

Transcendental Basenji Sermons & Enlightenment

*Celebrating 2005; The Centenary
of Relativity, Brownian Motion and
the Photo Electric effect.*

*Albert Einstein, more real than
Santa Claus, relatively easier to
understand than Quantum Theory*

**Vol. 1 No. 10, January to March
2005, For ANZAPA No. 224**

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Editorial

As per usual this issue is a rush job in that I
wanted to get something up and out well

before the April due date. If all goes well
there will be an eleventh Basenji with it, it is
just that I am not confident of getting out an
acceptable response to issue 222 and 223 in
one operation, especially as the printing /
mailing dates will be so close to Conflux and
the Anzac day long weekend.

Still bubbling with outrage over the way things
were done at the 'Flash Fiction' event at last
year's Magic Casement Festival of
Speculative Fiction I decided to do something
about it. I wrote and I wrote and in a period
of less than three weeks ... I had several
entries! I was surprised how easy it was to
just sit down and churn out SF stories,
Fantasy Stories and SF&F/Horror stories.

If I don't win any prizes this time ... I'll be back
with more next year. Win lose or draw
though for 2005 to 2006 it looks as though
there will be enough of my original fiction for
each Basenjij. I have tried them out on
people at work and they seem to like them.

An essential part of this little festival of
creativity has been the post Christmas
purchase (\$A400 including delivery) of a 17
inch flat screen monitor for Dell 2, my father's
internet isolated PC. I am now taking stuff
home on disc from my work PC and working
on it at home, extending my effective 'creative
hours' by a factor of four or five.

Other Fannish pots on the boil are; The
Sydney Futurians are finally affiliating with the
UTS students Association and a big
opportunity has opened up for the 17th, 18th
and 19th of March.

I'm trying for a follow up, second edition of
Apoom! my Sydney SF fandom year in review
/ Sydney SF convention substitute booklet,.
It's called 'ApooM Again!' Let me know
which Sydney SF fans you would like to meet
through its pages and I will try to chase them
up for you as 'Sydney Fan Profiles' pieces!

I hope to see you at some time soon, maybe
even at a 2005 Sydney Freecon.

Garry P Dalrymple 01 March 2005

Monday December 27, 2004. A busy day

Windy Stormy Lightning and rainy stuff wakes me up at or before 7 am, or just possibly the sound of the Indian Ocean earthquake. Unable to get back to sleep coz I'm smoked out and Nicotienized by the bloke next door's smoke blowing in my bedroom window. I let Mystique out of her sleeping cage and she is very visibly upset, which at the time I put down to lightning from the early morning storm, but after the event I think that this could have been sensitivity to the quake, as Mystique's cage is her 'safe' place and her stripe was most definitely showing when I let her out. I helped mum with the washing, by moving the buckets of wash and rinse cycle water to toilets or short term storage. I.e. mum did no heavy lifting this morning.

During the season of peace on Earth and Goodwill to all men, nothing so becomes the season than Tree Murder. In the cool of the morning I inspected the tree/shrub (can I say Bush post 911) in question. Its crime is that it is growing in the corner of the front garden bed between the brick front fence and the water meter and hose tap. It's roots are lifting and splitting the fence's brickwork and in time may force it to fall over. Initial plan, the use of star stakes, ropes and pulley to drag it out of the ground by main force is discarded, as the roots are too thick and extensive. Will have to dig out around the base and sever roots individually. Using a bush saw I de-branch and de-leaf the tree turning it into a stump. Cut branches taken round the back yard and propped up against the fence to dry out in the sun.

Went to the Clemton Park shopping centre (all shops closed except for the Chinese owned corner supermarket) to post off 32 each of TBS&E number 9s to Bruce Gillespie and a set of copies of numbers 7, 8 and 9 to Erika Lacey, care of Bundaberg Post Office.

On the way back I detour to a nearby bulk pet food shop to buy and carry home an 18 kg bag of Mystique's preferred / habituated dry dog food, 'Supercoat (brand name) Lite and

Mature' for \$37 (\$2.05 per kilo). NB as Mystique currently weighs about 11 kg and eats less than 200 g of this per day, 18 kg will take her some time to chew through! During the week I notice 4-kg bags at the supermarket for \$9 (\$2.25 per kilo), so the big bag was more a saving of time (five trips to supermarket) rather than money. I then rested from my labours (10.30 am) and watched some videotapes until nearly 1 pm, when mom wanted to watch the start of the Sydney to Hobart yacht race.

After this mum receives a phone call from Shirley Blair, an ex-neighbor, and an hour long conversation follows. Bringing Shirley up to date probably involves re-raising several anxiety increasing points of the past two years (Mrs. Blair's death, the sale of house next door, Father's death, my Uncle's death, Gladys' death, Mrs. K's death, dealing with Gladys' estate matters and the prolonged and disturbing renovations taking place next door). Mother then has an afternoon nap on her bed underneath the breeze from a rotating ceiling fan.

By 3.30 pm Mother has back discomfort and she asks me to microwave a wheat sack (heat pack) for her as she is uncomfortable about getting up. At about 5.30 pm mother crawls to my room in pain (worse but different to Kidney Stones or Diverticulitis) and wakes me up, I help her into wheeled office chair half hour conversation with Ambulance base people until the Ambulance and two person crew arrive.

We were in the ambulance at 6 pm and headed toward St. George Hospital as the closest public hospital (Canterbury) is 'Code Red', closed to all emergency admissions. The Ambulance and crew have to wait for an emergency bed to become available for mother before they can leave and attend to other calls. I see them drive off at about 7 pm by the Emergency waiting room clock.

My Brother Robert arrives at about 7.30 and is able to get the hospital staff to let us go see mother, 'follow the blue line'. Mother is in a 'non-acute' section with maybe a dozen other emergency admissions. Robert and I have a

conversation with mother, stop a nurse and are told at 8.10 pm that there were currently '23 ahead of you to see a doctor' i.e. it would be at least two more hours to wait for a medical opinion and diagnosis, probably an 'all fine, go home' or an 'we'll keep you for the night'. We decide that it is would be better for Robert and I go home and await news by phone as nothing will happen until 10 pm or possibly midnight.

Robert drives me home, we discuss mother's predicament and as there is still some daylight I show him the stump and together we work to bring down the 10 metre high CB radio aerial. Mystique is quite distressed by the absence of mom, a stranger in the yard, the arriear coming down and the unseasonably cold gusty winds.

I receive a phone call from mother at the hospital after 10.00 pm, all is OK, a Doctor has been seen, referrals written and some Panadol are providing adequate relief. We decide that it would be better for her to return home by taxi on her own rather than by my going back to the hospital by taxi to collect her, or asking Robert or Ruth to drive over from Peakhurst to the hospital to collect her which would then result in their getting home after 11pm.

Mum arrived home at about 10.30, makes the necessary phone calls to Robert and Ruth. I make her a cup of tea and warm up some boiled eggs for her dinner, then off to bed. All fine next morning. It seems to have been an anxiety exacerbated back pain attack (just like ones I have 'enjoyed' at some cons and while organizing Freecons).

Mother went to the local doctor at the Campsie Medical centre on Wednesday and no follow up action seems to be indicated.

The conditions that I feel contributed to mother's distress, the wind up of Gladys' affairs and the continuing house renovations next door continue.

Grey Pages

Mailing comments for ANZAPA issue # 222 received during December 2004

Brq 39 December 2004 – Bruce Gillespie

Your pieces on moving in represented the pleasant side of the moving in experience. At Eulabah Avenue we have 'enjoyed' two years of our two nearest up hill neighbors moving in, the joy of the sound of renovations in the morning! Most mornings for 20 months! I found your review article interesting food for thought. I might have about half the books you mentioned but for posterity you should consider adding a reference to Graham Stone's latest book, A bibliography of all Australian SF up until recently, no serious researcher should be without ...

Everyday Practical Magic ... or the Bad Seed of Chucky – David Cummer

Re your comment to Dan McCarthy, during January I heard a broadcast on Radio National that made the same case for Poe being the 'First' Science Fiction writer, as for 'The Hand Maiden's Tale' by Margaret Atwood. Yes it is Science Fiction but it is not the sort of book that does SF any credit, with a strangulated and deliberately obscured plot line evidently to 'prove' that it is 'Literature' rather than SF. I recently forced myself to read it and compared to anything by Joanna Russ, Ursula K. Le Guin or even Tipper – IT SUCKS BIGTIME! Read your other mailing comments with interest, but no comments at this time.

Hold That Tiger – by Terry Morris

Read your mailing comments with interest. ReYC to LynC – I hope you get your gray water plans worked out satisfactorily. ReYC to Michael O'Brien - Over January I was grateful to be able to watch both Jeremiah and Firefly. I was surprised at the depth of characterization and consistency of plot in Jeremiah. This is a result of the TV screenplays being based on an earlier series

of comics, i.e. a there was a detailed back story for episodes to draw from rather than the single episode per writer treatment of some Star Trek Franchises, which lead to confused and inconsistent plot lines.

Firefly is a lot of fun, but incomprehensible at times, like when they feel a need to start swearing in Cantonese or Mandarin Chinese. I see it as a successful retelling of a lot of old westerns stories, as SAAB was a retelling of 'universal' War stories, not quite Science Fiction at all, even by the rigorous Margaret Atwood criteria.

Reyc to Bill Wright – Rap does suck big time (the 'C' is silent in rap) it has displaced some melodic and comprehensible spoken word singing (Reggae?). Whence Donna and Althea with 'Uptown Top Ranking'? Who decided that the crime and gun violence plagued lives of these US Inner city ghetto folk were fit for idolization and imitated? Why is this brand of black urban US music favored rather than Australian Black music, urban and country? Much of this music has a sense of land and people which calls to the vacuum of the (White) urban soul.

Intermittent Muse #7 – Michael F. Green

Read your contribution with interest, but no comments at this time.

Interstellar Ramjet Scoop – Bill Wright

Read your mailing comments with interest, found the cover art more comprehensible than usual, enjoyed the Planetary influence pages and might see if the Editor of the newsletter of the Sydney City Stargazers would be interested in re-printing it. Re the search for joggers, white sandshoes still exist and to my experience they should still be the footwear of diabetics and 'persons of mass' – just look for Dunlop Volleys, \$22 to \$32 when on special at K Mart Big W or local equivalents. Dunlop Volleys were designed as Tennis shoes, i.e. to absorb the shock of bouncing around a clay tennis court. They are better for walking than jogging as they do not 'spring' as you need for endurance rubnning. Keep an eye out for half sizes,

(10 ½), not all shops have them, but the extra width allows for thicker socks. You probably will not find cheap sandshoes at 'Runners' shops as the margins on a \$30 shoe are insignificant compared to the \$100 to \$300 they can get from the advertising deluded for 'designer' joggers of basketball footwear. All made in the same factories by people in poor people countries for \$2 a day etc.

Panopticon 27 – Dan McCarthy

Read your hospital waiting room experiences with some connection, passive helpless interaction with the medical system in this way seems to be a foretaste of purgatory.

Land of 10,000 Loons – Jeanne Mealy

Not much I can find to comment on in your contribution, other than the Aurora. Last November's Sunspots were about the biggest seen in living memory. Down here there were even reports of the Aurora Australis being visible in clear skies.

Ping! – John Newman

Reyc about living in the past, I too collect dated anthologies whenever I encounter them available second hand, a dozen dreams for a dollar! And likewise for music, the Homer Simpson doctrine on music seems to hold true. I enjoy TV Shows like 'Tour of Duty' and the earlier UK 'Heart beat' coz of the music they played to accompany the action.

Way South – Michael O'Brien

Yeah no surprises with the 'Your Favourite Book', part of this is the confusion of what is being decided, many respondents are reacting to different questions like 'Best Ever Book?' 'Most Important Book?' 'Most Popular?' or even 'What book can you remember reading last?'

You really know you're Home – Cath Ortlieb

The claim that 'so many people voted for the government' always annoys me. The ALP and Lib-Nat vote is about 40% each nationally, the battle for a 'Mandate' is these days a question of how the preferences will fall and trail towards a 'least worst' Tweedle dee or Tweedle dum(mer), hardly the shift of opinion that the victorious incumbent is happy to claim. Howard won his 'mandate' in a campaign of fear, false claims and promises.

Reyc to Christine and Derrick I raised many of the same arguments about my mum offering to pay private school fees for my niece to attend 'Danebank' (Jack might like to tell us about the history of this interesting UK maritime feature) the Anglican school for Greek Girls. Natalie is no doubt very deserving of her award. Most people confuse Ability and Performance, neglecting that home environment and hard work can make a real difference in educational outcomes. I work in the NSW Dept. of Education's School Measurement Unit, Educational Quality control if you like, and the balance of Quality / Achievement is far more mixed than the presumption that 'Private must be better' presumes. In many cases parents are actively sabotaging their children's future by picking schools for the wrong reasons. I.e. 'Best Schools' may challenge 'Best' students, but 'Ordinary Students' do better at schools catering to the skill levels of ordinary abilities, provided that the student's home background in each case is supportive of making the most of the education on offer.

Many Australian Private schools do not market 'Ordinary ness', they live off the academic achievements of their scholarship kids but they hope to falsely persuade parents of 'ordinary' kids that somehow this will rub off onto their kids. There are 'Dumb' kids at many better private schools that would be better off in the Public system that could address their specific needs, on the other hand some Non-Gov. schools provide special (vocationally driven) services for children with special needs (and thank god for that). Read the rest of your contribution with interest.

OZ SF Fan #31 – Lucy Schmeidler

Read your mailing comments with interest. The only comment I can make at this time is about your Writing workshop experiences, interesting. I can see that having to rise to the challenge of telling a story several ways or from successive different viewpoints is a necessary part of learning how to write well. I recently had a similar creative challenge to rise to, but I can't discuss that in this issue.

Ramblings 25 – Gerald Smith and Womble

I read and sympathise with what Karen and you are going through with the 'chemo'. By all means proceed with rain water capture, but on Gray water, for the moment you may want to proceed with caution. While My father was on 'chemo' Mother and I were shocked that nurses were handling father with double gloves and double flushing toilets to avoid the slightest contact with chemo drugs that had been through Father! As for gray water, the first step should be to figure out how much water you actually use for various purposes i.e. Showers, Clothes washing, Toilet flushing, Dish Washing, Gardening and other. Better to know the volume of your Gray water 'problem' before you start to formulate your answer? Read your mailing comments with interest, but no comments at this time.

Les Chattes Parties 74 – Sally Yeoland

I applaud your intentions to make inroads against the triumvirate of Blood pressure, Back pain and (over) weight. I'm on Micardis and my experience is that 'natural' improvements, like exercise, for one frequently alleviate the other two, once you can get on top of things. When evaluating alternate medications, do not neglect to consider stress, temporary elevated stress can mask the improvements of your medications. Read your mailing comments with interest.

Kingdom of the Bland – Eric Lindsay

Eric and Bruce – I received two identical copies of Kingdom of the Bland (unnumbered) have I missed an issue? Nothing much for me to comment on, but your Mailing comments with interest.

Necessity 61: Hallelujah – Jack R Herman

The best response I can make to your detailed comments on 'The Return of the Evil Little Bastard' is that Australian political life has moved into 'branding'. I.e. enough people out there are voting for the public image or brand of what they have been told by marketeers that a political party represents rather than any objective weighing factors like what they lied about last time or their present policies. The coalition set the political agenda as the Iraq war / Terrorism / Save your Mortgage referendum and enough people bought the 'tough on terrorism, safe financial future' brand name party. Wish it was otherwise, but this seems to be the new political paradigm. Issues, ethics and a regard for the truth in politics seem to be redundant – for now; and as for voting Green, you are just buying another brand name. The 2007 senate election will be 'interesting times'. The Greens and Family First Senators will have a job ahead of them under Howard's July 01, 2005 Senate Majority. Their out of Senate performance may be more telling of their political future than any in Senate performance.

As for the US Presidential election, lets do something about it, right now. Lets all agree to stop referring to President Bush, lets all hear it for President Sequoia, the worthy successor to President Bartlett, a visionary American leader for a new century with a towering political vision well above the tangled undergrowth and sleaze of contemporary American Politics. Name it and Claim it I say. If enough of us start talking about President Sequoia he just might happen? Right?

Re your passing comment on Private schools, at work we have Non-Government school representatives, i.e. they manage the application of our NSW Government school measurement initiatives to the Private schools. They were unable to give me an answer to a question – 'Which is the largest Australian Religious Denomination WITHOUT a private school in NSW?' – my guess was The Salvation Army, but they were of the view that the school-less Salvation Army wasn't a real 'Religion'. Curious world! Not only are there

so many Federally funded religious private schools, but around here (EARLWOOD), many local school halls and community meeting places are co-opted during the weekends as evangelical church meeting places. Tough if you wanted to run a local Science Fiction convention! The more financially successful New Age Church / Empowerment Centers are setting up shop in former light Industrial areas and several night a week, the street in front of my place is parked out by a 'home church sect' meeting. Re your comment to Cath. – the other attraction of the film 'Breaking away' is the film's sound track music by Devo! Read the rest of your contribution with interest, but no further comments at this time.

From the Lair of the Lynx #27 – LynC

Rather enjoyed your Xmas card, on my 'gunna's' list is to make up a personal Xmas card, but as each year rolls around the opportunity passes. When I still had two basenjis one thought was to make up a sleigh line of basenjis in different poses with fake antlers. This February's NSW Basenji newsletter features a humorous account of 12 all Basenjis teams entered in an Alaskan sled dog race. Re your Unionism / Non Unionism pay situation, quite a nightmare when the interests of Union establishments and 'Employers' coincide to the detriment of the 'Working Classes'. Have you considered looking into coverage by the Federated Clerks Union? The FCU does have some public sector coverage, frequently covering public service 'professionals' whose job skills have direct private sector equivalence.

ReYC to Eric, on Public sector Vs Private sector leave statistics, In my 20 plus years of Education Department employment, whenever school holidays come around there are always children underfoot. Usually it is the Public sector employed parent (in 'mixed marriages') who takes some time off to be at home with the kids, or just bring them at work. I wonder at the implied public sector 'child care subsidy' when private sector employees are not as able to just bring their kids to work.

Blue Page – Science and Astronomy **Notes from meetings of the Sydney City Skywatchers**

Astronomically speaking the September to November period was an almost complete loss. My only Stargazing efforts were navigational, while letterboxing at night. The minutia of contesting a Federal election left me unable to attend committee or public meetings in September and October. For the first time in recent memory, I missed attending the AGM. The only highlight being my re-appointment to the committee.

However, recent financial developments have increased my resolve to buy some new Astronomical equipment and to re-commence more active observation.

I am looking forward to November, as there will be astronomical moments, with the Australian Skeptics convention, an SCS public meeting and some worthwhile TAMS events to cover. I ended up spending the whole of the much publicized November SCS meeting stuck in a train between stations on Sydney's underground due to 'signal failures' at Ashfield.

Sydney City Skywatchers Committee meeting of November 17, 2004

Present were: Janette Brennan, Elizabeth Budek, Elizabeth Cocking, Michael Chapman, Garry Dalrymple, Monty Leventhal, Nick Lomb and Harry Roberts.

Matters discussed during the committee meeting; What to do with the old Gold and Silver BAANSW badges previously given to Branch Presidents and Guest Speakers, resolved to give them out at meetings.

- A Sydney City Skywatchers shirt/jumper with the new name and logo, general support that it should have pockets.
- Dates and speakers for 2005, New Membership cards.
- Logo and letterhead, desirability of using a commonly available font. New SCS address labels done.

- Seasonal cards, a season's constellation to look at on one side, SCS contact and meeting details on the other.
- Discussion of the Donovan trust's meetings & finances.
- How to suggest to SCS members that bequests from members would be welcome. There is a great need to get the wording for this exactly right.
- Some correspondence may be being delayed for lack of new official letterhead
- Suggestions for routine (email sent) publicity for SCS meetings. 702 ABC's What's On, Inner Western Weekly, The Wentworth Courier, The Manly Daily, The North Sydney Weekly (North Shore times might be going too far, as it is read in Chatswood?), Cremorne paper, City of Sydney events listing, Georgie Vestie's 'City Talks' etc. (English Language ethnic and cultural newspapers?)
- A new Librarian is needed, previously when Committee and public meetings were on the same night we needed a Librarian and an assistant for members to access the library before public meetings.
- The Guest speaker for April 2005 is Dr. Nick Cannis who will speak on the Psychology of Space Flight, coming from the US for the occasion.
- Discussed 2005 moon observing dates
- Committee dinner (instead of meeting) 15 December at the Catholic club, between Town Hall & Aust. Museum.

Garry's Sept/Nov. Astronomy Observations

- During the election campaign I was able to interest Mayo Materazzo, a member of the Australian Democrat MLC Arthur Chesterfield-Evans' staff on considering Light pollution as a legislative environmental concern
- Was able to get a light pollution themed letter to the Editor published in an electorate local paper
- Saw a very bright counter sun (North of the Sun) from the bus on Monday or Tuesday November 9 or 10. This is the latest I can recall seeing this occasional 'winter' phenomena. A passing cloud caused it Icy cloud as it was no longer visible when I got off the bus only a few minutes later.

Green Page – Political

Golden pages – Science Fiction

**Garry's List of some SF& F events of
National significance**

This is my working a list of events to keep in mind when planning to hold additional local SF activities i.e. it is a list of events that local SF&F Writers and other 'serious' SF&F fans have probably made plans to attend, those Non SF&F events that would make it unlikely for a small scale 'SF Lit' event to get much media coverage, and lastly it includes some of the overseas / interstate SF&F events that I might prefer to attend rather than trying to organize my own events.

January

- 8 to 30 January, Sydney NSW, Festival of Sydney, Wide ranging Arts Festival, will probably including some appearances by SF&F Writers and some SFnal Film?
- 3 January to 12 February, Brisbane Queensland, Clarion South 2005 a residential workshop that is an intensive 'boot camp' for SF&F Writers seeking professionalism.

February

- 3 January to 12 February, Clarion South 2005 continues

March

- 19 March, NSW Writers Centre, Rozelle Sydney, the third Magic Casements Festival of Speculative Fiction
- 24 to 28 March, Perth Western Australia, Consensuality SF convention
- 25 to 28 March, Wellington New Zealand, ICON the NZ SF Natcon

April

- 22 to 25 April, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, Conflux II SF convention

May

- 23 to 29 May, Sydney NSW, Sydney Writer's Festival, probably some SF&F Writers?

June

- 10 to 13 June, Hobart Tasmania, Thylacon IV Australian National SF convention
- Terry Dowling's invitation only Winter Solstice event - Weekend closest to Solstice

July

- 2 and 3 July, Rozelle Sydney NSW, Popular Writers and Readers Festival a NSW Writers Centre Festival, some local SF&F Writers (NB this is a guess from 2004)
- 15 to 17 July, Melbourne Victoria, Continuum III SF convention

August

- 4 to 8 August, Glasgow Scotland, Interaction the World Science Fiction convention

September and October

- 30 Sept to 03 October, Adelaide South Australia, Conclave SF convention
- 14 to 16 October, Sydney Whovention 7, a Dr Who convention with overseas guests

November and December

- Nothing SF related seems to be happening, although the annual Australian Skeptics convention is held during in November.

For full and up to date details it is worth looking up the details on the various convention websites (as well as Krenon's) or the Australian SF Bullsheat.

Some periods with 'clear' weekends for a 2005 Sydney SF day/Weekend seem to be;

- Late February to mid March (NB Sydney based Magic Casements follows)
- Early May to Early June - Mid to Late June - Mid August to Mid September (post Worldcon fatigue an issue?)
- Mid October to end of December (a clear run up for planning and many possible alternative weekend dates?)

Sydney Futurian Meeting dates for 2005

The following are the dates for the 2005 Sydney Futurian meetings, third Friday of the month, 7 to 9 pm, room 1615, Tower Building University of Technology Sydney Broadway campus, near Central Railway station.

21 January	18 February	18 March
15 April	20 May	17 June
15 July	19 August	16 September
21 October	18 November	16 December

Interstate visitors to Sydney for the Magic Casements 3 (MC3) festival of Speculative Fiction might care to note that the March Futurian meeting takes place on the night immediately before MC3.

Books Read, December 2004 to Feb., 2005

30 Nov to 07 December, 'Defending the National Tuckshop' by **Michael Cathcart**, 222 pages © 1988

27 to 29 November, 'There is No Darkness' by **Joe Haldeman** and **Jack C Haldeman II**, 245 pages © 1983

29 Nov to 20 Dec. **'Sacred Treasure, Secret Power'** by **Guy Patton and Robin Mackness, 330 pages © 2000.**

23 to 27 December **'Against Infinity'**
By **Greg Benford, 243 pages © 1993**

28 Dec. to 99 Jan. **'The Handmaiden's Tale'**
By **Margaret Attwood, 395 pages © 1985**

28 Dec. to 07 Jan. **'The Killer Bean of Calabar and other stories'** by **Peter McInness, 237 pages © 2004**

08 Jan. **'Shades 04 – Black Sun Rising'**
By **Robert Hood, 165 pages © 2001**

09 and 10 Jan. **'Treks not Taken'**
By **Steven R Boyett, 191 pages © 1998**

12 to 16 Jan. **'Republican Party Reptile'**
By **P.J. O'Rourke, 220 pages © 1987**

12 to 16 Jan **'When the Sky Fell – Searching for Atlantis'** by **Rand & Rose Flem-Ath, 179 p. © 1995**

14 and 15 Jan. **'Clay's Ark'** by **Octavia Butler, 201 pages © 1985**

17 to 21 Jan. **'The Dreams our Stuff is Made of'** by **Thomas M Disch, 256 pages © 1998**

22 to 27 Jan. **'Analog Magazine Jan / Feb 2005'** by **Various writers, 240 pages © 2005**

25 and 26 Jan. **'Fortean Times – November 2004'** by **Various Writers, 99? pages © 2004**

29 to 30 Jan. **'Galaxy SF Magazine Feb 1967'** by **Various Writers, 194 pages © 1967**

31 Jan to 05 Feb. **'Metamorphosis and other Stories'** by **Franz Kafka, 218 pages, each story, © 1916 to 1931**

Full length Book Review

'The Handmaiden's Tale'

By Margaret Attwood

With this book I am going to take the time to do a lengthy review as I believe it is important to take on this challenge. I do not possess the delusion that any my criticism of Margaret Attwood's work will ever get back to her, but instead I believe that it is important that I display to you readers MY biases and concerns about SF books by 'Genre Denying' writers. Unusually I am starting the review process before I have read much of the book in the hope that I can document how my point of view changes with the reading of the book. Hope you will stay for the full ride

First impressions – Before you get a chance to read any of the book you are advised on the front cover that it is "The Brilliant #1 BESTSELLER", with a quote from a Washington Post Book World review. The front cover illustration, a Scarlet clad 'nun' with a basket in front of a brick wall is a puzzling choice to 'sell' a book, as the image is only explained in a passage at page 44 onwards, that is, unless the intended purchaser is already assumed to know the plot / maguffin details of the book ahead of purchase. The back cover declares 'Now a Major Motion Picture' (did I miss it or is that a misuse of 'major?') and has laudatory blurb / reviews from the San Francisco Chronicle and Newsweek. Inside the Front cover over three pages no less than nine additional reviews saying the book is good stuff indeed. To me it seems it like a concerted effort to ignore / paper over the dead elephant in the living room, i.e. that this might actually be one of those 'Science Fiction books, but in spite of that, all these authorities are lined up to tell you it is a 'worthy' book to read.

I must say that all this internal publicity put me off a fair bit and I cannot proceed to review this book without the baggage of having to inwardly assess whether it is / isn't Science Fiction, instead of just being able to read it and say whether it was good or bad.

First impressions (to page 45) different narrative structure to what I is used too. The maguffin is not stated at the beginning, there are hints and minor implications revealed on the way, but it seems that it will have to be revealed to us piecemeal as we go through the chapters of the book. I find this irritating, most good SF immediately takes you to the top of the temple and tempts you with the kingdom and then proceeds to direct your attention to the travelers struggling to cross this new universe. Good SF gives you a new Universe for the imagination to wander among, a meadow of wildflower blooms each a 'what then' following from the central 'what if' of the story. In The handmaiden's Tale we are with the travelers immediately with only a pedestrian's eye view of the world as and when they encounter it. I.e. by page 45 there seems to be a totalitarian state, a war

somewhere else and a severe and patriarchal restriction of women. Some sort of baby drought and / or religious basis to the society is hinted at but not clearly explained. Frustrating rather than engaging, to be kept on a narrow path of the writer's own devisement because you simply are not told anything much else. One thing that can be said about her writing style is that she uses poetical skills, getting point of view character from point A to point B involves much more description of scene and character's inner dialogue than I am used to.

Impressions (to page 187) - My Ghod this stuff just goes on and on. The Narrative structure is; a progressing present interleaved with 'flashbacks' from the main character's past, mostly based on the writer's experience of college age life. Both strands will almost certainly meet at the moment of decisive action. Not stunningly original at all. If you were to separate out the two strands as two novellas it would be excruciating reading, only the switchovers make it passably endurable!

(Warning - SF Sermon / Pontification point follows) I find that the glory of Science Fiction in its classic setting, the SF magazine, is the short story, Novella or continuing serial story. Each offers you a brief adventure in a unique New World wholly created by the writer. If the world is intriguing enough and the reader clamors for more adventures in that world, then the writer has the basis for a SF novel. That is to say what is needed are several stand alone elements each attractive and encouraging enough to the reader to want him/her to imagine what else takes place in that world. So far in this book (about half way through) I have encountered a pastiche of writer's (disguised?) biographical material and stuff that is lifted from late WW2 Nazi-SS 'Kinder, Kuchen und Kirch' baby farming practices (I'm not sure if Attwood realizes this) and a bit of American sex-phobic Puritanism which puzzlingly seems to be 'Bible Based' and yet is 'Church Free'! Criticism - Attwood has given us an adequately 'Science Fictional' society but refuses to let us explore it, all the action takes place between the ears of the Main character and like it or not were are along for the ride.

To page 200, slow and boring, the poetic description passages stop happening.

To page 300, slow and boring

To page 402, the book's end. The final chapter is exposition about an explanatory 'paper' from a post Gilead anthropology conference. These are the bits of the story that should have been given at the front of the book or naturally explained as the story unrolled. This whole book should have been done away with and this final chapter could / should have been the major part of an effective SF short story, a very cliched, minor SF story.

Conclusion;

My Ghod this book sucked big time; it was SF of a most strangulated and painful sort to read. It was SF with 'Lit establishment' blinkers on. Sod the SF-Nal potential of the idea of the republic of Gilead!

The criticism I feel most free to make of most Quest Fantasy is that you are lead by the nose. The universe of the story is only what the writer tells you about the adventures of the main character, because essential plot elements are unknown, unknowable, hidden with intent to slow down and blindside the imagination of the reader. To my thinking the imagination of the SF reader is almost as important a part of the SF reading experience as ... the paper the author's words are printed on. I.e. Until the author tells you so, the ornament retained from earliest childhood is just an ornament until the 'The Bangle of Destiny' reveals itself, or that as a 'disinherited and dispossessed real prince or princess' of course you can call down, command and ride dragons at the critical moment you can't anticipate, and look around and behind the main characters to see the world they live in. In contrast, I see that good SF gives you at the start of the story an amazing, consistent universe with an innovative 'McGuffin', and in addition to the adventures of the main characters you are free to wonder what else might be happening.

In the Handmaiden, the reader is a long way through the book before you realize that it is in fact set in a home grown Taliban style American theocracy. A society with peculiar

rules, but rules never the less. If Attwood was a SF writer, rather than a just Genre denier, it would be interesting to explore the republic of Gilead beyond the Hand maiden's Tale, but that isn't going to happen.

Brief Book Reviews

'Defending the National Tuckshop' by **Michael Cathcart**, a non fictional Victorian centred view of history of the events of 1931, when under the stresses of the depression, Australia very nearly had it's own 'Munich Beer Hall Putsch' organized by Conservative, Anti-Catholic, Anti-Communist and 'pro-Empire' establishment elements. The book's several sections cover a fair bit of the Australian history that they do not teach in schools as it is still 'too political' for current State and Federal Government parties to want to have widely discussed. It makes me very curious as how my Grandfather's were affected by these events, as both were 'diggers' in a small soldier settlement area town that had closer links to Victorian rural affairs than to the NSW capital (and Lang stronghold) Sydney, By their employment one Grandfather would have been part of the 'establishment' and the other would have been an 'essential services' worker. It is hard to see that they would have been unaware of events across the border or similar movements in their own town.

Over the holidays I might get round to looking into some family history and to get round to reading my copy of D.H. Lawrence's 'Kangaroo' which is a fictionalized version of the key events referred to in this book.

In **'There is No Darkness'** by **Joe Haldeman** and **Jack C. Haldeman II**, the authorship of this book is of course a curiosity, a genuine collaboration, an attempt at copyright bequeathment or an uncle attempting to give a nephew a leg up in hard to break into publishing circles? The book gives no clear explanation of the explanation of the relationship between the co-authors. Made up of two Asimov's magazine published Novellas **'There is No Darkness'** is about a Worlds' touring spaceship of 'college' age students and their adventures on several planets. It is a bit cliched, a giant sized naive

off worlder makes new friends, fights Bulls, Polar Bears and Sharks as a later day Gladiator, gets kidnapped / recruited as a reluctant mercenary conscript with characteristic Haldeman battle sequences. The tour around the populated Planets could just as easily have been a novel about a 19th century innocent abroad's adventures while touring of 'old' Europe. At the end of the book there springs a 'SFnal turn', in the form of a typical Haldemanesque change of mind.

'Sacred Treasure, Secret Power' is about scholarship of the sort usually encountered in the pages of the Fortean Times. This book deals with the real or imagined history of a region of Southern France near close to the Spanish border, the Roman Province of Septimania. It reads as a very involved set of interlocking stories involving the alleged descendants of Jesus Christ, the treasure of the Temple of Jerusalem, Romans, Visigoths, Moors, The Templar Knights, a medieval Jewish Kingdom, hidden treasures, Masonic secret societies and all manner of historical loose ends piling up for interpretation. All of the above may very well be true but it is a body of history that has well and truly fallen off the table of accepted national histories.

In **'Against Infinity'** the settlers of Ganymede are involved in a generations long terra forming project involving methane tolerant GM animals passing rock and ices through their guts to excrete more earthlike chemicals and aided by Cyborg modified animals. The Earth has gone 'Socialist' (or at least the American understanding of that term) leaving the frontier Colonists on Ganymede and the Asteroids as a rare holdout pocked of Capitalist, or more correctly an imitation of the Basque Catholic approved Syndicalism social structure. Mondragon and all that. Several ancient alien artifacts have been found in the outer solar system and one of them, the 'Aleph' is still operating. The Aleph is a kind of 'Moby Dick' figure to the Colonists, a block of flats sized machine that inexplicably tunnels, swims or runs about Ganymede only occasionally interacting with humans, occasionally destroying their settlements or works, but mostly just ignoring them. 'old Matt' aids the Main Character and together they manage to stop the Aleph. During this encounter old Matt' is seriously injured, and chooses suicide

to a continuing life that would see more of his organs replaced by technology. The Main character returns to the scene six years later, after the death of his father and the Aleph is re-started, with the 'old Matt' as some form of soul in the machine. Not one of Benford's better novels, by it's lack of body it had the feel of an adult draft of a latter day Heinlien or AC Clarke Juvenile SF novel. Female characters are very conspicuously absent (Main Character has a Mother and later a Girlfriend, but they get only a few lines on a few pages) The cover and presentation of the book do not help either, seems to be a bag of jewels / chipped glass spilling out, which has exactly what to do with the story? The Cover Image and Blurbs make me think that this series of Benford books were intended to be promoted with genre disclosure. Sort of a book version of the TV cliché that any attractive woman (or superhero) can be effectively disguised by doing something to their hair and by poking thick framed glasses on his/her face.

I bought this book from the author at an Australian Museum Society meeting last year. **'The Killer Bean of Calabar and other Stories'**, by **Peter Macinnis**, 237 pages, © 2004. I bought this book from the Author at an Australian Museum Society meeting last year. The book lived up to it's promise as being a very comprehensive trawl of the field of human / poisons interaction, and full of handy hints for the home poisoner (if you don't mind getting caught). It is mostly are review of historical events because modern science and medicine these days leaves few opportunities to the results driven researcher intent on committing the 'perfect crime' via the 'undetactable' poison

'Shades 04 – Black Sun Rising', by **Robert Hood**, 161 pages, © 2001. As Rob Hood's readings from his Shades series of 'Young Adult' Speculative Fiction books have been a major feature of the Sydney Freecons, I was slightly disappointed by this book. It was the first of the Shades books that I had set down to read and it seemed a trifle disjoint, with action taking place almost simultaneously in Cairo and on the NSW South coast. It was an adequate read, but not exceptional, I guess

I should have started at episode 01. I do however recommend The Shades series, as it brings a Science Fictional discipline and rigor to a dark world that coexists with our own, that is to say it is self consistent. The adventures are a bit like those in 'Buffy', with a 'young adult' acceptable 'gang' but without the never ending sequence of the discovery of some new 'prophesy' requiring invincible evil and fortuitous discovery of new talismans of power. This shadow world and its rules make some sort of sense and are largely free of 'crap theology'. A purpose of this story clearly was to bring to some conclusion the events of the preceding three books. I believe that all four Shades titles have recently been re-published in a single volume and as such I recommend you get a copy.

'Trek's not taken – a parody', by **Steven R. Boyett**, 201 pages, © 1985

This is a book that disappoints. Twenty parody exercises 'not by' an impressive range of uniquely stylistic writers using slightly misspelled characters from Star Trek Next Generation (well at least it 's not a parody of Voyager!). I bought this book out of curiosity, was it going to be hilarious parody or was it going to be brilliant ensemble Science Fiction that was free from the constraints of Star Trek 'canon'. The Star Trek episodes I have enjoyed most have been the Ensemble SF ones, i.e. where a SF-nal problem can occur and be resolved within 40 odd minutes because of your familiarity with the character and abilities of the cast. I.e. as you already know that the pointy-eared character is logical and the girly captain is impetuous the screenplay doesn't need to divert to explain each time the characters motivation and abilities. This book was not to my taste, the parody was not side splittingly brilliant, or I was insufficiently familiar with the work of the 'not by' writers, and the Star Trek stories were not sufficiently Science fictional. I expect that there is a universe of much better Trek Fan Fiction out there, written by people who understand and love the characters and free of the stylistic constraints of parody. Buy this book as a curiosity or to complete your collection of unauthorized Star Trek knock off material.

'Republican Party Reptile', By P.J. O'Rourke, 220 pages, © 1987

Twenty or so chunks of journalism or satire from the 'High Reagan' Era of American life, some entertain, some give a partly reasoned point of view of thinking of a past era. P.J. O'Rourke is said to be a commentator of the Right as opposed to Hunter S. Thompson being a commentator of the left. I cannot say that I can detect the difference. Does this say more about me than it says about US politics? I think on balance I would be more inclined to join the US Republican Party as a Contrarian challenge to my political beliefs. In effect, to face off against the angels of my darker nature, than to join the US Democrat party, whose policies I would probably find disappointing in that they wouldn't go far enough to meeting own attitudes on several issues.

A rare book, one truly fit for burning. I picked up **'When the Sky Fell – Searching for Atlantis'** because my attitude to 'alt history-Ancient Catastrophe' is always 'Okay show me something new, some that offers an alternative explanation....' But this book did not come up with the goods.

This is a very annoying book, allegedly written by a pair of Librarians who I would have presumed to have a better grasp of the concept of proof, evidence and citation. The book's premise follows from a single 'Fact' that around 9600 BCE the crust of the Earth slipped, displacing the continents and shifting some Arctic areas to temperate and some temperate areas to (Ant) Arctic over a matter of hours or days! The mechanism of this unprecedented geological event is not clearly explained, the Why is. This event took place to allow an Antarctic located 'Atlantis' to be extinguished so that its few survivors could be on hand to seed the civilizations of the ancient world, as described by Solon et al as depicted by Plato. All that follows are selectively interpreted factoids presented to suggest that A. 'everything happened after the 9500BCE event, i.e. Agriculture and Pyramids. B. All the ancient maps secretly used by modern era explorers has an ancient Atlantean pedigree. And C. everyone everywhere has a tribal creation myth of emergence out of chaos or a

'we came from elsewhere' story that attests to Atlantean origins.

Why this Idea sucks big time

1. The whole Solon and Atlantis story is a philosophical subterfuge. The Greeks and their sky gods came from elsewhere. The people they conquered had 'Earth Gods' who gave them the gift of the Arts and Civilization. In response this story states 'we got civilization from the Egyptians and they got from someone else'. QED. No gifting Gods were necessary. I.e. the story is no more 'historical' than Plato's Republic.

2. A 10,000 BC Sub-Antarctic temperate Atlantis could not have risen in isolation. If it existed it must have had trading partners, trading ports and presumably colonies about the place and if they had technology or any sort of social order some of the barbarians would have started to take up civilization well before the 'fall' of Atlantis and the scattering of it's survivors.

3. Agriculture started pretty much as soon as it could, after the glaciers had left, soil had built up and people could move about. You needed Temperate Real Estate, generally at some altitude to be down hill from snow capped mountains for year round water and to be free of forests that needed to be cleared by hand, i.e. usually grassland plains instead of sea coasts.

Clay's Ark by Octavia Butler, 201 pages, © 1985

A common element that I have noticed in all the Octavia Butler books that I have read is that she has frequent non-white point of view characters, that in no way get in the way of the plot (unlike Heinlien). Octavia Butler is the only Black African American SF writer that I am conscious of having read. This book is about an expedition to Proxima that brings back a plague / symbiote infection. It kills but it enhances, it makes you hunger for food, sex and a sense of family! The sole survivor of the expedition crash lands in the 'Mad Max' lands of America finds himself a home, a family and mutated kids. What drives the story is the determination of the infected to try containing the infection to their immediate group. The characters of this story are alien organism controlled but they are still human enough to want to try to save the world. This

is an important point of departure from a 'Hot Zone' or 'Andromeda Strain' type of story, where the disease has no 'human face'. I however note some common story 'DNA' to some of the lesser known stories of Arthur Miller Jr. (A Canticle for Liebowitz), where the irresistible disease is combated and contained by the discipline of a religious order, in a sense an extended non-biological family.

While shopping for telescopes I spotted a copy of **'Analog Magazine 75th anniversary Jan / Feb 2005'** in a newspaper shop near the Galaxy bookshop. They charged me \$A5.20 for it, which is a bit puzzling as the cover price was \$US5.95! I guess this thick commemorative edition was being sold at the 'usual' issue price, or just that the numerical skill base of Newsagency employees has declined markedly.

The UK Magazine the **'Fortean Times'** is one of my holidays or trip away treat reads, lots of weird stuff going on in the world. The Magazine itself is frequently very hard to find at newsagents, lost among the Porn, Car Magazines and New Age Stuff.

In reading **'Galaxy SF Magazine Feb 1967'** there was a lot of Cold War paranoia in the stories presented which made most of the stories seem very dated even when the ideas of the stories were quite timeless.

The Edition of **'Metamorphosis and other Stories'** by **Franz Kafka**, that I picked up contained four or stories. I was able to fully read only three of them, as the post translation punctuation was a complete shambles. Sentences were half a page long and punctuation marks every third word at times as trains of thought in each sentence pinball back and forth. That said, the impression that I got was of a bloke who really, really hated his father and copped a load of self-loathing about his Tuberculosis. The stories themselves left me with a sense of 'So What', as by today's standards of Speculative Fiction they were so bland and laboured. I can only hope that there are better translations out there somewhere as I definitely got the feeling that much had to have been lost in translation from Wiemar Bourgeois German through pre-WII

middle class British. I have read Carel Kapek's 'The Salamanders', translated through a similar path, but it reads in a modern enough voice not to jar.

My Calendar of potentially ANZAPA able 2005 Events

February

- 02 – Tuesday, Dinner with Eric Lindsay in town
- 03 – Infinitas Meeting at Parramatta, Topic 'Best Books for / from 2004 (Published or read that year)'
- 07 – Sydney City Stargazers Public meeting, Topic;
- 10 – TAMS Meeting, Topic 'Preparing for Eternity'
- 16 - Sydney City Stargazers Committee meeting
- 18 – Sydney Futurians Meeting, UTS, Topic Medieval
- 10 – TAMS Meeting, Topic 'Preparing for Eternity'

March

- 03 – Infinitas Meeting at Parramatta, Topic 'TBA'
- 03 – TAMS Meeting, Topic 'Bound for Eternity'
- 07 – Sydney City Stargazers Public meeting, Topic;
- 10 – TAMS Meeting, Topic 'Egypt an armchair travel experience'
- 16 - Sydney City Stargazers Committee meeting
- 18 – Sydney Futurians Meeting, UTS, Topic
- 18 – TAMS Meeting, Topic 'Life and Tombs before the Pyramids'
- 19 – Magic Casements 3, how I won the writers competition (or Wuz Robbed! again)

April

- 04 – Sydney City Stargazers Public meeting, Topic
- 07 – TAMS Meeting, Topic 'Sir Charles Nicholson'
- 07 – Infinitas Meeting at Parramatta, Topic 'TBA'
- 15 – Sydney Futurians Meeting, UTS, Topic
- 20 - Sydney City Stargazers Committee meeting
- 21 – TAMS Meeting, Topic 'Murder and Conspiracy in the Egyptian palace'
- 22 to 25 - Conflux 2, Canberra, Con report?

May

- 02 – Sydney City Stargazers Public meeting, Topic
- 05 – Infinitas Meeting at Parramatta, Topic 'TBA'
- 17 – Sydney City Stargazers Committee meeting
- 20 – Sydney Futurians Meeting, UTS, Topic
- 20 - Sydney City Stargazers Committee meeting
- 23 to 29 – The 2005 Sydney Writers Festival?

June

- 02 – Infinitas Meeting at Parramatta, Topic 'TBA'

06 – Sydney City Stargazers Public meeting, Topic;
10 to 13 – Thylacon 4, Natcon at Hobart, Tasmania
15 - Sydney City Stargazers Committee meeting
17 – Sydney Futurians Meeting, UTS, Topic
18/19 or 25/26 – Terry Dowling’s weekend nearest to the
Winter Solstice event (by invitation only)

**The rest of this page for your notes toward
Mailing Comment notes on Transcendental
Basenji Sermons & Enlightenment Volume
1 No. 10, January to March, 2005**

July

02 &03 – Popular Writers and Readers Festival, NSW
Writers Centre Rozelle?
04 – Sydney City Stargazers Public meeting, Topic;
07 – Infinitas Meeting at Parramatta, Topic ‘TBA’
15 – Sydney Futurians Meeting, UTS, Topic
15 to 17 – Continuum 3, Melbourne
20 - Sydney City Stargazers Committee meeting

August

01 – Sydney City Stargazers Public meeting, Topic;
04 – Infinitas Meeting at Parramatta, Topic ‘TBA’
04 to 08 – Interaction Worldcon, Glasgow Scot. UK.
07 – Sydney City Stargazers Public meeting, Topic;
17 - Sydney City Stargazers Committee meeting
19 – Sydney Futurians Meeting, UTS, Topic

September

01 – Infinitas Meeting at Parramatta, Topic ‘TBA’
05 – Sydney City Stargazers Public meeting, Topic;
16 - Sydney Futurians Meeting, UTS, Topic
21 - Sydney City Stargazers Committee meeting
30 – Conclave SF con, Adelaide Sth. Aust. start

October

01 to 03 - Conclave SF con, Adelaide Sth. Aust. end
03 – Sydney City Stargazers Public meeting, Topic;
06 – Infinitas Meeting at Parramatta, Topic ‘TBA’
07 – Sydney City Stargazers Public meeting, Topic;
14 to 16 – Whovention 7, Sydney
19 - Sydney City Stargazers Committee meeting
21 – Sydney Futurians Meeting, UTS, Topic

**Transcendental Basenji Sermons & Enlightenment
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November

03 – Infinitas Meeting at Parramatta, Topic ‘TBA’
07 – Sydney City Stargazers Public meeting, Topic;
16 - Sydney City Stargazers Committee meeting
18 – Sydney Futurians Meeting, UTS, Topic

December

01 – Infinitas Meeting at Parramatta, Topic ‘TBA’
05 – Sydney City Stargazers Public meeting, Topic;
16 - Sydney City Stargazers Committee meeting
16 – Sydney Futurians Meeting, UTS, Topic