

TBS&E 35

June to July 2009

Produced by Garry P. Dalrymple as a contribution to ANZAPA mailing No. 250, of the Australian and New Zealand Amateur Press Association.

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Editorial

Unseasonably Cold, Unseasonably Windy? A very different June from most years. This month I have been doing some unusual things. The Queens Birthday weekend has become the default date for the big family get together, that centres on my Mother's cousins and their families. So not much chance of getting to Australian Natcons! This year I made up two 'OBE's, a gift to 'Our Beloved Elder' on turning Eighty (or more vulgarly 'Over Bloody Eighty'). This consists of a triangular plaque with a birth year penny inset. This year the recipients were my Aunt and a spouse of one of my mother's cousins. Only one more OBE to present in 2011, then I will have to think about whether to mark 50s or 60s (or 100s?). I finished these the day before they were needed. On the Tuesday I had a flex day off work and on this occasion I commissioned 'mighty works' I fabricated from wood and six CDs a new windmill rotor and I made up an Australia shaped plaque (30 and 45 degree angles mostly) for a long time work colleague. This Plaque has space for a 1949 penny and a 2009 one Dollar coin. The point of this being that she was born (in Belgium!) during 1949 and the 2009 one Dollar coin commemorates 60 years of Australian citizenship. Before 1949 Australians were 'Australian British Subjects' or some such.

Naplan – for two days I was working locally, that is at the Kingsgrove Naplan processing centre. Something of a mixed blessing as I had to walk most of the several Kilometres to work on those mornings that were the coldest of the year so

far. The work I was doing had to do with transcribing the large format and coloured paper versions Naplan booklets that were filled out by students with various learning or perceptual disabilities. My sample is admittedly biased by the above, but it is rather alarming what kids do not know these days. I get a feeling that they are getting very little 'out of classroom' incidental learning, such as what you pick up from wide and undisciplined reading. For example I saw several 'amusing' student responses to various questions. Three that stick in my mind are some very very slow Space Rockets (0.04 m/s!), some Very Hot mountain tops (50 degrees C!) and some vast 50 kilometre a side Pyramids!

Late News for this issue

The 2009 Sydney Freecon will take place at **Bankstown City Public Library November 27 to 29**. It is likely to include a 6 to 8 pm Friday Night Session, a 9 am to 4 pm Saturday session and a 1 pm to 4 pm Sunday session.

Short SF Story Writing Competition, Local SF&F writers attending, Paradox Auction of Donated SF&F material, Kevin Dillon Symposium (Ghost of Honour SF&F Writers honoured)
SF&F discussion panels and much more!

Garry P Dalrymple July 21, 2009

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Mailing Comments on ANZAPA Issue No. 249.

If your newsletter title is in bold then I'm replying to your comments.

1. Official Bloody Organ #248 - **Bruce Gillespie**

Re your comments – I have looked up and downloaded the first seven issues of the Futurian Observer, they make an interesting compare and contrast to 1995 to 2009 Sydney Futurian meeting notes. I might do a commentary on them as a feature of Sydney Futurian meetings, as I hope to pass them around at the July 17 Sydney Futurian meeting – Three cheers for **Kim Huett**, we might elect him and **Bert Castellari** honorary (non-attending) Sydney Futurian status for their efforts!

2. Quoz 14! – **Claire Brialey & Mark Plummer**

Re your contribution – I'm wondering if there should be an official season for sharing ANZAPAN's annual reading lists, first mailing of the year or last mailing of the year etc? Might be easier to make detailed comparisons about what we all collectively read / watch?

3. Avast Ye Land lubbers ... Cutthroat Kobwebs

– **Glen Crawford**

I Re your comments – Collecting Memories from Mum will continue to be a sporadic task in the future, there are things that Mum can and can't be bothered doing and similarly I do not have the energy to be constantly on her

To get done some of the things that I feel she should be doing. It's a matter of being receptive when for no particular reason she says "I remember" and being on hand to get her to write something down, then re-write it and then ask her to elaborate / explain any points that it raises. I'm not enthusiastic about the 'talk to a tape' procedure, an hours long taped conversation would take me a weekend to transcribe and unless you research and direct the questions to be asked it would be hard to expect a 'no longer with it' parent to come up with much that is profound or useful. Catching A memory, when it flows, seems most practicable to me.

Re Your problematic Neighbours. Sympathy! The conduct of others reminds me that

undiagnosed minor mental illness is more common than is polite to ascribe and is probably as valid an explanation for 'bad manners' as any. I'm beginning to suspect that one or both of the boys next door (screaming, noisy and repeditive play, communication and reactions to strangers?) might be to some minor degree Autistic? They are difficult to live with, but it would be more difficult to discuss my concerns with the family, without giving grievous and counter productive offence.

4. TBS&E number 34 - Garry Dalrymple

Modesty forbids me to discuss this most excellent newsletter, other than to say that I was very surprised by the volume of comments about the legibility of the text on red paper. Will try to avoid this problem in future.

5. Patersonia Rhubarb - **John & Diane Fox**

Re your comments – Yes the Rose Bengal thing was a disappointment. If I had known that the answer was going to be 'No' then one more round of 'cut-it-out' surgery that could have made Mystique's last few months a bit less horrible. To some degree though it was also a useful lesson in the conservatism and / or constraints placed on medicine, that we couldn't get this bit of alternative 'nothing to lose' bit of treatment done, while a 'Naturopath' probably would and could? Yes the 'rules' of Basenjijis / Human interaction are a bit of a confrontation to the presumption that animals play it our way. I think that many dog attacks / snake bites etc are a result of not 'seeing it their way'. I tend to think of Amber these days as being a 'resident alien mind' (much more so than 1980s TVs' wisecracking 'ALF') than just a dog.

6. Last minute musings 6 – **Karen Gory**

Re your comments – Mnnnn Three Cats now? I think you've just reached the ANZAPA average in that respect. Pet ownership, home cooking and furniture changing. Makes it sounds like your settling in process has reached another stage?

7. Bookmark 19 - **Michael F Green**

Re your comments – Pleased that you enjoy my book reviews, they are mounting up ~100 so far?

Re Tim Tams, last Sunday I was doing some shopping at Campsie, cheap flats, high

turnover Migrant / Refugee population demographics etc. Noticed what I expect was Somali or Sudanese man with a full basket of Dark Chocolate Tim Tams. So many that I was tempted to ask the bloke if he had heard about 'Diabetes'? Assimilation proceeds in leaps and bounds? 'Foreign' Tim Tams are almost certainly on sale at Campsie and Bankstown shops as well.

8. Necessity 88: Serendipity - Jack Herman

Re your comments – Public Transport – The sense that I was getting at was that the Sydney System is fairly good at getting you to and from work, 8.30 am to 5.30 pm on weekdays, but slightly before or after it tends to be difficult, going across suburbia is always problematic and with a population growth, or even just land uses changing over time the bus rail system should be constantly by 2 to 5% each and every year on a routine basis rather than as 'Specials' proposed only at election time with delivery promised some decades after.

I noticed your letter to the SMH (following mine?) about the Freedom of the Press aspect of the School League Tables 'debate/ political football'. I would be interested in your comments about the fusion of the three NSW volunteer maritime services. The proposal as announced sounds reasonable.

9. Kingdom of the Bland - Eric Lindsay

Re your comments – I'm 'somewhat' more than 130 kg at the moment, I think I would have to have been more than 20 kg lighter when you were in Sydney. The 'Clerical Pool' situation remains, but in it's absurdity there are also some opportunities, for example the workload is even more concentrated on school terms, with practically no work / supervision during this recent July 13 to 24 between school terms school holiday. The teaching qualified staff are all away, the trips to talk to schools etc are all off until school gets back etc. Opportunity for 'gardening' while recording '9 to 5' work hours or taking leave etc. Needless to say I have taken the opportunity to been extremely busy at this time and I'm looking forward to using future term breaks to similar effect. Would you by any chance recall if any of your Gegenschein series of newsletters include coverage of Sydney Futurian meetings, I'm particularly interested in 1994 to 1997 meetings,

even if it is just who was there and what topics were chosen for meetings?

10. Jeanzine 2009-2 - Jean Weber

Re your comments – Seems like a pleasant set up you and Eric have at Carlyle Gardens, hope everything continues to roll out to your satisfaction.

11. Panopticon 53 - Dan McCarthy

Re your comments – I fear that when it comes to furniture I'm a bit more garage conscious than most, the wonder of wheels on firm flat concrete, inspires me at times. Book cases that Move and turn!

Nice cover art. It catches well the sense that Winter Solstices activities are about the celebration at the darkest time of the year that Summer will return.

12. Land of 10,000 Loons - Jeanne Mealy

Re your comments – As you will read at the end of this issue I've also been having an enhances involvement with 'The Force' recently. Holding a Sydney Freecon before the Worldcon is a pragmatic idea which also occurred to some New Zealanders, so the viability of that remains to be seen. I might try to re-cast it as a pre-pre-Worldcon orientation seminar for Sydneysiders mostly?

The errors were I believe to do with the tyranny of the spelling checker, it is easy to miss where it has run unsupervised beyond where I wanted it's assistance. As I have probably commented elsewhere, both Mystique and Amber probably were better off as solo dogs, in the time that they co-existed there wasn't much sign of a simpatico developing. Tim continues to be a plus to my niece and her mother, hopefully a first dog in their lives rather than a one off. I have a neighbour who is living alone and suffering rather badly from depression, I'm very tempted to advocate a dog as therapy when he is a bit more up to it.

Thanks for your thoughts on Mystique.

13. Hold that Tiger – Terry Morris

Interesting use of colour thought

14. Ping! - John Newman

Re your comments – Thank you for your commiserations. A thing that I have that gives me some moral support at a time like this is that being without spouse or dependents it will be a lot easier for me to say 'goodbye' to paid employment at a time of my own choosing. In a place like Sydney I could easily work as a volunteer at any of several Museums several days a fortnight to maintain the

'social' contacts which are one of the things I would miss most on leaving formal employment.

15. YRKYHWYFAWIYB 122 - **Cath Ortlieb**

Re your contribution – No comments at this time.

16. Far 4/ Cabal 4 - **Marc Ortlieb**

Re your comments – I second your comments on **Colin Knapp's** Cageworlds, a Scrith too far to cross, read one chose not to seek others in the series because to really did seem to be segments of a series of Novelas to make up a whole story?

17. OZ SF Fan - **Lucy Schmeidler**

Re your comments – On Pink Paper! Your take on the Superhero question is valid, love and admire them from a distance, but who could actually live with a Superhero? I'm pleased to hear that people are reading and appreciating the Sydney meeting notes I write up, to be mentioned in print is I feel the only sort of immortality on issue these days.

18. Moving On – **Gerald Smith**

Re your comments – Yes, There is an infinite appetite within organisations to re-structure to suit? Who can say who reaps any long or short term benefit from these things when the point of the restructure seems to be to remove the basis for comparison. Perhaps it would be better to abolish every government agency and piece of legislation every 20 or so years, with the last two years being spent in an wide ranging and transparent public inquiry to establish what the future needs actually are, a bit more honest than cost cutting and service withdrawal being sold to the public as 'efficiency dividends' and 'reform'. Book clubs are a curious phenomena, in many ways a fraudulent undertaking, you are supposed to read the book, but most people stay because they enjoy the fellowship of a group of people to talk to rather than the satisfaction of a hunger to increase their understanding of 'Literature' (for this a WEA or TAFE course would be better? On the other hand, some do join expecting to be told what to read, not a problem that we of the fannish ilk suffer from?

19. The Unfortunate Rhinos - **Spike**

Re your comments – Not quite to issue number 38 just yet! I wouldn't put it past **Nabokov** to have included 'Proustian' elements in Lolita for effect, as I type this an impertinent comment keeps is tugging at my sleeve to ask that **Jack Keroac's** 'On The Road', road trip story, be considered as well. I doubt that I would spend more than 2 hours a month in a public library. None of the SF&F meetings take place in a Library setting and I would spend much more time trolling for second hand or remaindered SF&F books than in a library looking for books to borrow. The job is tolerable at the moment, Amber is about as settled as she is likely to get.

To me she is rather less of a dog than her grandmother was, but very much more of a companion to my mother. She is approaching ten years of age, so not much change can be expected.

20. Interstellar Ramjet Scoop - **Bill Wright**

Re your comments – Dear Bill, you mean you didn't get to see the witty three dee pop-up comments that were embedded in the Black on Red? I am very much aware of the 'For Writers' aspect of some Australian SF&F conventions / festivals. As long as there are the people coming forward to organise 'by writers' Speculative Fiction events I guess fans of Science Fiction will have to live with this and chart a course of best comfort through it. 'Pure SF' if it ever existed, is a good basis for a discussion meeting, but the presence of Writers or similar will always be a drawback for Convention sized events.

Grants, Awards, inbreeding and group-think are to me examples of what should be avoided among Australian 'Speculative Fiction' circles.

I don't know what can be done about making reader's based of jury based awards systems more authoritative, there just seems to be too much noise to signal. Because I read even recently published Australian SF generally some time after it is newly released. The only new and improved system that would appeal much to me would be a sort of retrospective one, i.e. 'best' in 2009 being a vote on all published since 2004 and then 'best' in 2010 being a vote on all published since 2005 etc. Not much use for promoting the sale of newly released books though. Or failing this, have Ditmars / Natcons only every second year so it could be Ditmars in 2009, Aurealis in 2010, Silver Ditmars / Aurealis (best in 5 years) or Golden Ditmars / Aurealis (best in 10 years) etc.

21. Les Chattes Parties 100 - **Sally Yeoland**

Re your comments – Yeah- Restructures suck, the shortcomings of them are known to everyone who cares but they are still used as a (blunt) management tool to achieve? As I've commented elsewhere setting mother down to a microphone to 'remember now' isn't likely to be a success, I basically ask her to write down a spontaneous comment, write it up a bit and then and ask her to elaborate, before writing it up as the 'final' form. Dogs and Cats are a joy, but also a commitment that require 'domestic infrastructure' I mean apart from my mum, who can I rely on to look after my dog if I ever get sick or go overseas for a while?

Meeting the Sydney Humanists - Notes on the Wednesday April 8, 2009 'Open Forum' Discussion meeting held at the Humanists Hall

This meeting has been a weekly event since 1971. It was advertised to start at 8 pm, so I stuck around at work until nearly 7 pm then I went off to Bankstown station, got off at Central, walked the tunnel, diverted for basement books, then a bus ride of only two stops and I was there at the Humanist Hall, 10 Shepherd Street, a bit before 8 pm. The meeting was called to order at 8.15 or a little bit later.

Before the discussion commenced the mood was in some ways similar to that of a Quaker's meeting, waiting for divine inspiration to move someone to words

The Rationalists Hall - As a potential meeting venue has been much on my mind of late for Futurian / Freecon events and on that front I have to report mixed results. See the final part of this report. The 'Hall' itself consists of an office / reception area, a large single meeting room lined with bookshelves and a kitchen and toilets adjoining. Around the walls of the meeting room there might be about 60 shelf metres of books. These books include some 'Rationalist' publications, some reference books but are mostly general reading Fiction, including two metres of Star Trek Novelizations! In a previous life the building was probably a small shop or residence before conversion into a book room/meeting room / club house. To me, the building suggested that a property developer should offered the Humanists some sort of a redevelopment deal, i.e. move the Rationalist meetings to the SMSA for a year or so, demolish and rebuild 10 shepherd street with a shop (or two?) on the ground floor, car park underneath, the Humanist office / meeting room on the second floor, flats on levels 3 and 4, and some sort of rent sharing to give the Humanists a non-membership based income stream etc.

The Meeting - On this occasion the meeting was set up as a double ring of chairs, enough to seat twenty something people. When the meeting commenced there were ten people present (and

a large and elderly dog that was spotting the carpet and punctuating the conversation at times by licking itself with the usual canine pre-occupation. Another four or five people arrived during the evening. David Duffy (a self confessed Luddite!) who organises these meetings was chairing the meeting and as he had been unable to organise a guest speaker for this evening the discussion this evening was a form of 'suggest your own topic'. Going round the room all present were invited to suggest a topic for discussion or to 'pass', these were subsequently voted on.

The three topics that emerged were:

- The proposed \$43 Billion Broadband Roll out
- Punishment fitting to the Crime, Marcus Einfield
- Sydney needs more Protest Art.

These were then discussed in the order listed above. Going round the group, each person present was in turn offered the opportunity to say something on the topic or to 'pass'. At the end of the circuit, the proposer of the topic had a right of reply to what had been said after his / her original introduction of the topic.

Impressions and conclusions - It was rather like what we do at Sydney Futurian's meetings, only a little more haphazard (if that is possible), people were offering their opinions, feelings, prejudices and experiences on a topic. Much the same as occurs on an email discussion list? For a group with a professed 'freedom-from-belief' rationale what I was hearing, the opinions and interpretations expressed during these discussions, suggested to me that most present carried into the meeting with them several strongly held beliefs. There were the opinionated in search of any audience, the genuinely enquiring and there were some there just to be among company on a midweek night?

I left the meeting just before 10 pm, to catch a bus home, arriving home a little before 11 pm. They were still going strong, just about to start discussing the third topic, which makes me wonder if these people have jobs to go to in the morning? Most of the people present were a fair bit older than I am, so possibly they don't. Perhaps an earlier, closer to 6 pm start might attract more people? On the whole it was an

interesting night. It would have been a lot more comfortable for me if the ceiling fans had been turned off (or the meeting held in darkness?) as the 'flicker' from fan blades under fluorescent lighting was giving me a migraine and would presumably be enough to set off an epilepsy sufferer? As a group, the people I encountered at this meeting probably are a lot closer in practice to what the original 'church' congregations consisted of, searchers for enlightenment, people interested in the exchange of ideas and experiences within a mutually supportive and respectful environment. I suspect the same mix of people and attitudes would be found at Theosophical or Lodge meetings as well, in spite of their Religious differences?

Incidentally - This meeting room is one of the few where you will find still a picture of an **Australian Democrat** Senator displayed in pride of place. The photo is that of **Senator Lyn Alison**, who was, 'Humanist of the year 2008'. Clearly there is an opening here on the Open Forum for a guest speaker to explain to the Rationalists what the NSW Australian Democrats are up to these days – post Senate representation. Also, if the Rationalists have not already had a talk on Light pollution then **SOLIS** should step up to the crease soon.

Holding future Futurian meetings at Humanist Hall? This question was after all a major motivation in my going to this meeting. I asked David Duffy about the possibilities for the Futurian meeting being held ahead of the Open Forum meeting (i. e. say 6.15pm to 7.55 pm) and the answer is No, on the grounds that he feels that it would be too confusing to have two events taking place on the same night. Hiring the Humanist Hall for another week night or for a weekend meeting? I didn't explore whether this was per hour or per night? The NSW Knitters qualify for a 'mate's rate' of \$30. \$30 at the Humanists, \$35 (for 7 hours) at Bankstown or \$20 per hour for a meeting room at the SMSA? Which rather rules it out from our consideration, although perhaps it might do for a one day, smallish Freecon, if our event would qualify for a 'mate's' rate?

Garry P. Dalrymple © April 2009

Book Group Meeting Notes

Garry's Book Review, ISBN
0-7336-1709-3 Windmill Hill by
Michael Jacobson, Australian,
361 pages, (c) 2002. Read May

11 to 14, 2009 and discussed May 20, 2009.

Not a book I was able to enjoy reading as much as the group's previous selection, **Ben Elton's** The first Casualty'. Physically I found this book to be another of those artificially thinned out 'modern' books, 25 mm thick, with fewer words per line, fewer lines per page, two pages of blank paper at each chapter's beginning / end etc., in order to create the impression of a satisfyingly thick book out of a slight story? I've read and enjoyed thinner and more densely printed 500 page books.

- I can see why the Woman's Day would rave over it, it contained a bit of WW1 adventure, a bit of small town and family relationships drama, a (fair) bit of garden porn and a Mystery of sorts to be resolved. A mixture of Very Mild Stuff to a SF reader but 'novel' and astounding to someone who doesn't read much at all apart from Women's magazines?.

- I found the story to be disjointed and slightly confusing rather than engagingly divided, as the story chopped between several lines of narrative and created a sense of 'Mystery' by simply delaying disclosures that should have been made earlier in the story to help the reader understand why some of the back story and continuing story was important to the resolution of the book, setting up the events that compelled Grandson and Grandfather to want to go and build a garden near Queenstown, among the hills denuded and devastated by decades of mining and refining.

- I read this book immediately after reading 'Myths of the near Future', an anthology by the very recently deceased UK writer **J.G. Ballard**. These were some of his late 70s and early 80s short stories (very cheerful? - Not!). In this collection he vividly explores over several stories characters with 'misplaced' and displaced minds. Minds out of step with the present times and frequently about people

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Blue Pages

Garry's Notes from the AIAA (Sydney Branch) meeting of Monday May 25 2009, at Sydney University

From Earth to Mars – A talk by Pascal Lee, Mars institute, SETI Institute and NASA AMES. This meeting was one of a series of capital city meetings sponsored by the Sydney branch of AIAA the **American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics**, which seems to be the 'professional' group that Mars Society and National Space Association (Aust.) end up joining

Notes on before the meeting

A bit of a rush to get from Bankstown to the venue by train and then an uncertain walk across campus. Inappropriate lighting on campus only serving to kill my sense of direction by denying me the opportunity to look up and get my bearings. I was surprised to discover that tonight's event is very nearly at the opposite end of Shepherd Street, the same street where the Humanists hall is located. To get to the place from Redfern station was a bit of a struggle, like being a salmon swimming against the river, as a tide of Sydney University Students / Staff were leaving the campus. Visualise the shift change sequence in Fritz Lang's 'Metropolis'? Found the meeting room well before the advertised start, by the reserved rows of chairs I thought that there might be a dinner or a day time conference on before the talk. I guess there would have been 100 or so people present when the talk started. The gender ratio was about 85:15 M to F (or slightly better) and mostly students or 'my age' academics (by dress sense). The crowd got noticeably younger as kick off time approached, some sort of camera set up at the back, cable TV or campus TV?

Some faces I recognised in the crowd

Michael West, Ian Woolf and Ian Bryce (without Pope-mobile in tow!) I was a little surprised not to see more Astronomy and Space interest faces. I guess their promotion was mostly on campus and not directed to the general public?

From Earth to Mars – Steps toward the first Human Mission to Mars

The AIAA has 35,000 members in Industry and Academia and this talk is part of their sponsored Distinguished Lecture series, Sydney being City of five in this current tour organised by the local Sydney and Adelaide (Defence Research?) branches of the AIAA. This year is the 400th anniversary of Galileo and the 40th of Apollo 11. Much of the speaker's efforts are concerned with the Devon Island project in the Canadian Arctic, this island is very Mars like in land forms including the Horton Meteor. He has also done some time on Antarctic research bases as well, Helicopter pilot / instructor et al. This trip is his third to Australia (MARSupial rover expedition?) and at home he has an Australian Cattle Dog called 'Ping Pong', (who is clever enough to lead a coalition opposition?). He draws some inspiration from Australian Antarctic explorer and Geologist **Sir Douglas Mawson**, who was in it for the Science and not the national glory as was more usual in polar exploration of the time.

Earth to Mars is likely to be the big challenge of the 21st century. The Moon race can be likened to a Cold War sprint of five or so years, but the journey to Mars is likely to be a longer and more involved 15 year effort.

Why go to Mars? A need to explain life and man, a journey to answer the question of how unique is 'life as we know it'. It needs a field trip to 'another' Earth to gain some perspective. As far as we now know 'Earth-like' is the happening place for a Planet with life, but it is very possible that Mars like Planets are more common in the Galaxy and Mars is our nearest 'life-possible' Planet. The Galaxy is full of big numbers, big numbers of stars and possibly ten to the power of 23 possible Planets?

What is the human mission? To Land, Explore and return with samples. The idea has been around since the 1950s, but the more we know about it, the harder a task it seems to be. The 1960s / 1970s Moon missions were a big trip away from Earth. Printed out to

scale, the Earth to Moon trip reaches across the full page, subsequent manned spaceflight has only been one pixel or so away from Earth, barely above it's atmospheric skin and the Earth to Mars trip is about 1,000 times further out than the Earth to Moon trips!

Going to Mars – options

A **Conjunction class mission** would last ~ 905 days, 180 out, a 545 day stay and a 180 day return. This would be a least energy path, but the duration of the mission and exposure to unpredictable Space / Martian conditions raises concerns about the reliability of equipment.

An **Opposition class mission** (crossing when Earth and Mars were closest) would be 313 days out, 40 days on Mars and 308 days back, 661 days in total. In practice however it might be a quick first mission and then longer follow up missions?

Conditions on Mars are hardly Earth-like. The atmosphere reaches 10 millibars, (one hundredth of that on Earth), the atmosphere provides very little UV filtration so you would 'tan' 800 times quicker, average Temperature is -60 degrees C, gravity is 38% of Earth standard and there is lots of sand and very fine Hydrogen Peroxide like dust. At Mars's Polar regions (cold but always the possibility of water ices) there is CO₂ 'dry' ice cover as a result of 30% of the Planet's atmosphere precipitating. The Southern Hemisphere of Mars is higher and as it is spotted with meteor impact craters, older than the smoother Northern Hemisphere. There are Volcanic provinces, including the Tharsis bulge. Without plate tectonics, Martian volcanoes stay in one place, piling up material, possibly for Billions of years. Temperatures are typically -125 to 20 degrees C during the day and -130 to -55 during the night. Higher places are warmer during the day, but colder at night than surrounding areas. These extremes are due to the lack of an atmospheric blanket to retain some of the day's heat. There are however some spots that are more hospitable, at Hellas and Canyon corner liquid water would be stable.

Comparisons – Mount Everest Vs Olympus Mons, to stand on Olympus Mons is in effect to stand in Space. The oldest meteor impact

craters show some signs of ancient water erosion and some recent 'watermarks' have been spotted, suggestive of near surface subsurface water at locations beyond the Polar regions. The Martian landers and rovers see sand and rocks, but Phoenix has found ices just under the dust.

Meteorites from Mars? Out of about 25,000 known Meteorites in collections about 35 are presumed to come from Mars, blasted off the surface by other Meteor impacts at irregular intervals, possibly carrying life between the two Planets?

Why go to Mars? A long, difficult and dangerous journey to a lethal and corrosive environment with travellers at risk of extreme Solar Radiation on the Planet and on the trip. One reason would be to search for life, the terrestrial Tree of Life has three branches, where would Martian life fit on this?

Other reasons to go to Mars, there are many but the important thing is to identify those causes that would motivate and justify the (government) expense of the project. National Interest, to show Technological Leadership would probably beat appeals to Scientific curiosity. 'We' (in the US) haven't gone yet, or committed to going because a case appealing to National Interest has not yet been made. It is however a good financial investment, any dollar spent on new Science usually returns great financial benefits.

When will we go? Possibly during 2025 to 2030, as a race with the Europeans or possibly in cooperation with the Europeans. A return to the Moon would be first, before a Manned Mars expedition and possibly Asteroid intercept missions on the way, presumably Near Earth or Earth crossing one, as they are much easier to get to than Mars and without the complications of having to land under gravity. Most plans for a Mars trip include some sort of investigation of Mars' moons, the gravity captured Asteroids Phobos and Deimos. Mostly it all depends on the timing of the availability of Ares, the US's Apollo like post Space shuttle manned spaceflight system.

Who will go? The mix of the crew would depend more on relevant skills than being representative of society at large or 'one of

each' A smaller crew of 5 to 8 people would be better, capable of fitting with supplies onto a single rocket rather than requiring a fleet of ships for 20 or 30 specialists. These individuals would need to know several specialities to each, consequently older people with a greater fund of life experience / work skills might be preferred over the younger and more brilliant? Also, an older crew would be less likely to be affected by the higher levels of radiation expected to be experienced during the mission. The importance of the personal qualities of team members on a similar duration mission are discussed in Douglas Mawson's book, 'The Home of the Blizzard'. You want altruistic people rather than the self centred.

How to get there? An Apollo on steroids type spacecraft and Lander set. Nuclear powered rockets would seem to be desirable for their superior fuel mass to thrust characteristics. Quantities of Hydrogen would be needed, as anti radiation shielding, so one scenario would be to use food and water as shielding on the way out and your own (securely packaged!) poo for shielding on the way back! The quantities involved in a 40 to 400 day stay on Mars are left to your imagination (Draft Kenny from Splashdown for the Space program?).

Horton Crater. Is a 20 km diameter and 39 million year old crater located on Devon Island in Canada's High Arctic. It is in fact the largest uninhabited island in the world! The Arthur C Clarke campsite is located on the rim of this crater and it is the largest privately funded polar research station. It is powered by wind and Sun. The environmental poverty of the place is demonstrated by a fox shaped moss patch. Some hundreds of years ago an arctic fox died and subsequently a moss patch has grown using the nutrients of it's decayed body. Local non-Mars like hazards include visits by Polar bears, precautions against these include hiring local dogs and arming local teenagers for protection. Overall, arid and cold, the terrain looks very Mars like. There is life about, but it mostly shelters inside porous rocks. It also resembles the landforms seen near the Lunar Polar crater Shackleton which is near a hill that enjoys perpetual Sunlight and also shadowed craters that never see Sunlight

Space suits? The Space suits trialled on Devon Island for Mars use need to be very much lighter than Space or Moonwalk suits (a half or a third), as they need to be used under 38% Earth weight.

Mobility Systems? Several types of Mars Rovers or stand in Mars Rovers are being evaluated, including two 'Hummers' and a pressurized modular 'camper' Mars Rover that has two 'step in' type pressure suits at the back of the rover. The Hummer, a converted Ambulance as seen in numerous movies, was driven along the Frozen up North West Passage over sea ice for 500 km. I also saw something like a Mars Segway built for two!

Questions from the audience

Crew Selection?

Currently there are simulations and trials being conducted to look into potential crew configurations, including a 'man in a can' 500 day program being conducted by Russia

National interest as a driving force towards Mars?

It is an open question as to whether the nascent Chinese manned space program will be involved in future Moon or Mars landings.

Space / Mars Suits?

Competing proposals for Hard walled Vs Counter pressure suits are being evaluated at the moment, like deep sea diving suits Vs rubber scuba diving suits / pressurised helmets etc. A major part of the engineering of all proposed 'Space Suits' is that they require cooling.

Robotic Vs Human Exploration?

1. Robots can meet most of the scientific objectives but putting humans into space has never been motivated solely by Science. It is more about an expression of human competitiveness. Science is an after the fact justification and what they can do when they get there.

2. As costly as Space exploration is, all the money remains on the ground, doing clever things that usually have a very good rate of return for money spent. 'Space Exploration with all its challenges is a call to rise to the occasion!

3. A very good thing about a prospective trip to Mars is that it will require international collaboration. This adds a Political dimension to the technical, but this is an opportunity.

Robert Zubrin's Journey to Mars idea,

Take Hydrogen, to Mars and process Martian CO₂ and the Hydrogen to produce the fuel required for the return journey (this theory was advanced in the absence of recent evidence suggestive of Martian water ice deposits). Answer – It might be OK for later trips, but taking all the stuff you need for the first journey might be more reassuring (and politically palatable?).

Conclusion

They will need altruistic and multi-talented people to go to Mars. Older, more stable and experienced people with multiple 'trade' skills rather than younger people. Darker skinned people rather than lighter skinned people, on account of on Mars UV exposure etc. So are they really looking for a crew of middle aged Nuns with an Afro / Pacific heritage? Much was said about Submarine and Antarctic research base social dynamics determining the ideal crew to send, but perhaps they should also be considering 'Life behind Bars' prisoner experiences as well? © G. Dalrymple June 2009

Garry's Notes from the Sydney City Skywatcher's meeting, Monday June 1 2009, at Sydney Observatory

Guest Speaker: Simon O'Toole from the Anglo Australian Observatory's Gemini Office.

Topic: Searching for Planets around distant Stars

Who was there; 18 people

The Abomination!

English seaside towns have their 'Illuminations' season, streets and piers decorated with amusing and festive lighting, Sydney has just had it's Abomination season. As soon as darkness fell A real clever idea, why do they need to understand the architecture and purposes of Sydney's prominent buildings by a daylight visit if they can stumble around in the dark and take photos of buildings with funny

lights on? All an Observatory needs these days is a bit more lighting? Adding to the sense of 'What the _ _ _ _', after the meeting I went round the back of the Observatory, the rotunda in the park also had the 'spooky' lighting effect, but with the addition of an overly active smoke machine. The smoke was blowing down hill and across Observatory Hill Park to 'fog' and grease the traffic lane approaches to the Harbour Bridge - Real Bright Idea that one! A secondary effect was to transform the wandering herd of nocturnal sightseers emerging from the under the Harbour Bridge Subway into a pack of stumbling Zombies. All this with passenger liners due to dock down at circular quay for Sydney's own 'Whitby landing' moment for the predicted Swine / Zombie Flu outbreak?

Members Observations

Overall, Members observations this month were greatly affected by the weather, there being very few clear observing nights May to June.

Monty Leventhal's Sunspot observations showed the Sun to be at a low level of activity, although some signs of an increase detected in the number of Flares and Prominences observed - Bad weather put an absolute limit on the number of observations recorded, although a Flare was seen on the 13th and some filaments ahead of a small group of Sunspots appearing, the first for a very long time. Minor Prominences were routinely seen at the Sun's edge, weather generally precluding photography. The appearance of the group of Sunspots confirms that cycle 24 has begun.

Nick Lomb and Harry Roberts Narrated a few images from a recent club outing to Tebbutt land, Windsor and John Tebbutt's observatory complex. Nick Lomb was to give a talk at the recently constructed Hawkesbury Regional Museum, his topic being a comparison of Galileo and John Tebbutt. The visit included a tour of the Anglican Church, which has a star decorated ceiling (suggestive of constellations?) and the Astronomy themed

Continued Page 19

Yellow Pages

Garry's May & June Sydney SF&F meeting notes

Garry's notes from the Sydney Futurians Meeting of Friday May 17, 2009, Topic: Complexity in SF&F Stories

Present were: Stephen Bingle, Garry Dalrymple, Diane Fox, John Fox, Jules, Sonia Lal and Arun.

Newcomers to this meeting were Sonia Lal and her friend Arun.

Apologies received – Brian Walls and Victor Kay (inquired but unable to attend)

Contributing – Elizabeth Pastor

Science News

Glow in the Dark Puppies, not just GM transgenic Beagles, but Cloned. Made in Korea. Movies with packs of sinister luminous Albino attack dogs?

NASA's conspiracy to prevent us noticing Jupiter flaring into a second Sun thwarted. Coz it just didn't happen. But a Solar observation satellite caught matter from a Solar Flare / Mass ejection event crossing Jupiter and unexpectedly brightening.

Two Space Telescopes going up on an Ariane 5 Rocket, **Herschel** and ???, same time as **Hubble** gets its last Space Shuttle mission scheduled service. Australian involved in fabricating a new observation unit for the Hubble that m it.

CSIRO to build a mini Square Kilometre Array as a lead up to the real thing, amazing data processing volumes anticipated.

An **autonomous self programming robot** researcher already making discoveries and setting own research directions on yeast, next project 'correcting' the human genome?

Comet Garrad M3 is greatly brighter than expected, currently magnitude 7.6 as opposed to a predicted 13. Visible through Binoculars, finder's guide sheets handed out. Presumed to be carrying mega-tonnes of Swine Flu viral material!

Swine Flu, a combination with bird and swine elements, was or was not concocted in a laboratory (by an evil misanthropic Albino Mad

Scientist or the Bush administration, take your pick)

SF&F News items

SB – presented a vast number of Newspaper references, about half to do with reactions to the Star Trek movie, some Astronomy and Science. Much taken by the Quantum Leap episodes that he has been viewing recently.

GD – Recently read (and reviewed) a **J.G Ballard** Anthology, 'Myths of the near Future', and provided most of the Science news listed above.

DF – No news to report, several books for the Paradox Auction

JF – Has almost finished reading **Sean McMullen's** 'Centurion's Empire', about the adventures over 2,000 plus years of a time travelling DIY cryogenic Roman. Characters encountered range from the Historical (Etruscans) to the holographical? He is also nearly ready to commence a Master's degree in Creative Writing at UTS.

Jules – delivered his verdict on the Star Trek Movie

Sonia – Has been trying to get to our meetings for most of this year, our source on the Battlestar Galactica news. Watches SF online and on Cable TV.

Arun – Taken by surprise by news that meetings like this are conducted, is impressed and appreciative of the social commentary that can be found in original Star Trek episodes.

Futurian - This night's meeting was the first with a 6.30 pm start. The result? UTS Students! Actual UTS students studying and working hard on site at 6.30 to 8.30 pm on a Friday night. Amazing to see! Have the consequences of the current economic downturn trickled down to this or is it Assessment / Project deadline time? All four conversation cubes were occupied for the duration of our (earlier than usual) meeting. With two email inquiries and two newcomers showing up to this meeting, the 6.30 pm start (and an 8.30 trip to Basement Books after the meeting?) seems to be a good move, but we will try the 6.30 pm start for a few more meetings before making any steps toward 6 pm. The presence of all these students on campus during our meeting time restricts our access to the conversation cubes, but I believe that the downstairs foyer area (level 3) seemed to be less crowded than on most previous Friday nights.

Battlestar Galactica Ends – Yes really, it does. Viewed via technology the final episode is set on an Earth-like caveman world where the (B Arc?) Battlestar Galactica survivors arrive and meet primitive indigenes (just like in HHGTTG?). They decide that all 12 tribes / colonies should live together in harmony etc. The Galactica was lost or destroyed along the way.

Vast amounts of Star Trek movie coverage, reviews, gossip such as New Spock can't do the Vulcan salute (and walk) Stunt hands, Medical Superglue and invisible fishing line options?

We also discussed at some length **Elizabeth Pastor's review of the current Star Trek movie**, general agreement on the movie's strengths and weaknesses.

SF TV – Very nearly a complete blank! Lost I suppose and Futurama would be about it. The Dr Who / Six Million Dollar Woman special (due June 30?) is eagerly awaited.

SF Movies – Star Trek and what else?

Discussion of the topic:

Complexity in SF&F Stories

The types of stories that we considered to be 'complex' can be broadly divided into several categories; **Time Travel**, **Parallel/Alternate Universe**, **Grand Space Opera** and **Human Societies** and **Necessarily and unnecessarily complex Stories?**

Computer Technology stories, and of course those stories that just seemed too have been written to be so complex that they were difficult for the reader to understand, i.e. some Fantasy stories with just too much back story for comfortable reading.

Time Travel stories,

Quantum Leap, a Sci-Fi series that combines the usual complexity of Time Travel 'fixing' history with Genealogy as the Main character has to incarnate and act through a relative who is living at the same time/location as the intervention in question. There is a **James Tiptree** story where to ensure his own conception the main character has to rape his own mother, a grimier and less sugared version of **Robert Heinlein's** short story, 'All You Zombies', where a time jumping character plays all the roles in his own life, from 'abandoned'

hermaphrodite baby, to young unmarried mother, to young man time war recruit, to seducing father, to nurturing grandfather figure etc.

Also the UK TV series 'The Flipside of Dominick Hyde', where a time jaunting historian with flying saucer time ship, goes native and becomes his own great grandfather in the 'lost to history' years immediately ahead of a Nuclear war (or something'. The Greeks had a word for it, 'Ourrobos' the self consuming serpent. Is this sort of thing actually possible? Does causality AKA the timeline protect itself from interference, is all pre-ordained or does free will exist?

Parallel/Alternate Universe stories,

Usually tied up with Time travel, as branching alternate worlds can be a result of natural turning points or time meddling. **H. Beam Piper's** The Paratime Wars would be my choice, an across time and space war between two factions, the Spiders and the Snakes create complexity as ripped from time characters meet and interact. In **Robert Heinlein's** 'The Number of the Beast' the four main characters have possession of a helicopter / spaceship (a space and temporal Winnebago) equipped with a dial-a-difference type parallel reality drive that allows them to travel, infinite improbability drive like across a range of different, chosen for convenience and comfort versions of Earth and Mars. They are on the run from cross time / cross reality assassins?

The **Isaac Asimov (or AC Clarke?)** story, 'The five Billion Names of God' is a story of complexity resolved and consequences there after. A bunch of Himalayan monks set the nearly infinite task of seeking the true name of God, a combination of 5 billion possible letter combinations, seek technological assistance in the form of a computer to print them all out so they can be chanted to bring God to his senses and terminate this current stage of existence.

Grand Space Opera stories and Human / Alien Societies

The ways that People and Aliens interact are complex – See the Sector General stories by **James White** – What is the deal with the Opera balcony style parliament in Starwars? **Princess Armidale** a Queen of Nauvoo and then a Senator and then **Jar Jar Binks** as a Senator (only in the National Party, only in Queensland?). An essential part of SF stories, the good ones is

the exploration of how you should live in changing times, innovation, consequences and something for the reader to think through in comparison with present day life?

Massive Space Fleets – Communities of millions of worlds? Attempted in books like Dune and it's sequels, dimensions of backdrop that are set to amaze while the story itself is of a conflict between a family sized set of individuals?

The Culture series of books, such as 'Consider Phlebus' by **Ian M. Banks** deals with a hostile Monoculture Vs a (rainbow) Universe of individually different cultures.

In the Series, 'The Well of Souls', by **Jack Chalker**, at the end of the universe lives Nathan Brazil, a character who is infact one of the 'Old Ones' (souls dividable into eighths and sixteenths?), there is also a pocket universe of sorts, a series of hundreds of biosphere domes holding samples of all the current intelligent species of the Universe, as a control mechanism of this parliament of worlds (see Starwars reference) to prevent power cliques, you die and are re-incarnated into another species, usually one that is biologically incompatible with its previous type.

In the The Uplift War series by **David Brin**, two forms of complexity come to mind, firstly the convoluted 'families' of chains of sentient species raised to sentience by older patron races, and secondly from the Galactic Library, which contains all the knowledge of all past species, or rather all the knowledge that your species is granted access to.

Complexity and confusion are a sign of the times in the 1960s/1970s era world of **Jerry Cornelius** as written by **Michael Moorcock** and others.

Necessarily complex Stories?

- **Isaac Asimov's** Foundation Trilogy (and sequels) is necessarily complex, all possible variables identified and fall possibilities considered in order to calculate the broad structure of the future and to do something about the foresee-able downfall of civilisation, the creation of two Institutes at different ends of the inhabited Universe.

- The Three (two and a half) The Matrix Movies, setting up a virtual world as a reality and adventures within it. The Movie 13th floor is sort of a reply to the movie Tron, where a Matrix like second life world becomes so complex that a virtual world set up inside it is able to punch

through to our reality, allowing virtual characters to incarnate in our world.

- How much complexity does the infinite improbability drive from **Douglas Addams** HHGTTG need to function – lots, phone number level improbabilities at cruising speed!

- **Robert Heinlein's** 'The Cat who walked through Walls' is a first contact story with a complex difference, these 'cave men' after first contact advance past all human understanding, an earliest 'Spike' or Technological Singularity story. The 'Spike' is a theme in some SF stories **Damien Broderick** (Aust) and **Vernor Vinge** etc. they posit a time where the rate of technological advance (and complexity) exceeds our ability to predict what might come next, unless Microsoft Windows TM has anything to do with it!

In the Movie **GATTACA**, set in the not too distant future (I mean, electric cars?) the complexities of the Genetic code you are born with define your place and role in society, unless you rebel and seek to subvert the accepted rules of society

Needlessly Complex Stories?

Oh Ghosh didn't you just love page after page of slabs of Dwarfish genealogy or Middle Earth pre-history in **JRR Tolkien's** The Lord Of the Rings (compared to The Hobbit?).

The exposition in some Fantasy Trilogies, seemingly just to reach the magic 500 pages in each book of the trilogy? I mean there are Good Characters, Bad Characters and those who are not what first impressions suggest, why spend the first two hundred pages torturing a character until their 'true' character is revealed and the story can proceed?

The Sc-Fi TV series Lost and Heroes. Too many shark jumping plot twists, turns and character reversals to sustain interest, too complex to follow if you have missed an episode or two.

Deviations

– We spent a fair amount of time discussing the AD/BCE **Manichean / Gnostic point world view**, that all that we experience as reality is merely a dream in the mind of the Good Ghod that is being manipulated by the Bad Ghod. I.e. the true path to virtue is to be 'bad' and to bring down the system as this will wake up the Good Ghod from his slumbers and bring into being a better World. This argument in part developed as a response to the question, 'If ghod is so good

and in charge of 'Everything', then how is it that evil prospers and good people are allowed to suffer?' Clearly this argument is insufficiently complex to be discussed at this meeting?

- Two **punishment scenarios** from SF stories that cropped up; 1. dropped back into time so that you are not only alone in the world but that anything that you touch or create in the life left to you will be erased by time so that no one will ever know you existed. 2. Person is infested with nannites and you are dumped in the desert to die of thirst. When you die the nannites re-build you so you can die of thirst again and again.....

- **Nazi era Science?** The work of a WW2 era German, Nazi approved physicist who was concerned with the complexity that develops in water flows. Much time spent talking about all sorts of things not documented in these notes.

The next meeting's date and topic, Friday June 19, 2009, Topic: Avian Alien Life forms (birds of a feather?)

Notes from the Infinitas Bookshop SF&F Book Review meeting of Thursday May 21, 2009

Books Read and Discussed were; Dead until Dark by **Charlaine Harris (US) - Fantasy**

Make Room Make Room by **Harry Harrison (Ire, was US) - SF**

On this occasion both books, SF and Fantasy were well enjoyed by those who read them. Seems to be a lot more Vampire Fantasy on the Infinitas Bookshop shelves than is entirely healthy, perhaps they are preying on those thick Fantasy Quest cycle books?

Dead until Dark by **Charlaine Harris (US) - Fantasy**

This book forms the basis of the Cable TV series 'True Blood', a series that you are unlikely to see on free to air anytime soon, due to nudity and sex and all that 'only for Cable TV' subject matter. It is worth mentioning that each chapter of the book is made into an episode. Very violent, funny, self aware and sexed up to the max! It is set in a world where the Japanese have created a blood substitute that allows Vampires to come out in the open and no longer depend on traditional sources

/ lifestyles. They even have a TV spokesperson, to push the (false) line for public sympathy that their condition is a result of 'a virus'. The story in this book is at times funny 'tongue in cheek' style but quite enjoyable. There are currently 8 books out in this series and there is a story arc, but the Author has three series of books currently on the go, so it may or may not conclude satisfactorily. The book is set in the American South (traditional home of Lynch mobs and Vampires apparently, a Transylvania de jour?) but is sympathetic to the lives of poor white Southern 'Trailer Trash' people. The main character works as a waitress in a bar. She is able to hear most people's thoughts. Not a pleasant experience at all times, consequently she is attracted to an 'undead' boyfriend, for the mental peace and quiet of the undead mind?

Conclusion - Some readers of this book may get the impression that there is a mystery in this book, but there isn't. Some of the Author's other books are 'Crime / Mystery' and this seemingly is also used in this book.

GPD © May 2009

Make Room Make Room by **Harry Harrison (Ire. / US) - SF**

The edition of this book that was available for discussion is a recent re-print edition, after years of being out of print. In addition to the original 1960s / 1970s era story this edition includes an after word, basically Harry Harrison discussing 'what I got right' and 'What I got wrong'. In reading this book you have to put aside some of your expectations from having seen the Movie 'Soylent Green', which is based on, but departs from the story in this book. What the book is about is living during a spiral down into poverty caused by overpopulation and the burden it places on the social and physical environment. After 40 years it is still a powerful and affecting story. Desertification and Climate Change are mentioned, the weather has become strange and unpredictable, but it is not expressly mentioned as being the consequences of man-made Global Climate change as we are concerned with presently. It is probably enough that the World of this story seems to be a big city and that Cities create their own 'heat island'. Communication generally is limited, so the population is in the dark as to the causes of what is going on,

possibly due to government policy, but partly because technology like the power grid is failing to meet population demands. This is a story of a slow bleak dystopia / day by day apocalypse where there is no real prospect of things ever getting that much better. In discussing this book we talked about 'Captive Universe', an Aztec themed SF story and speculated that this story could have been influenced by what the author may have seen while he was living in Mexico's, translating Mexico City in the 1960s to New York in the 2000s? What this book does not have is any 'Soylent Green', or the picturesque death of Sol, there are suicide booths, but sol dies as a result of medical complications from a broken hip. Systematic re-cycling really isn't present in this book either.

Conclusion - This book still reads very well and it still has something to say to readers after forty years. It does have a slightly dated 1960s/70s feel to it, as it was written before SF was allowed to swear and describe sex and nudity, so it would be OK for younger readers as an introduction to 'Classic' Science Fiction? **GPD © May 2009**

Notes from the Infinitas bookshop SF&F meeting of Thursday June 4, 2009, Topic: Science Fiction of the 1980s

Present were – Daryl Addams, Garry Dalrymple, Kurt Frank and Mick Ousley.
The arrival of a fourth person provided just enough critical mass to make this a discussion of a topic rather than just a conversation between fans.

Sci-Fi TV News for June

Several US made Sci-Fi TV series are to be continued, 'Fringe' gets a second season (and a new cow), 'V' is to be remade. It is all to do with American 'Fall Season' TV announcements ahead of the TV filming season.

- Fantasy writer **Paul Eddings** is dead, as per Twitter announcements made fifteen hours ago, possibly the first Author death announcement by this new communication form?
- Is the current financial collapse is affecting TV? Implications - Telemovies rather than mini series, cheap SFX shows rather than expensive Stars. American producers will probably go for

'length' rather than artistic excellence; while conversely, UK TV producers may go for shorter, higher quality series?

- Last weekend saw the first of the (five) bridging holiday specials between the current and the 2010 appearance of the next Dr Who, the Six million dollar Woman crossover one?
- Stunning genre TV critiques are on offer on the internet via by 'Scottish Falsetto Sock Puppet Theatre'.
- Torchwood has signed series 2 and 3 to the ABC, Captain Jack as Captain Scarlet re-born?
- The final of the US version of 'Is there Life on Mars' revealed to be a hibernation virtual reality distraction for Astronauts on the way to Mars! In the UK version the main character decided that he preferred the comatose 'reality' to re-emerging to face 'real life'.

Discussing the topic; Science Fiction of the 1980s

In TV and Movies

- The TV series 'UFO' was set in the 1980s, 1984 to be precise.
- After the success of 'Starwars', 'Aliens' and 'Raider's of the Lost ark' the stage was set for the franchise movie, sequel following sequel.
- Some 1980s Sci-Fi series and miniseries are currently being re-made 'V', 'Battlestar Galactica' and 'Superman' (and Lois?).
- **Ray Bradbury's** 'The Martian Chronicles' made it to TV during the 1980s. Other better SF had TV outings as well.
- 'America' – A series about the US being invaded by the United Nations killed off the 1980s Sci-Fi Mini series (apparently)!
- Disaster movies abounded, some apocalyptic SF, 'The Day After' etc.
- The Running Man and the 1980s were **Stephen King's** Decade via movies and made for TV telemovies?
- Lots of money moved into SFX and SF movies.
- Movies were made ahead of becoming the pinball machine, arcade game or home cartridge game as an after thought instead of the current trend of 'Movies of the Game' at present.
- We saw 'Blade Runner', 'The Empire Strikes Back', 'Mad Max 2', 'Aliens 2 & 3' and 'Buckaroo Banzai' at the Movies and we bought the collectibles or videos, before they

were remastered or offered as 'directors' cut' versions..

- An effect of the success of Star Wars was the eclipse of the SF book as the source for the later movie. Instead the Book of the Movie was promoted independently of any original source book, although at the end of the decade, there was sufficient confidence to do the Movie / Miniseries of the Dune books?

- Media SF fan groups and Conventions took off, one for each Movie / TV franchise rather than generalist SF&F groups, later to fall back into Cult Fiction / Pulp Fiction generalist clubs, without the Science Fiction readership or SF&F fannish traditions?

- Movies of the Comic book were not yet a big thing in the 1980s?

In Books

- The 'Novelisation' of Star Trek Next Generation adventures, taking the TV franchise further than just re-telling the Classic Star Trek TV series scripts as **James Blish** short story anthologies. They became a parallel revenue stream for Paramount Studios rather than just an incidental 'tie-in', a new two or three hundred page STNG novelisation a month, and then there was DS9, Voyager and Enterprise streams of books. They provided employment for some well established as well as 'hack' SF writers

- For the more Literary SF reader, the 'New Wave' of British SF writers were replaced as the 'happening new thing' by the blend of high technology and low life / underground culture known as 'Cyber Punk'. This movement was centred on US West Coast and Canadian writers?

- Publishers discovered the inexhaustibly extensible Quest Fantasy Trilogy as a consistent repeat sale marketing stratagem.

- At some point the public perception and the presumed bookshop rack definition of 'Science Fiction' became the Fantasy Quest Trilogy. Some SF&F writers changed from being SF to Fantasy writers, i.e. **Anne McCaffrey**, 'The Ship who Sang' (Cyborg SF) to 'Pern' (Dragon based Fantasy).

- The 'jointly' written SF book emerged, usually, teaming a newcomer to SF with an established SF writer, to crank out extensions to the older writer's past landmark SF books or series.

- The pairings of **Gentry Lee** and **Arthur C. Clarke**, **S.M. Stirling** and others, **Anne**

McCaffrey and some others spring to mind.

- It must be pointed out that these across-the-Planet collaborations were to some degree enabled by the then new 'Sci-Fi' internet technology.

- In reaction to the wussy 'hippy stuff' SF of the 1970s, Military SF emerged as a popular SF subgenre. Or was it that US publishers and readers were 'over' the Vietnam War? Several writers following the success of **Jerry Pournelle's** 'Janissaries', or possibly 'Aircraft Carriers in Space' was the logical next area for 'Space Opera' to explore after the success of Starwars Vs the Star Trek Next Generation having gone boldly to offer their caring and sharing Federation philosophies with a largely pacified Universe?

- **Comic Books**, as a result of advances in printing technology, were re-born as '**Graphic Novels**'. Their lush textured images and monosyllabic action being new competition for the 'imagine it yourself' offering of traditional Science Fiction rather than a stepping stone to SF readership?

Thus endeth the lesson, a shorter account of a meeting than usual. Proportional to it's attendance level? © **G. Dalrymple June 2009**

Future Sydney Futurian Discussion meeting dates and Topics include;

Friday August 21, 2009, Topic:

Fantasy Stories that are Feudal Free or otherwise break the 'Quest Fantasy' mould
Friday September 18, 2009, Topic: **Politics, Money and the Economy in SF&F Stories, realistic and laughable?**

Friday October 16, 2009, Topic: **The aspects that a SF Story must have to take it beyond being a Mundane story**

Friday November 20, 2009, Topic: **A discussion of the Best and Worst Alien Life forms**

Friday December 18, 2009, Topic: **Future pre-occupations for SF?**

Friday January 15, 2010, Topic: **Your Best and Worst SF&F / Sci-Fi etc for 2009**

Science Fiction Book Reviews

ISBN 0-224-02936-3

Myths of the Near Future

By **J. G. Ballard UK (deceased 2009)**, 205 pages, **An Anthology of 10 stories**, © 1982, Read May 3 to 7, 2009. Published TBS&E #35 for ANZAPA # 249 of August 2009

A **J. G. Ballard** Checklist of story features;
Bright Sunlight – Passing in and out of normal consciousness/ dementia/ mental states – motel rooms – Light Aircraft – Main character Nudity – Astronauts – Main Character's belief that He/She was an Astronaut – Car Crashes – Memories of China under decaying Japanese control – projection of images – interaction with dead bodies (who cannot speak but still 'talk'?) – Psychiatrists madder than their patients?

Yes its another trip deep into the mind of **J. G. Ballard**, another sometimes SF writer who deals in 'otherness' and altered perception themes like a UK version of a **Philip K. Dick** who got over the paranoia thing?

This Anthology contains these Short Stories;

1. Myths of the Near Future

Astronauts flight into space has unleashed a psychic illness. People believe that they too were Astronauts, causing them to converge on the site of the abandoned Cape Canaveral.

2. Having a wonderful time

Solution to a population problem? Send them all off to the Canary Islands on holiday, only it is a one-way ticket to white shoe paradise for all the 'B Arc' people no longer required by their home economies.

3. A host of Furious Fancies

A sort of re-write of the Cinderella story, or just some deluded old coot's confabulation / point of view change?

4. Zodiac 2000

An updating of the Zodiacs animal icons for some more relevant technological ones within a free association / stream of consciousness story of a sort.

5. News from the Sun

Caring for a delusional Astronaut, carer catches the disease, symptoms, increasingly longer 'out of time' fugues. Recovery or escape to a different consciousness via the brightness of the Sun, makes death a doorway to a new way of experiencing the Universe?

6. Theatre of War

Re-voicing the Vietnam War set in a 1980s Britain, a better tool to understand the end phase of the Vietnam conflict than a SF story, although not that great a stretch of the imagination given life in Thatcher's Britain?

7. The Dead time

An autobiographical story? Adventures / a road trip with a truck load of corpses through China as Japanese control recedes after the Japanese surrender. Sort of explores living / not living and Not at War Vs Not at Peace etc

8. The Smile

A bachelor with a sense of imagination acquires a very life-like artificial doll. Grows to treat it as a 'silent partner', until he discovers that it is in fact taxidermy. The realisation that it is/was a 'real woman' leads to a breakdown in their 'relationship' as the man imagines it has been unfaithful. Given a smack, it like an unloved spouse 'lets itself go'.

9. Motel Architecture

An obsessive, Isolated and wheelchair bound (nude) TV commentator imagines an intruder in the house, leads to murder / suicide as the main character's personality divides.

10. The intensive Care Unit

Ultimate end of the video generation, a society that interacts only by video link. One man tries to meet his family in the flesh. Doesn't end well at all.

Not very cheerful stuff at all, unless you enjoy 'Spaceship of the Mind' type SF that crash lands on the planet of the monstrous psyche! Hope his stories cheered up a bit later on.

GPD © May 2009

ISBN 978-0-575-09085-9

The Forest of Hands & Teeth

by **Carrie Ryan US**, 308 pages, © 2009. Read May 20 to 22 May 2009, Pub. in TBS&E #35, ANZAPA # 249 – of August 2009

The Material that comes with the review copy of this book promotes it as being the book that will do for Zombies what **Stephanie Meyer** has done for Vampires. This might even be the case, I haven't read any **Stephanie Meyer** and this book seemed to me to be an above the average Young Adult story, compared to some I have read recently.

The story has lots of talk about 'relationships', there is embracing and some kissing but the story is silent on what presumably follows thereafter. OK and expected for YA, adults probably do not need to be told what might be happening after. The story has gaps that a more demanding adult reader should notice, but this may not be an impediment to a younger reader's enjoyment?

The story could be subtitled 'a long walk to the Sea', as there is a lot of walking though the book and eventually the Sea is reached, transparently the starting point for further books in the series?

It is the story of a young woman, a teenager presumably who is coming of age in an isolated (and walled off) community that is surrounded on all sides by The Forest of Hands and Teeth and Zombies! Picture an inexhaustible sea of Zombies washing up against the fences and occasionally breaking through to infect the living before being repelled. The community is run by a religious order (of sorts), the Sisterhood, and the options available to young women are marriage to whatever young man of the community will have you or to join the Sisterhood. The main character spends a great deal of the book discussing her plight, there are two brothers, and it is the 'wrong' one that asks for her, but only after an uncharacteristic stint with the Sisterhood, which seems to be a conceit to allow the main character to wander around the Sisterhood's Cathedral (but No Bishop!) discover a few secrets and have some tantalising encounters with Gabrielle an 'outsider' whose existence is counter to the Sisterhood's theology as it hints of there being a wider world beyond the fences of this community. Mostly though, the stint with the Sisterhood is to allow the chief Sister, (clearly modelled on Mrs Danvers of **Daphne Du Maurier's** Rebecca?) to explain 'how the world is' according to the Sisterhood. Gabrielle is staked out to be infected by the Zombie flu, the Sisterhood's method of dealing with inconvenient people/facts which results in a Zombie invasion that ends the community!

A small band of ludicrously ill prepared survivors then make their escape down a narrow fenced forbidden pathway that leads to.... The unknown.

After weeks of travel and the death of one of their number they end up at the gate to another community. Their hopes of a welcome are disappointed, this apparently abandoned community has in fact been previously overrun by zombies, who lie in stasis until their arrival, roused by the prospect of 'fresh blood'. They are soon besieged, which lasts for some weeks, before an unexplained series of house fires spurs them to desperate measures and a desperate flight that only ends when the main character ends up on a beach, among the flood tide's storm wrack of beheaded Zombies, having left behind her Brother, two possible boyfriends, her best friend, home community and way of life.

Conclusions - an OK read for YA readers I guess, for my tastes the plot requires a few too many inexplicable conveniences to proceed. I would give the writer some credit though for one aspect, just as I was about to roll eyes and say 'you've got to be joking' as the Sisterhood's community set up was being explained, the author has Gabrielle, the outsider appear on the scene.

The implications of this outsider maintained my interest sufficiently long to get further into the book, to the long walk, where I expected further explanations of what was really going on to emerge at the crossing of each 'gate' on the path to the sea.

I wouldn't categorise this book to be Science Fiction although it borrows much from apocalypse SF and rather less than from Fantasy.

There is just too much left unexplained and faintly ridiculous about the Sisterhood's community set up, the Zombie plague and how the world came to be that way.

There is none of the Supernatural about the story either, so I suppose the book is like a zombie, between live SF and dead Fantasy?

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Tebbutt family tomb. The tomb is decorated to appear like an observatory, with celestial hemispheres at each corner, each inlaid with brass or copper stars. Of the several features

of the observatories at John Tebbutt's home, the 8 inch (18882) Grubb Refractor and its massive mount and the ingenuity of the rotating dome above it stood out.

Michael Chapman gave a report in two parts; he had attended the Royal Astronomical Society of New Zealand's annual conference for the launch of 'Variable Stars South' a re-organised Variable Stars observations coordinating group. Alan Plummer (absent this evening) is one of several Australian and New Zealand directors of 'Variable Stars South', whose website was also displayed and discussed.

Michael also raised the prospect of being able to do useful variable star work with an 'ordinary' digital camera. He displayed a few views of the night sky from his back yard and it appears that magnitude 8 stars were visible.

Frank Displayed only one image, brilliant but with a few visible defects that betrayed the less than ideal observing conditions under which it was taken. The object was NGC4545, a Siefert II Galaxy (narrow spectra) of the 25 minutes of exposure (multiple images) he had to discard several images taken due to wind induced blurring.

Garry Dalrymple - My own observations were of the Journey to Mars talk at Sydney University (see notes elsewhere). If it is funded by the Obama government then it will be a 15 year program and a lot of Science will be done ahead of the first Martian footfall.

My personal views on the topic

For a long time I have been very critical of the way that the search for extra Solar planets has been reported. I keep seeing newspaper articles about the discovery of 'The First Planet beyond the Solar system....' Which turns out to be another case of the existence of a non-luminous body being inferred from scantily explained graph plots and other mathematical gymnastics and always with the article a much larger than the text 'Artists Impression' masquerading as a real Astronomical image. As a result of this my standard of evidence for a Planetary 'Discovery' has always been 'show me a real image'. During late May I found an image on page 75 of the March 2009 edition of Sky at Night magazine. This Hubble image shows a nebula around Formalhaut and the 2004 and 2006 positions of a Planet.

Guest Speaker: Simon O'Toole
from the Anglo Australian
Observatory's Gemini Office. Topic:
Searching for Planets around distant
Stars

Opening comments - Pleased to see some of the references in the Members observations (above) as the first Observatory I ever visited was John Tebbutt's observatory at Windsor. I was also pleased to see the picture of Mr (Tom) Jones at the RASNZ, who has spent over 60 years observing Variable Stars, with only a week off after cataract surgery, to 'recalibrate' his post cataract eyes.

The Theory of Planets beyond our own Solar System existed as a philosophical concept well before Astronomy could realistically hope to find examples. In 1584 Giordano Bruno (Later burn at the stake for other heretical notions) was of the view that there must be countless worlds, some of them inhabited. In 1963 there was a briefly credible claim for a Planet around Barnard's Star in a Phd. thesis. This 'discovery' was down to observed deviations from projected proper motion, but by 1973 it was shown to be a statistical error. In 1991 a Planet orbiting a Pulsar was discovered, mass inferred from observed pulse delays, but this turned out to be a failure to allow for Earth's slightly elliptical motion around the Sun. In 1992 however, using the Arricibo Radio Telescope they did find several Planet sized objects orbiting PSR 1257+12. In 1995 some Swiss Astronomers found a Planet with a Four Day orbit around its Sun, and there after more were found.

5 methods for finding Extra Solar Planets

1. **Observation of a Star's wobble**, inferring the effects of an associated non-luminous mass. Sun and Planet both rotate around a centre of Gravity, a Barycentre resulting in the light received from the Star being Doppler Red and Blue shifted as it (as seen from Earth) advances and retreats. Spectroscopic observation of the extremes of this Red and Blue shift gives the period of the Planet's orbit. Very precise observations are needed, the 'differences' looked for are about 1 in One Hundred Million. This technique was suggested by

Otto Struve in 1952, but the technology took much longer to develop. Very stable, frequently nitrogen cooled Spectroscopes were needed

2. Or you could try to observe a **physical wobbles in star images over time** and so estimate a periodicity for an unseen Planet. This is rather hard to do as errors creep in. The 'differences' looked for are about 1 in Ten Million.
3. **Transit based** - Observe Stars for relatively brief and minor drops in observed brightness during the brief period that a Planet crosses the face of it's Star as seen from Earth. But only a small fraction of candidate Stars will have Planets that are conveniently lined up to cross the observer's view. Space Telescopes are best for this, avoiding the false positives that atmospheric variations produce. CoRot is a Space Telescope that is searching for (and finding) Exo Planets, ahead of the (recently launched) Kepler Space Telescope. Observed transit times give accurate absolutes for the size of these Planets.
4. **Gravitational Micro Lensing** - A Star (as seen from Earth) passing before a Gravitational Lens produces a brightness increase. If the Star has a Planet the brightness curve is seen to have a shoulder spike. These events are very brief, providing detail poor, random outcomes. Very few detections do result, but these are useful for counting / estimating the total population of Stars with Planets.
5. **Direct Imaging**. A search for a pixel or spot beside a Star that could be it's much less bright non-luminous companion. After shielding and image processing one has been 'seen', 350 AU from it's Sun, in a 6,000 year orbit more expected soon as technologies for image processing and brightness ratios and contrast problems are solved.

Australian initiatives include; The **Anglo Australian Observatory's Planet Search**, using Doppler Shifts of light, the **PLANET collaboration** which uses Micro gravitational lensing techniques and **HATnet South**, which uses transits (some of this technology developed from AAO's **FLAIR** technology, measuring/observing the spectrum of multiple Stars at once?). 11 years ago the AAO

started using the **UCLES spectroscope** which used a sealed container of Iodine gas vapour to provide stationary spectroscopic markers against which to detect the small Doppler shifts of light from stars whose surfaces are in motion.

Looking for smaller Planets, Earth like or Solar Systems that could support life (as we know it). The search for statistics about the distribution of Planetary sizes currently involves monitoring about 250 sun like Stars, down to magnitude 7.5. In this search they discard 'Active' stars, as the brightness fluctuations of Sunspots and flares would swamp the detail they are searching for. Otherwise, a mirror image view of our own Sun with it's 11 year solar Cycle would be seen as a 11 year period wobble?

To date over 300 Planets have been identified and over 25% have been found as part of multiple Planet systems. The AAO is responsible for about 10% of these. No Solar Systems just like ours have been detected yet, as the rough curves and plots discovered so far tend to disclose multiple (large) Planet influences, such as Jupiter and Saturn sized objects, which can then be observed.

The Lomb-Scargle Periodogram (contributed to by our own Dr Nick Lomb). Nick's method of manipulating the recorded observations in search of periodic variations that suggest Planetary periods. Subtraction and further mathematical manipulation may suggest harmonics of the periods of lesser Planets.

HD209458b – Osiris. Is the first observed transiting Planet, has a 3.5 day orbit around it's Star and images reveal that it even has a commentary tail!

Super Earths, possibly Rocky Planets of 4.2, 6.7 and 9.4 Earth Masses have been found around a nearby Red Dwarf star. These have 'years'/orbits of less than twenty days!

CoRot-Exo 7b is currently the smallest known Extra-Solar Planet, only twice Earth's mass. It takes 20 hours to orbit it's Sun and its surface temperature is 1500 degrees C (in the shade?). Another big discovery is that most Extra-Solar Planets so far detected have eccentric and elliptical orbits rather than circular, frequently verging on being comet like! Many are very close to their Star, suggesting that they were kicked in from the outer cold by unseen gravitational events. However these

may be an unrepresentative sample, biased by these ones being easiest to detect?

Transit surprises – Observed motions suggest very low densities for detected Extra-Solar Planet, suggesting that most are made up of light gasses. Calculated densities are much less than predicted values suggesting that either that the models are wrong or that they are made up of 'hot' gasses, so lessening their overall density.

HR8799 was depicted by combining images from the Gemini and Keck Telescopes. The combined image shows three Planets. The process used involves masking the Star's brightness and on this occasion the Planets can then be seen as points that have moved over time! This Star's spectral class and other characteristics suggest that it and it's Planets would be less than 300 million years old. Existing technology limits what can be seen and it is observations in the infrared that currently seem most promising. This allows the imaging of some Planets that are still hot from formation. In doing this type of work the AAO has a considerable advantage in looking for Doppler shifts in stellar spectra, as it has an archive of records built up over eleven years of observing, so it can have much better 'luck' in catching rare before and after changes.

The future of Extra-Solar Planet searching is the recently launched Kepler Space Telescope, which, far above atmospheric effects suffered by ground based telescopes peering up through an ever changing atmosphere, will spend a couple of years looking at a promising patch of sky with a 13 degree wide field of view.

The big remaining question is still the matter of a true size distribution for Extra-Solar Planets. There should be many more smaller Extra-Solar Planets than larger ones, (similar to Asteroid size distribution?) but the means available and the discoveries made to date are clearly biased by those that we can see easiest and may not represent the full picture.

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ISBN 0-593051122 1945 the World we fought for, by Keel UK, 400 pages, © 2005. Read between April 25 and 2 May, 2009. Published in TBS&E #35, ANZAPA # 250 – of August 2009

A Eurocentric account of the final year of the Second World War. It details how the final push against Hitler's Germany was conducted at the same time as the stage was set for the post War carve up of Europe and the 'Cold War'. It was most illuminating to read of the political distractions that were occurring as the war was ending in Europe, but the War with Japan was still largely in the balance. Unconditional Surrender was what was on offer from the allies but there was still some latitude for on the battlefield compromises as German allies defected and German occupied areas were bypassed. As an account of the fighting the book was at times thin, but this seemed to stress the point that the war was frequently contested violently at some strategic locations and much less vigourously at other locations. A point that lead to expectations on the German side that some accommodation might emerge, if only Germany could hold out longer and suspicions on the part of each of the allies that one or other of the allies would do a deal with Germany to advance / maintain national agendas. The end of the War in Europe was treated by many as a pause rather than a conclusion as the War against Japan still needed to be fought to a conclusion. At the end of 1944 vast territories in China and South East Asia remained garrisoned by millions of undefeated in the field Japanese troops, irrespective of the conditions in Japan. At an early stage in WW2 the Americans decided to concentrate only 15% of their war effort on Japan. Even on VJ day the allies had liberated only 7 % of Japanese occupied land! The massive investment in developing the Atomic bomb was intended for the European war Bomb and it's application against Hiroshima and Nagasaki contributed to a climate of events and expectations that aided a 'concentration of the mind' on behalf of the Japanese leadership. Even after the Japanese surrender there was great concern whether the Japanese Military in China and South East Asia would lay down their arms as instructed by their home government.

Conclusion - This book is a really good introduction to the birth of post war Europe and shows how the Coldwar / Iron curtain was an extension of tensions that were present even when the Anti-Nazi Allies were at their most united, rather than being an unexpected last minute post war surprise.

Continued from Page 6

alternately interfacing with past wars and imaginary future space faring, so Blink's mental displacement of this book hardly raised a metaphorical eyebrow in this reader. **J.G. Ballard** does it Soooo much better, weird and 'real life' detail at the same time. I've also

recently spent time with elderly people, people with more vivid and accessible memories of the distant past than the recent /current present.

- Initially I thought this book was going to be substantially about Launceston's Windmill Hill, a now neglected site where once a great community endeavour was enacted. Most towns and Suburbs have one of these, sites bypassed by technology and the diminished sense of community currently abroad. There are several Windmill Hill like places I could show you within Basenjis walking distance of where I live.

- My second impression was of a disjoint and grating time scale, a WW1 veteran, his retired 70 plus year old son (too young for WW2) and a 30 to 40 year old grandson. It just doesn't seem to fit together. I simply do not see how it could all fit in; it drives the events too close to the present decade. My Grandfather was a WW1 veteran, who married late (died 1976, aged 87 when I was 12). My father was a WW2 veteran who also married late, so by my family yardsticks 'Angus' is extracting his 100 plus year old grandfather from the nursing home for a spot of intensive hands on gardening? I mention this because according to the back page the Author was born the same year as I was. It just doesn't wash!

- My third impression was frequent incidents of 'how on earth does the book know this', as first person eminences from people long dead and unmet by the narrator rolled on for page after page. This was resolved on nearly the last paragraph with a bland statement to the effect that 'and later we exchanged a great deal of family history'

- The Mysteries in this book were why was 'Angus' named after his grandfather's lost war time companion, (the Main character / narrator's childhood accident with a gun that killed an Uncle, leaving him 'stranded on the wire' like a WW1 casualty), Why was Blink was so affected, because he felt that he had betrayed a friend who had saved his life, by leaving him stranded on the wire.

- **Side excursions** - pre-WW1 enlistment life in Tasmania, Suburban and Queenstown - the life and times of a Queenstown entrepreneur (and knocking shop magnate).

There were convenient but credibility stretching elements of this book, the real Angus being wounded and completely voiceless, surely not.

Blink's psychosis and mental displacement never attracting the attention of the repat people, 1919 to the book's present?

Conclusion - After reading this book cover to cover I still really do not understand why Blink needed to build a garden and why it had to be near Queenstown. I can understand his remorse, but not the urge to garden at that location, a regard this as a failing of the book.
GPD © May 2009

Garry's Notes from the June 17, 2009, Men only Book Group meeting held at Campsie Public Library from 6.30 to 7.30 pm

Who was there: Three people attended and three apologies were received before the meeting. Not a great turnout, but the apologies received do indicate a continuing interest?

Meeting Notes

- If the book can be said to be 'about' anything it was probably about a Father / Son relationship, but even this is left somewhat unresolved at the end of the book?

- It's not a straight forward read that follows a clear plot line. The book describes about a week in 1945, a final summer holiday in 1948, a later day trip to Sweden and the narrator in old age reflecting back on these memories.

- Re-reading and 'meditating' on the images found in this story seems to be the way to enjoy it. On a first read the reader is likely to ask, 'What is this all about' and 'What is the writer's purpose in including that scene / sequence?'

- The book included a kaleidoscopic like play of scenes rather than a strong narrative thread. These scenes, some with great attention to descriptive detail, of mundane details of an old man's daily routine are best appreciated as 'scenery' rather than as driving a story line?

- The repeated jumping between the Narrator's present to 1948 (15 years old) to 1945 (father's absences / resistance work) was challenging. It was suggested that the Narrator's dreams were a linking device for the otherwise random seeming passages.

- There are points of transition / maturation in the story, a son transferring primary allegiance from Mother to Father, and Father's abandonment of Son. Sexual awakening, the Milkmaid scenes and father's acknowledgement of his son's sexual maturity during the horse back trip to Sweden

- There were four or five occasions (Abraham and Isaac like?) where a son is sacrificed, The death of Odd by his brother Lars' hand, older brother Jon leaving the family as a result of this, Jon's return to claim the farm after 9 years away at sea evicting Lars (and his Mother doesn't object), the Father and Son horseback trip to Sweden (with the father's intent on abandoning the family as a subtext?) and even the death at German hands of the Narrator's uncle, one of two escaping twins.

- Very late in the book the Narrator's Daughter (one of two) shows up, setting up an opportunity for him to 'renounce' his renunciation of his previous life (had left without forwarding address) or possibly as a scene so the Narrator could strike a different direction from that of his own Father who had also just departed from the family without explanation?

Deviations

- Discussion of the Library's new human book initiative, people with interesting 'life experiences' that you can book for a half hour conversation.

- Also discussed the future in-library appearances by Sydney Writers Susannah Fullerton and Bob Ellis. Susannah has a new book out, describing the Australian visits of 11 prominent Authors between the 18 hundreds and 1939

- Dalrymple family history relating to an accidental gun death of one brother caused by another.

- Deliberations on what sort of lists of books should be used as source material to select books from for future meetings; current / past HSC recommended texts, lists of Genre fiction 'bests' (for books with crossover appeal?)

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Garry's Book reviews

ISBN 0-099-50613-0 **Out Stealing Horses**, by Per Petterson (Norway),

264 pages, © 2003 - A reading choice for the June 17 meeting of Campsie Library's Men only book group. This review to be published in TBS&E #35, for ANZAPA mailing # 250 of August 2009

This book contains;

A guilt producing sex situation. **Check**

A point of division from a one time childhood best friend / side kick. **Check.**

An accidental and catastrophic gun incident being essential to the story. **Check**

Something to do with the War, with incidental battle scenes recalled. **Check.**

An older Narrator flashing back to memories of life as a younger person. **Check.**

Some heavy 'gardening' scenes (woodcutting). **Check.**

Some 'Mystery' set up by having only part of the full picture at the time. **Check.**

Water themes, Waves, Rivers or mud combined with breath holding. **Check.**

Answers to some sort of a mystery involving significant moments in the life of an older relative, which are explained in a disjointed episodic manner via flashbacks. **Check.**

Then I guess it has to be another Campsie Men only book group reading choice!

The title for this book comes from a throw away line used early in the book, the joint father and son use of the euphemism 'Out Stealing Horses'.

The Father made use of the expression as a euphemism for his WW2 time resistance courier work and the son used it for adolescent adventures that included riding a neighbour's horses. We have a 67 year old in retirement thinking back to events when he was 15, during 1948 and there are further 'flashbacks' within these detailing events around his father's war time resistance work.

The settings are remote Norway for the present and on the Norway (occupied) Sweden (neutral) border zone.

The main character's best friend's is despatched from the story as a result of his negligence in failing to unload a gun, which leads to one of his twin brother's killing the other.

Lots of Northern Hemisphere Seasonal descriptions, that I couldn't quite relate to, but would an Inuit be able to relate to Eucalypt forest descriptions?

Rather a lot of Wood handling and carpentry discussed which I could relate to and be rather envious of.

The narrator gives Best Friend's Mother a cuddle, precipitation a log handling exercise that removes Best friend's father from the scene. Narrator subsequently discovers that his Father and Best Friend's mother have a 'thing', war time to 1948 and beyond?

Through convenient acquaintances the reader discovers that the frequently 'away on business' Father was in fact acting as a courier and manager of resistance communications between occupied Norway and neutral Sweden.

Very late in the book some sort of explanation for the absence of the main character's father emerges, but only in a half hearted way.

If the point of the book was intended to be a 'mystery' about the father's absence then I wasn't aware that it was intended to be the main thrust of the book until very late in the piece.

I noticed a few Idiomatic deficiencies and stylistic curiosities, each of which testifies to it being a translated to English book. For example have a look at this passage from the book –

'but in Summer he had the windows open. The kitchen was painted the blue colour which was customary out here, it kept the flies away, was the saying, and that was probably right, and he had made all the furniture himself.' - I hope that this is an explanation for some of the textual distractions I encountered in reading this book.

Warning – This book should not be read by people who are twins or who love twins. Two sets of twins are encountered during this book. In each case one twin dies young due to firearms related causes! Rather unlikely?

Conclusion – This book / Story failed to grip my imagination. I found it to be an aimless and purposeless wander in a hyperborean forest encountering random memories, rather than a

great Scandinavian Quest with Nordic heroes to uncover the mystery of the narrator's self identity or to get to know a deceased / absent father.

I picked up and read a couple of books between starting reading this story and doing this review. I found them infinitely more gripping.

The format of this book is; few words per line and few lines per page etc., which suggests to me a lack of love for the environment and forest products! This book might come down to a Novela size if it were printed in a closer type, wider line format?

This book won the Independent (awarded by the UK Newspaper of the same name I guess?) Foreign Fiction Prize, so I suppose it must appeal to some tastes?

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An apparently Blank Space

Feel free to imagine some insightful quote or dazzling piece of artwork to fill this space, go on, and exercise your imagination!

This issue of TBS&E will shortly be continued, please feel free to turn the page anytime now. GPD
Two Non SF Book Reviews
ISBN 0-7472-1552-9

Codename Downfall, By T. B. Allen (US) and N. Polmar (US), 402 pages, WW2 History, plans for invading Japan, ©

1995, Read June, 2009. Published TBS&E #35 for ANZAPA # 250 of August 2009

It is a little unfortunate that this book is so American centric, as the War against Japan was the greater part of Australia's Second World War, our national integrity was imperilled in a manner far exceeding that of the US. Our losses at Darwin and other places proportionately far exceeded the losses of the Americans? Indeed at one point there is even a mention of the fact that at one stage the US war effort was stated to be Europe and Atlantic 85%, Japan and the Pacific 15%.

The book does deal with the plans for the invasion of Japan, as end chapters, the majority of the book is an explanation of America's war in the Pacific and it's pre-war involvements in the region. Understandable, but not all that could be written on the topic. Australia and Australians are occasionally mentioned, as being 'involved in the fighting as well'. General McArthur's disinclinations, to use coloured US troops and Australian armed forces (hints of fears of miscegenation in the air?) are mentioned, but it is typical of the tone of this book that the irony, McArthur's slights and the author's own lack of coverage of Australian involvement is missed.

The long and drawn out account of events leading to the planning of the invasion is necessary. Proposing to invade Japan in 1945 was a very different and greater problem than that faced by the planners of the liberation of Europe in 1944. There were no advancing Soviet armies to the enemy's rear and there were literally millions of undefeated Japanese troops still underarms on the Asian mainland.

The consequences of an invasion would involve these troops in addition to those on the Japanese home islands. For example, the earlier carrier based Doolittle air raid on Japan, was estimated to have resulted in over 200,000 Chinese casualties, about the same as for the rape of Nanjing. The consequences of an allied invasion of Japan's 'sacred islands' for subject Chinese civilians and Allied POWs beggers belief. To a greater extent than I had realised, the Japanese were indoctrinated to see WW2 and resistance to the allies as a holy war. In modern terms, imagine trying to invade and pacify a nation of 70 million fundamentalist motivated Jihadist!

The plan as outlined was for an amphibious invasions of Honshu in November 1945 to be then used as a base for another amphibious invasion in early 1946 of the Tokyo region, with fighting on the ground to last until 1947 perhaps. Optimistic forecasts were for Honshu to be an Okinawa times ten as far as US casualties were concerned. Half a million or so Allied troops would face hundreds of thousands of Japanese troops and militia, as well as millions of poorly armed civilians 'motivated' by well armed secret police liquidation squads behind the battle lines to exterminate those who fell short of their national duty.

The difficulties of mounting a war in Japan after the victory in Europe were discussed, signs of US civilian War weariness was a constant concern, as well as the practical difficulties of moving half a million people from Europe to the Pacific and either maintaining in uniform skilled but war weary veterans of the European war, or raising and training an almost entirely new and untested military for the invasion?

The book covers in great detail the intended allied invasion plans, as well as the Japanese plans for apocalyptic resistance, as well as the politics and divisions within (US) war leadership. Each would have ensured that the invasion would have been a disaster that would have lead to far greater recriminations than any part of the conduct of WW2 except the Nazi death camps? MacArthur consistently down played casualty estimates and Japanese defence preparedness. For a vision of how it might have turned out, imagine if it had been planned for each German division to place the population of a concentration camp between it and the advancing allies on D Day, that the allies would have to fight their way through to get to the German troops?

Japanese peace feelers? The reality of claims that Japan was 'negotiating to end the war' were discussed in one chapter. Those in power were actually seeking an alliance with the Soviet Union against the Western powers, and through signal intercepts this was known to Allied war planners.

One element that I found surprising was that there were plans to use US manufactured V1 buzz bombs against Japan. The reasoning

for this partly had to do with hopes to minimise potential US casualties, as shot down and captured Allied airmen were not expected to survive captivity.

In conclusion – In reading this book I am more convinced that the dropping of the Atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki were essential to ending the War and that they were the ‘right’ decision under the circumstances. Had an invasion taken place, the casualties to the Allies (US forces alone on Honshu, with some Commonwealth forces taking part in the Tokyo invasion) and the Japanese people would inevitably be numbered in the millions. It would have been fanatical resistance or Jonestown like submission to national suicide. The dropping of the Bomb provided the basis of an excuse for Japan to surrender a war that it could no longer hope to win, but for which it did not have until then the political vocabulary to resign from, in much the same frame of mind that Japanese military leaders believed that bombing Hawaii would provide an excuse for the US to stay out of the Pacific War.

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The Rats of Rangoon, by Wing Com. Lionel Hudson RAAF (retired) Aust. , 221 pages, © 1987 Read June 23 to 29, 2009. Published in TBS&E 35 for ANZAPA # 250, August 2009

Something of a theme in my reading of late has been to read several WW2 era non-fiction books nearly back to back and there are still one or two more similar on the ‘soon-to-be-read’ pile.

This book consists of several intertwined stories, Lionel Hudson’s relatively brief incarceration as a prisoner of the Japanese in Burma, the curious end to Japan’s occupation of Burma and finally post war meetings with figures from the other two strands. As a read this book is helped by the fact that pre and post-war the writer was a journalist, so this book contains both personal the experiences well observed, the framework of historical facts and a well set up storyline, so it reads a bit like a novel.

The book starts in March 1945, as the War in Europe is clearly ending, and just as clearly the tide has turned against Japan in South East Asia and the Pacific. Lord Mountbatten, allied supreme commander in South East Asia is

planning an amphibious assault to re-capture Rangoon.

The Allies have air superiority over the Japanese, so over confidence is partly to blame for the situation that Hudson finds himself in, insensate and crash landed in a Japanese occupied area where he first encounters the cowardly aspects of the ‘Code of Bushido’, i.e. you can beat the crap out of anyone you feel is beneath you. His treatment is to be particularly severe as the fact that the Allies are conclusively beating the Japanese in the Air enrages them. It invalidates both their God-Emperor belief system and their claim to racial superiority.

So Hudson is a captive of the Japanese at a time when Allied Airmen are being treated as ‘Criminals of War’ (for being able to effectively fight back?) rather than as POWs and he has two additional problems. He seems to be the senior Allied airman in Japanese captivity and in his head he has knowledge of Allied invasion plans! Both are good reasons to take the advice recorded by Gunner Spike Milligan – Make like a Basenjis – keep quiet or otherwise he could find himself on a transport to Tokyo as a prize captive.

After the usual reception interrogations he is locked up in Rangoon’s Prison, where the Airmen are segregated from the ‘United Nations’ of other Allied POWs. Privation and cruelty are endured, ‘mateship’ among POWs of all nationalities and the sharing of scarce food and other items saves many lives, but all is under the twin clouds of, ‘What will the Japanese do when the allies arrive at Rangoon, and when will the Allies arrive to end the prisoner’s suffering, before or after the Monsoon?’

As the invasion of Rangoon becomes increasingly immanent, with air raids and ‘thunder’ on the horizon that could be advancing allied artillery or an early Monsoon, the Japanese ominously ask for a list of ‘all the prisoners who can walk’. Were these men to be evacuated and all the rest murdered, or were they to accompany their captors on a death-march retreat into the Burmese hills? These ‘fit’ men were then marched off with the Japanese as hostages, but were then abandoned after only a few days and after a few deaths on the way. The prospect of the Japanese just up and leaving was never

anticipated by Allied or Japanese High commands, but it happened. For several days before the Allies arrived in force there was a power vacuum, that led to a brief interregnum of 1,000 Allied POWs, with Hudson as their head, ruling Rangoon in a balancing act by setting Burmese Nationalists, Quisling Indian Army forces (abandoned by their Japanese masters) and Japanese set up local administrators. The set up was Monty Pythonesque, maintained on the strength of a bluff that Allied POWs were closely in contact with soon to arrive overwhelming strength of Allied forces. The Post-war sections of the book are mostly about dispelling war time impressions gained during the fog of War and laying ghosts to rest?

Conclusion – an interesting perspective on a neglected corner of the WW2 campaigns that deserve greater attention from Australian readers, an essential memoir in the sub-genre of the cruelties, horrors and absurdities of war?

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Traveller's Tales (Or the Men in Blue Pages?)

The Big Bust? One Evening last week I arrived at Bankstown railway station in time for a fairly routine police sweep. They seem to happen about every month or so and given the age of the typical police person these days, you can't be sure whether it is a real Police 'crack down' or just an outdoor training exercise for rookies.

I rather wish they'd crackdown on the 'free range' smokers whose smoke stream I have to evade most evenings. The rule seems to be half the platform for the smokers and half the rest of the platform for the 80% of non-smoking rail users, Smokers can stand where they wish, Non-smokers are free to move out into the rain to get upwind of the smoke streams.

Message to the NSW treasurer, each smoker on the platform is worth \$1000 on the hoof of Budget balancing fines! Looking at it objectively, Bankstown station probably is a significant drug conduit, it is a link between the Liverpool and Lidcombe rail lines and their fabled open air drug markets, there is a big shopping mall (with car parks) nearby, low rent housing and a police station and court, plenty of

reason to expect the drug addicted and other low life to be present in the community. I've seen evidence of drug commerce about the place at lunch time or walking to the station after work, and I have seen drug deals taking place in the train carriages between stations.

There were about a dozen Police and a drug sniffing dog and handler on the platform. When I see a Police drug sniffing dog I'm always a bit concerned about the dog, for a young-ish Labrador they always look a bit thin and ragged, although I always like to try to ask 'is that Policeman using a guide dog, I thought only detectives needed them?'

I found the first incident of this event to be slightly disturbing, firstly the dog handler bailed up a tiny middle-aged Chinese or Vietnamese guy (4 foot 10 my guess) and was haranguing him to 'get of the phone!'. Maybe he was a drug dealer / user correctly fingered by the dog, but it might also have been a language problem about a packet of herbal smokes?

The second incident was more problematic to me, the were trying to get this guy out of the station toiled, a bloke I know as being physically disabled, because some times I hold the lift door open for him to shamle thankfully into the lift. He has very poor dexterity and a speech impediment as well, possibly from being born with cerebral palsy, or possibly some partial paraplegia from an accident or a stroke or even Parkinson's disease? From the train carriage I could see that he was on the floor of the toilet cubicle, trying to get up / trying to get out and his speech was slurred as he was trying to respond to police questioning him. He might also have been drink / drugs affected, it was after work so a bloke is entitled, but as I missed the first part of this exchange I can't really say on way or the other.

Now the question of the day is 'Which one of these two gentlemen was resisting arrest sufficiently to warrant getting Tasered? The guy who could get up or the guy who wouldn't / couldn't?

On the other hand, one morning while I was waiting for my bus to Campsie station, a police car (or blue taxi) pulled up at the bus stop across the street. Usually in this locality it suggests that someone has been sent from the

Campsie police station – to collect the morning tea order of pies and cakes from the Clemton Park Cake shop. However on this occasion it really was a blue taxi service, as a woman got out of the back of the Police car and proceeded to wait for her bus!

Helping Police with their inquiries, each morning as I stagger off to the bus stop, waiting for the Micardis to kick in and re-boot my higher mental faculties I derive some enjoyment from contemplating leftovers of the night before and try to identify what the purpose of discarded items are and evaluating them for potential use. Finds include nails, nuts, bolts and screws that if collected might come in handy later.

On Thursday June 18, at about 8.40 am, near the South corner of Malley Avenue and Bexley Road, I saw what looked to be a wallet, and indeed it was, a Joseph Bonano of Rossmore's wallet. It contained No money, but still had a Heavy vehicle Driver's license, some credit cards and membership cards etc. Soaked and ink from the leather staining my fingers as I held it. On the Bus and train to Bankstown I inwardly discussed just phoning the guy from work and suggesting that he come to the office and collect it, but as there was no cash in it, and the bloke might think that I had trousered the cash, I thought it better to report it to the police. And therein lies the problem, report it to the Rossmore Police, or report it to the 'local' Police. Where I found the wallet was roughly equidistant from the Campsie, Earlwood and Kingsgrove Police Stations!

The problem resolved itself as I when I reached Bankstown, there were two Police officers at the station exit / entry turnstiles, so I spent about ten minutes 'helping Police with their inquiries' before proceeding on to work (and writing up this account).

On another evening, leaving the bus stop I noticed a glasses case on a driveway. Feeling that no joy could come from this situation I picked it up and found it to be heavier than I had expected – it was a mobile phone!

I took it home with a view of phoning 'recall' and asking the person at the other end who owned the phone. Short time later the owner phoned, I told him where I was and he came to collect it. The owner was very grateful, made comments about 'finally meeting an honest man in Sydney' and left with his phone promising to drop some beer around as a thank you. Next day,

received 24 bottles of Coopers Stout, first time I have ever been rewarded or thanked for returning a lost mobile phone!

Basenjjs Tail Piece

During this winter's recent cold snap, I have again attempted to get Amber used to wearing the jackets. Sometimes I have been walking her at night after the jacket has been put on her, with the intention of familiarisation / normalisation to wearing the jacket. The current procedure is that Mum gets to do the deed. I stand back and watch from a safe distance. Amber is still far more tolerant of Mother handling her than my handling of her. I'm also looking into getting hold of an electric toilet seat, for Amber's convenience. This is a seat with a heating element embedded in it so as to avoid 'chilling' incidents in the bathroom. I feel that an electric toilet seat could provide some 'chew and fluid' proof general heating or a warm but not too hot place for her to curl up on at night in her crate.

Something of an Index

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Announcing a Bold 'New'
TBS&E Department!

Seeking Letters of Comment from
the 'Sydney Pasturians'

Why am I doing this?

Having been deeply moved by the experience of reading through the website versions of the 1940 to 1945 British Futurian War Digest that was published under the most challenging War time conditions.

I would like to try to re-create one aspect of his enterprise, using single mailings as an omnibus way of keeping fans in touch. It was a sort of 'on paper' internet chat group for SF fans?

From running the 2008 Sydney Freecon I was made aware that there are still some 1950s (!) Sydney SF fans out there. Alive and well, just reading their SF a little slower these days, and apparently only meeting at funerals? I dare to think that we can do a bit better than this?

The offer is this, if you were formerly active in Sydney SF circles before Aussiecon 1 (1975), (a 'Sydney Pasturian' as opposed to a current Sydney Futurian?) and if you still possess an Australian mailing address, then I will undertake to print a brief 'cheerio' / 'Does any one know the whereabouts of?' letters from you in a special up to four page segment / supplement that will be a feature of any future issues of TBS&E that I produce in the run up to Aussiecon 4 next year. In your LOC you may request publication of your address or non-publication of your address or other contact details.

The intention is to get a few gaffiated 'Sydney Pasturians' back in touch with each other ahead of Aussiecon 4. **Additionally**, if you care to send me as an attachment to your letter a list of last known addresses of some 'Sydney Pasturians' that you recall or would like to renew acquaintances with, then I will include their addresses in the mail out of that TBS&E issue. Registering your interest in getting in touch with some other older Sydney fans might result in more up to date contact details emerging, or a phone call from a once familiar voice from your past.

To start things off here are two recent letters I have received at the luxurious TBS&E Editorial suite at Basenjjs Hall.

Firstly, an email from Felix Jenkins, an 'old time' Sydney SF fan of the 1960s now living in retirement near Port Macquarie NSW.

Hi Garry!

I'm still around but have no SF friends left in Sydney. I'm afraid I've out lived them all. But reading your TBS&E #34, I thought that I'd like to make a comment; Felix Jenkins, aged Futurian. I'm afraid that at 92 I've become a cynic. Especially about the Planet warming.

I have just been in touch with friends (religious types) out Bourke Way, who last year were praying for rain. They are now living in the top story of their house watching their valued stock and possessions drift away towards Lake Eyre and praying for it to stop. Who can dare to predict the world's future climate?

When we have a planet in a Solar System drifting through millions of kilometres of interstellar dust, which fills most of the galactic spaces, adding unknown kilo tonnes to the Sun's surface, obscuring a lot of the Sun's rays from reaching the Earth, as well as adding unknown kilo tonnes of unknown materials to our oceans.

If we wanted a variable future then there you have it. The magnetic / polar caps could reverse themselves overnight! Are we screwing ourselves for something so doubtful? We can only hope for the best when and where possible.

Hope for the best – Regards, Felix

PS. I can remember a few Sydney SF fans. In fact my visual memory is so good I can see them in my mind's eye, but names and addresses elude me. One suggestion though for what it is worth, place a small ad in any of Sydney's older Second hand Bookshops or perhaps in the Sydney University Old Boy's magazines. This might get some results, as nearly all the members I remember were Uni students then.

Best of luck

Felix

Secondly a letter from Bert Castellari, living in the ACT dated June 15, 2009.

Dear Garry

Thank you for your invitation to Friday's Sydney Futurian Meeting (June 19), and for the copies of TBS&E.

I am unable to accept the invitation. I have had to rely on hearing aids for some time now and in the past year conversation at any level, but particularly at meetings or on the phone, has become very difficult.

Fortunately I haven't reached the point where people avoid me. Must be because of my sparkling personality.

I read your publication in admiration – a print job which even with modern technology must be a daunting task, especially with so much packed into it. But better a slog than a Blog.

Best Wishes,

Signed Bert Castellari

And Thirdly, from Graham Stone (who needs no introduction from me)

Futurian Society of Sydney

Yes, the FSS has been inactive for years, so has its offspring the Australian Science Fiction Association which will be better known to most. But this is 2009. Over the decades we've celebrated the anniversary of SF Fandom in Australia on or about the 5th of November taking the foundation of the FSS as the real beginning though there were earlier stirrings. So this November we reach the Mystical age of Twenty years.

So expect to hear from me again with some preliminaries over the coming months. For a start here is a special edition of the former SF News, with my compliments (*still available from Graham? – GPD*). It represents a fragment of SF history, and I plan a few more pieces of Nostalgia. As for the November happening, what form should it take? For the 60th and some others we had a re-union dinner but some might have other ideas.

There are no club funds at present, so a small donation towards the cause would be welcome. Should we reactivate a formal structure with a subscription and regular activities?

Let us have Suggestions.

- I am going to reprint Vol Molesworth's History of Australian Fandom, which will be priced \$10.

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And
Graham Stone**