

Sardine
#1
Tin Gods



Sardi ne Ti n Gods

Issue One

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GodSpeak

Not that I'm proclaiming to be a god, of course, but I thought that it'd be more interesting than "introduction" or "editorial" or some such. Theoretically speaking, if I were, it'd be more accurate to say "goddess"—but I have no aspersions to such titles.

There is always the obligatory explanation of the title: I'm not much of a person doing this. I've always had trouble trying to come up with a fresh name for essays and for previous fanzines. This time around I was "inspired", if you will, while watching an episode of *Highlander: The Series*. One of the episodes was named "Little Tin God", and thinking upon things that would be smaller than that, memories of a sardine tin came to mind. When I used to eat such things (the sardines, not the container) I called it a "can of sardines", but that's semantics.

Late in December I came up with the idea of doing a genzine, different from the SF publication and from the APAzines and perzines since. Not yet *another* thing to do, but I was bored of waiting to see if I'd get back into university this year after failing yet again, and needed something to do. Even so, this zine came out just on time — procrastination is one of my bigger sins.

A little history on my publication history — the SF publication *Harbinger* went for four issues before I folded it because of monetary issues. However, nothing was lost; I had fun doing it, and a couple of the stories went on to be nominated for the Aurealis award, which I'm sure the

writers were very chuffed about. One of them certainly looked it when I met him. *Harbinger* might be revived at a later stage — when I have the income to do so. For the moment I'll content myself with zines.

The perzines I've done so far haven't seen the light of day, but were incorporated into the two APAzines that I do for BWA and ANZAPA. Those two satisfy my need to ramble on about life issues of the time being and the occasional book that I've read.

Should anyone want to contribute to future issues, feel free. In fact, I encourage you to do so and await you with open arms. I can most certainly blather on for pages on end, but I'm sure that the receivers of this fanzine would appreciate works of those other than myself.

This issue has a bit of history on the city that I live in — ghosts, more precisely. Brisbane has a ghost tour, but Logan does not, so I took it upon myself to tell about one local ghost that I am very familiar with. There's a piece on online fan music, including two interviews with those who make their music available online, DocCovington and Patrice Deceuninck. Last, but not least, there's a pompous essay on my perceptions of gender neutrality in *The White Abacus* that I wrote in 1999 when I was doing linguistics. I couldn't write something like that these days; I've forgotten all of that which I learnt in that semester. All but 'noun phrases', which would be best forgotten anyway.

The next issue will appear whenever; I do intend to have one by the end of the year, though. It'll take some time to get together enough material to make another one. This one was mashed together with short notice, though I did make the deadline that I'd supply myself with, as I mentioned before.

There ought to be more commentary on SF books that I've read in the past while, as well as another piece on the ghosts of Logan, though of one rather more interesting one than the one at the gallery.

Happy reading, folks; I hope to hear back from some of you regarding your views and any suggestions for improvement for future issues.

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An Introduction

Parts of this was originally published in an APAzine for BWA

I've had an interesting life; born in Australia, I didn't manage to stay here for long. My parents decided soon after my birth to take off on a round-the-world voyage. Perhaps more accurately, my father decided and everyone else was along for the ride.

I'm a born Sydney gal, and having returned there a few times since being back in Australia, I am most happy that we have settled in Brisbane (north, and much more tropical and cheaper). I had the time of my life travelling. It's not like when I travel now—going somewhere and knowing that I will return home after a specified period. The yacht was my home, and although I knew that we were going to return to our home country, Australia was a mythical land for me, about which I believed great many things that were not true. In essence, I was a tourist returning. I had no 'country' I could call my home; that was our yacht Pampero II. I used to visit it every so often to remind myself of the 11 years I spent aboard her, but now my father and brother are doing work on her to put her up for sale. We went to many countries ... over 30 in all, of which we managed to completely skip the UK and the US.

Leaving Australia in 1985, we headed for Asia, going first to India. This was the place that I had my first brush with death. Prior to that, upon nearing the country, we were besieged by 'fishermen' who demanded foreign products such as clothing, alcohol and cigarettes. Not having what they wanted, they soon left us alone. We stayed up a river for a while, and there we met up with some other Australians and made friends with locals. One day I fell into the river, which had very strong currents. I almost did drown, but my father came to fish me out by the hair. I was pampered for a short while afterwards but then blamed for having fallen in the water. I promptly placed the blame on my brother—not nice of me, I must admit.

... my parents were offered a price for me ...

Skipping a few countries...Sudan was interesting also, another first. My parents were offered a price for me for the first time. Notice I say first. A local man, he must have been rather taken with my then-blond hair, for he offered 50 camels in return for me, leading to future marriage. I am rather pleased that they didn't take him up on it.

We also had one of our gerry cans stolen here—something that is very important when one lives on a yacht, as they carry water. We didn't see who it was, and there was nothing that we could do. I hope that whomever took it needed it more than we did. Something that scared my parents, and because it did them, my brother and I, was when

we stopped (illegally, I admit) in an anchorage. We were filming when suddenly the army appeared. We didn't speak Arabic and they didn't speak English, but once we realised that they were not there to do us harm everything was much better. They took us back to base—which turned out to be far away—and were hospitable, that night treating us to a feast. They had been in the middle of Ramadan.

Egypt was interesting—they have a way of doing things that involve bribery to get anywhere. We managed to get to Cairo for one day to look at things, climb pyramids and the like. We went up inside one; it was eerie with scared adults all around. It wasn't scary for me as small spaces for adults at age 6 are not quite so small. No mummies within—we had to go to the museum to see those. I didn't think them that interesting, but the reconstructed photographs were.

We went to Israel and stayed at a kibbutz for a while with friends. Jerusalem was large and crowded with much tension. We walked around and ooh'd at everything. Well, I did anyway. I thought the people were as interesting as the buildings, especially the orthodox Jewish men, who I had never seen prior to being in Israel. We were lucky to have left our hostel when we did, for that area was bombed a few weeks after getting back to where our yacht was moored.

Cyprus was another country where I had a potentially fatal accident. When *Pampero II* was on the slipway I was climbing to get offboard without holding on, then slipped and fell from the top of the ladder onto hard concrete. When I came to I could not see, only hear. I was blind for hours, thought not as worried or scared as I could have been because I could hear the voices of my mother and my friend and her parents. I went to sleep at my mother's urging and awoke being able to see. Luckily for me.

Turkey and Greece would have to be two of the most beautiful countries that we visited, even if they were different. Turkey was friendly and inexpensive, whereas Greece was less so and considerably more expensive. We made friends in Turkey and were sorry to have left. We visited castles and other ruins in both countries. It's interesting to see signs of old cultures where Australia does not have them. I am not saying that we don't have old cultures—we most certainly do, even if we tend to forget the Aborigines. We have art and artefacts, but those are not open to the public and/or stay in museums—not nearly the reminders those large stone walls were. We stayed in Spain for several months; my brother and I went to school, with the aim of learning Spanish. We stayed for no reason that I can see other than that my brother and I were attending the local primary school.

The yachties have a social system that can be compared to fandom in a way. Everyone knows everyone else, or if not directly, then someone else that knows them. Few things are secret, and people help others out if possible. On occasion that we were broke, we had people lend us money; we had someone lend us a camera which we still have not returned—not that it is working anymore. It's the grapevine that lets us pass through countries with little or no hassle; this is the place where you can bribe the

officials to get through in one day rather than a few weeks, that country is in the midst of civil war. And the like. We managed to stay out of war-torn countries and arrive just after wars had ended thanks to this network. We also used to pick up each other's mail, especially if we knew that the other yacht had passed the port we were currently in. Consequently people sometimes got mail very late. At one stage we had a piece of mail handed over to us two years after it had been sent.

My brother and my schooling were from my parents. My mother taught us mathematics and to read and our father taught us how to spell. My brother was content to leave it at that, but I went further and read every geography, history, science and sociology text I could. In addition to this, I would read the fiction my father picked up in book-swaps (the way yachties got fresh reading material). I devoured everything—crime, horror, romance (accidents of choice on his behalf), thrillers. The first fantasy book that I read got me hooked on the genre, which was *The Fellowship of the Ring* by J. R. R. Tolkien. The last I remember seeing the book it no longer had its cover and all of the pages were falling out. Both my brother and me had quite high educational knowledge, as we found out on our return to Australia.

School was hard. We weren't used to children, despite being children ourselves. We weren't used to the backbiting, the bitching, and the violence. We'd been amongst adults all of our lives, who are generally more subtle in their approaches than walking up to you in the middle of a lunch break and giving you a wallop for nothing more than gazing in their direction for a millisecond too long. Not being precisely white myself (although my brother is), the racism was a new and unexpected thing. I left that first high school and relocated to a more multicultural high school where one of the quickest ways to get yourself hurt was to be racist.

I finished high school with no great drama after the initial rocky start, and then started into university. Intending to complete a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology, I began the rather different and lonely life of a uni student. First year I stuck my head into books—texts and fiction alike. I started off the same way in second year but then found friends, who changed my priorities slightly, much to the detriment of my studies. I also cooked up the brilliant idea of beginning my own SF magazine. I don't know how I began to think of it, but one night I went to bed considering it and woke up resolute to begin one.

When that was over and done with, my studies were failing, and they continued to do so for the next year. This year is the one in which I finish my degree once and for all.

A more complete version of my travels is available on my website, for those of you who are interested in reading it.

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The Electronic Era: Music

When people say “mp3s” most think of illegally ripped CDs, illegal songs available on the net, Napster, and lawsuits. But that is not the only thing that they are good for. Also available are a large range of free music. There certainly is a lot out there. One of my favoured things to do is seek out songs made by fans. Filk, melodies, themed songs, and the like.

The format mp3 stands for mpeg layer 3 (Motion Picture Entertainment Group Layer 3). It is a file compression format that supports audio. Even though it is in use by many people, it's not open source. There's a new format still in the works to solve that; a project called Vorbis. We can all wait and see. Until then, we'll be using mp3s.

Another format in which music is available is midi (Musical Instrument Digital Interface). These are not really music files as such—they're played through the sound card or synthesiser rather than anything else. They're not large files, as are mp3s, but small, around 25kb for an instrumental song of 2 minutes. These ones are the most abundant, for people don't have to go to the hassle of changing the files into WAV and then into mp3, and they're small enough to play on a website.

One of the best things about the internet that a lot of things are available for “free”—things that otherwise one would have not access too. Filksongs are one of those things. A simple search will result in a number of hits. This is excellent for those who don't have an active filking lot around them and like the stuff. Read: me. Running around to conventions isn't an option, and my musical capabilities are rather less than stellar.

The filk that I found was varied—some songs to Bujold's work, Darkover, miscellaneous others, including some humourous ones. Not all of them are good, certainly, but they're different enough from the stuff that one normally finds advertised as mp3s. One very prolific filker whose stuff is readily available online is Tom Smith, in mp3 format as well as CD.

Instrumentals are something else that I appreciate. One day, while searching for information to do with Robert Jordan's *The Wheel of Time*—when in my obsessive stage—and I came across “WoT music”. After a baffled moment, they were downloaded in curiosity. I have never looked back. They were synthesised music inspired by some event in the books, each one capturing the atmosphere excellently. From there on it was *The Lord of the Rings*—something for which there is a fair amount of music, both instrumental and lyrical songs. Some of the better stuff are by Patrice Deceuninck, a French composer.

Themed songs, songs that are composed from scratch and inspired by either book or TV, are also around. One of the ones who I listen to regularly are DocCovington's

songs, inspired by the television series *Xena: Warrior Princess*. This one is especially big as a fandom, and they are particularly audio-visual oriented group. There are many others out there: some for *The Lord of the Rings*, as I mentioned earlier, *Buffy: the Vampire Slayer*, and others.

Here are a few word from two fannish musicians.

DocCovington

I was raised in a household of musicians. My parents are retired singers. I was four when they took me to the opera for the very first time. My parents sent me to a public music school when I was five, where I learnt reading notes. Afterwards I had piano lessons for over ten years, but I was a lazy bone. Although I really love classical music, I have always known that it is not what I would like to do. In the course of time I discovered that my heart beats for rock music. So I joined a band and started writing my own songs. My TV show related songs are more of a hobby fun project, but Fredi Kohl (a.k.a. SoundSleeper) and I are glad that people seem to like them a lot.

What actually inspired me to produce fan music was one particular *Xena* episode: “The Ides of March”. It was so intense, truly a piece of art regarding the acting, directing and writing. I was watching it all night, over and over again, and then, just as I wanted to go to sleep, that tune popped into my head. I grabbed my electric guitar, and an hours later my song “The Ides of March” was born. So far I have only written *Buffy* and *Xena* stuff, but I compose fandom unrelated music all the time. I must have almost 30 songs by now, which I am about to make a demo recording of.

The episodes that inspired me to write music was “The Ides of March”, “The Bitter Suite” and “The Xena Scrolls”, in *Xena: Warrior Princess*, the latter an episode I like for introducing the character of female archaeologist Dr. Janice Covington, a parody of Indiana Jones. For another *Xena* song of mine, “The Free-wheeler” (only on CD), I got inspired by a still young and rather “innocent” Gabrielle as portrayed in the first two seasons of the show. I think that the love between the characters has always been the strongest inspiration for me. The same goes for my *Buffy* songs.

I usually work alone when I’m writing. Only exception is when Fredi has written something new; then we put our heads together to complete the song by adding bridges etc. and, of course, the lyrics (which is my job). My writing is done “old style”, just me and my guitar. My life is what inspires me to create new works. Everything I write has a certain connection to what I or friends of mine have been going through. I think that



The CD, available for US\$11, has 6 *Xena*-inspired songs.

is normal for most song writers, because it is hard to write about stuff you have absolutely no experience with.

Writing differs from song to song. Sometimes something happens in my life which I feel I have to convert into music—with the specific subject in mind, I grab my guitar and just follow my instincts. In other cases I start playing around with no intention on

My life is what inspires me to create new works.

creating a new piece of work, and suddenly I find myself writing a new song. In most cases music and lyrics emerge along with each other, which means that while I am playing the

words automatically build up in my head, and I'm writing both things down. Sometimes I start with the chorus. The choice of instruments is rarely made before I got to play the song with the band, because you have to try which sound is the best for each particular song.

One of the strongest influences on my work would have to be Melissa Etheridge. In my opinion, she is the greatest! Of course, I listen to a lot of different styles, for there are great talents to be found in almost all sorts of music. But the only style that really touches me is rock music as written by Melissa or Bruce Springsteen. It is pure and deep. The early Bryan Adams has been quite an influence, too. Besides Etheridge and Springsteen, I also admire older work (e.g. the Beatles), classical work (mostly the Russian composers, such as Rachmaninov), film and television composers (like Jerry and Joel Goldsmith, James Horner, Bill Conti or Joseph LoDuca), Celtic stuff (Clannad), but also teen bands like Hanson who I think are underestimated by the adult audience.

It all started with “The Ides of March”. I didn't have an own website back then, so I asked friends if I could use theirs to publish the song. Gerry Tentler, whom I have known from the *Xena* fandom for a while and who has got a homepage for his band Taranis (<http://www.taranis.de/>), then asked me if I would like to have some webspace so I could put up a whole page of my own. I gratefully accepted. The problem though is that I have no access to my own site. Which means that I have had to design everything at home and sent him the stuff to put it up along with instructions how I wanted it to look like. That has gotten a bit annoying, plus I always had to keep the design simple. And therefore me and another popular Xenite, Andreas Hloupy, who is also a close friend of mine, have decided to create a mutual website we call “Soulblood”. It is a *Xena/Buffy* site and has our combined talents.

Patrice Deceuninck

I first realised my interest in music at 17, when I came to Lille at the university. At this time I've met a lot of musicians and I've bought my first bass guitar at 19 to play in

my first rock band. I've studied piano for three years (from 9 to 12) but I've begun to "learn" music on stage with my first rock bands. I'm a bass player indeed. I've made a lot of concerts since this time (around 500) in France, Belgium and Germany. I'm still playing in a band called "Markarnold" and our first CD should be available in spring 2001. The singer, one of my best friends on earth, comes from Australia and half of the songs will be in English.

Since I began to play music I always wanted to work for cinema. Working on *The Lord of The Rings* is a kind of exercise to me, just to see if I'm able to translate into music the magic words of Tolkien. I've not only worked on the *Lord of the Rings*. I've worked in a studio for one year to produce techno songs for a Belgian record company... Nonetheless, Middle Earth is the place where I feel better.

To create my music, I just need my electronic piano. Everything happens in my head, in my fingers and in my heart. I've been composing with my computer and different synthesizers for nearly 15 years now. It's really a wonderful tool! I use Logic Audio Platinum from Emagic. It's a great program and easy to use. Beginning each piece is never the same. Sometimes just a simple melody, sometimes a rhythm, sometimes a bass line...

Influences on my work are classical music and rock bands, and I'm inspired by my readings, my life, and my friends. I have plenty of favourite composers; some of them that I love are Jerry Goldsmith, John Barry, Ravel, Prokofiev, Tchaikovsky... Russian composers in general.

I get feedback in the form of many emails (around 2000 in one year) and many proposals in order to work on video games. I've also met Vsevolod and many many interesting and fascinating people. Some of them became friends. I go to Poland next week to meet one of them and I should fly to the US next year. Sometimes I receive postcards or CDs. People are very nice and thanks to them I've the feeling to "live".

On the CD that will be released soon, the music will be played by a live orchestra. To do this, the music will be improved and orchestrated again. In fact, there are a lot of mistakes in my work. As you may know I'm nearly an autodidact and a young Russian conductor living in Paris is helping me to orchestrate the songs correctly. His name is Vsevolod Chmoulevitch and he won the Prix Dutilleux last year in France. I've already seen the first two scores he made and I can tell you his work is wonderful! "Improvement" is the word!

Nothing has been defined yet. Nonetheless, I hope the CD will be available before September of 2001. Let's keep our fingers crossed. It depends on the orchestra's available time and on the number of rehearsals needed. The first CD should have twelve tracks inspired by the *Fellowship of the Ring*. About the cover, I've asked John Howe to illustrate it and he accepted. One more time, nothing has been defined yet but I still hope this CD will be available one day. Anyway, I do my best to release it! Believe me.

Currently, I don't want to have my own website. Not yet. I wouldn't have time

enough to manage it. At the moment they're hosted where they are because the webmasters of these sites are kind enough to post my music on their site.

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Undoubtedly most of the songs out there are by media fans. This is partly because of there being more people as fans of a TV series than there are fans of a particular book or set of books. Speaking of book fandom, for the most part it's a fantasy series that set people afire. Looking for songs inspired by science fictional books is all well and true—finding them another matter altogether. A cursory search for various well-known science fiction series results in very little.

My favourites are instrumental pieces. They vary from the passionate to those with smooth, calm tones—something for everybody. If you're going to take to downloading any, remember that there are always more being made -- and that it means larger hard drives. It soon becomes an obsession, and when you find works by the same people and they're not fannish-based, you get to download those too.

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Links

<http://www.wothymns.com/>—synthesised instrumental pieces by Fredrik Mörnestedt and Pasi Sivula inspired by *The Wheel of Time*.

<http://fan.tolkien-movies.com/music.shtml>—music by a great number of people, all inspired by Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, including Patrice Deceuninck.

<http://www.soulblood.com/>—DocCovington's music, inspired by *Xena: Warrior Princess* and *Buffy: the Vampire Slayer*.

<http://www.mi.uib.no/~respl/tolkien/Botr/music.html>—High quality versions of Patrice Deceuninck's work.

<http://www.tomsmithonline.com/>—Filker Tom Smith's website.

<http://www.mp3.com/>—A repository of music available from all sorts of people, for free, including a number of filkers and fannish musicians.

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The Ghosts of Logan, pt 1

When I first began my shifts at the Logan Art Gallery, one of the first things that I was told about was the local ghost. I was quietly skeptic, not saying anything in case the person who was telling me about it wasn't pulling my leg and really believed it. They were pulling my leg.

The Gallery used to be the local library before it changed, and the change is for an improvement. The old library was hideous. It was brown outside, brown inside, and other sombre colours covered it everywhere else. The books were spread so that nobody could find them. Then it moved. In the now gallery, sensor doors were installed, and the brown was covered by blue, yellow and white. The colours of the gallery. Only—the doors were prone to moving by their own.

The doors moving was what inspired the “ghost” of the gallery. Four years ago I was told of it, and who knows, it could have started two years earlier when the gallery itself opened. Since then, though, we “old-timers” have been spreading it down to those who join us. There are few people who stick by for years—most people are only there for a couple of months before moving on.

One of the people who was an old-timer died last year, and since then, his ghost has become the ghost of the gallery. Those who were around from before, when the ghost was an unknown entity who moved doors, have now adopted John as the ghost, forgetting that the strange noises and door opening happened before he died.

Some of the gallery volunteers profess to be scared to be on a shift by their own (most shifts are in twos). These are generally the new folk, who are unfamiliar with our resident ghost. They say

that whenever they are alone, noises start to sound where they never did before. The door opens (this happens regardless of how many people are around).

The mystery of the sounds remains unfound—they only occur when there is one person around. As such, it is unprovable to see if they really occurred or if it was merely the air conditioning sounding extra loud because there isn't the impetus of chatter to drown out the sounds.

However, the door has been seen by everyone, and the doors open without having anything moving around them. Not even a lizard. The doors slide open for a moment, as if someone is walking in, and then slide shut. We often look up from whatever we are doing to look at the door at this stage, and then give each other knowing looks.

*... one of the first things
that I was told about was
the local ghost.*

“The ghost,” we say.

It would be interesting to know if there was any such occurrences when the gallery was the library. Perhaps talking to old staff would find this out—but what if there was not? They’re not in the know as are those of the gallery. They might sneer at our friendly resident who has done nothing but keep us on our toes from day one.

Regardless of the history of our mysterious phantom, it keeps us entertained on slow days without visitors. It has made for interesting commentaries over a cup of coffee, and some debate about who it could be. Only one person on the volunteer roster has died so far. Most of the folk are well into their retirement years, as was John. Should any of them die—and I’m hoping not for a long time—they’ll be added to our list of ghosts.

Perhaps we should keep out a dish of milk for them—kind of what the Russians did for their hearth gods. Maybe they’re not ghosts after all?

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Gender Neutrality and Language in *The White Abacus*

This piece was originally posted to the internet via the Eidolist in 1999.

In the book *The White Abacus*, Damien Broderick creates a world in which there are ai and hu. Ai are artificial intelligi which are part of a Gestell that joins them, and hus are human beings. Damien says that “‘Hu (rhymes with ‘you’) and ‘ai’ (rhymes with ‘I’) are a ... blend of accidental lexicon history and the ancient bonded dichotomy ‘I/Thou’” (p. 340).

He also creates a new set of pronouns to refer to the ai, who are meant to be sexless. To call the ai ‘it’ would be dehumanising, if that is the word; to make them less in the eyes of the hu, if not in the reader. He uses the pronouns of ‘sen’, ‘se’, ‘ser’ and ‘sem’ to refer to them, and it is these pronouns that I am going to look at in the context of *The White Abacus*.

Damien states that ‘sen’ is a title, and indeed it is used as such. Characters are referred to as ‘Sen’ throughout; the first instance is ‘Good evening, Sen.’ (p. 4), where the speaker is referring to the ai Ratio, who is the often-narrator of the novel. It is also used to refer to hu; the next instance, where it is not used in referrance to Ratio, Cima, the other main character, is being spoken to. The title ‘Sen’ does not appear to be limited to the ai or the hu, but used amongst themselves. It also appears to have overtones of politeness and equality, where the title ‘Sir’ implies deference and inequality. The places in which I found them used were when they were uttered by computers.

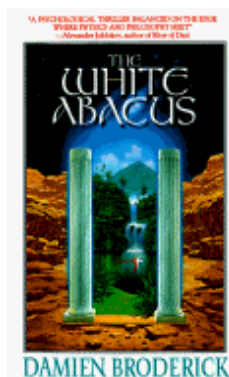
‘Se’ according to Damien, stands for “he/she”. Looking at the context in which it is used in the book, it is the nominative inflection of the pronoun ‘se’. If one were to look for the roots of the word, it would be easily found; I dare say that ‘se’ is a composite of ‘he’ and ‘she’. An example of where it is used, ‘Se recalls the first sight se ever had of Telmah Cima...’ (p. 61) is pretty standard of the usage throughout the novel. This pronoun is only used in reference to ai.

‘Ser’ is a word, which upon looking at in the novel, occurs only as accusative—at odds with Broderick’s claim of it being a strong genitive. In the afterword, he states that “‘ser’ ... [stands] for ‘hers/his’”. This isn’t precisely accurate. The instances where I found this form were in sentences such as ‘Cima turns a wolfish grin on sem’ (p. 90) and ‘the Queen tells sem’ (p. 54). Under no circumstances could it be mistaken for strong genitive in light of its usage.

The word for ‘her/him’, ‘sem’, appears to be what Broderick tells us it is. In the phrases ‘looks at ser friend’ (p. 97), ‘Ratio raises ser companion’ (p. 90), the form is

weak genitive. It is obvious that Damien has chosen to mix the existing male and female forms for the neutral form, which works well here.

I could not find usage of the strong genitive version of the lexeme ‘se’ anywhere. How Broderick managed to write a book without using it once while speaking of Ratio, I don't know. In my list below, I have shown what my examination of his book has revealed. He has obviously carefully looked at the lexiconology of the word and created the versions provided. But for the pronoun to be fully created, a strong genitive ought to exist. What combination of ‘hers’ and ‘his’ could be created for this form? ‘Sers’? ‘Sis’? ‘Sems’? All of these are viable usages. ‘Sis’, perhaps, should not be considered; there is already a meaning attached to this word in the English language, albeit a colloquial meaning. Imagine a sentence: “This hat was sis”. Substitute the others. “This hat was sems”, “this hat was sers”. To my ear, ‘sems’ would be a good choice, but since Damien did not choose to use it, we can only speculate.



The usage of these pronouns are not held fully throughout the story; for example, on page 105, there is a passage ‘...in all the five years he has known Telmah Cima...’, where Ratio is obviously the one being talked of. Perhaps this could be attributed to editorial mistake, but there are also other passages, ‘there is no doubt that his companion is a superb strategist. Se cannot find the path’ (p. 125) when talking of a chess game with Telmah. Is this a deliberate effort on Broderick’s part to undermine the usage of the pronoun he has invented, or is it, as I mentioned before, merely a mistake? Obviously Broderick did not find Ratio to be gender-neutral in his own mind, as can be seen from these occurrences. Again, I found instances on pp. 104, 150, 237, to name a few.

In conclusion, I can say that Broderick has made a good attempt to create a gender-neutral lexeme, although he did not finish his creation. He slipped in his writing in places, and these slips show that he did not really think that Ratio the ai was gender neutral. I did not find any corresponding slips where Ratio was thought of or referred to as female, so I can safely say that, in Damien’s eyes, Ratio was male.

Table of inflection of third person personal pronoun

lexeme	nominative	accusative	reflexive	weak genitive	strong genitive
she	she	her	herself	her	hers
he	he	him	himself	his	his
se	se	sem	semsself	ser	(sems)

References

Broderick, Damien (1997). *The White Abacus*. Avon Books: New York.



Image manipulation of the actresses Sandrine Holt and Jennifer Dale as Li Ann Tsei and The Director from Canadian TV show *Once a Thief*. Reproduced with permission of the artists (but not CTV). **The Theban Band** have more work at <http://www.squidge.org/~praxisters/index.html>