

Transcendental B. S. and Enlightenment

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'The coming of the Bicycles'
For ANZAPA issue No. 233

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Index or Newsletter Plan

Pages 1 and 2, Index and Editorial - **Blue**

Page 2 to 4, Quark Strangeness and Charm –
Travel notes

Pages 4 & 5, Pre-VJ Day & 'Victory at Sea'
(whole series!) DVD Review

Green Pages – Environmental?

Pages 5 to 9, Garry's New Bike

Golden pages – Science Fictional

Pages 9 to 18, Notes from some July and
August 2006 Sydney SF Meetings, Books
Read and some short Book and DVD reviews

Pink – Original Fiction (but not SF?)

Page 19, To be overheard on a train?

Page 20, A Basenji Tail piece

Editorial

Strategic withdrawals ahead of a strong Summer offensive?

Hey I'm holding a Sydney Freecon at
Bankstown in November this year and you're
all invited!

This month, after nearly twenty years I have
felt it necessary to effectively stand down as a
committee member of the Astronomy
Association. I am for the moment rather
'over committed' at work I sometimes joke that
my typing hands are committed to writing

ANZAPA and Futurian promotional stuff, my
evenings to watching taped TV and my
walking feet to Mystique's convenience.

I organized the last Sydney Freecon in 2003.

I had expected something to grow from it once
I stood aside. Something other than hearing
each year that at an interstate SF con that
some Sydney fans had stated that an
ambitious 'real' Sydney SF&F convention
(overseas GOHs and Hotel venues) would be
organized that year and with luck, a Natcon to
follow shortly. Two or three times since, 'Real
Life' has mugged the proponents and the
year's 'promises' have come to nothings other
than, 'well perhaps we might try next year?'

I have made a commitment to organize a 2006
Sydney Freecon in November 2006 AND to do
another one in November 2007! These will
be at the end of the fannish year and are
designed to take place on a date that does not
preclude anyone planning to hold a Sydney
SF con on any of the holiday long weekends.

So what do I have in mind? Well, sort of a
Bonsai regional Natcon sort of thingy with as
many of the features of a 'real' SF con as I can
fit in on one day before collapsing with
exhaustion. **Viz - the five elements are;**

1. A 9 am to 4 pm Freecon with guest writers,
discussion panels, Four Minutes of Fame
opportunities for SF fan worthy things.
2. An optional lunchtime '**Kevin Dillon**'
Symposium (cheese Sandwiches supplied)
on the life and works of **A. Bert Chandler**.
3. An optional theatre party to a nearby
cinema to see a movie
4. An optional 'All Sydney SF fans Old and
New' Dinner at a Bankstown restaurant.
5. A 'Peoples Choice' SF Short Story Writing
competition, 1000 word limit, with the best
stories to be displayed at the Freecon and
voted for by the people attending. There
will be a prize pool and it will be distributed
pro-rata according to the votes cast, rather
than a fixed amount for a 'first prize'. I.e. if
you enter the competition and attend the
Freecon then you stand a good chance of
getting a small cash prize, and some
opportunity for reader response, rather

than 'Winner takes all' prize and a complete mystery as to how the winning prize got the award this year. The prize pool will be at least \$50 and will be topped up by half the Freecon proceeds (if any).

The intention is to cover 'book based' SF&F, something for readers, something for Authors and Editors and something for those who feel they can write SF&F. All ANZAPA members are most welcome to enter this competition!

It is likely that I will have a lot to do over the next few months with the Freecon and all that. I will probably be attending even more Sydney SF&F events than usual, to organize and promote the Freecon and Associated events but I may not have the time to get all this down on paper for an ANZAPA newsletter.

I grave your indulgence, but looking on the bright side, you may look forward to expect quantity and 'quality' Solstice and New Year reading in the months ahead.

At or after the 2006 Freecon I may put out a 'thin' Basenji issue. One feature it might contain is the listing of all the Sydney fans that I have encountered at Sydney SF&F meetings during 2006. I am considering making this an annual feature coz in the absence of big Sydney SF conventions, no one else seems to be documenting the 'Who' (and the Non- Dr Who?) of Sydney SF fandom.

One last editorial type thing, There is original Fiction in this issue, I'm not sure that it is Science Fiction, so don't read it out to the kiddies as a bedtime story please! Tell me what you think about it. Will be in touch when I can be, to save precious paper in this and future issues of TBS&E from now on

There are No mailing comments this issue.

Rycwibnfcatt. = Read your contribution with interest but no further comments at this time.

Quark Strangeness and Charm in Sydney - Travel Notes

1. Seen on a train

First Class Seat without a ticket?

Riding the train in to the August Futurian's

meeting two blokes got on at Marrickville.

The entered the vestibule of the train with a removalist's trolley and a rocker recliner armchair. They were taking home a furniture purchase to the Housing Commission high rise blocks of flats at Surry Hills. To avoid waiting for a next train they were travelling without a ticket! So here they were, sitting on an armchair on the train, surprised a few passengers when they entered the carriage. Their do-it-yourself home delivery method may have been due to the reluctance of merchants to deliver to this high suicide public housing address?

2. Wildlife from the platform

Travelling by train in Sydney means repeatedly being in approximately the same place at the same time through the progress of the seasons. From the platform at Bankstown Station you see an annual life cycle of feral cats. In the vicinity of the Station there are storm water drains, relatively protected highways for cats and their prey to move around, as well as some fruit shops whose un-saleable stock and trash provide an after hours food source for prey and a hunting ground. During the warm months, around Christmas, you usually see a few kittens playing in the long grass that grows on the embankments on either side of the platforms. People sometimes leave milk, or they get to eat some of the bread that elderly pensioners left in the early hours of the morning for 'the pigeons', which actually more frequently feeds mice and rats once the bread crusts make it into the cover of the long grass. This practice irritates the railway staff, who after all have to clear up the 'by-product' left by the cats and pigeons who will roost (and poop!) anywhere they are not physically prevented from landing. During the winter months, the number of cats seen by commuters on an afternoon thins out, with the unlucky ones having presumably died 'off stage'. The availability of shelter like the long grass usually seen on railway land, near platforms and the long strips on both sides of the railway tracks between stations, is not only a convenience, as this cover can be essential to the feral cat's survival during the colder months. A cold and exposed cat needing so many more calories to survive, at a time when

food, caught or human delivered is that much scarcer. As the days begin to warm up again, the cycle will repeat itself, and so it goes.

The absence of rain over recent months has left the station embankments mostly as bare earth. In the past few weeks I have noticed a Willy Wagtail taking advantage of the afternoon sun to display (between trains of course!) on the railway lines in front of the North side of the passenger platform. He has probably been emboldened by the lack of cats and the absence of nearby ground cover, as Willy Wagtails usually display only on a sizeable piece of cleared ground, such as the park across the road from number one Eulabah Avenue.

3. Pram Jam, Thank you Mam

If I leave home shortly after 8 am, whether by walking to Campsie or by waiting for a bus there are usually four trains I can catch to Bankstown and work. Two pairs of trains about five minutes apart, one goes to Lidcombe (the Loop) and then onto the city and one goes off to Liverpool and the outer darkness of primal suburbia. (Some people who sleep through Bankstown are reportedly eaten, hence the volume of 'lost' property handed in at Central?). One morning I ended up on the later of the pair and while waiting for the lift there were no less than eight mothers with babies in prams waiting to catch the lift up to ground level and presumably a day's shopping. I ended up waiting for the third trip of the lift that morning!

4. Me and Mamdou Habib

While wandering the shopping mall one lunchtime I encountered **Mamdou Habib**, the famous Ex-detainee. Scarved heads turned as he past, he was recognised by fellow shoppers. He was out with his wife who was wearing a headscarf and modest clothing but with her face unveiled. Mamdou was dressed up like the sort of 19 year old suburban punk that you fear might be planning to steal your car, all 'famous' (American) brands, the sort you hear well before they arrive four to a hotted up low rider car. To be charitable to the bloke I suspect he still has 'issues' to work through, before he is again the conservative Muslim suburbanite who went to

Pakistan to find a 'Good' Muslim school for his teenage children. Mamdou may be a 'Martre' to injustice, but I expect that Mrs Habib will need the patience of a Saint until normality is restored.

6. Two views on Re-Partnering

On the 423 bus into town for the August 26 Mechanics SF readers group meeting I was feeling pretty inert after spending most of the week in bed from a killer flu. Two middle aged ethnic ladies sat down behind me and proceeded to discuss the intricate difficulties of re-partnering in middle age. Each was Widowed, each had found someone else, each had had to balance the appearance of 'singleness' against the expectations of community and family. Their conclusion was that it was not easy, but so worth while to try. Later that on during that bus ride, facing me, a girl of University age and her friend were discussing the inevitable dumping of a partner. She had just 'grown out' of him. No particular lapses or offenses against the 'rools of cool' were being cited. The process is being delayed and complicated by the fact that chap in question is out of a home at present, having lost his flat last week/month and is currently camped out at her place. I really did want to lean across with a solution on this one, instead of a formal or protracted informal 'I'm Dumping you!' declaration, she should invite over all her single and unattached friends for a joint 'Coming Out' party to signify that each is now officially 'Available'. Much more civilized and tidy than the shouting match or silent treatment Dumping procedure. It would have been very interesting to have both sets of women in one place for an exchange of views on partners and relationships?

7. Walking on the Wild side?

Ever wanted to Walk on the Wild side, break all of Society's rules, stick it to 'The Man', declare yourself a liberated zone from all those bourgeois sensibilities? *Well let me tell you what its like!* Well not quite, but for a few weeks I have been walking around and shopping while carrying a hard plastic security case that was probably intended to prevent a DVD or computer game from being stolen. They are 'un-openable' without the correct tool

and have a metal foil radio 'tag'. I found two of them behind the library some months ago and since then I have been using them to protect the thinner paperback books (less than 15 mm) that I carry around to read before and after work etc. I use the plastic or cardboard slip cases from Video tapes to protect my thicker paper back books, from 15 mm to 25 mm. One of the two cases is still 'active' as the sticker/tag is still intact and is capable of setting off the alarm when I walk through the security portal at a shop (or a Library). To date I have walked through several shop portals and set off alarms at Woolworths, Kmart and the Salvation Army. I have not been stopped once! I can only assume that I fail to meet the profile of what a Shoplifter is supposed to look like, that staff just don't give a stuff, or that the security value of these tags and 'portals' is purely placebo – they are there just for show!

Garry's notes – Pre-VJ day at work, Friday August 11, 2006

As you may recall I was fortunate enough last year to have a letter published in the Sydney Morning Herald that mentioned that my father was **One** of the Dancing men of Sydney on the day that the second World War was declared over.

This year I had the plonk to hand so I thought I would try to organize a little Friday afternoon 'plonkfest' as a bit of a celebration ahead of VJ Day.

Firstly I sent out an email to all of my co-workers advising of my intentions. In this email I repeated my father's claim to have been a Dancing Man and I also mentioned that my maternal grandmother, Edith Muriel Rhead, a light opera singer, had been on the bill at Sydney Town Hall recital which prematurely (six weeks?) celebrated the end of the Great War.

I then went out at lunchtime and bought salted peanuts, lollies, a block of cheese and a 2 litre bottle of Apple juice to go with the two bottles of Broken Earth 2002 vintage Sangiovese I had at work.

I also gave a little speech.

It went something like this –

Today I invite you all to join with me and celebrate V-J Day, the day when Victory over Japan and the end of the Second World War in the Pacific was announced.

To some present day Australians V-J Day is a date that they are uneasy about celebrating with any enthusiasm, coming as it does on the calendar after the anniversaries of the fire bombing of Tokyo, Hiroshima Day, and Nagasaki Day.

These days there is a greater appreciation that in wars all great victories are achieved only at great cost of suffering to one or both sides. There is the unanswerable question of whether the war could have been ended sooner, were Dresden, Hiroshima and Nagasaki absolutely necessary to end the War?

Could the concentration camps and allied POWs been liberated earlier or the War ended sooner?

So many questions.

There is the undeniable truth that the end of the Second World War did not bring peace and liberation to all. Eastern Europe was still occupied by totalitarianism and the stage was set for the Cold War, the Korean conflict and all the wars that have followed since.

There is also among Australians a sense of inter-generational reticence when it comes to Wars. Wars past have usually been seen as a bit of a sacred space belonging to an older generation. It was Father's War or Grandfather's war, the old man hardly ever wanted to talk much about it and no-one wanted to interfere with their 'one day of the year'.

But I have not asked you here to celebrate the Second World War.

War is terrible, and with every year that passes the old men who fought in it grow

fewer and fewer.

In my opinion the celebration of VJ Day is not old men's business, for the end of every War belongs to the young. They are set free from the fear of routine death only by that war's ending. In one sense the whole of the post WW2 generation was conceived on V-J Day, in that before V-J Day there was only room for 'The War', but after V-J Day the future became possible.

Join me then in celebrating that all wars do end, and that their end is worth celebrating, like King David thousands of years ago outside the walls of Jerusalem who danced before his God with unrestrained joy, think then on the words of our National Anthem –

*Australians All let us rejoice,
for we are young and Free.*

I ask you all to raise your glasses to the liberating spirit of Freedom and Hope that was abroad and celebrated on that first V-J Day.

DVR Review Victory at Sea

26 episodes of the 1954 Emmy winning documentary of the Second World War (at sea mostly)

I watched this over a week, and my reaction is – haven't War documentaries come a long way since! The 26 episodes jumped around a lot, so it wasn't a chronological depiction of the War, it chose 'theatres' of war and some major battles parts, for the most part 'American' campaigns but it did include UK, German Japanese and even some Soviet footage. Very simplistic stuff for the most part, - these are the men, these are the machines, short battle footage clips, very little analysis of numbers of opposing forces or use of graphics.

Australians and New Zealanders were occasionally mentioned but what struck me was that it was an almost completely 'White' war as seen by US footage.

There were very few 'Coloured' Americans to be seen, although the US Navy was the major US fighting service to allow 'Coloured' Americans in combat roles. Possibly there were more colonial Free French Forces or Indian Army troops visible. Most of the footage of Black Americans seemed to have been edited in as an afterthought, as their scenes were brief 'blink and you would miss it' pieces that were not part of the main narrative.

I don't think it taught me much more than I already knew about WW2, but it was kind of interesting to see footage that I have seen elsewhere closer in time and context.

Green Pages Some environmental stuff?

Garry's New Bike

For some time I have been considering getting a Bike. The idea has stirred and risen of late. It might be the 'wall to wall' SBS coverage of the Tour de France. It might be an intermediate confidence building step to getting a driver's license (and then an electric powered P76!). It might be that most weeks I notice that chained to the railway station fence are up to nine bikes. It might be that coming home from Bankstown or going into the city I frequently share a carriage with a 'peddler' (the inner city is urban bike ground zero?). It might be for 'fitness' or to recapture 'youth', but whatever the reason, of late I have been thinking of Bicycles.

Through my usual suburban child hood there have of course been many bikes. There are still two of them in the garage, one tied up to the rafters (too heavy to get down, last used in 1980, condition of tyres and tubes very doubtful) and a fold up 'Leaping Leo' type smaller wheeled bike with no brakes! To get either into a road safe condition would require more than a full weekend or two of tinkering and errands to parts suppliers.

Where I live is roughly between the cycle path that parallels the M5 Motor way (600 metres?)

and the Cook's river cycle path, which for those with enough puff, will take you from Botany Bay to the 2000 Olympics venue (and presumably beyond). All good flat ground travel options.

As I have an embarrassing excess of Recreation leave, so recently I took off six working bays and on my 'to do' list was – get a bicycle! I had expectations of rocking up to the sports/toys section of a Supermarket, picking out a bike (Basic, Gentleman's, Large), handing over the cash (some change out of \$150 according to the weekly blizzard of through the letterbox catalogues), and be on wheels the next day. Easily said, not as easily accomplished.

I quickly learned that bikes come in boxes and that 'some assembly may be required', which nixed the idea of wheels overnight. My next recourse was to scour the nearby opportunity shops and the Bower (re-used appliances and furniture next to 'Reverse Garbage' at Marrickville in the hope of finding a fully assembled bike for under \$100 that I could walk or possibly ride home. I even considered mugging a Mormon Missionary, but have you ever tried to get one of those guys alone, No luck there? I would have had a better chance if I had gone looking after the Christmas / School holidays when so much of 'last year's' stuff gets passed on down the economic food chain.

So Bike' and then rapidly up to several I was driven back to the palaces of consumerism, Big W, Kmart etc. each of which justified a trip into town, so I thought why not look into the professional Bike shops for a price and range of offerings comparison. I went to the Clarence Street Cycle Shop and encountered 'Price Sticker shock' The Cheapest bike that they had was for \$343 for a clunky looking 'Mountain thousand dollars for bikes with Batleth shaped frames presumably made out of exotic Sci-Fi alloys (price tag specifications seemingly in Klingon). At the Campsie Big W (closest to home) I found the following, a garage sized rack of sample bikes with numbered boxes below. The boxes were two-thirds the size of a door, just a bit too big to be able to wrestle onto a bus (or a Taxi)

and then wrestle home from the bus stop.

Big W Box Number	Cost	Weight as listed on the box
No. 1	\$118	
No. 3	\$148	16.8 Kg
No. 5		
No. 6	\$198	17 Kg
No. 7	\$298	18 Kg
No. 20	\$198	
No. 33	\$198	
No. 34	\$298	18 Kg
No. 35	\$198	

The point of the above table is to explain the un-portability of the Boxed Bike. I asked about Home Delivery, a minimum of \$30 and delivery some time in the following week. The lady at the Glebe/Broadway Kmart asked can't you get someone with a car This plus 'some assembly may be required' after the delivery of the aforesaid and above mentioned box shifted the entire proposal of a bike to ride on my week off into the conceptual realm of 'next month, some time perhaps'. Or so you might assume, but then Serendipity does happen.

Late in the afternoon, on the 423 bus coming back from the city at the end of this day of frustrated expectations, two stops short of my own stop I noticed a bloke putting out for council collection what appeared to be two bikes! That night I took Mystique on a reconnaissance and salvage mission. What we brought home was surprising, a full bike with a frame and front wheel welded on via a half metre piece of Angle Iron. Rusty as anything, but as the tyres held pressure when pumped up it was a 'goer'. Next night I sawed through the Angle Iron and so now I had a bike of sorts, at the end of this lengthy discovery process, for the cost of wheeling it back home! I still cannot understand what purpose the welding of the two bike frames was supposed to achieve, they were connected only at one place, under the saddle so it would not have made a practical bike for two or a bike for one with balance problems.

Saturday July 22 – I wandered around

Burwood in the (vain) search for a Bike and Skateboards shop that I recall seeing in the past. The Burwood Book Exchange (and a few other shops as well) has shifted down Burwood Road. This shop has a commendable Sci-Fi and Fantasy section (at the very back of the shop) and is 'World Famous in Burwood' and well known among Sydney's second hand book lovers for the fact that all its books are covered in plastic! Consequently all the books on their shelves look 'new'. After this I wandered back up Burwood Road, intending to stop in at K Mart to look and see if they sold (Black or White) Dunlop Volley shoes in the wider half sizes. No luck there, but I did eventually find their bikes and later their bike parts area. Bike brake pads were \$3 a pair, and lots more stuff, tubes and tyres etc. for less than \$10, so I bought two pairs of brake pads for \$6. This source of spare parts greatly encourages me. The pads can go on the salvaged bike, the fold up (if I can be bothered to transplant the brakes from the 'spare' half of the Salvage bike) or even the bike up on the rafters. With Kmart's zero level of customer support and 'maze-mode' display policies (and doesn't my inner Ferengi rage at their efforts to place barriers between their goods and my wish to buy those goods!). I have a fellow potential customer to thank for pointing out that they had some 'Electric Bikes' on sale. In boxes without any price details! We had to find a Kmart employee equipped with a hand held midichlorian counter to discover that the price was \$499 for a 35Kg package that shows a bike with a chain and pedals with an integral motor and rechargeable battery pack under the seat and above the back wheel. The box promises '20 Km range and up to 20 Km ph speed'. This presents an intriguing possibility, especially if the bike's specifications can be found and interpreted, i.e. would it be possible to add/substitute additional or lighter batteries, add regenerative breaking or Solar Panels etc? How long would it take to pedal to a Canberra SF con on a sunny day with the wind at your back and solar assist?

On the morning of Sunday July 24 I fitted to the four \$6 brake pads to the salvaged bike and I took it for a spin up and down Eulabah Avenue. I.e. it is now a functioning Bike (that

no one in their right mind would want to steal) and on the road for \$6!

Saturday August 05

After the SF Book Discussion meeting at the Mechanics and the expedition to the Go'ulds bookshop I visited the Marrickville Pole Depot, a precinct which houses the Reverse Garbage Truck (recyclable industrial discards) and the Bower (second hand items). I bought a cast brass 'Lords Prayer' (\$1) wall plaque and a pair of button hole connecting Braces (\$0.50). I also saw and was impressed by the three racing bikes they had for sale, at \$75 and \$65.

I would have bought one on the spot, but the delivery charge was \$30 (40% of purchase price!) and delivery would be 'some time next week', the same problems with the 'bike in a box' options previously discussed. I was not dressed to ride and I was carrying too much clothing and stuff to seriously consider a late afternoon transit across unknown territory. However, rationalizing 'what else are weekends for' but for life's little adventures?' I decided to go home and plan to return next morning, which leads to -

Garry's Big Green day out

Next morning got up early and organized. I had the Cash, the Helmet, a backpack, a bike pump, a street directory, one litre of fluids and an efficient low energy/loss of altitude route worked out. Catching the 9.50 am 423 bus got me to the Bower and Reverse Garbage Truck at ~10.30. There was a market day on, (mostly 'organic' produce) so I spent some time looking at that. I noticed some compact fluorescent globes on sale at much less than retail. I bought five large (three with long sleeves!) unbleached cotton T-shirts with a 'Homeless Outreach' or some such design printed on them for \$5, mostly as padding for the five globes which cost me just \$6.

What followed next was a bit of an adventure, but what else are weekends for?

The hose on my bike pump ruptured, so I had to set off with flat-ish tyres – greater rolling resistance all the way up and down hill. The bike pedals were equipped with toe cups, great for racing, but inconvenient for me, I

tend to pedal with the centre of my foot, these require force through the toes, nigh unto leg cramps several times. I couldn't get the gears right, so effectively I was pedaling 'up hill' all the way home. The chain dropped off the gears twice! I had to invert the bike and back pedal to get it back on. I fell off the bike twice, avoiding a 4WD and front wheel getting caught between two tree stakes. Ended up spending the time half walking half riding the bike, most of the actual riding was coasting down hill until I got some sense of the gears and was able to pedal on the flat (Permanent Avenue) closer to home.

In all, Rolling resistance, (mass related) inertia, gears, lack of confidence and being out of condition made this a two-hour trip from Marrickville to home, \$75 a ticket compared to \$2.50 on the bus!

When did this happen?

I had filed away as a mere curiosity the fact that the fold up bike (bought for \$70 at a neighbor's garage sale many years ago) had a car valves on the front wheel and a 'proper' bicycle valve tyre on the back wheel. There are bike valves and car valves – Right?

Not necessarily, or so it would seem. In getting the racing bike home, the rupture of my bike pump hose necessitated a replacement. Fortunately, for many years (ten, fifteen?) I have had a replacement one sitting in the freezer at home, next to the swimming goggle rubbers (a lesson learnt from several years of Naval Supply Service – stocks of rubber fittings will perish on the shelf sooner unless they are refrigerated). So imagine my surprise when it was defrosted and found to have a 'car-tyre' type fitting on the end. Back again to Kmart!

At Kmart I discovered that all the tyre tubes they had for sale (or shoplifting) and the bike pumps had what I considered to be 'car tyre type valve fittings'.

So when had this change-over taken place?

I remember seeing my ex-motor mechanic grandfather helping my brother and I pump up our scooter tyres using a car tyre stirrup

pump, the connection between car pump and bike fitting being achieved by using a valve hacked off a car tyre tube, an eminently sensible improvisation. Discussing this issue with my mother revealed the following. My mother says that during her childhood her father would routinely fit an adjuster to all their bike tyres. The adjuster was made from parts of the valves of discarded car inner tubes and it was fitted over the existing bike type valve fittings so they could fill their bike tyres by using the garage's car tyre 'free air' dispenser or by using their manual bike pumps.

Eventually at Kmart, after 10 to 15 minutes of searching I discovered a \$6.95 pack that consisted six items, ball inflating needles, a tyre to pump hose (car tyre fitting) AND finally a small brass doover, a screw-on adapter, bike-to-car and car-to-bike valve. Part of the reason for the time it took to locate what I needed was the state of the bike bits section of Kmart. There was a heap of mixed up stuff on a floor shelf, no knowledgeable sales staff to be found, price tags absent. I even spent a while looking at what I thought were three different products. They turned out to be the same carded set of fittings that I eventually bought, but previous 'customers' had just removed the one item of the six that they wanted from the pack and then put the pack back on display and presumably left without paying! - Kmart shop lifters paradise?

Saturday August 19, spent the morning pumping up the bike fleet's tyres (Rusty, Racer and Foldy), so much easier to do with the right equipment. Would have taken less time but for the fact that I broke the (plastic) handle of my father's car tyre stirrup pump. Had to find a piece of wood to replace the handle, drill it to fit, then back in business! The uniformity of car and bike tyre fittings makes a great deal of convenience and sense. I approve in principle, but why wasn't I told!

Sunday August 20 – took the rusty bike for a spin, greater inherent stability with its wider non-racing handlebars. Much easier to pedal now that I have some understanding of the gears, discovered the negative implications of a person with greater than

average mass trying to use a bike with a racing seat. Ouch! This cut short the exercise dramatically. Otherwise I would be doing a lot of standing up this week!

Other Greenness – The Rain Man has friends

Dr Serrie Kamara Ph.D., our workplace's distinguished Eminence Grise from Sierra Leon has been issued with an official Met Bureau rain gauge and may be issued with an official rainfall-recording book.

Apparently the Met Bureau has no-one to record the rain between Bankstown Airport and Canterbury Race course.

Serrie's house lies midway between these two locations.

This news tempts me to consider 'going pro' with my rain recording, as Eulabah Avenue is somewhat between Bankstown Airport, Mascot Airport and Canterbury Race course and the Met Bureau might appreciate one more set of data.

I recall that my mother's 'on the farm' (Sugar) relatives actively recorded the rain.

Yellow Pages Science Fiction

Notes from some July and August 2006
Sydney SF&F Meetings

**The Infinitas SF&F Discussion
meeting of Thursday July 6, 2006**

**Meeting at the Infinitas / Blokey stuff shop
Parramatta, Topic: Dystopias**

Present were: Darryl Addams, Henry Chatroop, Garry Dalrymple, Kurt Frank, Jo Kay, Mick Ousley, Charmain Spears, Brian Walls and Tim

News

Darryl showed us on a laptop the famous 'The internet is for Porn' animation.

On the Topic: Your Favourite Dystopias in SF

Distinctions and definitions – Dystopias are BAD places, not just bad things happening to a main character or locally unfair events, the whole system has to be crook. There has to be a 'world' system and it has to have gone pear shaped rather than just being a matter of 'bad luck'.

One person's Utopia may be another's Dystopia. I.e. living in the world of John Norman's 'GOR' might superficially appeal to some, as a swell place to be 'king' of, but for most of us the system of 'GOR' would get up your nose fairly quickly. Even if you were briefly on top of the GOR system you would have only a short time to enjoy the view.

Timing – Dystopias are a classic sub-genre of SF because they put the question and work through the answer 'What if...'. There were a whole lot of 'after World War three / Civilization collapses' stories about in the sixties and seventies, just as there were many SF stories about the threat of totalitarianism in the thirties and forties of last century. Consequently there are lots of these stories in SF and they tend to come in waves, usually appearing in response to a new technological or social innovation. Frequently they are to some extent moralistic, as they purport to show the negative consequences of an avoidable 'wrong turn' in human history.

Usually this can take the form of something like 'Well you think it would be good to give women the vote/ability to reproduce without men?, well I'll show you exactly what sort of world that could lead to, a Dystopia.

Readers could spend hours I.e. for example there are they tell the story of probable that explore are Most of the refreshing feature of this evening's discussion was that talk turned to the nature

BW admitted to be being deeply affected, by

On the first Friday in July I had the opportunity for a triple meeting night. There is a Public Transport advocacy group that meets at the UTS at 5.30 pm, the Dr Who Tavern meeting and a SF themed Mu Meson Archive event, all within a short bus ride (or so it seemed). In the event I gave the Transport advocacy group a miss (and worked on TBS&E No. 19 instead) before heading into town. Read on!

The Friday July 07, 2006, Sydney Dr Who Tavern meeting at the Lansdown Hotel Broadway / Glebe

Present were: Karen Carpenter (*Ace*), Garry Dalrymple, Brendan Jones, Richard and a James, (*Not James Sellwood*).

I turned up to this meeting twice! From about 7 to 7.40 pm I enjoyed a steak and a beer in solitary splendour, before leaving for the long and indirect route to the Mu Meson Philip K Dick event. During this time I was able to address and envelope a few non-ANZAPA (blue cover, white inner pages) copies of issue 19 of TBS&E. After the Mu Meson event finished I visited the Lansdown once more. To get home on a 423 or 412 I needed to head back into town and as the bus stop was close to the Lansdown so I walked in at close to 11 pm. I found four Whovians, in a nearly deserted upstairs dining room area still sitting around a table talking. This suggests does it not that life in Sydney SF fandom goes whether I am there to record it or not?

Table conversation included

The Mu Meson Archive showing of the after life of Philip K Dick, Friday 07 July, 2006.

- Caught a 470 bus at 7.40, assuming it would get me close to where I needed to be, wandered the streets of Annandale until after 8 pm.
- Furniture Camping gear and music shops, is there a local shoe event horizon in the making?
- Street with no names, but plenty of big sandstone churches rather than pubs on most corners
- Street lighting making it impossible to get my bearings, had to wander in hope that I was getting close to Parramatta road and

my destination.

- Saw the rail of the steel stairway headed over and up.
- Physically the venue is a curious set up, being at the back (and up the stairs) of a Furniture store that seems to have engulfed several shop fronts and spread across the road, seems to be a void between two buildings over the concrete roof of a ground floor area that has been roofed over. It's a bit like a suburban double car garage rather than an extended lounge room. They have vast quantities of film tins on one side and on the other side what might be a book shop that is only open at odd hours.
- I had initially thought, 'Hey I could hold a Freecon here sometime', but as place is part of a private residence and the people are 'Cult Movie' rather than SF fans I decided that no it was not an achievable objective, although I could work with the Mu Meson people and possibly 'Borrow' part of their audience/membership from time to time.
- About thirty people present I think
- For \$10 I got a documentary on the life of PKD, an episode of 'Lost' UK SF, a cup of some mystery vegetable soup and a few slices of bread roll.
- Brian Walls was a star of the night, with a CD of Valis the Opera based on PKD's life or delusions and an opportunity to explain the disappearance of the PKD robot.
- About 30 people present, many more smokers than at a SF fandom turnout
- The group is into 'Cult movies' of which Sf would be a subset rather than a major pre-occupation.
- I expect I will inevitably attend more Mu Meson events, subordinate to attending Futurians meetings and juggling with Dr Who Tavern events

That's about it, a steak, a Guinness and a bit of a chat. Left the Lansdown at about 9.10

The Sydney Mechanics School of Arts Institute Science Fiction and Fantasy book group meeting Saturday July 15, 2006, 11.30am - 1.00 pm

Topic: No single topic, more of a general

discussion SF&F in general and which books those present have read and enjoyed recently

Present were: **Winsome Allen, John August, Belinda Coombes, Christine Campbell, Garry Dalrymple, Brian Walls** and **John August's friend**

Apologies were received from: Anne Devrell and Ann Pritchard

Garry's News

- To celebrate yesterday's Bastille Day, the execution of prisoners under a flag of truce, the liberation of the **Marquis De Sade** and a first example of survival by 'turning ones coat', I distributed White Chocolate Freddo Frogs.

- There is a Sunday afternoon SF book discussion group meeting at the Gloria Jean's coffee shop associated with the Bondi Junction Borders Bookshop.

- My recent reading has included: Patrick O'Brien's 'Master and Commander', to get an appreciation of SF-free 'Space Opera'. **Michael Moore's** 'Stupid White Men', US Politics is stranger than SF. **Melissa**

Scott's 'Shadow Man', A Lambda award winning story about a Human Universe with 9 sexes and an unyielding Patriarchy.

- According to Cheryl Morgan of 'Emerald City' newsletter, if you have to chuck rocks at 'specialist' SF awards, the Lambdas are a good place to start as they frequently make curious decisions, awarding SF stories of mediocore quality yet ignoring other stories that would seem to be better SF and on theme.

of an embittered (Martian) teen, but morphed into a planet smashing tale, with sex!

John August was attending the meeting for possibly a first time. He has been organizing talks and radio programs on 2SERFM. In the near future he might be organizing a seminar on alternative fuels / peak oil and later, possibly a talk on Ritzian Physics at the Mechanics institute. The former lead to a general discussion by most present on peak oil (after a 4 Corners program on ABC TV) and motor vehicle energy efficiency. John described some of his recent SF reading, part of the several book 'Biography of a Space Tyrant' by **Piers Anthony**, which follows the

life/career of an individual who progresses from being a despised space refugee to a being a widely respected Statesman.

John August's friend (sorry didn't catch name, French sounding but actually Spanish), would like to read more SF, but for the moment most of her reading is committed to reading journals and set texts. Her most recent exposure to SF has been through movies and TV seen. She described a few Movies / episodes that had taken her fancy, she was much taken by the Movie Solaris.

Other people present described their interest in the current sub-genre of Crypto-Religious Fiction (much more and better written stuff than the da Vinci Code).

Brian Walls presented his usual roundup of Sfnal news items, a report on attending the recent Conflux SF convention at Canberra, a vivid description of events at the Mu Meson Archive **Philip K Dick** night. Also the Trash SF guy in Brisbane has been given a grant to produce a movie based on a 'true' story about Brisbane's Lesbian Vampire Detective community (or something).

Notes from the Friday July 21, Sydney Futurians @ UTS SF&F discussion meeting

Topic: Mars in SF Stories

Garry's News for July 2006

I had prepared some notes on this topic some months ago, but where have they gone?

Present were; Garry Dalrymple, Diane Fox, John Fox and Anne Rankins

News

GD-? Surely some news?

DF – Ducks of Doom

Fannish Self sufficiency, some Blue Mountains fans treat their own wastewater on site and use for irrigation.

An Autistic bloke has created drawings (plans?) of an imaginary city of 12 million JF Approval has been granted to host Graham Stone's next lists of books available on the Futurians @ UTS website.

The August meeting will be listed in the next issue of *Blurt* so things are looking up

There is a clubs meeting/dinner August 09, 2006 to diffuse information about UTS clubs and Societies related info.

AR Reality has intruded into her life, curtailing opportunities for fanac, she has been minding her sister's children for a few weeks.

The Topic Discussed

Mars is the Planet in our Solar System for SF (after Earth of course). Consulting a listing of SF set on Solar System bodies there are over two hundred mentions, where most other planets score a few to a few dozen. There is enough material for you to be able to trace how human perceptions of the Planet as expresses in SF have developed following the state of understanding of the planet.

Mythical Mars - The influence of the God of War

Quatermass and the pit, locust like swarming and intolerance of the different ones, humans as apes uplifted by Martian DNA.

Telescopic Mars (after **Percival Lowell**)

HG Wells The War of the Worlds Ancient Martians, with intellects so old and cool beyond human comprehension, and no concept of hygiene!

Theosophical – The Ancientness of Mars presumes its past inhabitants must have possessed greater Science, Wisdom and had 'larger than life' adventures on the Martian plains. Hence **Edgar Rice Burroughs** and his imitators. Also in **Isaac Asimov's** Space Ranger series (juvenile SF) the powers are supplied by ancient subterranean Martians who gave up bodily form a long time ago.

Adventurers destination and Castaway survival on Mars

In SF of the Pulp era most Scientists or Gentleman adventurers could build a Space ship in the Lab out of boiler plate and rivets (no need for government funding) and off they would go – Flash Gordon et al.?

Movie Robinson Crusoe on Mars – Survival of a stranded Astronaut (and his Monkey), travel

under the Martian surface, Discovery of a Elvis Presley / Egyptian look alike Man Friday.

The Bitter Pill (or Botany Bay?) by **Bert Chandler**, a new Botany bay where 'Age Offenders', those who refuse to take age mandated suicide are sent as punishment. They start new and rewarding lives amidst adversity.

Writer unknown, Astronaut survives a crashlanding only because a bus sized alien keeps him alive as a pet!

Writer unknown, but mentioned was a story about a bright teenager (with a pesky first girlfriend) who paints a shipping crate with gas proof paint and figures out how to turn a TV set into an Anti Gravity drive. Flies to Mars, and in landing breaks an unreplaceable component and is stranded without a radio. He had left notes for his father to find, so he expects to be rescued. His pesky girlfriend finds the notes, makes her own plywood spaceship and she gets stranded too, but they make do together. They are eventually rescued by the first official mission to Mars, carrying his parents. Young couple are married by the ship's captain, before the papers hear of it, to forestall moral panic over how they have spent their time alone together!

Dumb Mars – **Bradbury's** The Martian Chronicles, Martian moons going the wrong way! Leaving the rocket without a radio, throwing beer cans into the canals, The Martian Hypnotists come unstuck when the childhood images taken from the mind are not comforting! Martians all die of mumps!) Santa Claus conquers the Martians and in return the more recent, Mars Invades of schlock, high camp Sci-Fi movie.

Hard Science on Mars – Post Mariner and Voyager spacecraft

Kim Stanley Robinson's Mars Trilogy Martian settlement from second landing to political independence under terra-formed blue skies, an allegory of the American genesis?

Routine Mars

Star Trek and Babylon 5 have Mars as 'just another human occupied Planet in the Solar System'. Federation Shipyards above Mars and Martian Freedom fighters essential to the revolution. In **Frederick Pohl's** The Oort

Miners, a teenager from a Martian settlement (the Sticks) attempts to win his way through to being an Oort Cloud Miner. A story of the struggle between a Frontierman's virtues against big city vices?

Frequent Visitors to Mars – Authors who frequently set their stories on Mars, include:

Isaac Asimov – Space Ranger

Ben Bova – Mars and Return to Mars

Edgar Rice Burroughs – John Carter and his family's adventures on the plains of Mars

Kim Stanley Robinson -

Robert Heinlein – Podkayne of Mars, Number of the Beast and other stories set on Mars

Attachment to the Planet or they just happened to be writing SF when Mars was venue de jour for SF adventures?

Interesting occasional visitors

In **Greg Benford's** Sunborn, Mars is terraformed by seeding with Australian plants.

AUGUST 2006

Notes from the Tuesday August 01, 2006, Sydney Fans at the pub meeting, Civic Hotel, Corner Pitt and Goulburn Streets Sydney CBD.

Present were; G. Dalrymple, & M. Phillips

Discussed were: The Evolution of the Federal Police through mergers and re-structures, the state of other Sydney SF discussion meetings

The Meeting at the Thursday 03 August, 2006 Infinitas / Blokey stuff shop Parramatta - Didn't attend

The Friday August 04, 2006, Sydney Dr Who Tavern meeting at the Lansdown Hotel Broadway / Glebe - Didn't attend

Sydney Mechanics School of Arts Institute Science Fiction and Fantasy book group meeting Saturday August 05, 2006, 11.30am - 1.00 pm

Present were: **Winsome Allen, Belinda Coombes, Ann Devrell, Garry Dalrymple, Edwina Harvey, Cynthia Ma, Ann Pritchard, Paolo Rech, and Brian Walls**

At the bus stop near the Moore Theological College a large group got on the 423. Two of the blokes, both English, soon started talking about Anglican endeavors in South America (An Anglican growth area) and Nigeria. Apparently Brazil is booming due to charismatic pastoral leadership, Chile and Argentina show promise but several of the South American Bishops are quarrelsome. Much of this sector of the Anglican communion is close in its thinking to the Moore Theological College 'line'. Apparently only few of these Dioceses would continue to go forward if cut off from overseas fraternal support. The Nigerian church is under pressure in some areas, an effect of politically motivated calls for the imposition of Sharia law? I asked then what the 'Churn' rate for these churches was, as some Sydney evangelical church franchises 'lose' up to 87% of their parishioners each year, operating in effect a sort of revolving door congregation as people enter then leave that brand of church. The guys didn't have an answer for this, but they seemed to take onboard the distinction between increases in parish numbers Vs congregations for life.

Other non-meeting preoccupations of the day were; on entry to the Mechanics building I discovered that the Australian Democrats national executive were meeting all day Saturday and Sunday in the room next to the Book readers discussion meetings! Having bought a few A. Bert Chandler books from Graham Stone I thought it would be sensible to check out the Mechanics Library – four titles sighted. I also took this inquiry to Gould's Bookshop, about six books, three titles, some duplication of editions etc. Must look into this further, as there seem to be five books in the 'Rim Runners' series and I mean to read them all before November.

Topic: No single topic, more of a general discussion SF&F in general and which books those present have read and enjoyed recently

Garry's News

To celebrate yesterday's Bastille Day, the execution of prisoners under a flag of truce, the liberation of the

Six degrees of Kevin Bacon/Coincidences?

Cynthia Ma turns out to be a neighbour of **Paolo Rech**. Paolo had invited her to experience the Mechanics Library and she joined the meeting only briefly, after the Library had closed.

Cynthia and I are acquainted through the ABC SCIENCE MATTERS email group.

In the Domain section of the Sydney Morning Herald was an article describing an Art Gallery/Home with an impressive Tin Toy collection. This collection is owned by a brother of a significant Canberra fan (and his Wife)

The Sydney Mechanics School of Arts Institute Science Fiction and Fantasy book group meeting Saturday August 26, 2006, 'A First Anniversary meeting' 11.30am - 1.00 pm

Present were: **Winsome Allen**, **John August**, **John August's friend**, **Belinda Coombes**, **Christine Campbell**, **Garry Dalrymple**, **Anne Pritchard**, **Brian Walls** and **Brian's Yoga friend Nicollette**

News

To celebrate The First Anniversary of our meeting there was Cake and Wine and Food and stuff. One cake had been laboriously decorated with eleven chocolate monkeys dancing around a block of Lindt chocolate standing in for the 2001 Black Monolith. (The Twelfth Monkey was of course implied!). Not sure whether it was a 'Black Forrest' cake or a Blue Danube cake?

- There was Champagne and a very pleasant South Australian Chardonnay was produced.
- The fizzy stuff in the hands of John August produced a NASA-worthy splashdown of the cork, into the instant coffee dish!
- As we were meeting so was the LA con

World SF convention for 2006 (did you go?). This led to a brief discussion of the peculiarities of the voting procedures for the Hugos and Worldcon site selection.

- This resulted in a distraction to discuss Wombats! The mobile speed bumps of the outback, traffic hazard and maker of non-rollback cubic poos!

- Much talk of Sci-Fi on TV at present, any reflection on programming decisions inevitably turns into Chanel Nine bashing, Why does it always have to be on after 11 pm and seldom starting at the advertised time. The precautionary start taping 20 minutes before advertised time has now become a full hour. Do they want us to buy the DVDs online?

- A mood among those present was to expand beyond familiar reading. A first attempt at reading some **Philip K. Dick** produced the assessment that he wrote as if 'He were a writer not taking his meds'. There was Universal and prolonged laughter at the accuracy of this assessment! There were of course the usual single entendre opportunities that hover in the wings anytime anyone can be maneuvered into commenting on the need for more or less **Philip K. Dick** in their life.

The Canadian SF writer **Gordon R. Dickson** was a second choice, yet to be sampled.

- Overwhelmingly positive response to my Sleek Geeks Science Fiction hand out, 5% No!, 5 % didn't understand the question.

- Have been unwell for a week, this choice disease has also affected the

- My **Bert Chandler** read-a-thon continues, I made up a list of the Bert Chandler books upstairs in the Mechanics Library and have borrowed 'Anarch Lords' from the library to read.

- Pluto isn't a Planet any longer, (Mickey mouse is reportedly devastated!)

- Brian is much enthused about 'Renaissance' a hand drawn animated SF movie apparently.

I consider it worth pointing out that the success of this meeting over twelve months has been to involve people in talking about SF. The following is My list of those who I believe have attended one or more 'Mechanics' SF meeting during the year:

Winsome Allen, John August, John August's Friend, Christine Campbell David Bofinger, Christine Campbell

Belinda Coombes, Garry Dalrymple, Ann Devrell, Edwina Harvey, Nicollette, Brian's Yoga Friend, Ann Pritchard, Paolo Rech and Brian Walls

After talk of SF had largely expired, **John August** received the indulgence of the meeting to talk about some of his difficulties in trying to conduct a 'public debate' on a pressing issue, 'Peak Oil'. The trouble seems to be not in identifying people or public institutions with special knowledge of the issue, but to get them to agree to deliver those views in public. To state a view at a public forum is seen as endorsing the people behind the people behind the public forum.

- Resorting to Stockbrokers was suggested, as each broking house has Industry analysts and these are seldom reluctant to put their analysis on record?

A decision of the meeting was to discuss a different **SF Sub-genre** at each of the remaining five Mechanics meetings for this year, in addition to the usual News and 'What I have been reading' elements. This innovation is broadly in line with that employed by the Detective/Mystery readers meeting and is intended to encourage reading beyond what you usually read, gaining a broader perspective on the genre.

NB - Notes of the August 18 Sydney Futurian meeting (Intelligent Animals in SF) held over for the next issue, TBS&E No 21.

Books Read: July and Aug 2006

July 02 to 11, **Master and Commander**, By **Patrick O'Brien**, 403 Pages © 1970.

July 12 to 16, **Stupid White Men**, (Comment on recent US Politics and society) By **Michael Moore**, 281 Pages, © 2001.

July 17 to 20, **Voyage to the End of the World**, (Antarctic Exploration) By **David Burke**, 200 Pages © 2002.

July 20 to 27, **The Ophiuchi Hotline**, By **John Varley**, 247 Pages © 1977.

July 28 to August, **Unnatural Fathers**, By **Catherine Storr**, 153 Pages © 1976. (an uncorrected Proof copy of an 'issue' SF novel written by an otherwise non-SF writer)

August **Star Courier (Dininity by Spacial Delivery)**, by **A. Bertram Chandler**, 142 pages, © 1977.

CURRENTLY READING

August 28 to ?? **The Anarch Lords**, by **A. Bertram Chandler**, 208 pages, © 1981.

The Fortean Times FT214 Sept 2006, Edited by **Sutton, Rickard and Sieveking**, 80 pages, ©2006

August 20 to ?? **'The Rim of Space'**, by **A. Bertram Chandler**, 208 pages, © 1981.

Short Book Reviews

Second bite - Master and Commander

As I have explained in the previous issue I chose to read this book after seeing the Russell Crowe movie and out of a sense of curiosity about what there might be in a Military SF / Space Opera without the SF. Having finished reading the book the Movie is more of a stranger. There are elements of the book in the movie but the story line is simplified and modified almost beyond recognition. What's in – The Disguising of the ship, the raft and lights subterfuge, a climactic ship boarding and the deaths in battle of the First officer and the 'boy'. What are absent from the movie is the main subtext of the novel, i.e. the triangular relationship between Captain Aubrey, Dr Maturin and the First Officer James Dillon. Dr Maturin 'loves' the Captain (in a manly way of course) but Dillon is unable to be a friend to Aubrey, as much as Dr Maturin tries to bring about a reconciliation. Dumbing down is at the centre of the differences, the youngest midshipman loses an arm rather than being killed, the adventure takes place off the Mediterranean Coast rather than the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans (is this too much to ask a geographically challenged American film Audience?) there is no Galapagos Island sojourn and as mentioned last month, the Irish question is deleted from the plot as too complex to deal with (or still too controversial to deal with for American audiences who need 'black' and 'White'?).

The Irish question is the reason for the tension between the three main characters of the book. Both Dillon and Dr Maturin are Irishmen, Catholics and to varying degrees Irish patriots with enough reason to want to keep their involvement in the Home Rule movement quiet. They each have to deal with the conflict between nationalism and loyalty to the British Crown and antipathy to the Spanish-French foe.

The Ophiuchi Hotline, by **John Varley** was a very good read. There were ideas to spare and the implications of new technologies were frequently worked out. The story is set in our Solar System a few hundred years after the arrival of incomprehensibly superior aliens who take over the Earth leaving a remnant of humanity to live or die on the less inviting Asteroids, Moons and planets. At much the same time humanity picks up signals that appear to be coming across interstellar space from aliens in Ophiuchi. The technology decoded from these signals helps a great deal, saying that it is time to pay up for services rendered!

A technology that the humans have is mind recording and down loading into cloned bodies. This technology creates new crimes and criminal opportunities for the powerful. Boss Tweed, an out of power ruler of the Moon, saves one condemned prisoner from death and sends a series of her clones on a journey out to Pluto to independently confirm the messages received from space. Each time she attempts to escape she is killed and then re-made until the job is done. A prisoner Inhabited Asteroid is fitted with black hole powered space drive and leaves the Solar System. The Aliens explain that the way of the Universe is that incomprehensibly more powerful aliens just move in to the nicest Planets, displacing their native inhabitants into the void. If their race survives it in turn evolves and innovates until it in turn finds a Planet of beings that it can dispose. The 'price' that these signal sending aliens ask is apparently for a cultural blood transfusion of human society and culture, coz over the Millennia, to get by in intergalactic society all surviving cultures are merged and no-one in space has a sense of identity. There are a

lot more ideas in this book than in most thick Sci-Fi trilogies.

Unnatural Fathers by **Catherine Storr** is a 'naive' attempt by a mainstream and 'Women's issues' writer to write Science Fiction. What I mean by this is that an attempt has been made through a novel to set and answer a 'What if' question in nonfiction. The 'what if' is a procedure that allows men to be implanted and carry a baby to full term. Not an astonishing idea in SF, but a 'novel' idea to the writer? This story seems filled with 1960s characters. Bit players left over from the Jerry Cornelius stories. Titled ladies, knighted doctors etc, elements of the British establishment as it once was, but which now seems so 'nineteenth century'. To a present day reader the social set up of the story now needs more explanation than does the McGuffin. For all that it is not a bad treatment of the issue. I expect that a 'real SF writer' could have told the tale a bit better. In any case, the shock value of the story is now only an historical curiosity, as in 1980 with the birth of the first Test Tube baby, the current spectre of human cloning, Surragecy, therapeutic cloning et al the game has moved on a piece! I suspect it was written more as an exercise to explore 'what if **not only** women could give birth'.

Star Courier (Dininity by Spacial Delivery), by **A. Bertram Chandler**, was my first installment of my self appointed personal Bert Chandler read-athon ahead of the 2006 Freecon. I must say this first installment was a bit of a surprise. A Space Opera with Sex? What was old Bert thinking, Heinlein envy?

The story starts off with Commander Grimes reduced in circumstances, Captain and crew of an interstellar capable Pinnacle, basically a space rowboat. Out of the Space Navy Survey service (in a previous adventure) he decides to try to make a living from niche commercial shipping, i.e. carrying the mail to out of the way places that full sized freighters can't afford to service. He takes on a cargo and a lady postmistress passenger who 'gets physical'. The local union rep tips him off about 'lady passengers', get it all down on taper he urges! His first exercise in commerce

goes pear shaped, as an engine failure leads to captivity on an insectoid race's starship. This hive race is looking for a new planet. A key part of the story is the tape of grimes and the Postmistress 'at it' interests the insects greatly. They mean to seize a world with an ongoing religious tension between an old and new religion. The New religion rules and is very puritanical about sex. The older religion celebrates it! The tape and the two humans are exhibited to the natives as evidence that the insects are your friends and that any outsiders are perverts. At this point via a fortuitous escape the story morphs into revolution with the two humans represented as the old gods returned. The final 'laugh' after all the trouble that sex has caused is that the urgent Delivery turns out to be a case of tins/jars of Venus Strawberries, a Cosmic Viagra that were ordered by a needy planetary 'impotentate' who needed to stiffen his political standing!

It occurred to me in writing this review that you could probably take and with minimal re-writes place Grimes' Rim Worlds adventures into the universe of 'Serenity', it's that sort of a rollicking cowboy like universe.

Sci-Fi Classics – DVD Reviews

The Atomic Brain

They don't make movies like this any more! Body Snatching, an attractive threesome, Brains, Home Nuclear Reactors and vengeful augmented Cats!

The story goes that a rich old bitch has a mansion in the Hollywood hills, an elderly gigolo and a brain transplant Scientist with a basement Cyclotron/Nuclear reactor in the cellar (makes a change from Castle Towers?) The Eighty year old rich bitch wants a new body, so she has employed the Scientist to perfect his technique of brain transferring (A fnord alert seems in order, as the book I am currently reading is **John Varley's** 'The Ophiuchi Hotline', which features frequent mind transfers into *Cloned* bodies).

The 'Atomic' of the Atomic Brain come is into the story as the Scientist uses the process of an immersion into the Cyclotron (reactor pile?) as a way of kick starting the transplanted brain

in its new body. This also allows him to have a button on his console that allows for the self-destruction by nuclear fire of all evidence of the Scientist's wrong-doing, the mansion and all its inhabitants. As a warm up, until the threesome are delivered, he does a bit of body snatching, producing an animal in a man's body and a mindless attractive young woman to wander around until the 'monster' kills it (off screen!). I would not be surprised if a 'European' edition of this film exists with pornographic interludes to exploit the wardrobe opportunities created by these otherwise stunted plot branches. Three attractive young 'family-less' housemaids are hired (off the internet?) to end up as raw material for the next stage of the in-house research project. One is Mexican, one is 'British' and one is Austrian. Little effort made on 'accent support'. The 'British' one (Nina pronounced 'Nine Ah') lapses frequently into 'Hollywood Cockney/Australian'. The Austrian Girl speaks in a Midwest US accent and as for the Mexican, well the Scientist is fond of his cat, so naturally he transfers the cat into the Mexican girl, saving the production one speaking role and increasing further the further the libidinous opportunities of the European version! The Cat/Mexican girl wanders round in just a shirt and manages to scratch the British girl's eyes out, disfiguring her beyond use to the Rich Bitch, so the Austrian girl is 'it' for the proposed brain/body swap. On the operating table the doctor has a change of heart. The Rich Bitch gets put into the 'spare' cat body and the Austrian Girl gets to keep her own body, the Cat / the Rich Bitch locks the Scientist in his own Cyclotron, presses the button to radiates him to a skeleton and then triggers the atomic self destruct button. The Girl escapes, the Rich Bitch/Cat pursues, as all of the Rich Bitch's wealth was transferred to the girl that the Rich Bitch had intended to inhabit. Amazing stuff, a truly moral tale?

Book and Movie Review

'Stupid White Men', 283 pages, © 2001 and 'Shooting for Columbine', both by Michael Moore

I saw the movie on SBS at much the same time as I was reading the book. The Edition of the book I read was the post 911 Penguin

edition, which details some of the difficulties with the original publisher that this 'treasonous' volume experienced. It was released immediately after the World Trade Centre bombing, although it had been in the pipeline for two years.

I had seen some of Michael Moore's work on SBS and I gained the impression that to say the things he did well, he must have been a Canadian, the land of lakes, Mounties and Freely expressed Liberal points of view! The book is not about 911, although if you follow the hints you can understand why events like 911 and Enron et al have been allowed to happen. Put simply, in America the Lunatics (Stupid White Men with money) have not only taken over the Asylum, they have Privatized it to their own narrow benefit. The checks and balances of the once great Republic have been mostly clear felled and wood chipped for public loss and private gain. There is a chapter that lists the astonishing details of the engineering of a Bush the Younger's victory in Florida over Gore during the 2000 Presidential election. A movie on that would be interesting to see! The rest of the book's twelve chapters wanders across aspects of American life, uncovering Folly, Farce and the consequences of 'Freedom in America'. There are descriptions of the US Republicans in service of 'Stupid White Men with money' but the US Democrats are similarly mentioned as not being active enough on behalf of the US Public Interest. I'm sure that here is more than enough material about in Australian political journalist's bottom drawers for an Australian version, but it must be said that in the US 'Free Speech' like this book is still possible. This is not a book for 'America Haters', but it does challenge your assumptions about the land of the scared and homeland security.

The movie has a much more single-minded focus, Guns and America. It poses the question of why is America different, why do more Americans kill each other with guns than any other country in the World. All the usual excuses are investigated and found to be invalid. Canadians have as many guns, other multi racial societies are nearly gun death free, and countries with histories of violence and persecution have negligible.

The only remaining excuse is that American Society feeds on a type of self-fueling fear, justifying the need to be armed and the 'strike back first' in the expectation of conflict. In reading the book there were to me a few 'wrong notes' but generally Mike Moore's work comes across as an amiable exploration of 'why does it have to be this way' in the World's only remaining Superpower. The tag of Michael Moore as being 'Leftist' just does not seem to fit at all.

Original Fiction

To be overheard on a train?

© GPD August 19, 2006 – 715 words

'Yeah! I always sit here'. The man said.

With a wave of his meaty middle aged hands he indicate the area of the end of the train carriage with its two long and facing bench seats on each side. He was speaking to Natalie, the young office worker who was sitting at the far end of the opposite bench seat. She was grateful for the width of the carriage between them, as the man's hand gestures had spread but not to greatly dissipate the not unpleasant, and vaguely flowerlike smell of someone who been drinking heavily a fair few hours before.

Natalie was dressed in a practical and drip-dry sort of office get up, suitable for the office and suitable for going out on a Friday night? Her arms were bare to the shoulder and she was wearing a dark red vinyl top and a short dark skirt of leather like material. The sort of getup that any messy office mishap could just be wiped off, without any fear of leaving a permanent stain. She was however wearing rubber gloves. Did this suggest an aversion to being touched, or to touching what other people had touched, or perhaps a desire for privacy? The talking man showed no sign of noticing this as he continued to speak.

She was sitting so quietly, avoiding eye contact and seemed to be desperately trying not to be noticed. Only a few more stops to go now, Natalie thought.

'They call this the 'Vestibule'. The man said

to Natalie. He took every care to speak slowly and to correctly pronounce each of the word's easy to slur syllables, as if to show he was a man of some education and not just a pissed passenger to be mutely endured on a Friday night.

He continued, in a more confidential tone, 'From here you can see everyone who comes and goes'. 'Who goes up and who goes down'.

The motion of his hands now seemed to mimic the path of the new passengers who had just joined the train, as they decided to go and try for a seat on the train's upper or lower deck. 'And If you don't like the look of them', He said, alcohol completely insulating him from any sense of irony, as his hands indicating the door to the passage between carriages. 'You can get up and try the next carriage'.

Not waiting for any response from the woman he continued. 'I always sit in the vestibule now, coz you never forget that first time'. 'That time when you are tipped off first by the pale blood drained look on the faces of the passengers facing you'.

'That silence'.

'That silence but for the faint slow drip, drip, drip of someone else's life blood that lets you know that there's an Axe murderer on the train and he's standing right close behind you'. 'Axe in one hand and in the other probably a head held up by the hair and still bleeding. Blood and gore up to his elbows and plastered all over his face that stupid cock sucking mad grin.'

'You don't forget it'. He paused,

'You don't forget it, not the first time.'

The cleaver weighed heavily in Natalie's open handbag. The Stainless Steel edge of the cleaver was honed Oh So sharp. So sharp that once a sleep-over boyfriend on finding it had playfully offered to help shave her with it, not knowing that it was The cleaver with the Oh So thirsty blade.

So thirsty, and, "One less stop to go now" she thought.

By now the carriage was nearly empty and the train only two stops away from the tunnel, the tunnel where passengers covered their ears at the volume of noise from the scream and shriek of the train's wheels.

Where the noise of steel on steel would blot out the sound made by any human throat. Whether made in agony or in exultation.

As she was thinking this, her hand undid the clasp and she reached into her handbag feeling past the make up and coins. Natalie could feel the chill of the stainless steel handle through the rubber of her gloves. Steel on flesh. It felt good.

Natalie thought, 'It felt Oh So good',

'to be Jack's daughter!' – GPD © SEP 2006

A Basenji Tail Piece - Basenji on a hot plate?

At Mystique Pukkanut's first home at Dural she had the comfort of an infra red light/heater suspended over her sleeping area. Dural is considerably more inland and elevated than Earlwood / Clemton Park. At our place she sleeps (by choice!) in a steel basenji travel crate. Depending on the season this crate is wrapped or unwrapped with canvas and corflute (old election placards abandoned by the major party candidates after each election) to keep the cold out and with flyscreen in the warmer months to let the cooling breezes in but keep the mosquitos out.

While winter frost is almost a thing of the past in Sydney, thanks Dubya for the Global warming! and as Earlwood / Clemton Park must be a few degrees warmer at night than Round Corner Dural, Mystique's previous place of residence, there are still several 0 to 5 degree minimum nights during Winter. Basenjies have a body temperature of nearly 42 degrees C (human 38) and maintaining that Body-Air temperature gap in 10 kg of elderly

Basenji is no small task. Personally I wouldn't like to be out at night in only a thin fur coat!

- How long it takes in-crate temperature to drop to outside air temperature.

While we had two Basenjis to share this sleeping crate and while Mystique was younger this was less of a problem, as each Basenji was doing 'Blanket duty' for the other and the combined heat from ~25 kg of Basenji kept the air temperature in the crate comfortable enough.

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© Garry P Dalrymple August September 2006

Of late I have placed a 100 watt electric plate warmer (bought for \$5 from an opportunity shop!) to one side of the 200 mm air gap that separates her cage from the Concrete and brickwork that surrounds her crate. The hot plate itself is too hot to comfortably rest your hand on for long, but it is not hot enough to burn the skin off your hand. The intention is to raise the air temperature in the crate above to about that of Winter daily maximum / Summer daily minimum temperatures rather than to bake the Basenji.

NB 100 watts of heat from the Plate warmer. Midday Solar energy for the floor space of the cage would be approximately 900 watts, a small bar heater typically runs at 1000 watts.

If it ends up too hot directly over the plate warmer she still has a cooler side of the crate to rest on. The preliminary experiment (conducted 7 pm to 10 pm) resulted in in-crate air temperatures of about 18 degrees while outside it was around 10 degrees.

Ideally I would like to have a set up with a timer or a thermostat controlled switch set on an 'ideal' temperature, allowing for her crate to be left open at night even in winter so that her aging plumbing can be accommodated. Another consideration is that with some automatic heating it would be possible on some occasions to not have to come home at night just to let in and lock up the dog at night as we do presently.

Significant Data still to be collected

- Temperature / Time curves to indicate maximum heating effect
- How long it takes to raise this temperature