your great task now, they will kill you. This is your only chance of survival.' She laid one hand on his forehead. 'Let your gifts shine forth!'

But her heart ached for him as she turned to leave the True Vale and re-enter the Shadows to fetch the others.

Anna Jacobs, historicals 10/99 OUR LIZZIE (pbk), 10/99 LIKE NO OTHER (hbk)

coming SO FAR AWAY (2000) in progress OUR POLLY

Sherry-Anne Jacobs, PLOTTING AND EDITING (how-to), A SUITABLE BRIDE

(contemp romance)

Shannah Jay, ENVOY (SF), THE SWORD OF AZARAY (YA fantasy)

<http://www.iinet.net.au/~jacobses>

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Featured Writer/Reader

The New Literature Board

Chairman, Nicholas Hasluck of Western Australia. (See PP6 for short bio)

Deputy Chair, Sue Gough of Queensland. (See PP7 for short bio)

Connie Gregory of Victoria, formerly of the Northern Territory. (See PP7 for short bio)

Philip Ayres of Victoria. (See PP7 for short bio)

Sarah Day of Tasmania

Frank Devine of New South Wales

Heather Nimmo of Western Australia

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Best of the Literary Box

There has been little on my literary box over the past month or two.

Morris West, the famous Australian writer and novelist, was featured and eulogised on Channel Two's 7.30 Report, shortly after his death. He was a remarkable man, a literary giant with the capacity not only to get right inside his subjects but also to display uncanny foresight in choosing topics that burst into global prominence shortly afterwards.

Dorothy Porter also featured for five minutes of fame on Channel Two's 7.30 Report, having achieved the remarkable feat of authoring a verse novel, "Monkey's Mask", which is a best seller. She has some refreshing views about poetry, claiming that the literary journals are pre-occupied "still, with oblique poems for wankers." She is a poet I've resolved to read.

Writers Centre? "The Pillow Book", a film by **Peter Greenway**, the British filmmaker with a penchant for the written word and nudes, was recently screened again on SBS. His story is woven around a young Japanese woman with the unusual desire or fetish of having people write on her body, as a sort of living parchment. This young writers centre is also written on from head to toe, and in one scene, the writer is invited to sign his name on the sole of her foot! Truly, the word becomes flesh!

Greenway is always very watchable for his ingenuity and innovation, treating the screen like a multi-layered page.

Max Harris graced the screen of channel 31 for a long session, talking about the Angry Penguins and the Ern Malley affair. It was strange seeing the affable Harris, who was so big on the box nearly a generation ago, as an old man.

Poet Laureate.

Andrew Motion is poet laureate of the United Kingdom and the talented and articulate Robert Pinsky is poet laureate of the United States of America. Will Australia have a poet laureate? Should Australia have one? Who will it be? Will Les Murray get the geurnsey?

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Articles old and new

Web Critic

Surfing the net with my comparatively low powered (75Mhz) surfboard, is often a tiresome experience because of overloaded sites that loom like the famous Japanese woodcut, Hokusai's "The Great Wave", leaving the surfer to hang five or merely hang around whilst their frothy substance gradually fills the screen .

Some of the worst are the biggies in the business, the international hardware and software companies.

It is galling during the long wait, when quite basic information such as a local contact cannot be found. More galling still is a contact e-mail address that proves to be the home of a robot with the seeming purpose of providing friendly obfuscation and information for a net detour which inevitably leads back to your starting point. Some contacts don't work.

It is obvious that there is need for the new job category of web critic. For a small fee, the critic could try out a site and report to its owners with cc to the webmaster, asking whether some graphics are really needed, trying out contacts and searching for basic information.

For instance, my city's transport information page has a huge image of a bus built from a dozen or so GIFs that take a long time to materialise. It is a meaningless decoration that could be replaced with text or a smaller image.

(It's route finder can't recognize the major domestic airport or its nearby streets, but that is another matter.)

One of Australia's premier literary sites is so stuffed with literary goodies that it is quite literarily stuffed and almost impossible to access.

Another literary site hangs whilst the owner's snapshots of a sojourn in a university town materialise.

My ISP re-builds its home page from time to time, with new u-beaut buttons and much more information, but each innovation has made it slower so that it now takes three times as long to access my e-mail!

If anybody requires a web critic, I'm available to have a stab at it. For the industry rate of a mere two or three dollars per minute, I'll blue pencil any corporate pages!

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Words Worth

Ubiquitous This word used to be found everywhere and was in such common use that it was in fact ubiquitous. It seems to be making a comeback

Particular is a word that some people can't help attaching to a noun in about every third sentence that they utter, not to differentiate it from the general, but as a sort of poetic embellishment. It is often meaningless.

Tranch is a delightful word from the bourse, recently used to describe the pieces of Telstra that were parcelled for sale. It is a first cousin to "trench" and is used metaphorically to describe a piece carved trenchantly out of a corporate trough to offer for sale.

Home and hone are delightfully confused at times by persons who have obviously never known that to hone is to sharpen something on a stone or a steel, and therefore, honing in to a place, idea or target is impossible. Home as a verb is used to describe the process of navigating towards something or somewhere in much the same way as pigeons home in on their roosts or lofts.

(FRANK DEVINE HAS A DELIGHTFUL COLUMN, IN SOMEWHAT SIMILAR VEIN, IN THE WEEKEND AUSTRALIAN.)

BLIMPS AND BLIPS - GOVERNMENTS FOR AND AGAINST THE ARTS

(CONSIDERTED CRITIQUES OF POLICIES ARE WELCOME HERE.
ANON WHISTLEBLOWERS ARE ESPECIALLY WELCOME.)

[BACK TO CONTENTS](#)

Impressing & Depressing - the rise, fall, amalgamation and gossip about presses and publishing

The lovely and talented **Jill Hickson** has sold her successful literary agency, Hickson Associates, to Curtis Brown, thus creating Australia's largest agency, with a compelling list of titles by top Australian authors. Apparently, after fifteen years, she felt the need for a life-style choice. I had the pleasure of meeting Jill at the Journalists Club in Sydney where we were both invited guest speakers for one of the larger regional branches of the FAW.

Les Murray has vowed to write no more copy for politicians after his work on the proposed preamble was largely discarded. He has submitted a bill for his efforts. It's a pity that John Howard did not have the nous to recognize that writing the preamble was properly a poetic exercise. It called for elegance and inspiration, not the lumpy list that had the bullet points removed.

The proposed preamble from the other side of politics is quoted below: Labor's proposed preamble (89 wds)

Having come together in 1901 as a Federation under the Crown,
relying on the blessing of Almighty God, and
The Commonwealth of Australia being now a sovereign democracy,
our united people drawn from nations across the globe,

We the people of Australia
Proud of our diversity
Loving our unique and ancient land
Recognising indigenous Australians as the original occupants
and custodians of our land
Believing in freedom and equality, and
Embracing democracy and the rule of law
Commit ourselves to this our Constitution.

Goliardys - Saucy little stories or verse.

(WE HAD CONSIDERED PUBLISHING EXCERPTS FROM THE CLASSIC PORN OF OUR YOUTH, PENGUIN'S *THE GOLDEN ASS* BY APULIUS, TRANSLATED BY ROBERT GRAVES. HOWEVER, WE BAULKED AT TRACKING DOWN THE COPYRIGHT AND HAVE TAKEN AN EDITORIAL DECISION TO AWAIT WRITERS' INITIATIVES.)

Joker

READERS ARE WARNED THAT CURRENT OFFERINGS FROM NANON ARE SOMEWHAT RIBALD, DESERVING AN "R" RATING, ESPECIALLY FOR THE FIRST, WHICH ARRIVED VIA THE NETHERLANDS.

Balletje Balletje

THE LITTLE OLD LADY AND THE BET

A little old lady went into the Bank of Scotland one day, carrying a bag of money. She insisted that she must speak with the manager of the bank to open a savings account because, "It's a lot of money!"

After much umming and arhing, the bank staff finally ushered her into the manager's office (the customer is always right!). The bank manager then asked her how much she would like to deposit. She replied, "£165,000!" and dumped the cash out of her bag onto his desk. The manager was of course curious as to how she came by all this cash, so he asked her, "Ma'am, I'm surprised you're carrying so much cash around. Where did you get this money?"

The old lady replied, "I make bets."

The manager then asked, "Bets? What kind of bets?"

The old woman said, "Well, for example, I'll bet you £25,000 that your balls are square."

"Ha!" laughed the manager, "That's a stupid bet. You can never win that kind of bet!"

The old lady challenged, "So, would you like to take my bet?"

"Sure," said the manager, "I'll bet £25,000 that my balls are not square!"

The little old lady then said, "Okay, but since there is a lot of money involved, may I bring my lawyer with me tomorrow at 10:00 AM as a witness?"

"Sure!" replied the confident manager.

That night, the manager got very nervous about the bet and spent a long time in front of a mirror checking his balls, turning from side to side, again and again. He thoroughly checked them out until he was sure that there was absolutely no way his balls were square and that he would win the bet.

The next morning, at precisely 10:00 am, the little old lady appeared with her lawyer at the manager's office. She introduced the lawyer to the manager and repeated the bet:

"£25,000 says the manager's balls are square!"

The manager agreed with the bet again and the old lady asked him to drop his pants so they could all see. The manager complied.

The little old lady peered closely at his balls and then asked if she could feel them.

"Well, Okay," said the manager, "£25,000 is a lot of money, so I guess you should be absolutely sure."

Just then, he noticed that the lawyer was quietly banging his head against the wall. The manager asked the old lady, "What the hell's the matter with your lawyer?"

She replied, "Nothing, except I bet him £100,000 that at 10:00 AM today, I'd have The Bank of Scotland's manager's balls in my hand."

N.anon (via the Netherlands)

CHURCH BULLETIN BLOOPERS, Part 1

Bertha Belch, a missionary from Africa will be speaking tonight at Calvary Memorial Church in Racine. Come tonight and hear Bertha Belch all the way from Africa.

Announcement in the church bulletin for a National PRAYER & FASTING Conference:

"The cost for attending the Fasting and Prayer conference includes meals."

Our youth basketball team is back in action Wednesday at 8 pm in the recreation hall. Come out and watch us kill Christ the King.

Miss Charlene Mason sang "I will not pass this way again" giving obvious pleasure to the congregation.

"Ladies, don't forget the rummage sale. It's a chance to get rid of those things not worth keeping around the house. Don't forget your husbands."

Next Sunday is the family hay ride and bonfire at the Fowlers'. Bring your own hot dogs and guns. Friends are welcome! Everyone come for a fun time.

The peacemaking meeting scheduled for today has been cancelled due to a conflict.

The sermon this morning: "Jesus Walks on the Water"

The sermon tonight: "Searching for Jesus"

Next Thursday there will be tryouts for the choir. They need all the help they can get.

Barbara remains in the hospital and needs blood donors for more transfusions. She is also having trouble sleeping and requests tapes of Pastor Jack's sermons.

CHURCH BULLETIN BLOOPERS, Part 2

The Rector will preach his farewell message after which the choir will sing "Break Forth into Joy."

Remember in prayer the many who are sick of our community.

Smile at someone who is hard to love. Say "hell" to someone who doesn't care much about you.

Don't let worry kill you off --let the Church help.

Irving Benson and Jessie Carter were married on October 24 in the church.

So ends a friendship that began in their school days.

The service will close with "Little Drops of Water." One of the ladies will start quietly and the rest of the congregation will join in.

Next Sunday a special collection will be taken to defray the cost of the new carpet. All those wishing to do something on the new carpet will come forward and do so.

The ladies of the church have cast off clothing of every kind and they may be seen in the church basement Friday.

A bean supper will be held on Tuesday evening in the church hall. Music will follow.

At the evening service tonight, the sermon topic will be "What is Hell?"

Come early and listen to our choir practice.

Eight new choir robes are currently needed, due to the addition of several new members and to the deterioration of some older ones.

The senior choir invites any member of the congregation who enjoys sinning to join the choir.

Please join us as we show our support for Amy and Alan in preparing for the girth of their first child.

Scouts are saving aluminum cans, bottles, and other items to be recycled.

Proceeds will be used to cripple children.

The Lutheran men's group will meet at 6 pm. Steak, mashed potatoes, green beans, bread and dessert will be served for a nominal feel.

For those of you who have children and don't know it, we have a nursery downstairs.

During the absence of our Pastor, we enjoyed the rare privilege of hearing a good sermon when J.F. Stubbs supplied our pulpit.

Please place your donation in the envelope along with the deceased person(s) you want remembered.

Attend and you will hear an excellent speaker and heave a healthy lunch.

The church will host an evening of fine dining, superb entertainment, and gracious hostility.

This afternoon there will be a meeting in the north and south ends of the church. Children will be baptized at both ends.

Tuesday at 4:00 pm there will be an ice cream social. All ladies giving milk will please come early.

Wednesday the Ladies Liturgy Society will meet. Mrs. Jones will sing "Put Me in My Little Bed" accompanied by the pastor.

This being Easter Sunday, we will ask Mrs. Lewis to come forward and lay an egg on the altar.

Potluck supper Sunday at 5:00 pm.--prayer and medication to follow.

The rosebud on the altar this morning is to announce the birth of David Belzer; the sin of Rev. and Mrs. Julius Belzer.

CHURCH BULLETIN BLOOPERS, Part 3

Weight Watchers will meet at 7 p.m. Please use the large double door at the side entrance.

The 1997 Spring Council Retreat will be held May 10 and 11.

Pastor is on vacation. Messages can be given to the church secretary.

The associate minister unveiled the church's new tithing campaign slogan last Sunday: "I Upped My Pledge, Up Yours!"

The Rev. Adams spoke briefly, much to the delight of his audience.

The eighth graders will be presenting Shakespeare's "Hamlet" in the church basement on Friday at 7 pm. The congregation is invited to attend this tragedy.

A new loudspeaker system has been installed in the church. It was given by one of our members in honor of his wife.

The outreach committee has enlisted 25 visitors to make calls on people who are not afflicted with any church.

The Ladies Bible Study will be held Thursday morning at 10. All ladies are invited to lunch in the Fellowship Hall after the B.S. is done.

Evening message: 6 p.m.

The Pastor would appreciate it if the ladies of the congregation would lend him their electric girdles for the pancake breakfast next Sunday morning.

The audience is asked to remain seated until the end of the recession.

Thursday at 5:00 pm there will be a meeting of the Little Mothers Club. All wishing to become little mothers, please see the minister in his study.

Low Self-Esteem Support Group will meet Thursday at 7 to 8:30 pm. Please use the back door.

Ushers will eat latecomers.

The third verse of "Blessed Assurance" will be sung without musical accomplishment.

Next Sunday Mrs. Vinson will be soloist for the morning service. The pastor will then speak on "It's a Terrible Experience."

Due to the Rector's illness, Wednesday's healing services will be discontinued until further notice.

Stewardship Offertory: "Jesus Paid It All"

The concert held in Fellowship Hall was a great success. Special thanks are due to the minister's daughter, who labored the whole evening at the piano, which as usual fell upon her.

In the church bulletin during the minister's illness:

GOD IS GOOD!

Dr. Hargreaves is better.

Netscape & nbsp;

THIS GRIMLY HUMOROUS PIECE WAS APPARENTLY WRITTEN BY A ROBOT AND IS RENDERED AS RECEIVED. IT WILL BE OF NO INTEREST TO NON-COMPUTER PEOPLE AND IS COMPLETELY UNFUNNY, EXCEPTING IN AN IRONIC WAY.

Date:

Wed, 29 Sep 1999 16:21:59 -0400

From:

sitefeedback@netscape.com (Site Feedback)

To:

pixpress@iinet.net.au

Dear pixpress,

Unfortunately, this help desk only supports NetCenter, the Netscape web page, and downloading the Netscape software. For questions dealing with the installation, use, and errors of the Netscape software, please call our Technical Support department at 1-800-411-0707. Select Option 1 for support (\$29.95). Or you may go to: <http://home.netscape.com/support/index.html>

At the bottom of the page you can search for your question or problem.

Netcenter Support

-----original message-----

From: pixpress@iinet.net.au

To: sitefeedback@netscape.com

X-Mailer-Version: Mozilla 4.05 (Macintosh; I; PP

<HTML>

Dear Deborah,

<P>Within my general grizzle about Netscape was a statement that I could not download 4.61, which would seem to be in your area.

I'm becoming increasingly frustrated and ready to turn to another browser.\

<P>Walter Vivian

<P>Site Feedback wrote:

<BLOCKQUOTE TYPE=CITE>Dear pixpress,

<P>Thank you for using Netscape Netcenter. I hope you are enjoying our service.

<P>Unfortunately, this help desk only supports NetCenter, the Netscape web page, and downloading the Netscape software.

<P>For questions dealing with the installation, use, and errors of the Netscape software please call 1-800-411-0707. Select option 1, and then choose option 1 again. There is a charge of \$29.95 for support.

<P>You may also go to: http://home.netscape.com/support/index.html

<P>You can search for your question at the bottom of the page.

<P>Thank you for contacting Netscape NetCenter Support.

<P>Regards,

<P>Deborah

<P>-----original message-----

<P>From: pixpress@iinet.net.au

<P>To: site-feedback@netscape.com

<P>X-Mailer-Version: *Not specified*

<P>Reply-To: pixpress@iinet.net.au

<P>Name : Walter Vivian

<P>Email : pixpress@iinet.net.au

<P>Category :

<P>URL :

<P>I have had difficulties and reinstalled 4.5 from my CD disk but cannot

download

<P>the

<P>upgrade to 4.61.

<P>My 4.5 is unstable and disappears occasionally, givin

<P>g me an error code for which I

<P>have no table.

<P>I've searched your Australi

<P>an website to find where I can purchase another CD,

<P>without success. I lost t

<P>he address of the last supplier when my address book

<P>disappeared.

<P>Regards,

<P>Walter Vivian.</BLOCKQUOTE>

 </HTML>

Publishing News - the rise, fall, amalgamation and
gossip about hard copy & electronic presses

There are rumours that some of our literary magazines are going west. This does not, of course, mean that Blacktown or even Perth, will benefit!

Opinion - readers views and feedback, especially with a literary flavour.

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[Contacts - URL's to visit on the net](#)

[Australian links](#) is a homely site with a lot of useful information.

[The Australia Council](#) has useful links to other arts agencies but be prepared to wait as graphics mount.

[The Ozlit site](#) is massively comprehensive, with a huge database of Australian writers, but it is very, very slow.

[Fremantle Arts Centre Press](#) has a clear and simple site which tells all you need to know without distracting bells and whistles.

Prolific and successful writer, [Sherry-Anne Jacobs](#), has a prize-winning web site which is well worth a look. It is a model of clarity with speedy graphics.

[Web Wombat](#) is a recommended search engine for Australia.

Other Australian search engines:

AltaVista Australia <http://www.altavista.yellowpages.com.au>

AusIndex <http://www.ausindex.com.au>

Answers <http://www.answers.com.au>

Excite Australia <http://www.excite.com.au>

Matilda <http://www.aaa.com.au/matilda>

Matilda features a number of Australian State search engines

to help narrow your search even further.

Inklings: newsletter for writers. This excellent Canadian site emphasises technical aspects of writing, especially targeting and marketing. It's worth a look at inkspot.com/inklings/

The QUOTATIONS HOME PAGE, contains a mass of information at :

<http://www.geocities.com/~spanoudi/quote.html>

Australian Writers Organisations On-line e-mail Addresses: (Please contribute any others that you would like to have listed.)

Australian Society of Authors <asa@asauthors.org.au> <http://www.asauthors.org.au/>

Australian Writers Guild <awgsyd@ozemail.com.au>

(THESE TWO ARE THE PROFESSIONAL AND "UNION" ORGANISATIONS FOR WRITERS OF BOOKS AND SCRIPT, RESPECTIVELY. THEIR FEES ARE HIGH AND THEY MAINLY CATER FOR WRITERS WHO ARE GENERATING INCOME FROM THEIR CRAFT.)

Society of Women Writers (WA) <trudy@inet.net.au>

Fellowship of Australian Writers (WA writers centre) <fawwa@inet.net.au>
<<http://www.inet.net.au/~fawwa/>>

Located at the base of Melon Hill in Allen Park, near the corner of Kirkwood and Wood Streets in Swanbourne.

Postal Address: PO box 312, Cottesloe 6011. Phone: (08)93844771, fax: (08)93844854

Katharine Susannah Prichard Writers Centre (WA Writers Centre) <kspf@inet.net.au>

Located at 11 Old York Road, Greenmount 6056. Phone: (08)92941872, fax: (08)92941372

Peter Cowan Writers Centre (WA writers centre) <nwacowan@inet.net.au>

Located on the Joondalup Campus, Edith Cown University, POBox 239, Joondalup 6919. Phone/fax: (08)93012282

New South Wales Writers Centre <nswwc@ozemail.com.au>

Queensland Writers Centre <qldwriters@peg.apc.org>

South Australian Writers Centre <writers@eastend.com.au>

Victorian Writers Centre<writers@vicnet.net.au>

New Zealand Writers Organisations On-line e-mail Addresses:

New Zealand Society of Authors <nzsa@arachna.co.nz> (The Society apparently includes the New Zealand PEN and has six branches.)

New Zealand Author<nza@clear.net.nz> (This the nzsa magazine.)

(Home Page URLs, if available, may often be found by re-jigging the e-mail address:
http://www.(address after @)/~(address before @)/
for example, pixpress@ iinet.net.au becomes http://www.iinet.net.au/~pixpress/)

Contributors

(Published contributors are invited to contribute their details to this section.)

Sherry Anne Jacobs is an internationally published writer in three genres, with nearly a score of publications to her credit.

Glen Phillips teaches at Edith Cowan University and is a well-known poet and sometime contributor to this magazine. He has enjoyed writing fellowships in Italy and China to draw on for some of his subject matter. His recent book of poems, *Spring Burning: New and Selected Poems 1967-1997*, was recently published by Folio/Salt under the auspices of FACP.

Kevin Gillam earns his living with his bow as a teacher of music and has had many of his poems published in literary magazines.

Alec Choate is the doyen of poets in the west, with an extensive record of publication and several books of verse brought out by Fremantle Arts Centre Press. He was recently honoured with a tribute at the Alexander Library by the Western Australian Writers Forum.

Janet Woods is a British-born, Australian writer. The first short story she wrote was accepted for publication and her first novel, "Thread of Destiny," was published by Robert Hale (UK) four years later, and sold on to Wordsworth Publishing. Her second novel, "Spellbound," has been serialised in a magazine, and along with "In Bed With The Enemy," a more recent creation, will be e-published by New Concepts in February, 2000.

Jim Cornish is a writer of whimsical (and other) poems and co-author of a chapbook with

Fran Sbrocchi, an accomplished and prolific writer and poet. Fran recently brought out her own extensive collection of poems, *Flight Patterns*.

Shen practises medicine and poetry in Adelaide.

N.Anon has an ancient and honourable lineage. It is, of course, Net Anon!

Debbie Hill is a beginning writer and mother of six.

Advertisements.



Sappho's Delight, poems by Walter Vivian

\$12.95 posted.

Spring Burning: New and Selected Poems 1967-1997 by Glen Phillips

Glen is well-known poet and sometime contributor to this magazine. He has enjoyed writing fellowships in Italy and China to draw on for some of his subject matter.

Publisher: Folio/Salt (John Kinsella)

The Wheels of Hama

Collected War Poems by Alec Choate

\$17.50 or \$19.00 posted from 11A Joseph St, West Leederville WA 6007, Ph: (08) 9381 8203

Alec Choate is the doyen of poets in the west, with an extensive record of publication and several books of verse brought out by Fremantle Arts Centre Press.

Brillig

edited by Roland Leach

Brillig is a brilliant little magazine for secondary students. In quality and sophistication, it displays work rivalling much to be found in adult literary magazines. The slithy toves produce two issues per year.

Subscription is \$10.00 per annum or \$5.00 singly from Blackwatch, Presbyterian Ladies College, Box 126, COTTESLOE WA 6011.

Not a Proper Shop

Walter Vivian

This nostalgic book of poems would make an ideal gift for a west coaster exiled overseas or interstate. See reviews on PixelPress page. Available at Dymocks Floreat, Dymocks Claremont, Lane Bookshop Claremont, Collins Cottesloe, Bookcaffe Swanbourne and other booksellers.

ISBN 0-9587350-0-X \$10.00

Sudden Alchemy

The winning poems from the prestigious annual Tom Collins Poetry Prize have been compiled and published in this work.

\$24.95 from booksellers or FAWWA

Dancing On The Freeway

By Ethel Webb Bundell (LMP - Aus \$15.00)

Ethel Webb Bundell spins a tale of heartbreak and despair, which may be too familiar for some in *Dancing On The Freeway*. The story centres around Vee, who is coming to terms with the tragic loss, two years earlier, of her husband and baby son. She finds a dangerous kind of solace in the arms of Grant, who was once a brilliant journalist, but is now reduced to a pathetic drunk.

The issue of women who love too much is explored throughout, as Vee gathers her strength to begin the long awaited journey back to reality. A place long since vacated by Grant, who is more or less, in constant hallucinatory state as the story progresses.

In most films, or any other medium which tries depicting alcoholism, the worst case scenario for a drunk is to have him or her (mostly Him) driving down the street, and having a fender bender with another vehicle. This person's alcohol problem is then amazingly cured by this incident, or a few harsh words from loved ones. Bundell therefore, strives to expose the side of alcoholism, unknown to many, a side which exemplifies how low "rock bottom" can be for sufferers of this disease. As she stated in the novel's introductory note, "I wrote this because, at the time, I felt the literature and information about alcoholism was far too hopeful.

Extremely well written, Bundell's story gives the reader's heart a good tugging with some wry humour injected along the way.

Chi Tran in *New Readers World Book Reviews*.

Flight Patterns

A collection of poems by Frances Arnett Sbrocchi, principally on the theme of migration and immigration. Available from Fran <naisburi@iinet.net.au> or

The Well Bookshop @ \$12.00.

Dutch Point by Barbara Yates Rothwell (Lagoon Press) \$35.00

The Boy from the Hulks by Barbara Yates Rothwell (Longman Cheshire) \$9.95.

www.iinet.net.au/~ignpress/mymag

E&OE. IN THIS CASE, ERRORS AND OMISSIONS EXPECTED. IF WRITERS DETECT THAT WE HAVE SINNED IN DISPLAYING THEIR WORK, THEY ARE INVITED TO E-MAIL CORRECTIONS, IN THE KINDEST POSSIBLE TERMS, AND CORRECTIONS WILL BE MADE FORTHWITH.

Have you noted **PixelPapers'**
bookmark? Please surf in again!

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