

Two Basenjjs, Sermons and Enlightenment Issue No. 29 - 'June July and August'

By Garry P Dalrymple
PO Box 152,
Bexley North
NSW 2007 AUSTRALIA

For the June 2008 ANZAPA
Mailing

Mailing Comments for ANZAPA mailing 241 February 2008

Bloody Bored Student

Rybcncatt

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

Ah the local Tip, the happy holiday hunting ground of my youth. I appreciated the many comments, but there seems nothing in need of a reply. Passing strange that I received two copies of your newsletter this mailing?

Last Minute Musings

Ah the local Tip, the happy holiday hunting ground of my youth. I appreciated the many comments, but there seems nothing in need of a reply. Passing strange that I received two copies of your newsletter this mailing?

Bookmark #11

Like the woodwork on the front cover, some day soon I'm going to make my own trebuchet and an 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!

Necessity 80

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?

The missing fragment, was to the effect that all the Passey cousins (my mum's relatives) had come down with Measles, very much pre-immunisation. **On Olive Dickenson**, the putative NZ source of genealogical knowledge about Captain Cook's descendants, the Captain Cook link came up briefly during a conversation with a member of the Mormon side of the extended family, so there might yet be something to it after all, a Cook cousin or grandfather or something.

BRG 53

Ah the local Tip, the happy holiday hunting ground of my youth. I appreciated the many comments, but there seems nothing in need of a reply. Passing strange that I received two copies of your newsletter this mailing?

Kingdom of the Bland

The plaques were appreciated, even though I didn't get to hand them out in person (or deliver the speech on my mum to an Audience. That weekend Lake Macquarie was flooded the camp site's internal roads were under water, the power out, total catastrophe etc. Each **Plaque** came with a year of birth penny, I hope to do more of them as birthdays and anniversaries permit.

From the Lair of the Lynx 45

Funny you should mention that. On the whole, given recent experiences I too would MUCH prefer to do these speeches with the

Panopticon 46

Funny you should mention that. On the whole, given recent experiences I too would MUCH prefer to do these speeches with the person present, rather than posthumously!

Arbitrariness - 5

Yeah, **Star Trek**. As much as I can see the down side of being a trekker would have to be fairly mild at most, beyond looking a little goofy. The **Freecons** are what the Freecons are. This years will be a refining of a formula that I plan to try to repeat year in and year out, rather than discarding it and moving to a 'higher' form of SF convention. I'm looking forward to a 'clear' year, when I can assemble the bits for a Sydney Freecon over 9 or 10 months rather than a ghod awful rush over two and a bit. When I was younger I had a friend who served up this strange dark stuff, a cola cordial. It was years before I figured out that this stuff was supposed to be similar to '**Coke-A-Cola**'. It could be the brutality of the CO2 from carbonation, or the acidity of it and the phosphoric acid in the stuff. There are colas that I will drink, usually 'flat', but flat 'Coke-A-Cola' just doesn't do it for me either.

Tumbleweed Collection

Funny you should mention that. On the whole, given recent experiences I too would MUCH prefer to do these speeches with the

Land of 10,000 sub-prime Loans

I hope that your bank job is not greatly affected by the US sub-prime loan melt down.

As you will read in this issue, **the Transplant** did not go well. The family get together did not take place, and then a bare few months later the family was called together by my brother's funeral. It wasn't a wussy little '**Brush Fire**', it was a real Aussie Bush Fire, a sort of Dresden in Arcadia type of thing. The meaning of the missing Fragment issue is covered in my response to Necessity 77. Mystique passed her 15th birthday without incident. We drove home to Sydney through even more bad weather, so her sleeping arrangements were undisrupted. **All Americans do look like Trekkers**, sadly this is not a joke at all. Sorry to let the secret out of the bag, that's why Australians watch so much US TV, it's a scream!

Ping!

Thanks for the thoughts on both topics.

Sparrowgrass and Battlewings 6

Funny you should mention that. On the

Sparrowgrass and Battlewings 7

whole, given recent experiences I too would MUCH prefer to do these speeches with the

You really Kwow Your home

Funny you should mention that. On the whole, given recent experiences I too would MUCH prefer to do these speeches with the

The Unfortunate Rhinos

I was apparently born very young, you write with a very young appearing font.

OZ SF fan

I was apparently born very young, you write with a very young appearing font.

ANZAPA 770

I was apparently born very young, you write with a very young appearing font.

Yterbium 82

I was apparently born very young, you write with a very young appearing font.

Interstellar Ramjet Scoop

I was apparently born very young, you write with a very young appearing font.

Les Chattes Parties 93

Thanks for the thoughts on all topics. Responses elsewhere answer the same points raised in your com

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

Ah the local Tip, the happy holiday hunting ground of my youth. I appreciated the many comments, but there seems nothing in need of a reply.

Passing strange that I received two copies of your newsletter this mailing?

Last Minute Musings

Ah the local Tip, the happy holiday hunting ground of my youth. I appreciated the many comments, but there seems nothing in need of a reply. Passing strange that I received two copies of your newsletter this mailing?

Bookmark #11

Like the woodwork on the front cover, some day soon I'm going to make my own trebuchet and an 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!

Necessity 80

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?

The missing fragment, was to the effect that all the Passey cousins (my mum's relatives) had come down with Measles, very much pre-immunisation. **On Olive Dickenson**, the putative NZ source of genealogical knowledge about Captain Cook's descendants, the Captain Cook link came up briefly during a conversation with a member of the Mormon side of the extended family, so there might yet be something to it after all, a Cook cousin or grandfather or something.

BRG 53

Ah the local Tip, the happy holiday hunting ground of my youth. I appreciated the many comments, but there seems nothing in need of a reply. Passing strange that I received two copies of your newsletter this mailing?

Kingdom of the Bland

The plaques were appreciated, even though I didn't get to hand them out in person (or deliver the speech on my mum to an Audience. That

weekend Lake Macquarie was flooded the camp site's internal roads were under water, the power out, total catastrophe etc. Each **Plaque** came with a year of birth penny, I hope to do more of them as birthdays and anniversaries permit.

From the Lair of the Lynx 45

Funny you should mention that. On the whole, given recent experiences I too would MUCH prefer to do these speeches with the

Panopticon 46

Funny you should mention that. On the whole, given recent experiences I too would MUCH prefer to do these speeches with the person present, rather than posthumously!

Arbitrariness - 5

Yeah, **Star Trek**. As much as I can see the down side of being a trekker would have to be fairly mild at most, beyond looking a little goofy. **The Freecons** are what the Freecons are. This years will be a refining of a formula that I plan to try to repeat year in and year out, rather than discarding it and moving to a 'higher' form of SF convention. I'm looking forward to a 'clear' year, when I can assemble the bits for a Sydney Freecon over 9 or 10 months rather than a ghod awful rush over two and a bit. When I was younger I had a friend who served up this strange dark stuff, a cola cordial. It was years before I figured out that this stuff was supposed to be similar to '**Coke-A-Cola**'. It could be the brutality of the CO2 from carbonation, or the acidity of it and the phosphoric acid in the stuff. There are colas that I will drink, usually 'flat', but flat 'Coke-A-Cola' just doesn't do it for me either.

Tumbleweed Collection

Funny you should mention that. On the whole, given recent experiences I too would MUCH prefer to do these speeches with the

Land of 10,000 sub-prime Loans

I hope that your bank job is not greatly affected by the US sub-prime loan melt down.

As you will read in this issue, **the Transplant** did not go well. The family get together did not take place, and then a bare few months later the family was called together by my brother's funeral. It wasn't a wussy little '**Brush Fire**', it was a real Aussie Bush Fire, a sort of Dresden in Arcadia type of thing. The meaning of the missing Fragment issue is covered in my response to Necessity 77. **Mystique** passed her 15th birthday without incident. We drove home to Sydney through even more bad weather, so her sleeping arrangements were undisrupted. **All Americans do look like Trekkers**, sadly this is not a joke at all. Sorry to let the secret out of the bag, that's

why Australians watch so much US TV, it's a scream!

Ping!

Thanks for the thoughts on both topics.

Sparrowgrass and Battlewings 6

Funny you should mention that. On the

Sparrowgrass and Battlewings 7

whole, given recent experiences I too would MUCH prefer to do these speeches with the

You really Kwow Your home

Funny you should mention that. On the whole, given recent experiences I too would MUCH prefer to do these speeches with the

The Unfortunate Rhinos

I was apparently born very young, you write with a very young appearing font.

OZ SF fan

I was apparently born very young, you write with a very young appearing font.

ANZAPA 770

I was apparently born very young, you write with a very young appearing font.

Yterbium 82

I was apparently born very young, you write with a very young appearing font.

Interstellar Ramjet Scoop

I was apparently born very young, you write with a very young appearing font.

Les Chattes Parties 93

Thanks for the thoughts on all topics. Responses elsewhere answer the same points raised in your comment

Blue Pages

Science
Fiction
MEETINGS

Notes from Sydney's June, July & August SF&F meetings of 2008.

**Notes from the April 19, 2008
joint JASA (Jane Austen) and
Kipling Society meeting**

Present were: a full house, about 90 people, mostly retired but some Uni aged women as well. I.e. you could meet a nice literary fem And her Grand parents over tea and cakes afterwards.

MC – Susanah Middleton

Guest Speaker – **Harry Rickitts**, the Author of a Kipling Biography and a NZ Academic, born in the UK.

- I arrived in time for a 'House Captains' style rundown of Society news. Apparently the powers of Persuasion, are not to be underestimated, with an overfull house of bookings for their annual study weekend that will discuss this book.

- Encountered John August who is moving in Kipling circles now?

- Copies of the Guest speaker's book were on order (delivery postponed by mishaps) from Paul McDonald, proprietor of the Children's Bookshop. You could get a bookplate signed if you ordered a book for later delivery.

- The JASA Regency fair had been flooded with second hand books, suggestions were

made to hold back any more lower quality ones?

- A bus trip to Newcastle was being organised, to attend a Jane Austin inspired theatrical production.

- A first Edition copy of 'Emma' was up for Auction, 50,000 pound reserve, higher bids anyone!

Harry Rickitts, speaks on Jane Austin and Rudyard Kipling, Rudyard Kipling as Jane Austin 'heir'.

There is a NZ related Rudyard Kipling story Discussed Jane Austin and Rudyard Kipling connections

Discussed recent Jane Austen TV and movie adaptations, some approvingly, such as 'Clueless', others passionately disliked (ie not only SF readers complain about the mixed outcome of transitions from book / short Story to Movie

RK's works follow Austen in that they have a romantic but tough view of English Heritage, more critical in later works?

Some JA references in early verse works but also flickers of Austinian irony in narrator's voice?

Page 1

Wrote 'plain tales

Three stories stand out, Mary Postgater, The Gardiner and the Janites

Page 2

Page 3

Page 4

Speakand Rudyard Kipling t 'ski and Tim Martin.

Discussion of Temeraire by **Naomi Novic** and Company of the Dead by **David Kowalski**

Conclusion – It is worth going to these meetings even if only to act as a recorder in order to see the same enthusiasm that we true SF fans have is shared by fans of other types of books. Also, to contemplate the depth that some readers can find in some books also encourages me to pick and choose a few more to add to my 'must read sometime'

midden.

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 From the Infinitas Bookshop SF&F Book Review discussion meeting held on Thursday June 19, 2008

Present were; April, Julie Anne, Mark, Garry Dalrymple and Tim Martin

Both books to be discussed tonight were Fantasy they were:

ISBN 0-575-07786-7, **The Blade itself**, by **Joe Abercrombie (UK) © 2006, 560 pages**

and **Wicked**, by **Gregory McGuire (US) © 1996, 406 pages**

The Blade itself,

Rather a lot more was said / time spent on this book than on 'Wicked' and is probably an accurate measure of the merit of the respective books.

The Story in 'The Blade itself' is slow to get started or to make sense as a coherent piece as the three main characters are presented. Partly this is because unlike in a JRR Tolkien book, where you pick up the important background details on the way, in this book the background is front loaded and continuous revelations about the characters / setting cause you to re-think about on whose 'side' your sympathies lay. You even develop an emotional attachment to these characters, before you realize what appalling people they are!

From someone who read ahead (this is book one of a series) the Torturer comes into his own in the second book.

There are quite a few Women characters in this story, they are all strong characters, but they are also all 'Bad' Women. Possibly this book is grittily 'Fantasy Noir' or an accurate

account of what surviving women would have to be like in a realistic Quest Fantasy?

Comment on the Fight Scenes was that they were well thought out and that the writer really does know about hand to hand combat. While fighting there is even an inner dialogue that makes sense!

A negative point raised was of the repetition of comment on the pain of torture, and that scenes are frequently re-stated to give the differing views of the major characters. Logan the Berserker, two characters in one, emerges as a favourite.

Does the world of the story as described engage the reader, is it self consistent?

'The Blade itself' features a good narrative momentum, as three out of the four readers of the first book have gone on to read the subsequent books in the series – Praise enough? This book however is not really a complete story, it really does conclude in book two (that's a commitment to an 1100 page read!). The third book in the series is quite a different story though, although to get that far, three 500 plus page books is about twice the reading of The Lord of the Rings (six books)?

Message of the book – NEVER disturb a Mage's bath time routine – Never!

The point of the book is that 'real' War is far from being a glorious adventure! Afterwards, comments were made to the effect that the readers had deep misgivings about the idea of children in combat, as depicted in the soon to be released 'Prince Caspian' movie, as instalment of CS Lewis' 'the Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe' story.

All three books were published almost simultaneously, leading to suggestions of a 'Sultans of Swing' type eruption out of nowhere of this writer as a new talent, however, as the writer of these books is also a Movie editor and is presumably used to chopping and changing other people's stories for maximum impact, the tight flow of the story is therefore quite explicable. The readers of 'The Blade itself' could easily see the book re-interpreted as a series of movies (three?).

Wicked,

About the book – L Frank Baum is famous for the two 'Oz' books that most people are aware of, but this there were about Forty 'Oz'

books in the end, a franchise that was worked to death? Wicked is a Story set in the World of the Oz books but it takes a very different view of the characters and institutions to L Frank Baum. Also, this was the very first book to be recorded as reviewed by the Lambda Bookshop's book review meeting – passing strange? If you are interested in critical reading of SF and Fantasy books I would recommend that you have a look at the list of books reviewed by this group. The 'Reviews' posted to their website read like a study guide / points to notice when reading and are quite helpful and informative irrespective of GLTG viewpoint in some of the books selected. The Author has also revisited two other folklore / Fantasy, stories, i.e. Cinderella (with his Confessions of an Ugly Stepsister) and Snow White (his Mirror Mirror). The sequel to 'Wicked' is called 'Son of a Witch', and it was published 2006.

Like The Wizard of Oz this story has gone from being a book to a Musical!, and consequently the comments on the two different treatments of the story were mixed up and intermingled in the Review that I read, Surrender Dorothy by **Tony Buchsbaum** – <http://januarymagazine.com/SSF/wicked.html>

Reader's report - The book is a prequel to The Wizard of Oz and it explains how the events depicted in that book Really came to happen, i.e. it gives The story of the 'Wicked Witches' from their point of view. The main character in Wicked; is the green Witch in this book is named as 'Elphaba' (from L Frank Baum, geddit?), a minor and off stage character in L Frank Baum's 'The Wizard of Oz' story. It covers her College life, as a 'Green Activist'. A rather different school experience to that of Harry Potter et al at Hogwarts? She is apparently a dissident from the rule of 'The Wizard'. One complaint against this book is that there is too much odd Sex described. Beyond prudery a 'Yuk!' factor disturbed several reader's enjoyment of the rest of the book. Was this an attempt to invert the 'cutesy-ness' of Frank Baum's OZ'? Otherwise the book was enjoyed by those who read it. Dunno.

The 'message' of this book - is that 'Wickedness' really is in the eye of the beholder. The Facts are the same as in 'Oz'

but if you read 'Wicked' you might find yourself discovering that there is a different point of view as to who is 'Good' and who is 'Bad', so perhaps this is not a book for 'Friends of Dorothy'?

© Garry P Dalrymple, June 2008

Garry's notes of the Sydney Futurian Meeting of Friday June 20, 2008

Topic: Memorable Weapons, Weird, Magical Opportune and Technological in SF Stories

Present were: Garry Dalrymple, Diane Fox, John Fox and Kevin McKern.

Contributing Virtual Futurians; Donna Corbin Dan McCarthy (NZ), and Paul Myers

SF & F News of June 2008

GD - I Attended the **Sydney Writer's Festival** SF events – Both of them! At Blacktown (three SF&F Writers) and at Paddington (1984 relay read), notes taken which will appear in my next TBS&E newsletter?

- **Supernova** this weekend at Homebush. Will there be a book / Author's corner this year
- I'm hosting a 'Mostly Futurians' Dinner / Worldcon room party at a secret location on Saturday August 9. I seem to have about a dozen starters already!

- I'm revising the Paradox Auction Books list each month, last version up was as of June 2, 2008

- I'm trying to organise ALL the accounts of past Sydney Futurian Meetings, 1996 to 2008 (mine, **David Bofinger's**, **Ian Woolf/Peter Eisler** and **Ron Clarke's**?) so that text or links to these can be put up on the Futurian Website.

- I am aware of two Short Story competition entries to date (three Authors involved!).

- There was an (annual) Teaching 'The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe' **CS Lewis** Symposium and general Sydney Anglican love-fest in Sydney last month, cunningly planned to coincide with the release of the 'Prince Caspian' movie?

- I've got a 'new' dog! Seven years old **Forever Amber** (named after a banned book!) joins her Grandmother Mystique at Eulabah Avenue.

- I think there was a new release (Non-**Tom Cruise**) SF themed movie a week ago, blink and you miss it distribution.

- **John August** may or may not be reading Poetry at a future meeting of the Australian Kipling Society?

DF – The Arctic is melting faster than previously anticipated

- Exhaustion of Planetary resources of the element Phosphorus (essential to many biological processes) is anticipated, too much running off the land into the sea (No SF stories about this that I can recall).

- The lower reaches of the Murray Darling river system is cactus, lifeless, acid swamps smelling of sulphurous stench?

JF – Went to Canberra on a course for a few days, during which he conspicuously failed to make any contact with Canberra SF&F fans. Spent some time exploring the delights of Fyshwick (explored a mail order book repository actually).

K. McK – it much worried about Oil and the consequences of it's current high price. This lead to a discussion about the consequences of living with high Oil prices. Doom and Gloom Economic downturn or an acceleration of the use of renewable and sustainable energy sources leading to an eco and economic utopia?

Recent Science Fictional Science News

- Plasma powered Frisbie /Flying Saucer invented – well sort of

- The Phoenix Polar explorer landed on Mars (and what aren't we being shown or told?), pictures of Ice, testing of Soil etc.

Recent SF / Sci-Fi on TV

- SG Atlantis (7) is back – ho hum.

- New episodes of Futurama are back on air

- Some Japanese Movies and Animation on SBS.

- 'Silent Running' turned up on ABC TV a few nights ago.
- Doctor Who is due back on ABC 1 next weekend (I think)

Discussion of the topic:
Memorable Weapons, Weird, Magical Opportune and Technological in SF Stories

Science Fictionally Powered (ful) Weapons – of Planet Destroying power, personal Weapons using SF Science powers or the use of SF nal technology as a source of weapons

- The 'Death Star', Robot and Clone armies in Starwars
 - All those clever devices created by 'Q' (or similar) in James Bond, Get Smart and The Avengers adventures.
 - The Disassociation gun in Blake's Seven, 'marked' objects can be dialled into oblivion at the flick of a switch any time after being marked
 - The Boomerang shaped projectile firing Trifid Gun in The Day of the Trifid
 - The 'Orgasmatron' in Barbarella
 - Dr Who and his Sonic screwdriver
 - Also latterly Sarah Jane's sonic lipstick! - Some 'weapons' are defensive
 - Dr Who's K9 - every robotic dog should have a laser muzzle
 - Zaaphod Beetlebrox's defensive sunglasses in HHGTTG!
 - Ben 10 - Omnitrix which is definitely a weapon
 - The transducer from Rocky Horror Picture Show
 - The Retro weaponry of 'Firefly / Serenity', six shooters in Space!
 - The Nude Bomb in the earlier Get Smart Movie
 - Space Battle Scenes, with and without Sound!
 - Killer or Assassin Androids, too many to mention them all but the Girl bombs in 'Dr Goldfarb and the Bikini Machine', were memorable, girlfriend bombs!
 - The doctrine of MAD. Mutually Assured Destruction which lead to the movie 'Dr Strangelove'.
- The Earth germs in 'The War of The Worlds' by **H. G. Wells**, microbes achieve what

modern weaponry fails to do against the Martian War machines and their heat rays.

Mistakes or inadvertent uses of SF Technology / Powers leading to an unplanned effect capable of being used by the resourceful as a weapon at some point

- The Genesis device in Star Trek a device capable of 're-writing' a planet into an Eden, over bare rock or a populated Planet?
- Home Teleport booths, intended for home delivery of Pizza etc. quickly turn to a method of terrorism, dial up and send a Nuke without borders?

Simulated Weapons

- **Philip K. Dick's** Pinball Machine – an Arcade game that is connected to real weapons in real time, unlike the simulations in Last Starfighter and **Orson Scot Card's** book Alvin Something .
- The Corbomite manoeuvre in Star Trek, the bluff of a weapon too powerful to use except under suicidal circumstances.
- The Star Trek crew stumbles on a world at war with its neighbour. Battles are simulated by computer with simulated casualties walking into disintegrator booths on request.

Ancient Weapons

Most SF civilisation leave behind fearsome weapons?

Often these same weapons are what finished off the civilisation.

In 'First Men On Venus' human arrive at a Hiroshima like state of devastation, seems the Venusians were planning to 'off' the Earthlings, but their technology backfired first! The Berserkers, from **Fred Saberhagen's** series of books, giant planet sterilising 'anti life' machines that humanity encounters in deep space.

Books / Movies with lots of Weapons

From **Frank Herbert's** Dune series many weapons are encountered:

- 'The Voice' in Dune as wielded by Paul Atreides
- The hovering assassin Drone left behind by the Harkonnens

- The use of personal shields rendering projectile weapons useless and re-inventing hand to hand combat skills with bladed weapons
- Household Atomics, ancient nukes held mostly as prestige items, not intended to be used in usual inter house warfare, but Paul Atreides used his to break down the barrier wall during the Sandstorm
- Use of natural things as Weapons, The Sand worms as 'stealth' transport, the Storm as cover etc
- Control of the Spice as an economic weapon and therefore Navigators guild Transport
- The Bene Gesserit faith?
- Dwolves to guard the palace?

In **Alistaire Reynolds** Revelation Space series, in the background there are Machine intelligences at work, left over from an ancient War involving factions with different views on the necessity of pruning the garden of life i.e. Friendly or unfriendly AI Angels? The series also features the **Co-joiners**, intelligent weapons that you have to convince that your cause is just. Different from the Planet destroying bombs of Dark Star, where the acting captain of the ship has to convince a bomb that has failed to drop NOT to explode while still attached to the space ship.

Dan McCarthy (NZ) said (in Panopticon No. 48) The 'Lazy Gun' in **Ian M Bank's** Against a Dark Backgr'ound. It is described as an instrument of awesome and unpredictable destructive power and "the only Weapon ever made to have a sense of humour".

Star Trek – The futility of an arms race as Klingons and the Federation arm separate 'primitive' tribes on a Planet. The Diamonds, Bamboo, coal Saltpeter and Sulphur 'gun' that Kirk uses to defeat the Dinosaur Starship Captain before showing mercy. The inevitable 'Phasors' (set on stun?). The Corbomite manoeuvre, the bluff of a weapon too powerful to use except under suicidal circumstances.

Star Gate – power staffs and 'zat' guns vs high velocity lead much debate about which is better, terrestrial or Go'uld derived weapons?

Star Wars – Light Sabres (single and double). The Death Star, Clone and Robot Armies. The Force, powerful and available for use for good or bad purposes.

The end absolutely everything bomb from Beneath the Planet of the Apes, the Cobalt Bomb.

Fantasy Weapons

Charms and other items of great power, intrinsic or as 'keys' to greater spooky powers. Some of the spells in "Harry Potter" – e.g. the one used by Voldermort to kill Harry's parents!
- The Will & the Word from the Belgariad
- Jimmy's Flute from HR Puff'n'Stuff

Next month's meeting will be on Friday July 18, 2008, and the topic is, Humour in SF & F Stories

© G. Dalrymple, June 2008

Garry's notes of the Sydney Futurian Meeting of Friday July 18, 2008

Topic: Humour in SF Stories

Present were: Garry Dalrymple, Diane Fox, John Fox, Kevin McKern, Anne Rankins and Susan Smith.

Contributing virtual Futurians – Simon Hayes and Paolo Rech

Apologies received from Stephen Bingle (whose father is currently very unwell)

Before the meeting

As I arrived at the UTS well before 6 pm (Pilgrim Time) I had time to look around the place and in the absence of the usual swarms of UTS students I discovered that we are not the only informal meeting taking place in the foyer on Friday nights. A group of the

Electronic gamers were meeting, sans technology and the group of 'older guys' I have noticed in the past turned out to be 'Action for Public Transport'. I stopped long enough to have a conversation with them and to outline my ideas for the Railway to lease fold up bicycles to seasonal ticket holders. They considered this and suggested that in addition stations should also have a rack of 'non-fold up' bikes available, swipe your ticket / Id tag to release a bike, pay your dollar etc. They seem to be an interesting and useful group of people.

Before we started the Futurian meeting I noticed a group of Students faffing around with a model sculpture, in the space that had held the Danish Bikes display last month. Clearly they were trying to figure out how and where the full scale version could be fitted in. I sidled up to the apparent maximum leader of the group and suggested in the usual patronising way that. 'What you kids really need is a measuring tape', paused for effect, then offered to go fetch them one. I returned moments later with two, mine and Sue Smith's. They seemed quite grateful.

Uni students these days! Could you imagine any sensible SF fan of our age leaving the house for uni without a tape measure, screw driver set, laser pointer and magnetic doover picker up-er?

SF & F News for July 2008

GD – I welcome the return of Susan Smith from WA. Sue attended Futurian meetings a few years back.

- I'm currently reading **John Birmingham's** World War 2.2 and 2.3 novels.

- Missed out on the (nearly) monthly **Sydney Dr Who Sunday party** (again), guess I'll just have to wait until it goes free to air on ABC 1

- Meet Dave the movie currently playing, Aliens, Spaceship and a Robot so I guess it has to be a Science Fiction movie then?

- The X-Files Movie will be out this month

- Preparation and planning for the 'Mostly Futurians' Dinner / Worldcon room party at a secret location on Saturday August 9 proceeds. With about twenty starters to date it will probably be bigger than the 1999 pre-Worldcon Futurians meeting (like holding a Freecon in my own backyard?) Carpentry

and other associated work for this proceeds amid the prevailing mood of pilgrimage in Sydney at the moment. Now what wood / nails would Jesus use?

DF – Currently reading books on decadence and Video Game Art.

- Moved to wear Black for the duration of Sydney's current McHappy McPilgrimagathon week.

- Lots of nice books noticed / bought at the Dymocks \$5 sale

JF – Currently reading **Bob Carr's** book 'Thought Lines' which is seemingly much influenced by the writings of **Marcus Aurealis**, Pagan Roman emperor and Spec Fiction magazine. Also reading the Australian version (after reading the UK original) 'Dangerous Book for Boys'.

KMcK – Discovered a website organised by people who love SF&F but are not as respecting of intellectual property. This site offers for a single click download (of biblical proportions!) about 13,000 SF books! These are books that have been scanned by individuals from paper books and collated. The file is eccentrically organised A to Z, under the writer's given name! Amazing and Appalling!

AR – Currently reading **Mary Gentle's 1610**, some discussion as to whether this is straight history, Flashman like historical Fantasy purporting to tell 'what really happened' or 'Wainscotting Fiction'.

- Has been discovering a lot of SF books to read at the Customs house (City of Sydney) Library. Approaching the task systematically she started by visited the Galaxy Bookshop to draw up an A to Z listing of SF&F authors, then using this as a guide started looking at the (all genres of Fiction mixed in) shelves of the Customs house Library.

SS – The 'I' shop opens in Sydney, Iphones, Ipods and much more promising 'Nerdvana'. Susan asks that no-one mention 'Harry Potter' in her presence. Susan arrived dressed in the height of coal field industrial chic as she is currently working near Newcastle on a project that will reduce Indonesia's Carbon footprint.

Recent Science Fictional Science News

- The Deep impact Asteroid impactor mission has been re-named, the usual near acronym

to make a name, or possibly to that of a less troubling movie?

- Plasma powered Frisbie /Flying Saucer invented – well sort of, if it works.
- The Phoenix Polar explorer landed on Mars (and what aren't we being shown or told?), pictures of Ice, testing of Soil etc.
- I've had recent correspondence about Cancer treatment using Rose Bengal, an application rather close at hand at my place

Recent SF / Sci-Fi on TV

- Doctor Who is back on ABC 1 on Sunday nights!
- SG Atlantis (7) is still going on and on.....
- Silver Sun (7) on weekday afternoons (used as sacrificial Aust content filler?)
- New episodes of Futurama (10) are back on air
- Not quite Free to Air, **Joss Whedon's** 'Dr Horrible's Sing along Blog', about a would-be Super Anti-Hero evil villain's trials and tribulations as he tries to make the grade and earn admission to the league of evil. Very Good

Discussion of the topic:

Humour in SF Stories

Opinion - **Comedic and SF genre writing frequently have in common inversions of the familiar, i.e. Comedy's premise - 'Wouldn't it be funny if** and **SF's related premise 'What if**

In preparing for this month's topic I've looked up the usual sources and there doesn't seem to be a consolidated humorous SF reference, in spite of many writer's / stories / Movies each individually being described as both SF and Humorous – passing Strange?

Simon Haynes' reply to '*Would you say that an authentically Australian voice in SF&F is more likely to be irreverent / humorous or would an Australian voice in SF&F be more likely to feature a considered outsider's perspective of the faults and fallacies of the prevailing mainstream?*'

- Both. Gags & Satire all mixed in together - stick it to The Man and make the readers

laugh.

What was your experience in putting together and promoting the Hal Spacejock series of books or other stories?

- Publishers weren't interested in genre humour. SF doesn't sell as well as fantasy in the first place, and when you add humour to it you're (apparently) narrowing down your audience to the three dozen people who enjoy Fawlty Towers, Red Dwarf, HHGTTG, Minder, etc, etc, etc.

Are there some other reliably humorous Australian SF writers you would be prepared to suggest?

- Never mind Australian, there are hardly any English-speaking humorous SF writers, and if they're smart they've already switched to Fantasy trilogies. The Hal Spacejock books only got into print because **Fremantle Press** was willing to take a chance. Most of the bigger publishers don't seem to be able to do that, despite their bigger budgets. On the plus side, publishing with FP means I have the luxury of building an audience over time, which is something else the big publishers don't seem to be able to do any more. Cheers,

Simon

Paolo Rech says - In everything I've read by **Robert Sheckley** I've found something "funny", and **John Wyndham's** short stories (collected in the Anthology 'Jizzle'). I also remember seeing some humorous or satirical or ironic stories on Outer Limits that contain elements of "black humour". An interest in these sometime prompted me to find or look up the original short story on which they were based.

Books, Movies and TV

Sci-Fi Movies do not have to be taken seriously, so they have more permission to be Comedy? The earliest movie I could identify was 'Just Imagine' a **Musical** about a 1930's ordinary man of the time (a Swedish immigrant!) who is re-animated in the unbelievably distant future, 1980, and then left to fend for himself! Set on Earth and human populated Mars, where everybody has an identical looking evil twin (first appearance of the evil twin phenomena, or a doppelganger ancient folk myth?) Rather close to the plot of the comic SF cartoon Futurama?

Dark Star – College dorm surfer grunge Dr Strangelove Space Opera?

Parodies (of SF genre films)

- Both Space Balls by **Mel Brooks** and the Blue Harvest episode of Family Guy are parodies of Starwars, as is the Fan made 'Hardware Wars' which turns household appliances into heroes?
- Galaxy Quest, a parody of Sci-Fi convention guests of honour, that doesn't ridicule Sci-Fi fans!
- Get Smart, and The Man from Uncle parody of the world of James bond et al.

Intentionally funny – but to what point, serious comment or amusement?

- The UK TV series 'Hyperdrive', six episodes, some better than others.
- The UK TV series 'Red Dwarf', multiple series, the heir to the HHGTTG tradition?
- Dark Star, Hippy Surfers in Space with an intelligent bomb that has to be persuaded not to detonate (and a beach ball alien on the loose!)
- Some Twilight Zone episodes have wry / humorous endings

Situation Comedies with a SF taste

- It's about Time', where Astronauts, just like in 'The Planet of the Apes', or influenced by 'The Flintstones' and 'Time Tunnel', inadvertently travel in time, but this time back to human Caveman times. Played for laughs rather than much SF.
- My Favourite Martian well before ET or ID4! Getting along in 1950s America with a Martian in the household. Comedic situations abound, compare this with the wisecracking furry hand puppet in ALF a generation later, or Third Rock From the Sun and Mork and Mindy.
- Quantum Leap, funny enough just for the cross dressing episodes as the lost in time, just like in 'The Time tunnel' character inhabits the bodies of ancestors and descendants as he bounces back and forth in time.
- Lost In Space, a wagon train in Space adventure taken over by **Dr Zachary Smith** at nearly every turn!
- Quark, an American series about the adventures of the crew of o Space Sanitation ship, a Spock like plant as a second officer, a

hermaphrodite officer with duelling male/female personalities, a pair of cloned girl grew members. Lots of fun! Sparked discussion of the 'Canadian SF program', i.e. American's don't do Irony or humour that well in a SF / Sci-Fi setting, when you see one that does work the assumption is that it was written / acted / directed by Canadians (i.e. Classic Star Trek?)

Satire Vs Comedy

- i. e. **Terry Pratchett's** Discworld series (satire of everything conceivable) Vs the episodes of the Red Dwarf series, SF adventures that are frequently funny.
- The Movie Dr Strangelove, is a parody of the political establishment of the time as well as the Nuclear threat? For Amusement or for political change?
- Some episodes of Dr Who were played for laughs (**Sylvester McCoy's** Doctor, and to a lesser degree the **Patrick Troughton** one?).
- Where would you place **Douglas Addams'** Dirk Gently series? Hichikers Guide To The Galaxy was absurdist and funny SF, the Dirk Gently stories are more absurdist but less Science Fictional?

But 'Animal Farm' by **George Orwell** and **Aldous Huxley's** 'Brave New World' are each SF&F stories and each is the writer's satire on the state of the world at the time or the foreseeable future, superficially funny, but not really that funny if you pause long enough to think through the message of the book.

Mary Gentle's book ?title? which gives an Orc's eye view of the LOTR experience.

Meanings that change over time

Mark Twain's, A Connecticut Yank in the Court of King Arthur, was at the time a reproach of the high Victorian 'Good old Days' stories then popular, a World in reality not much more welcoming than his own slave era American South, also a send up of the Yankee can-do ethos of the times?

Similarly **Dean Swift's** Gulliver's Travels would have had more satirical 'bite' and humour than it has to present day readers, **Lewis Carroll's** two Alice books (Alice in Wonderland and Alice beyond the looking glass) were also more pointed reading to the Author's chums, Victorian Oxford dons with a taste for matters philosophical?

Get Smart (the original) Sci-Fi secret service

played for laughs Vs the at times self satirising **Roger Moore's James Bond** outings. Most of the Gojira franchise big monster movies, funny to our eyes now.

Unintentionally funny?

- There are several categories of really Bad Writing which are saluted monthly in **David Langford's Ansible** as 'Thog's Master Class' citations, such as overly florid descriptions.
- Most of the Gojira franchise big monster movies, funny to our eyes now.
- 'Invasion of the Killer Tomatoes' and 'Plan 9 from Outer Space', intentionally funny or just ended up that way?

Other sorts of funny SF can include:

- **Slash Fanfic?**
- **The Overly Camp**, Blakes Seven, the BW Aust TV Sci-Fi TV show The Phoenix Five
- **Dated Explanations** or future Scientific 'Facts' that turned out to be really wrong
- **Anachronistic Social conventions** of the time carried on into the Future
- Self important literary commentator's '**informed speculation**' on the nature of SF and SF fans that is just **so** wide of the mark as to be funny to genre readers.

Some reliably funny SF writers

The Hitch Hiker's Guide to The Galaxy by **Douglas Addams**. More curious the more you think about it, a parody of the many back backer / Hippy Tripper tourist guides to out of the way and hard to get to places that proliferated in the 1980s, before terrorism became Global. In Australia it was the record played incessantly on Radio, then the book, then the (UK) TV miniseries then the inferior (US) movie.

The late **Robert Asprin's** Mythconceptions series (Fantasy?)

Harry Harrison's Stainless Steel Rat and Bill the Galactic Hero stories.

Some **Larry Niven** books/stories. Callahan's Cross time Saloon stories by **Spider Robinson**, puns and 'Feg Hoots' frequent. Is punning in stories mostly a SF genre illness?

Eric Frank Russell's 'Space Willies', where Alien Space invaders are spooked into capitulation by a fear of the hostility of humanity's imaginary friends, the Willies.

Who Goes There, by **Bob Shaw**.

Roland Charles Wagner (French) – no idea what he wrote.

Comic SF Anthologies

Found two, the 1953 'Science Fiction Carnival' edited by **Frederic Brown** and **Mack Reynolds**, and the more recent (current?) 'Amityville House of Pancakes Vol 3', an annual Anthology of humourous SF?

An Anthology of humourous short stories in 'The Best Laid Schemes'.

Some Local flavour

- Tongue in cheek Speculative Fiction is an Australian characteristic Yes / No?
- **Chuck McKenzie's** 'Worlds Apart', a good story let down by patchy promotion? A promising series cut off after the first book? Chuck also edited Austr Aliens an anthology of humourous SF&F?
- Some **A Bert Chandler** stories are played for laughs
- **Simon Haynes'** Hal Space Jack, the humourous adventures of a hero in Space

Falling short of the mark?

SF that wasn't really that funny

Isaac Asimov (who could do outrageously funny and rude limericks) put a major effort into trying to write a funny SF Story, (Buy Jupiter?) but it didn't really work.

Isaac Asimov's story about Attorney's at law on Mars, one partner swallows all of a vial of a super dooper new explosive mix, fat bloke is going to explode as is the Martian city dome's waste disposal system! Not the biggest explosion in the history of Mars, but sure to be the most disgusting!

L Ron Hubbard's Invasion Earth series. Satire done with too heavy a hand / too thick a brush? I didn't find it that funny although I could see that humour was being attempted.

Brian Herbert's Sudanna Sudanna, was probably intended as a sociological satire that I just found to be a tiresome effort to read, an entire Asteroid / World (orbiting the Planet Sudanna?) set up as a sociological experiment, only the alien white coated clipboard holders had left the scene ages ago without leaving much indication of what the experiment was about.

Next month's meeting will be on Friday August 15, 2008, and the Topic is: SF& F Stories involving Terra-forming

© G. Dalrymple, July 2008

Book Reviews

ISSN 1446-781X
'Andromeda Spaceways Inflight Magazine' Issue number 24, (Australian Speculative Fiction) 11 Short Stories, Book reviews, poetry and Interviews, Edited by **Edwina Harvey**, 96 pages, © 2006.

To be honest I haven't read an ASIM for a long time. When books by known SF Authors abound I seldom find the need to try a mixed bag of Authors, some of whom will be writing in a genre that I just do not 'get', although this does not stop me recommending ASIM to anyone who asks about Australian Science Fiction or Fantasy writing. It comes out Six times a year, about 100 pages each issue and as such it probably is the closest thing to an Australian Speculative Fiction zeitgeist. Would that it could be a Science Fiction Only magazine, but that at this time it seems to be financially unlikely that we will ever see an as regular Australian SF magazine as successful as ASIM is to date.

Short Stories
Wash and Wear by **Brian Tillotson USA** Story review

Poet Warrior by **Paul Woodlin China** A philosophical warrior besieging a castle is given a choice, Enlightenment or Duty? He chooses Enlightenment and then death with honour rather than turning from duty. Not the sort of stuff I'm into, but I can see that it is fairly well done.

The Beast's Apprentice by **Marissa Lingen USA** An elaborate re-telling of the less familiar Beauty and The Beast (European) fairy tale as a quest. No doubt in other hands this material could have been stretched out into thick Fantasy Quest novel or two.

Bones by **Stephabe Campesi Aust** A skeleton discovered in the bathroom? How Sydney Housing Commission! This skeleton re-fleashes gradually over the duration of the story. Flatmate's antics seem to be the main burden of the story, what was it all about, why was it there, why was it re-fleshing? Possibly I just did not pick up on some Horror / Spec Fiction tropes shorthand phrases at some point.

Spotting Starwhales by **Andre Oosterman Bali** Story review

The Cat Story by **Anna Tambour Aust** Story review

Tarans by **Simon Brown NSW** Story review

The Coming of the Space Craw by **S Hutson Blount US** Story review

Harry, The Wife, and Mrs Robson, Hell's Temptress from Number Six by **Steven Pirie UK** Story review

The Second Hand Bookshop of Al Hazred by **Chuck Mckenzie VIC** Story review

Impersonal by **Katherine Woodbury USA** Story review

Poetry – Ugly Fish by **Samantha Henderson USA** Sorry this one just did not work for me (just like the all too long Simian Baseball player story many issues back), snowy Ice Slush and fishery imagery just do not connect in my temperate latitudes mind, i.e. they were a barrier rather than a useful metaphore for carrying this reader to where the poem was heading, which I think was something like Deep Sea fish equals Alien, or something.

Am I too harsh? Is this review too negative? I do not think so, I do not read ASIM that frequently, I picked this issue up at random and must say, with some regret that this is probably the 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!

No ISBN 'Voyager 10, Celebrating the First Decade' A free sneak peek of Voyager 2005 Titles by **Various Writers**, 219 pages, © 2005.

This book is a collection of Seventeen first chapters from the 2005 line up of Voyager SF and Fantasy releases for 2005, on the occasion of Voyager's tenth anniversary. I picked it up to read to give me an overview of SF&F publishing. I would not otherwise be that interested in reading even just bits of mostly Fantasy titles. As these are 2005 releases the twenty Authors mentioned are all by now 'Main Stream' SF&F writers rather than 'First Book' SF&F writers, so the volume is probably a useful survey of the field?

Ascent by **Sean Williams with Shane Dix Aust** Story review

Gene of Isis by **Traci Harding Aust** Story review

Darkwitch Rising by **Sara Douglassn Aust** Story review

Shaman's Crossing by **Robin Hobb USA** Story review

Across the face of the World by **Russell Kirkpatrick NZ** Story review

(about) The Locus Awards by **Jonathan Strahan Aust & Charles Brown USA** Story review

Crystal Gorge by **David and Leigh Eddings USA?** Story review

Warlord by **Jennifer Fallon Aust** Story review

The Innocent Mage by **Karen Miller Aust** Story review

Black Jade by **David Zindell USA** Story review

Quicksilver Zenith by **Stan Nichols USA** Story review

Ancestors of Avalon by **M.Z. Bradley & Diana L.**

Paxton USA Story review

Flight of the Night Hawks by **Raymond E. Feist USA** Story review

Priestess of the White by **Trudi Cavanan Aust** Story review

The Hanging Mountains by **Sean Williams Aust** Story review

Odalesque by **Fiona McIntosh Aust** Story review

Temeraire by **Naomi Novik UK** Story review

ofl must say, with some regret that this is probably the 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!

ISBN 0-671-03306-9

And ISBN 0-671-03306-9

' World War 2.2 and 2.3' by **John Birmingham**, 328 pages, © 1999.

These two books are a 'damned fine read' packed with lots of detail representing a considerable amount of historical research. The natural comparison to make is with Harry Turtledove's World War series. Where the advanced visitors are lizards come to conquer 12th Century Earth with their Advanced technology, resulting in a disturbance of the balance of WW2 and igniting relentless innovation to catch up and surpass the Lizard's technological lead. I would rather compare these books with James Mitchiner's quasi historical fictions, due to the elaborate weaving of a tale using fact and mostly historical figures. Because of this I consider Birmingham's books to be head and shoulders above the usual run of Alternate History / time traveller intervention SF stories as most of these follow the standard plotline of – Visitors arrive intentionally or not at a key point in history, their technology and 'magic bullets' just manage to save the day, history is changed for the some one's idea of the better and all ends well. Birmingham's books are much better than that, as beyond the first book the magic bullets are running out and they have to manage both the manufacture of substitutes and the social upheaval of their modern mores and the application of their technology. In Soviet and Nazi occupied areas, the consequence of

knowledge of 80 years of future history in the hands of tyrants is a sea of blood, with the wholesale extermination of all dissidents and resisters identifiable in post war literature.

Some faults that become apparent – The usual criticism of poorly written Alternate History SF is that of Narrow focus, i.e. 'the War' is Hitler, Stalin, Roosevelt, Tojo, Churchill and one or two minions each as well as a few disposable bit player characters. These books are slightly different. It took me a while to notice that in these books the War is mostly Australia, Hawaii, California and Europe. Most European countries, Hitler's allies who did turn, North Africa, China and India hardly get a mention!

Another fault is the future technology described. It doesn't seem that much advanced on current technology and I fear that this will be the Achilles heel of these otherwise quite good books, real soon they will probably start appearing to be dated.

How we know that John Birmingham isn't really a Science Fiction Writer – During the three books of this series we meet some very significant historical personages and some bit characters flash past with names that you might recognise, however, we do not run into Science Fiction Writers, even though we have one character using 'our time' knowledge to buy up the rights to soon to be huge entertainment figures. What SF writer with contemporary people knocking around in 1940s could resist sweeping up the Isaac Asimov's and Robert Heinlein's of the Golden era of SF, into the story or staging a hit on Elrond Hubbard? I think that Birmingham just doesn't know these giants of SF, or must at least have been ignorant of the Material to hand in Fred Pohl's writings on the New York Futurians.

could resist a with recognisable names than very strong skepticism. As a child much of my out of school reading was UFO books, Astronomy and a group at all!

ISBN 0-671-03306-9 'Cosmic Crashes' (The incredible story of the UFOs that fell to Earth) by **Nicholas Redfern**, 328 pages, © 1999.

I must say, with some regret that this is probably the 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 shelves. 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

Vulgarity & 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 re-considers 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

Traveller's Tales

- **Monday June 2**, Attending the Sydney City Skywatchers meeting I again was able to look in on the people camped under the concrete flyovers of the Harbour Bridge approaches. The undergrowth (Monstera Deliciosa or some sort of perforated Elephant Ear foliage) was sparse but tall and the orange bark chip soil covering looked fresh and newly laid. In the walk from Wynyard Station to the Observatory I sighted only three bedrolls in the area. With some wind and recent rains It can't be a very inviting prospect at this time of year. On the footpath / side of the road I noticed a fair amount of broken bottle glass, more than I can recall seeing lately. I also noticed some areas that had been fenced off, mostly bare and exposed concrete, so I'm not sure whether this is a 'roadway security', anti litter or anti-vagrancy measure.

I will have to try to remember to see what changes the Papal visit / Youth Day brings to this residential precinct as I believe the area will form part of the pilgrimage / processional way.

- **Monday June 23 AM**, during the train ride to Bankstown uniformed Police entered the carriage and did a ticket check (rather than Grey clad 'Transit Officers') the bloke opposite me was given some grief about his ticket less bike. If you travel after 9 am and before some time in the evening you are supposed to buy a ticket for the bike as well as yourself. Mixed signals here, travel before 9 am Full price (person) ticket bike Free, travel after 9 am discount ticket (person) but have to buy a bike ticket! I.e. no encouragement to travel off peak bike assisted. These rules take no account of the fact that 'Sun-at-your-Back' travellers travelling counter to the usual traffic

flow (in to the City in the Morning, Out of the City in the evening) ride in nearly empty carriages, their carriages going out to suburbia to bring another lot into the congested City and through central connections!

- **Monday June 23** PM, took off from work early to get to Campsie and try and buy more of the Dynamo Torches. On the Railway platform there was a Chinese bloke whistling 'Oklahoma', complete with the trills that you get with traditional Chinese Violin based music. Had me stumped for a while, Chinese Oklahoma?

Then it came to me, substitute Prairie for the vast expanse of the grasslands of the Mongolian Steppes and yeah Chinese Oklahoma, with Mongols as 'Indians' and Han Chinese settlers.

- Counted Eighteen Bikes piled up near the bike racks outside Campsie station. With coming and going, this would suggest over twenty people 'Park and Ride' each day at Campsie, in addition to those who carry a bike onto the train.

- **Tuesday June 24**, Entered my usual Carriage, front vestibule second carriage from the front. It smelled of bad perfume and 'Old Wee', went somewhere else, smell localised. Shared a lift up with a person who smelled of bad perfume and 'Old Wee', If you have to mask it you can obviously smell it, so why not do something about it instead of going about all day smelling of bad perfume and 'Old Wee'

- While out walking with A and M one July night, surveying the availability of discarded wood near the stack of flats halfway to Campsie I was buzzed by two African guys on bikes, hooded up against the cold of the night. Passing me they said that my dogs were the type they preferred, i.e. dogs that dig not yak at them (and presumably chase them) I pointed out that these were non-barking African dogs – Basenjis. They both went into their flat, one of them later emerged and cycled round me before going back – Did it to get a second look at Amber & Mystique?

- **Saturday July 12**, 2008, Mother answered the phone, it sounded like another cold call phone call. Mother handed me the phone. It was a bloke looking for an address for an 'Amber Dalrymple'. He wanted to offer her a job! No not my Amber. This Amber Dalrymple studied Ballet, went to Europe to further her studies / career ran out of money, came home, studied law and graduated. The bloke wanted to line her up with a job at

his solicitor's legal practice! He had her father's address / phone number at Kenthurst, but this was no longer connected and as this was a home / business address he feared that the family had met with any number of travails that could have made the family need to move – Death – Bankruptcy.

I explained to the bloke the Senate / House of Reps electoral roll method of identifying home addresses for citizens. I also told him that we had just 'adopted' an Amber Dalrymple of our own.

For Some Time Now my \$5 plastic Digital watch has been hanging off the strap, one of the two steel needle things that hold it on has just gone. I probably have a small drawer of similar dea

Basenjis 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 inseparable 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 Basenjis. A Sydney Winter (wet season) is much dark and wet for Basenjis 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 Basenjis 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 Basenjis 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! Basenjis / 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? Aaaaahh!

Original Fiction Delivery by Grimes

By Garry P Dalrymple

To the sound of my own heavy breathing amplified by a pressure mask I reaching the pressure bulkhead panting. Standing under the Liberty Hall welcome sign, I glance at my wrist band through the fog made by my every breath. It shows that I have covered the 300 metres of the airship's keel walkway in 30 seconds, a new record! The things we do for diversion at 8,000 metres on a cargo Airship on a week long trans-oceanic flight with only ocean and cloud below for days at a stretch.

I'm able to stand let alone sprint in the cold thin air of 8,010 metres, by my wrist readout because of a lung helmet, several layers of cunningly treated fabric which by my own breathing and nano-sized Micro-pores lets out the CO₂, while keeping in the O₂. As it pumps, pre-breathes for the wearer, concentrating the available oxygen into something more easily breathable.

I'm told that it looks like a cross between a World War gas mask and a child's Halloween Darth Vader helmet.

Back behind me now is the 300 metre length of airship's keel, the keel of the Airship Commodore Grimes, Hydrogen cells above and a cargo hold and ballast tanks below, all wrapped in a lattice work of light alloy girders and covered in ice shedding photovoltaic fabric. Not the pride of the fleet, but a working freighter of Rimservice Air Cargo.

While I stand and catch my breath, enjoying the delayed oxygen boost from the mask I reflect that on the passenger versions of the Grimes' sister ships like the Nevil Shute Norway have a round the waist walkway, very nearly the old half mille if its hundred or so passengers cared to do laps.

My breathing is the only sound I can hear. The airship is running silent, each of the fore and aft propellers of the ten electric engine nacelles are currently freewheeling as the ship is being towed by the cables of silk steel running up to silk fabric kites riding the jet stream a few thousand metres above the Airship. The electric engines will be used later, to manoeuvre and drive the airship down to the ground.

Although I'm the only human on board the captain of the Airship Commodore Grimes is a small orange 'black box' called Bert. It manages everything, navigating the airship through three dimensions. Balance and trim. I'm only on board, as human supercargo / landing pilot only as an insurance overflight permission requirement. Rare in this business, this trip's load will require a landing, instead of being lowered down by a thousand or so metres of steel silk cable. Even 100 years after the Hindenberg, civil authorities are sensitive about having an unmanned a 300 metre plus Hydrogen filled electric powered dirigible in their skies.

Apart from this to look forward to, there is a long list daily inspection routine, do a visual check of the nearly indestructible photovoltaic cloth for power robbing tears, check by hand firing the engines, verify water ballast and Vanadium solution charge levels. Later

today the kites will have to be drawn in before we descend under power to the delivery site, unlike the usual delivery practice of lowering deliveries down by a thousand metres of silk steel cable.

Hydrogen cells above swelled, by eye about 90% filled, by my wrist, 87.6 % and as you do, standing breathing concentrated oxygen under several tonnes of inflammable Hydrogen, I glance at the nearest O₂ / H₂ indicator on the walkway by reflex and check that it and my wrist readout are in agreement, nil percent H₂ leakage.

It is a particularly heavy cargo this time, hence the nearly full inflation of the Hydrogen cells needed to lift it. On delivery there will have to be a terrific and costly venting of excess hydrogen, unless of course they have the compressing and storing capacity for H₂ on site. I'm sure that management has factored this into the freight charge.

Up at the top of the Airship to observe and if necessary take over, the kites are ready to be recovered. They go up folded like overly complicated umbrellas, towed up into the jet stream by their own hydrogen balloon, deploy

the hectares of green threaded photovoltaic fabric with a bit of imagination, or if the lung helmet is a bit loose, makes you think re The excess power generated during kite towed flight splitting ballast water and condensation into highly saleable liquid H₂

The cargo for this trip is suspended below the ship's keel by a cradle of silk steel straps as wide as a man's outstretched arms. Looking up from the cargo hold The nearly full Hydrogen cells above attest that this is a particularly heavy cargo. Steadied by the straps is the emptied out body and detached wings of a 2000's era passenger jet. After delivery it is destined for some sort of desert open air aviation museum, a Jurassic Park for dinosaurs of the fossil fuel age I guess. Too big to road or rail from a sea port,

Not for a first time on this trip I think about the cargo, Fancy that, a hundred tonnes or more of heavier than air metal flying at nearly treetop level for landings and take offs carrying hundreds of people with about a tonne of explosive hydrocarbon under each

passenger and with engines that had to go flat
chat just to stop the whole lot falling to earth
with a thud. Who these days would be so
brave?

Far too expensive to fly even for one last time.
Amazing, but they flew!

Original Fiction

Postings from Purgatory

By Garry Dalrymple

As I was walking towards the Pearly gates my first posthumous thoughts were that, 'Perhaps I could have lived a slightly better life', this was before I made it through the Gates, my second was to the effect that who would have thought ever have thought that heavenly clouds would be thick and sticky to have to walk through in issue sandals, clinging to my robes like a brighter sort of sticky bread dough.

Then I stopped at the desk and my first misgivings about an ill spent life returned in full measure with a breathtaking start.

Sitting at the desk and in front of a computer a screen for the customer and a screen for the receptionist was a honest to Ghod devil, with red burnt to black skin, horns and pointy tail, all as advertised.

I realised that up until now I hadn't noticed seeing seen a single Angel.

He was busy typing at a keyboard, his sharp claws clacking on the keys and occasionally getting stuck in the spaces between keys. Under the circumstances I wasn't inclined to hurry him, so I watched as he typed. It looked like he was doing some sort of programming of diabolical complexity. While he was doing this I noticed that he was wearing a name badge that declared that this demon's name was 'Don't blame me I'm just a temp'. He finished working on the software patch and sent it off, a Microsoft acknowledgement briefly flashed on. One of life's little mysteries solved - posthumously!

Back to business the demon apologised for the delay, muttering about 'Multi-tasking'. He briefly explained that out sourcing was more than even 'Global'. He then asked for my Id, looking at my hand, his pointed tail hovering about like a scanner 'Mark of the Beast he asked?', before laboriously typing in my name, clacking claws on keyboard keys etc. before asking 'Religion?'

Thinking quickly I answered 'Universal Life Church?'. The Demon replied, as all the details of my life flashed up on the screen 'A Wise choice', he muttered, but pointing a taloned claw he pointed out 'Mormon' in the final box of the screen, 'Religion'. The Entry even had baptism dates and other details. With a flick of the tail the demon said 'Happens a lot these days', before deleting and correcting the entry. He handed me a small leaflet and waved me on. Mostly it explained that there had been some recent changes in Heaven, Purgatory and Limbo having been replaced by a sort of twelve step program. Walking through clouded glass doors was my first view of the waiting room for heaven and it looked like -

A Call centre! Bland office space spreading out into the distance, with cubicles, terminals and in some cases bakelite look phones at each work station. Not very Old Testament at all! A flashing halo floating over a nearby vacant cubicle indicated what was evidently to be my place of penance.

A few days after my arrival one of my fellow sufferers let me in on the big secret of the place. This secret was a small flyscreened window in the gents. If you jiggled the screen out of the way a bit you could see outside. What you could see was sort of like

Hong Kong, Macau or Las Vegas built on clouds.

This I was told was the site of the old 'Limbo'. And being a site out of the sight of Ghod it had been sold off as excess church property to property developers and re-zoned as an ideal site for Casinos, flesh joints and other 'Iconic' re-developments.

My fellow sufferers were uncertain if this area was now formally a part of Heaven or Hell, or just some government re-election boondoggle scheme.

The leaflet explained that the purpose of this place was for the expiation of ones sins. You needed to apologise to all the people you had wronged in life before you could enter the heavenly kingdom. You needed to apologise in a manner appropriate to the offence given. At my terminal I had a whole lot of emails to write to all the people my emails had pissed off.

One of the other sights of the place was a large closed off rooms that had a nearly constant flow of Angels and Demons carrying documents in and out. If you got close to the room you could overhear someone speaking in Yiddish, Hebrew and all sorts of other European languages, just one hoarse and ragged sounding voice reciting words in all manner of European languages.

During a hot chocolate break (it seems that Joseph Smith was right about Coffee) one of the demons told me that this is where Hitler was still working off his many crimes. You see, the thing about Hitler of course was that most of his crimes had all been off the books, nothing on paper to incriminate and frequently records of names of individual victims had been intentionally erased, so he was having one heck of a time just identifying all his victims Before he could apologise to them, and again, because there murder is personal, he had to tape a personal verbal apology in the victim's own language before he had any hope of 'moving on' to heaven or to judgement.

By comparison, Joe Stalin had it easy. Accurate records of his crimes, purges and pogroms, dates and documents of all his victims were recorded on state files etc.

However, Hitler wasn't the saddest schmuck I met while I was in the place.

I'll never forget the guys who were all sitting in a group off to one corner. These guys were in for such a long stay that they practically had cobwebs growing on them. These were the donation seeking tele-evangelists, Spammers and wise-guys behind those Nigerian Bank account offers. Personal offers made by mass emailing. Hundreds of millions of personal apologies needed, no CC's, BCC's or multiple addressing allowed.

Their demeanour made that of the Microsoft programmers who had to really debug their Windows programs before they could enter heaven seem to smile like sunbeams!

1022 words © GP Dalrymple August 2008

Index

Pages 1 and 2 – Letters to the Editor

Page 3 – Travellers Tales

Pages 3 to 8 - Book Reviews

Pages 8 & 9 – Notes on the February 1
Weird History Symposium at
Wollongong University

Pages 10 & 11 – Notes from the
January 17 Infinitas Book Review
Discussion meeting. Books discussed;
Temeraire by Naomi Novic and
Company of the Dead by David
Kowalski

Pages 11 to 14 - Garry's notes from the
January 18 Sydney Futurian meeting.
Topic: **Your Best and Worst (SF&F) of
2007**

Pages 14 to 16 - Garry's notes of the
February 7 Infinitas SF&F Discussion
meeting. Topic: **Your Best and
Worst (SF&F) of 2007**

Pages 16 to 18 - Garry's notes from the
Feb. 15 Sydney Futurian meeting.
Topic: **Techno SF and Cyber Punk**

Page 18 - Garry's notes of the March 6
Infinitas SF&F Discussion meeting.
No Topic, SF&F news discussed

Pages 18 to 23 - Garry's notes from the
March 14 Sydney Futurian meeting.
Topic: **Women and Girls in SF&F,
Archetypes, Stereotypes and
Iconoclasts**

Page 24 – More Traveller's Tales

Page 24 – Basenjjs Tail Piece

For the April 2008 ANZAPA Mailing

Garry P Dalrymple April 2008