

**Chicon 2000**  
A convention report by Evelyn C. Leeper  
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Chicon 2000, the 59th World Science Fiction Convention, took place August 31 through September 4, 2000, in Chicago. As of Sunday, there were 5660 attendees.

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THE GREEN ROOM SHOULD HAVE A CLOCK.

For fifteen years, I have been saying this and only Aussiecon Three had one, and only then because Janice Gelb arrived, looked around, and sent someone out to buy one. I figure that maybe if I put it at the front, someone will notice it. Now that that is out of the way. . . .

**Getting There**

Flying to Chicago wasn't bad, and we landed a little before 11:00, but by the time we met Kate at O'Hare (her plane landed twenty minutes after ours at the next gate), got her luggage, found the train, took the train into Chicago, took a taxi from the train station to the hotel, registered in the hotel, and got to our room, it was 13:00. (While Mark and Kate registered, I made a quick run to the business center to FedEx our Toronto International Film Festival ticket requests--see my Toronto International Film Festival report for details.)

### **Registration**

Then we had to register for the convention, and finding registration was really difficult--there were no signs pointing toward it until you were fairly close. Everyone we asked--all of whom were wearing badges, so they had registered--gave us different directions. Eventually, of course, we found it.

### **Green Room**

The Green Room was amazingly well supplied, with cold cuts, cheese, bread, and other sandwich fixings in addition to the usual chips, veggies, coffee, and soda. It was also well-attended, although panelists seem to have given up the custom of gathering in the Green Room beforehand and going to the panel room en masse.

The Green Room should have a clock, an ordinary cheap kitchen wall clock that everyone can read.

### **Dealers Room**

The Dealers Room opened at 11:00 instead of the usual 10:00, this in spite of the fact that programming started at 8:30 instead of the usual 10:00. This meant after the first panel, people often wanted to go to the Dealers Room, but couldn't. Yes, I know some dealers want to sleep late--though not all--but it is a mistake to combine an earlier general starting time with a later Dealers Room time.

The Dealers Room was large, but the percentage of book dealers seemed low. I would put it at under fifty percent, but if you included all the magazine publishers and other book-like objects, it might be more than fifty percent. I bought a book and a hat for Mark and a book for me. Admittedly I was trying to limit my purchases because Kate had brought me five books and five videocassettes that she had acquired for me, and also I was saving myself for the used bookstores on Yonge Street in Toronto.

### **Exhibits**

There were the usual fan exhibits, but in addition there was "Masters of Space and Time," a truly amazing retrospective art show based on the art collections of several Chicago area fans. Artists included Dan Adkins, Paul Alexander, George Barr, Harry Borgman, Edd Cartier, Richard Corben, Don Dixon, David Egge, Alex Eisenstein, Ed Emsh, Virgil Finlay, Kelly Freas, Jack Gaughan, Mel Hunter, Davis Meltzer, Ron Miller, Mike Minor, Gray Morrow, Jerome Podwill, Richard Powers, Bill Rose, George Schelling, John Schoenherr, Don Sibley, Ed Valigursky, H. R. Van Dongen, Michael Whelan, and Wallace Wood. (I hope you appreciate this list, which I made myself by writing down all the names as I went through. I just wanted you to know I didn't just download it from somewhere.)

### **Art Show**

Compared to "Masters of Space and Time," the art show was pretty lackluster. I overheard someone saying that at least some artists were also disappointed in their sales, and when I went

through after bidding had closed, there were still a lot of pieces that hadn't been bid on. Someone also commented that the first artist whose work they saw on entering was *not* the Guest of Honor's (Bob Eggleton) but someone else, and thought this was a very poor arrangement. Since I spent so little time there, I'll let someone who knows art shows better deal with this area.

## **Publications**

The General Guide, Pocket Program, and Dining Guide were 8-1/2" by 3-1/2" each, and strung on a shower curtain ring. The idea was that you could carry only the ones you needed. I had all the program information in my palmtop, but I had to carry the Pocket Program around for the maps. (More on the layout of the hotel later.) The General Guide I didn't carry at all, or even much look at, particularly after seeing the Table of Contents, which listed sections as "Da This" and "Da That" (e.g., "Da Movies").

The Dining Guide by Leah Zeldes Smith was, as far as I could tell, a good restaurant guide for someone visiting Chicago, but not for people attending a science fiction convention in Chicago. When you visit a city, you move around a lot, and having meals is part of the whole experience. When you attend a convention (at least when I do), you are based and very strongly rooted at your hotel, and eating is something that happens around the program (or parties). Also, many convention goers are on a budget, and this guide was more heavily weighted towards more expensive restaurants, but the main flaw in the guide was the lack of geography, or map.

Another note: the guide was divided by cuisine, which is okay, but they were described as "The Subcontinent" or "Sushi Nation" rather than "Indian" or "Japanese." This is on a par with cute names for panels rather than descriptive ones. These are great for subtitles, but clarity counts.

Here are my requirements for a convention restaurant guide: Regardless of how long, detailed, or elaborate the full guide is, there must be a single sheet (two sides) that has a list of all restaurants nearest the hotel (two blocks, three blocks, whatever radius fits) with description of what they serve, price range (in typical cost, such as "entrees \$15-\$20," not "\$" to "\$\$\$\$\$"), and hours. The hours should be the hours for the weekend of the convention--this is critical for conventions over holiday weekends. It should include all fast-food restaurants and grocery stores. And there should be a map with all the restaurants on it. People who want to go farther afield can use the full guide, which should also have a map for the closest ones, directions for the rest, and distances for all.

In particular, if the convention is starting programming at 8:30, the restaurant guide has to tell people where they can eat breakfast near the hotel before that time each day. (Opening at 8:00 doesn't qualify.)

The editor of the *Program Participants Guide* had asked for biographies of a certain length, then realized they had too much material and ruthlessly cut, leaving many biographies incoherent. (Mark had spent some time writing his in verse, and their cutting lines from the middle didn't help its style.)

Not strictly speaking a publication, the Voodoo Message Board was grossly misplaced, being put in the narrowest part of the corridor between the two blocks of programming. The result was a major traffic problem with people who were reading or leaving messages blocking people trying to get through.

## **Programming**

Programming was a little different than usual. Programming started at 8:30 instead of 10:00, ended (sort of) at 18:45 instead of 18:00, and had items that ran an hour and fifteen minutes

with fifteen-minute gaps instead of fifty minutes with ten-minute gaps.

The longer time slots somehow seemed to help enforce the gaps, and it was sometimes nice to have more time, though it did sometimes drag as well. I think panelists (moderators) need to know that they can end the panel early if everyone has said everything they need to say.

There was an outside company taping panels, as usual. However, the convention did not bother to ask panelists to sign release forms, which led to some confusion and acrimony, as some panelists objected to being taped. All future conventions planning on having taping *should* get release forms from all panelists beforehand.

### **Hotel**

I don't normally say anything about the hotel, but the Hyatt in Chicago deserves special mention. It out-Thenardiers Thenardier (\*). The Hyatt charges you for *receiving* packages for guests (\$20 minimum, and you still have to go pick it up). It charges \$2/day if you just *open* the mini-bar to see what's in there, even if you don't take anything out. It charges \$5/day for the use of the room safe--it claims this is noted on a card in the safe, but most people I talked to had no such card. I heard that the phone surcharges were enormous, even for 800 numbers, but I've long since given up using room phones at hotels.

((\*) "Residents are more than welcome/Bridal suite is occupied/Reasonable charges/Plus some little extras on the side!/Charge 'em for the lice/Extra for the mice/Two percent for looking in the mirror twice/Here a little slice/There a little cut/Three percent for sleeping with the window shut/When it comes to fixing prices/There are a lot of tricks he knows/How it all increases/All those bits and pieces/Jesus! It's amazing how it grows!")

### **Planet Chicago: The Fiction Tour Thursday - 14:30 to 15:45 Room: Columbus Participants: Bill Higgins, Lindalee Stuckey**

This sounded really interesting, but Stuckey had to cancel because her school would not let her attend during the day, and Higgins was stuck somewhere trying to park his car. I want to make clear that I consider this a perfectly valid excuse--my article in the Souvenir Book describes how Chicago is a very car-unfriendly town, and attempting to park a car in downtown Chicago during the week is merely one manifestation of it. Welcome to Chicago!

### **Science Education Thursday - 16:00 to 17:15 Room: Columbian Participants: Larry Ahearn (M), Catherine Asaro, Bart Kemper, Charles Sheffield, Jonathan Sullivan Description: "Why are so many adults scientifically illiterate? What is good science education?"**

True to Patrick Nielsen Hayden's observation that conventions never remember how popular science programming is, the room (designed for about fifty) was full to overflowing.

Ahearn is in the National Space Society. Asaro is a writer and physics professor and started by saying, "I have a lot of opinions about it." Kemper is a technical writer and engineer. Sheffield

writes a weekly column on science. Sullivan teaches emergency medicine at Wayne State University.

Ahearn started by saying that part of the problem is that science in schools costs money for labs, equipment, etc.

Sheffield said he had sympathy for kindergarten through high school teachers because they don't understand what they teach--among other things. This is not the teachers' fault--science keeps changing. His solution is that "schools should try to get across the great central ideas or themes of science." These would include evolution, the formation of the solar system, and so on. Ahearn felt that in addition to science changing, it also keeps growing, so that teachers have too much to cover.

Ahearn said that the reason people hate math and physics is how they are taught. He felt that they could be taught in non-traditional ways. Kemper agreed, adding that when people have made it through engineering school, all the creative ones have been culled out. Kemper rambled on quite a bit about engineering rather than science education, complaining that students are taught about scientists but not about engineers.

Someone asked about the method of teaching theory before practical uses, and Ahearn agreed, saying that we teach math for theoreticians. He gave the example of showing students various structures like bridges and having them guess the weak points where they would break, and then showing them the math to prove this. Their reaction, he said, was, "You mean you can actually use math. . . ." I finished his sentence with "to break things?" which got a laugh, but which he also agreed was their reaction.

Sullivan talked about the general level of science knowledge in the United States. For example, a recent survey showed that only 52% of those asked knew that dinosaurs and humans did not co-exist. The reason for this is partially that the media underplays and distorts science. (The recent claim that "the speed of light had been exceeded" is an example.) What is important is to teach what science itself is as a discipline: science is a systematic approach to the world.

Sullivan said that the "rising tide of fundamentalism in all the great religions" was a problem for science teachers. This led Ahearn to comment on stereotypes, not only of the fundamentalists, but also of scientists. Sullivan pointed out that scientists help to reinforce these stereotypes, giving as an example a T-shirt in the audience that said, "What part of [long, complicated equation] do you not understand?" He recommended *The Mathematical Experience* by Philip J. David as a good introduction for the non-mathematician to mathematicians.

(Later, from the audience, Mark Leeper said that there is no richer vein of anti-science than in science fiction, with cyberpunk, etc., showing the cold, impersonal side of science. And Sheffield also commented that how we keep people out of science is "[we] invent an arcane vocabulary only [we] can understand.")

Ahearn thought it was important to look at aptitudes, but Sheffield felt it was a question of whether we wanted to teach the details or the concepts. He said that he took four years of Latin, but remembers only ten words. The purpose of science teaching, he felt, is not the details of science but a respect for science and an understanding of its importance.

(I found myself wondering at this point whether science is taught any worse these days than subjects such as history or English.)

Ahearn thought that part of the problem is that knowledge is power, and so science and technology is power, so people fear them. Sheffield disagreed, saying that scientists are not

powerful. However, scientific advances turn into social changes that no one understands or can control.

Kemper held up a sign saying "Science != Computers" and talked about how schools think if they teach children to use computers they are teaching science. (I would also have said "Science != Engineering," which I doubt Kemper would have agreed with.) Kemper also objected to foreign teachers. (He claimed his objection was to a lack of ability to teach, but his use of accents and other comments lead me to believe this is not entirely the case.)

There was a lot of discussion of the low pay and status of science teachers (and teachers in general). Because the pay is low, Sheffield observed, we don't draw from the best.

Someone in the audience thought that standardized tests like the New York Regents Exams turn people off from science, because they are "devoid of soul or sense of wonder." (Well, they *are* multiple-choice tests.) Kemper disagreed, saying that the problem was teaching *to* the test, that is, teaching only the minimum necessary to pass. Someone agreed, saying that too often, teachers think that science equals facts, rather than evidence or type of argument or logic.

Ahearn said it was not all doom and gloom. Sheffield agreed, saying that the good education in the United States is good indeed, but it is not available everywhere. He feels one requirement would be to enforce the idea of respect for teachers. (How? I suppose that's a whole nother panel.) Sullivan thought the answer was not to abandon the public school system, but to let the private sector drive some of the science education, perhaps by having all students get some actual lab experience in the private sector. He referred to a "working physics or mathematical laboratory." What is a working mathematical laboratory--a room with a desk, paper, and pencil?

Everyone did agree that even if computers weren't science, they had their uses. For example, using customized teaching to teach different students at different rates is something that has been much talked about but little implemented. But Sheffield emphasized, "You cannot remove the individual teacher from the center of action." Sullivan repeated that we needed to empower the teacher, reward him or her, give the teacher the tools necessary, and so on.

Sullivan emphasized that science and math *can* be difficult, and it is a valuable lesson to teach that sometimes you have to work at something and apply yourself. (Or as Mark said in response to Barbie's "Math class is hard," "Go for the burn, Barbie.")

Sheffield summed up by saying that what he wanted to see even more than scientific literacy was a respect for science.

**Revamping the Hugos**  
**Thursday - 17:30 to 18:45**  
**Room: Regency B**

**Participants: Chris Barkley, Vince Docherty, Steve Miller, Mike Nelson, Leah Zeldes Smith (M)**

**Description: "Do the Hugos need to be revamped for the coming 21<sup>st</sup> century? Panelists give their opinions."**

Two of the panelists were chosen because they had particular agendas. Barkley wants to see the Dramatic Presentation award split to provide a separate category for television shows, which he feels have a difficult time competing with theatrical films, and Docherty (from the UK) would like to see some sort of extended eligibility for works not published in their first year in the US.

Miller began by saying that when he went to the Internet (Usenet, sff.net, and the SMOFS mailing list), there was a groundswell who felt the awards should be left exactly as they are, although people did want to "do something" about the Professional Editor awards. I think I was the one who first mentioned that, and it centered around the problem that many people saw it as a magazine editors award, and didn't consider book editors. In part, this is exacerbated by the 10,000 print run requirement, which generated a lot of email. The gist of that email was that while people who edit mass market paperbacks have no problem, a small press editor (e.g., someone at Arkham House) or someone who was editing for printing on demand might not actually meet this.

Regarding books printed outside the US in their first year, Docherty said that single-item categories are dominated by the US (even when the Worldcon is held outside the US). He gave Greg Egan's *Teranesia* as an example of a book that probably would have made the list had it been published in the US in its first year, but its US publication was the year after its UK publication. Suggestions included allowing a two-year window for non-US works, extending eligibility until US publication, allowing an additional year when US publication occurs, and a couple of other minor variations on these. (While it's possible that the availability in the US of UK and other books has improved with such companies as amazon.co.uk and chapters.ca, this isn't wide enough distribution to balance things out.)

The most discussion, however, was generated by the Dramatic Presentation issue. Miller quoted (with permission) email from Mike Resnick, "Let's lose the Dramatic Hugo until they hand out Oscars and Golden Globes for best science fiction prose." While this sounds good, one could ask why we should rule out the Dramatic Hugo and not the art Hugos.

Most people, though, did not want to eliminate the Dramatic Presentation Hugo, and though people did agree that television science fiction had a tough row to hoe to get nominated, there seemed to be no consensus on how to fix this. Barkley said of this year's nominees, "There's no way you can convince me that those are [the best five examples of science fiction]." True. but I could say that of any of the categories' nominees. His proposal is to have two categories, divided by length, with the split being at somewhere around one hundred minutes, though he said that could vary by twenty minutes plus or minus. (And presumably the administrator could relocate a work close to the dividing line the same as in the fiction category.) Another proposal is that an entire season of a television could be nominated (as it used to be, actually) rather than only individual episodes.

Miller said that the awards had to be relevant to what was going on. In connection with this, perhaps, questions arose about the relevance of or need for a separate Semi-Prozine category, with the suggestion that this should perhaps be combined with the Professional Editor category. Miller also said that at least one person he talked to was under the impression that the Semi-Prozine category was for non-fiction only, indicating that perhaps they are not paying attention, as *Interzone*, a perennial nominee, is clearly fiction.

There was also a sentiment expressed that in some of the categories, the award seems to be granted more for a person's achievement over the last few years instead of the year in question. Someone asked if any Hugo administrator had attempted to encourage a "perennial" nominee to decline the nomination, at which point I gave a rather heated response that, as a Fan Writer nominee, I *didn't* want Dave Langford to decline if he was nominated, because then whoever wins would be winning the "Best Fan Writer Except for Dave Langford." I did say that if an artist, editor, or whoever feels they haven't done any real work in the year in question, and that they feel they have been "undeservedly" nominated, then declining is reasonable. Later, in a discussion of some of the other categories, Smith mentioned the problem of perennial winners "which Evelyn addressed so eloquently before." Well, I don't know about "eloquently." but it was certainly loudly.

Smith said, "Just because a form exists, do we need to give it an award?" She gave examples of categories that don't have their own category. For example, there is live theater, which is technically included in Dramatic Presentation, but because of the minuscule number of nominators who might see any given play, it doesn't have a chance there. There used to be a category "Number One Fan Personality," but that was deemed to be unnecessary. Or you could theoretically have "Best SF Con," but no one suggests adding that either. "Don't cheapen the award by having so many that anyone can get one," she concluded.

(Saul Jaffe later pointed out that one of the categories often proposed is "Best Web Site," but the problem is that while a book or a story or even a year's worth of artwork is a single entity--I read the same book as you do, or see the same cover art--a web site is constantly changing and there is no way for the voters to see what the nominators saw when they nominated it, or even for all the nominators to see the same thing.)

Miller noted that for this year, there were only 427 nominating ballots (for a convention of about 6000); it used to be that a majority of the Worldcon membership nominated. He said that he was more interested in changing attitudes than in the details of the categories, and worked to encourage greater voter participation (e.g., by allowing email voting). As a result, there were about 1100 final ballots. Miller noted that over a thousand people voted on the Dramatic Presentation category.

(I couldn't help but thinking that didn't really prove anything. If you had a "Best Hamburger" category on the ballot, it would also get a lot of votes. The fact that a lot of people have opinions in a category doesn't mean the category is a key category.) It would seem that encouraging more voting improves the overall numbers, but I wonder if the number of people voting for the short fiction or fan categories increased proportionally.

One audience member thought that giving TV awards would improve TV, but the response was an almost unanimous "No"--the Hugo Awards are so far beneath the radar of television as to have no effect. They buy what they buy based on the demographics.

This is not to say that individuals working in television are indifferent to the Hugo Award. When the producer and director of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*: "The Inner Light" got their rockets, the writer contacted Kevin Standlee asking if he could have one also. (He was even willing to pay for its construction.)

Another audience member claimed that eliminating the Dramatic Presentation category would affect our community, because the Dramatic Presentation is important to us. (If so, it's unlikely to be eliminated.)

Someone in the audience wanted a category for children's and young adult fiction. (Apparently, the fact that *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* was on the ballot wasn't sufficient, much as the presence of television shows in the Dramatic Presentation category isn't to other people. But there had been a trial Hugo one year for children's and young adult fiction, and the nominating response was too low even to have it make the final ballot. The audience member thought it would be a well-voted-on category because so many Worldcon attendees had children (or were children), but I suggested that the people with children were *not* the people who nominate or even vote--they have no time to read enough to nominate, and no time even to read the nominees.

Of course, a lot of these suggestions are because people think the voters don't understand the category, or they are unfairly swayed toward theatrical film over television, or toward science fiction over fantasy, or against book editors or fiction semi-prozines, or whatever. But as I said, "You can't help it if the voters are stupid." (That's true in larger elections as well.)



George Flynn has collected a lot of statistics on Hugo nominating and voting over the years-- see <http://www.nesfa.org/fanzines/votehist.html> for the details.

**Great Unsung SF Films**

**Friday - 08:30 to 09:45**

**Room: Regency A**

**Participants: Forrest J. Ackerman, Richard Gilliam, Mark Leeper (M)**

**Description: "You probably didn't see these, but you should have."**

(Leeper's hand-out for this is at <http://www.geocities.com/markleeper/forgot.htm>.)

Someone else had been listed as the moderator, but didn't show up, so Leeper got tapped at the last moment to fill that role.

In spite of the early hour, there were over two hundred people in the audience.

Leeper described himself as the "longest running Internet film reviewer" (since 1980), When this drew applause, he said, "You shouldn't clap until you've read the reviews."

Gilliam asked what was meant by "forgotten" (the alternate adjective applied to the films being discussed). *Earth vs. the Flying Saucers* (1956), for example, is not very well known these days, but "forgotten" doesn't seem the right adjective to apply. For that matter, he cited *eXistenZ*, "which was forgotten in the year it was made." (That would be 1999, by the way.)

Ackerman said that an example of a forgotten/unsung film might be *One Glorious Day* (1922), a film he saw as a child and which has since become lost. He used to see up to seven films a day, and most of those are forgotten. Another example he mentioned was *High Treason* (1929).

Assuming that "unsung" meant films that people didn't hear about which were worth looking for, Leeper cited *Red Planet Mars* (1952), particularly since it was somewhat accurate in some of its predictions, and *The Mind Benders* (a.k.a. *The Happiness Cage*) (1962) based on the novel by James Kennaway.

Gilliam suggested that the entire Quatermass series, now available on DVD (at least one with commentary by Nigel Kneale), was worth a look. Leeper said that he had been recommending the third film, *Five Million Years to Earth* (a.k.a. *Quatermass and the Pit*) (1967) for years, but it was unavailable. Then American Movie Classics discovered it and now it seems to run every month. (See <http://leepers.us/evelynleeper.htm/sf-film.htm> for a detailed description of the series.)

Going back to early film, Ackerman named two more lost films (*Wonders of the Universe* and *Mysteries of Life*) but also said that *Metropolis* (1926) was a film that didn't seem to get seen very much these days even though it was available. He was asked which version of *Metropolis* was the most complete. Ackerman said that Lang shot almost fifty times the amount of film he needed, and that the most nearly complete was the Giorgio Moroder version. Leeper noted the debt owed by Fritz Lang (or perhaps Thea Von Harbou) to H. G. Wells, since *Metropolis* is based on the same dichotomy as that of the Eloi and Morlocks in *The Time Machine* (and also in *When the Sleeper Wakes*). Ackerman thought this interesting, because Wells hated *Metropolis*. (As an aside, Ackerman noted that he didn't like *Dark City*, a movie with a certain visual connection to *Metropolis*.)

Leeper added another Lang film, *Frau im Mond* (*Woman in the Moon*) (1929), which originated the countdown for firing a rocket. Gilliam said that he once interviewed a German rocket

scientist who had been inspired to go into rocketry by *Frau im Mond*, and who said he wasn't the only one. Leeper noted that the Germans suppressed the film in the late 1930s because it revealed too much about rockets.

Other early films named by Ackerman included *Just Imagine* (1930), *Mysterious Island* (1929), and *It's Great to Be Alive When You're the Last Man on Earth* (1933). ("Assuming your glasses don't break," added one wit.) Gilliam thought that *The Fifth Element* (1997) had scenes reminiscent of *Just Imagine*. While the first two named have their points (I haven't seen the third), I suspect there is too much laughable by today's standards for them to play well with most people. And Leeper noted that *Mysterious Island* bears little resemblance to the Jules Verne novel. This was not uncommon back then, he added, citing the John Barrymore version of *Moby Dick* (1930) as being particularly egregious. (It ends with Moby Dick being sliced up on the deck of the *Shanghai Lady*, and then Ahab goes back to his fiancée, who marries him in spite of his wooden leg.) An audience member suggested that in Britain they stick closer to the source material, while in the United States it's looser. Leeper thought that this wasn't true of British films in general, but was true of the BBC, and Gilliam said that John Huston did stick to Melville in his version (1956).

Someone in the audience mentioned the BBC version of *1984* (1954), starring Peter Cushing (not to be confused with the 1956 version starring Edmond O'Brien), but that seems to have vanished from sight. Another cited Peter Watkins's *Privilege* (1967), leading Leeper to recommend Watkins's short film "The War Game" (1965). Watkins apparently did several films of the "documentary-set-in-the-future" style, including *Punishment Park* (1971), a film about the idea of using games instead of wars to resolve international disputes.

Another short film cited by Leeper was "Dark Intruder" (1965) which was quite a nice little occult thriller. Unfortunately, it stars Leslie Nielsen in his pre-*Airplane* days, and today's audience expectation of him is such that it would be hard to watch this without trying to put a humorous spin on it.

Gilliam added another BBC effort, the mini-series of *Day of the Triffids* (1981). (I would add their mini-series of *The Invisible Man* (1983) as well. Both are incredibly true to their source material, as hinted at above, but *Day of the Triffids* is the better of the two.)

Leeper said that *Unearthly Stranger* (released in 1963 in a double bill with *Last Man on Earth*) was a good little film with science fiction ideas and no special effects. And *Last Man on Earth* was (in his opinion) the best version of the Richard Matheson novel and an inspiration for *Night of the Living Dead*.

Ackerman recommended *F.P. 1* (a.k.a. *F.P. 1: Floating Platform 1 Doesn't Answer*) (1932), which postulates a series of refueling platforms across the Atlantic Ocean to allow trans-oceanic flights, and was written by Curt Siodmak. Leeper said that this seemed to be part of the whole "engineering" culture of the time that resulted in the Empire State Building and Hoover Dam in the real world, and other films such as *Transatlantic Tunnel* (1935).

Leeper said another older film that stands up is *The Man Who Laughs* (1928), based on the Victor Hugo novel about someone who as a child was purposely disfigured by having his face carved into a grin. Conrad Veidt (who was also in *F.P. 1*, but is probably best known as Colonel Strasser in *Casablanca*) must play the main character in such a way as to show his true emotion with his eyes, while maintaining a fixed grin with his mouth, and gives a tour de force performance.

The silent version of *The Thief of Bagdad* (1924) was recommended, as was *Son of Ingagi* (1940), an all-black science fiction film directed by Spencer Williams in the era of the "race pictures," and *The Black Cat* (1934), a truly delightful film from Universal in the 1930s that

doesn't fit in with any of their other films (except possibly *The Raven* (1935)).

Going way back, Leeper said that the Charles Ogle *Frankenstein* (a.k.a. the Edison *Frankenstein*) (1910) was now available over the Internet. (There is a long story about how this came to be and what its current status is, which I will not relate here.) In this, Leeper said, the creation is treated more magically than in later films. Ackerman said that the lost film *Life Without Soul* (1915) was more accurate to Mary Shelley, and Leeper added that the most accurate was *Terror of Frankenstein* (a.k.a. *Viktor Frankenstein*) (1975). It was, he said, very faithful, but also the most ponderous.

Other lost films cited by Ackerman included *Crozier Sideralis* (?), a French film; *London After Midnight* (1927) (Groucho Marx patterned himself after Lon Chaney in this, with the result that people watching it now would think Chaney was copying Groucho Marx!); and *Seven Footprints to Satan* (1929). (I'm not sure the last is lost--I thought I saw it listed in a catalog.)

An audience member said that Fassbinder's *World on a String* (1974, made for TV) was an earlier version of Daniel Galouye's *Simulacron-13* than *The Thirteenth Floor*. The IMDB lists the English-language title as *World on Wires* or *World on a Wire*; the German title is *Welt am Draht*.

There was also a discussion of film preservation (or lack thereof).

Someone asked where one could find all these films. I suggested Sinister Cinema (<http://www.sinistercinema.com>); someone else named Facets Video (<http://www.facetsvideo.com>). An AltaVista search on titles (paired with "VHS") would also be productive. Note that many obscure films are not on DVD yet.

#### **No Award?**

**Friday - 10:00 to 11:15**

**Room: Regency C**

**Participants: Moshe Feder, Rob Gates, Helen Gbala, Evelyn C. Leeper, Van Siegling**

**Description: "What do fans do when there is no recognition for their favorite sub genre?**

**They create an award.**

**These fans describe how they did it."**

This was more like "No Audience," as only three people showed up. (This eventually grew to nine.) Since one person in the audience was a librarian looking for suggestions to make to other librarians about how to choose science fiction, we forged bravely ahead anyway.

Feder and Leeper are associated with the Sidewise Award for alternate history, Feder is also associated with FAAN Awards, Gates with the Spectrum Awards for gay and lesbian science fiction, Gbala with the Golden Duck Awards for children's books, and Siegling with the Pegasus Awards for filk. Of these, the Gold Duck Awards specifically exclude fantasy, while the others encompass fantasy as well as science fiction, so I will use the term "speculative fiction" for them.

Siegling started, saying that the Pegasus Award was created for purely mercenary reasons: the Ohio Valley Filk Fest wanted more filkers, and wanted to get them to food functions (since that is one of the ways the hotel makes money--more people at food functions means cheaper rates for meeting rooms). It was named the Pegasus as a reference to "flights of fantasy."

Gates said that the Lambda Literary Awards had been given to speculative fiction, but they focused more on small presses and avoided "mainstream" books (in the sense of major

publishers rather than in the sense of non-science-fiction). This combined with the whole question of "do we pick the best speculative fiction that happens to have gay content or the best book with gay content that happens to be speculative fiction?" led to the Spectrum Awards specifically for speculative fiction. (The Spectrum Awards use the first criterion, the Lambda Awards use the second.)

The Golden Duck Awards were created, Gbala said, when the Worldcon rejected the idea of a Hugo Award for children's fiction. (Actually, it was tried for Noreascon Two, but didn't get enough nominations to make the final ballot. As I noted in "Revamping the Hugos," this may be because the people knowledgeable about children's literature--parents--have no time to keep up with current literature enough to nominate or vote.) Interestingly, had the experiment succeeded, the current purpose of the Golden Duck Awards--to honor science fiction exclusively, excluding fantasy--would not have happened, because 95% of children's speculative fiction is fantasy and would certainly dominate the ballot.

As for how the various awards are chosen, they cover the whole spectrum. The Pegasus Awards are a "People's Choice" award. At the Ohio Valley Filk Fest, nomination forms are handed out for the next year's voting. Anyone can nominate or vote. Eligibility is not based on (copyright) date and is fairly flexible and open-ended.

The Spectrum Awards have a open nomination process, but the actual award is juried over the top three nominees plus any others that the jury decides to add. The jury is members of local clubs of the Gaylactic Network.

The FAAN Awards have an emphasis on activity. The model was the Oscars, with artists nominating artists, writers nominating writers, and so on. And as with the Oscars, everyone who is eligible to nominate in any category is then eligible to vote in all the categories.

The Sidewise Award is strictly a juried award (Moshe Feder, James Rittenhouse, Evelyn Leeper, Robert Schmunk, Stu Shiffman, and Steven Silver). Works are eligible for the year of their first general United States English publication. (This year's short form winner, "The Eighth Register" by Alain Bergeron, appeared earlier in French in Canada, and then in English in Canada in a small press publication, but became eligible because of its appearance in *Northern Suns*.) People are encouraged to point out as much alternate history as possible to the jury, who then choose a short list based on assigned a "grade" from 1 to 10 for each work, and then a winner by preferential voting. (But close votes are discussed until a genuine consensus is reached.)

The Golden Duck Awards have open nominations and then preferential voting by the jury.

Someone asked if any of these awards mattered outside their particular subsets of the science fiction community the way the Hugo Award does. Siegling says that Jim Baen does seem to like authors who have won the Pegasus Award. Gates said that the Spectrum Award jury was "tracked down" by publishers who wanted to submit works for consideration. Though they have been in existence for only a year, the "buzz" seems to be good, and the press at Gaylaxicon definitely wanted information about the awards. Leeper thought the Sidewise had little effect, though it is sometimes cited on the authors' dust jackets flaps, but from the audience, previous Sidewise nominee Lee Aldred said that he had made a sale based on his nomination, so who knows? Gbala said that the Golden Duck Awards are certainly noticed outside the field.

The title of the panel was somewhat ambiguous. Most of the discussion centered about awards which were created because there were no awards for those categories. But there was a brief mention of the other interpretation people put on it, namely that sometimes we should be voting for "No Award" on the Hugo Awards ballot.

## Is This the Ebony Age of Science Fiction?

Friday - 13:00 to 14:15

Room: Regency C

Participants: Steven Barnes, Tananarive Due, Maureen McHugh,  
Betsy Mitchell (M)

Description: "Are blacks more represented in SF today than in the past? Panelists tell why or why not."

Steven Barnes is one of the three authors that people list when asked if there are any black science fiction authors. (The other two are Octavia Butler and Samuel Delany. There are, of course, a lot more.)

Tananarive Due is a relatively new author, though she has had three novels and several stories published. (She is also married to Barnes.) Maureen McHugh also has three novels, as well as the award-winning story, "The Lincoln Train." Betsy Mitchell published the anthology *Dark Matter: A Century of Speculative Fiction from the African Diaspora* (edited by Sheree R. Thomas), which covers the period from 1887 up until the present. She also announced there will be a *Dark Matter 2*.

Mitchell started by asking, "Is there an audience out there waiting to be tapped?" to which Due immediately responded, "I pray there is." And this audience is made up of not just black readers, but also cross-over readers who want to read "stories about people who happen to be just a little bit different."

Barnes began by saying that "essence precedes existence." That is (if I understood correctly), the underlying belief system has to come before the stories that use it. And this underlying belief system often persists, the justification outliving the institution. Barnes said that much of the underlying belief system that supported slavery was still around in our national subconscious, long after slavery was gone.

In addition, the mass media has to have wide appeal, so no one takes risks. Science fiction led the change, but by a very little bit. As an example of this caution, Barnes said that black leading men must "keep their pants on." The media are afraid to show black men as having a sexual side. (I suggested that Will Smith might be a counterexample/sign of change, but Barnes felt that his performance in *The Wild Wild West* didn't qualify. I suppose only time will tell, but I suspect he will be the person who smashes this rule.)

Barnes also talked about one of the standard stories in science fiction, where humans are oppressed by aliens and rise up and defeat/kill them. If whites think of that in terms of being a reflection of our society, though, they are likely to ask, "Do blacks feel like that about whites?" Barnes hastened to reassure the audience, saying that he "probably thinks of killing white folks only twice a day." McHugh added, "The only thing I think of killing twice a day are men." (I found myself asking about how Jews feel about Germans, and while I think that Jews may be cautious or nervous about Germans, I don't think that they think about killing them.)

McHugh talked about how "somebody shaped by the issues of growing up a minority in a racist culture" has to come to terms with writing about that. And, she added, "Blacks and whites are equally racist." (Barnes asked, "What are universals?" and said that one is that "human beings are racist.")

Due said the problems arise when you try to portray "The Black Character" (with capital letters). You usually end up with "an older male or Whoopi Goldberg" with no inner life who is just a spiritual guide. Barnes said one way to avoid this is for the writer to ask himself or

herself, "What would have to happen to me to make me act this way?" One thing that sometimes helps is to recall that "being black in America is a lot like being a woman would be if men didn't want women for sex."

Due said that the "image of what a black writer should be" is also limiting. People seem to think that black writers should not only write about either poor rural blacks or urban inner-city blacks, but also fit one of those categories themselves. McHugh added that it would be "intensively naive" to lump all black writers together. (I am reminded of the blurb for some woman author which said "In the tradition of Andre Norton, Ursula K. LeGuin, and Marion Zimmer Bradley." Huh?)

Barnes said that he is embarrassed by what he called the "Coon Comedies" on WBN or UPN, but they are the only place viewers find black lead characters. There are no one-hour dramas on any of the three major networks with a black lead. The result is that black people see white people's fantasies (about being rich, being powerful, or whatever), but white people don't see black people's fantasies.

Due talked about Octavia Butler, saying that she writes about power and hierarchy even when she is not explicitly writing about race.

One problem is that schools apparently don't teach about blacks except as slaves. African history is not covered at all. And Barnes said he has never seen a science fiction novel having a consumer product manufactured in Africa. Barnes said he is writing an alternate history titled *Insh'Allah* in which Mohammed's daughter Fatima survives, and Africa develops and eventually settles the New World, importing white slaves from (uncivilized) Europe.

Referring back to the question of an inner life, Barnes said that he particularly hated *Gone with the Wind* because the black characters had no inwardness. When he mentioned this to another author, the author actually said, "Well, they didn't have any [in real life]." So in this book he attempts to do a better job of portraying the slaves than Margaret Mitchell did. I was just wondering about the Jews in his world, when an audience member asked just that question. "The Jews are doing great," Barnes responded. "I do not have it in my heart to have the Jews have more trouble in my world."

For all his negativity on race relations, Barnes did say, "I'd rather be a black person in America than a rabbit in the woods."

Someone in the audience commented that the art show was "a bit pale." Again, this was attributed to commercial concerns--more people will buy art with white people than with black people. In books, Barnes said, "Characters can't be black unless the point of them is to be black." On the other hand, he said that we "don't see black men dying to save white men as often as before . . . and it's a great relief."

Barnes talked about the underlying rules in movies that caused the phenomenon of the black character always dying. You can't have a man as the last person alive. You must have either one woman of child-bearing age or a couple. But since this couple has to be a breeding couple, you can't have a black man and a white woman, or vice versa. Given that movies want to have at least one black character (to attract black audiences or deflect charges of discrimination), that character almost invariably must die.

He also said that this business of "write what you know" is "crap." "If you can't write about black people, you sure as hell can't write about aliens." McHugh said that writers are concerned that they will be blamed for getting it wrong, and observed that this wasn't really a major concern in writing about aliens. And there are other double standards as well. While he was working on *Spider-Man* he suggested that one of the police captains be black. He was told,

"There are no black police captains in New York," to which he responded, "And there *are* spidermen?"

**Critics' Views of the Recent Crop of Science Fiction Movies**

**Friday - 16:00 to 17:15**

**Room: Grand Ballroom B**

**Participants: Paul Barnett, Bob Blackwood (M), Randy Dannenfels, John L. Flynn, Matthew Springer**

**Description: "Critics tell which movies you should see and which you can miss."**

(Paul Barnett writes as "John Grant.")

The first question from this panel was what the most interesting films of 1999 and 2000 were. Blackwood thought *The Cell* was the most interesting, though he said that the characters were two-dimensional. Flynn named *Galaxy Quest* (and was undoubtedly pleasantly surprised to see it win the Hugo Saturday night). He said that *Free Enterprise* and *Trekkies* looked down on us, but *Galaxy Quest* treated us with affection.

In a controversial choice, Flynn also said that *Battlefield Earth* captured the feel of pulp science fiction, the "space cowboys of the 30s and 40s." It wasn't great, he said, but it was fun. (Many would disagree.)

Springer thought the most interesting were *The Iron Giant*, *Titan A.E.*, and *X-Men*. Barnett started by cynically observing, "Of the recent movies, *The Day the Earth Stood Still* was pretty good," but then went on to cite *The Iron Giant* and *Titan A.E.* He noted that while *Titan A.E.* has some plot holes, "it has fewer plot holes than other Don Bluth films." He also liked *Princess Mononoke* (an older film, but not released in the United States until 1999).

Dannenfels branched out from the usual list to recommend *Magnolia* and *Being John Malkovich*, leading Barnett to say if fantasy was being included, he would name *The Sixth Sense*.

The panelists were asked to comment on recent trends (good or bad) in science fiction, fantasy, or horror films. Blackwood said he saw a trend toward more humor, even in serious films. He also said there are a lot of films which seem to have Satan as a character, whom he doesn't need to see. (The two combine, of course, in the upcoming remake of *Bedazzled*.) Flynn noted the recent trend (plethora is more like it) of films that question or subvert the nature of reality. (See <http://leepers.us/evelynleeper.htm/bosk37.htm#reality> for a description of a panel at Boskone discussing this.) Barnett said he found it annoying that movies have discovered alternate realities. Dannenfels said that the films that expand or examine reality are well-attended, which will certainly encourage the trend.

Springer said we are seeing more animation of various sorts. Barnett observed that outside the United States, animation has long since been regarded as a medium for adults (e.g., *Fantastic Planet*, the work of Jiri Trnka, and so on).

Specifically negative trends included all the horror films and slasher films, according to Blackwood, of which *Hollow Man* is merely the latest. Flynn bemoaned the fact that thirty-somethings who don't read books run Hollywood, and their idea of creativity seems to be bringing their favorite old television shows to the big screen.

Springer disliked the "franchise mentality, but Barnett said there was a silver lining--he felt

good about the piles of unsold *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace* merchandise. Dannenfelsler was more general, saying there seemed to be a growing trend toward bad writing. Blackwood disliked fireballs in every movie, and gave *Space Cowboys* as an example of a film which had the level of special effects needed to serve the story, and no more. Flynn pointed out that *The Sixth Sense* and *Being John Malkovich* also had a low level of special effects. Springer summarized by saying that *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace* had "eye candy," while *Space Cowboys* had "serviceable special effects that served the story." Barnett said that the PBS production of *The Lathe of Heaven* had "poxy special effects" but it didn't matter. Hollywood, he said, thinks we want special effects rather than story.

Dannenfelsler said that *Hollow Man* had good use of special effects at the beginning, but eventually wound down into a slasher film.

Were there any good made-for-television movies? Blackwood liked *Cast a Deadly Spell* and its sequel, *Witchhunt*. Springer thought of the "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" two-parters as good made-for-television movies. Barnett liked *The Tenth Kingdom* for its good special effects, though he also admitted it had "a lousy story." Flynn said he doesn't watch very much television.

Panelists were asked what film had the best chance of enduring. Most named *The Matrix*. Flynn said it "has a transcendancy beyond our time period." Blackwood said that it was an analogy to corporate culture, much as *Gattaca* was. Springer also had hopes for *The Iron Giant*. Dannenfelsler echoed those two and also added *The Sixth Sense*. Barnett named *Princess Mononoke*, *The Sixth Sense*, and *The Iron Giant*.

From the audience Mark Leeper observed that there seemed to be more films based on established science fiction novels this year (four out of about forty-five). Springer said that Arnold Schwarzenegger was discussed briefly as the lead for the remake of *I Am Legend*. Barnett noted the on-going production of *The Lord of the Rings*.

Dannenfelsler said that one problem was that *Titan A.E.* and *The Iron Giant* were mis-marketed--this is probably connected to the previously mentioned United States tendency of seeing animation as being only for children. (Someone in the audience later said that *The Cell* was being promoted as an MTV action movie, so maybe Hollywood doesn't know how to market anything.)

Someone in the audience mentioned *Rocky and Bullwinkle* and *X-Men*. Flynn said, "*X-Men* they did wrong--no blue Spandex." Someone else mentioned *Frequency*, which Blackwood said was really two films, a father-and-son story in the first half, a slasher film in the second.

I mentioned *Titus* as a film with definite fantastical elements not usually mentioned. Someone else added *Dogma*. Blackwood said, "Theologically it didn't hold water, but I didn't think it would." He didn't hold this against it too much: "There are a lot of Catholics out there who need a good laugh."

Dannenfelsler talked about *Mission to Mars*, saying that someone called it "2001 for second-graders."

Invariably someone mentioned *The Blair Witch Project*. Flynn said he lives in the area being discussed, and saw the film, but didn't like it. Springer piped up, "It was awesome, dude!" but then noted that he also had no desire to see it again. Barnett said he liked it quite a lot, and added, "It pleased me no end that it was such a low-budget production." (I think *The Last Broadcast* pre-dated it, and was cheaper.)

Dannenfelsler said that *The Blair Witch Project* was a "textbook study for the next century in



how to market a movie." Blackwood summed up a lot of people's feelings, saying, "I just hated those kids and was rooting for whatever was chasing them." (Mark Leeper noted that in many ways, *The Blair Witch Project* was the logical extension of "Dogma 95.")

**Two Millennia of Roman Rule**  
**Friday - 17:30 to 18:45**  
**Room: Regent (Fairmont)**  
**Participants: Thomas Harlan (M), Leigh Kimmel, Harry Turtledove**  
**Description: "Panelists discuss a world where the Roman Empire never fell."**

I would have loved to attend this, but was scheduled to be on a panel opposite it, namely. . . .

**The Cozy, Nurturing Community of RASFF**  
**Friday - 17:30 to 18:45**  
**Room: Buckingham**  
**Participants: Brenda Clough, Tom Galloway, Mary Kay Kare, Evelyn C. Leeper (M), Laurie Mann**  
**Description: "RASFF is one of the most active Usenet groups. Learn what is it and how you can join, or if you want to."**

Like RASFF (rec.arts.sf.fandom) itself, this was almost entirely digressions and off-topic remarks, dealing with such varied topics as the Great Renaming of 1989, the Great Split of 1991, sombreros and flippers, microwave caramel popcorn, and various "net personalities. The history of "!" versus "@" addresses was discussed, and I made a proposal that those of us around when people still used "!" paths should form "F!rst F@ndom." Any proposals for a cut-off date welcome.

There were some stories about how rasff is on occasion nurturing, but I still think that Janice Gelb's question ("Do you really disagree with me or are you arguing just to be polite?") is perhaps more typical of the atmosphere.

**How Do I Review a Movie?**  
**Friday - 19:00 to 20:15**  
**Room: Columbian**  
**Participants: Lyda Morehouse, Steven Piziks, James J.J. Wilson**  
**Description: "What do critics look for in a movie? Are there different standards for SF films?"**

Wilson made the distinction between a review and film criticism--a review is basically to tell the audience whether the reviewer thinks they should see the film. When you start reviewing you think a lot about your review as you watch a film, but this gradually decreases.

Now admittedly the panel seemed to be floundering around for direction, but I was still taken quite aback when Mark Leeper got up in the audience, walked up to the table and joined the panel. And although I think the panel was pleased with this help, I can also see that it sets a terrible precedent.

Anyway, Leeper said that what he hoped to see in a movie was something he hadn't seen

before, and looked for ideas rather than fights and chases. Wilson and Piziks agreed.

Piziks said that as he sees more films, he gets more critical, and also that when he started he didn't know about press kits.

In terms of specific rules people followed, Leeper said that it was important to tell the reader "where you're coming from" (e.g., if you really love monster movies, mention this in your review of *Godzilla* so that the reader can understand the basis for your review). Wilson gave the example that he can't stand Matthew Broderick.

Someone in the audience asked about whether movies made from books should be reviewed on the basis of how accurate to the books they were. Someone else noted that novels were really too long to make into movies--novelettes were about the right length. Piziks said that direct translation from book to movie was impossible. For example, mental processes are easier to write about than to film.

Someone else brought up the issue of special effects. (Actually, this panel didn't stick to its topic very well, for which I feel a little guilty, as I suggested it as a parallel to the perennial "How Do I Review a Book?" panels.) Science fiction is not equivalent to special effects, but there is more to it than that. Leeper observed that marionettes don't look realistic, but no one faults them for that. Nor should special effects be rated entirely on their realism. The question to be asked is whether they advance the story. Piziks gave the example of the special effects in *Titanic* being in service of the story, though this is probably a poor example, since they were also, on the whole, realistic.

Someone asked the panelists if there were any reviews that they had written that they would change. Wilson said that he loved *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* when he first saw it, then later realized that it was just nostalgia he was feeling. Morehouse liked *Godzilla* (1998) on first viewing, but not later. Piziks said that he wouldn't change his review of *Something About Mary*, but that he seemed to be the only one who didn't like it, so he couldn't really insist it wasn't funny.

Piziks said that reviews are not written like hard news stories, with each paragraph elaborating on the previous one in a hierarchical structure. The consequence of this is that editors can't just cut a review by chopping off the end--but not all editors know this.

Leeper said that when writing reviews he tries to avoid giving away plot twists, though for some films (like *Ladyhawke*), it's almost impossible to review them without revealing something concealed in the film for almost an hour.

Piziks said that for some films one has to use different criteria. For children's films, for example, one has to gauge by the audience's response rather than attempt to apply adult critical standards. Leeper says that sometimes a review has to say, "This film was not intended for me."

Asked what films they have liked the most and the least, the panelists varied. Morehouse liked *Soldier*. Wilson liked *Brazil* the best and *E.T.: The Extraterrestrial* the least. Piziks liked *Batman* and disliked *Cocktail*. Leeper liked *Schindler's List* and *Five Million Years to Earth*, and disliked *Seven Beauties* and *Eraserhead*.

Leeper also described the experience of seeing *The Messenger*, a film by a French director about Joan of Arc trying to throw the English out of France, in France in English with French sub-titles. As Leeper put it, "Didn't work very well, did it, Joan?"

## **Why Short Stories Are Still Worth Writing**

**Saturday - 10:00 to 11:15**

**Room: Regency C**

**Participants: Adam-Troy Castro, Gardner Dozois, Bill Johnson,  
Robert Reed, Gene Wolfe (M)**

**Description: "Short stories used to be the cutting edge of SF. Is that still true? Panelists discuss why short stories are still important."**

All of the panelists are either short story writers or editors and anthologists, so they do have a certain bias in the topic. As Dozois said, there seemed to be "a bit of a pre-selection bias." Robert Reed said that along with Stephen Baxter he is one of the most prolific short story authors, having eleven stories this year. (Baxter had fifteen stories in 1998.)

Wilson said that he thought that all the authors had also written novels, but Johnson said he hadn't (yet, anyway).

Castro said that one reason he preferred short stories was that there were more ideas that could be made into short stories than into novels. Johnson thought it was a question of time. He quoted Jerry Pournelle as telling David Drake, "Four pages a day is four novels a year." Dozois immediately responded, "No, sir, four pages a day is four pages a day." (The fact that Pournelle doesn't think that anyone every needs to do second drafts or edit anything may say more about his writing style than a general approach.)

Dozois described himself as more of a natural short story writer. "I'm more likely to take a four-hundred-page novel and boil it down to a five-thousand-word short story than to take a five-thousand-word short story and expand it into a four-hundred-page novel." Dozois also said, "Most novels I see on the shelves these days are grossly padded."

(At this point, someone asked Dozois to move closer to the microphone. "You're the only person who's ever said my voice is not loud enough. Have you had your ears checked?")

The panelists agreed that people have ideas for stories that hang around for years, and also titles. Wolfe gave the example of the beginning of an opening line that had been rattling around in his head for a while: "When I was Ming the Merciless." When he finally wrote it, it ended up as the last line. Johnson said his story "When We Drink a Fish Together" had a similar history. Castro gave an opening line, "When a frontier gets old, it becomes a theme park."

Wolfe quoted Johnson as having said that one difference between a short story and a novel is that "one of the things you have to do in a short story is you have to get to the damn point." And also, Johnson said, "You have to give the reader a reason to turn the page."

Someone in the audience asked about the practice of taking a series of stories and packaging it as a novel. Reed said that he did have such a series ("Sister Alice," "Brother Perfect"). But stories need a back story. "I don't approve of just stapling stories together and calling it a novel." Dozois said that while the stories are appearing separately, you can't assume that readers have read the previous stories. He noted that Asimov had also claimed this was true of novels in a series, but someone observes that the current trend towards numbering obviates that problem.

Dozois said there seemed to be a formula for success in writing short stories: write five or six great stories in a series with shared characters or universe in a year. This, he said, worked for Larry Niven, Roger Zelazny, and John Varley.

Wolfe suggested that if you want to succeed, you start writing short stories until you make a name for yourself, then write novels. "It never troubled me that the reader is confused. I want

him confused, frankly." As he explained, "'What the hell is going on in this book?' is a reason for the reader to turn the page."

Someone cited Kim Stanley Robinson saying that he wanted to use (did use?) a scene where a bathtub with a corpse fell through the ceiling. This may or may not have been in conjunction with Roger Elwood's *Continuum* series, which seems too early for Robinson, but I have a note about it here, adding that Robinson said he "thought things were getting a little dull."

Castro said that a series develops name recognition for the author, because you remember they were all written by the same author (as opposed to a bunch of unrelated stories by the same author).

Reed said that one advantage of short fiction is that it is easier in short fiction to "have unlikable characters take center stage."

Reed talked about being asked to expand a novella that "had too much stuff in it" into a novel. He was, in fact, given a *minimum* word count. As Reed put it, "I put the stuff between the stuff but the stuff between the stuff was thinner stuff." Wolfe noted that "The Book of the New Sun" was originally supposed to be a novella.

From the audience, Fred Lerner asked how authors who write in a series avoid being boxed in by previous stories. Castro had the simplest answer: "Avoid it completely." Wolfe said another way was to undo the problem you created the same way Doyle did with Holmes's death at Reichenbach Falls. Dozois agreed, saying that you could just say the previous story was all a dream.

Regarding the minimum word count mentioned earlier, someone said they liked the 180- to 200-page novel and wondered what had happened to it. Dozois said that when such novels are turned in, publishers ask for another hundred pages. "That's what wrong with a lot of modern novels." Most science fiction novels up to 1970 were under 70,000 words.

Wolfe suggested that one approach to the minimum word count was to write, "She wondered what had happened to the cat. She called, --Kitty, kitty, kitty, kitty, kitty, kitty, . . . ." Dozois responded, "He answered, --Meow, meow, meow, meow, . . . ."

Wolfe said that another reason authors write short stories is that it's hard to get a novel read if the author has no background or reputation. Dozois said that the magazines do the winnowing, not only of short fiction, but also of authors, but that basically this was necessary because publishers (other than Tor) do not read their slush piles (unsolicited, un-agented manuscripts).

What does short fiction do for the field (rather than for the authors)? Dozois said that most of the evolutionary work is short stories, which are better suited as a tool. Magazines can afford to let one author experiment because the other authors will carry the issue. As he put it, "The natural form for experimentation is short fiction."

Castro said that there was also the "snapshot story" (such as those found in Arthur C. Clarke's *Tales from the White Hart?*) where the idea can take precedence over plot.

Wolfe said that short stories also used to be more profitable to write than novels.

There was some talk about the small press support of short fiction. Dozois mentioned such publishers as Arkham House, Golden Gryphon, and NESFA Press who are currently publishing collections. I said that one problem was that young readers don't recognize collections--a friend's son started an Arthur C. Clarke collection, but came back to his father and said that the chapters didn't seem to relate to each other. Dozois said just to tell him, "It's postmodern."

The top short story authors named by the panel included Eleanor Arnason, Catherine Asaro, Kage Baker, Stephen Baxter, Terry Bisson, Adam-Troy Castro, Greg Egan, Nina Kiriki Hoffman, Bill Johnson, Nancy Kress, Ursula K. LeGuin, Paul McAuley, Robert Reed, Michael Swanwick, Connie Willis, and Gene Wolfe.

Someone asked about magazines. The picture is not good, with newsstand distribution down from fifty to four. Currently there are 5000 magazines of all kinds; the prediction is that there will be only 2000 in another year or two. It may be possible to get subscribers through the Internet, but no one knows.

At some point, the panel completely digressed, with Wolfe saying that Solon used to require citizens to prove they were earning an honest living. Dozois commented, "That would clean out Congress." Castro added, "And SFWA." And someone quoted what George Washington (really--yes) said to Henry Knox in the boat crossing the Delaware, "Move your fat ass, Henry, or you'll sink the damn boat." All this may have had some connection with short stories, but if so, my notes failed to capture it.

### **GoH Programming: Alternate History: Changing the Real World**

**Saturday - 11:30 to 12:45**

**Room: Grand Ballroom B**

**Participants: Steven Barnes (M), Richard Garfinkle, Harry Harrison, Teresa Nielsen Hayden, Robert Charles Wilson**

**Description: "Panelists discuss what's necessary to write alternate history that is believable."**

Barnes is working on *Insh'Allah*, Garfinkle wrote *Celestial Matters*, Harrison wrote *The Transatlantic Tunnel, Hurrah!* and is currently working on the "Stars and Stripes Forever" series, and Wilson wrote *Mysterium* and *Darwinia*. Nielsen Hayden was there as a "history junkie."

Barnes began by saying that alternate history is at least sociological science fiction, and that there are rules for playing fair. Wilson described alternate history writers as "intellectual otters": "We can't see a large body of knowledge without wanting to play in it."

Garfinkle felt that one rule was that when one had a specific point of departure, not to change the personalities of real people. Basically, he said, "The rules are what people accept." The earliest alternate history, he noted, was by Livy.

Harrison said that alternate history was science fiction, because it was in response to the question, "What if?" But there's not much good in alternate history, he said, because it requires hard work and writers are lazy. He's been working on "Stars and Stripes Forever" for forty years. "For the Civil War you'd better get it right because everyone's an expert."

Nielsen Hayden said the most important thing was that "you have to get the guns and ammo right" because that's what most people will pick on. It's also a mistake to have too much agenda. And a common mistake is a failure to respect the complexity of the universe. (For example, she said, some writers have major changes in the United States with no changes elsewhere.) And you also see a failure to respect the moral earnestness of human beings--that is, that people consider multiple futures when they do things, so to write as if people consider only one possible outcome is a mistake.

Garfinkle talked about the assumption of the transmission of a great civilization, and linear inevitably. He also said that writing about history successfully requires a certain amount of

distance and perspective.

(Harrison mentioned *Watch the Northwind Rise* by Robert Graves, in reference to its matriarchal church, but that is set in the future and is not an alternate history. Someone also quoted Gore Vidal's statement, "Christianity is the greatest disaster to befall mankind," as a starting point for alternate histories.)

Wilson said, "Everybody's knowledge is an approximation," but still, how do you know when to stop researching and start writing? He said it is important to avoid the "Great Black Hole of Research."

Barnes talked about his upcoming *Insh'Allah* (in which Africans colonize the Americas with European slaves). His point of divergence is some time during the Peloponnesian War to allow Africa to develop rather than Europe. After designing his timeline, he brainstormed it with some friends, using videotape and a secretary to capture everything.

Garfinkle said that one important thing was to use only primary sources for research.

From the audience, Fred Lerner asked what an author does if the history that's being changed is unfamiliar. Barnes says in his book, two of the characters are schoolchildren, so he can use the school setting to give the reader information about his history. (Still, unless the teacher says something like, "If X had gone the other way, then Europe would have developed rather than Africa," the reader may still be at a loss.)

Wilson said he had a similar problem with his *Mysterium*: it's based on the gnostics, to which Garfinkle immediately inquired, "Which gnostics?" (Typical!)

There was some discussion of the difference in style and technique between stories that include the point of divergence and stories that merely refer back to it. Garfinkle said that if you include the point of divergence, you end up including historical characters that you have to be accurate to. By placing your story far enough after the point of divergence, you give yourself freer rein.

Nielsen Hayden said that another trick is to not explain too much, but give the reader cues instead.

Another type of alternate history (or is it?) involves asking, "What if the world worked differently?" Garfinkle, for example, wrote *Celestial Matters* based on the premise that Aristotelian physics was accurate.

There was the obligatory discussion of the Great Man Theory versus the Tide of History. Garfinkle likened "historical inevitability" to an avalanche--you can't stop it, but you can alter who is passing under it when it happens. (As for "historical inevitability," he later observed that "everyone knows" that you can't conquer Russia in the winter, but the Mongols did it--and by going through Siberia to boot!)

Regarding *Darwinia*, Wilson said, "Turning Europe into an unpopulated continent that could be settled by North Americans was an idea too enticing not to do."

Someone in the audience observed that authors don't consider all the consequences of their changes.

Someone suggested an alternate history where William Dean Howells didn't become editor of the *Atlantic Monthly* and there was an entirely different face of American fiction. In general, I think literary alternate histories are overlooked in favor of military or political ones, though there are exceptions ("Wall, Stone, Craft" by Walter Jon Williams, several of Howard

Waldrop's stories, and possibly *Possession* by A. S. Byatt from what I've heard). This may be because the people who follow military strategy are more likely to buy an alternate history than someone who follows literature. Or maybe I'm just interpreting the data backward.

Asked if he had any final comments, Garfinkle said the inevitable "No. If this were some other alternate panel, I might have a comment." Harrison suggested that someone might want to write an alternate history in which humanity abandoned the idea of war early on.

**Pros and Fans at Cons: Who's Hiding from Whom?**  
**Saturday - 13:00 to 14:15**  
**Room: Grand Ballroom B**  
**Participants: Janice Gelb (M), Alexis Gilliland, Perrienne Lurie,**  
**Patrick Nielsen Hayden, Terry Pratchett**  
**Description: (no description given)**

Gilliland started by saying something which may cover most of the cases people think of: "People aren't hiding from anybody; they're looking for their friends." Gelb said this was true, and the problem was the "tension of varying expectations."

Nielsen Hayden elaborated, saying there are "immiscible ideas of what an SF convention fundamentally is." He cited the flap over this year's "Meet the Pros" event, seen by many as a title which set up an "us-versus-them" mentality (on both sides) and presumed that each side had a specific and differing role to fulfill. We need to "work against the tendency to build hierarchies," he said. There are pros who are fans and pros who are not.

One manifestation of this tendency to build hierarchies that Gelb mentioned was that of a pro wanting a free membership just for attending the convention. I wish I had noted precisely how the particular pro phrased it, because Nielsen Hayden responded with, "There are more errors in that statement than words." I was reminded of the minor pro who visited NESFA once and was asked to help collate "Instant Message" or some such in the back room. He responded that he was a pro and didn't have to do that sort of thing, and just as he finished, Isaac Asimov stuck his head out the door of the back room and said, "We're almost out of page 3; can someone run some more off?"

Nielsen Hayden pointed out another problem with making hierarchies: "The model of fandom as a junior varsity league who want to be pros is wrong and we should stomp it flat." Gelb noted that there was a big difference in attitude between pros who came through fandom and pros who didn't.

As for the charge of hiding, Pratchett complained, "People don't understand body language, especially the direct walk to the bathroom."

Pratchett spoke at length about how pros are treated (or mis-treated) by conventions. Often he gets letters inviting him to attend conventions where he has to respond, "Are you planning on paying my airfare to this convention on the next continent or just asking in case I'm dropping by?" (The latter is not impossible, if it turns out a book tour is being planned, but it is unlikely.)

Pratchett (with an implied nod to Tolstoy) also said that one reason people hear all the horror stories about some pros are treated, but not about all the success stories is that "all the good stories are good in the same way, but all the bad stories are uniquely bad." He, for example, has been stiffed on the airfare, gone to a convention to discover it had been canceled, and so on. It's good to understand expectations, he said, but he didn't think a contract was necessary or even desirable.

Gelb suggested that some of the problems had to do with differing cultural expectations in different countries. For example, someone said in the UK, program participants get more drinks. In Eastern Europe, they may keep the pros in a little room except when they are on panels.

Nielsen Hayden thought the UK was more egalitarian, with the bar being the central social thing. (In fact, he told the audience that it would be hard to overestimate its importance.) I found it interesting/ironic that the country we think of as being more class-conscious than the US is actually more egalitarian in this regard, but it's also true that we have an overrated view of our own supposed egalitarianism.

Gelb said there were also differing opinions on free memberships for pros who are not on the program. Gilliland mentioned CreationCon, but Nielsen Hayden said that even "Star Trek" fans dislike the exposition model. (Beth Friedman pointed out that there are media fan writer cons where the actors are *not* wanted because they might be embarrassed.)

I think it was Pratchett who quoted Bob Shaw's reason why an author might want to go to a media exposition: "It will be full of sad girls who want to have sex with Captain Kirk and since he won't be there you might do."

(If "Star Trek" fans are "Trekkies," are Harry Potter fans "Potties"?)

Nielsen Hayden said that he challenges the desire to meet pros as the primary reason fans attend conventions. And fans are often two-minded about their relationship with pros: they have their personal opinions and they have their critical opinions. (For example, there are authors who I think are quite nice and personable, but I don't think their work is very good. Conversely, there are authors whose work is great, but they are impossible.)

Pratchett said that he was impressed at how eclectic conventions in the United States are compared to the UK. At the first Discworld convention, he added, 90% of the attendees were first-time con-goers.

There was discussion of autographing etiquette. Pratchett had a few rules for this (and in general) including "Don't be a jerk," "Drooling at any stage is not good," "Buying them a drink is good," and "When they're sitting at a table with a pile of pens in front of them, asking for an autograph is appropriate."

Gelb said that there is also the problem of the pro "who never gets to meet the nice polite fan because they're too polite."

Lurie said that the midlist and neo-pros are insecure and they tend to be the ones who need reassurance at the SFWA Suite (which is where most fans think the pros are "hiding out"). Nielsen Hayden talked about how this feeling that people are hiding is tied to the "feeling that all your friends have successfully ditched you," and are at some better party. Pratchett recommended, "Stay at one party and make it cool or go to bed early and be fresh in the morning."

Gilliland reminded the audience that pros can also have a bad day, be sick, etc. Gelb agreed, saying not to judge a pro (or anyone, for that matter) by a single encounter.

Someone in the audience asked whether pros hadn't earned all the stuff they seem to demand. Pratchett said that he is "quite tough" in what he demands from literary conferences, but science fiction conventions are more fun. "Where else would you have a heated conversation about punctuation than a science fiction convention?"



Nielsen Hayden thought it was more important for a convention to use its programming to honor its pros than by giving them special privileges. Gilliland agreed, saying that the Guest(s) of Honor a convention selects defines the convention (or should, anyway). There has been much discussion over Guest of Honor--how many a convention should have, whether they should be picked to represent a specific type (e.g., should X be identified as an "Editor Guest of Honor" or just a "Guest of Honor"?), and so on. Most of that discussion didn't take place here, but it is worth noting its existence, since one might reasonably ask how much a convention, particularly a smaller one, can honor eight different Guests of Honor sufficiently to warrant the title. Gelb did say in conjunction with the categorizing of Guests of Honor as well as the general context of the panel that fan activity and pro activity were "not essential states of being or Platonic ideals." She also said, "The cure for pro adulation is . . ." which Nielsen Hayden finished off with "meeting them." "Yeah. No!"

Pratchett emphasized again that "the problems get remembered" and the niceness forgotten. A publisher at a science fiction convention once said to him, "Aren't science fiction fans nice?" And a hotel manager once said, "I like science fiction fans. They drink like the rugby club and fight like the chess club."

**Best Science Fiction Films of the Decade**  
**Saturday - 14:30 to 15:45**  
**Room: Regent (Fairmont)**  
**Participants: Bob Blackwood, Dan Kimmel (M), Mark Leeper,**  
**Misty Pendragon, James J.J. Wilson**  
**Description: "Panelists discuss and defend their choices for the**  
**top ten films of the 90s."**

Kimmel began by saying that to avoid arguing about what constituted "the decade" or the 90s," the panel could include everything from 1 January 1990 through 30 August 2000. He also split this into three chunks, so that everyone had a chance to speak fairly frequently without having to go year by year.

On the other hand, I don't have to make any such concessions, so I will list each panelist's list all together. I will, however, use alphabetical order for the panelists and (close to) chronological order for the lists.

Bob Blackwood:

- i *Edward Scissorhands*
- i *The Handmaid's Tale*
- i *Total Recall*
- i *The Addams Family*
- i *Naked Lunch*
- i *Army of Darkness*
- i *Time Cop*
- i *Secret of Roan Inish*
- i *Tank Girl*
- i *The Craft*
- i *Gattaca*
- i *Dark City*
- i *The Matrix*
- i *The Cell*

Dan Kimmel:

- i *Total Recall*
- i *Terminator 2*
- i *Rain Without Thunder*
- i *The Nightmare Before Christmas*
- i *Ed Wood*
- i *12 Monkeys*
- i *Independence Day*
- i *Gattaca*
- i *The Truman Show*
- i *Being John Malkovich*
- i *Space Cowboys*

Mark Leeper:

- i *The Rocketeer*
- i *Grand Tour: Disaster in Time*
- i *Total Recall*
- i *Babylon 5*
- i *Jurassic Park*
- i *Puppet Masters*
- i *12 Monkeys*
- i *Richard III* (the Ian McKellan "alternate history" version)
- i *Gattaca*
- i *The Truman Show*
- i *Star Wars: Episode 1: The Phantom Menace*
- i *The Cell*

Misty Pendragon:

- i *Darkman*
- i *Terminator 2*
- i *Freejack*
- i *Army of Darkness*
- i *Stargate*
- i *Strange Days*
- i *The Arrival*
- i *The Prophecy*
- i *The Fifth Element*
- i *Dark City*
- i *Galaxy Quest*
- i *X-Men*

About *Being John Malkovich*, Kimmel said, "I have not seen a movie that surreal and twisted since Buñuel died."

Several people mentioned they would have named films other people had already named, but wanted to spread things around. So, for example Blackwood would have named *Being John Malkovich*, but cited *The Matrix* instead. Leeper gave honorable mentions to *Contact*, *Deep Impact*, and *Titan A.E.* Kimmel liked the first half of *Hollow Man*.

Asked to name their one best film of the decade, Blackwood, Kimmel, and Leeper all named *Gattaca*. Pendragon named *Terminator 2*.

Leeper thought that H. G. Wells would have liked *Island of Dr. Moreau*. And regarding marketing, Kimmel asked in disbelief, "Whose idea was it to come up with --Hunchback of

Notre Dame' backpacks?"

The audience then started suggesting titles including (in alphabetical order): *Aladdin*, *Amanda and the Alien*, *Barton Fink*, *Blast from the Past*, *Cube*, *Event Horizon*, *eXistenZ*, *Heavenly Creatures*, *Matinee*, *Men in Black*, *The Omega Code*, *Pi*, *Pitch Black*, *Prospero's Books*, *Scream*, *Sliding Doors*, *South Park*, *The Thirteenth Floor*, *Titus*, and *Whole Wide World*.

Let me say here that I would not want to be trapped in a video store with some of the people here, at least based on their notion of "best of the decade."

I do think a possible topic for another panel might be "Films People Hate That I Like and Why."

**Other Worldly Awards**  
**Saturday - 18:00 to 19:30**  
**Room: Crystal Ballroom (Fairmont)**

This was for the presentation of the Golden Duck Awards, the Sidewise Awards, the Webs of Wonder awards, and other non-Hugo awards.

It was also the cause of much confusion and rushing around. Steven Silver and I were presenting the Sidewise Awards, supposedly with the assistance of Moshe Feder. Since Steven and I were going immediately afterward to the Hugo Award Ceremony, we went back to our rooms to change into our tuxedos.

First Steven called me--I should head downstairs, but he had forgotten to pack the studs and cuffs for his shirt. (I cheat and wear a pleated blouse with regular buttons.) When I got downstairs and he showed up, he still hadn't rounded up a set of studs and Elaine was going to keep looking. (For the Sidewise Awards he had put on his Murray Leinster T-shirt with his tuxedo.) Then I discovered that I had misplaced my Hugo Reception ticket. We went over to the Fairmont and Elaine dropped by to say "no progress." I had a brainstorm and suggested that she take my key, go to my room, and pick up my Hugo rocket pins--Steven could use those! (She could also see if the ticket was lying around.) This seemed like an outré, but workable, idea and off Elaine went. Luckily for Steven, however, someone else produced a real set of studs and links. Oh, well. (My other suggestion was to hit up each person at the Reception wearing a tuxedo for their bottom stud and that would give him enough.)

Anyway, enough of this background color.

We had asked to give the Sidewise Awards for Alternate History first, since two of us had to run off to the Hugo Awards. The Long Form Award went to Brendan DuBois for *Resurrection Day*. The Short Form Award went to Alain Bergeron for "The Eighth Register" (originally published as "Le huitième registre") and had been translated by Howard Scott (who also received a plaque). A Special Achievement Award went to Randall Garrett, for the Lord Darcy series.

The person Bergeron had designated to accept the award was quite surprised, since the short list of four stories included two Robert Silverberg stories and Jan Lars Jensen's Hugo-nominated "Secret History of the Ornithopter." Thanks to Esther Friesner, Mistress of Ceremonies, for reading the French title of the story with the correct pronunciation.

After this presentation, we had to re-wrap the plaques and rush off for the Hugo Award Ceremony, so I didn't get to see all the other winners.

**Hugo Awards Ceremony**  
**Saturday: 20:00 - 22:00**  
**Room: Imperial Ballroom (Fairmont)**

Much has already been said about the Hugo Award Ceremony, and I will be adding to it, but first:

- i Best Novel: *A Deepness in the Sky* by Vernor Vinge
- i Best Novella: "The Winds of Marble Arch" by Connie Willis
- i Best Novelette: "10<sup>16</sup> to 1" by James Patrick Kelly
- i Best Short Story: "Scherzo with Tyrannosaur" by Michael Swanwick
- i Best Related Book: *Science Fiction of the 20th Century* by Frank M. Robinson
- i Best Dramatic Presentation: *Galaxy Quest*
- i Best Professional Editor: Gardner Dozois
- i Best Professional Artist: Michael Whelan
- i Best Semi-Prozine: *Locus*
- i Best Fanzine: *File 770*
- i Best Fan Writer: David Langford
- i Best Fan Artist: Joe Mayhew
- i John W. Campbell Award: Cory Doctorow

Okay, now on to the juicy details.

My major complaint was that the proofreading was appalling. No, let me correct that. My major complaint was that the room was too small--to the extent that they *encouraged* people to stay away and watch on their hotel televisions! (The room held 1300, with the convention having about 5500 people.)

But of things they presumably had some/more control over, the proofreading and related activities stand out as the worst I have ever seen at one of these, by a mile. People have noted about two dozen misspellings and mistakes on the slides, including "Diskworld," "10<sup>6</sup> to 1" (should have been "10<sup>16</sup> to 1"), "The Winds of the Marble Arch," "Patrick Nielson Hayden," "F&FS," and more others that I can't recall. In addition, several times the slide operator accidentally displayed the entire set of Powerpoint slides on the screen; fast readers with good eyes could see the slides naming the winners before they were announced.

Compared to this, the other problems were minor. The winners for Dramatic Presentation, director Dean Parisot and writer Robert Gordon, were so surprised and thrilled to win for *Galaxy Quest* that they forgot to take the award itself when they left the stage. (I suspect that, like many people, they expected *The Matrix* to win. I, for one, was enormously pleased it didn't.) No one had told Bob Eggleton (the person reading the Dramatic Presentation nominees) that there would be clips before announcing the winner. Several people felt the booklet should not have listed specific works for the people nominated for Professional Editor, particularly since the lists were incomplete (and in at least one case wrong) and not based on any input from the nominees themselves.

One thing some people found confusing was that the awards were not given in the traditional order, but rather (I believe) in order of increasing number of votes for a given category.

Several other awards were given out as well, Forry Ackerman presented the Big Heart Award to Robert Silverberg. It was inscribed with a comment Silverberg had made on first hearing about the award many years ago: "I know I'll never get one of those." Ackerman then passed the torch for administering and presenting this award to David Kyle. Kyle presented the First

Fandom Award to Jack Williamson (in absentia).

Master of Ceremonies Harry Turtledove, attired in tuxedo, introduced himself: "My name is Harry. I'll be your waiter tonight. The specialties are rocket and crow." He went on, "I am the Reader Digest Condensed version of this year's Democratic Party ticket. I have Joe Lieberman's Judaism and Al Gore's charisma." I did not record all the puns he made--be grateful.

The Seiuns were presented by someone who had an excellent grasp of English, demonstrated by his explanation of this year's award. (Each year the actual award is different. One year it was a sake set; another year it was a lacquered tray.) This year the award was a fan, which he pointed out was already a pun, but went on to say that in Japanese, it was "sensu," which sounded like "sense of wonder." The winners were the short story "Out of the Everywhere" by James Tiptree, Jr., and the novel *Kirinyaga* by Mike Resnick, both translated by Maseyuki Uchimo. (I hope I spelled that correctly--I can't seem to find it printed anywhere.)

After Langford's umpteenth win as Fan Writer, someone suggested that next year one related book would be "the SF blockbuster, --The Collected Hugo Acceptance Speeches of Dave Langford." After *Galaxy Quest* won, I decided my motto in the Fan Writer category would be, "Never give up. Never surrender."

*Galaxy Quest* director Dean Parisot said in his acceptance speech, "This is the oddest but most entertaining event I've been to." Afterwards he and writer Robert Gordon were at the Hugo Nominees party, apparently enjoying themselves quite a bit. They were impressed with the level of the ceremony, especially with the acceptance speeches, compared to those they were more familiar with (such as the Oscars). (And if here anyone had shouted, "I'm king of the world!" it would have been to satirize James Cameron.) As someone noted, though, most of the recipients (and presenters) worked with words and writing a lot, and so the idea that they could produce a reasonable speech wasn't totally surprising.

### **The Best Dramatic Presentation Hugo Winners and How They Have Stood the Test of Time**

**Sunday - 08:30 to 09:45**

**Room: Regency A**

**Participants: Bob Blackwood, John L. Flynn, Perrienne Lurie (M)**

**Description: "Panelists discuss past winners and whether they would win today."**

First, the list:

- | 1946: *The Picture of Dorian Gray*
- | 1958: *The Incredible Shrinking Man*
- | 1959: (No Award)
- | 1960: *Twilight Zone* (TV)
- | 1961: *Twilight Zone* (TV)
- | 1962: *Twilight Zone* (TV)
- | 1963: (No Award)
- | 1964: (not on ballot due to lack of interest)
- | 1965: *Dr. Strangelove*
- | 1966: (not on ballot due to lack of interest)
- | 1967: *Star Trek*: "The Menagerie" (TV)
- | 1968: *Star Trek*: "City on the Edge of Forever" (TV)
- | 1969: *2001: A Space Odyssey*
- | 1970: TV Coverage of Apollo XI

- | 1971: (No Award)
- | 1972: *A Clockwork Orange*
- | 1973: *Slaughterhouse Five*
- | 1974: *Sleeper*
- | 1975: *Young Frankenstein*
- | 1976: *A Boy and His Dog*
- | 1977: (No Award)
- | 1978: *Star Wars*
- | 1979: *Superman*
- | 1980: *Alien*
- | 1981: *The Empire Strikes Back*
- | 1982: *Raiders of the Lost Ark*
- | 1983: *Blade Runner*
- | 1984: *Return of the Jedi*
- | 1985: *2010*
- | 1986: *Back to the Future*
- | 1987: *Aliens*
- | 1988: *The Princess Bride*
- | 1989: *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*
- | 1990: *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*
- | 1991: *Edward Scissorhands*
- | 1992: *Terminator 2*
- | 1993: *Star Trek: The Next Generation*: "The Inner Light" (TV)
- | 1994: *Jurassic Park*
- | 1995: *Star Trek: The Next Generation*: "All Good Things"
- | 1996: *Babylon 5*: "The Coming of Shadows" (TV)
- | 1997: *Babylon 5*: "Severed Dreams"
- | 1998: *Contact*
- | 1999: *The Truman Show*
- | 2000: *Galaxy Quest*

The panel didn't really fulfill the description, focusing more on whether these films still stood up today. In general, the panelists thought they did, but there were exceptions.

For example, today's audiences react very differently to *A Clockwork Orange* than audiences did when it came out. (In regards to Kubrick in general, Blackwood said, "Kubrick had pessimism about man." Flynn added, "And about the machines he builds." Blackwood also felt that Kubrick had a great sense of spacial relationships.)

*Slaughter-House Five* and *A Boy and His Dog* were cited as films that don't stand the test of time well. Someone on the panel said that *2010* would not beat *Brazil*, but they were not actually in the same year. (*Back to the Future* beat *Brazil*; *2010* beat *Dune*, *Ghostbusters*, *The Last Starfighter*, and *Star Trek III*.)

As for whether these films would win now, that wasn't addressed. If I look at the lists, and assuming the nomination list was the same (not necessarily a reasonable assumption, but how much research do you expect me to do for this?), I think *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad* would win for 1959 over "No Award," and *The Time Machine* might well win out over *Twilight Zone* for 1961. Would *Burn, Witch, Burn* defeat "No Award" for 1963?

For 1976, I would predict that *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* would win over *A Boy and His Dog*, which won as a combination of sentimental favorite and because it was first shown at a previous Worldcon.

For 1977, the fact that *Star Wars* completely overshadowed the nominees (which were 1976 releases)

would not be as much a factor, and I think either *Carrie* or *The Man Who Fell to Earth* would have won rather than "No Award."

For 1978, I think *Star Wars* would still win, in spite of the fact that the group of Chicon members who voted for the best science fiction films ever named *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* as one of them, and not *Star Wars*. Similarly, between *Dark City* (which made the list) and *The Truman Show* (which didn't) for 1999, I still think *The Truman Show* would win. Basically, I think a different set of people vote on the Hugos than voted in the "best ever" poll.

For 1979, *The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy* definitely would win over *Superman*. In fact, had the award been given based on the relative applause when the nominees were read off, it would have won then. Its problem, of course, was that the majority of the American voters had not yet heard it.

It's hard to say whether *Brazil* would win over *Back to the Future* for 1986. And would *Edward Scissorhands* still beat *Total Recall* for 1991? (Flynn didn't think so.)

Even the recent years would change. *Gattaca* lost to *Contact* in 1998 mostly because a lot of people hadn't seen *Gattaca* yet. Now with the Chicon membership (or part of it, anyway) picking *Gattaca* as one of the ten best science fiction films ever, and three out of four panelists on an earlier panel naming *Gattaca* the best of the decade, things have changed.

There was some discussion of what "standing the test of time" means? Repeat viewings? Succeeding with a new audience? Has *Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* "stood the test of time"? (From the audience, Mark Leeper said that it stands up without standing the test of time.)

Flynn listed some notable films or television shows which didn't win Hugos included *Alphaville*, *The Outer Limits*, *Solaris*, *Death Race 2000*, *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, *Escape from New York*, *Mad Max II (Road Warrior)*, *The Abyss*, *Total Recall*, and *Logan's Run*. (The last four were nominated, however.) *Farscape* was mentioned by Blackwood.

### **Conversation**

**Sunday - 10:00 to 11:15**

**Room: Addams**

**Participants: Joe W. Haldeman, Robert Silverberg**

**Description: "These authors could discuss the weather and make you want to stick around for more. Find out what interesting topics will come up."**

Well, this was a real mess, both in general and for me specifically. I went to this item a few minutes early, but couldn't even get close to the room, which was designed for about forty people, but valiantly trying to hold two or three times that number. What were they thinking when they put these two authors in a room this small?!

So I returned to the Green Room, where Silverberg was just asking how to find the Addams Room. Trying to be helpful, and sure I could find it because after all I had just come from there, I offered to escort him.

You guessed it--I got lost.

In my defense, let me say I am not the only person who found the convention center and hotel corridors and connections confusing. The main problem (for me) was the escalators just outside the Green Room. To get to the Addams Room, you needed to go up two levels. But the escalators did not "corkscrew"; they were "stacked" so that when you went up one level, you had to walk around to the back of that escalator to take, or even see, the next one. And naturally this is what I failed to do, and

we found ourselves in the hotel lobby, which was clearly wrong.

Well, someone else who was going there and had a better sense of direction did get us there without too much delay. I apologized profusely and left. I hear that Silverberg did joke that his "native guide" got lost, and I have to say I deserved it. (I also heard that they moved the conversation to a bigger room, but the damage was already done in the number of people who just gave up when they saw the crowd.)

**Collecting vs. Amassing**  
**Sunday - 11:30 to 12:45**  
**Room: Regent (Fairmont)**  
**Participants: Walter R. Cole, Howard Frank, Judy Lazar,**  
**Tara Miller-Oakes, Michael J. Walsh (M)**  
**Description: "Do you collect or just acquire?**  
**Panelists discuss the differences."**

All the panelists collect science fiction books, but they also collect other things. For example, Frank collects art, Lazar collects perfume atomizers, and Miller-Oakes collects toy robots.

They discussed some of the hazards of collecting. Frank said he had to keep moving to get more space--first things start ending up packed in boxes, and eventually you move, unpack, and start over.

Do the panelists weed out?

Walsh said he triages every once in a while and gets rid of "stuff he doesn't really want" and duplicates.

Do they buy on-line or from eBay? The answer was "only from dealer they know."

Frank said that collecting has a rhythm all its own. It took him a year to buy all of H. G. Wells's first editions, but he had to decide to buy the first one.

I asked whether the panelists read their collectible books. Frank said he buys two copies of a book he wants to read so that one remains pristine.

Walsh said that speculation doesn't work, and recommended that people buy what they like, especially in books.

Panelists talked about what to do about collections after you die. Frank has set up a foundation to help fund a museum for his art collection, but the main problem there is not the original building but the on-going maintenance that no one wants to take over.

Cole said the only real possibility for a science fiction book collection was a university library. Miller-Oakes said this didn't help her problem: "Carved cherry and oak just don't go with the robots."

Someone asked about conservation. Walsh and Frank agreed that it was pricey and has to be done on a per-volume basis, not en masse. One warning was that storing books in cardboard boxes is not a good idea, since the boxes are not acid-free and the books can leach acid from them.

Regarding insurance, someone recommended Collectibles Insurance Agency.



**Science Fiction of Ages Past**

**Sunday - 13:00 to 14:15**

**Room: Ambassador (Fairmont)**

**Participants: Forrest J. Ackerman (M), John Fast, David Kyle,  
Mark Leeper, James J.J. Wilson**

**Description: "Panelists discuss the history of SF and how it developed into today's SF."**

This was *supposed* to be about SF film, and though Programming kept assuring me that the missing word "film" would be replaced, it never happened, so I have no idea what the audience expected. What they got was more a series of reminiscences interspersed with Ackerman doing little monologues (and dialogues) from SF films. (I am sticking to my standard of referring to people by last name, though for Forry Ackerman, it feels as though I should be saying "Forry.")

Ackerman talked about seeing *Frankenstein* for the first time. When the monster appeared, a woman on the aisle jumped up, screamed, and ran out. He sat through it a second time, and the same woman jumped up, screamed, and ran out at the same spot!

Kyle remembered seeing *Dracula* on stage. Ackerman said that, contrary to the film *Ed Wood*, Lugosi never said anything negative about Karloff, used a cane, or fought with an octopus. Kyle added that Karloff was also a gentleman. While Ackerman found *Ed Wood* entertaining (though inaccurate), he liked *Gods and Monsters* better.

This led Leeper to ask whether the other panelists thought that the 1930s films were inspired by the horrors of World War I. Ackerman said that this was more true of such films as *J'Accuse* (1919, with another version in 1938) and *Journey's End* (1930) Whale's

film directly about World War I).

Wilson wondered what took science fiction, which used to be considered adult fare, and made it "kid stuff." Kyle said it was the serials. The first science fiction film he remembers is *The Mysterious Island* (1929); other early ones were *The Invisible Man* (1933) and *Things to Come* (1936). These were all attended by adults as serious films. Leeper mentioned that he had heard that Hitler was "inspired" by *Things to Come*, leading someone to note that Hitler is the least welcome science fiction film fan. (Hitler was also a big fan of *King Kong*.) Wilson said that one reason *Things to Come* seems so odd is that Wells wanted the characters to be archetypes, not people.

Someone asked about the "War of the Worlds" broadcast. Ackerman said he slept through it; Kyle said he was in college in Alabama and enjoyed it, and later ended up living in London where the Martians had crossed the Thames in the book. (We live near where the Martians landed in Grovers Mills, New Jersey, and in fact, the town erected a plaque commemorating that event!)

Kyle said he also saw both *When Worlds Collide* and *The Day the Earth Stood Still* at Nolacon I in 1951, and always wanted a sequel to *When Worlds Collide*. And he said he remembered see Ackerman in a movie running on a television in a bar in Majorca.

There was some discussion of science and special effects in older movies. Leeper mentioned the bee in *Dracula*. It's apparently supposed to be a giant bee with a full-sized coffin, but looks more like a regular-sized bee with a tiny coffin. And Kyle noted that in *The Incredible Shrinking Man*, he kept more of his weight than he should have.

Of really old films, Kyle said, "The charm of silent films was that they were unpretentious." He prefers implication rather than explication--"The attempt to make things real makes them unreal"--and gives the example of the demon in *Night of the Demon*.

**Faith**  
**Room: International Ballroom (Fairmont)**  
**Sunday: 14:30 - ?**  
**An opera by Michael Ching based on a story of James Patrick Kelly**

I would really have liked to see/hear this, but it just conflicted with too many things.

**The Best Sci-Fi Films of the Twentieth Century**  
**Sunday - 14:30 to 15:45**  
**Room: Grand Ballroom C-D**  
**Participants: Steven Barnes, Bob Blackwood (M), Randy Dannenfelser, Alexis Gilliland, Dan Kimmel**  
**Description: "Critics discuss the best SF films of the century as selected by the Chicon membership."**

The films, as voted by a subset of the Chicon membership, were:

1. *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951)
2. *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968)
3. *Blade Runner* (1982)
4. *Forbidden Planet* (1956)
5. *Aliens* (1986)
6. *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977)
7. *The War of the Worlds* (1953)
8. *Dark City* (1998)
9. *Gattaca* (1997)
10. *The Thing from Another World* (1951)

Gilliland spoke first about *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, saying, "Everyone was very nervous about nuclear power." People were looking for hope or safety. "In the old days," he said, "it used to be angels that came down and solved our problems." (Though in this he seemed to be referring more to the story upon which it was based, "Farewell to the Master" by Harry Bates.) Gilliland also thought *2001: A Space Odyssey* a beautiful film. He said that a lot of people saw it while under the influence of drugs and "maybe they didn't know what they had seen, but they were very impressed.

Kimmel suggested to those who didn't like *Blade Runner* the first time they saw it, "See it with the right audience this time." When first shown it received a very mixed reception, but when he saw it at the Boston Science Fiction Film Marathon, it seemed much better, not only to him, but to many in the audience. Kimmel also noted that *Forbidden Planet* was the biggest in budget and prestige of all the 1950s science films. One needs only to look at the care lavished on the music (then called "electric tonalities" because of some truly ludicrous dispute with the composers' union) and the script.

(Side story on the music: Some time after the film came out, a soundtrack album was issued, possibly self-published. It did okay, but the composers, Ford and Beebe Barron, ended up with a lot of unsold copies.

When Midamericon came along in 1976, Ford Barron decided to try to sell some in the Dealers Room--I believe he shared a table with some else, possibly Gregg Press. So he came with a case of records--which practically flew off the table, they were so popular. He was on the phone to his wife the first night, telling her to put all the records they had on an airplane to Kansas City. As with many artists, it took a while, but eventually he realized that their work was recognized and appreciated. Sorry the details are sketchy, but Midamericon was seven years before I started writing con reports, so I have no notes to work from.)

Blackwood said that what he liked about most about *Aliens* was the art direction and the fact that it showed a diverse crew with women being just as capable as men. (These both carried over from the first film, of course.) *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* showed the first friendly aliens since *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, according to him. I suspect I could find a few exceptions if I tried, but he may be right if one thinks only of major films. On television, of course, we had *Star Trek*, *The Outer Limits*, and *Twilight Zone*, which all had friendly aliens. Of *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, Blackwood said that the actors, the script, and the special effects were all "appropriate and enchanting." (I find it interesting that from 1977, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* made the list and *Star Wars* did not.) Gilliland disliked *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* because it manipulated the audience. *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, he said, "had all the sound and fury signifying nothing." If he were going to pick a film for the list that manipulated the audience, he would choose *Jurassic Park* instead. (This may just be another way of saying that Steven Spielberg has gotten better.)

Dannenfelser said that *War of the Worlds* was the first of the Saturday matinees, and that its place on the list was due more to the demographics of the voters than to its absolute quality. (I should elaborate that the voting was by whichever of Chicon's members chose to vote, so it was extremely self-selected.) He also felt that *Dark City* should clearly have won over *The Truman Show*, and jokingly suggested a recount of last year's Hugo ballots.

Barnes didn't share other people's enthusiasm for *Gattaca*; he felt it was a good underdog story, but too sterile and cool. *The Thing from Another World*, on the other hand, he described as "fun and terrifying, claustrophobic and xenophobic." Kimmel disagreed, and pointed out that in the previous day's panel on the best films of the decade, three of the four panelists picked *Gattaca* as the best.

Blackwood thought *The Day the Earth Stood Still* a subversive film, but didn't elaborate.

Dannenfelser didn't like *2001: A Space Odyssey*--he thought it was too slow, and the visuals really worked only in Cinerama. Barnes, on the other hand, said that it was his favorite film (and he thought *Gattaca* too sterile and cool?!), in part because it answered the question, "What would the experience of first contact be?" He describes it as "one of the highest forms of visual cinema."

The panelists were each asked what film they would add. Most had difficulty with the concept of the singular in that request and provided a list. Gilliland would add *Star Wars*. Kimmel listed *Voyage to the Moon*, *Metropolis*, *Frankenstein*, *King Kong*, *Things to Come*, and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* ("a film about people who stop thinking," according to director Don Siegel). Since these would involve dropping over half the list off, I will note that the first five were in the context of Kimmel's observation that the voters seem to have ignored the first half of the century, and he was more giving examples of likely films than his absolute list.

Blackwood added *Dr. Strangelove*. Dannenfelser named *Bride of Frankenstein*, *King Kong*, and *The Empire Strikes Back*. Barnes also named *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and *Dr. Strangelove*, along with what he described as a personal favorite, *Independence Day*. He particularly liked the latter because it did not have the usual dynamic of the United States or Britain saving the world, but of the entire earth pulling together. Barnes also liked *Rollerball* as an examination of corporations.

The audience also named films, which again I will just list after saying that many of these suggestions for one of the ten best science fiction films of the century tells me that the person naming them hasn't seen many more than ten films: *Alphaville*, *Andromeda Strain*, *Brazil*, *Fantastic Planet*, *Fantastic Voyage*, *Five Million Years to Earth* (a.k.a. *Quatermass and the Pit*), *The Hunt for Red October*, *Invaders from Mars*, *The Iron Giant*, *La Jetée* and *Twelve Monkeys*, *Last Night*, *The Last Wave*, *Mad Max 2: The Road Warrior*, *The Matrix*, *Miracle Mile*, *The Navigator*, *Planet of the Apes*, *The Quiet Earth*, *Silent Running*, *Sleeper*, *Soylent Green*, *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*, *Starship Troopers*, *Terminator 2*, *The Time Machine*, *Westworld*, *When Worlds Collide* (which Barnes said he wouldn't comment on--I suspect the racial bias of that one in particular was irksome), and *Young Frankenstein*.

## What Makes Bad Programming?

Sunday - 16:00 to 17:15

Room: Regency B

**Participants:** Evelyn C. Leeper, Gary McGath, Jim Mann (M), John Pomeranz, Ben Yalow

**Description:** "Why do some programs work so well and others, maybe very similar, fail so badly? What is the secret of good programming?"

Mann began with something not necessarily obvious: Worldcons generally are working with the wrong-sized rooms. While they can't change the room size, they can ask the hotel not to set chairs in the back third or so of the room. This effectively makes a large room better for a smaller audience-- people don't feel as isolated. The flip side of this is the comment made earlier on science programming: it is always more popular than convention planners think, so it should always be put in a larger room than one would first think of.

Having a convention in multiple hotels is a bad thing. For Worldcons it may be necessary, but it makes trying to schedule or arrange programming very difficult.

Pomeranz said that the current mini-trend towards "no tracks" doesn't work. Silver (head of Programming for Chicon 2000) said that he dislikes tracks, but also realizes his limitations in some areas. He said he needs to have other people working on sub-topics (e.g., science, media). His compromise is to have tracks, but not to label them as such in the printed materials, or to use fixed rooms for them (which would encourage people to stay only in one track and never venture elsewhere).

Also, Silver admitted that "eyeballing" a program schedule for conflicts and problems doesn't work. Pomeranz thought the mechanics are perfectible, but not perfect.

One problem for small regional conventions, Mann said, is that there are few changes from year to year, and a program can get stale.

McGath said it was a bad sign when panelists arrived and announced they didn't know what a panel was about, or why they were on it. Leeper suggested it was the panelists' responsibility to find out what a panel was about, and to ask to be taken off a panel if they felt they had nothing to contribute. But another problem for organizers is that they can't be at all the panels, and there is no feedback method (other than word of mouth) for them to find out that panelist A was great and panelist B should never be allowed on a panel again. (Though they are more likely to hear about the second than the first!) McGath said that someone who dominates a panel is bad. (Though I have seen panels in which all but one person were fairly non-communicative, and that one person, by dominating, saved the panel.)

Yalow asked what the program really was. He saw fandom as a conversation, and the program as an instantiation of this conversation. Mann said that getting ideas for programming was hard, but that putting people with these ideas was even harder. He liked the new idea of a program item of putting a bunch of people in a room and then saying, "Talk amongst yourselves." Actually, he said he would like to see more conversations (in large enough rooms, one hopes!) than traditional panels.

Silver said that his suggestion (and his approach for Chicon 2000) was to be innovative. People are afraid of failing, but you need to risk failure in order to succeed. For example, Chicon 2000 had earlier starting times and longer program lengths. Were these completely successful? No, but they at least partially succeeded. Some program items *do* need longer lengths. One suggestion in this regard was to have different lengths. Aussiecon Three did this, with hour- and half-hour-length items. (Well, fifty- and twenty-five-minute.) Trying to mix ninety-minute and sixty-minute items will *not* work.

(Someone later suggested that if you're innovating, you should be on the staff, but not be the chair or head.)

Leeper suggested the use of overflow rooms for items that want to continue, but others pointed out that that doesn't really work, because by the time you pick up and move everyone, people drop off, get lost, etc., and the momentum is lost. On the flip side, conventions need to encourage people to quit when they are done. Panelists should be told that they do not need to stretch to fill the entire slot.

Mann said that one advantage that regional conventions have is that they generally have the same staff each year, or at least the same organizing body. Worldcons, on the other hand, have no real continuity from one year to the next, and so many of the lessons learned have to be re-learned every year. These would include which items work and which don't, who the good panelists are, and so on. Silver thought this was because of bad communication, in part because no one (in this litigious age) wants to write down negative comments. One method that helps a bit is the practice of asking prospective panelists who they do *not* want to be on a panel with. It was noted that of all the things filled out on the form by prospective panelists, this may well be the most important to honor.

Mann thought another problem arose if the moderator couldn't or didn't control the audience. When people come expecting to hear a panel, they may be disappointed if it turns into an audience participation session. This is probably more true when the panelists are experts, very well-known, or otherwise "special." (For example, if I go to what purports to be a talk about the state of genetic engineering today by someone in the field, and it turns into a debate among the audience over the rights and wrongs of it, I will feel disappointed.)

Connected to this is the idea that titles for programming items should be accurate, and informative.

On the purely physical level, rooms should be comfortable (not too hot or too cold). They should have microphones as necessary. And they should have enough microphones--a five-person panel requires two, but many panels at Chicon 2000 had only one. I thought it was because it was easier for the company taping the panels, but it turned out to be a financial issue not related to that.

Rooms should have walls and ceilings. If you think this a flippant statement, you were not at Intersection. Actually, there was a problem here as well, with the Dealers Room and Art Show and Auction sharing the same space without full walls dividing them. At one point, there were a series of announcements over the public address system in the Dealers Room: "The Dealers Room will close in fifteen minutes." "The Dealers Room will close in ten minutes." "The Dealers Room will close in five minutes." Each time, the art auction was interrupted and had to wait for the announcement to finish. When they finally announced, "The Dealers Room is now closed," cheers erupted at the art auction and the auctioneer announced, "The Art Auction is now open. Please bring your money from the Dealers Room to the Art Auction," which drew yet more cheers.

**Masquerade**  
**Sunday: 20:00 to 22:00**  
**Room: Imperial Ballroom (Fairmont)**

After seeing how crowded the Hugo Award Ceremony was the previous night, we decided to watch this from our room, particularly since that allowed us time to eat dinner. There were a variety of technical problems, not the least of which being that the screen went blank between entries, which made us think we didn't have the right channel. But while the picture gave us somewhat more detail than we might have had from a seat towards the back of the room (even though we bring binoculars), the real problem is that there is just one picture, and while the cameraman might think that one part of a group should be featured, we might want to look at something else instead. (General consensus is that the cameraman was not very good--if I recall correctly, he tended not to give people a full figure

shot, but cut them off at the knees. This is not unreasonable for things like awards presentations, but *not* for a masquerade.)

The winners (from Sheila Lenkhman, assistant Masquerade director):

Workmanship Awards:

- | Best Junior: Melissa Knappenberger as "The Magic Sea Shell"
- | Best Novice: Rachel Hrubetz, Sallie Abba, Mandi Arthur, Diane Dunlap, and Jeanette Roth as "Galaxy Breast Bra"
- | Best Journeyman: Kris Honse, Ian Honse, Mike Byrne, Jeri Byrne, and Denise Garner as "Samples From Sylvan Dior's Latest Fashion Collection"
- | Best Master: Lance Ikegawa and David Sheets as "Poke-Brat"
- | Best in Show: Jacqueline M. Ward as "Ill Met by Earthlight"

Junior Awards:

- | Judges' Choice for Best Choreography: ShainaLyn Waitsman and Helen Hebelas "Three Ways to Die"
- | Judges' Choice for Most Beautiful: Kathleen Fowler as "Fire Lizard Fairy"
- | Best in Class: Melissa Knappenberger as "The Magic Sea Shell"

Novice Awards:

- | Honorable Mention: Ted Begley and Sunshine Katz as "Thermian Ambassador"
- | Judges' Choice: Mark, Cathleen and Caitlin Christenson as "We're Off To See the Wizard"
- | Judges' Choice for Sauciest Contestant: Eugenia Horne as "A Tale of a Space Vixen"
- | Judges' Choice for most Cow-rageous: Jay Meisner as "Royal Cow-nadian Moo-nted Police"
- | Best in Class: Rachel Hrubetz, Sallie Abba, Mandi Arthur, Diane Dunlap, and Jeanette Roth as "Galaxy Breast Bra"

Journeyman Awards:

- | Judges' Choice: John Bondi, Gail Bondi, Bill Ernohazy, Tina Beyechok, and Steve Barlett as "Carneval 2047"
- | Judges' Choice: Anne Davenport as "Sister Medea of the Purple Prose"
- | Judges' Choice: Kris Honse, Ian Honse, Mike Byrne, Jeri Byrne, Denise Garner as "Samples From Sylvan Dior's Latest Fashion Collection"
- | Judges' Choice: Morgana Blackwood and Juanita Nesbitt as "A Mother's Love"
- | Judges' Choice: Zoanne Allen, Terry Cupples, Michael Fobbs, and Ju Marty as "Mother-in-Law of Gor"
- | Judges' Choice: Alfred Richard and Margot Palmere as " A Klingon Quiet Night Out 3: Can You Dig It?"
- | Best in Class: Susan Eisenhour and Margaret Blakesley as "The Awakening"

Master Awards:

- | Honorable Mention: Lance Ikegawa and David Sheets as "Poke-Brat"
- | Judges' Choice for Best Choreography: Kevin Roche and Belle Davis as "In Space, No One Can Hear You Tap"
- | Judges' Choice for Most Beautiful: Joy Day as "Spring Rain"
- | Judges' Choice for Most Glamorous: Zelda Gilbert as "The Galactic Liberace"
- | Best in Class: Jacqueline M. Ward as " Ill met by Earthlight"

Best in Show:

- | Pierre and Sandy Pettinger, Julie Zetterberg, Greg Sardo, John Blaker, Les Roth and Greg Abba as "Ancient Plagues"

**GoH Programming: The Popularity of Alternate History**

**Monday: 10:00 to 11:15**

**Room: Buckingham**

**Participants: Ginjer Buchanan, David Combs, Kenneth Hite (M), Michael F. Flynn**

**Description: "It sells, but why? Is there a non-SF market that's buying AH?"**

I would have liked to see this, but everyone told me I had to see the "Classics of SF Art: The Chicago Show," so I did that instead--and it was undoubtedly a wise choice, as that was a once-in-a-lifetime thing.

**GoH Programming: Is Alternate History, History?**

**Monday - 11:30 to 12:45**

**Room: Regency C**

**Participants: Suzanne Allés Blom, Elizabeth Garrott, John G. Henry, Kenneth Hite, Walter Jon Williams (M)**

**Description: "How much history do you need when you've just changed it? How to keep your alternate history historical. Is alternate history a dying species?"**

(As this panel was starting, someone was trying to take a picture with a digital camera and was asking the panelists not to move while the view panel displayed the pictured. This led Hite to say, "One hundred fifty years to get back to Mathew Brady: don't move for a minute and a half.")

Blom said that she need to do a lot of historical research (for *Inca, the Scarlet Fringe*) and use that. Sometimes, she said, alternate histories have better history than some history books.

Henry said that the answer to the question of the title was yes and no. The author needs to examine the consequences of actions and must understand the historical method., but it's not history.

Williams asked a parallel question, "Is Jane Austen sociobiology?" He then answered it, saying. "Yes, but if you're reading Jane Austen as a sociobiology text, you have more problems than we can deal with on this panel." To the question, "Is alternate history, history?" Williams said no, but they use the same skill sets. The problem the author has is to tell a story versus putting history in perspective. The best counter-factuals, he feels, are an academic discipline in history, giving as an example Niall Ferguson's *The Pity of War: Explaining World War I*.

(Later, asked to distinguish between counter-factuals and alternate histories, Hite said that a counter-factual is something you write to get tenure; an alternate history is *not* something you write to get tenure. Someone else suggested that a counter-factual is just an outline for an alternate history. Tim Lane, from the audience, said it was important to remember that an alternate history is a *story*, with all that implies.)

According to Greg Feeley, the only alternate histories that people want to read are those based on the (American) Civil War and World War II. This is almost definitely hyperbole, since Garrott later referred to "the Byzantine Mafia" (that set of authors writing alternate histories based in that era: Harry Turtledove, Eric Iverson (actually a Turtledove pseudonym), Susan Shwartz, and Judith Tarr).

Blom said that she included a blurb on the actual history before each chapter. Of course, if the story diverges drastically and the time span is large enough, these blurbs become less and less meaningful.

Hemry mentioned his story "Where Does a Circle Begin?" (*Amazing*, Fall 1999) which interprets the clash of the ironclads in the Civil War as a battle between two sets of time travelers rather than a technological coincidence.

Asked what alternate histories they liked (topic drift already), Garrott mentioned those of "the Byzantine Mafia" (as noted above. Hite liked Ward Moore's *To Bring the Jubilee* and Philip K. Dick's *Man in the High Castle*, but also mentioned John Maddox Roberts's *King of the Wood* (which he described as "a stupid, stupid book but I love it") and the works of Marc Laidlaw.

Hemry named H. Beam Piper's *Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen* and Frederic Brown's *What Mad Universe*. Blom liked Richard Dreyfuss and Harry Turtledove's *Two Georges*. Williams said he liked the works of Howard Waldrop.

Blom talked a bit about the notion that in some alternate histories, the viewpoint characters are real, but history is so skimpy that no one really knows their characters (e.g., Atahualpa, the central character of her book). Hemry says he much prefers to have a minor but real character change history than the well-known ones.

(I would claim that alternate history ceases to be history when ordinary people rather than just famous historical characters are included.)

Garrott suggested changing your characters' actions by using the Meyers-Briggs scale and a six-sided die. (This sounds like Philip K. Dick writing *The Man in the High Castle* using the *I Ching*. It may have worked for him, but I don't think I recommend it in general.)

The notion of historical fiction as alternate history was raised. (That is, since Rhett Butler didn't really exist, isn't *Gone with the Wind* an alternate history?) Blom suggested the idea that historical fiction is really just secret history.

Why are alternate histories popular now? Hemry suggested it was because nuclear holocaust novels changed history. In response to the observation that they weren't alternate history, he responded that they became alternate history.

Blom said it was "because we have experienced the end of history." Everything used to be the US versus the USSR; now we have options.

Hite put forth the "Great Man Theory," saying that Harry Turtledove was "a great writer, an interesting writer, a best-selling writer," and that caused the flood. Actually, I think Mike Resnick might be more the cause, with his *Alternate Presidents* and *Alternate Kennedys* anthologies which came out in 1992, while Turtledove's "Worldwar" series didn't start until 1994.

Williams said that he was told in July 1983 that historical novels were unsaleable, and if other authors were being told that, it would make sense that many of them switched to writing the very similar alternate history novel instead. Asked about the upswing in historical fiction that had occurred before this (after World Wars I and II, Korea, and Vietnam), Williams said, "Millions of Americans went to foreign parts and came back wanting to find out how they became so foreign."

Someone in the audience thought that Ken Burns and his fresh approach to producing historical documentaries also affected the field.

Someone asked if Randall Garrett's "Lord Darcy" stories were alternate history or fantasy. Williams said, "Fantasy." Hite said, "Both." Garrott, referring in part back to historical fiction, said that all fiction was alternate history, but we're talking about where the milieu is different. Hite noted that Tim Powers uses real history, but with magic (secret history?).



Hemry insisted that plausibility is necessary for alternate history. The reader should be able to say, "Yeah, that could have happened." Blom countered with Philip José Farmer's "Sail On, Sail On"; I'd add Richard Garfinkle's *Celestial Matters*. These change the rules of everything *except* history.

Hite noted that parallel worlds are not alternate histories. Setting a story on another world or in a fantasy world is, in his words, "cheap cowardice." Garrott noted this would include Turtledove's "Sarantium" series. Williams also clarified that his "Argonautica" was *not* alternate history.

Someone else mentioned Guy Gavriel Kay's works, and Williams said that the reason Kay used a fictional world on which to set his otherwise alternate history was that it allowed him to compress several generations down and speed the story up.

Someone asked where one should shelve cross-over alternate histories. (I'm not quite sure what was meant by this--possibly something like the alternate history romance novels I run across.) Blom's answer (she is an author, remember) was that you should buy two copies. Hemry said what was needed was a classification system that was a web rather than linear.

The Sidewise Award was mentioned. Someone asked if there was really a need for this award. Someone else (not me) responded, "Does there have to be a need for an award?" Hite said, "I don't see a need for it, but if someone wants to give me an award, I won't stop them."

Books mentioned as good sources for ideas included William Seymour's *Yours To Reason Why: Decision in Battle*, Robert Cowley's *What If?: The World Foremost Military Historians Imagine What Might Have Been*, and Geoffrey Regan's *Great Military Blunders*. Someone said that some alternate histories have no specific point of divergence one can point to, but just a general change (e.g., Kim Newman's "Ten Days That Shook the World"). Hite said this might include the general category of Rome not falling. He claimed, "Kirk Mitchell is the classic one," which could only mean that L. Sprague de Camp's *Lest Darkness Fall* had slipped his memory.

Mention should be made of <http://www.uchronia.net>, a massive alternate history resource.

### **Is the Media Fan Still the Black Sheep of Fandom?**

**Monday - 13:00 to 14:15**

**Room: Grand Ballroom B**

**Participants: John L. Flynn, Yvonne Penney, Steve Saffel, Van Siegling**

**Description: "Is media becoming "serious" SF? Or are media fans still second class?"**

Yet another panel I wanted to attend, but I passed it up in favor of the following, which was a wise choice: the one I picked was the best of the convention for me.

### **Surrealism and the Fantastic: Magic Realism and Beyond**

**Monday - 13:00 to 14:15**

**Room: Columbian**

**Participants: F. Brett Cox, Victoria Garcia (M), Fred Patten,**

**Description: "Is magic realism SF or something else?"**

Garcia described herself as a proto-academic, Cox writes for the *New York Review of Science Fiction* (among other publications), and Patten said, "I'm here because the convention assigned me to it."

Garcia began by saying that the roots of surrealism were at the same time as the roots of science

fiction, and that both forms arose for the same reasons. Surrealism is a movement that was founded after World War I by people scarred by World War I. Many of the founders were in the Medical Corps, in fact, and saw more of the carnage than other soldiers. They couldn't believe in art anymore. Many became involved in Dada but abandoned it for a study of dreams and the unconscious, though some also looked at science. They were trying to reject old landscapes and to look at new landscapes.

Cox said that the notion of common perception is "just plain weird." As examples of differences in perception, he gave Dali's watches, Mae West, and Tex Avery cartoons. The flowering of magical realism (which does not to me seem connected to surrealism, nor did the panel actually establish a connection) he said was called "El Boom" and included Jorge Luis Borges, Gabriel García Márquez, and Italo Calvino. So it would appear that he at least does not subscribe to the idea that "magical realism is fantasy written in Spanish." But he then said that there is a geographic, cultural, and political specificity in magical realism.

As for its connection to science fiction or fantasy, "the writers we read, read magical realism," so there is an influence. This was particularly evident in the New Wave. Cox noted that J. G. Ballard's "Assassination of John Fitzgerald Kennedy Considered as a Downhill Motor Race" was a direct take-off/homage/copy of Alfred Jarry's "The Passion Considered as an Uphill Bicycle Race." (Jarry's work is available at <http://hamp.hampshire.edu/~ngzF92/jarrypub/works/passion.html>.) Alfred Bester's *The Stars My Destination* was also influenced by surrealism.

Science fiction, he noted, prides itself on its concreteness. Its metaphors are literal: "The guy walking on the surface of Mars is not a metaphor; it's a guy walking on the surface of Mars." This leads to conflict between surrealism and science fiction and could explain much of the antagonism towards the New Wave.

Patten mentioned a couple of works that he thought might qualify: *Crimson Bears* and *A Hundred Doors* by Tom Lafarge, which had different animals talking in different styles. (These are from Sun & Moon Press, also recommended by Garcia.) This led Cox to suggest Terry Bisson's "Bears Discover Fire." I'll add William Kotzwinkle's *The Bear Went over the Mountain*.

Cox also made reference to Lewis Shiner's "Oz" (in *Full Spectrum*) which conflated Lee Harvey Oswald and Ozzy Osbourne as having surrealist influences. Cox has an upcoming story combining Flannery and Sinead O'Connor, "Flannery on Stage," in *Indigenous Fiction* (probably issue 8).

Still trying to get a handle on this, I asked if Howard Waldrop's work could be considered surrealist. Garcia said that it is misty, but too concrete. The heart of surrealism is "automation," which seemed to mean not consciously thinking about what you are writing. She mentioned the custom of the "exquisite corpse" (I have no idea where this name came from): each author would write a sentence and then fold over the paper so that the next author could see only the last few words. (I think I've seen this as a party game; it's certainly not very far from "Madlibs.") Some of this is captured in Tom Stoppard's *Travesties*, a play about the origins of surrealism.

Cox gave the example of William Burroughs, who would write something, then cut and paste it at random. He also assembled the pages of his work at random.

As for current authors influenced by surrealism, Cox named Elliott Fintushel and Don Webb, as well as Jonathan Lethem (*Gun, with Occasional Music* and others). Garcia added that Lethem wrote a story about automation ("The Insipid Profession of Jonathan Hornbaum," which appeared in *Full Spectrum* 5).

Someone in the audience suggested Philip K. Dick using the *I Ching* to write *The Man in the High Castle* might qualify. Another added *The Transmigration of Souls* by William Barton.

Cox wondered, "Is science fiction kidding itself with its concreteness?" The rise of quantum physics

as the glamour science, and its current ceding of that position to biotechnology, seem to indicate that concreteness is not achievable.

Johnzo (from the audience) suggested that "science fiction's roots were always grounded in narrative" in a way that surrealism's are not.

Cox suggested a story of interest: "Borges in Indiana," by Michael Martone. (Go to <http://webdelisol.com/f-subst.htm>, click on Editors' Picks, then Fiction, and the story is listed there.) There was a trend toward surrealism at one point, he added, "but a lot of it was [just] people wanting to flip off the establishment." And Samuel R. Delany, Barry Malzberg, and Michael Moorcock all deny that they were ever in the New Wave. Cox said he no longer sees any of this in the magazines. Instead, he sees authors such as Greg Egan whom he likes ("It makes my teeth ache"), but he would still like to see something more daring and innovative. (Is following an eighty-year-old literary movement daring and innovative?) "I would like to see more conceptual audacity and it would be nice if there were some formal audience to go with that," Cox said.

Garcia said that André Breton (one of the founders of surrealism) hated the novel (as a form) because of its emphasis on theme. So surrealism had to be more about style, because that was all that was left when theme was removed.

Someone in the audience wanted to know how writers could use surrealism to satisfy Cox's longings. Cox suggested that writers could begin by reading more widely. And they need to recognize that "there's a difference between surrealism and incoherence." Garcia suggested trying "automation in small doses." As she observed, "One of the goals of this genre [science fiction] is creating something that is truly alien," and she felt that this was a method to approach this.

Cox observed at this point that surrealism is relevant because "there will be a tomorrow, it will be different from today, and today isn't what it seems." He said that this comes though most clearly in some episodes of *The X-Files*.

Cox also said, "MTV has changed our visual vocabulary." (He later added that MTV was presaged by the 1929 film *The Man with a Movie Camera*.) But unfortunately that audience doesn't transfer to the printed page, even though authors like John Barth, Donald Barthelme, Robert Coover, and Thomas Pynchon use the same techniques in literature.

Garcia returned again to issues of concreteness. She said that Lisa Goldstein's *Dream Years* was about surrealism (as was the Lethem mentioned earlier), but it was unsatisfying because it talks about surrealism without being surrealist. She quoted Gardner Dozois at Clarion as saying that science fiction writers have to have an invisible style, because they are talking about something weird. This is of course the opposite of the goal to eliminate theme and have only style. (H. G. Wells expressed a similar sentiment as Dozois in "An odd person in an odd place is an oddity too much.") Cox somewhat disagreed, saying there was a difference between style and voice.

Someone in the audience said that Gene Wolfe had said that he thought surrealism let writers get away with being slovenly. The panelists tried to defend surrealism, saying it was more like Hollywood versus the independents, or commerce versus art. Garcia said she was a self-described "artsy, surrealist, beatniky kind of person," and that people often take issue with Clarion over saying of surrealists that "[their] noses are so far in the far that birds could have flown in." Of the commerce versus art argument, she did quote Tim Powers, who said that "an artist and a hack measure their success the same way--by their sales." And she agreed that yes, it was "possible to be extremely slovenly."

All this was seen, however, as a struggle between art and popular literature. Johnzo asked, "Is there a place for surrealism outside the academic greenhouse?" Someone suggested that this dichotomy was there only when seen from an American perspective, and that the popularity of writers like Jonathan

Carroll and Pablo Neruda indicate this is not universal. And Cox suggested that some writers are trying to deconstruct rejection slips. This may be going to extremes, but at least they are using it in the real world.

The magazines *The Third Alternative* and *Backbrain Recluse* were recommended.

In response to a question from the audience, Garcia said that surrealism is not similar to fantasy. Fantasy is based on folklore, history, and a concrete magical system. (Well, some fantasy anyway. This struck me as a rather limiting definition for fantasy.) She agreed that some surrealists were into the occult. Cox saw both fantasy and surrealism as part of the fantastic in the arts. Patten said that a lot of these arguments had two aspects: the definitional one, and the publishers' genre one. To publishers, genre means market, and if different people are buying fantasy and surrealism, publishers do not see them as the same genre. (This is certainly why in publishing, alternate history is science fiction. It's the same market.)

Garcia recommended the publisher Exact Change for surrealist works. People in the audience recommended Paul Di Filippo (it sounded like "[something] and the Weavers", but could have been "The Square Root of Pythagoras," co-authored with Rudy Rucker, in the November 1999 *Science Fiction Age*; something in *Realms of Fantasy*; "Stink Lines" in the February 2000 *F&SF*; and *The Steampunk Trilogy*). Someone else named R. A. Lafferty. Cox responded, "Who knows?" implying Lafferty's work was so strange you couldn't even tell. He said that Lafferty was "a law unto himself," but recommended "Flaming Ducks and Giant Bread" in *Lafferty in Orbit*. Cox added Carter Scholz's "The Ninth Symphony of Ludwig van Beethoven and Other Lost Songs."

Garcia recommended books about surrealism. There is the work of Andre Breton, of course, and his biography, *Revolution of the Mind: The Life of Andre Breton* by Mark Polizzotti. Dadaelus Press has two volumes of surrealist work edited by Leonora Carrington (*The Book of Surrealism 1* and *2*). There is also "The Surrealism Server" at <http://www.madsci.org/~lynn/juju/surr/surrealism.html>.

Cox's final recommendation was, "Read a lot of stuff." Seems like a good way to end my con report as well. (The final item is by guest writer and all-around great guy Mark Leeper.)

**Past as Prologue**

**Monday: 13:00 to 14:15**

**Room: Regency B**

**Participants: Gerald "G. David" Nordley, W. A. Thomasson,  
John G. Cramer (M), Mike Moscoe**

**Description: "Panelists discuss scientific discoveries and  
what they could lead to."**

**[The following was written by Mark R. Leeper.]**

I dropped into this panel and found a lot that I did not quite follow, but some of the ideas floating around were either whimsical or ones with deep implications. The ones that stuck with me were:

Hopi Indians and the (or some) Japanese may have a connection. Both may be descended from the Ainu.

An early tribe said to have invaded prehistoric Ireland may have actually been Egyptians.

There was a mention of spears found thought to be 500,000 years old.

This would make man a tool-building animal half a million years ago. Apparently there are

indentations found of weaving that also goes back to before the ice age. Did Cro-Magnon survive the Neanderthal because when the glacier came the former had underwear and the latter did not?

New gradations on degrees of autism seem to include behavior patterns of many of our most creative people. Autism may be more widespread than we had thought.

The NSA is putting a lot of money into quantum computers, a new approach to solving equations at very high speed. The literature is hard to understand but you set for the equation and the waveform collapses only when the problem solved. NSA would like to use it to break public key systems.

Anti-matter may be useful to fight cancer. It may be possible to shoot an anti-matter beam so that it does nothing for say three inches and then interacts with matter. That would mean you could destroy a tumor without boring a hole to get to it.

The energy from the Big Bang may be held in vacuum in some way we do not understand. It may be what is pushing the universe to accelerate outward.

(I am pretty sure I got these ideas correct but if a panelist wants to say that I have misquoted I let them reserve that right. If you want more complete information on any of these, presumably the reader can put the key words into Alta Vista or some other search engine.)

At <http://www.aip.org> you can find links to the latest breaking information in physics.

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Toronto won the bid for 2003.

Next year in Philadelphia!

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