

Two Basenjjs, Sermons and Enlightenment Issue No. 28 - 'The Mailing Comments'

By Garry P Dalrymple
PO Box 152,
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NSW 2007 AUSTRALIA

For the June 2008 ANZAPA
Mailing

**Mailing Comments for ANZAPA
mailing 241 February 2008**

Bloody Bored Student

Rycbncatt

Ah! If you think you are bored now, just you wait until you are no longer a student and have to become a productive citizen and a fully employed 'work unit'. Thank you for your comments about the **Sydney Freecon** it takes place in November. It is the nature of Society these days that there are expectations for 'Free' and 'Expensive' products. I do not see the Freecons as competing against the like of say Conflux at Canberra, which will cost me some change out of a Thousand dollars to attend, rather, as email / chat room / and internet information is also substantially free to the consumer, I see Freecons as competing against these, meeting in the flesh as a slightly better idea than electronic intercourse.

BRG 53

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atlatl (or woomera, the atlatl having entered the language much earlier). Among Ms Atwood's more famous genre denial statements was one to the effect that her books could not be SF coz her books did not involve Rockets or Giant talking Squids.

Kinokuniya is a vast Japanese owned Bookstore, it is huge and at times its range of books can be quite puzzling. Buying and stocking decisions are made mostly in Japan. It's well worth a visit just to be reminded that not only do non-US/UK people write SF&F etc., but what they think is good SF&F even if it is written mostly by US/UK writers. I too was surprised by what I started to find when I started to read through the **Bert Chandler** that I collected ahead of the Freecon, fruity stuff indeed, but not that dated!

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Yeah! In reading about the book I did pick up that **the movie version of 'Rebecca'** was free of a lot of the things that I complained of about the 'full' story in the book, a clear case that a short story usually better translates to a movie treatment?

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Blue Pages

The Sydney City Skywatchers meeting of Monday June 2, 2008. Topic: Rise, Fall and Rise Again, the Tale of Sydney Observatory – Speaker Dr Nick Lomb

Member's Announcements, News and Observations

- An excursion is planned to visit some of Sydney's coastal rock carvings, subsequent to interest being shown after a previous month's

meeting on Aboriginal Astronomy. The hire of a Minibus etc. is likely to be involved.

- The Signal flagstaff (a 30 metre ship's mast!) has been restored. The \$200,000 cost was donated. It will display Weather and Planetary information

- Many events are planned for a weeklong celebration of 150 years of the Observatory, Talks Seminars, Past Staff and Astronomer's family re-unions.

- **Fred Watson** will give a talk on Uranus

- **Monty Leventhal** demonstrated with his sunspot drawings that activity is very low at the moment (only 14 spots this month)

- **Harry Roberts** displayed observations about NGC 6744 and a prominence which over time showed matter that had been expelled from the Sun being caught in magnetic channels and swirling round in a 'sink', made up from two hour of observations. The feature's growth and speed of spread were compared with SOHO, and 'Hairy Sun' imagery to show Magnetic lines of force and stuff travelling along magnetic channels to a Coronal Hole. There are currently two Dipoles active on the Sun's Surface, Nth & Sth Poles and a near Equatorial set, which is causing Auroral displays 'like mad' as it is pointed at the plane of orbit of Earth and the other Planets. A bit of Swiss animation shown. Spaceweather website has more imagery like this, APOD referred to.

The Ice Patch near the Phoenix Mars Polar lander was discussed.

- **Alan Plummer** – Handed out copies of a published report which included his observations. Showed off some of the Historic (and attractive) Star charts he has collected, some accurate and surprisingly detailed, some rather more imaginative. Mentioned problems with Bateson's star charts, which are frequently quoted from in papers. Spoke on the progress in Star map making, from naked eye to deep sky photographic surveys available in several different spectra. The accurately determined Hubble Guide stars number 1 Billion, is available on line (as are many other catalogues of Stars) are now down to 20th magnitude and each is a clickable object leading to light curves for the object. Alan Attended the RASNZ conference (where Academic and Amateur Astronomers mix freely) at Lake Tekapo, mostly for a Photometry course held near Mt St John. Several other Australians attended including

Col Bembric. About 100 people attending, Students and Amateurs restricted to 20 minutes a paper. Plans to list the vicinity as a world heritage area for its dark skies stopped by local developers.

- **Garry Dalrymple** – Mentioned my Eulabah Avenue star night in March this year, about colour in stars in the absence of Moon or Planets. The Wunderlich (past members of our Association) family mentioned in an Art Deco context. Books etc. for Sierra Leone (clear tropical skies!). Asked where all of Sydney's CBD Astronomy shops have got to? Mentioned the completion of the HC Russell inspired Square Bookcase

Nick Lomb's Talk (an abbreviated version of several of the talks that would be presented on the following weekend)

The Reverend William Scott arrived on November 3, 1856. He was a Mathematician, Third Wrangler at Oxford, rather than an Astronomer. He had spent time in England learning some Astronomy (like Lt Dawes?) Two days later he was taken to the Sydney Observatory side two days later by the Governor. Which at that time was mostly a flagstaff hill to relay messages via flags and semaphore from the station at South head to Parramatta. A first dome had been erected by 1858. Scott had been given a list of things to do from the Astronomer Royal, which included accurately determining Sydney's position, supervise Meteorology observations.

A Time Ball went up in 1855 and the mechanism is mostly still in situ, i.e. the Time Ball and its Tower were planned before the observatory, but an Astronomer had been required to make the observations to determine the time. The Time Ball originally was to Drop at 12 noon, but as this was switched over time of shifts on boats, this soon changed to 1 pm.

Scott did not have a peaceful life as NSW Government Astronomer, as he was frequently attacked in the papers by an anonymous letter campaign. Tebbutt's discovery of the 1861 Great Comet and not Scott was one complaint? But he did observe and publish and did have some defenders. He resigned in 1862 citing ill health, offering the job to Tebbutt. His successor was to be HC Russell, his 'Computer', after a brief reign by Mr Smalley. Scott did however organise to

observe the 1874 Transit of Venus from Eden on the south Coast (of NSW) Cook. HC Russell greatly expanded and improved the Observatory during his rule, grounds, staff and activities, including a new wing for the Meteorological service. Initially Tebbutt and Russell got on well, but they fell out, Tebbutt writing to the SMH complaining 'not enough Astronomy'. HC Russell returned the favour by publishing the definitive book on the 1874 Transit without mentioning Tebbutt. HC Russell's biggest event was the organisation of several teams of 'the best Scientific men of the Colony' to observe the 1874 Transit of Venus from several locations (to avoid being clouded out at any one location). He trained the observers and their observing stations were linked by Telegraph wires. Planning ahead, HC Russell also used the sale of instruments bought for this occasion to finance the acquisition of new transit instruments for the observatory to more accurately determine Latitude and Longitude, leading to the observatory's tower becoming a Trig station. Another major work of the Observatory was the 1887 Astrographic Catalogue, the first systematic attempt to chart the whole sky using photography. This started in 1890 and the observatory only completed (partially) the publication of this effort in 1964!

For the Astrographic catalogue HC Russell built his own 38 cm telescope using survey specification lenses, in effect a giant telephoto lens! To house this he designed a mount of a form that was to be re-invented much later to house the 100 inch Mount Palomar Telescope ~70 years later! He used Scott's original telescope as a guide scope on this.

Garry's Earth Hour Eulabah Avenue Star night report

7 pm to 9 pm on Saturday March 29, 2008

Prior to the day

As with last year I letterboxed the street and a few adjoining houses to let people know what I planned to do during the 'lights off' period. With no bright Planets up or the Moon visible at this time of year I tried for something different, to go for an exhibition of colours and shape.

Coloured stars like Aldebaran / Betelgeuse, the contrasts available to be seen in the Jewel Box cluster of stars and for shape, the great Globular cluster Omega Centauri and possibly the Great Nebula in Orion or the Pleiades / Hyades. With the stuff I letterboxed I included an elementary

Astronomy activity sheet. It showed 'how to find the ten brightest stars' (of March / April skies in Sydney). My hope was that this would be some Astronomy that families could do together with or without attending my star watching night.

I also decided to offer the people showing up on the night a cup of Hot Chocolate, as an incentive to fill out and return the RSVP cards and so give me some idea of what numbers to expect. A few days earlier I found a picture frame and I had intended to string it up with beads etc to represent the Southern Celestial polar region, from (Centauri A & B) the pointers to Achernar on the other side of the South Celestial pole.

On the day

I had to go into town to sort out some overdue library books at the SMSA library. I also did an Author check on most of the books listed for the Paradox Auction. I got home at 1 pm, had lunch and a rest. There was an intense thunderstorm in the late afternoon which made me pessimistic about the viewing proceeding at all.

I have seven eyepieces but with only hours to go I could only find one! My missing eyepieces had been 'tidied away' out of sight somewhere about the house in bags and boxes then placed in a pile with all the other bags and boxes somewhere. With only one eyepiece most of my telescopes were now effectively not much more than scrap metal. I spent hours looking for them and getting rather upset, instead of getting prepared for the night.

On the night

It was far from dark at 7 pm, when I went first went out to see if it was dark enough to try to set up the telescope. I had to wait for stars emerge as I needed the pointers (A & B Centauri) and Achernar to be clearly visible for me to estimate the position of the South Celestial Pole so I could line up the Telescope so I could then take a swing at finding the precise positions of Omega Centauri and the Jewel box in the sky. There were kids out there waiting near the front gate post at just after 7 pm so I told them to come back at closer to 7.30 when it was more nearly dark.

I could see that most houses in the street had extinguished their outside lights. One kid was dropped off by parents in a 4WD, I think he was a cousin of a Eulabah Avenue kid or something. In conversation it came out that he had recently visited an observatory / planetarium in Brisbane.

I gave each kid that showed up a big Glow-in-the-Dark Star, so they at least had something to show for it even if the rest of the night got rained out or was a complete disaster.

With passing cloud cover and much fumbling about in the dark, it was nearly a disaster. All I

was able to show everyone was a Blue Star (one of the pointers) and a red star, Betelgeuse.

Ad Hoc ing furiously I gave an impromptu talk on the nature of candle light, as a means of to explaining the colour of Stars. I also handed out about three litres of cups of hot chocolate.

Conclusion

By the evidence of the number of used cups of chocolate about a dozen to fifteen people showed up. They represented about Seven of the thirty or so households I had letterboxed. I.e. numbers were down from last year, but this was not unexpected as I was offering far less to see than last year. I was more disappointed in my failure to perform.

Afterwards

I might do another Star night later in the year, at a time of my choosing and with a better sky to observe than the Earth hour one. Next yel will hand out Rainbow glasses for next time to demonstrate spectra even in 'white' stars and street lights.

- Really should get one of those automated telescopes if I have any hope of showing off things like Omega Centauri and the Jewel box in 'footpath' Astronomy situations.

- Moon viewing in daylight as outreach for the SCS at the Cooks River Festival? Me, Astroscan, leaflets / contact list and a Laminated Rand McNally Moon Map on a picnic Table?

- If equipped could I be brave enough to try doing a series of single street star nights in nearby streets, i.e. Malley Avenue, Clemton Avenue and the RC Church?

On Sunday Night, near midnight I took the dog for a walk and was surprised at some of the outdoor land display lighting that presumably is left on all night, all week. In one shop window there were twelve or more of those 'Low Voltage' halogen down lights that consume 50 watts for the transformer, 12 watts for the light, bright to look at, but they give off precious little useful light but lots of fire starting heat!. I thought of writing the shop owner a 'cheque' drawn on the Greenhouse bank pointing out that their all night advertising display, from 6 pm to 8 am 365.24 days of the year is costing them 4,200 kilowatt hours worth of electricity a year (\$400?) to very little commercial benefit. I wonder if SOLIS would like to take this idea on as a project, issuing 'cheques' and advice leaflets on profligate lighting?

Science Fiction MEETINGS

Notes from Sydney's March, April
and May SF&F meetings of 2008

Garry's notes from the March 20, 2008 Infinitas Book Review meeting

Books discussed were; Light by
John M. Harrison - Science Fiction
and Obernewtyn by Isobel Carmody -
Fantasy

Present were; April, Danielle, Garry, Julie-Anne,
Mark, Michael and Tim

The books discussed

Light by John M. Harrison -

Science Fiction

Oh dear! This one was not popular.
Four 'thumbs down' out of four attempts to read
the book. The most persistent of the four only
making it to halfway through the book before
saying 'enough!' - It was just not entertaining
enough to motivate continued reading.

A lengthy and general slugging off of the book
followed. This book was highly recommended
in the literature, including comments by several
writers we take seriously.

This book was on the to be reviewed list largely on
the recommendation of **David Kowalski**.

Criticisms;

- The frequent and apparently pointless
Masturbation scenes,
- The Very British Class consciousness
permeating the story,
- The unreality and disconnected-ness of the
Girlfriend murdering Main character who
returns to his ex-wife for sex even though she
knows of his lethal post sex routine,
- The Split reality world, both of which float
unexplained. An underworld of 'would be
human' robots while 'Human' society is
luxuriously Hollywood Bellaire.

This book was also a difficult read. The story
was not accessible and difficult to make any sense
of, like all the characters were reporting an 'on
drugs' perspective, less Phillip K. Dick-ien, just
plain confusing.

After disposing of many sticking points in the book
there was a general discussion of the phenomena
of 'Rave Reviewed by experts' SF books that fail to
engage ordinary SF&F readers. A view was
expressed that this was an overly 'Literary' SF
book in a negative way. I.e. Rave Reviews were
responding to its difficulty and complexity, as 'elite'
Literary books are supposed to be rather than
accessibility and engagement of story line as is the
crime of 'non-elite' SF.

Final word on this book - There are some books
that you don't get immediately, but you read on
expecting that the separate narrative strands will
meet in the end and that the 'pay off' will make it all
worth while. Clearly this book did not sustain this
level of endurance.

Obernewtyn by Isobel Carmody - Fantasy

Ghosh! Everybody just loved this one.

Several readers have gone on to books two to
five in the series! It is a slender teenage girl

fantasy written by a then teenage girl writer. It has elements in common with **John Wyndham's The Crystalids**, in that it is a 'Teen with powers' self-discovery adventure story. Like **Sue Townsend's Adrian Mole** books, this book has spawned a series of follow on stories that may match the writer's concerns as she grows older? Initial fears (from the title) that this would be a pseudo-Welsh-Arthurian Fantasy were unrealized. The Story is set in a post-apocalyptic world where people are fanatically anti-clerical (?) to the point of extremisms like witch burning and the imprisonment of anyone who is slightly different or innovative. The imprisoned are liable to be experimented on! The book does feature some of the characteristic flaws of Fantasy novels, i.e. here be Neologisms, new made-up words when perfectly good ones already exist, and inevitably the main character has magical helpers in the form of a telepathic Horse and a visionary mind reading alley cat. Oh dear, teenage girl writer/ teenage girl reader effect?

Final Word

- The story seems unfinished at the end, leaving some matters unresolved but leading on to book two etc. A reader who has read beyond the first book confirmed that (as in Mormonism!) continuo/*us revelation is a feature of future books in the series, i.e. the reasons for things in earlier books do get explained better in latter books. The readers who went on to read book two did so because they enjoyed book one so much!

Other discussions included

- Spiders Explode!

Tim offered his experience that Spiders are currently everywhere in large numbers, Orb Weavers weaving, taking advantage of the last few good days before Winter cuts down their food supply. Similar sightings are reported elsewhere in Sydney. Simply a normal seasonal profusion of Sydney's fauna, or is it Shelob's minions or new arrivals from Metabellis Three (Dr Who Universe) on the march? The more classically minded may care to dwell on Greek myths and the role of the fates and their part in Arachnid's weaving.

- The Death of Arthur C. Clarke

The death of **Arthur C. Clarke** at 90 years of age is not unexpected. General curiosity was expressed over how his obituaries will appear, with reference to size of his obit and degree of coverage of his SF writing career. Postings to The Eidolist, an Australian SF fan's email list were dwelling on the unsustained accusations about his sexuality. Due to the date of his passing and the enjoyment that his body of work has given SF readers he will inevitably be featured as a ghost of Honour at the 2008 Sydney Freecon.

- The real story behind the extended Dune saga, per Kevin Anderson

Brian Herbert and **Kevin Anderson** met after **Frank Herbert's** death to consider and plot out the continuation of the Dune Saga. They spent a fair amount of time doing so, doing plot and character work for these books. On returning home **Kevin Anderson** received a phone call. **Brian Herbert** had found boxes containing 18,000 typed pages of his father's notes on future books in the Garage! Oodles of new material for new books, from the Master's hand etc. Then ten years after **Frank Herbert's** death **Brian Herbert** discovered that an unlabelled key turned out to belong to a Bank Deposit box - containing more Dune series notes!

Possible Books for future month's meetings?

There was some discussion about having an **Arthur C. Clarke** book and a Fantasy book of the same era as review choices sometime soon, but nothing definite came of it.

April

40 days of Rain by **Kim Stanley Robinson** - SF

And **Crosstitch** by **Diana Gablarone** - Fantasy

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Garry's notes from the Infinitas SF&F Discussion meeting of April 03, 2008

Present were;

Henry Chatroop, 'Craig', Garry Dalrymple, Kurt Frank, Jo Kay, Tim Martin, Mick Ousley, Rebecca, Charmain Spears and Brian Walls

Apologies received from Daryl Addams (currently working in Canberra).

The discussion topic for this meeting was **'Your best or most memorable recent read'**

Arthur C Clarke's death was discussed at length and his life memorialized at the beginning of this meeting

GD - There is now also a **Lombock 'Hobbit'** so the little people of Flores need not be an isolated exception.

- Websites are now up for the **Futurians** and

the **2008 Freecon**, including a listing of the books available at the **Paradox Auction**.

- **JG Ballard's Autobiography** (he must be pushing 70?) was reviewed over three pages of the Australian Literary Review supplement in the Australian newspaper. This book was spurred by the Author's recent close brush with illness / death.

- **The Moon Cure patent** issued on a \$2 million 84 element array of 1.2 by 2.4 m mirrors, with health resort attached. Concentrated reflected moonlight cures your allergy or asthma or whatever (and when the Sun comes up you can use it to incinerate fleets of wooden ships! By the way, in daylight that would be a 242 kilowatt (Death ray!) reflector in sunlight!

HC – Neal ([Snowcrash](#) / [Diamond Age](#)) Stephenson has a new book due out soon.

- [The Bionic Woman](#) TV series has been cancelled, a casualty of the US (TV & Movie) Writer's strike (and then all the forests of British Columbia fell silent ..).

- The next Sydney Superhero movie is currently on strike. They have a 15% Tax break, but they want a 40% one!

- **The smallest Black hole in the World** has been discovered. At 3.5 solar masses and less than 20 km in diameter, it is much smaller than the previous smallest one (3.8 Solar masses) and may re-open debate on theories of how small they can be. This lead to speculation that the new CERN super collider might generate a Black Hole (we're All Going To Die!), or it might not. Could also serve as a Time Machine / Time portal – perhaps.

- **Laser pointer attacks** on Aircraft approaching Sydney Airport were discussed. A 'Ban' was reflexively announced and then reconsidered in light of the uncontrollable number of laser equipped devices out there that could be adapted to this anti social use. (GD) This mis-use of laser pointers is to be expected given the 'glamour' afforded to the gratuitous light pollution of using heaven pointed search lights at 'Galah' events.

JK - There is currently a **documentary series on SF** running on Foxtel, the point of it being to document the effect that 1940s and 1950s SF has had on popular culture and the SF that followed it.

Tim – During a recent visit Scottish SF writer Ken McLeod signed all of Infinitas' copies of his books. His books are from a leftist political perspective. His next (released / to be written?) book will feature a 'Post

Terrorism' world, with a distinctly secular World government, because Religious Fanaticism is understood to be like smoking, an avoidable cause of death.

BW - A new horror film festival starts on April 3,

- Mu-Meson Archive will be conducting 'direct your own horror movie' classes shortly.

- Marvel Comics are now mostly a Movie Studio rather than a comic book outfit.

- Mention of a Reality TV series based on SF Writers and writing?

Some Observations

- The top few Scottish SF writers, **Ian McCloud**, **China Meville**, **Ian M. Hamilton** and **Alistair Reynolds** etc. are reportedly 'Sporran' for a fight over who gets top ranking, although they are possibly overshadowed by the success of the 'Turn-Kilt' some times SF writer **Ian** (With or without an) **M. Banks**?

New Age Superhero Comic Book to Movie idea – **Placebo Man**, he doesn't actually do anything, but it's been proven that up to 23% of those people who see him 'in action' believe that he has helped to rescue people or solved crime etc.,. In spite of this fame and recognition he still struggles with self doubt and self esteem issues.

Help Defeat Chinese cultural genocide!

Install a **Virtual Dalai Lama** on your PC. Re-incarnations or upgrades likely to be available soon – spread enlightenment across the internet rather than computer viruses? Try our free sample **Panchen lama** version for seven days first.

Discussion of the topic

Which sort of became '**SF stories read in the past that really affected me bigtime**'.

HC – Is reading through **Elizabeth Moon's** Military Space Opera [Vatta series](#) that charts the military career of a member of a filthy rich interstellar trading family's scion who had a promising military career terminated by Pirates and then fought back. Rather like **David Webber's** Honor Harrington series?

GD – I continue to be affected by [The Twilight of the Vilp](#) by **Ableman**, one of the first SF books I ever bought, from Coles at Campsie

out of my saved pocket money. This book is currently first of the 'A's in my four sided book shelf. Currently I have been most impressed by **Brian Aldiss'** Dracula unbound, Time Travel, Dinosaurs, Comet Strike, Vampires, Bram Stoker and Syphilis all in one story.

JK – While re-reading through some **Terry Pratchett** books, The Last Continent, a Disc World book inspired by Australia, had me in stitches.

MO – **John Birmingham's** World War 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3. Titles include Weapons of Choice etc.

Enjoyed the bending and blending of known past and presumptive future. He particularly enjoyed that within the story arc the appearance of the people from the future and their technology seems to have kicked forward 'the future' by at least 20 years. One rule of conduct – If they encounter individuals from their past who are tainted by crimes against humanity – they kill them! Birmingham says that has a valid contract to write a few more of these books, but that he is hesitant to write more.

CS – At **Darryl Adams'** urging is now into **Sean McMullen's** Moon Worlds Fantasy series. It is Fantasy, but it makes good use of many SF ideas.

Craig – Enjoyed Darkly Dreaming Dexter, by **Jeff Lindsey**. These are the series of stories that the Dexter TV series is based on. The stories are about a crime scene investigator who is a serial killer of serial killers. Very readable escapist reading.

BW – Much affected by some books by **Rudy Rucker**, Mad Professor Anthology. His recent book Post Singular is in the running for a Nebula award.

The subject for the next meeting, May 1, 2008, will be; '**Philosophy in Science Fiction**'

Garry's notes from the Sydney Futurian meeting of April 18, 2008

Topic: 'Religion and Atheism in SF&F stories'

Present were: *Stephen Bingle, Garry Dalrymple, Diane Fox, John Fox, Kevin McKern, Anne Rankins and Brian Walls*

April SF & F News

SB – Pointed out an editorial on possible the economic consequences of Space Junk, the extermination of Satellite based communication.

- The Sarah Connor Chronicles has ended its run on Free to air TV in Sydney.

Has been watching Dinosapiens (with his nephews) a program that has Dinosaurs, good and bad living among us.

GD - **Conflux V** (October long Weekend) is now open for business, with over 100 days before their con.

- Even less SF at this year's **Sydney Writer's Festival** than in previous years, **Iain** (No M.) **Banks** pulls out for a second year running! No **Margaret Atwood** invented 'LongPen TM' either.

- **Terry Pratchett** has donated \$1 million to Alzheimer's Research. UK fans are running a 'Match it for Pratchett' to raise another Million.

- **JK Rowling** is enmeshed in a legal Quiddich game / copyright case against a Harry Potter Encyclopaedia / concordance that has transferred from a free access internet site to a becoming a published (and sold) book format.

- **Charlton** 'Planet of the Apes' **Heston** has died ('Get your hands off me, you ghod damned Ape!') no news on his gun or what was prised from his cold dead hands.

- Looks like I'm getting one **more Basenjjs**. The current one, **Mystique's**, **Fibroid Carcinoma** has re-emerged on her lower jaw and consequently, her long term life expectancy is not so good, possibly months, possibly a year. Who knows! The new one, **Forever Amber**, is a grand daughter to **Mystique**. I hope to have two **Basenjjs** for some time, until, like in The Highlander movie 'There can only be one!' A name change of my ANZAPA newsletter may be necessary shortly to reflect this change in circumstances to; 'Two **Basenjjs**, **Sermons & Enlightenment**'.

- I've got a **new Windmill**, on a 2 to 3 metre high steel tower! Psuedo-rural chic or the

ultimate enviro-garden gnome statement?
Already I want a bigger one!

DF & JF – Currently reading 'Remember Me', a Chick lit book about an amnesiac's return to a nearly perfect life. Has signed on for the local Toastmasters group which meets at the Carrington Hotel in the Blue Mountains. Working on a Editing courses and possibly a Masters degree next year.

KMcK – A Mars orbiter has revealed high resolution photos of Phobos, a new Geography for SF stories revealed?

- There is / will be a new 'The Culture' novel by **Iain M. Banks**, called 'Matter'. In this story the place is run by AIs of differing levels of intellect, Minds (better than Human, Drones (equal to human) and other lesser minds. Kevin is a fan of these books.

- Has watched Battlestar Galactica Season 4, half the 12 Clones have been found, the rest when discovered are well integrated in Human society – Suspense!

- Has watched Dr Plonk, the Australian Black and White silent movie about time travel.

AR – Has concluded researching the Mary Magdalene tradition (spurred by reading The Da Vinci Code) and has encountered all sorts of curious facts and suppositions on the way. One example is that a reason why Tarot cards were suppressed as 'evil' by church authorities because they were supposed to be symbolic of the life of Mary Magdalene.

- Currently reading Archangel, a book by **Sharon Shinby**, which is about a world where Technology is bad because Technology lead to a Fall (and is a book that is relevant to tonight's topic).

a represent s. wanting to get to the bottom of
BW – **AC Clarke** is dead

- Has been recently mixing with the Transsexual / cross dressing Literati (?).

- Impressed by a photo in the paper purporting to represent the orbiting junkyard, mostly parts of dead satellites in orbit about the Earth.

Bought a copy of the novelisation of the soon to be released movie 'Ironman' at Newtown

- **Joe Haldeman** has won a Nebula award for latest book. Joe also recently stayed at Pasturian Eric Lindsays's place at Arlie Beach Queensland the two events are not believed to be connected.

- The next Wolverine Superhero movie Will be shot in Sydney after all as tax/subsidy issues sorted out, with **Angelina Jolie** as a Temptress?

Recent Sfnal Science News

- **Improved IVF** processes announced – Double your chances of conception!
- Smallest ever **Brown Dwarf** non-star discovered, 48 Jupiter masses, hot on the inside but not enough to ignite.
- The bloke who coined the term '**Black Hole**' has just died.
- A **Lungless Frog** discovered – does not have a croaky voice.
- **Space Exhibition** at the Powerhouse Museum now open?
- The chances of dying by Asteroid Strike in our lifetimes has just been increased by a factor of TEN, thanks to a Thirteen year old German school boy who pointed out that the Asteroid Apophis, which is due for a 2029 close encounter could hit a satellite in near Earth orbit and consequently could be slowed in its tracks just enough to smack into Earth next orbit! **NB found to be an urban Myth, so it just ain't so.**

Recent SF / Sci-Fi on TV

- SG Atlantis (7) is back – ho hum.
- The Sarah Connor Chronicles (9) is on. I'm getting tired of it already, is it just 'The Fugitive' with killer robots? Not much SF beyond the killer robots?
- Lost - (7) is back again – ho hum.
- Silver Sun, was on 2 on Saturday mornings, and is now on channel 7 at 2.30 to 3 pm on weekdays.

Discussion of the topic: **Religion and Atheism in SF**

It is hard to come to grips with this topic as it is too big a picture i. e. in deciding where 'Religion' and Civilisation/Culture part company. By definition, can there really be 'Gods' in Science Fiction? My overall impression is that main characters in SF stories are very rarely church going, they are more likely to be seen in stories as 'Gods' than as parishioners. I would say that SF would qualify as being on the whole 'Agnostic' as Religion, like bathroom cleaning, is an activity by the main character that seldom seems essential to the Story, but is presumably happening even on the most gleaming of space ships. Lots of religions are encountered in SF stories, usually with an evil

high priest, who is frequently an impostor and is just using the prevailing religion as a cover for their other interests?

It must be important though as there are well tended websites listing 'SF & F Writers of Faith', but not lists of SF&F writers sorted by Height, Age or physical attractiveness?

Fantasy is allowed to have Religion and all too frequently does. Appeals to the Ghods and 'Ghodswill' (the divine hog food?) are common in Quest Fantasy which is after all a trial to set right some previous wrong against the (Divinely?) ordained proper status quo? The 'Science' in Science Fiction really should imply an attempt to explain how and when Ghods seem to operate?

When (Science Fictional) man/woman begin to attain most of the powers of the Ghods through their own invention, then why shouldn't their thoughts turn to stories about explaining all the false Ghods of the past or creating new myths about the new forces that seem to be influencing or controlling human life? Onward and upwards for the new Ghod (Heisenberg be his Prophet) of the Quantum Church?

Mythology Vs Ghods

Theology and Church Vs divine. How much Mythology are you allowed before it becomes Religious Dogma, i.e. **Vampires** and the **Golem** stories are attached at the hip to a religious tradition, but they are not directly religious stories?

Explaining Ghod and Religions

Arthur C. Clarke's 'The Star' is an example of a SF story to explain the Bethlehem / Christmas star?

- In Childhood's End by **Arthur C. Clarke's** the aliens finally show up and they look like Satan. 'pre-figuring' is involved, has man been pre-memory implanted in the past by a bad earlier encounter with these aliens, or did these aliens rivals get here first to warp our minds against the Satan look-a-likes? Which is uncomfortably close to far **L Ron Hubbard** and Scientology's claim about the involvement of a certain Lord Xenu in humanity's ancient past, who thought of it first?

- In the clearly (Science) Fictional works of **Erik Van Daanikan**, 'Chariot of the Gods' etc. ancient Astronauts arriving on Earth are seen

to be Ghods, founding figures of terrestrial religions etc.

- Philip K Dick believed that he was getting Religious revelations from VALA, an intelligent extraterrestrial computer / mind.

- In 'Quatermass and the pit', the Devil and some unpleasant mass behaviour has been encoded into human DNA by the 10 million years gone insect like Martians.

- In a story involving people who dive deeply, they get a sense of religious rapture from Hypoxia, until one experimenter gets some Science and can explain the effect. The story is mostly about his loss of faith.

Diminished Ghods

- The Classic Star trek Episode (and Lost in Space Episode) where the Ghods are now much diminished due to lack of following, but still capable of doing damage if pissed off by impious mortals?

Wainscoting and Absent Ghods

- There is a **Greg Egan** story (currently downloadable for Free) where to a reconstituted people (from transmitted Genetic code) their Ghods/Religion is the technology of the machines that re-assembled them. As a hard SF writer **Greg Egan** has less Sympathy for Religion. In Permutation City recorded people are run at 10% of full speed meaning that they are not able to respond as 'humanly' as unrecorded full speed people. Experiments proceed to speed up the 10% ers, in permutation city, but as this is effected, bugs in the software set up a different physics that is in conflict with the physics of the real world.

- They, the Ancient Ghods still walk among us, but they unseen and appearing to be just ordinary folk. A special case would be a **Piers Anthony** series, where people are conscripted to fill the ongoing roles of the Ghods of Greek Myth.

- In 'The General' series of books by **David Drake** and **S.M. Sterling** on the Planet Bellevue the Religion of the ruling elite is based on the terminology of 1980s computing, Sysops for Bishops, uploading for prayer etc. This Religion provides a 'Creation Myth' type explanation for the fall, the failure of the now mythical world of technology that resulted in the present society on Bellevue.

Strange uses for Religion in SF

- A movie version of **Roger Zelazny's** 'Lord of Light' was shot in post Shah Iran as a CIA venture to provide cover for an orderly withdrawal of their underground agents in Iran?
- **Charles Manson** claimed to have been inspired by **Robert Heinlein's** character Michael Ballantine in 'Stranger in a Strange Land'.
- A visiting US SF writer in the 1970s revealed that he had a message from **The Church of the Great Spider**, a cosmic Spider who eats people's souls after they die (NB the writer was NOT **Spider Robinson**). The deal is, if donate a coin to the Spider that has an animal on it and the Spider won't eat your soul. The thing is that the Spider enjoys showing the coins with animals to his friends.
- **At the 2007 Freecon** we were given an example of the power of Religion, the followers of the snail Ghod, the **brotherhood of the spiral**.

Religion as a basis for Galactic Ideology and Empire

- In the Culture series of books by **Iain M. Banks** the conflict that drives the story is that of a conflict between those who have a single Ideology / religion and those who don't (The Culture)
- Thanks to **Frank Herbert, T.E. Lawrence's** view of Islam lives on in the whole Ghod emperor thing / Bene Gesseret Mothers thing in the Dune series? **Frank Herbert's Dune** series is a rare example of getting Religion / Star Empires right. To run separate star systems as an empire successfully you need a common ideology as distance between planets means that you can't rule from the capital. Religion or a common Imperial philosophy is what you need to form what your local administrators will do.
- **L. M. Modestitt's** The Parafaith War, Moslem / Mormon unity faith Vs the Shinto Agnostics of an all American Fundamentalist future.
- In 'The General' series of books by **David Drake** and **S.M. Sterling** the basis for the forced re-unification of the world of Bellevue is religious. General Rog Whitehouse is the Avatar of Ghod after being augmented by the only battle computer to survive the 'Fall' of

civilisation, a nearly universal Cyber war that took out electronics all over the planet and reverted society to 19th Century Technology and near Feudal Social structures, with the church predominant in Society. All the other Religions of Earth are present on Bellevue, being the 'old time' pre-fall religions that were carried to Bellevue by its initial settlers.

- In King David's Spaceship a bunch of would be Crusaders 'take' a stranded Space ship, get diverted to the alien home world, take it and establish a Christian Star Empire millennia before humans venture into Space.
- In **Karen Miller's** The Empress of Mijack a rather vindictive hands on Old Testament styled Ghod is running things, cruel but consistent in his/her divine wrath, but prone to changes of policy?.
- **The Bajorans** in Star Trek DS9, the basis for their civilisation is their religion, a valid religion (miracles seen to happen?) or just a misunderstanding of other dimensional inhabitants of the wormhole?

Religious SF

As distinct publishing sub-genres there is a fair amount of Christian (and Mormon) SF available on the internet. In the US it is nearly mainstream apparently, more a testament to America's born again population rather than artistic merit? It is up there with Lesbian Vampire Detective SF I guess.

- Stories whose big 'What if it' is that Religion and Religious events are true, and then what follows is
- Lots of 'What really happened' SFnal re-interpretations of Biblical events. For example
- I have read two or three stories like Dem Bones by ? which 'explains' how Mormonism and the Angel Moroni's Gold plates etc. came about as a consequence of the stranding of a bunch of refugees from a far future eco-collapse. They have dropped back too far, or not far enough, into America's past, meeting Indians and Mammoths! They get killed!
- **Olaf Stapledon / Brian Stableford's** The Swan of Space series? Where a star travelling Jesuit exploring a distant star system discovers that the Star of Bethlehem was a supernova that wiped out a really cultured people. Divine genocide just for a cheap religious special effect.
- In **Jeff Somers'** The Electric Church everlasting life is just an upload away! In a

dismal future the Electric Church offers hope and is doing big business

- Too many stories to list about time travel tourism in search of religious 'truths' the visitors usually end up crowding the scene, contaminating the past and turning a relative non-event into a 'Miracle' that echoes down the years.

Isaac Asimov, a writer of (secular) Jewish heritage came out as an Atheist / Rationalist, while being associated with the Unitarian Church.

Or the use of religious mental furniture is the basis for 'Next adventures',

- **Richard Harland's** Ferren and the Angel series, 'real' Christian Angels and heaven lore used as the background for a Sci-fi / Fantasy adventure.

- The '**Post Rapture**' stories, the Christ based reply to the Turner diaries? Document the future perils of the Ghody as the 'purest' are taken up to heaven and the rest, the slightly less than perfect, have to put up with a lot during the tribulations

Allegorical Fantasy

- **CS Lewis's** The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe series and the Perelundra Trilogy? Re-telling of redemptive Christlike sacrifice in the face of evil.

Message - Ghod and Religion is Good.

- What about all the Mormon (and pre-monotheist Old Testament stuff) influences found in Battlestar Galactica, is it the even newer Testament?

- There is a book by **Robert Heinlein**, where America has been invaded by China, and the only Freedom allowed is Freedom of religion (tell that to the Tibetans and the Falun Gong people!), which becomes the basis of a Resistance movement that develops a 'Chinese specific' plague, which they then release without qualms. American freedom restored by an act of global megadeath genocide!

- In **Philip Pullman's** The Golden Compass (movie & books), features a thinly disguised Church organisation that is doing bad things to small children. Message – Religion is Bad.

Incidental Ghods/Religions?

- In **David Greeley's** 'The God Game' someone or something is killing off the 'Gods', people and aliens who are affecting a cross

between US revival Tent and Televangelism displays. The story is mostly a detective story with the Sci-Fi Ghods as murder victims and possible suspects.

- In **Douglas Adam's** Dirk Gently book the Holistic Detective encounters the robot monk whose purpose in life is to free human beings of the burden of having to believe the unbelievable.

- In a **Brian Stableford** Swan of Space (?) story the main character and his companion (an intelligent fart) encounter a religious settlement with a computer based 'Pope'. It was designed to avoid human frailties and consequently has inbuilt infallibility.

- In most of the stories of **Walter Miller Junior**, A Canticle for Leibowitz and its sequel, Saint Leibowitz and the Wild Horse Woman which was completed by **Terry Bissel**, with cowboy Popes and Indian Cardinals! It has a revised American centred Catholicism hold together a post nuke future, or in some short stories, the effects of a touchy feelie plague from Space that raises your intelligence and sensitivity, so of course all decent Americans would be agin it.

Some Made-up from Sci-Fi Religions

- **The Jedi** (Orthodox or Reformed?) religion from Starwars

- The Gor books by **John Norman** have inspired not just one but two sex cults, by newspaper and internet reports they split over 'doctrinal' differences.

- **The Satanist religion** was invented by the writings of **Anton Le vay**

- **Robert Heinlein's** Stranger in a strange Land inspired a group to form a church that then sought Heinlein's endorsement (Wot, Pope Bob the first?)

- **Scientology** – **L. Ron Hubbard**, nuff said? Not just a Science Fictional religion, but one that owes much of it's public profile to the Sci-Fi movies of **Tom Cruise** (and **John Travolta**).

- **Enkankar** – Campbell encouraged robot underworld religion, still in business on the internet

- **Mormonism** – allegedly based on a novel that was put out by a pastor (named Campbell) who was active in New York State when the Prophet **Joseph Smith** was younger. coz their belief in continuous

revelation and prophecy has then living in old Testament times in the present.

- **Seventh Day Adventism** – Inspired by End of the world Millennial list fantasies from 1841 onwards.

- **Theosophy** and the **Christian Scientist Church** – Wish fulfilling New Age believers before there was a New Age (the called it the New Dawn), based on bad fantasies inspired by of 19th Century Science, before SF had that name.

- There is a **Church of Spock** in Tennessee

Next month's meeting, Friday April 18, 2008, and the topic is; Police and Law enforcement in SF&F stories

Notes from the May 15, 2008 Infinitas Book Review meeting

*Present were: April and Julie-anne, Mark, Garry Dalrymple, Danielle, Dr Kowalski and Tim Martin.
Discussion of Temeraire by **Naomi Novic**
and Company of the Dead by **David Kowalski***

Both of the books discussed at this month's meeting were on an 'Alternate History' themes, although treated very differently. This meeting report is in two parts, for reasons that will become obvious shortly.

Garry's notes from the Sydney Futurians meeting of Friday May 16, 2008

**Topic: Police & Law
Enforcement in SF&F stories**

Present were: Garry Dalrymple, Diane Fox, John Fox and Anne Rankins
Apologies were received from Stephen Bingle and Paolo Rech

SF & F News for May 2008

DF - Has been reading a book by **Gesualdo Bufalino**, The Keeper of Ruins, © 1986 which is an anthology of re-told Greek Myths which tend towards the fantastic at times

JF - Is about to finish a writer's Certificate, a major course work item is to edit a book length manuscript on 'Beetlemania' (about VW fanatics?), so he is not reading much SF at the

moment. Other pre-occupations of the moment are Estate Management. For no particular reason remembers stories about 'Taz' a boy who was born in Space so he doesn't need to breath air!

GD - I have been reading a few written by Australians SF books that seem to be intended as YA or Children's titles. Frequently it is quite confronting stuff, nasty things happening to children. Quite a surprise compared to the 'Juvenile' SF (by **Edgar Rice Burroughs, A. C. Clarke & Robert Heinlein**) that I used to read.

- **The SF&F events of the 2008 Sydney Writers Festival are;**

Monday 19 May

9.30-2pm, 008, Parramatta, **Emily**

Rodda Primary School Days

6-7 pm, 017, **Emily Rodda** @Penrith Library

Tuesday 20 May

9.30-2pm, 023, Syd Theatre Walsh Bay **Emily**

Rodda Primary School days

6.30-7.30pm 031 Blacktown City Library **Dr**

David Kowalski Speculative Fiction & World Building

Thursday 22 May

12-1 pm, 072, SDC Studio 1, **Richard**

Walsh - The Future Files

6.30-7.30 pm 116 Glebe Library, **Fred**

Watson - Spacefarers of the new Millennium

Saturday 24 May

4 to 5.30 pm, 251, Bangara Theatre

Michael Pollan &? Cafe Scientific: The Future of Food

Sunday 25 May

11am - 6 pm, 276, MCA-F, Various - Zine Fair at the MCA

1 to 2 pm, 296, SDC4, **Fred Watson & Robyn**

Williams Astronomical

2 to 3 pm, 299, Ariel Bookshop, Various - 1984 reading marathon

2 to 3 pm, 304, The Powerhouse Museum, **Kerrie Dougherty** - The Phoenix Mission to Mars

2 to 3 pm, 306, SDC2/3, **Alan Jacobs** - Philip Pullman's debt to CS Lewis

5 to 6 pm, 327, P2/3-U, **Lynne Segal & Richard Watson** - Imagined Futures

That's a total of 11 SF / Science events out of some 300 plus listed SWF events? I will be taking time off work to try to attend and document some of them.

- **Meteor Inc.** has been set up to preserve and conserve SF&F material in Australia. Bruce Gillespie and several long time fans involved.
- The Guy who played the Angel '**Pygar**' in the '**Barbarella**' movie has just died at the age of 70.

AR - Currently reading **Ben Bova's Moon Rise** and plans to read through all the SF Books on offer at the Customs House Branch of the City of Sydney public Library. She plans to proceed through SF writers A to Z. This library allows you to take out 20 books at a time!

Recent Sci-Fi Science News

- **Win a Nobel Prize for playing computer games?** Forming and folding Novel Proteins has been formatted as an online computer game. The 'Game' uses the computer power and manipulation skills to create and evaluate the biological properties of potential therapeutic molecules.
- **Rocket man or Jet Boy?** An Austrian chap has made up a strap-on glider wing powered by four small Jet engines to give ~45 minutes of jet powered flight!
- Some Millions of Japanese jobs will be lost to robots by 2020.
- **The Platypus genome** has been mapped, first ever Monotreme, presumably this would have to be a last of the 'Firsts' as most other categories of animals have already been mapped by now?
- **Korea is cloning Labradors!** From mass producing cars to domestic appliances to domestic pets? They are all clones of a champion drug detecting dog. The Monoculture rules ditto?
- **Japanese vending machines** may soon have face recognition age identifying software to stop under 18 year olds from being able to buying fags. After July you will need a 'proof of age' pass card!
- **Travel through the Universe** promises WorldWide Telescope, a free offering from **Microsoft Research** that allows access to NASA and big telescope images of Planets and many Deep Space objects. Better than Google Sky?
- **The Vatican** says that Aliens could exist, the official Vatican newspaper headline was 'Aliens are my Brother' and _ They may be born without Original Sin!, says **Father Gabriel Funes**, official Vatican Astronomer.

Recent SF / Sci-Fi on TV

SG Atlantis (on 7) is on and that's about it except for children's shows and obscure foreign language stuff on SBS?

Dr Who (on 2) and Torchwood (on 10) are coming back soon? All episodes pre-viewable at nearly monthly Sydney Dr Who meetings

Discussion of the topic: Police & Law Enforcement in SF&F stories

Generally

Crime, Police and Law enforcement stories are bigger selling genres than SF&F. Lots more Police / Law Dramas on TV than SF as well, with considerable spill over into SF and Fantasy even before you start considering 'Mainstream' Techno Thrillers, Books and Movies that with the progress of Technology are 'borrowing' from SF. I.e. Most **James Bond** Stories have a degree of both Crime and SF involved in the plot. Mission Impossible at times deals with SF fringe concepts and equipment.

Sci-Fi Detectives

The Philip K Dick inspired movies (with and without Tom Cruise) such as Minority Report and A Scanner Darkly. Each have SF aspects in the identification of the Crime and the Criminal not seen in ordinary Police / Detective books / TV.

Time Cops

- Protectors of the Authorized time stream / history, crime fighters assisted by 'hindsight in advance', advice from the future to prevent present day Crime, several TV series known to use the same name?

- **Fritz Leiber / H. Beam Piper's(?) Paratime series**, a battle for the Past/Future between the two competing forces, the Spiders and the Snakes as they fight through centuries past and alternative worlds future.

Played for Fun?

The law enforcement forces on Terry Pratchett's Disc World series of stories are recurring characters even having their own book 'Guards, Guards, Guards'. Through this fantasy series many real world and

fictional events and practices are satirised, police forces included?

Identity Theft

Stories involving data and identity theft do exist including a recent movie where Criminal and pursuing detective swap faces due to a skin transplant? Many others out there. Who can forget the immortal Classic Star Trek episode 'Spock's Brain' and other involuntary organ donor stories?

Rough Justice

- One school of thought has it that the past must be more brutal and arbitrary than the 'Glorious Past', hence Judge Dredd 2000 rides the pages of Comic books and Movies on his motorbike dispensing rough justice.

The Long Pursuit

The Fugitive and Logan's Run are stories of an extended pursuit by the forces of the law. In the case of Logan's Run, Logan had been a 'Sandman' enforcer of the 30 year lifespan permitted by the under the dome survivalist (post Nuclear exchange?) society. In The Fugitive the main character hopes to find vindication, by locating the mysterious one armed man. In the Australian Children's TV series 'Cyber Girl' a shape changing cyborg girl from the future is pursued by some fairly moronic thugs from the future.

SF Cops in Space (or not)?

- The puzzlingly bad 'Future Cops in Space with puppet heads and Alien Perps' series 2040 (the bubblegum was OK though) had a space station (DS9?) police Station.

Michael Garibaldi and his men in Babylon 5's security detachment, an honest policeman.

- Star Trek Deep Space Nine (DS9) had the shade shifting **Constable Odo** (he could not only threaten to throw the book at you, he could BE the book!) as a major character. Mostly his role explored the 'outsider' and collaboration / resistance issues, but The Law and Justice are his anchor in troubling times.

- In the Japanese animation series 'Ghost in the Machine, Standalone complex' Cyborg enhanced police battle crime, with the aid of armed funnel web spider shaped robots. They frequently fight computer enabled crimes.

- In the series 'Alien Nation' the arrival of 250,000 'Newcomer', Tenctonese slave workers as refugees via a huge spaceship

causes the world to change. This series focuses on the Tenctonese detective '**Sam Francisco**', his family and his human police partner **Matthew Sykes**. The arrival of the Newcomers causes police work to include not just aliens as victims and perpetrators, but new 'real' alien crimes can occur as a result of the biology and social structure of the Newcomers. Science Fiction or just a SF reflection of the more terrestrial emigrant experience? The books of the series are usually freer of the usual Sci-Fi conventions and some are quite thoughtful hard SF using the characters of the TV series.

- Of course, in the Mad Max Series of Australian Post Apocalypse movies, Max starts out as a Policeman and this is arguably his anchor in troubled times?

The Secret Policeman

O'Brien in **George Orwell's** 1984 demonstrates the ambiguity of the Secret Policeman in many SF stories. Is he the resistance? Many Military SF stories have Secret Policemen present, sympathetically or unsympathetically portrayed. In **Lois Mc Master Bujold's** Barrabar series, for a time the main character **Miles Vor Kosigan's** is a secret Police Agent. In **David Webber's** Honor Harrington series the enemy People's Republic has a French revolution styled Secret Police. In the Aeon Flux animated series / Movie the main Character Aeon is an assassin pursued by the police, or a Freedom Fighter against a Police State, Ambiguity Rules!

Inversions of Justice?

- In **Harry Harrison's** several The Stainless Steel Rat, stories **Slippery Jim De Griz** is an arch criminal turned law officer, poacher turned Gamekeeper?

- In The Syndic by **Kornbluth** (?) the natural government of the USA is – an organised crime syndicate.

- In the Gowachin's courts of Justice of the Dosadi Experiment by **Frank Herbert / Gordon Dickson?** In Gowachin law the Prosecution tries to prove the innocence of the suspect; that is innocence by virtue of stupidity sufficient to mark the suspect as being unfit to live, and an embarrassment to family, friends and race. The defence argues that the defendant did it and did it by evading the law with real cleverness. The Gowachin Law

'innocent' are then usually lynched by their family and friends after the court rises!

The Scientific Detective?

- The clearest example of the Scientific Detective on TV recently is the program 'Numbers' where all the clever detective work is done using Mathematics to clear the innocent or identify the guilty

- **Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's** fictional detective, **Sherlock Holmes**, was known as the 'Scientific Detective', so would his use of a scientific method make his adventures Science Fiction?

- **Douglas Adams' 'Dirk Gently, Holistic Detective Agency'** features a Detective who only handles Science Fictional cases?

- Scientific TV crime series – CSI and its many imitators - are ubiquitous. Beyond the absolute fantasy of coroners solving crime, is this SF?

- A stronger claim to SF might be found in programs like 'Wire in the Blood' investigations of the psychology of the criminal mind by a loopy Psychologist?

Justice as entertainment?

- **Pohl / Kornbluth's 'Gladiator at Law'** has justice dispensed by trials of combat in a public and televised Arena.

- The Running Man movie starring **Arnold Schwarzenegger**, run the gauntlet, survive and you are free!

Crime solving Superheroes

- Most Caped Crusaders, Super Heroes Batman, Superman et al. spent their time fighting big picture Science Fictional crime, thefts of Planets, Death rays or more frequently 'Mad Scientist' aided costumed Super Criminals.

- Before the Jedi there were **EE Doc Smith's 'The Lensmen'** series of books, aided by alien technology a select group were the appointed protectors of Law, Order and Galactic Good Government.

- A curious sort of Super Hero is to be found in the British TV series, 'The Champions' a series about some air crash survivors who are 'fixed' by shadowy Tibetans Secret Masters. They use their new Superpowers to fight crime, as you would, not at trying out for the Beijing Olympics to show the flag for the Dalai Lama etc.

- The 1960's Japanese TV series 'Phantom Agents' (remember, the gun is always the last resort) had technology aided adventures that verged on the Science Fictional in a nearly Super Hero sense.

Computer based Crime SF & Techno Thrillers

Most of the early 'Cyberpunk' books by **William Gibson** involve Crime and Computer technology. In **Neil Stephenson's 'Snow Crash'** has crime and terrorism in Second life style cyber reality?

The Lesbian Vampire Detective SF and their ilk

- All TV Vampire Detectives are Male, Forever Knight, Angel and Moonlighting, but apparently (I'm told) most book Vampire Detectives are Female (and Lesbian). Why is this so, I have no idea?

- I would also include the short lived TV series 'Brimstone' in this tour of the 'Dark side of the Force', a damned soul, a policeman killed in the line of duty is offered resurrection if he can track down for Lucifer and return a number of damned souls who managed to escape from Hell and re-join the living.

Botany Bay re-told

Stories of Penal colonies transplanted into the Future / planted on new Planets, new Societies out of the unpromising refuse of the old. Australian writer **A. Bert Chandler** wrote several stories where aspects of the Botany Bay story and the society it created emerge.

From Brian Walls

- Did you know **Gene Roddenberry** wanted to follow up Star Trek with a series about crime fighting in the future (title unknown),

- **Isaac Asimov** was a big devotee of crime fiction (he wrote only a few sf mysteries but no straight crime books (?)).

- Judge Dredd was a huge piss take on Dirty Harry & Robocop was definitely influenced by the former.

- **Mickey Spillane & Max Allan Collins** wrote a series about Mike Hammer (in all but name) in the 23rd century. Spillane was the 20th

century best selling American author in paperback.

- Many pulp authors tried their hand in writing criminal activity in the future (few did authentic mysteries a la Asimov).

Next month's Sydney Futurian meeting will take place on Friday June 20, 2008, and the topic is;

Memorable Weapons in SF & F stories, Weird, Magical, Extreme Technology, or just opportune'

© G. Dalrymple, May 15, 2008

Book Reviews

ISBN 0-340-73483-3,
Convicting the Innocent by
Chester Porter QC, 597 pages, ©
2005.

It is worth recording two things about this book and it's author before reviewing the book. Firstly, **Chester Porter** is an enemy of my blood. By having a better documented claim to be 'The Dancing Man' seen on Sydney streets on VJ day he has denied my family the right to advance our claim that my Father was A Dancing Man on VJ day. I stepped out of the Infinitas bookshop at Parramatta and noticed this book on the lid of a municipal street bin. It had been placed to be seen, it was in an as new condition. When I picked it up the first thing that I looked for was any sign of Book Crossing or similar markings. Nothing! Reduced to it's essentials this book is about the failure of the courts to produce 'Evidenced Based' decisions and how these defects occur. There are sixteen chapters dealing with types of these defects, citing cases from

Australian, UK and US courts where miscarriages of justice have occurred. It could also be sub-titled as 'A Skeptical approach to Justice and Conviction'. The main problem it describes is that of the human condition, people freely decide to allow subjectivity to over rule objectivity, i.e. the Police who decide to 'improve' evidence or to cover up evidence that contradicts their belief that they 'have their man' and Judges and Juries who are able to persuade themselves that their reading of the demeanour of the accused or witnesses is a more reliable evidence of guilt or innocence than mutually inconsistent evidence. A point that begins to wear is that many of these cases are repeated in several chapters. This serves to highlight the fact that in most miscarriages of justice it is usual for there to be several concurrent defects in the conduct of the Police examination of the crime as well as in the court room presentation. Single unfortunate justice denying errors of fact seldom result in injustice, they seem to hunt in packs and usually tend to go for the members of our communities that weakest and least able to defend themselves in court. A point is made for the cost effectiveness of Scientific evaluation of evidence. Good and freely available forensics releases the expense connected with the wrongly jailed, compelling evidence is more likely to jail the repeat offender sooner in Guilty plea court cases when the defendant and their counsel can see that in regard to the defendant's guilt 'the writing is (forensically) on the wall'. A bit tedious to read at times for late night before turning in reading, but it is mercifully free of law text Latin and other jargon. To my mind the sort of book that should be provided as reading matter for shut in overnight juries called to decide on a defendant's freedom. Well worth reading. I think I'll pass it on to a Crown Law Office employee I know.

ISBN 0-671-03306-9

Galax-Arena, by **Gillian Rubenstein Aust**, 328 pages, © 1999.

The first thing I noticed about this book was a dedication / thanks at the start of the book to Australian SF writer **George Turner**. I started reading this book partly out of curiosity and partly out of a sense of duty. This book is

highly recommended / Awarded Australian writing for 'younger Readers', so what is the literary establishment's idea of a good read as SF or Fantasy. It didn't start too well, the story is told as a flashback memory of previous events, effectively negating one avenue of suspense, i.e. you know that all these characters have to come through the adventure as depicted in the opening pages. The story starts off with a description of the mundanities of life in hiding after the adventure. The Adventure seems at first to be a 'kidnapped by Gypsies / run away to join the travelling Circus' kind of Riff, but it soon gets stranger. The kids are picked up at a railway station north of Sydney and driven to a private Space Base / Area 51 set up (credibility gap opens) then transportation by Rocket ship to an alien Planet (gap yawns further) with a special Earth Normal habitat for the captives and a realization that they are trapped in a **Mary Renault** Minoean era adventure 'The King Must Die' type acrobatic troupe (no Bull!) for the enjoyment of a race of largely unseen aliens who, it is later revealed, get their jollies by vicariously experiencing the thrills of roar of the greasepaint and the smell of the crowd by watching these children risk death and injury in the Galax-Arena. Shades of the antics of the children of the yogic flyers in **Ian Watson's** Alien Embassy? The truth comes out via the appearance of a fly. Yes a good old Aussie blowie. A live Blowfly living free on an 'Alien Planet' allows the Main character to conclude - No Alien Planet! The habitat is a charade, they must still be on Earth so escape is possible! A Struldebug (119 year old person, from Gulliver's Travels by **Dean Swift**) in an rare attack of sentiment spills the beans. The whole deal is a set up. The children are all prisoners in a secret medical experimental lab with an immortality treatment that involves the children's exhilaration, stress and pain reactions from performing in the Galax-Arena being used to re-boot the aged organs and metabolism's of presumably wealthy or influential old people. An Escape proceeds, betrayal and Copenhagen Syndrome and child becoming their parent issues are explored. An implant is ripped out and relative freedom, as fugitives is sustained. **What I disliked** and considered to be 'lazy' storytelling was the reliance on 'Psychic like' mental powers by the main character and the key role of 'bro rabbit' a 'possessed' hand puppet as a key element

of the story.

Conclusion – Not bad, it was better than I had expected it to be and despite a few lazy moments (the psychic contact with the Alien 'pet owner' I was engaged by the story, particularly when some of the gaping credibility gaps of the Abduction to Vexa turned out to be explicable as necessary elements of a conspiracy to delude the kidnapped children into believing that escape is impossible. I feel it could have been improved as a read and as a SF nal story by being shorter. The Galax-Arena stuff was to my mind poorly described and much of the mundane 'prologue' to the abduction could have been ditched. With less detail about how special the older and younger children were a younger reading audience might be more likely to identify with these characters and feel 'they could have been me'. I wouldn't consider this to be 'Great' SF reading, it's tolerable, I can think of much better Juvenile SF stories. My lasting impression is that this could have been a good SF story but that it has been written 'down' to conform to some 'Children's Literature' norms. Some of the concepts in this story give me the screaming heebie jeebies, far more so than the 'Adult' concepts touched on in some Juvenile SF I have read. As I believe that in Science Fiction, of all literary Genres, the Imagination must be free of conformity restraints I find this to be very disappointing, but I suppose that's where the money is?

ISBN 0-671-72189-5

The Steel (Bk. IV of The General) by **S.M. Stirling & David Drake (Both US)**, © 1993, 302 pages

This book is the first of the NSW University book fair books that I have reached for to read after the 'duty' read of **Gillian Rubenstein's** Galax Arena. I've read other books of this series (1 and 2?) so I know what to expect, a Military Quest novel, escapist light reading rather than 'Blow Your Mind' SF. The World of this story is Bellevue, an Earth colonised planet that has been isolated from Earth and Space travel by a cybernetic meltdown that occurred a thousand or so years previously. This event wiped out all technology and sent civilisation down for the count. I. e. it is a special case of a post-fall civilisation, space flight lost, descent into barbarism to follow, like

the setting for **Lois McMaster Bujold's Miles Vorkosigan stories** (only without the Nukes). The social / economic set up on Bellevue seems to be US civil War era technology overlaid over a retelling of Bellisarius' campaign of reconquest of Italy / the Western Roman Empire under the Byzantines. This world has been balkanised into several feudal type societies, each being ruled by the descendants of a section of the once 'Galactic' military, like the split up of the Hellenic world under the generals of Alexander the Great, or like the post Roman Empire set up, where veterans of Roman Legions set up Barbarian tribal kingdoms?

On Bellevue they apparently never got round to importing horses, as they have breeds of dog, bred up for increased size, instead of horses for their cavalry to ride, and tow wagons etc. In an earlier book of the series armed (African) 'Azanians' riding 600 pound war Basenjis are briefly described. Hell's puppies indeed! The central McGuffin of this book and the series is that Raj Whitehall, minor noble, up and coming provincial officer in the Civil Regime's military had an encounter with the one surviving computer on the Planet. This Computer is called 'Centre' and it lives in the disused tunnels underneath the palace. This War command computer has been waiting for 1,000 years for the right man to arrive. It used to be a command and control computer capable of running a technological army and planetary defences. It has the ability to control Raj Whitehall like a meat puppet, but it forms a symbiotic partnership with him instead. Raj becomes a nearly invincible General, aided by the memories and advice of the Computer whispering in his mind as needed. Centre's mission is no less than the restoration of Civilization on Earth, after the unification of Planet Bellevue and Raj Whitehall is it's instrument. Much flannel about the Cycle of Civilisation, Centre figures that it succeeds with Raj Whitehall or the future is 15,000 years of decline to a caveman level before a technological civilisation re-emerges, without the assistance of Raj and Centre. I can't pick the battles, but I suspect that there would be re-telling of both US Civil War and post Roman battles. What to make of this book, it is not quite Space Opera and it's not quite an Alternate History SF story although clearly it contains elements of both. A minor point is that the voice of Centre also gives social commentary as to the

consequences of actions, and Raj Whitehall does not want to be king, so it is a bit more than just a conquering general book or a Military SF story charting an inevitable rise to power. I quite enjoyed reading it, as four nights of near Winter reading, but it is not that deep a story being told as say a **Honor Harrington** story by **David Webber**.

ISBN 0-7336-1467-1 'The Floating Brothel',
by **Sian Rees (UK)**, 248 pages, © 1986.

This book is a surprisingly detailed account of the lives and times of the passengers and crew of the Lady Julian(a) a convict transport carrying a cargo of female convicts from Portsmouth England to Botany Bay (actually Sydney Harbour). The book seems to use just about every known document about these people. Their crimes, court cases, prison and earlier lives are all documented, as much as the scanty available records allow. Their ship was supposed to be part of a second relief fleet, but they ended up sailing ahead of what would be the second fleet, and more significantly they sailed before they knew if the first fleet had succeeded in establishing itself at the other end of the world. Two things surprised me when reading this book, the first being how transitional the English society of 1778 was. At the time, Government was basically only a revenue source to pay for the Kings Wars (and the King's Whores?) and not much else. A degree of industrialization was at its early stages, i.e. rural cottage based Industry and trades were being eclipsed, at the same time that Agriculture was being organized more efficiently, requiring fewer on site workers. The European and American Wars were for a time over, Sailors and Soldiers were being dumped back onto the streets as were the women who had been able fill shop assistant positions etc. The laws of the land and it's social institutions were simply not up to the job. For example at this very time purely as a revenue raiser, Prime Minister Pitt (the younger) brought in a tax on the employment of parlor maids over the age of 15, leading to an exodus of now 'overage' domestic staff onto the streets where survival by theft of prostitution were about the only options on offer. In other words, the Society of the times was just not planned at all –

however contrast this with the set up of the settlement at Batany bay, plans made for feeding, housing and putting to work all who fell into the transportation system – a planned economy amid the laissez faire!

I could not help but be struck by the implied barbarity of the system that planned for frequently teenage girls to be rounded up for wife or prostitution roles at the end of the Earth with no expectation of return (about one third did manage to return to England), and to be expected to serve as shipboard wives for the crew in transit. A prototype 'Stolen Generation' without even the veneer of publicly stated good intentions? The book's fifteen chapters cover the period admirably.

No ISBN, review copy was an uncorrected Proof copy
'Lab Rats in Space',
by **Bruno Bouchet (Aust)**, 169 pages,
© 2007.

On starting to read this book I very soon realised that this book is very much a children's book rather than a 'Young Adult' book. It is about the adventures of five children and an intelligent fuzzy dice who wake up without memories in cages on evil Dr Xanax's space station laboratory. Very Strange things have been done to the children, one boy has a third arm grafted on, one girl has a hammer and screwdriver hands, one boy has an enormous nose (good for recurring snot jokes), one boy will transform mid-story into a girl and the last child, an apparently 'normal' girl ends up spinning a cocoon! I found what had been done to the children to be very confronting. Children abducted, mutilated and caged is not my idea of pleasant reading. What was happening was very much nastier than what occurred in **Gillian Rubenstein's Galax-Arena**. The difference is that this is a childish story, children's actions and motivations rather than an Adult story written down to 'YA' standards, so you are able to laugh it off as 'fantastic/unbelievable'. This helps a great deal to make my reading of it more tolerable. The 'Science Free' SF, things that do not make any sense, also did not worry me as much as it had in Galax-Arena, it is after all a story intended to appeal to sub-teen pre-puberty children, who apparently can't get enough bodily function

humour. This story climaxes and concludes in a confrontation between Dr Xanax and the children on a Library Planet, setting up an extended series of adventures, first escape from Dr Xanax's space station, then a search for home planet and family, an under ten's version of **E.C. Tubb's Dumerest saga** with heroic Librarian cameo roles? Reading this book, 23 short chapters over two days was OK, I can see that this would be a popular sort of children's read and I could see it to be a suitable as a one a chapter a night bedtime reading book for courageous parents read to their children who are too young to read the book on their own.

ISBN 0-691-02749-8
'The Rise of Christianity, A Sociologists reconsiders History', by **Rodney Stark**, 246 pages, © 1996.

Are your two least favourite subjects, Religion and Sociology? If so, No reason to be interested in reading this book? Well no, this book is a lot more worth reading than that and it is a text that can be used for the same purposes to understand the dynamics of just about any sort of social movement. In an increasingly Secular age (I hope!) what need of a study of religion? Actually quite a bit, as once you ignore the dogmatic fantasy of Miracles and Mass conversions, you have to ask how did it happen, from Twelve Disciples (or the 14 plus named in the various gospels) to State Religion in a relatively short time. You could even use it as a guide as to how to fight 911 style terrorism movements.

This book in its ten chapters explains how it was probably done. There is something in it if you are a Skeptic, or if you are a believer wanting to have a more honest understanding of your religion's past or your current congregation's future. The Author applies elements on modern Science to the hints and odd statistics quoted in the history of the early church and other period commentaries to come up with a 'that's how they did it' explanation. The simple answer is the 'Miracle' of compound growth on personal contacts and a rather more encouraging, organised and welcoming family life inside the

faith than outside it. This and the odd few megadeath epidemics sweeping through the known world. This book even explains why the future is probably going to be Mormon! So you had better read it before they start door knocking where you live!

The ten chapters of this book are (and wouldn't it have been classier if he had managed to stretch it to twelve!);

1. Conversion and Christian Growth – Evidence from Mormon statistics and observations of 'Moonies' Church establishment show that the people who do convert to a new religion do so through social connections and are more usually people without strong religious ties to an existing faith. 10,000 door knocks for one new Mormon Vs a conversion rate of about 50% for each a new Mormon's in laws

2. The Class Basis of Early Christianity – From the evidence in the gospels, salutations in Epistles etc. and evidence of influencing Roman decision makers, it appears that there were many more highly placed people among the Christians than is commonly supposed.

3. The Mission to the Jews; Why it Probably Succeeded – Injunctions against 'The Jews' do occur in the New Testament, but many Jews of the Diaspora converted, seeing Christianity (in early centuries) as a continuation of the faith of their ancestors that was more available to them as Hellenised Jews than Jerusalem based orthodoxy with it's exacting dietary and observance rules. I.e. they 'grew into' Christianity.

4. Epidemics, Networks and Conversion – The Philanthropic influences of the Early church meant that more of their people came through the series of megadeath plagues and through service to their neighbours it made membership of their faith attractive at the same time that these plagues were cutting the bonds to other social institutions

5. The Role of Women in Christian Growth – In the Early Church Women had status not available outside the faith, an absence of infanticide gave them greater rates of increase and valuing girl children meant that they had excess Christian women in an environment where otherwise adult women were under

represented, leading to non-Christian men marrying in to the faith resulting in secondary conversions.

6. Christianizing the Urban Empire: A Quantitative Approach – Lots of stuff here, abstruse statistics that sort of prove that the rise of the early church was through urban centres and initially Jewish Diaspora communities.

7. Urban Chaos and Crisis: The Case of Antioch – Until the invention of sanitation as we know it Ancient Walled City states were frequently festering pits, fires and contagions among the crowded dwellings meant that more often than not people died younger and faster in the cities than elsewhere. Under these conditions, Christianity was able to prosper, converting an ever greater percentage of the (surviving) inhabitants to the faith and then exporting it to surrounding town on trade routes.

8. The Martyrs: Sacrifice as Rational Choice – The number of actual Christian Martyrs was much less than was commonly believed, some people tried really hard to be martyrs, most were able to 'opt out'.

9. Opportunity and Organisation – The Church was organised and transportable to wherever there were people of faith, Paganism was not. Christians could establish themselves anywhere, Pagan faiths generally could not

10. A brief Reflection on Virtue – The population came to value Christian virtues, in the absence or laizefaire attitude to capricious Pagan Gods / Society. Marcus Aurelius tried, but his set of virtues did not have the 'stick' of the old guy in the sky, Heaven and Hell etc. to back up his set of virtues.

Over all I found this book to be a more positive explanation of the rise of Christianity to being a Majority Religion within the Roman Empire / Europe than I had expected.

However, when it became a Majority faith, well power corrupts I guess. Well worth reading as a basis for evaluating the rise of any other belief system, Religious, Social or Political.

ISBN 0-552-12404-4
'Far From Home'

An Anthology of 13 stories by **Walter Trevis**, 172 pages, © 1981, stories from 1957 to 1980.

From the publishing credits of the 13 stories included in this Anthology Walter Trevis seems to be something of an oddity, A SF writer who has been mostly published outside the usual SF&F magazines. I can't say that I was familiar with his work, but having read it now I think I can say that I'm very comfortable with it's classic SF themes of 'What if' happening to an ordinary guy. With Single Author Anthologies, or those occasions when I have set out to read several books by a single Author (usually for Freecon Ghost of Honour presentations) you frequently get a sense of things that seem to be on the writer's mind as they show up in successive stories, i.e. in A Bert Chandler's books it seems an even money bet that public nudity and Airships will put in an appearance. In the second part of the Anthology a lot of mental 'dirty laundry' is put up for display?

Part one: Far from Home

The other end of the line A bloke receives a phone call from his future more affluent self, betting and share tips. As the time approaches he becomes apprehensive. His attempts to call his past self prevent the all important phone call. His wealth dissolves before his eyes!

The Big Bounce An inventor develops a new Rubber formulation which bounces twice as high as it is dropped, converting heat energy into kinetic energy, threatens to bounce high and smash cities!

The Goldbrick An 'immovable object' is discovered, which gives offence to the American Military mind, various attempts are made to shift it, including finally shifting the earth in it's orbit, turns out to be the 'peg' holding the Earth on track. Dislodged from it, Earth plummets into the Sun!

The Ifth of Oofth While playing around with multidimensional figures the inventor inadvertently creates an Earth threatening effect shall with a red hot poker!

The Scholar's Disciple An Academic makes a series of deals with the Devil, plagiarism of the decently dead? Does not end well, the Academic Vs the whole Damned Literary set?

Far From Home A janitor on discovering a Whale in his Arizona swimming pool is blinded by this from the greater source of miracles and

wonder. An excellent misdirection story.

Part two: Close to Home

Rent Control A young couple discover that while they are physically in contact they inhabit a time bubble, after 'time shifting' experiments they retreat into their own world. Seen from the outside they are in stasis and to be locked away in an asylum.

A Visit From Mother Bloke brings in his dead parents to show off his new girlfriend. Works through a few Child-Parent issues, has sex with his mum!

Daddy Much the same deal as in A Visit from Mother. Seeing his mother undressed at one time seems to have made a big impression on the writer. Heinleinesque?

The Apotheosis of Myra A bloke married to a very rich wife lives on a Planet that is the sole source of a painkiller that is essential to his wife's well being. He plans to kill her in a staged accident. The Accident unites his dead wife's consciousness with that of the planet's unique Biology. He ends up married to the Planet!

Out of Luck Insecurities and a love rival multiplied to fill an artist's world?

Echo A bloke's personalities / memories etc. is recorded and generations later he is downloaded into a new body. Forms a friendship with another less perfectly downloaded individual – turns out that they are copies of the same recording / personality.

Sitting in Limbo A bloke is in a sort of Limbo. Has several chairs to sit on, each corresponding to a time of his life. He is able to re-live moments of his life so he attempts to correct mistakes and failings in his life that have affected others.

ISBN 0-553-81498-2
'Ghenghis Khan: Life, Death and Resurrection'

by **John Man**, 431 pages, © 2004.

The Writer has made a career out of studying the lives and times of the peoples who have erupted out of central Asia to have an effect on the history of the civilised world as we know it. He has done a similar treatment of 'The Life of Attila the Hun'.

Reading this book so shortly after the Sociologist's view of the rise of Christianity there were a few similarities that emerged.

This book is a biography that explains the rise of the man, his times, his empire and the rise of his legend. Ghenghis Khan Vs Jesus Christ? There is very little written at the time documentary evidence for each, their 'Testaments' were written by followers and their myths were created to serve subsequent institutions / national identities. There is in fact even a growing Ghengis Khan religion, in service of current day Mongolian aspirations, in parallel with a Chinese serving Ancestor / Emperor cult. I.e. he currently fights on both sides of a national identity / one China dispute. The main thing that I got from this book was an appreciation of how 'Chinese-ness' is a Millennial long tendency, a construct rather than an ethnographic fact. The 'China' that Ghenghis united was a patchwork of Chinese and non-chinese cultures and his 'Chinese dynasty' was only one of a sequence of 'foreign' or barbarian rulers who swept into China from beyond its then borders and then became Chinese as a result of their ruling Chinese citizens. In Ghenghis time there were Tibetan and Manchurian kingdoms and cultures that were conquered to unite and as a result to become Chinese. The lesson for today is that for Tibet to remain distinct or to re-gain autonomy it would be swimming against the 2,000 year tide of Chinese culture. North Korea and Vietnam next?

ISBN 0-224-02917-7,
'Hocus Pocus'
by **Kurt Vonnegut Jr.**, 303 pages, © 1990.

Another episode of the Kurt Vonnegut Style, Slightly unbelievable events described in such a way that you get the feeling that the fictional characters could be slightly autobiographical; you are told at the outset of the book about the extraordinary life and circumstances of the main character and yet, as you read through it, it still seems to be a continuous revelation of new discoveries.

So What is going on in this book? The Main Character is A Vietnam Vet, so as to allow a voice to Kurt Vonnegut's disillusion with the US military. The Main Character then moves to a Private school that has become a bastion of US ruling class privilege so as to allow a voice to Kurt Vonnegut's disillusion with the US military. The Main Character is

then sacked and ends up teaching in a US prison that has been privatised and sold off to an overseas company so as to allow a voice to Kurt Vonnegut's disillusion with the US Penal and Business practices. A Prison break occurs allowing all these threads to be combined.

Observations of the peculiar rendered mundane occur frequently through this book, but I was left with a feeling that disillusion was the main theme of this book, rather than the offbeat sense of purpose of earlier Kurt Vonnegut books that I have read, which is a bit sad as I have until now found his books fairly upbeat and an encouragement to look at the world with different eyes and a sense of wonder.

ISBN 0-312-86326-8 'Shiva in Steel'
by **Fred Saberhagen**, 318 pages, © 1998, 813'.54.

I approach all Berserker stories with a sense of expectation, an expectation that the story will be an exploration of Good Vs Evil, Man against the Machine and usually in some sense a retelling of nearly familiar War stories. I must say, that this book was a bit of a surprise.

From the opening chapter the reader is aware that there is to be some sort of a showdown with Shiva, an all too successful new Berserker. Our point of view character appears at a Star base just as a task force is due to arrive. The task force arrives seriously shot up, five of its six battleships destroyed, but with a commander still bent on completing his mission, to take on and destroy Shiva regardless of the cost in human lives.

The Humans have some temporary intelligence advantage over the Berserkers and are determined to use it in the destruction of Shiva before the secret is out. Late in the book we discover that this advantage is enigma machine like code breaking of Berserker signals. The vain glorious mission is halted however when Shiva and its fleet appears at the Star Base. Battle takes place and the story ends ambiguously as when the point of view character leaves the scene it is not clear whether Shiva has been destroyed or whether it is still 'alive' and stranded on the

Star Base planetoid.

last UFO book I shall read with anything other than very strong skepticism. As a child much of my out of school reading was UFO books, Astronomy and a group at all!

Traveller's Tales

After taking my mum to the 'Imaging' centre for a scanning appointment I had time on my hands wander around parts of Campsie that I do not get to frequent during daylight on weekdays.

Near the imaging centre there was a heap of techno-trash by the pavement. The usual chopped up computer. There was also several pieces of bent sheet metal, mentally re-assembled this proved to be the six elements of a small satellite dish. I was very tempted to gather it up and take it home, got to be useful for something?

And so it goes, in Campsie Satellite dishes have joined TVs, computers and white goods as 'disposable' household items.

- I also found two magnetic car P Plates, joyous discards by a newly qualified unlimited license holder or incriminating evidence to an opportunistic car thief? I have used these as magnetic patches to cover the rust holes on the steel shed's roof.

On another day in Campsie, from the bus coming and going I noticed a Buddhist monk, in robes and sandals pacing up and down Beamish Street to and from the Railway Station.

Have I got it wrong I wondered?

Blinded by materialism and an attachment to possessions have I overlooked that Nirvana is a station that can be found on the Bankstown, and might enlightenment be found underfoot on Beamish street, between the gaps between the council's paving slabs?

The Summer ends, Winter approaches and in Sydney thoughts naturally turn to financially convenient **arson**. On the morning of the last day of March from work we were able to see not one, but two fires from our windows. White smoke was visible over the hill and to the East at Alexandria, where a furniture warehouse was burning, and to the South and

just across the Railway lines, a column of thick dark smoke was billowing up.

The colour and thickness of the smoke put me in mind of the time a transformer at Strathfield Station went up and the more recent and local case of some would be Jihadists torching an Electricity sub-station with a petrol laden Mercedes four wheel drive vehicle.

Last year several furniture warehouses went up in flames in succession in Sydney, competition from cheap (Chinese) imports were considered by some to be an additional incendiary factor adding to the proprietor's financial distress. In previous years it was inconveniently Heritage listed buildings that were burning down. From the platform of Bankstown station last night there was still a strong smell of burnt plastic or insulation, 100 yards or so away from the fire scene. I had a look at the fire scene next morning, or as much as I could see, as the site and its surrounds were blocked off by police crime scene tapes and several uniformed police were visible. The seat of the fire seems to have been at the back of the Arcade, as the children's clothing shop fronting the Mall had enough time to throw some bales of clothing out onto the footpath before they evacuated the shop. Several businesses on either side of the Arcade are currently closed, blocked off and presumably their premises are smoke affected. One consequence of a fire in Late March / Early April means starting the next financial year with an insurance cheque?

At the Railway Station **the cats** seem to be in for a better winter than the last one. It has been mild so far going into autumn and recent rains have promoted the growth of groundcover that will keep them out of some of the cold to come.

Of Windmills and shopping trolleys – I have long considered making up a windmill, I have eyed up plans and Eco shop kits and even considered the adaptation of bicycle parts to suit. There are many options that could be pursued. So last weekend on a supermarket shopping expedition I found myself at a book table at a Girl Guides fete. They were trying to raise some money so they could attend a Jamboree. When I arrived there was literally only a man and a dog present (and it was only a small dog). After hoovering up all the vaguely interesting (Non-Romance) books and magazines for 'Fifty cents' each and

rearranging the rest so that people could see at a glance all the titles, I noticed that there was a cardboard box leaning up against the table it proved to contain a windmill kit, a bonsaied decorative simulacra of a water traditional outback pumping Windmill. Asking price? \$5.00. Sold! The prospect of getting stuff to make up a windmill and then spending several weekends assembling it vanished for less than what I pay for some second hand books. But a problem remained, how to get shopping and 15 kg of windmill kit home? Too much to walk home, too bulky to carry on the bus and I had shopping instructions to bring home Frozen food, food that would suffer if I waited for the hourly 412 bus. So I went off to Coles supermarket and returned \$176 poorer. The windmill kit was still available so it went into the Coles shopping trolley with my shopping stroller, shopping and the windmill kit and off I shoved homewards. It took about 50 minutes to cover the two kilometres to home. You may think that pushing a shopping trolley in a supermarket can be difficult, but let us consider the physics for a moment. You have a centre of gravity on a flat equipotential surface. You stand behind the centre of mass and push and the system must move roughly in the direction of your push. However, going cross country and the ground under the wheels slopes off at different angles at different times. A force diagram over time would see the centre of mass directing a force that was ever changing in direction and magnitude as the trolley on its four independently swivelling wheels tries to go 'downhill' while the ground profile under its wheels changes. Just pushing it doesn't work any more, you have to pull it sideways, hold it from falling over etc. and etc. Off the supermarket floor its Long distance cross country arm wrestling. If there is another episode of this I'll try to stick to pushing it along the road, even rough and neglected backstreets have a very much more even surface than most footpaths and gutters.

Conclusion – If I ever have to dispose of a body, I'll use a two wheeled Otto bin for cross country transportation, it would be so much easier than and a centre of gravity between them would be much easier than using an independently wheeled supermarket shopping trolley. At one point in my journey the shopping trolley managed to 'throw' me as I tried to stop it tipping over and spilling

everything onto the footpath!

Things My Father should have taught me –

The Windmill kit was obviously short a number of bolts so I went to Campsie to see what I could find to suit. I found four '\$2' shops, Chinese owned enterprises filled with cheap imported hardware and home furnishings. I was able to comparison shop because pretty much the same item was available in each shop. What I discovered was that the shops got newer and the prices cheaper the further you walked from the Railway Station.

April 21 - Shopping at Woolworths Campsie. Stocked up on Merlot, as I was buying a woman was negotiating the purchase of twelve bags of Ice, a supermarket trolley full, and in doing so clearing out supplies of ice at the supermarket's attached grog shop. The girl behind the counter related that previously one customer had remonstrated about the out of supply situation, as an earlier customer had done the same thing. I suggested to her that she should have advised the irate customer, upset by the lack of ice to 'Chill Out', and then call security. Beamish Street has a great many restaurants, that same trip I had seen a bloke moving off with thirty or forty litres of milk (in two or three litre plastic bottles) and frequently 'on special' soft drinks moving out of the supermarket in convoys of shopping trolleys, presumably when on special 'cheaper than wholesale'.

April 22 - Had the money, went into Office Works near Sydney University with the intention of buying a new lap top computer. What I need is a device that is (Con attending?) portable and capable of running Word and Excel, so I can work on financial records and text at home just as I can at work. At the moment I can't do this, with several machines at home it is at times a roundabout, moving from machine to machine to get things done that I can do at ease at work (after 5 pm). To just get new software and install it on the old machines is problematic as Mum has all her Financial records (which sooner or later I will have to manage) on 1990s software. I saw what they had and cash in hand realised that it would be folly to proceed until I had technical advice as to what machine / software I should get to be 100% compatible with what is running at work. There is after all some sort of discount for Education workers software package to be had.

April 23 - Made several attempts to rid the

garage of several space consuming but still useable items, a pair of stereo loudspeakers, a colour TV set, a Rowing Machine and a Tuner (I think). Contact numbers to charity's free collection services failed to make enthusiastic connections and frequently 'We don't take' Responses. Best offer was 'call us in a month, we're re-building at present'. Stuff will now move from the Garage to the shed in hope of future pick ups. My plan for the rest of the day was to go and look at a Presbyterian Op shop that is about halfway between Campsie and Burwood, just over the Cook's River crossing. I have bussed past this shop for years on the way to and from Burwood, and even walked past it (after dark), but I have never been inside to have a look, so, fancy free and on five days forced rec leave I decided to have a look. On arriving at the 400 bus stop I noticed that the corner shop was roped off with 'Crime Scene' police tape. There were four Police officers attending and they were talking to the wife of the shop owner who was looking very worried indeed. The local (Pacific Islander?) criminal element tend to look on our local shopkeepers (of Chinese descent) as human ATMs. Some years ago my mother was at the newsagent's while they were bailed up by two or more (Large) Pacific Islanders. I went over to the shopkeeper to commiserate. Part of his unease might have been as a Tienamen Square Era refugee he may have had entirely different feelings about having dealings with the police than a shopkeeper of different personal history.

Met **Stephen Bingle** on the 400. He was going to the Library at Campsie and then off to Beecroft for a medical appointment, quite a journey! On the way we discussed options for Democrat participation in the upcoming Local Government Elections. The deal in Canterbury is that the Mayor is popularly elected and there are three wards that return three Alderman, i.e. the system is engineered to manufacture a Labour Majority with about 40% of the vote as with four Quotas to fill, 40% for Labour gets them the first and the third Alderman and Liberal, Independent or Green candidates getting second and (not elected) fourth quotas as the non-labour preferences flow around and about.

The thing to do would be to stand a Democrat candidate for Mayor and to endorse some pre-

existing Aldermanic candidates. The few extra percent from this might conceivably result in Non-Labour candidates coming in as quotas two and three in some wards, enough to break Labour control of the Canterbury Council.

Stephen was looking into a missing Library card from a 'lost' wallet. I was going to the library to drop off several kilos of accumulated company reports (for the kiddies to look up for their school projects on Australian Industry). Eventually got to the Presbyterian Op Shop, it is over a kilometre from the Campsie Station bus stop and a 600 metre walk back from the closest 400 bus stop. No Furniture, wall to wall women's clothing, a single rack of men's trousers etc., but the books! Lots of books, possibly over thirty metres of bookshelf and the books themselves were frequently those large format, large print / thick paper 'Best Seller' type books. No less than four identical 'Da Vinci Code' books side by side. Absolutely no Science Fiction, or even much Fantasy! I can only assume that either their book donors are a pretty homogenous middlebrow group (possible I suppose as most Presbyterian churches joined up with the Uniting Church, the same month that the Australian Democrats formed!) or that there is some 'filtering' going on, with non 'Best Seller' genre fiction being sorted to 'toss' rather than shelve. What I eventually found to buy were

Two books by Australian Authors; Red Heart by **Victor Kelleher** (for \$2.60) and Everything I know about Writing by **John Marsden**. Both were large format paperbacks which let them through the filter? Given this discovery, the paucity of SF&F and the physical difficulty of getting to the shop I doubt that I will be visiting it again any time soon.

I walked back to Campsie, about two kilometres and went to the Salvation Army shop. Their books (unfiltered!) were shelved two deep, a pointless gesture in my book as the ones on the outside shelf are the only ones the casual browser gets to see and the best of these are soon picked out leaving only 'tired' books to greet the potential customer. I bought; First Australian Dictionary of Vulgarities & Obscenities, by **Bob Hudson & Larry Pickering** (for \$1.00) and Shiva in Steel, by **Fred Saberhagen** (for \$2.50) a Berserker novel.
April 25, 2008

Once a year in Sydney, in late April, there is a gathering of old comrades and friends. I refer to the UNSW Book fair, which occurs over the Anzac day long weekend. You see some of the same people you used to meet at fannish events in years past, and the books, well you frequently see the same titles and Authors each year and at each of Sydney's many book charity fairs.

I was told last year that the 2007 Anzac Day march was to be the last ever for my late father's old unit, the 14th Australian Army Service Corp. Shortly after completing High School my father fled Griffith (Country NSW) for Sydney. The plan was - to tryout for the RAAF (the Air Force) and to avoid the limited unit choices that being drafted from a small country town might result in. Colour blindness prevented his Air Force career, except for being a rear gunner, many of whom he would see in Darwin completing a mission by being hosed out of the shot up rear of an RAAF bomber. I did not consider attending the Anzac day march of my Father's Unit re-union this year as this year some elements of the RSL requested that Family members NOT accompany their WW2 veterans. On the day before Anzac Day I noticed that the 14th AASC was listed for marching / reunion but by then I had made other plans. I had bought a weekly travel pass before I took the week off. The 25th was my last day of 'Free' travel, so rather than spending ~\$10 on bus fares to go to UNSW on the weekend (for \$20 worth of books!), today was the day to go book fairing!

On the 400 at 10 am, I arrived at UNSW at ~11 am. I handed over ~100 of my May and June listings of book events (including the months of charity book sales). Being more than a little obsessive I spent some time re-arranged the books, titles readable all one way, as I went down both sides of the cricket pitch long 'SF&F' table. I was also 'grouping' books by the same Author when they were within reach, so I can tell you with some certainty that there were towards a dozen of **Michael Crichton's Prey** (Red AND Blue Editions!) on that table! The SF&F table was mostly SF (half?), some Horror, some 'thrillers'. I did not notice much Quest Fantasy, although about a quarter of the books were probably Fantasy. Very few Australian Authors, I spotted one **Jack Dann (Memory Cathedral)** and one **Sophie Masson** book. My organisational activities was noticed and commented on by one of the organisers I

encountered as I was leaving with my haul. She was appreciative of someone taking the effort to help others rather than just rooting through the trough.

Another thing I noticed, was that the Street Directories, Maps and religious books were on adjacent tables, so if you were searching for direction in life, I guess they have got you covered!

I encountered **Sydney fans David Bofinger, Peter Eisler and Edwina Harvey**. As I had heard that Edwina had been in ill health (Diabetes related?) I approached her and asked how she was these days. Edwina is only a few years older than I am (I believe, as my slightly older cousin John was one of the first cohort to survive the treatment regime for childhood onset Diabetes). She replied something to the effect of 'better until you showed up'. It has been my experience with encounters with Edwina that increasingly she displays her 'sunny side' rarely and selectively, and her more negative aspect freely and without care as to the effect it has on others.

I also met **Mr McAdam**, who I met at the Sydney Uni bookfair last year. Bookfairs are curious in several ways, one is that the 'Checkout Chicks' are frequently holders of Mathematics degrees or Phd., not Art Graduates as you would expect to encounter in suburban supermarkets?

Anyway, This is my haul for the event, a relatively restrained 17 books / Magazines that set me back \$17.50.

Kite Making and Flying by Harold Ridgeway UK

- © 1962 - 155 pages

The Rise of Christianity, a Sociologist reconsiders History by R. Stark US - © 1996 - 246 pages

Hottest Blood – a 20 story Horror Anthology Ed by J. Gelb & M Garrett US? - © 1993 - 256 pages

Analog May 2005 – 7 Stories – Ed. by Stanley Schmidt US - © 2005 - 144 pages

Analog December 2005 – 6 Stories – Ed. by Stanley Schmidt US - © 2005 - 144 pages

Analog March 2006 – 6 Stories – Ed. by Stanley Schmidt US - © 2005 - 144 pages

The Decievers by Alfred Bester UK © 1981 - 255 pages

Get Out of My Sky (& There shall be no Darkness) by **James Blish UK** - stories © 1950 & 1956 - 168 pages

Reach for Tomorrow – a 12 Story SF Anthology, by **Arthur C. Clarke Cey** - © 1956 - 189 pages

Tales of Ten Worlds – a 15 Story SF Anthology, by **Arthur C. Clarke Cey** - © 1962 - 204 pages

Sentinels from Space by **Eric Frank Russell UK** - © 1953 - 227 pages

Book IV of The General - The Steel by **S.M. Stirling and David Drake US** - © 1993 - 302 pages

War Games by **Brian Stableford UK** - © 1981 - 205 pages

Swan Song (6th Hooped Swan Bk.) by **Brian Stableford UK** - © 1975 - 158 pages

The Paradox of the Sets by **Brian Stableford UK** - © 1979 - 176 pages

The Empire of Fear by **Brian Stableford UK** - © 1988 - 390 pages

A Martian Odyssey & other Great SF Stories –

a 5 Story SF Anthology, by **Stanley G. Weinbaum US** - stories all © 1930s - 159 pages, this book is a copy in better condition than one I was previously given by **Felix Jenkins**.

From the above you can not only see that when it comes to the SF I read I am a creature of habit, living in the past and seemingly have a short attention span?

I left the Roundhouse at ~1.15 pm, two hours tolerably spent in good company (i.e. among books).

After this I caught a bus into town and ran into the back end of the Anzac day March street closures (from 5 am to 3 pm) so I prepared to walk from Hyde Park to Railway Square, given the nature of the day, the theme of far greater sacrifice, a walk across town was a small inconvenience to endure. On the way I diverted to look in at **York Optical**, my fall back Astronomy/Telescope supplier, the place where I bought my last telescope a year or two ago. At the appropriate place I found only 'York Optical, in business since 1950' decorating an otherwise empty shop, no sign of 'moved to' and a Development Application

form pasted up canvassing for objections to plans for a 60 seat restaurant!

The changing seasons, after twelve rainy April days in a row (and didn't the Mysti just love that!) the weather changed after the Anzac day weekend to windy and REAL COLD. In the cold, the flowers and greenery on the wreaths set out on Anzac day (April 25, 2008) at the foot of the Anglo Place / Beamish Street Campsie war memorial Clock Tower will look fresh well into May this year. Over the last part of my week off work I had been enjoying my \$5 worth of Windmill each day, as the strong, cold and highly variable winds turned the blades and the head of my windmill at blade blurring speed. On my first day back at work, stepping off the 412 bus at Campsie I had an encounter with a homeless man that set the changing seasons in perspective. In Winter life on the streets is bitter. This man was wearing two zippered poly fabric carry bags and a large blue plastic sheet in a desperate attempt to keep out of the chilling wind. The Poly bags had arm, head and leg holes cut into the bags and the blue plastic sheeting was worn as a sort of a scarf / hood around his head and neck. He was that Shrouded in Plastic that I didn't see his face at all, just the fringe of his beard. This is how he had spent the night.

When I was younger and working for the Navy (as Civilian Supply support) I used to be amused at how frequently the mandated 'Summer Whites' and 'Winter Navy Blue' uniform code would fail to match the weather of the day, but for this poor bloke his winter uniform this morning (and the night before) was no joke at all.

Basenjjs Tail piece

I saw a 'good home wanted' advertisement for a Basenjjs / Chihuahua cross at Penrith. The text indicated that it was small but that by its behaviour its Basenjjs ancestry was dominant. A half sized 'Bonsai' Basenjjs would be just so cute! A smaller Basenjjs cross needing a home could be what we need at Eulabah Avenue these days, but as the add was dated January and as it was ambiguous as to

whether this dog was located at Penrith NSW or Penrith UK I decided not to take the matter further.

On behalf of all our readers I have sent off an email request for a review copy of Mr Cleveland's book, 'Basenjjs Revelation'. If anything comes of it you will be among the first to know and a Book Review will shortly appear.

You never quite know what to expect from a Basenjjs. It seems that Mystique is still learning / applying pattern recognition skills. I have been taking her for after dark walks more frequently recently. When I go to put on my worn Dunlop Volleys and it is dark she expects a walk to follow shortly. Last night I noticed her reaction to my putting these shoes on, her tail wagged, a very different thing to describe from the usual side to side motion of most dogs, as Basenjjs have an 'elbow' type joint and flip-up muscles at the base of their tail. This is about the only unambiguously positive emotion about 'walkies' that I have seen Mystique express.

Dead by Christmas?

More Grief on the Mystique front I'm afraid. Three months on from the surgery of late January and the lump is visibly back. It is less than half the size of the earlier version and again a field of questions arise requiring decisions to be made. After discovering this last night I discussed it with last night with Mum. She also doesn't want a mutilated dog either, quality of life issues, chewing stuff is one of her great pleasures. Mysti tolerated the last de-bulking surgery fairly well (\$500 cost), survivability of partial lower jaw removal surgery (\$2,000 cost?) is an unknown factor. A repeat of the de-bulking second time round should be marginally cheaper, as no diagnostic tests would be needed this time. Personally, I could live without a dog, but I do not look forward to being met and reminded every morning that I had ordered the mutilation of my own dog. The prognosis offered earlier, 'a 40% survival after twelve months if left untreated', is still no great help, as her continued longevity as a fifteen year old dog at this time, with or without the cancer is anyone's guess. I was advised by Science Matters subscribers that in the event of the cancer's metastasis the consequences could be; if to the brain – unlikely to notice anything until one morning when the dog will not wake up, if to

the Liver, a dog with very marked reduction in 'oomph' over a few weeks. If it to the Lungs, then coughing and breathlessness.

As before, Mysti's vigour is much as it was pre-lump, and again Mysti among all the residents of Eulabah Avenue, she seems to be the least worried about her condition. Unless I get some better options I'm inclined to still wait and see, to budget for another de-bulking operation in a month or six weeks time and a repeat six months later if necessary. If Mysti doesn't come out from under the anaesthetic this time, or a next time, (during Freecon time, what a joy to contemplate!), that would not be intolerable, at least we did what we could for her.

Forever Amber – Two Basenjjs Sermons and Enlightenment?

- So now I have two Basenjjs again, the last time that this was so I also had a Brother, a Father and an Uncle. Would that this could be so again. From now on I guess it will be increasingly about Amber and less about Mysti until there is only one again.

I could

Basenjjs Tail Piece

Mysti and Amber are still getting used to each other, there have been many minor adjustments in their relationship, which is still at a tolerance level rather than one based on inseperable affection. Mysti is now more active after dark, taking an opportunity to feed when Amber of heads down asleep in her beer

crate after 5 or 6 pm. Incidentally, this time of year is really a bad one for Basenjjs. A Sydney Winter (wet season) is much dark and wet for Basenjjs comfort.

A rather chilling but ultimately rewarding event took place on the Monday June 9, Queen's Birthday public holiday. I thought it would be a good opportunity to get Amber more used to people and local noises in daylight, so I went to the local shopping centre, tied her up outside one shop, did some shopping and came out to find a neatly chewed through lead and no dog!

VERY alarming such discoveries frequently end with a squeal of brakes and a very unpleasant sound, as Basenjjs have about as much road sense as a half brick! Mysti in particular was fond of hiding Under Cars on the odd occasions that she had gotten out. So holding my chewed off lead and passing a succession of helpful bystanders each on recognising the dog free lead pointing and saying 'Little dog went that way'. A single person on foot cannot chase down a straying dog, unless it wants to be found, so I headed up Bexley Road with deep apprehension as bystanders had been unclear as to what side of the street they last saw Amber or what direction she might be headed in. After looking for a bit, cross streets and the School grounds, I decided to head back home and to eliminate one possibility or to get my mum out to help search. I was very relieved to see Amber, still agitated from the traffic, wandering around the front yard. She was making no attempt to head out and explore the street at all. Amber seemed more embarrassed than exhilarated by her brief freedom. With Mother's help I was able to get Amber to go inside the house.

After the initial adrenalin rush about the possible consequences of a Basenjjs out 'playing outside in the traffic', we were both very relieved to realize that by the events of this morning we have established that Amber really does consider 1 Eulabah Avenue to be her home 'Home' as this was where she chose to run to.

Ultimate consequence - Bought two new leads, first time in twenty years, 1.8 metre length - \$25 for the pair at the supermarket.

- **Saturday June 21**, strange sounds while the Washing machine was chugging through a

load. Went to investigate as did Mum. A spotted neck Pigeon had flown through the open door of the Sunroom. Assisted it's exit with a broom. Amber Very interested in making it's acquaintance. Established that Amber has a snapping reach of 1.5 metres above the ground (standing on back legs), but she cannot fly, otherwise that pigeon would have been a gonner.

- After this I discovered that I

Aaaah! Basenjjs / Hitchiker's Moment – Amber as you might recall from a previous instalment, has monopolised a plastic beer bottle crate as a day bed. We have placed a rather ragged bath towel in it for padding and comfort. Before settling in for a lie down she stamps around in the crate in a very tight circle, instinctively stamping down the 'grass' before sitting or lying down. On a sunny winter afternoon, after a fair few dark and rainy days (just before the Winter Solstice) Mother brought in the washing and was folding it on the kitchen table. Seeing this, Amber dragged her towel out of her crate and dropped it on the kitchen floor – maybe she wanted her towel folded too? Aaaahh!

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For the April 2008 ANZAPA Mailing

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