

EMERALD CITY

Issue 38

October 1998

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Introduction

And welcome to Monterey.

This issue should first see the light of day at the World Fantasy Convention in Monterey, California. I've not been to a WFC before, and I gather that it is much more of an event for writers than for fans. So what am I going to be doing there, you ask? Well, hopefully I'll get to catch up on news from Melbourne from Jack Dann and Janeen Webb. I'll wander round the tourist shops on Cannery Row and try not to buy anything. I'll maybe pop into the aquarium again. And most importantly, I'll go and watch the sea otters. Heck, given that I'll be there for a few days I might even try one of the scuba trips round the kelp forest. Monterey is a gorgeous little town. What a shame the transport access is so poor. It would make a wonderful site for a Westercon. Maybe we should do SMOFcon there one day.

But enough of crystal balls. When you last heard from me I was in England. Most of this issue has been written there. I've been to a couple of conventions and I've been continuing to catch up on the best of British SF. Here's the gen.

Into the Abyss

Well, not me exactly. Glasgow. Those poor unfortunates who have been with me since issue 1 will know that I am not exactly enamoured of Scotland's "City of Culture". You can imagine, therefore, how pleased I was when, arriving there for Albacon '98, I discovered that the entire area around the Central Hotel was one massive building site. "Wow", I thought, "they are going to take the whole place apart and level it". The truth, however, was even more apposite. Glasgow is built on good coal-bearing rock. The land under the city is honeycombed with mine tunnels, and slowly but surely the city is sinking into the abyss. What does this tell us about the next UK Worldcon bid?

A few words about the Central first. Believe it or not, these guys are well used to conventions. Unfortunately the best laid plans, as a famous Scotsman once said, are not proof against Murphy. Those of you who were at Intersection will probably remember the Central most for the evening that the Night Manager tried to shut down all of the parties. Visions of the Hotel Horrors of the Brighton Metropole doubtless sprang to mind. You may be interested to know that the same guy also caused trouble at the Albacon later that year. When the Con staff complained to the manager the reply was something like this: "sorry guys, the chain won't let us fire him, but we have got agreement to have him moved. He's

working out his notice now and we promise you he will never set foot in this hotel again". We have had our revenge.

I was hoping to get out to the SCCC and see what the new additions looked like, but somehow being at a convention got in the way. Which I guess shows that I was enjoying myself. It should do, 'cos I was.

For starters the convention had some excellent guests: Kim Newman, Ken MacLeod, Rodney Matthews and Ray Harryhausen. By the time you get this issue, Kim's new Dracula book, *Judgement of Tears*, will be out in the US. It is set in Italy in 1959 and will doubtless be full of references to period films that only Terry Frost and other serious film buffs will understand. Perhaps Kim should provide a recommended viewing list. However, it will be a great book, and I hope to feature it in the next issue (alongside the new George RR. Martin). Kim says that there will be one final book in the Dracula series. It will be set in Hollywood in the 1970s and will be full of sex kittens, disco dancing and truly hideous clothes. The *Coppola's Dracula* short story that appeared in the *Mammoth Book of Dracula Stories* will form part of the novel.

The other news from Kim is that he and Eugene Byrne are planning a series of books together. Eugene, as you may remember, partnered Kim on the thoroughly excellent *Back in the USSA*. The new series will also be alternate history, set in Nazi-occupied Britain. Kim says it is going to be a little bit darker than *Back in the USSA*. They intend to focus on what life would actually have been like: who would have collaborated, who would have resisted, and why. But I suspect that Captain Mainwaring and friends will find their way into it somehow, albeit probably in disguise.

I spent a lot of time talking about Ken MacLeod's books last issue. Having now met and talked with him I am happy to report that he is a very nice bloke indeed. Probably the most interesting thing I discovered was that he and Iain Banks were at school together and have been friends for some considerable time. Certain parts of the relationship between Jon Wilde and Dave Reid described in *The Stone Canal* are based on that friendship, though Ken points out that neither character is based on either one of them.

Banks turned up to Ken's Guest of Honour speech. Andy Adams was doing the introduction and at one point quoted me as describing Ken as Banks's protégé. Iain was of the opinion that Ken should be deeply offended by such a suggestion. All Ken would say was that, whilst Iain knew that he wanted to be a writer from a very early age, and set out determinedly to become one, others take a little longer to get round to realising what they want to do with their lives. That is a sentiment I can relate to.

Somehow I managed to miss out on Harryhausen's talk, which is a shame. I was rather hoping to be able to sit through *Clash of Titans* and *Jason and the Argonauts*, having not seen either for some time, but if there was a film programme I seem to have missed it. I walked in on the end of Rodney Matthews' talk to discover that he had done all of the art concept stuff for the new Gerry Anderson series with the spaceship that looks like a thatched cottage. Nice to see the guy still working. I don't particularly care for his style, but he clearly has a lot of talent.

Big names aside, however, the star presentation of the con (and apparently of every Albacon) was Dr. John Salthouse of Manchester University. I can't remember the title of his panel, but it should have been entitled "Better Explosions through Chemistry". Guys and gals, this presentation would probably not be allowed in an English hotel, and if we tried it in the US we'd probably have the local Fire Department and the National Guard storm the

place. It is a shame. Making bangs is fun, and ridiculously easy when you know how. Just don't try this at home.

Running concurrently with Albacon this year was Homeworld, a Highlander convention. It was an interesting idea to minimise on overheads by running the two cons at the same time, but it seemed a great shame that, for the most part, the two events seemed completely separate. (It was also noticeable that almost all of the workers on registration and ops were Albacon people.)

I've only seen the first of the Highlander films and know nothing about the TV series. On the basis of Homeworld, however, I think I have a pretty good idea of what goes on. The vast majority of Highlander fans seem to be middle aged women, and having seen one of the guests, a gentleman by the name of Jim Byrnes, I can quite understand why. More than enough to set the average red-blooded, heterosexual woman's heart palpitating. Apparently the guy has a pretty good blues band as well (something else I missed). I might find myself going to another Highlander convention in the future.

Aside from the usual star-worshipping and autographing sessions, Homeworld had quite a few interesting programme items. There were practical demonstrations of staged sword-fighting and of what to do with all those yards and yards of material when you are putting on your kilt. I went to one on warrior women in history (apparently the TV series has got on the Xena bandwagon) which was very good (meaning it came up with a few people I didn't know about).

To summarise, darn good little convention, nice bunch of folks, shame it is in Glasgow. I did try, Vince. Honest I did. Went out for two meals: both pretty average. Settled for a burger the other night: got food poisoning. Went shopping: awful smell of urine around the city centre shopping mall. Sad really.

One other thing I did get out of the convention was that I have finally made up my mind about the great Ops debate. One of the most significant differences in style between how the Brits run conventions and how Americans do it is that, whereas the Americans tend to have separate departments and Operations is basically a communications system, Brits run everything out of the Ops department.

The American system is better. No question. Centralising everything in Ops has two main failings. First there is a tremendous danger of control, especially of information, being hoarded by a small number of people who then overwork themselves. Remember what I said about micro-management at Bucconeer? British cons encourage that sort of behaviour. Second, it results in a view that all any job requires is to throw a bunch of gophers at it. No matter what the task, be it running a masquerade or registration, no techniques are developed, and skills, if acquired, are not passed on. Of course this is exactly what is wrong with much of British industry as well.

Having a Masqued Ball

From the sublime to the ridiculous, or is it the other way round? From the shadowy abyss to the geriatric ghetto: Glasgow to Eastbourne. It is hard to find two towns in Britain so far apart both geographically and culturally.

Eastbourne also managed to demonstrate some of the best and the worst of British hotels. The Albany is a smallish establishment on the sea front which is owned by, and presumably used as an overly for, the much larger Cavendish next door. It has great views of the sea. It has some fabulous old furniture which looks like it has been there since the nineteenth century, and the staff are very friendly. But it has no concept of service whatsoever.

I was sharing a room with Giulia de Cesare, and we were not best pleased to discover that the hotel had only one key for the room. We were told that this was a fire regulation: if the key was lodged with reception they would know that the room was clear. Well firstly no one remembers to leave the key with reception when they go out. And second, as Giulia pointed out, having one key would lead to one of us having to be locked in the room, without a key, if we didn't want to go to bed at the same time. Stupid. Also, whereas the Central is well geared up to get the maximum out of the fannish desire for reasonable-quality cheap food and vast quantities of beer, the Albany didn't seem in any great hurry to provide food or drink.

Of course food and drink were hardly the point of the event. Masque is the annual convention of the UK branch of the International Costumers' Guild. It is a weekend for dressing up. The UK has some very good costumers, and there was some splendid stuff on show, but if you had come there expecting an event like Costume Con, or even the Australian Costumers' Ball, you would be sadly disappointed.

Costuming in the UK is very much on a relaxed and amateur basis. Masque is a weekend at which a small bunch of friends (there were less than 60 people registered) get together and show each other their new costumes. There are competitive masquerades, but it is all on a very informal basis. Which is just as well considering the conditions under which the events were run. To describe the facilities as Spartan would be to give compliments way beyond what was due.

I really don't understand what is wrong with costuming in the UK. They had a masquerade at Albacon which I thought I might help at. I changed my mind when I was told not to use the term "den mom" because it was American and would cause offence. I offered to help out at Masque, but despite the committee being obviously over-stretched, I wasn't asked to do anything. I think much of it is just snobbery. "We don't want to do what the Americans do". "We don't want to put on a professional show because that is un-fannish". What a waste.

Of course there are advantages to such an approach. Penny Hill's mediaeval night-dress, which featured large quantities of absolutely exquisite blackwork (and took three months to embroider) would not have got a look in on anything other than workmanship in a big show. At Masque everyone could see it clearly and there was no question about it winning. On the other hand, Mikki Dennis's spectacular South American costume, entitled *The Wind Brings Music to the World*, was clearly intended to be shown off on stage. You could see just a little too much of the construction close up.

One of the features of Masque is the Chaos Costuming area where you get to play in a vast pile of scraps of material. A sewing machine is on hand, and members are encouraged to

put together something for the Anything Goes masquerade on the final day. There is a definite tendency here to favour imagination over workmanship. It is apparently more acceptable to produce a costume with a lot of fraying edges than to not produce one at all. But it also produces some spectacular results. This year the hotel decided to enter the competition. One of the barmaids, Gayle, was a little disappointed that she didn't get a part in their entry, so Jaine Weddel put one together for her from the Chaos Costume pile in ten minutes, and it looked great.

Reports of costuming conventions are, of course, a bit meaningless without pictures. For those of you who have web access, there should be a selection on the *Emerald City* photos page. As usual, my profuse apologies to those of you who are not equipped with the necessary tech.

Any Colour as long as it is Vurt

What do you do with words? Some people weave, taking the complex skein of plot back and fore in ever increasing knots until it forms the fabric of a novel. Others exposit, laying their insight bare before the world and trumpeting loud the correctness of their causes. You can paint, leaving languid strokes of colour across the bare parchment, as evocative of a scene as anything made with mere physical brushes. And you can sculpt, moulding the clay of life between your hands like the Gods of old, creating new and vibrant life, independent and self-willed.

Jeff Noon does all of these, but for preference he likes to make music. Hard, fast, insistently thrumming music. The beat of the street. The rhythm of the night. The screams of machines. Syncopation-nymphomation. Neurodancer. Attacking club culture with twin Thompsons. Eighteen with a bullet, and each one marked with an E.

His latest work, code-named *Pixel Juice*, is a pick 'n' mix of pernicious jingles; fragments of tunes and melodies from the familiar to the bizarre which meld and mutate into each other with startling dexterity. There are snapshots and poems, and classic SF themes given new clothes of chrome and feathers. There are glimpses from the underside of the world of Vurt. (Did the kids at school call you Scribble, Jeff? Were you writing, even then?) There is crime and rain and grime and pain: the music of Manchester. And everywhere there is the patient, seductive spectre of death.

There is even self-parody

*Oh, there's weirdo perversions galore!
Guns, hookers and drugs by the score;
Critics should pan it,
They really should ban it,
Or at least put it front of the store.*

An off-switch for the body. Murderous adverts. Artificial life more real than the original. Living letters. Dead cool. The secret of sublime scratching. The world as a media

experience, set in a giant shopping mall. Twisted, contorted, mutated, evolved, and only to be taken intravenously.

In the vats, with their Vaz, the cats play their Jazz and the music it has taken over my brain.

The words they are ringing,
The genes they are swinging,
For Noony is singing
The dub dance of life.

The labs are refining
The chemical binding,
Your mind for subliming
To the dub dance of life.

The chrome is organic:
Your body's mechanic
Cries digital panic
In the dub dance of life.

But the mix keeps on growing,
A vast soup of knowing
And coming and sowing.
It's the dub dance of life.

Fucking hell, Jeff, the damn stuff's contagious!

Pixel Juice. Short, sharp, sexy and mind-expanding. Shoot some up today.

Pixel Juice - Jeff Noon - Doubleday - hardcover

The Prodigal Returns

If you were to ask me where to find the best SF writer in Britain today, I would tell you to go look on the mainstream shelves. Not, I hasten to add, for the estimable Mr. Banks. Sure he's very good indeed, but to my mind the top spot goes to M. John Harrison. Those of you with memories that stretch back to the early will remember the city of Viriconium with particular fondness, though Harrison produced many good SF books in that period. Then he went mainstream.

Well, actually he went up a mountain. *Climbers* and *The Ice Monkey* are both born of Mike's passion for rock climbing. I haven't read them yet, but a friend of mine who is a climber tells me that they might not mean much if you've not been out there on the edge. *Course of the Heart* (reviewed in Emerald City #8) could possibly be described as fantasy, but you won't find a literary critic agreeing with you. There is little, however, that they could say about claiming *Signs of Life* for science fiction. It is on the genre shelves in Borders. It is about biotech. Paul McAuley, for reasons which will become obvious later in this issue, is credited with providing the technical background. The man has come back to us.

Of course it is nothing like that SF that most of you will be used to. It is SF written as if it were a mainstream novel. It does, I guess, what Magic Realism does for fantasy. You can believe every word of it, and not because of the science. "Fusion of super-realistic dialogue with caustic observation", says *Time Out*. "Superbly realized", says *The Times*, quite possibly using the word in the sense of "made real" and not just "created". "An irresistible harbinger of the world we're entering and an elegy for the one we've lost", says the *Washington Post*, but then that was Elizabeth Hand whose approach to writing is about as close to Harrison's as anyone I know.

OK, so what about the story. I said it was about biotech, right? Well, not exactly. It is about people in a world where biotech is starting to get out of control. Most importantly, it is about desire. It is about the aspirational life-style of post-Thatcher Britain. It is about wanting.

"You are an extraordinary person", I said.

She sniffed and wiped her eyes.

"I know", she said. "I know. But what does that matter, when you can't have what you want."

I can't sum up the book any better than that little quote, except perhaps to add that if someone comes along and promises to give you what you want, no matter how outlandish the request, you should be afraid, very afraid.

It has a Dave McKean cover too. What more could you ask for?

A new Viriconium book, of course. And the rumour is that we might just get it. Watch this space...

Signs of Life - M. John Harrison - Flamingo - softcover

Of Angels and Rivers

Funny how things fall into place. Here I am focussing on British writers. Paul J. McAuley is one the brightest stars in the SF field. I find myself in St. Andrews and discover that the guy used to be a biology lecturer there. His books seem to be selling reasonably well, which probably means that he is getting a lot more money now than he did before. (And yes I do know how badly writing pays.)

Pasquale's Angel is the book which first brought McAuley to the attention of the great mass of SF-buying public. It is an alternate history set in a Florence where the Great Engineer's inventions have proved successful enough to usher in an early Industrial Revolution. Pasquale is a young painter (a dying breed given some of the things being invented by the artificers) who accidentally becomes involved in a plot against the city, or against the Pope, or something. He is assisted in his work by a retired politician turned journalist by the name of Niccolo Machiavelli. That should tell you most of what you need to know about the plot.

As far as the novel is concerned, to my mind it suffers from the same sad lack of direction as *Fairyland*. McAuley tries to fill his tale with interesting twists, but succeeds only in creating a jarring meandering of direction that leaves the reader confused and irritated. Judgement of history: promising, but needs polish.

Child of the River is McAuley's last but one book, and is the opening salvo in a multipart series called *Confluence*, that being the name of the world in which it is set. *Confluence* is an artificial world full of strange alien species which seem to be descended from Earth animals. The various parts of the world are connected by a giant river, down which the dead are floated.

I think you will already be seeing a wealth of SF ideas culled from much of the best of the genre. There are elements of *Riverworld*, of *Ringworld*, of David Brin's *Uplift* concept and the way Larry Niven designs aliens. Most significantly, however, the style book reminded me strongly of Gene Wolfe's *Book of the New Sun*. *Confluence* is a decaying world full of ancient, improperly understood tech and strange religions. Severian would feel quite at home there.

This is not meant to be a complaint on my part. McAuley hasn't based to book solely on one idea from elsewhere, as Ian MacDonald sometimes seems to do. He's taken much of what is best from SF's history, and then tried to produce a story in the style of one of the very best series ever. He doesn't quite have Wolfe's knack for obfuscation and sudden, startling revelations, but he's done pretty well. It is a brave thing he is aspiring to, and so far it has come off pretty well. The second book in the series is out in hardcover, and I'll be looking out for it.

Pasquale's Angel - Paul J. McAuley - VGSF - softcover

Child of the River - Paul J. MacAuley - Vista - softcover

The Best Laid Plans of Cats

"My name is Divine Endurance. I am a cat, a creature of extensive cunning, patience and tenacity. It has fallen to me, for there is no one else to take on the task, to act as guide and mentor to a very special person. Her name is Chosen Among the Beautiful, Cho for short, and it is her duty to serve mankind and grant their every wish."

Divine Endurance is quite an old Gwyneth Jones novel, written after *White Queen* but before the other two novels in the Aleutian trilogy. It is set in a far future, post-apocalyptic version of Southeast Asia where civilisation is all but collapsed and, if there is anywhere else, it is far beyond the lifeless, glassy plains of southern China.

This much is fairly obvious, but Gwyneth, being Gwyneth, is not going to tell you an awful lot more. It becomes obvious after a while that *Divine Endurance* and Cho are not exactly what they seem, though quite what they are is open to conjecture. There are hints of vast powers, and other hints that their understanding of the wishes and desires of human beings is far from perfect. This, it may occur to you, is a fatal combination.

Meantime the action takes place against a background of warring dynasties and simmering resentment against the tall, pale-skinned Rulers who have sailed in their floating islands, packed with technology, from a wasted land far to the south to subjugate the Malay Peninsula. There are interesting cultures, important roles for women, and hints of mysterious powers understood only by the old crones.

All in all, it is devious, imaginative and intelligent but, at the same time, confusing and obscure. There is such a thing as making the reader work too hard. Unlike the Aleutian series, which is primarily about sexual politics, this book is about the concept of political revolution itself. Is it justified? Is it worth it? If so, by what means, at what pace, and at what cost? Sadly the book is just a little too obscure to allow the message to shine through.

Divine Endurance - Gwyneth Jones - Headline - softcover

Britwatching

And now, for the benefit of my American friends and Pam Wells, another investigation into the bizarre world of British potato chip flavours. First up are Brannigans, purveyors of the rather excellent roast beef and mustard flavour. They have decided to go into the market for what one might call "designer chips": the sort of thing that Kettle produces. And so far so good. Their double cheddar and chives is one of the best cheese and herb favours I've had in a long time, and sea salt and lime vinegar is an interesting twist on a tired and boring staple. I like these guys.

The supermarkets have also tried to jump on the quality chip bandwagon. Safeway were offering jalapeno and Monterey Jack, which I could not possibly pass up. They were not quite as hot as the US equivalent, and nowhere near Kettle Australia's wonderful red chili flavour, but they were OK.

Walkers, the leading band of down market chip, have a whole range of bizarre flavours, including paprika, Worcester sauce and tomato ketchup. Sadly most of these are available only in mixed packed along with vast quantities of boring stuff so I've not sampled them.

I did, however, get tempted by another mixed pack from Highlander. This one included Ayrshire bacon and brown sauce which tastes surprisingly like the advertised flavour. I guess you should have them for breakfast with scrambled eggs. According to the packet, Highlander also produce such exotic flavours as Aberdeen roast beef, Caledonian tomato, fried onion and chili cheese. More power to them.

The last month in the UK has been Party Conference Season, that is, the time when the major political parties take it in turns to get together by the seaside and parade their internal divisions for the world to see. It can be quite fascinating, in a sociological sort of way.

The Liberal Democrats had first go. They are always good for a laugh because, especially after Labour's conversion to market economics, they have no policies of their own worth speaking of. As a result they become an umbrella organisation for the disaffected of all sides. The conference was particularly notable for the leadership's new education policy being howled down by the rank and file. There is, of course, no real chance of any of this

matter because without proportional representation the party is unlikely to have any great influence. Sadly, PR, along with a bill of rights, is one of those election promises that Tony Blair has found distinctly less attractive now that he has a massive majority to play with.

Labour's show, as we have come to expect these days, was stage-managed to perfection. This even went as far as the vast display screen in front of which speakers were obliged to stand and which changed colour to match the clothes and message of the performers. Blair's keynote speech was swathed in imperial purple, whereas un-favoured speakers from the floor were required to stand in front of a patchwork of clashing colours. Two things were clearly missing from the conference. The colour red was nowhere to be seen, and none of the major speeches had any substance to them whatsoever.

And so to the wreckage of the once mighty Tory party, most of whom are unknown even in Britain. A funny little chap with a bald head and a very bad upper class accent called William Hague claims to be the party leader, though everyone knows that he dare not do anything without Maggie's approval. The Leaderene is rumoured to prefer the party thug, Michael Portillo, but his ability to appeal to the mass of Torydom is severely hampered by his being half Spanish and half Scots. This is not the sort of ancestry that is at all acceptable to the blue-blooded (and blue-rinsed in the case of the ladies) party faithful. In any case he lost his seat at the last election which is rather embarrassing. Thatcher countered by pointedly falling asleep in Hague's speech.

Hague's Big Idea for this year has been to try to put an end to the squabbling over Europe by having a referendum amongst party members over the Single European Currency. Unsurprisingly, 84% of them voted no. What would you expect from the bunch of Little Englanders that is all the Tory Party has left in the way of support? It is all very reminiscent of Michael Foot's sojourn at the helm of Labour. Massively popular with party activists, Foot was completely out of touch with the country as a whole and a complete liability in elections.

You would have thought that they would have noticed by now. Portillo has been busy making a TV series that purports to look for a New Direction for his beleaguered party. Parts of it were surprisingly Libertarian. He even went so far as to admit that his party's line on drug control was totally inconsistent with its stance on market economics, though he argued that it would be political suicide to change it. The most significant episode, however, was the last one on Europe in which he failed utterly to find anyone (other than the obvious choice of Norman Tebbit) who agreed with him. It was the best pro-Europe TV programme I have seen in a long time.

I guess, however, that I should say something good about the old country, and thankfully I've found something. I spent a week staying with an old friend in Folkestone and I must say it is a very nice town indeed. Of course being a port helps. There's nothing quite like being able to pop down to the harbour and buy fresh fish that has been landed that morning. There's also a very nice walk along the sea front out towards Hythe, marred only by the looming sight of the Dungeness nuclear power station sitting, apparently far out to sea, in the far distance. There is even some sand, which is unusual for beaches in the south-east of Britain, though I must say that there is nothing quite like the sound of surf on a beach made of small pebbles, and that makes the seafront walk ever better.

For those of you still struggling with geography, Folkestone is just to the west of Dover and is in the bit of land between the sea and the exit from the Channel Tunnel. This has

apparently resulted in the town being somewhat left behind economically, but that is no bad thing. It means that the town centre is still quite pleasant, and has some decent shops, even a reasonable-sized supermarket. There are even some good smaller shops.

Sadly my friend tells me that the town council has obtained a supply of money to "do the place up". What this means, of course, is paying all the big shops to move to out of town retail centres and putting up the rates for the town centre shops so that most useful little businesses move out. The signs of decay can already be seen in the invasion of charity shops in the town centre.

You may think that charity shops are a good idea. Certainly they allow the poor access to better quality clothing that they might otherwise afford. Also they raise money for whatever good cause owns them. They also drive out small retailers. You see a charity shop has much lower overheads. Much of the stock is donated, they are expected to have lower standards of fittings, and many of the staff are volunteers. Thus they are able to pay higher rents than ordinary stores. In St. Andrews, a town which is dependent entirely on tourism and the university, they have even started buying in tourist, which they are able to sell more cheaply than the local stores. Result: none of the interesting little shops that make shopping in towns, as opposed to malls, such a pleasurable experience.

"Ome m'Lady?"

"Home, Parker."

Well, I have to make do with BA rather than a pink Rolls Royce, but it is indeed time to go home. No more having to watch out for thieves and muggers all the time. No more people yelling abuse at you in the street for no apparent reason. And no more freezing my butt off. Just dear old Silicon Valley where it is safe and warm and welcoming. If only we had a local Marks & Spencer...

Footnote

I have a veritable feast for you next issue. New novels by Kim Newman, George R.R. Martin and William Browning Spencer, three writers whom I have raved about in the past. Also a new epic fantasy from a British writer called Tom Arden who is adding significantly to the growing amount of quality work in this otherwise benighted field. So with all this good stuff on offer, I'm off to read some of it.

Ciao,

Love 'n' hugs,

Cheryl