

Transcendental Basenjjs Sermons & Enlightenment Number 21

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Detailing events of August and Sept. 2006
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This issue includes;

*Science Fiction Stories
featuring Intelligent Animals*

The Spocksoc Trivia Night

30 years of Sydney Dr Who

SF Stories that are Spin offs

*Banned Books and better
ways to stock Libraries*

Books I've read, Sept-Nov

Editorial Comments

This newsletter is a revived and re-typed version of a partial print out of an earlier draft version TBS&E No. 21. It's resurrection was much delayed by events that included the 2006 Sydney Freecon and the Data death of the disc containing the full draft was caused by the failure of my home PC's D Drive.

This also defeated earlier attempts at revival (which killed TBS&E 20 and 22!) so this is my third attempt, which is only been made possible through the use of a lap top (yes it is That old) and having the post Christmas week off and time to think. As I have been doing this I have the Post Freecon three Kilo plus mass of TBS&E 22 waiting to go to the Post Office and I am also reading through ANZAPA mailing 234 in preparation to doing up the mailing comments that will appear in TBS&E 23.

I am going through a very pleasant week at the moment, from June to December my main fixation has been the Freecon. That is now over for the year and I am considering reviewing and revising all the 2006 Freecon related files ahead of making any announcement about the 2007 one. At the moment I have the relative luxury of being able to take the time to think about things and to dip into Fanac as I choose. With the ANZAPA 234 mailing to hand it is quite pleasant, I liken the feeling to being at a Worldcon class relaxacon as I can pick up and read your ANZAPA newsletter as if we were encountering each other at a Worldcon fan lounge and we had all the time in the world for a chat before wandering off to the next program item.

GPD December 29, 2006

Mailing comments.

Sorry, there are no mailing comments with this issue, they were all lost or terminally corrupted with the data death of the 'real' version of TBS&E no 21.

Quark Strangeness & Charm in Sydney

Travel Notes

1. New Mobile Phone Features?

At Burwood waiting for a 400 bus to take me home I noticed two young misses. One was rubbing her mobile phone on the edge of her top. I asked her 'Is this a new feature? Like in Aladdin's Lamp - i. e. rub it and a genie appears? This was met with the eloquence and loquacity of modern youth - Dumb Silence.

Yellow Pages Science Fiction

Garry's notes of Sydney SF&F meetings attended during August, September and October 2006

Notes on the Sydney Futurian's meeting of Friday August 18, 2006. Topic: SF Stories featuring Intelligent Animals

Notes on the Spocksoc Quiz night of September 01, 2006 at the John Thomas room of the Round house at the University of NSW

Notes on the Civic Hotel Fans at the pub gathering of Tuesday September 05, 2006

Notes on the Sunday September 10, 2006 meeting at the Drummoyne RSL Club to celebrate 30 years of the Sydney Dr Who Club

Notes on the Infinitas Book shop SF&F discussion meeting of Thursday October 05, 2006. Topic: Spinoffs
Notes on the Sydney Mechanics School of Arts Institute Science Fiction and

Fantasy book group meeting of Saturday October 28, 2006

Notes on Friday August 18, 2006.

For me, the distractions and detours made the evening. After encountering Anne, Diane and John at the Subway Bookshop I moved on to the ABC Building complex. I had 'earned' a pair of tickets to the 'Sleek Geeks' Science week event (gave them to my Niece and Sister in Law) and thought that I might say 'hello' to them if they were late in arriving. Ahead of this month's meeting I had made up 45 or so copies of a revised edition of my 'Where's the SF in Sydney'.

An Ad Hoc Survey of attitudes to SF

I spent about ten minutes (before 7 pm) hanging round the ABC Foyer and offer these flyers to the late comers for the 'Sleek Geeks' event. I offered them with a sales pitch of 'Would you like some Science Fiction to go with your Science Week experience?'. I was tolerated by ABC reception and Security staff after explaining what I was about and the reaction to the flyers was good. Well over 80% of the people I approached seemed very pleased to receive a bit of information about Science Fiction. About 5 % said 'No' often quite reflexively (did I look like a Scientologist of something?) another 5 to 10% had to pause and think about the question, before deciding that they had no need of any additional SF in their lives. What does this all mean? A hidden unsatisfied need for more SF events in Sydney? Was I presumed to be some sort of 'The Chaser' stunt? A serious need for Natcon committees to organise a presence at Science Week activities? I Dunno. I am tempted to see the 2007 Science Week as an opportunity to reverse the fortunes of The Sydney Futurians, as all of the people showing up for this event were showing up for a weeknight event and therefore might be more likely to attend a SF&F discussion meeting than the average SF reader?

After this I walked to the UTS Tower Building Foyer where I met Anne Rankins and we waited for the Foxes to arrive as there was still some

time to go before 7 pm. While doing this we talked and I invited a rather nice student who was sitting opposite from us what she read and managed to draw her into the conversation. At first she denied any interest in 'SF&F' but it emerged that she really enjoyed reading 'Magic Realism'. For her Hard Science / High Technology for Technology's sake and Battles / Empires in Space were real turn-offs, as were the really thick Fantasy books. She had in fact read and rather enjoyed the **Evil Talking Squid Queen's 'A Handmaiden's Tale'**. We explained that there was much better SF out there than that. I suggested anything by **Ursula K. Le Guin** or **Johanna Russ** and we had quite a pleasant chat out of it. Not quite a Road to Damascus conversion to the joys of SF, but I think she left the conversation with a better impression of SF&F than that which she started the evening with and some understanding of what SF fans mean by SF. This conversation was part of the reason why we ended up having an additional minor topic added to the meeting.

Notes on the Sydney Futurian's meeting of Friday August 18, 2006. Topic: Science Fiction Stories featuring Intelligent Animals

Present were; Garry Dalrymple, Diane Fox John Fox and Anne Rankins Apologies were received from Brian Walls Contributing Virtual Futurian - Kevin Phyland

SF and Science News for August

GD - The first Anniversary of the **Mechanics SF&F book reader's discussion meeting** is on Saturday August 26, 2006 from 11.30 to 1.30 pm. A Tardis shaped cake to celebrate?

- The **Sydney Dr Who club** will celebrate 30 years on Sunday September 10, 2006 at a meeting to be held at the Drummoyne RSL Club.

- A 'Sci-Fi' magnetic levitating bed has been made, or rather a base for a mattress, it costs \$1 million plus.

- I have done up a revised 'Where's the SF' guide and was able to hand out over forty at the ABC Science week event taking place across Harris Street.

- Objects bigger than Jupiter but smaller than the Sun (0.01 Solar Masses) have been detected orbiting each other. At the moment they plan to call them '**Planemos**'.

- **Turkish Archaeologists** are claiming Conan the Barbarian as a native son! Connan was a 'Cimmerian' and some evidence suggests that they originated in Asia Minor in the 8th Century BCE and stayed briefly in the ancient city of Antandros. This explains the How, but not the Why!

- A home sized Three-Dee projection system has been invented. Just like Princess Leia's? It uses a self generated water vapour cloud as a screen.

- I am currently reading a second **A. Bert Chandler** Story, 'The Rim of Space'.

Battlestar Galactica is back on Free to air TV, can you spot the Mormon references?

DF is working on her Bad Taste Fan Fiction epic. Five pages at a time is being offered for review on a web page.

JF - There has been some activity on the Futurian Bulletin Board, not all of it pornography or Viagra type offers.

- The UTS is to take part in SF-nal brain measuring research, to detect precursor signs of Driver fatigue.

- **Pluto** may not be a Planet any longer. The IAU conference is to sort out the status of **Pluto, Xena, Sedna** and any other future 'Way out There' bigger than Asteroid sized objects.

AR - is about to start reading **Ben Bova's 'Titan'** which is part of a series of books, one book per Planet or large moon. This book has just appeared at her local library branch.

- All present had seen and were impressed by the Catalyst program about the discovery of '**Thylacaleo**' Marsupial Lion skeleton in a limestone cave under the Nullabor plain.

What do we mean by 'Intelligent Animals'

We started by discussing what we meant by 'intelligent animals'. The majority view was that anything that had a civilisation and ran a planet had to be 'people', irrespective of their shape or appearance to humans. The minority view was that people, even humans, were all animals. The idea was further refined to be that 'animals' had to have 'people' above them.

This argument runs into difficulties when you

include some comensal relationships encountered in SF, i.e. the 'Hexapumas' of **David Webber's** the Honor Harrington stories. Hexapumas are pretty smart, have Tool use, language and Society, but Humans rule. Without humans being present they would have to be considered as 'human' as **Poul Anderson's** 'Hoka', and what of **H. Beam Piper's** 'Little Fuzzies'? Animal or people as their Space Flight achievements are not initially known. There was some dissent on this as well, as by right of Biology, all Aliens (except the mechanical) must also be animals?

To be 'human' we generally understand this to imply both human in body form and intellect. Many SF stories play with this for effect, discussing the differences between men and animal species as it is far more PC these days than to bring 'Class' or 'Race' into such a debate. Animals Fantasies such as in Watership Down by **Richard Adams**, where animals had people-like quests and personalities are more the rule these days? Well before SF there were Fables and stories featuring anthropomorphised animals such as **Aesops** and The Wind in the Willows. Animals acting like people in fur suits. Should we rule out Animal shaped Aliens such as the Lion headed Cat people in **C. H. Cherryh's** Chanur's pride? Do we insert a requirement that 'Animals' must not be the dominant species of a planet if so in **Pierre Boule's** 'Monkey Planet (AKA Planet of the Apes) we have to allow that humans can be 'intelligent Animals' and also in **Dean Swift's** 'Gullivers Travels (among the Brobdingnagians and the Yahoo).

Discussing the topic, some instances of Intelligent Animals

The name characters in both 'Francis the Talking Mule' and 'Mr Ed' are clearly intelligent as is the dog in **Harlan Ellison's** 'A Boy and his Dog'. All three are animals intelligent enough to know when to keep their mouths shut! K9 in Dr Who, is a robot to us, but a dog to the Doctor? In **Piers Anthony's** 'Chaos Mode' series of books there are parallel worlds with Animal 'people' inhabiting them.

Turning Animals into Humans and Vice a Versa

There is a Russian Movie where a Doctor transplants the heart of a freshly hung Murderer into a dog. The 'dog' morphs into a human who becomes an NKVD informer and an all round fink. The 'dog' revolts and kills people. The Doctor re-transplants a dog heart into the 'dog' and all is well again. In the special effects driven movie 'The fall of Atlantis' the evil and decadent Atlanteans turn their human slaves into animals (coz they can!). The 'Animals' revolt and end Atlantis. The most famous such story is of course **H. G. Wells'** 'The Island of Dr Moreau' where the usual mad Doctor transforms animals into humans by surgical means, without affecting their animal natures? Inevitably the 'Animals' revolt and end Dr Moreau / Atlantis. You may detect a recurring theme here. In 'The Zap Gun (or the short lived empire of the pigs)' by **Chip Delany** 'Human' society is pretty decadent, they can only field children and enhanced animals to defend Earth from attack by aliens. The Animals are part human, the higher your alleged human ancestry the higher your status (is this a comment on the racial complexion of the US's Vietnam War armed forces?) A powerful new weapon is created, it falls into (and out of) the hands of the pigs , coz of their swine-ish nature. This is rather different than in **Cordwainer Smith's** 'The Instrumentality' books, where the underpeople have defined 'service roles in society, and different again from the treatment of uplifted animals in **David Brin's** 'The Uplift Wars'. In the Uplift wars the whole Universe is populated by species that are each part of a chain of Master and Client species / races in a family relationship. You gain status in the Universe by raising up to full sentience Client species / races you encounter. Humans are the odd ones, as they seem to have spontaneously evolved to sentience (which is against the understood rules!) without 'parental' supervision. This makes them suspect and their ease and generosity in uplifting Dolphins, Chimpanzees, Dogs and Gorillas makes them the object of suspicion. I think that this is a re-interpretation of the post 1960s experience, where newly independent

African (and Asian) countries were invited / tied to their former colonial masters by language and cultural links. The set up also borrows from the Roman cult of the 'Gens' in that you bought slaves, freed them and they thereafter enjoyed legal political and prestige rights as being part of your 'family'.

Sharks with Frikking Lasers on their heads, or animal augmentations that you just know aren't going to end well

In the famous short story (made into a movie, partial inspiration for 'Lawnmower Guy'?)

'Flowers for Algernon', both a mouse and a retarded man are have their intelligence briefly improved by a process that is to prove fatal. There is the melancholic experience of the man having known intelligence and then to see it ebb away. In the aquatic gorefest 'Deep Blue'?

the one with Jacqueline McKenzie in a swimsuit they raise the intelligence of some big toothy sharks, something to do with Alzheimer's research. The Sharks revolt and kill people, while trashing the submerged research station. From **Kevin Phyland** in Victoria we have the story 'Nascent' by **Michael Sutch**. It is apparently a cool story about Canine enhancement. It appeared in a May 1975 edition of Analogue. This made me recall the 'Feminist SF' book 'The Dog's Revolution', which is about all the women of the world turning gradually into dogs and all the dogs turning into Women. Doesn't sound very 'Feminist' does it. The new women revolt, hence the title and a supposedly Feminist / Canine-ist? clique sets up to rule. The reason why I have a great deal of bile stored up on this book is that one of the leaders of the

Dog-to-Women clique is described as 'A Basenjis' and the writer's description of the dog-person's temperament is just plain wrong, about 180 degrees wrong.

Shape Changers

Do we have more Social Comment here, thinking of **C. H. Cherryh's** series of books, Fantasy with a message? - That all men are Filthy Evil Bastards that should be cut up and castrated with rusty razors. In these stories her main characters often live as animals or women, possibly a comentary on the differing status and

obligations that society places on women and that her characters can only be briefly free of these by shape shifting?

People Imprisoned in Animal Form

The Fantasy adventure movie 'Lady Hawk' (any movie that gives a starring role to Solar Eclipses is a winner in my book) comes to mind, but there is also **Jack Chalker's** complex series of 'The Well of the Worlds / All Souls' stories where main characters end up in missfitting animal bodies and families are split up, 're-incarnated' into different sentient species inhabiting a bonsaied artificial Universe of pocket habitats set up by an ancient intelligence for inexplicable reasons.

Mechanically or Computer enhanced Animals

Machine Intelligence counts too! In a book by **Mick Farren** set in a Mad Max sort of a Society based on extrapolations of trends of current (1980s?) US society, you can but a bionic dog with enhanced speed and weaponry to terminate intruders. What was a kidnapped ordinary dog lies dreaming of 'Steak Bushes' until activated by the home security computer. The residual dog within the machine comes to the rescue of the main character in the book's denouement.

In the conclusion of discussing this topic, let us not forget the prophetic final passage of **George Orwell's** 'Animal Farm', to the effect that as the days go by it gets harder to tell the Pigs from the Farmers - Oink!

Additional Sub topic - The SF&F that was on offer to at School to the young Sydney Futurians

Think about it, even before Harry Potter and all that, a large proportion of the fiction offered to school children has contained SF or Fantasy themes, justifiable to catch their interest and start them off on reading and then In High School when books are meant to be taken seriously SF&F seems to drop off the Radar / Curriculum in favour of more 'worthy' reading and those few classic SF texts are effectively poisoned by being 'taught' rather than read for

enjoyment. I mean we SF fans meet to talk about books and enjoy them in much greater depth than the usual classroom serving of 'Tess of the D'Urville's' (a nice Uplift theme evident in that 'L' literature book by **Mr Hardy** care to compare and contrast with anything by **Mr Brin** or any of the other SF writers mentioned above?). Why is it so? Wouldn't it help if SF Fandom and the idea of 'love of stories' were on the curriculum or available as a support for English Studies? Odd isn't it, you hook them into reading with the appeal to the imagination of SF&F themed stories that the children find interesting and engaging and then you tell them to drop it and force them to read the other stuff - for exam marks - is it any wonder that kids are 'off' books? Hardly a recipe to encourage the start of 'life long reading / love of books' is it?

The SF&F ish books we read when we were at school

AR - Was required to read and Review **Fred Hoyle's** 'The Black Cloud' specifically to produce an essay on the defects of SF as a literary genre (knowing the book, a strawman exercise if ever there was one!). She was also offered '1984' but this was not identified as being Science Fiction.

DF - Has no memory of SF&F books during her schooling, but recalls that **Shakespeare's** 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' and The Tempest were taught and that these did have SF&F-nal elements.

JF - Recalls being taught **John Wyndham's** 'The Midwich Cuckoo' which caused him to seek out, buy and read 'The Crystals'.

GD - My first memory of reading a book with SF-ish themes was an illustrated reader called something like 'Akimbo'. It was an Italian translation and it dealt with the arrival of a UFO bearing an adult sized robot called 'Akimbo'. Akimbo was actually only a little boy robot, he had adventures with the local children, then had an accident, requiring the appearance of his daddy (hence no ID4-esque 'Mothership') to fix him up and take him home. A **Very** Fortean story wasn't it! I also recall reading in the School Magazine when they ran a serialization of a sequel to Gullivers Travels, by **T. H. White** (thanks to **Graham Stone** for this point) it was called something like 'Malpaquette'. The story was that an orphaned girl's ancestor had brought back

from Lilliput a hat box full of Lilliputian people and animals and settled them in the garden of his country estate. She befriends them and together they make war on her evil guardians (where's DOCS when you need them!). In High School (Kingsgrove North 1973 to 1979 if you must know) I was taught 1984 and Animal Farm as well as **John Wyndham's** 'The Day of the Triffids' and I also had the opportunity to read, without supervision (they had a box of 'read one and review it' books, I probably read three or four) **Ray Bradbury's** 'Fahrenheit 451', and of course there was 'The Twilight of the Vilp' a book that introduced me to the potential strangeness of the alien mind.

Given the enjoyment that this round of reminiscences provoked we may re-use this as a topic at future Futurian meetings: I. e. '**What were the first SF&F books you can recall reading / your childhood impressions of SF&F**'.

Notes on the Spocksoc Quiz night of September 01, 2006 at the John Thomas room of the Round house at the University of New South Wales

Impressions and Gratuitous Advice

Impressions

A few days before the quiz night **Karl Emmet** of Spocksoc posted to the Eidolist and Eastcoast SF email groups an open invitation to attend Spocksoc's Sci-Fi Trivia night at NSW University. Most Spocksoc meetings seem to be weekly lunchtime / Friday night Video / DVD marathons of current or recent Sci-Fi or Cult TV and Movies. As someone at Spocksoc was making the effort to make contact with the non-campus based SF&F fandom I thought I had better take a look and report back.

Setting Out - My evening started at fourish, as after finishing work I set to listing a box of books that I intended to take and giveaway as a goodwill gesture. These were the contents of one of the six boxes of Futurians books that

were hibernating in my garage. To each I added a sticker 'A gift from the Sydney Futurians etc'. I left the office at ~5.30 pm, a train got me from Bankstown to Campsie. I was on a 400 bus by 6 pm and I managed to arrive at the NSW University at about 7.30 pm. I had had plenty of time on the bus to consider the Eloi Vs Morlock nature of Spocksoc meetings and University student life in general, even in the 1980s and 1990s there were those who saw the University only by night, only after work Vs those who studied and who presumably also partied in daylight (Morlocks - Part-timers, Eloi - Fulltime students).

Impressions

The trouble with holding meetings in any 'Round House' is that without sides and corners, room directions should be given as Polar Coordinates, i.e. the meeting is behind the door 120 degrees along from the steps, but they never are. The way to the meeting was marked by a trail of Klingon insignia! When I arrived the quiz was about one third of the way through, a punishing Fifteen rounds of Twelve questions each! There were enough people present to make me think that the forty 'Where's the SF in Sydney' I had brought would not be enough to go round. I spoke to the organisers about the giveaway books and joined the smallest table of quiz compeditors. It seems that there were only two extroverts on the Spocksock committee. Overall the gender mix of the meeting was quite good with about one third of those present being young women. As I tend to do these days, on arrival I was measuring up the venue for its potential as a possible Freecon venue, and yes indeed I could see myself organizing a Freecon style event for these people in this room, but that is very much for the future and after a long line of ifs. The First Surprise of the night was that several UTS students were Spocksoc members and attending the quiz. They were unaware of the Futurians or even the SF gamers. Second Surprise was the number of questions based on several single gimmick not-so-good Sci-Fi programs like Quantum Leap, Sliders and (yuck) Lost. Third Surprise, University Students these days are apallingly inarticulate, I mean not stupid, just unable to clearly explain off the cuff what matters to them. When I was a child we could all talk

the legs off a table at the drop of a hat and all present must have received higher HSC marks than I ever did, just to gain entrance to Uni. Fourth Surprise, they have changed all the names of the degrees since I was there. Fifth Surprise, They were not so good on SF Book questions. My being on the team raised their performance from dismal last to a decent third out of four. As arranged, the Pizzas arrived (ordered at 7.30, delivered after 9 pm) and the meeting moved to Face-stuffing-mode I was able to take the floor and with the attention of the meeting proceeded to give out the fourteen books. I read out the Author's name, then the title and all books rapidly found new owners. The intent of this procedure was to avoid an unmoderated Seagull like scramble for the books which would have seen the 'best' books going to the fastest and the greediest leaving several 'dud' books behind. I gave the usual ET speech 'SF&F fans of Spocksoc, you are not alone' and I handed out 30 ish leaflets, as about a third of the 7.30 pm people had already expired of hunger / left for the evening before the Pizza had arrived. The Quiz terminated at 10 pm with only twelve of the fifteen planned rounds completed. In order of the table's quiz results the groups at each table were allowed to loot the Spocksoc gifts box.

I was out of the meeting at ten past to discover - no toilets were open after 10 pm! Oh Dear! Fortunately I was on a 400 bus home by 10.25 and home at 11.15 pm. The length of this trip home compares favourably with other trips home from city SF meetings. All in all I had a pretty good time. Due to the work to NSW University travel time I cannot expect to be a regular at future Spocksoc meetings, but I would like to keep in touch with the Spocksoc people.

Gratuitous Advice - Suggestions to the Spocksoc Committee

First let me just say that I think that you guys are doing a terrific job. Forty plus people in one place on a Friday night for a SF / Sci-Fi Quiz is a great achievement. You have a great group going and the format of a quiz night

has great potential for increasing contact between all of Sydney's Campus and non-Campus based SF&F groups. That said, I think that there are several improvements that can be made.

The LOTR issue - A 6 pm to 10 pm, fifteen round, twelve questions per round quiz is just too damned long. The Sci-Fi fans who attend NSW Uni live all over the place, for many a 10 pm end means meeting an 11 pm train at Central and getting home probably after Midnight. People do need their beauty Sleep on a Saturday Morning, especially ex-Applied Science Students!

The Invitational - Why not make a point of inviting each of the University's Colleges to field a team / table for the next quiz night? You could take this further, by inviting the SF&F clubs at Sydney's other Universities to take part and compete for 'fabulous prizes'. Could be the start of an intercampus challenge? You could even consider inviting teams from the nearby High Schools, Sydney Boys, Sydney Girls and Randwick etc, introducing next year's freshmen to Spocksoc before they do their HSC? Teach them that 'Nerds Rock'!

Turn the Temple into a Marketplace - as most of the people attending would not be out of place at a Sydney Dr Who event, why not invite them and their portable shop of Whovian goodies (DVDs, Videos, Books and figurines) along as well?

Spocsoc Free Spagboll Nights - Pizza is great food for fans, but whenever you order in you and the timing of your meeting are at the mercy of external forces. Consider also your members living at the colleges, to attend your quiz they are probably giving up a paid for meal at college. A big order of Pizza goes only after the last one is ready and your order will be delayed by other orders. The meal break happens at a time convenient to the supplier rather than the orderer. You could order before the event say '60% of what we ordered last time' and then put in a second order to cover the balance of what people actually want, or for not much organisational effort in keeping track of who ordered what / who paid what, you could approach the Student's Union or

one of the College kitchens to deliver a cauldron of Pasta (and meat sauce, vegetarian sauce, halal / kosher sauce, breadrolls, plates and cutlery etc.) at a time of your choosing and take away all the mess afterwards. The Colleges / Student's Union have these people / facilities on tap. It shouldn't cost more per head to than ordering in Pizza and if it were very much cheaper you could run it as a member attracting 'Free Dinner'. There is probably a Casoc subsidy you could apply for as well and isn't an opportunity of University life the opportunity of learning how to make deals? If you get an oversupply of Spag Boll, then like generations before you, the households of Committee members can live off leftovers for weeks afterwards - very character building and something to bore your children / grand children with the re-telling of.

One slightly (more) Silly Suggestion to even things up - Mandate a maximum of six per team, it sux when your table is four against fifteen! Have the team nominate 'Drinkers' and 'Non-Drinkers (drivers)', max two non-drinkers per team. To even things up, at the end of each round the lowest scoring team gets to nominate which member of the winning team has to scull a standard drink. In the case of registered 'non-drinkers' something healthy like a schooner of Banana Custard, vile 'health tea' or some weird Soya milk concoction can be substituted for the alcoholic drink.

This can allow for many happy hours of malicious fun as the 'losers' plot which of the 'winners' to take out with the liquid handicap.

Postscript - Kathleen Tanswell of Spocksoc attended and participated in a SF&F Clubs panel at the 2006 Sydney Freecon. I believe she had a good time and reported the same back to her committee.

Notes on the Civic Hotel Fans at the pub gathering of Tuesday September 05, 2006

Unfortunately this meeting is only too easy to describe. I was the only one who showed up, so there was not much need for chat to

catch up with other fans. I visited the Civic hotel twice between 6.20 pm and 7 pm and could recognise no one of a 'fannish appearance'. A trip into town, waiting and a trip home, three and a half hours of my life gone for what? I am very concerned at the dissipation of the momentum that this gathering has suffered (compared to the previous few gatherings) as I cannot see an improvement occurring without sustained effort on behalf of the gathering's organisers, **Chris Barnes** and **Zara Baxter**. October in Sydney usually has better weather than September, in November the pub will be filled by post Melbourne Cup Day celebrants and during December and January fans make themselves scarce. Dunno what can be done about it, whether announcing a recess until the new year or the appointment of some one with enough get up and go to actively start promoting the event. That someone will not be me though! I emailed a version of the above to Chris Barnes. Things did improve a bit after that.

Notes on the Sunday September 10, 2006 meeting at the Drummoyne RSL Club to celebrate 30 years of the Sydney Dr Who Club

This month's meeting was a return to the Drummoyne RSL Club as the format of the meeting required more of an auditorium / theatre venue than a pub bar / billiard room. It was a two bus trip for me and it proved to be a greatly 'retro' day which was appropriate given that it was to celebrate 30 years of the Sydney Dr Who group, which to my mind is the major Australian Media SF group as it persists and has run seven Fan run / not for profit Dr Who conventions, where other commercialised Media SF groups have come and gone. Consequently there was little 'Noo Hoo' on offer, which affected the attendance levels. Mostly the program consisted of Tom Baker Dr Who episodes, 'The Mask of Mandragora' (showing at the time of the club's genesis during 1976) and some discussion panels about how the club got started. The attendance peaked at about sixty and was mostly more than 45 (by empty chair count) at all times during the day.

Two Surprises - Firstly I attended this meeting with fifteen SF&F books to give away; and mostly

they just didn't get it, that is the idea of accepting free (non-Dr Who) books. Eventually the books did go, to older members of the audience, suggesting that the younger Dr Who fans simply do not read non-Dr Who SF&F books! Alarming.

Secondly I noticed that there were four sets of 'girls with parent' as opposed to only one 'boy with parent'. I'm unsure what this means, is it that more girls are wanting to see Dr Who (now that the Dr is the 'hot' Tennant), or is it that daughters are more supportive of 'sad old dad's' uncool Dr Who obsession?

Much more observation on the day, sadly all lost to irretrievable data death.

Notes on the Infinitas Book shop SF&F discussion meeting of Thursday October 05, 2006. Topic: Spinoffs

Present were; Darryl Addams, David Bofinger, Henry Chatroop, Garry Dalrymple, Kurt Frank, Jo Kay, Wil Kenedy, Mick Ousley, Charmain Spears and Tim (infinitas owner)
Apologies were received from Brian Walls.

Some SF&F News for October

DA - Battlestar Galactica series three starts showing in the US real soon. It will involve the resistance struggle of the survivors on the Cylon occupied Planets.

- Probably as a reaction to the quality of recent Battlestar Galactica episodes Stargate SG1 and Stargate Atlantis are slowing their production rate to aim for better quality product.

- **Kurt Frank** is holding a video weekend (at his place?), probably on the same day as the 2006 Sydney Freecon

- A recent episode of The Collectors (ABC TV) featured Dr Who stuff, this was announced months ago at a Dr Who event as well, they were phishing for obsessives with 'collectibles'

- The promised release dates of 'Private lives of the Imperial Space Marines Volume 2' (a sequel to a spinoff of ?) has been very much delayed.

- **'Bucky Eggs'**, lopsided carbon Bucky Balls have been produced (try beating that Mr

Faberge!). I think that they can be used to 'cage' some reactive metallic atoms or drug molecules.

- The **European Space Agency** is sending out a message to the Stars - with **Nude Narrators** (filth!) and we hope some SBS style subtitles?

DB - His novel length SF story is 'becalmed' and the plot needs to be re-engineered around some sticking point.

- The Heinlein and TB treatment story, when the only treatment available was frequently fatal, Heinlein was third in line, the first two died one from error, the other from heart stopping fear, who was the braver, the guy who died of fear or Heinlien who survived?

HC - **The Pentagon** is to fund a two year feasibility study into a ground-to-orbit magnetic accelerator / collider ring.

- An Ex-NASA engineer is working on a Microwave powered shaped wave-guide as a spacecraft thruster. 30,000 Newtons of thrust from a single kilowatt of power! The 'Q' effect inhibits the efficiency of this process but he is now talking to Linear Accererator guys who have to deal with 'Q' all the time (its good to see an ex-Star Trek charactor 'moving on').

GD - Announced the **2006 Sydney Freecon** / and the **People's Choice Short SF Story Writing competition** and distributed promotional paper to all present who wanted it.

KF - Dannish researchers have teleported some atoms across a metre at 'Light Speed' (which varies!). **Quantum Entanglement** has the potential to transmit information at ~1500 times the speed of light. An **Ansible** in every home soon? (an **Ursula K. Leguin** and **Dave Langford** reference all in a single aside!).

WK - Time to dump all your Star Trek DVDS Now! As Paramount is set to re-release everything again with new computer generated special effects, but no 'renovation' of squeaky old wooden plots or acting.

MO - Mentioned a new movie being made in New Zealand that features **Carnivorous Sheep** (and sexually insatiable?). Model makers have experienced much grief in trying to make sheep mouths convincingly carnivorous.

GD - Also in NZ, they have found an island where the rabbits have started eating the nesting birdlife! Roll over **Russell Braddon**!

Discussion of the topic, mostly instances of Spinoffs in SF

Some discussion of the nature of the topic

For the purposes of our discussion of 'Spin off's we had to decide what was 'in' and what was 'out'. We decided to rule out **Sequels** or **Prequels**, that is stories set in the same universe with continuing main characters from an earlier work. Also had to consider **Shared World Stories**, in as a maybe, sometimes. There needs to be a *right-angle-turn* between the original story and the spinoff. A major change of story perspective is required, some minor characters may be promoted to become new major characters in the spinoff, but the new story has to have a life and a new direction of its own.

Some Instances

There will be more Dr Who spinoffs, 'Torchwood', 'Sarah Jane Investigates' and even a partly animated 'K9 and Friends'.

Spinoff or 'homebake' Star Trek is ubiquitous, reportedly actively being made by fans in thirty eight groups / countries / places. It is filling the 'need' for Star Trek with some paper pulp thin wooden acting, but frequently the special effects are at a professional level. Paramount seems pretty relaxed about it, as long as its 'not-for-profit'. It is afterall keeping interest in their franchise alive at no cost to the studio.

Star Trek DS9 was a rare spinoff that was better than the original, STNG.

Other 'Better than the Original' (at times) series would have to include 'Buffy' and 'Stargate SG1', and 'Xena Warrior Princess' which emerged out of 'Hercules'.

Mixed feelings about 'Firefly' and 'Serenity' with its too dense plotting and it played like an RPG like adventure on film.

The Movie 'Starship Troopers' lead to the 'Roughneck Chronicles'.

Dianetics the Religion from **L. Ron Hubbard's** (uneven) Science Fiction.

'The Worlds of Honor Harrington' are shared Universe stories, now that Honor Harrington,

David Webber's main character has run out of career achievements.

Starwars Spin offs include - the two 'Ewok' movies as well as 'Droids' (and a whole heap of Star wars fan fiction / films as well?).

'Babylon 5' gave rise to 'Crusader'

'Robocop' the TV series from the Movie

'Logan's Run' the TV series from the Movie

'The Planet of the Apes' the TV series from the Movie, and prior to that, **Piere Boule's** book 'Monkey Planet'. And Fan Fic of all types!

Well, Sort of Spin offs

'Space 1999' was supposed to be a spinoff / sequel to 'UFO', but it wasn't. It was also intended to be a UK reply to Star Trek? In fact, all the Anderson stuff was set in the same 'Universe' but at different times. This explains, but does not excuse, 'Space Precinct 2040'. 'Dinotopia' the TV series is apparently NOT based on the Movie or the book of the same name?

Some Not Quite SF examples

'The Simpsons' were originally just a poorly drawn five minutes of animated filler in some English Chick's (**Tracy Ullman**) comedy hour.

The 'Flashman' series of books by **George McDonald Fraser** (Alternate History therefore sort of SF?) were spun out of 'Tom Brown's School Days', what happened to the school bully after he was thrown out of Rugby etc.

The 1960s Moustache and leather fetishist TV detective series 'Jason King' (didn't his brother Bernard have a cooking program?) was spun off 'Department S'.

Margaret Weiss' next (Fantasy?) series after 'Dragon Lance' has some change of major characters and perspective.

Dates and topics for the next few Infinitas bookshop SF&F discussion meetings are;

November - Rogue Computers & Artificial Intelligences

December - SF from a Feminist perspective

January - No Meeting

February - The Best and the Worst of 2006

Notes on the Sydney Mechanics School of Arts Institute Science Fiction and Fantasy book group meeting of Saturday October 28, 2006

Present were; Winsome Allen, Belinda Coombes, Garry Dalrymple, Paolo Rech and Brian Walls. Apologies were received from Christine Campbell and Ann Deverell

The following is mostly made up from notes I made before the meeting, items I intended to introduce and what I could remember of what was said on Saturday or Sunday afternoon. Consequently its got more 'me' in it than was the case on the day.

SF&F News for November

- 'Jericho' has started on TV, post nuke war, survivors travails and hard decisions, but it's not SF right? Not sure that it is good enough to be described as SF, same defects as 'Lost' pointless and improbable suspensions of disbelief in order to suppoer a Soap Opera 'Reality TV' type plot? Seeing this TV show is not a priority for 'Mechanics' attendees.

Dr Who (the Noo Hoo!) ends its run this week, generally very well received.

'Silver Sun' continues to run on Channel 7, Saturday and Monday mornings?

- Freecon promotional paper is out in the specialist bookshops and some public libraries.

- 'Pegasus' the double part Battlestar Galactica episode screened this and next week is the episode nominated for this year's Hugo award.

- While distributing Freecon paper to libraries I encountered and brought to the meeting some stuff that Canterbury (Campsie) library were using to bring 'youth' into the library over the School holidays. A Manga Swap meet AND a newsletter listing banned books, Movies and Songs. This was much discussed. Of the nineteen banned books at least five were Science Fictional, kinda makes you proud to be so 'cool' doesn't it. (SF-nal books in **bold**)

The Full list is;

The Grapes of Wrath by **John Steinbeck**, 1939
Animal Farm by **George Orwell**, 1945
Brave New World by **Aldous Huxley**, 1946
Lord of the Flies by **William Golding**, 1954
Catch 22 by **Joseph Heller**, 1961
A Clockwork Orange by **A. Burgess**, 1967
The Outsiders by **S. E. Hinton**, 1967
Slaughterhouse Five by **Kurt Vonnegut**, 1969
Deenie by **Judy Blume**, 1973 Summer of my
German soldier by **Bette Greene**, 1973
The Chocolate War by **Robert Cormier**, 1974
Killing Mr Griffin by **Lois Duncan**, 1978
Cujo by **Stephen King**, 1981
Fallen Angels by **D. W. Myers**, 1988
The Arizona Kid by **Ron Koetge**, 1988
The Giver by **Lois Lowry**, 1993

But of course, less than five kilometres away from the Lakemba Mosque, absolutely no mention of **Salman Rushdie's 'The Satanic Verses'**

- There will be no more 'Emerald City', **Cheryl Morgan's** SF&F newsletter of SF&F book reviews and coverage of some US and UK SF conventions. There may be an issue 133 and 134 to tie up loose ends but that's it. I will miss it, it was my main window into US conventions.
- I exhibited the Convergence II poster and gave out the postcards together with Freecon material.
- On the way in I noticed that the forecourt of Customs House is decorated with Pink Dinosaurs and a rather sad and parched Pyramid shaped 'Grass Castle', a tribute to contraband Drugs of some sort of 'Art' happening? Just inside the door of the Customs house building there is a plaque to explain the swastikas on the floor. The plaque (like most Germans?) didn't want to talk about the War.
- The Civic Hotel gathering of Sydney fans has shifted its monthly meeting date to THE SECOND TUESDAY from the first Tuesday, this avoids a proximity to public holidays and the Melbourne cup day.
- There was discussion of the injustice of the porous borders of genre Fiction, themes from 'Cyber Punk' seem to have been absorbed by the mainstream and inconsistent rules are capriciously applied to SF&F to determine which

parts of SF&F are or are not 'Geeky' (or un fashionable)

- The quest leads ever onwards, in search of the elusive 'new' fantasy novel that is not a re-visioning of LOTR. Many volumes are abandoned partly read and left at lonely genre cross roads, discarded on the trail as they fail the originality test.

All book Vampire Detectives are female? Or so it seems, but on TV the Angel and Forever Knight the Main Character is a 'Hunk' also for the Blades series of movies? Why is it so?

There was confusion over the correct names of several recent attendees of the 'Mechanics' SF&F book discussion meetings. This led to discussion of the need for more communication, exchange of emails and contact details etc.

The following is my unofficial list of the 2006 participants in 'Mechanics' SF&F book discussion meetings. I attended about half the meetings.

Winsome Allen
John August
John August's friend
Christine Campbell
David Bofinger
Belinda Coombes
Garry Dalrymple
Ann Devrell
Edwina Harvey
Ann Pritchard
Paolo Rech
Paolo Rech's flatmate
Brian Walls.

Applying the 40% rule this would suggest that you might reasonably expect five or six people to attend most meetings.

- One proposal mentioned was for an all MSA members Yahoo type Email discussion group that could be used principally to post MSA announcements to members and MSA related meeting details and other communication.

Another purpose for this email group could be to discuss potential MSA library acquisitions. Separate strings would emerge for the different

types of books that MSA library users might have an interest in. I.e. as Australian book choices usually follow by some months US / UK availability of most books, then there is usually word of mouth available for most genres of books that could aid library book acquisition decisions.

For the Science Fiction interest string discussion could be 'primed' each month (or annually, whatever) by posting a list of the Hugo, Nebula and BASFA nominations and after a month or so for member's observations a priority list of recommended future purchases for that genre could be drawn up, taking advantage of expert opinion freely offered and 'peer reviewed' rather than just wading through the booksellers bumf. Having the list open to input from non-MSA members would gain the list a far broader perspective of 'quality' book choices. Tallying and noting the MSA / Non-MSA votes for books might then suggest book acquisitions that might encourage non-MSA people to join the library.

Brian Walls gave me an overview of recent SF-nal things, but unfortunately this list was a casualty of the data death incident.

At the MSA Library

The MSA Library newsletter 'Library Limelight' lists 153 books acquired in September 2006. Four of these are listed under 'Science Fiction'. Three are clearly Fantasy books and **John Birmingham's** Alt history SF, 'Final Impact' is listed under 'Novels'.

A bookmark listing suggested 'Magic Realism' titles lists about twenty mainstream Authors. Isn't the Magic Realism form a subgenre of Fantasy, do we have genre confusion at the library?

Winsome Allen suggested that next year we could try for a SF&F film / video afternoon. Possibly a screening of all the Hugo nominated Sci-Fi TV episodes?

Books Read, Sept. to November 2006

August 30 to Sept. 02, Space Mercenaries by **A. Bert Chandler**, 128 pages © 1978

September 01 to 07, Fortean Times FT214 Sept 2006, Dark Nature Cover Edition, Edited by **Rickard et al**, 80 pages © 2006

September 10 to 18, The Big Black Mark by **A. Bert Chandler**, 224 pages © 1975

September 22 to 24, The Australian Skeptic Spring 2006, The Death Penalty, What Value? Edited by **Barry Williams**, 70 pages © 2006

September 19 to 27, The Long Way Back by **A. Bert Chandler**, 175 pages © 1978

September 28 to 07 Oct, Bring Back Yesterday by **A. Bert Chandler**, 153 pages © 1961

October 08 to 10, Fortean Times FT215 Oct 2006, Star Trek Strangeness Cover Edition, Edited by **Rickard et al**, 80 pages © 2006

October 11 to 17, The Coils of Time by **A. Bert Chandler**, 128 pages © 1964
Half an ACE Double header paperback

October 20 & 21, The Friday the 13th Anthology Ed.by **Martin Livings**, 14 ea 1,000 word Horror Stories © 2006

October 22 to 26, Flashman (at Kabul?) by **George Macdonald Fraser**, 128 pages © 1964

October 28 to 30, Parable of the Sower by **Octavia E. Butler**, 299 pages © 1993

October 31 to 02 Nov, To Prime the Pump by **A. Bert Chandler**, 192 pages © 1971

This Space is provided for your notes towards mailing comments

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