

# *Transcendental Basenji Sermons & Enlightenment*

Vol. 1 No. 15, October 2005  
For ANZAPA issue No. 227

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The Topic for the October 21, Sydney Futurians at UTS meeting is 'Human Only Universes in SF' and selection of some 2005 / 2006 discussion topics.

## Grey Pages – ANZAPA

### Editorial

**When we confide unto the Lord our earnest hopes and mortal plans - Ghod laughs!**

I had not planned to get this fifteenth issue out in time for the October ish mailing, I completed issue 14 well ahead of schedule so as to leave space for the organization of the 2005 Sydney Freecon. Then things started to happen, Sydney Futurian and very long term Sydney SF fan Kevin Dillon died and so did my plans for the 2005 Freecon / Uicon in its original format. Picking up the pieces, much of this issue is about Kevin and instead of the Freecon Uicon, we will have a 'Sydney Futurians Saturday' on Saturday October 29 at the University of Technology Sydney, with your choice of six 2004 / 2005 Friday night discussion topics to be re-visited. I.e. a second chance if you missed it first time round, or if you just can't do Friday night meetings, a chance for as much of a Sydney Futurian experience as you can fit into a Saturday, one or six sessions!

You are all invited, I'm expecting between ten to thirty SF fans to show up for some or all of the Saturday.

Due to the nature of this issue, I will postpone doing mailing comments until issue 16 (November?). If after reading this newsletter, you know of someone whose life was touched by Kevin, then let me know their postal address and I will try to mail them an additional copy of this newsletter.

Garry P Dalrymple  
September 30, 2005

## Report on my investigation of matters relating to Kevin Dillon and his effects

1. **Brian Walls phoned** on Thursday night Sept. 08, 2005 to advise of Kevin's death.
2. **Followed up on E. Harvey's** email posting.
3. **Spoke to Marrickville Police Station** (Ph. 9568 9299), the discovery of Kevin's body is listed as Event No. E24976858. Attempted to place on Record concern over the un-investigated disposal of Kevin's Science Fiction related effects.
4. **Referred to the Morgue** (Ph. 8584 7821) and established that Kevin's body was at Glebe Coroners Morgue. It had been formally identified and was currently available for collection. If Kevin had died intestate then his funeral and effects will be handled by the Public Trustee (which will then attempt to recover expenses from his Estate)
5. **At the Public Trustee's Office** (9252 0523), confusion over the death of another Kevin (Francis?) Dillon who died in 2002. Attempted to place on Record concern over the un-investigated disposal of Kevin's Science Fiction related effects.
6. **Attempts to identify Kevin's brother** through Pioneers Index Birth records (find Kevin, then look for other Dillons of same parentage in earlier or later years) stymied, births after 1918 not publicly available.
7. Spoke to **Graham Stone** who was able to state that Kevin did have an older brother, and a childhood Campsie address therefore Electoral roll records for that subdivision in 1931/32 will disclose Kevin's father and brother, after 1933 will presumably disclose Kevin, disclose Kevin's father and brother all living at the same address.
8. Spoke to **Public Trustee's Office** on Friday 16 September, still confusion over the other Kevin Dillon, assured that our Kevin's file is on a superior's desk. Attempted to place on Record concern over the un-investigated disposal of Kevin's Science Fiction related effects, assured that the Public Trustee's Office goes through the estate with a fine toothed comb searching for items of value. Left home and work phone numbers for news.

9. **Prepared this report** to take to the September Futurians meeting.

## My Notes from Kevin Dillon's Funeral Monday September 26, 2005, East Chapel Northern Suburbs Cemetery

Having an excess balance of Recreation Leave I was able to take a day off work to attend Kevin Dillon's Funeral. Kevin's funeral was our second Sydney SF fan funeral of September. The funeral notice in Saturday's SMH invited 'The relatives and friends of the late Kevin Dillon late of Dulwich Hill ...' I took this to be an ambiguous indication about a next of kin.

I was in the shower, getting ready to leave, when John Fox phoned. He was unable to get time off work and Diane was unwell, so I went prepared to represent the ANZAPANS and possibly the Futurians.

I left home at 12.15, and was at Chatswood Railway station in time to meet Brian Walls and catch the 1.48 number 545 bus to Northern Suburbs Cemetery. We miss judged our stop and ended up with a long-ish walk through bushland back to the place. As Brian and I headed towards the East Chapel we could see two groups of people.

The turnout for Kevin's Funeral was as follows;

John August

Maggie Blinco – Address Supplied

Garry P Dalrymple - Earlwood

Ian Driscoll

Chester Graham – email supplied

Don Lawson

John Masters-Brown – Address Supplied

Doug Nilson – Address Supplied

Blair Ramage - Earlwood

Gerald Smith - Ashfield

Graham Stone - Burwood

Brian Walls - Granville

Ron Ward – Manly?

the celebrant, and of course, in some sense of the spirit of Kevin Dillon was present as well.

Look among these names and I expect you will notice fannish names that went Gafia long before Starwarz came onto the scene. No family or neighbours attended.

Those present all knew Kevin through his Science Fiction and Literary interests and could be roughly divided by era of introduction to Science Fiction. The older fans would have defined their era by now long forgotten bookshops, the only places that the then Rare Science Fiction title could be sought, however I terms more sensible to latter-day readers, we could also be described as belonging to the pre and post Dr Who era fandoms.

Shortly before 2.30, the celebrant introduced himself to us, and in the absence of family, invited anyone who wanted to say something about Kevin to step forward.

**The order of the service was;** a brief address by the celebrant, a few short speeches, a consoling poem and then a concluding piece from the celebrant. All was concluded in the hour or so allotted, but characteristic of the fans that we all were, at the conclusion of the service we just couldn't help ourselves, corridor conversations broke out and we had to be politely 'shooed' out of the Chapel as people started to arrive for the next service. You just do not sum up Kevin's life in a single hour!

#### **What I recall about what was said**

I offered to be the first to speak, as I could sense that some of the others present wanted to speak but were reluctant to go first. The following account of what I said is made up from a set of notes scribbled down in the minutes between being invited to speak and the start of the service. The other speakers I tried to copy down as they spoke and combined with later recollections.

#### ***My apologies in advance for false attributions or any other inaccuracies.***

#### **Garry Dalrymple**

Over the weekend before the funeral, I had considered and discarded the idea of writing up a formal eulogy, because, as the death notice ambiguously implied that Kevin's

relatives would be attending, I presumed that family would have precedence over friends, so excuse this set of recollection if it sounds a bit rough and disjointed.

I should not be the person giving this speech, as there are people present here today who knew Kevin much better and for much longer than I did. To me he was a welcomed acquaintance, a constant figure frequently encountered at a surprising range of SF and other literary events. I know from Graham Stone that Kevin was born and lived in Campsie for much of his early life. He would have been of a generation to be born into a family that would have been familiar with the great comradeship shared by men who had served in the First and Second World Wars. I would like to think that for him that the company of Science Fiction fans provided some measure of similar comradeship.

The special thing that we all know about Kevin is that he was a collector and a SF fan. For most people, Science Fiction Fandom is a stage people go through, in that you read, you start to collect and then as you graduate, get a job or family commitments, you had to let most of your stuff go. Kevin, bless his soul, was always there, as a collector of last resort, constantly buying up stuff, the stuff that was probably important but had to be let go of. I can well remember Kevin at a SF convention auction, myopically sifting through a box of newsletters just bought sight unseen. The bidding for a next box stalled until the auctioneer halted proceedings to ask Kevin if he intended to make a bid. This would usually result in reserve-matching bid and so the auction could proceed.

Kevin also confided in me one piece of advice that I always remember when attending conventions. In those days of room sharing and crash space at conventions, when hygiene was only optional and well before the Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy, he advised 'always attend a convention with two spare T-shirts', that way, if you get a chance at getting a shower you can use one as a towel and the other for a change.

I was always very pleased to see Kevin at our Friday night SF&F discussion meetings, as he represented a continuity with the community of SF fans who attended the 1952 and 1955 Sydney SF conventions, especially as he turned up to each of the Sydney Freecons I have organized.

We last saw Kevin at the August 21 Sydney Futurians SF discussion meeting. He explained that he was back after many months away from our meetings undergoing cataract surgery on both eyes, and his return was most welcome. Earlier that night he had attended a book launch at Gleebooks with Brian Walls. On hearing of Kevin's death, Brian Walls asked around, and apparently Kevin had been seen in Ashwoods still looking over stuff to collect in the week before he died.

### **Brian Walls**

I first met Kevin in 1972/73 at the Glebe SF group meeting. One time I visited his house, at that time all his collection was under one roof. Through work I was doing then I discovered that he had been working as a proof reader for the NSW Government Printer, before it was privatized. His poor eyesight, Glaucoma and finally Cataracts you probably know about. When I told Ian at Ashwoods about Kevin's death he was visibly upset and immediately phoned his father, his comment was 'There goes my best Customer'! At the Gleebooks event in August, Kevin was more interested in the books than the free food and Drink on offer, a fitting comment on Kevin's life.

### **Don Lawson (I think)?**

I first met Kevin in Mc Calls bookshop in 1948 or 1950, one of a nest of now extinct bookshops and newsagents up the cross where SF could be found. Kevin was leafing through the magazines as if he knew what he was looking for. Kevin's dominant characteristic was his reserve, in that he stood and waited to be noticed, and would seldom if ever forcefully interject his opinions. He was the most un-malicious person I have ever known, a rarity at that time when SF fans tended to be 'strong' and opinionated personalities.

Kevin seemed to be very motivated, but not readily apparent what he was motivated by. A desire to understand might have been it, as he would often collect books on a subject that ranged from beginner to expert, as if at some point he might wish to read and self-educate himself on that subject from being complete novice to an expert level. It is true that he did have some characteristics that in another would have been unwelcome, but Kevin was always welcome wherever he was, no matter the company.

### **Graham Stone**

My last contact I had with Kevin was a message I sent him in August via his message bank, about an exhibition of work done by the NSW Government Printers office. I first met Kevin was when he appeared out of the blue at the 1952 Sydney SF convention. Kevin was one of the few promising young finds among those who attended. In those days SF readers were a despised and persecuted minority and most SF fans pursued their interest in solitary isolation. Kevin collected ... well if it was on paper or printed or related, then he would probably collect it. I helped him move twice and among the things I noticed then among his collection were a stove, Motorbike parts, a very early model computer, a photocopier and at least six ancient typewriters. It is one of the enduring legends of Sydney fandom that while living in rented accommodation not once but twice Kevin had floors collapse under the weight of his collection.

### **Blair Ramage**

I remember Kevin as a bloke who would do anything for you, on one occasion I mentioned an interest in contributing to an APA, but explained that I didn't have access to a duplication machine. No problem! Kevin had me write it and he copied it up and sent it off for me. He was so helpful that at one Melbourne SF convention they were surprised that I was a real person, as many had believed that I was just a (pseudonymous) figment of Kevin's literary imagination. Kevin had a good imagination, but not that good. Kevin's ability to locate rare or unusual SF titles must also be mentioned, the impossible or the

unobtainable he could probably find and hand you, without any fuss.

### Stray comments overheard

Prior to the service, during conversation outside the Chapel, **Gerald Smith** was amused and thought it singularly apt that Brian Walls had been able to put a name to the, Eastern Suburbs church that Kevin had had dealings with, St Jude's Anglican, the patron Saint of lost things and causes. **John Masters-Brown?** (Who had helped clear Kevin's seventh Garage, reducing the seven to six!) was of the view that some of Kevin's urge to collect and save some items may have been in part motivated by a sense of outrage at the 'clear out' mentality of the chiefs of some local depository Libraries towards Australian Literary output.

In trying to set up circumstances that will lead to the permanent preservation of the SF related component element of Kevin Dillon's collection I have been firing off emails. One of the responses has been the following email from Alan Tasker – [atasker@sl.nsw.gov.au](mailto:atasker@sl.nsw.gov.au) - of the NSW State Library / Mitchell Library.

Have we organized that all issues of ANZAPA have been archived to this NSW library, I think we more than qualify on the 'Slice of Life' criteria.

Dear Garry

Thank you for your email regarding the probable intestacy of Kevin Dillon.

As the deposit library for NSW we should hold a copy of all publications produced in this state - books, magazines, newsletters, flyers, sheet music, posters, maps - anything produced on paper (legislation now looking at Websites and other types of cyber publishing now).

We hold Futurian Society News, Futurian Observer, Futurian Society of Sydney library catalog (1962) and Notes and Comment. As we don't always achieve a perfect run of small production serials we are always happy to receive copies to help complete or improve our holdings of the title. If you could supply a snail mail address I'll send you our holdings for these serials.

I think that Fisher Library and the National Library may both have an interest in overseas science fiction magazines although I do not know for certain.

We would certainly be interested in any original materials of the Futurian Society, especially its origins. I imagine you may hold some of these in your own archives but as a long term consideration the security of the Mitchell Library could provide a more widely accessible place for your non-current historical records.

As an organisation you may be able to register an interest in Kevin's collection. I don't mind you mentioning that the Library is keen to fill in gaps in our holdings of NSW publications and that we may be interested in his personal papers. You could supply my contact details to whatever agency is dealing with his estate.

It is hard to prescribe what we collect - apart from mandatory collecting of NSW publications (as above). With original material we can only make general statements but need to see each group of personal papers or organisational records to make an assessment. With groups, minute books, correspondence, membership lists and photographs with descriptions are the main types of documentation we look for.

We describe this material as providing "a slice of life" in NSW, particularly for people or activities not generally documented in books, periodicals, film, recordings etc. We consider anything we think would provide researchers with unique documents likely to help in an understanding of our past.

I'm sorry I cannot offer to attend your conference - despite being the Field Librarian. I am fully committed to processing collections at least until the end of the year at the moment. I'm happy for this email to be distributed to your members for their understanding of our activities and in helping fill gaps in our holdings of your newsletters. Remember to send a mailing address so I can give you details of issues we hold.

I hope this helps in dealing with Kevin Dillon's possessions.

Regards

Alan Tasker, Field Librarian, Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW 9273-1429

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## Quark, Strangeness and Charm in Sydney?

## When is a Library not a Library?

Many Sydney Municipal libraries offer services intended to make it easier for people to access library services. Book mobiles, bus based mobile libraries attend some schools and book busses, that take the less mobile to libraries are a standard municipal service.

However, most mornings before 8.45 am at the Northern exit to Bankstown Railway station, 50 metres from the Bankstown City library building, you will find two Bankstown City librarians with table topped trolley covered in new paperback books. They are there for commuters to borrow and return library books. I.e. a library service without a library building as such!

While attempting to publicize the Freecon / Unicon I went to visit the Sydney City Library. I couldn't get in, but there were signs and arrows. Followed the signs and arrows and found a much smaller library on the ground floor. Only it wasn't a 'Library' it was a 'Library Link', a room supplied with comfy chairs, shelves of paperbacks and some newspapers But No Librarians! The people that on first impression seemed to be librarians, were actually fellow library users. There were anti theft type shop barriers to stop book 'evaporation', and if you wanted to leave with a book you had to swipe your library card and the book yourself. There were also self-help bookable computer terminals and a phone extension if you needed to talk to a real live (out sourced to India?) librarian. Wow! a library without Librarians!

# Golden Pages

Sydney Science Fiction Meeting  
Notes, Books Read, Book reviews  
and 'Non-Award Winning' Original  
Science Fiction

Sydney SF meeting notes for the  
months of August and September

## Sydney Futurians meeting notes

For August 19, 2005,

Topic: **Science Fiction Stories based  
on Myths**

**Present were;** Garry P Dalrymple,  
Kevin Dillon, Diane Fox, John Fox,  
Peter Garrone, Ann Rankins, Ted  
Scribner and Brian Walls

## August 2005 News Items

Much informal discussion of the weather before the meeting started. Brian Walls and Kevin Dillon arrived late, having come from a book launch at Gleebooks book. They arrived together while we were part way through the news.

### Garry Dalrymple's News

– I attended the last of the three **Phoenix Dr Who events** put on by the Sydney Dr Who Club, it was a nice day and a reasonable crowd attended.

– Sightings of the 'Companion' among cinema lobby screenings of Serenity. The movie is being promoted as a guns & girls and action movie to the proles (Dukes of Hazzard in Space?), with the crazy girl as some sort of super secret ultimate weapon.

– Have heard from **Felix Jenkins**, he has sent me his 40 plus page story

– **Daniel Cotton** of Newcastle University is organizing a Science Fiction Story competition as part of the international year of Physics (Einstein) for the Australian Institute of Physics. Seen on the Eidolist, \$200 prize for a 2,000 ish word story and he is interested in attending the 2005 Sydney Freecon / Unicon.

– The 2005 Sydney **Freecon / Unicon** has sprouted a **short short Story competition**. All stories **must be**

-Science Fiction - 525 words or less,

- Read at the Freecon /Unicon,

-Judged by a 'people choice' vote of people attending on Saturday at the Freecon /Unicon.

- Up to twelve stories will be read, and will share in a prize pool of at least \$100. I.e. if a story gets 20% of the total votes cast, it gets 20% of the total prize pool.

**Kevin Dillon** was content to listen without adding any news other than to explain that he had recently undergone

**John Fox's news** – We now have a Sydney Futurians @ UTS website, it is;

<http://users.secsme.org.au/~futurians/>.

– We were represented at the **UTS Clubs conference** on the evening of Wednesday August 10. The news is that even post VSU there is still a future for affiliate clubs like ours, currently available (with preconditions) are help with printing (posters) meeting publicity within UTS publications, and subsidies for club dinners & T-Shirts etc.

– We were represented with a **table at the UTS Clubs day**, 11 am to 3 pm Thursday August 18. We gave away over a dozen books, and signed up Five 'Members' and Five 'Email Contacts'. This gives us much more security of tenure and standing with the UTS Student's Association, as otherwise our UTS Student / Staff participation level is quite low.

**Peter Garrone** - Today there were 1100 entries recorded on an email list string to identify the worst SF book ever

**Anne Rankins** – (the TV show) **Taken** sucks bigtime, similar plot DNA to **4400**.

**Ted Scribner's News** -The ABC is releasing an MP3 version of the Dr. Who Radio play Dr. Who Vs the Daleks.

-Tomorrow is **Edwina Harvey's Birthday**, all present wished many happy returns!

-The Adelaide SF&F con '**Conclave**' has collapsed due to lack of memberships.

- Other 'Media SF' Sci-Fi events are falling by the wayside, is this the fall of '**ABN Fandom**' ventures that seem to be non-club based, for profit meet a TV celebrity events. Market saturation and the high cost of having multiple overseas guests were discussed.

- The Australian SF Bullshead has won a **second Ditmar** (one for Ted to keep and one for Edwina?)

**Brian Walls' news** – Handed around a sample of the glossy promotional material for **Serenity** the movie of the cancelled '**Firefly**' Sci-Fi Western TV show.

There is a new Biography of **Sir Fred Hoyle** out (reviewed in the Fortean Times) pays very little attention to his Science Fiction efforts.

According to the Telegraph, the ashes of Jimmy Doohan, Scotty from Star Trek, and four Australians are due to go into orbit.

**Continuum III** attracted over 500, mostly to see **Niel Gaiman**, whose website records 800,000 hits a day.

Apparently Wrestling with Angels (on the head of a pin?) is an interest of Brians

The movie '**Mirror Mask**' has been completed but languishes on the shelf.

The head of the Australian Horror writers Association is **James Cain**.

### SF TV of late

– **SG. 1** is back (or is this **Atlantis**) and the Saturday Night season of **Dr. Who** has ended, 'Retro-Who' is still playing Monday to Thursday. There is a 'Christmas Show' 'New Who' episode that has not been shown yet, rumour has it that the Sydney Dr. Who club may have a copy of it and it may be shown at meetings, unless the ABC shows it soon. The **Taken** and **4400** series are ending shortly. '**Striperella**' is showing at 2.30 am. Is **Silver Sun** still running?

### Science News (from ABC Science Matters)

"Japanese researchers have developed a flexible artificial skin that could give robots a humanlike sense of touch":  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/4154366.stm>

"The world's first pure nerve stem cells made from human embryonic stem cells has been created by scientists at the Universities of Edinburgh and Milan":

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/4155016.stm>

"Scientists in the US have managed to get single cells to ferry objects up and down tiny chambers":

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/4156282.stm>

"Tiny tubes of carbon, crafted into the shape of a Y, could revolutionize the computer industry, suggests new research. The work has shown that Y-shaped carbon nano tubes

are easily made and act as remarkably efficient electronic transistors":  
<http://www.newscientist.com/article.ns?id=dn7847>

**Great relief** at the safe return of the Space Shuttle (and Andy Roberts!) to Earth

Topic: **Science Fiction Stories based on Myths**

**Waddy mean Myth?  
I tell you its Gospel, Mate!**

### 1. Cultural / Historical Stuff

Fiction or Non-Fiction stories of long standing whose origins are lost in time, such as; Arthurian Legends - Beowulf - Homer's Illiad and Odysseus etc

### 2. Religious Stuff

Reputed to be true or the basis of a religious World-view, i. e. My religion is your Myth, (especially after Disney gets hold of it!)

- Creation Myths of all cultures
- Plenty of action adventure Bible Stories
- Traditional Epics, mostly transmitted orally until writing became common, like the Gilgamesh and the Ramayana and the Mahabharatta.

### 3. Stuff in between

Things that are 'made up' Religions, such as The Book of Mormon and the Scientology explanation of the Earths pre-history.

**Urban Myths** and other contemporary cultural beliefs that are said to be true but continue to be re-told because they serve some point

### Science Fiction that self creates or builds on Myth.

Stories that have created some thing in the public imagination that is more lasting than the memory of having read a book. (just some)

JRR Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings

Frank Herbert's Dune series

Robert Heinlein's Lazarus Long books

George Lucas' Starwarz

H Beam Piper's Little Fuzzys

**Science Fiction that feeds off some pre-existing Myth.**

Battlestar Galactica (Based in Mormonism)

The 'Left Behind' series, featuring post 'Rapture' Evangelical Christian themes when the 'really good' are swept up to heaven and the slightly imperfect are left behind to suffer the 'Tribulations'

PJ Straczynski's Babylon 5

Golding's Lord of the Flies

### The open re-telling of old myths

Lots of Dr. Who and (Original Series) Star Trek episodes used classical mythological figures in their stories.

Stories that offer explanations for 'What really happened'. Where the re-telling tidies up old myths for modern readers and explains using Science Fictional tropes exactly how Dragons could fly, and usually why they aren't around anymore

### Suggestions of some myth based SF stories

The Lensman series of books by **EE Doc Smith**, make use of Myth themes make and make **JRR Tolkien** a bedfellow?

The Life of Brian by **Monty Python**, SF as it involves an alien spaceship and ride.

Centurians Empire by **Sean McMullen**, the myth of the 'Eternal Roman' weaves through 1500 years to the present and near future.

Job, a Comedy of Justice, by **Robert Heinlien**, re-use of a biblical figure.

Several **Jasper Fforde** 'Bookworld' series books featuring a main character called **Thursday Next**, who interacts with mythical figures who come to life within books.

The Wizard of OZ by **Baum** and Carter of Mars etc by **Edgar Rice Burroughs**, were each inspired by elements of **Theosophy** and so consequently we must also include the movie Zardoz.

**The Nazis** and their ilk, were influenced by **Bulwer Lyttons**' Vril, the coming Race.

JRR Tolkien's LOTR and The Hobbit were inspired / borrowed from European oral tradition mythology such as Finland's The Kalavala.

(Tolkien was apparently horrified by the **British Interplanetary Society** – per BW)

**Tolkien** and **CS Lewis** were challenged to try to write SF&F, Tolkien's attempt, a **The Lost Road**, a Time Travel story (it ran out of time?) was never finished, CS Lewis' was more successful, producing **the Ransom Trilogy**, an extended allegorical piece about man's fall from a state of Grace.

**Kevin Dillon** offered – **Hoka** by **Poul Anderson** and **Gordon Dickson** who played with all sorts of styles and myths in an extended series of short stories.

**Anne Rankins** offered – **Iliam** by **Dan Simons**, based on **Homer's The Illiad**.

Two TV series stand out for Myth plundering – **Xenia Warrior Princess** and **SG1**

Australian Writer **Terry Dowling's Rhynosseros** series creates a blending of Myths old and new suitable for a distant future Australia.

**Olaf Stapledon's** creation **Odd John** can't be mythed out.

Childhood's end, by **AC Clarke** fincludes in its story elements of myths local to Sri Lanka and Indonesia (Mystic / holy mountains and invasions of butterflies / transformed fallen warriors). **2001**, short story and movie has more myth in it than you can point a black monolith at.

In one outing of **Brian Stableford's Swan of Space** books, a Jesuit loses his faith on discovering that the Bethlehem star of Christian tradition was the end of a beautiful advanced and ethical civilization.

**Angelica** and **Angel Seeker** by **Sharon Shinn** feature Angel Mythology, as does Australian Author, **Richard Harland's Ferren and the Angel** series

**Mists of Avalon** by **MZ Bradley** draws heavily on Arthurian mythology

Thar be Dragons in **Dragons of Pern** by **Ann McCaffery**.

**Robert Silverberg's Gilgamesh** was based on guess what?

**Roger Zelazny** has four or five Mythology based books.

**Piers Anthony**, who earns a good living by writing books to a commission (and who once described a basenji that followed his daughters home from school as 'his second favourite dog' which will be immediately understood by any Basenji owners reading this), has written a series of Fantasy books

where real people have the opportunity to become Classical Greek / Roman Gods who still affect human life. **The Rhinegold** is apparently based on Beowulf.

## Thursday September 01, 2005 – The Infinitas Bookshop Meeting

Present were;

Daryl Addams, Leonard Chapple, Henry Chatroop, Garry Dalrymple, Kurt Frank Will Kenedy, Mary Right, Charmain Spears and Tim

I arrived at 7.05 pm by which time a discussion was already well underway. The topic seemed to revolve around Movie faults and the downloadableness of TV and movies altering the Cinemas-then Cable-then video release-then Free to air market for all forms of entertainment. Also discussed was the technological leadership of the Pornography and Gambling sectors in pioneering new communication technologies and ways of getting 'product' to consumers.

The faults and disappointments of current Cable TV programming were discussed. This means of distribution is still not an efficient or satisfying means of getting your timely Sci-Fi 'hit'.

Conversation then returned to night's topic – Sequels.

Suggestions of **Sequels that Sucked** or should never have been made include;

Highlander 2

Crusade

Galactica 80 (a Battle Star Galactica sequel)

The Mummy 2

Star Trek Enterprise

Ghost in the shell 2 TV version

Scoobie Doobie Do

The following were suggested as being OK Sequels;

The recent Battle Star Galactica

The recent Dr. Who (The Noo Hoo!)

Maccrosse 2

Ghost in the shell 1 TV version

Buffy

Xenia (better than Hercules!)

The following were suggested as

**Movies that Never should have been made;**

Terminator 3 (sorry Arnie)

Aliens 3 and 4

The Second and all subsequent Highlander movies

The following were suggested, as

**should do Sequels;**

Ultraviolet

Space Above And Beyond

Firefly

Callan (1960s UK Spy drama)

Tim the Infinitas / Blokey Stuff shop owner reported on seeing the Firefly movie preview, the news is good, although the Science is at times a little dodgy.

At this point I had a side conversation with Tim about the 2005 Sydney Freecon / Unicon. When I returned to the discussion conversation had morphed to being about Golf, Seven Star Hotels and the recent local political regime changes that saw both **Bob Carr** and **John Brogden** withdrawing from NSW politics.

A final comment was heard to the effect that the Science Fictional rise of China had been predicted, no book title or Author quoted.

Meeting ended at 8.15 dispersed to reconvene at a nearby Café.

Next month's topic; **Geopolitics, Oil and Terror**

## Friday September 02, 2005 –The Sydney Dr Who Tavern Meeting

Present were: Brendan, Tony Cook, Garry Dalrymple and Carl Elsen with a brief courtesy visit by David Bofinger

Brendan was there first, I arrived at about 7 pm. When Tony Cook arrived there was an exchange of club mail and discussion of the recent membership drive. The percentage of membership turnout to meetings and special events is usually about 20 to 25%.

While waiting in line to place an order for my \$5 Steak I observed many forms of creative queue jumping. If they had a 'tick a box' drink coaster or mini order form for their limited range of \$5 meals they could feed people more efficiently and give people more 'sit down and have a drink' time rather than standing in a que time.

I gave Brendan a copy of the most recent issue of my ANZAPA newsletter, 'Transcendental Basenjjs Sermons and Enlightenment No. 14' as it contained a review of the recent Sydney Dr Who 'Phoenix' meeting.

Brendan is due to finish his doctorate shortly, which lead to a discussion of exactly how many Doctors there are among the Whovian classes of Society?

Received some appreciation for my review of the Phoenix review and there was a subsequent discussion of my encounter with Sydney Sf living legend Mike McGann.

Apparently Captain Jack's Bum was not deleted for the Box set, but an extended variation of the kiss scene is secured in the out takes section of the DVD, said to be a hoot!

The background noise level of the venue prevents much deep philosophical conversation; lip reading would be a useful skill to acquire for these meetings.

Observation of the number of typos and editing sins in some of the exchange newsletters that Brendan was looking through suggested a competition for the next Dr Who Data issue, i.e. for a list of the most egregious typos, suggest a description that fits, such as;

- **Gurads** – The dyslexia monster running amok and causing social disorder in an Alternate Terry Pratchett like Universe?
- Kroll, **a Quid like monster** so presumably there are Florin, Shilling, Zac and Trey like lesser monsters as well?
- The **Creastors**? Your guess is as good as mine!

The meeting broke up and we went our separate ways at about 8.35 pm.

## Notes from the Sydney Futurians meeting of September 16, 2005.

### Topic: Plants in Science Fiction Stories – Intelligent and Strange

#### Present were;

Garry Dalrymple, Diane Fox, John Fox, Ann Rankins, Ted Scribner and Brian Walls

### Contributions were received from - Via Sydney Dr Who; Evil Lord Zog, Grrag, and Bruce Rayne

## September 2005 SF&F News

- **Kevin Dillon** has passed away at the age of 73, a week or so after attending our August meeting. Kevin was one of the 1952 Sydney SF convention members, a regular fixture at all Sydney SF events and an inveterate 'collector of last resort' for all manner of things including Science Fiction newsletters and convention memorabilia. I for one will miss him.

- **Karen Warnock**, known in Australian fannish circles as 'Womble' has died, as a result of a series of bouts with cancer. Karen was the partner of Gerald Smith and a member of ANZAPA. Karen's funeral was held earlier today and a memorial service will take place shortly in Melbourne. Diane and John Fox report that it was a moving ceremony well attended by Sydney fans.

- A minute's silence was observed for Kevin and Womble

**Brian Walls' news** - Details were unclear, but there seems to be a new German Sci-Fi Opera about.

- Brian and Garry each gave brief reports on what was known about Kevin's death, funeral arrangements and estate matters.

- Brian had known Kevin for 32 years!

- John Fox gave a brief report on Womble's funeral and wake which took place today

- The throbbing noise from Rock band supporting a Korean Evangelical Christian event in the UTS Great Hall ceased part way through our meeting. There had been herds of 'Live bait', skinny Korean girls on hand to welcome invitees!)

- **John Birmingham** is working on a second Alternate History book '**Weapons of Choice**' and having fun planning dreadful fictional deaths for people who have annoyed him in real life.

- The fossil of a new biggest ever **Pterosaur** (flying Lizard) has been found, wing configuration resembling that of a WWII Spitfire aircraft.

- Reports from Korea and elsewhere state that people are dying after marathon internet (gaming?) sessions.

- **A 'Jerk' detector**, voice analysis software, is currently being marketed, and then presumably they will market voice 'un-jerk' disguising software.

- The Movie '**Code 46**' was shot in Shanghai coz its recently constructed architecture makes it the new 'Futuristic appearance' city.

- The new **Superman** movie will cost one third of a Billion Dollars, in spite of being shot in a cheaper than third world country – Why?

- The **Gertrude and Alice Bookshop** near Berkelews is well worth visiting

A '**War of the Worlds**' Musical is coming out

**John Fox's news** - The Sydney Futurians web page is up and growing

**Ted Scribner's news** - **Cat Sparks** has won a significant placing in the world wide '**Writers of the Future**' SF writing competition.

**Garry Dalrymple's news** - The **Kinokuniya bookshop** currently has an impressive corner display of Science and Science Fiction books to match a very impressive catalogue booklet, copies of which were handed out.

- **On page 9, September Issue, Cosmos Magazine** you can just make out a picture of Futurian **Ian Woolf**, taken at the Cosmos organized 'Science in the Pub' outing to discuss Longevity. The issue also features Book Reviews by our Hon. Member **Bruce Gillespie**.

- There will be a **new 'young persons' Science show on TV**, 4 pm on Mondays starting September 19. It is a joint production between Channel 10 and the CSIRO.

- **Zara Baxter** and **Chris Barnes** (the Con Syder twins?) have announced the start of 'Fans in the pub', a First Tuesday of the month

gathering of fans at the Civic Hotel, corner of Goulbourn and Pitt Streets.

- The **Con Syder** news from **Zara Baxter** is: "We're still scouting venues, and we have a lot of support from people who have offered to be part of the committee. We've been in discussions with Conflux about the future of Sydney and Canberra conventions. Beyond that, we're quite happy with progress. Never fear, we'll report anything major as soon as we have information which is firm and unwavering"

- *In this writer's opinion*, this suggests that the committee for the first Con Syder may be backed by 'Money from Melbourne', and 'Writers from Canberra' rather than having to learn by their own mistakes as they go.

- Went to **the September Infinitas meeting**, Eight people present, discussion of Movie Faults, sequels that sucked and sequels that should be made. Much incomprehensible Technology talk followed.

- Went to **the September Dr. Who Tavern Meeting**, met Brendan, a Dr. Who fan who cares about newsletters! While there, I several Sydney Futurian connected people arrived and went to have dinner at another table. More people were present for this ad hoc 'non-Futurian' meeting than for the monthly Dr. Who Meeting!

- **Dalek Photo**, a photo carried in many Australian news-papers after England's victory in the Ashes Cricket series, of an **inflatable Dalek** decorated with 'AUSSIES E-X-T-E-R-M-I-N-A-T-E-D' is an example of the fannish culture appropriated by the mainstream.

- Eidolist traffic about the **Serenity Disclaimer**. People attending a Special evening, Serenity Preview and a chance to meet Joss Weedon had to give implied consent for, well just about everything. Seems to be the universal (studio?) case that they can afterwards depict you as saying anything about the film for their subsequent promotional process!

- **Book launch and signing at Infinitas Bookshop**, 11 am Saturday September 17, 2005. 'Best of Australian SF&F' Edited by Congreve and Marquardt.

- Tomorrow night Saturday September 17, 2005 at the **Chatswood Club** there is a **Skeptics Dinner** meeting (\$40 per head, contact Barry Williams on 9417 2017)

featuring **Dr Mills** an Astrophysicist and Radio Astronomer. Be there by 6.45 pm!

- **On Saturday October 8**, at Macquarie University there will be an Astronomy open night. The speaker will be Fred Watson Anglo Australian Observatory and the topic will be '**Relatively Brilliant: Einstein's Amazing Universe**'.

- **The Pre-meeting notice** went out through a UTS server thanks to John Fox, to make our meeting notices look little more 'Official'.

- My claims about the frequency of the 'Gang of Four' meeting were unintentionally exaggerated, seems they actually meet some Saturdays at mutual convenience rather than each Thursday night, which tends to explain how they can be so 'underground'

### Current SF&F TV noticed

**Ghost in the Shell**, Thursday 10 pm SBS, 13 part Anime series just started.

**Stripperella**, an unusual sort of superhero cartoon, continues to be worth trying to tape occasionally, 2.30 am Channel 9, Thursday Night / Friday mornings.

**Dr. Who** continues through the Davidson (wet) regeneration, with the terminally annoying Adric.

### 2005 Sydney Freecon / Unicon News

**NB subsequent to this meeting the 2005 Sydney Freecon / Unicon and all events associated with it were deferred until a date to be determined next year**

- Plans for a Friday night session of the Freecon / Unicon have been gazumped. The venue is committed for a UTS International Students event. Instead there will be an additional Futurians meeting on the evening of October 28, as a 'get to know you' opportunity for early arrivals ahead of a Full Saturday and Sunday Morning Freecon / Unicon. A session of Martian Archaeology has been suggested as a 'topic'

- Many invitations mailed, suggestion of additional addresses sought.

- Still need more 525 word SF stories before October 21, additional entrants highly likely to earn a cash prize, audience vote etc
- If there is to be a **2006 Freecon / Unicon** it may be over two or three evenings or a single day, at a time of the year other than October that fits in with the UTS academic calendar.
- Possibly it could be free for signed up Futurians, \$5 a night / \$10 a day for all others (i.e. to pay to get some GOH up from Canberra or Melbourne)?

### **Futurian Agenda Items**

**Issue** - The recognition of the contribution Old Sydney Fans or those who conserve the history thereof. Should we introduce some Honorary and Absentee membership classes? Should we take steps to identify and secure the patronage of widely respected figures to Sydney SF fans?

**Sydney Futurian flyers**, please, take some (five each?) to give to people you meet who seem interested in SF&F.

**Sign a condolence card** about Womble's death, so we can get it to Gerald? Would have got a card for Kevin as well, but we don't know who we could give it to!

- **Email from Niel Bonness**, Authorize Garry to write to them to officially state that the Sydney Futurians believe that Kevin's effects could be of significance and may contain documents worth conserving.

### **Separate Issue - What can be done about Kevin's Garage contents?**

Graham Stone is of the view that perhaps 10% of the stuff accumulated by Kevin (six Garages) would be Science Fiction relevant material.

I am prepared to offer my place (carport and limited garage space) as the venue for a set of sorting days if the garage contents can be secured. I live 5 minutes drive away from Kevin's flat (presumably Kevin's Garages were nearby) and if necessary I am prepared to pay to keep Kevin's garages intact for a while.

Hopefully 10% of six garages might equate to what may be temporarily stored at my place and 'less than a garage full' might be a more attractive qty for professional archivists to justify looking over than the unsorted 'mixed' contents of six garages.

## **Discussion of the Topic: Plants in Science Fiction Stories – Intelligent and Strange**

### **On 'Plant-ness'**

Prior to exploring instances and types of stories involving plants I think it useful to discuss those aspects of 'Plant-ness' that are available to the Science Fiction Writer as pre-understood concepts from which to construct an economical story.

### **Plants can**

- Live for a very long time
- Were here before animals emerged
- All animals are parasites on plant life, directly or at a short remove
- Can be very widespread
- Tend to stay in one place
- Can be amazingly big
- Have evolved to cooperate / coexist with some animals
- Change slowly, evolutionary and their 'day' could be our year or season
- Can have a tenacity that can defeat intelligence
- Have a slower but great power to affect the environment, natural or human that they find themselves in
- Can reproduce and spread in astonishing numbers
- Come 'alive' from a very small and apparently inert fragment
- Possess methods of reproduction beyond just the sexual, i.e. budding, from cuttings, from self-fertilization, from underground tubers/roots, from 'fruiting', male plants, female plants, bisexual flowering plants

### **Some Plant involving Books / Stories** **Hothouse or The Saliva Tree by Brian Aldiss.**

Set at a time in the deep future, when the Earth is flooded and much warmer (A third Bush as US President?). The Sun is much older, redder and most of the animals are gone, their niches filled by evolved up plants of all sorts. A Worldwide Banyan Tree, predator carnivore flying plants! Surviving humans and pussy cats live among

the Ants, i.e. people turn up to Ant's picnics, not the other way around.

In **The Uplift Wars** series by **David Brin**, I believe there are intelligent plants working as librarians in the Galactic libraries

In the **Well of Worlds** series by the late **Jack Chalker**, a place of hundreds of habitats for hundreds of intelligent species, where 'souls' can migrate and re-incarnate but never in the same species bodies, there are intelligent plants – somewhere!

The **Cthulhu mythos** also had a fungi-based life form or two from memory.

- In **Alien Earth** by **Edmond Hamilton** the story is set in Vietnam and a strange drug is used to slow people down. At the right speed, plants are no longer seen as static and passive life forms.

In the '**Deathworld**' series of books by **Harry Harrison**, the plants and animals of an entire planet are homicidal and evolving at a furious rate of knots (except for the part inhabited by the hippies!). Life on Deathworld responds in kind to the human colonist's antipathy.

**Worlds Apart**, by **Chuck McKenzie** Describes the perils of a truly superior being, struggling to make a go in life, as a Star Ship captain striking prejudice everywhere – coz he's an intelligent Plant!

In two **Larry Niven** books, **Grendel** and **Neutron Star** a 'Gammidge Orchid thing' is mentioned, it is mobile but not intelligent.

**The Woodwose** is a significant character in **Cordwainer Smith's** precursor to the **Norstrilla** stories. The Woodwose, is an elephant sized, barrel shaped plant / animal hybrid, All the other artificially raised to intelligence animals (before the Under people) revere and protect the girl from the A10 capsule, a rare human survivor when the 'Menschen Yaeger' machines stalk the earth killing all humans they encounter who cannot prove their 'Aryan' status on request (in German!). The 'Menschen Yaeger' were originally designed to counter Chinese dominance of the planet.

The **Ents** of **JRR Tolkien's The Lord of The Rings** and **The Hobbit**. Certainly intelligent, a little odd if not strange, but were they people gone 'plant' or plant gone 'people'? Possibly they were intended as a balancing species, i.e. Tolkien made the Trolls, Stone was made

animate, Orcs, fair Elves made corrupt as men made 'legendary' and the legendary races swept away, so why not Plant life made animate?

**Oldman Willow** in **LOTR** traps some of the hobbits, communicates with them, hobbits saved by the appearance of Jar Jar Binks? Err make that Tom Bombadil.

**Weinbaum's Venusian Barrel** trees on the Terminator Ice are 10,000 years old and highly cultured but resigned to being attacked and eaten by local semi-intelligent proto-humans.

**The War of the Worlds**, by **HG Wells**, the **red weed**, OK not intelligent or all that strange but it did add an additional creepy element to the story.

In **The Food of the Gods** (the original book, not the confusing movie) by **HG Wells**, the cause of the growth of rampaging giant animals is their eating strange plant life.

**The Day of the Triffids**, by **John Wyndham**. Definitely strange, possibly Alien or GM plants the **Triffids** were covertly created as a source of vegetable oil, or possibly as a weapon. Definitely intelligent, as they are able to send and receive messages, drumming.

**Ardiabiola** by **Yvgeny Yveshenko** (Soviet era poet of some note) Researchers trying for a plant based Cancer cure end up with a compassionate intelligent plant that yes, can cure cancer!

In an **un-named story**, a circle of moving mushrooms surround a Space ship, threatening disaster, successfully wiped out by .... A Spaceman's aftershave!

A story featuring a character called big thorn, the intelligent species of a planet grow on a tree like fruit. Tribes make war to defend their parent trees. They are actually gametes. Boy and girl fruit pair up then run off to honeymoon elsewhere and 'go to seed'.

**The Body Snatchers**, is an ambiguous case, possibly plant like? **Who goes there** story, the source of **The Thing** movies, the famous 'Living Carrot' recovered from near an ancient spacecraft found buried under the Antarctic ice, that is able to grow from parts or from blood in a wound into an additional inhuman monster.

And let us not forget the chief attraction of **The Little Shop of Horrors!**

## Television

Second mate Ficus from the Interstellar Sanitation ship lead by Captain 'Quark'. There is also the mystical Zahn and her blue faced body baring kind from the Australian **Farscape** series set the alien planet Cronulla. Seemingly in tribute to the English's love of lawn and Garden, there are a great number of villainous vegetables sprouting among the Dr. Who canon The Krynoid from Seeds of Doom, is a huge cabbage / Squid thing with unlimited growth potential and planetary domination expectations. It grows from a single coconut sized seed recovered from the eternal Ice ..... A human infected with its sap goes Green in a most un-PC way, turning into a tentacled plant This series also features a 'real live' human shredding machine as claimed to be used in Baghdad, so maybe there were WMDs after all, hidden **IN THE POTTING SHED GEORGE W!** .

Meglos, the sole surviving inhabitant of a now desert world is a shape shifting Cactus seeking to impersonate Doctor who so it can steal a portable power plant capable of fueling its plans for galactic domination. A truly nasty prick to ever have any dealings with.

The Wolf Weeds from the recent episode with the big green blobby thing down the mine shafts, i.e. free rolling free range attack & guard salads?

The Keys of Marinus had some screaming plants in the third episode. The Chase has some mobile, people-eating giant mushrooms in the last two episodes. Mission to the Unknown and The Daleks Master Plan had the **cactus-like Varga**, which propagated by way of some kind of venom on their spines, which turned those pricked slowly into more Varga. Planet of the Daleks had plants with eyes and ones that spat spores that quickly grew and devoured those infected. There was Sentient Sea Weed in Fury of the Deep. In The Sun Makers, the evil financial geniuses of the Universe who were going to shut down the Solar System for a Tax loss turned out to look like a few strands of seaweed. Although the Doctor thought they were better described as 'Toxic Fungi'. This was a case of an alien plot foiled by exposure and ridicule! In The Vervoids, a ship full of

Cabbage headed intelligent vegetables whose facial features disturbingly resemble human genitals are intent on conquering Earth (yet Again)? Dr. Who 'Exterminated' the whole race of them yet escaped punishment as a certified, Galaxy Class Genocide. The Dr Who New Adventure book "Warlock" features a sentient fungal drug (or whatever it was).

**The only 'good-guy' plants** in the Who Universe that I can recall were The Trees from 4.5 Billion AD final inheritors of the Earth, still ahead of the mum and dad Telstra shareholders! These featured in the New Who, possibly a belated apology for past prejudices, or just a snide aside at the unwillingness of the 'Bush' regime and its connections to respect the will of the people and allow them selves to be voted out?

In Lost in Space, Dr Smith builds himself an army based on one initial self duplicating plant thing that has convinced itself that Smith is its mother. In another adventure, possibly a shark jumping episode of the final season, a wish fulfilling alien makes **Dr Smith a King!** Of the vegetable kingdom that is, Smith in a **Carrot Suit**, (Oh! McCain you've done it again!)

**There was no intelligence in Star Trek**, errr , make that there were no intelligent plants in Star Trek Movies or TV, just Bloody Whales!

In a Star Trek (or Blakes Seven) episode an animal-less planet is visited. All that is left of the animals is a giant circular ring of bones, as the plants had turned on the animals.

In an episode of Original Star Trek a bunch of peacenik, anti-war, hippy scum (Mr Chekhov nearly 'gets lucky' with a hippy chick almost violating the Enterprise's prime directive, 'The Captain always gets the Blonde') force the Enterprise to an apparently Eden like Planet, where the hippies discover that the fruit is acid and the greener grass is toxic. In another episode, everyone on the Enterprise beams down to the planet except Kirk, and gets 'high on happy' due to the psycho active effects of some pollen from alien (lotus like?) flowers. Kirk then has to 'bitch slapping' Spock until the effect of the pollen wears off. Do I detect an agenda in here? Now pollen in of **Richard Avery's 'The Expendables'** books was more frightening stuff, it caused extreme

testosterone poisoning leading to a survival decision for the men of the expedition of 'lop em off' or pump the men choc full of girly hormones (effects described in vivid detail)!

### Movies

Biolantra is the star of a Korean Gojira genre monster movie. A plant with a (GM patent applied) Heart (as I recall) created for ..... Ghod knows what reason? In 'Green Slime', Alien stuff carrier through an airlock on the heel of a space boot, (hey, didn't you guys ever listen to your mum – always wipe your feet before you come in!) at a time when a Space station is fighting for its political survival. Green Slime grows into jolly green bouncy garbage bin sized plant things in a vacuum that can move around a bit and 'gibber'. And of course the Space Station is going to crash and contaminate the whole Earth! The Movie ends up by affirming America's most sacred / saccharine founding principals – Blerrrrk! (Sounds of regurgitation). The Movie Attack of the Killer Tomatos features plants acting badly.

### Role Playing

The West End Games version of the Star Wars role playing game had a plant-based species that looked essentially human. One of their quirks was a general fear of the dark. Another was that while they were really quite open and generous and generally nice during the day, at night they'd become scared, furtive, rude to outsiders and such. Dungeons and Dragons has a plethora of self-aware vegetable life.

### Books Read

19 Aug to 03 Sept. 2005, Colonization 3 – After shocks, By **Harry Turtledove**, 661 pages © 2001  
04 to 10 Sept. 2005, 1788, By **Watkins Tench**, Edited by **Dr. Tim Flannery** 280 pages (C) 1996  
11 to 14 September 2005, Hard to be a God, by **Boris and Arkadi Strugatski**, Trans. by **Wendayne Ackerman** 205 pages, © 1973

16 to 21 September 2005, The Alley God, by **Philip Jose Farmer** 176 pages © 1970, which consists of three stories, each claimed to be a 'short novel'. They are; The Alley God, 47 pages © 1959; The Captains Daughter 58 pages, © 1953; and The God Business 64 pages, © 1954)  
21 to 24 September 2005, Splashdance Silver, by **Tansy Rayner Roberts** 386 pages © 1999, Winner of the George Turner Prize  
26 & 27 Sept. 2005, Fortean Times No. 202 – October 2005, 80 pages © 2005

### Current reading

24 to 99 Sept. 2005, Barnacle Bill the Spacer and other Stories, by **Lucius Shepard** 292 pages © 1997, individual stories © 1987 to 1996

### Short Reviews

Colonization 3 – Aftershocks by Harry Turtledove - provided no great surprises. In this episode, it's now the 60s / 70s, the lizards have been on Earth for long enough for children to have grown to adulthood knowing no other world than one divided between the humans and the Lizards. 'World' coverage continues to be paper thin, tautly stretched between the twenty or so individuals (human and Lizard) and dozen or so locations that make up this 'World' and its Two Billion inhabitants (human and Lizard). I read this because it is 'time-share reading', a return to a comfortable, comprehensible and familiar world that is some respite from mundane daily life.

I do note though with some interest that this extended foray into 'Alternate History', the sub-genre most likely to approach 'Mainstream Status' is in fact running out of history and historical figures to blend into the narrative, in fact later developments, the emergence of a US Space Fleet suggests that 'Space Opera', the Classic Sci-Fi ghetto sub-genre might be the only possible future direction of this saga!

1788, is an amazing find and it is amazing that it had not more recently been re-published. It is an original, contemporary at the time, account by Watkins Tench, an officer of the Marine contingent sent to Botany Bay of the founding of white settlement in Australia. The account was found and edited By Dr. Tim Flannery for a modern audience and it is a first

hand accounts of the voyage out from England and of the first three years of the NSW settlement, 1788 to 1791. About a quarter of this book deals with the trip out, relations with the first inhabitants and a 'travelogue' about the colony as it was being set up. The final quarter is a miscellany of points and observations not fitting into the other three categories. I found that it presented a very different and very human picture of the stumbling and uncertain progress of the settlement and its inhabitants, very different from the 'founding fathers' narrow focus of the history I had been taught at school. It tells much of the time when European and Native Australians first interacted and when each society was essentially still independent of the other, a quality that was soon to disappear.

**Hard to be a God** Started off in an almost incomprehensible manner with a CS Lewis like day's outing to an enchanted forest. The blurb on the back by Theodore Sturgeon "my personal penchant in s-f is more its fiction than its Science..." but I stuck with it and were rewarded. I know enough about Russian to be able to read between the lines and to see that levels complexity of Boris and Arkadi Strugatski's conception have been lost in translation, by straight from the dictionary transliteration. I.e. at one level it can be read a disguised anti-Stalinist commentary in that it poses the question of what would a future enlightened person do if they were to find themselves as an agent of Historical record dos. This version was translated by Wendayne Ackerman, the wife of Sci-Fi movie legend Forest J. Ackerman. The underlying story is a parable about the paradox of then Soviet life. How could Marxist Leninist Dogma, supposing that all history is a progression to the enlightened values of the Marxist state, the march of political history through Feudalism, Despotism, Capitalism, Fascism etc. be squared with the arrival of Stalin who did so much to destroy all that was progressive? This progress is an irresistible tide that cannot be forced or stopped by the actions of any single man. This story is set many Centuries after our time, when Earth sends teams out to study the ongoing process of political evolution on backward planets, so as to be able to better document and to collect

the data needed to ever improve and refine the Science of political development. Earth's researchers are meant to blend in and observe the cultures they inhabit, but shouldn't interfere, not that there is an enforced prime directive, just that it is a 'fact' that intervention against the tide of 'progress' is a futile and counter productive gesture. They are required to observe with an almost divine dispassion and are limited to using their 'god like' skills and technological powers spiriting away rare individuals. But imagine if a Stalin figure emerged in a medieval time, and so proceeded to destroy so much of that society's knowledge and social order that progress towards the next level of political innovation was threatened. What is a decent modern person supposed to do if the whole political paradigm threatens to unravel due to the brutality of one person?

I think I have read that **Philip Jose Farmer** is the 'other' big name Mormon SF writer. If you care to look carefully through each of the three stories that make up the book **The Alley God** you might at times notice resonance with Mormon mythology and history, or perhaps it is just me!

**The Alley God**, is a story I have referred to in past Futurian meetings? In it a one armed bloke who makes a living from collecting Junk by (imagine, a time when Recycling was a social stigma!) claims to be a Neanderthal or 'Paley people', descended from a small population who survived in the Pyrenees and then left for America when the Napoleon's recruiting officers turned up to enforce the draft. He claims that his people were dispossessed by the Gyas folk 'False People' or Homo Sapiens due to magic and trickery, specifically the theft of the Paley King's magic hat. Ever since the surviving Paley people have been looking through junk piles hoping to find it so they can then recover their magic and domination of the earth. A fake hat is made up by a sociology student sent to study this family and planted leading to all sorts of consequences.

In **The Captains Daughter** we get a murder in space, a space ship, a nubile Captains daughter, a planet full of sexual puritans,

group bathing and a sexually transmitted parasite! A doctor is called in when a freighter arrives at the moon with an illness on board and an unaccounted for crewmember. The ship's own doctor having unaccountably died on the planet of the puritans, at the other end of the ship's freight run. The Captains daughter is running a fever, eating like a horse and smells like a fish (as does the story)! Doctor signs on as crew and cracks the case, seems the secret shame of the planet is a sexually transmitted parasite with an unnecessarily complicated lifestyle. I.e. a male parasite infects a male host, which then causes the host to seek out a similarly infected woman, using the ishy breath as some sort of pheromone / marker. Then the female parasite makes baby parasites in the woman's girly bits, which are spread non-sexually (it is a thoroughly monogamous religious society) through an annual aquatic baptism and 'home coming queen' ceremony. The Parasite is a degenerate life form in that it forms a 'straw man' inside the host, drawing what it needs from the host's organs instead of developing its own. The Captain has killed twice over the shame of it all, years ago his wife had been infected and exiled, he has himself become infected and the daughter was infected during the aquatic ceremony when she was crowned 'virgin of the year'. A 'No-Brainer' solution to this planet's problem would have simply to have been to exclude women from the aquatic side of the festival, not a big ask for a likely to be patriarchal religion?

In **The God Business** the Illinois River is running with an intoxicating but unidentifiable additive. It makes sick people well, the ugly attractive, the sad happy and inclines all to go naked. A part of the state of Illinois has gone 'Classical', as in Mount Olympus. The weather is warm, the climate has gone lush, clothes inhibitions and all responsibilities have been shed, a new Eden seemingly without a serpent. It seems that a small town college professor of the classics has attained godlike powers and has created a clothing free kingdom where all are well, attractive and available.... As revellers feuled by 'the Brew' repulse the Forces of US Law and order and the military by spraying them with water pistols filled with the Brew. Another (bald and

toothless) Professor is sent in to investigate accompanied by an attractive young female marines major, to get a sample of the Brew for analysis and counter measures. To fit in, to go 'undercover' of course they have to strip and go naked at the border! The story is an amazing wander through allegory and equally amazing, for the descriptive passages. I.e. how can you describe passing through a land of naked people with your eyes metaphorically firmly averted, I mean if you can no longer describe people by how they are dressed, how do you tell them apart? In the end, it turns out to be a story about attaining godhead. This is a story that Hollywood still wouldn't dare make into a movie!

Reading, **Splashdance Silver**, by **Tansy Rayner Roberts** was in several ways a curiosity, I got up to page 117 before I gave up, I decided that 386 pages of my life was more of my life than I was prepared to spend on a book that I 'just didn't get'. I picked this book up because it was labeled as a George Turner Prize Winner (GTPW), and as the other GTPW I have collected and read were SF, I assumed that this one would be as well. It wasn't. It was Fantasy. A sort of a cross between Terry Pratchett's amusing Fantasy romp and Tolkien's legendary creature studded Quest adventure with a fair bit of Gilbert and Sullivan's Pirates of Penzance thrown in. It was not to my mind a satisfactory blend, but it was originally planned to be a part of a twelve book 'Mocklore' trilogy. The story is of a woman on a quest to raise a pirate band to recover the legendary 'Splashdance Silver' hoard hidden by her Pirate father. The Woman was apprenticed as a Pirate, but decided to make a living by singing in taverns. Her mother was a witch which will qualify her for magical adventures as well as swashbuckling ones. The main adversary of the story seems to be a recently ascended queen who wants in on the Silver. An odd thing about the book is that it was printed with space for 50 characters per line, i.e. it could have been a much shorter, thinner book if typeset at a more usual 60 to 70 characters per line.

On Monday September 26 I received my copy of the **Fortean Times No. 202 – October 2005**. It was a pleasant vacation for the

mind and a welcome distraction from the realities of the day, Kevin Dillon's funeral. This issue 's main stories feature the strangeness entangled with the life and works of the German / English painter Hans Holbein, the Fortean phenomena referred to in a work by William Hogarth and the strange influences of the 'Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood' of British Artists. That is to say an excursion into the weirdness of British Art figures of the 16<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. In other departments, there was a story on the newly discovered species of Australian Dolphin. Stories like the Dolphin one are not unusual, in that the Fortean Times frequently gives earlier and better coverage of local science interest stories than local news sources. It is good to be able to read this magazine as a backstop to the deficiencies of the 'popular press'!

# Original Fiction

## Something in the milk?

by Norco C. Parmalatte - 998 words 12 Feb 2005

Farmer Robbins was standing in the shade of the milking equipment shed. The morning's Milk had been collected, processed and shipped for the day, leaving this brief quiet time before lunch and the afternoon milking.

He enjoyed being able to spend this free time out in the open, still a farm boy at heart. If it wasn't raining, and if he had noticed a tour group passing through the factory, Farmer Robbins liked to spend some of this time near this shed as it was close to the final point of the grand tour. There he could try to overhear what comments or judgements the visitors felt free to pass, after having completed their Robbins Free Range™ experience.

It had been the work of his lifetime and farmer Robbins was very proud of his achievements. Gone were the old feedlots and battery dairy sheds where cows were held in narrow pens and medicated into giving ever higher milk

yields, mooing in pain with distended udders if their six hourly milking was delayed. They never saw green grass, soil or sky. The animals lived in squalor, Antibiotics in the feed making basic hygiene no longer cost effective.

He had taken on running the old family farm, innovated, made it efficient and converted most of the most bitter critics of the animal husbandry industry, Animal Rightists and Anti GM activists into some of his most contented consumers, especially of the recent Soy-Moo-Milk™ range.

The tour of the Robbins Free Range™ dairy farm was nearly at an end as the tour guide brought the tour group out of the bottling plant (re-use glass bottles, save the planet). Seeing the tour guide for the first time this morning, Farmer Robbins thought that Corinne was like a perfumed and lacquered blue cattle dog in the way that she herded the tour group across the car park area to give them her summing up speech. When that was over she would release the group to freely graze in the visitors Centre with its cafeteria, gift shop and rest rooms area.

Corinne could just as easily have stepped out from behind a reception desk of a fortune 500 Head office to greet and receive the important corporate clients than from the doorway of a high technology, operating theatre like milk processing factory.

Off in the distance on a billiard table green paddock dotted with shade sheds, numerous cows could be seen, some with calves, apparently grazing contentedly. The clots of thick, potentially rain bearing clouds floating across the otherwise clear blue sky only added to the perfection of the chocolate box like beauty of the view.

She paused before a white painted railing fence and went into her well-rehearsed speech,

“At Robbins Free Range™ we are proud of our commitment to the highest ethical standards in modern dairy practice and safe clean affordable food for all”.

“You have been able to visit each of our feed storage areas to see for yourselves that absolutely No GM food enters our product cycle. Each year we are certified organic, drug free, hormone free and nor do we use artificial pesticides of any sort, yet we pride ourselves on our ability to provide cutting edge consumer responsive products like Soy-Moo-Milk™ and Solar-Dvite-plus™ for consumers who care about their family”.

Corinne paused for breath before adding,

“Over there”, indicating the paddock behind the fence

“Is part of our original herd of Soy-Moo-Milk™ cows. Our commitment to animal welfare includes taking the milking to the cows, rather than stressing them each day as in conventional dairies by bringing them in to dirty, crowded and unsanitary milking yards twice a day”.

“You will see sheds like these”,

Indicating a nearby shed that Farmer Robbins was now standing behind,

“On each paddock that has our Soy-Moo-Milk™ cows”.

On this cue most of the milling tourists chose to wander off to look through the shed’s large back window. Some marvelled at the line of plastic clean suits racked on the wall, the metal buckets and other sparkling clean implements. Some men and boys were openly envious of drivers of the four little electric all terrain milk

collector / tanker trucks that the milking crew would use to visit and milk each Soy-Moo-Milk™ cow plant individually.

As the party of eco-ethico–foodie tourists broke up, some mostly those who had come on the Hydrogen powered bus as part of a factory organized free tour, made their way to the visitors Centre. The others, the acrid popcorn stink of ‘home brew’ bio diesel testified, went straight to the car park to leave.

Sheltering under the broad eaves of the milking equipment shed as the gentle rain fell on the paddock of the Soy-Moo-Milk™ cows. The still mobile calves left their immobile mothers to seek the shelter of the rain sheds. Their mothers remained still rooted to the ground, where they had been planted from cuttings just on six years ago.

As Farmer Robbins stood thinking about the future, the gentle drift of rainfall across the paddock had turned his thinking to the question of more dams. The large flat area behind the hill beyond this paddock would be ideal he thought, as it was both large enough and near enough to the river and the existing roads. Setting up the dams for the new Omegathree-Cows™ would take about two years to bring off, what with planning permits, earth moving, irrigation piping and breeding up stock to be organized.

Time to get the marketing boys onto building the brand name he thought, as he hopped over the white rails of the fence, at 67 years of age, he was still a walking advertisement for his own products.

While walking back to the farm office it occurred to Farmer Robbins that getting his milking crews used to taking the milking to the immobile Soy-Moo-Milk™ plant-cows was one thing, but training them to catch and milk the

huge fishlike Omegathree-Cows™ would be, he laughed inwardly, another kettle of fish entirely.

### Some Very Late News

Much grief and worry over my niece Janene's High School choice. She was awarded a place in the first round of offers at St. George Girls High School. Recently she was offered a 'Music Half Scholarship' (with my mother willing to pay the rest, \$30,000 to \$40,000 over six years) at Danebank. There was also some confusion as Kirrawee HS phoned and Janene went off to school one day convinced that she would be going there. It took some weeks for my brother, his wife and Janene to decide not to accept the Danebank offer. My opinions were sought and my arguments against accepting the half scholarship to Danebank were:

1. **Logic, and the maintenance of later options.** If Janene Attend St George, if it doesn't work out then Danebank will always make a place for one more (half) paying customer. If she attends Danebank and it doesn't work out then the chances of entry to St George Girls at a later point are remote and she would have to park at a third High School until Selective entry was resolved.

2. **Music Scholarship acceptance's implied specific obligations** Any sort of scholarship entry imposes obligations, i.e. at Danebank, Janene would be required as a Music Scholar to represent the school at all possible Music competitions and in-school public events, possibly to the cost of her participation in out of school musical, athletics, or scholastic opportunities of her choosing.

3. **Scholarship acceptance's implied social obligations**, being a scholarship anything at a school implies school community leadership responsibilities, at St. George she can be an ordinary girl among 120 bright girls, rather than being obliged by expectation to lead classes, be a sports captain, prefect or band leader etc., unless she so chooses.

4. **Financial**, as things stand, it is likely that money can be found to allow Janene to attend University as a full fee paying student. That is if her marks are slightly below a qualifying cut off she can buy her way into an Australian or New Zealand University. The expense of six years tuition at Danebank far exceed the cost doing a three year full fee paying degree course at most Australian Universities.

5. **Appropriateness to the scholastic needs of gifted students**, as Private schools like Danebank tend to offer a lesser range of subjects that they are certain that their students can excel at, 'cherry picking' rather than taking a chance with breadth, completing University entry

qualifications at St. George will allow for a broader choice of subjects. I.e. even if it results in a lower University entry mark, a result from St George is likely to be worth much more at University as it would include having done courses at higher levels of difficulty that would be likely to more useful pre-requisites.

6. **Equity**, if you allow that Danebank has anything special to offer, then it is more equitable that this opportunity be given to a girl with less ability and from a poorer family than Janene's. Attaining St George Girls entry in the first round of offers implies that Janene should not need extra 'help' to perform well.

## A Basenji Tail Piece

### A logical conjunction. Kids and Dogs

One of the people at work, Serrie Kamara, (he deals with statistics) was a refugee from Siera Leone. He is taking part in the planning of an Sydney 'African Youth' festival. I suggested to him that as the British have their Bulldogs, the Germans their Alsatians, the Irish their Wolf Hounds, (the cheese eating appeasement monkeys have their French Poodles) the Mexican's have their neurotic Chihuahuas and the Scottish their terriers, then why not remind people that the Africans have their noble and inquisitive Basenjies, after all, as kids and dogs go together, why not invite the members of the NSW Basenji Club to bring along their African sourced dogs, so the parents of the 'cute kids' can meet the owners of the 'cute dogs' and each have a uniquely African experience and enjoy a prolonged a session of mutual appreciation in deepest darkest Sydney?.

I provided Serrie with a recent (colour cover) copy of the NSW Basenji club newsletter and he got back to me to say that the committee thought that it was a wonderful idea.

This could be a very interesting occasion to attend, to see the kiddies encounter something 'African' in an unexpected context.

Transcendental Basenji Sermons & Enlightenment  
Volume 1 No. 15 © Garry P. Dalrymple October 2005

The rest of this page is provided for your notes toward Mailing Comment notes on Transcendental Basenji Sermons and Enlightenment Volume 1 number 15

