

Bucconeer

A convention report by Evelyn C. Leeper
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Bucconeer was held 5-9 August 1998 in Baltimore, Maryland. Attendance was about 5300.

Registration

Registration was quick, but the convention center was so large that finding (say) the freebie table was not an easy thing. The freebies included a few books and old copies of Science Fiction

Chronicle and Locus, as well as the usual buttons and bookmarks.

Programming

Programming was adequate, with panels in the evening as well as during the day. There were a lot of minor programming changes (panelist adds and drops), which were listed on programming change sheets. Whether people read them was another story: I had dropped off the "Fandom on the Internet" midnight panel and this was listed on the sheet, but several people mentioned having expected to see me on it. (I had said I didn't want to do late-night panels, but this apparently was forgotten when the schedules were first set up, and the schedule of the fandom panels was sent out to participants too late to change the Pocket Program if anyone had a problem.) There were some new topics, but a lot of repeats as well.

Seen on the schedule changes: "How to Enjoy Your First Worldcon: Remove Rusty Hevelin"

Now, listen up! The following are Leeper's Laws for Conventions:

- 1. Until teleportation is perfected, people need time to get to the next panel, so panels at conventions will end at 50 minutes after the hour/10 minutes before the hour. thousands of dollars; surely a large, cheap wall clock can be squeezed in there somehow. (It probably would cost less than a pot of hotel coffee.) sessions on Shabbat. choose between a 700-person ballroom and a 100-person room.

Dealers Room

The Dealers Room was large, but probably only about a third books and related material. Dealers Rooms have somewhat lost their fascination what with superstores and on-line used book searches (and the fact that we have more books already than we will ever have time to read). One could, I suppose, claim that's why so much is stuff besides books, but those on the whole just don't interest me.

The Jules Verne Renaissance

Wednesday, 12N

Jean-Michael Mangot, Steve Michaluk, Brian P. Taves (m), Mark W. Tiedemann

"Verne, who brought us 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea and many other early SF classics, is still with us as an inspiration to media and even technology. Recently, Verne has attracted even more interest due to new reference materials and newly-discovered or newly-translated works. Verne experts discuss this father of science fiction."

Mangot is a Verne bibliographer, Taves and Michaluk wrote The Jules Verne Encyclopedia, and Tiedemann is just a fan.

Michaluk began by reading a long (and not very engaging) introduction. He connected Verne to Baltimore by noting that admired Poe, and also by pointing out Verne's use of the Baltimore Gun Club in *From the Earth to the Moon*, *All Around the Moon*, and *The Purchase of the North Pole* (which involved tilting the Earth's axis).

Taves also read his presentation. He claimed that many of Verne's predictions have not yet been realized, such as the floating island, leading Mark to ask me just what an aircraft carrier was. Over a third of Verne's novels featured the United States and its obsessions with technology, power, and freedom.

The Encyclopedia is the first comprehensive guide to Verne's novels in English. One of the important things it tries to do is to discover all the variant titles a single work was published under. For example, *The Children of Captain Grant*; *Captain Grant's Children*; *The Castaways*; *In Search of the Castaways*; *A Voyage Around the World*; *A Mysterious Document*, *On the Track*, and *Among the Cannibals*; and *South America*, *Australia*, and *New Zealand* are all the same novel. (In this article I will be giving what I think is the most common English name for the stories that have one.)

Taves also described bad translations, including the deletion or addition of passages, or the changing of them to change the political message or for other reasons. (He mentioned that "The Humbug" is not often included in the translation of the collection *Yesterday and Tomorrow* because editors think American readers would be insulted.) Most of Verne's most famous novels have been retranslated, but the old, bad translations are still the most common. (Well, they are in public domain, while the newer ones aren't.) Strangely (according to Taves), *Paris in the Twentieth Century* was translated to match the old-fashioned 19th translation styles instead of in a modern translation. And the posthumously published books either were not published as written by Verne or were written almost entirely by his son Michel.

There have been something like forty Hollywood Verne films, and just recently several French silent films of his works have been rediscovered.

In short, Jules Verne is one of the most widely translated authors of all time. I remember when we were in Lithuania, the house where we stayed had one very long shelf full of Lithuanian translations of Verne and one of our Lithuania souvenirs was a copy of a Jules Verne novel in Lithuanian. (We also have Verne in Spanish, German, and Turkish.)

Mangot had some hand-outs showing some of the variations among different editions. For example, *Mysterious Island* first appeared serialized and with an introduction that was never reprinted, then as a three-volume set of small books (the "real" first edition), then as an octavo which is not an original edition, and also not illustrated. The text and illustrations varied among editions.

Other interesting facts: *Captain Hatteras* is the first "Voyage Extraordinaire." The engraving in it showed the ship launched bow forward (incorrectly) in the first edition, but then this was corrected. Also, the drinkers changed in third edition from sailors to the upper class. And the introduction was never reprinted in English, but it explains whole purpose of publication of series.

An engraving from *Robur the Conqueror* was reused (sans Albatross) in *Around the World in 80 Days*.

When the city of Nantes purchased all Verne's papers, they published a quick small edition of the manuscripts to get copyright. The only volume widely published was the third (of unfinished novels and short stories).

There is also *Voyage a Travers L'Impossible* (*Voyage Through the Impossible*), a play by Jules Verne which Mangot claims is the Jules Verne work and contains all the main Verne characters. It was written in 1886 or 1887 and has not been translated into English. *L'Oncle Robinson* ("the first draft of *Mysterious Island*") and other works also remain to be translated. Some have been published in Canada in French.

Mangot said that Walter James Miller, translator and editor of *The Annotated Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, was the first translator who did a good job, and he recommends the book.

Tiedemann said that Verne's works were good to hide other books in in school because the teacher thought he was reading a classic. (Mark said that means he is a lot younger than we are-our teachers thought Verne was not worth reading either.)

Tiedemann said that Verne's devices were Victorian optimism-Victorians thought they could fix anything. (Idle question: Does "Victorian" imply British?)

Someone asked about Verne as a racist, with Northern Europeans always being superior. The response was that often characters' backgrounds are hidden or outside European mainstream groups, but the portrayals didn't necessarily target any one group.

Someone observed that Robert Goddard and Konstantin Tsiolkovsky were both inspired by Verne.

Mark and I asked questions about the Captain Nemo books. Mark was correct that Nemo was originally Polish; this was changed to Indian for political reasons. And I was correct in pointing out that the chronology of *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, *Captain Grant*, and *Mysterious Island* is all off. (The final one takes place at the end of the Civil War, yet the first already has a ship named the Abraham Lincoln.)

The panelists recommended <http://math.technion.il/~rl/JulesVerne/biblio/> as the best place to start on-line looking for Jules Verne information. I can second this, having discovered it about a year ago.

(It's a bit ironic that Verne is a very interesting topic that the reading of prepared presentations can make dull.)

Suppose They Declared a Worldcon and No One Came?

Wednesday, 1PM

Martin Easterbrook, Mike Glyer (m), Kathleen Meyer

"How much longer can we keep it up? Are Worldcons becoming a thing of the past with the median age of fandom rising, hotels becoming more problematic, balkanization of the 'SF Community,' and decreasing numbers of young fans?"

Glyer began by stating, "I don't know what our qualifications are, because everybody came to our Worldcons." He then asked, "Whither the Worldcon?" which I noted could also be "Wither the Worldcon?"

Easterbrook said the European problems are how to persuade people to fly across the Atlantic (in either direction) and how to get new people to the Worldcon. Easterbrook wants to concentrate on the latter. Meyer was more concerned about when they will pay; showing up wasn't as important. Apparently in 1991 ASCAP and the IRS starting to look at conventions, so the problem became how to plan a minimal con, with contingencies on ways to dump excess at-the-door membership fees into last-minute expenses.

Another question troubling conventions is whether enough people will stay in the hotels contracted for.

Someone suggested that the current style of Worldcon was sustainable only by people in their prime earning years. Can students and others with limited incomes afford conventions? One person said that compared to Air Jordans, conventions were cheap. Someone suggested offering the ability to sign up on the installment plan. Los Angeles had this informally, but it can be a nightmare for the Treasurer. Credit cards provide an automatic installment plan, but the convention gets hit with the percentage fee, and it's difficult to get credit card certification for a one-shot event like a Worldcon. (Meyer said sometimes you can find a local group or business that will let you use their "wokka-wokka.") Glasgow had children's membership prices up to 14 years old, not 12 but Easterbrook said this was done because of Scottish law.

There is also the modified socialist model of asking people who can afford to, to pay more. Emphasizing the tax-deductibility of the extra amount might help. This is similar to the Balticon (Europe) model, where members from countries with soft currencies pay less.

One-day memberships seem over-priced from the outside, according to another audience member.

Someone in the audience said that too many people are coming to Worldcon and not working, to which a panelist responded, "Why would you come to a Worldcon and not work?" At LAcon III, twenty per cent of the members were on staff.

I asked if the Worldcon is pricing itself out of the market by trying to be all things to all people. It turns out that the peripheral stuff is often the cheapest and easiest to do. Someone said that all gamers need is a deep dank basement but Meyer pointed out that they don't do room nights. The most expensive item is the Masquerade, but that is also the one item that draws the most people together, at least according to Easterbrook. (An audience member suggested, "Have you tried a public hanging?") Someone else said that the "Balkanization of Fandom" occurs within each of us, and we all wanted some variety of items.

Someone claimed that young people have more things to do these days instead of going to convention. I'm not sure this is true; there was a lot to do thirty years ago even if it didn't include computers and video games. One person suggested, however, that the reasons for people to go to conventions have changed because the Internet and other things make it easier for fans to connect with other fans without needing conventions.

LAcon II had 8365 members, but also had tremendous local publicity and "all the numbers were at the door."

Meyer said one reason for a lot of types of events is that we want people spread out, not sitting around the hotel. (We don't shut down at a reasonable hour either.) Glycer mentioned Lee Gold's hotel contract, in which every other line is "and we are noisy." (One of the primary requirements for a good convention was good negotiating.)

>From the audience, Patricia Olson reminded the panelists that bigger is not necessarily better. Whom do you aim the publicity at? Is it worth drawing locals? An audience member said, "Fandom doesn't particularly need curiosity seekers," and both Dripclave and the Boskone from Hell were cited here. Some conventions are trying to cut back because they are getting too many of the wrong type.

Someone in the audience said that fans need a lot because they have a "high stimulation threshold," to which Meyer added, "and a short attention span."

Someone, in talking about traveling a long way to conventions, said he had the "Asimov-Bradbury Disease-I don't fly." One person in the audience noted, "Bradbury got over it," to which another added, "So did Asimov."

Another comment and response was: "There are people out there who don't know this world exists." "Yes, and we want to keep it that way."

People did like the Education and Teaching Track, which Patricia Olson described as being for "people like we are with no fashion sense who like to read." Someone said we need to keep next generation from becoming uncontrollable monsters because "too many of us know too much physics for any of us to sleep well at night."

Rather than the Internet making Worldcons unnecessary, advertising there helps. People will always

want face-to-face contact (The Naked Sun to the contrary notwithstanding).

It was agreed that Worldcons should get local groups involved. Easterbrook said in an informal survey (which he defined as "sitting around in a pub and asking each other questions, leading another Brit to say, "I thought that was as formal as it got.") that we bring people in, but don't show them how to stay involved. One suggestion was to ask local attendees if they wanted to be put on a list to be contacted by local fan groups so as to at least get the most interested people connected. This is important in part, Meyer said, because people at the top need to remember to bring people up to replace them.

Great Forgotten SF Authors

Wednesday, 2PM

Moshe Feder, Dr. John L. Flynn, George R. R. Martin, Mark L. Olson (m), Ben Yalow

"They never won a Hugo; their books have been out of print for years; but these authors made a difference on the field, and their works are well worth a look today. Compare our panel's suggestions against your own list of forgotten SF greats."

Some initial questions added included "Are they forgotten or just not read?" and "Are they obtainable?" Classic works are not always in print, but the dealers room helps a lot.

Why authors are neglected is tied up with publishing. Martin said, "Some of these authors have had the bad judgment to die," which means that they cannot follow the standard practice of having old novels re-issued in conjunction with a new novel that will get their names in front of the public. As Martin expressed it, all their books become cabooses with no engine to pull them.

Olson said, however, that if you found a religion, this solves the problem. Authors like Wells and Verne stay in print because they are taught in schools.

Martin said that one strange problem is that often publishers put a very distinguished cover on a book and label it a classic, instead of skipping the solemnity and giving it a nifty Michael Whelan cover. The result is that something like *Martians, Go Home* gets an 18% sell-through. Another marketing problem is that vaguely generic covers make people think they have the book already.

Another stumbling block is that old books read differently and may be stilted. (Someone made the distinction of "good" versus "good for you.")

Another reason for neglecting older authors is time. Thirty years ago you could read everything worthwhile in five or ten years and everything was in print during that time. Now, while it's true there is a lot of dross out there (Sturgeon's Law is never false), there is also ten times as much good stuff. I would add that books are thicker now and so one new book displaces three old ones.

Sometimes outside forces help. *Starship Troopers* is selling better now than ever, causing Martin to note, "The tail has completely taken over the dog." He emphasized this by observing that had J. Michael Straczynski attended *Bucconeer*, his talks would draw many times the number of people that C. J. Cherryh drew. (Even without him, the *Babylon 5* presentations were very big attractions.) But Feder said that this merely reflected that while the commonality among fans used to be magazines, it is now television and movies. But the panelists also agreed that Hollywood can't solve this for us.

Various names were suggested as neglected authors: Pat Frank, Talbot Mundy, Shepherd Mead. Some in the audience observed, "No one is clamoring to reprint Gardner Fox." Olson listed Eric Frank Russell, particularly *WASP*. Martin said that the only reason Russell was brought back in print

a few years ago by Del Rey was that Jack Chalker told Del Rey they could have his latest trilogy (at the time) only if they brought Russell back in print.

Good places to find classic stories by some of these authors are the various anthologies: Raymond J. Healy and J. Francis McComas's *Adventures in Time and Space*, Anthony Boucher's *Treasury of Great Science Fiction*, John W. Campbell's *Astounding Science Fiction Anthology*, *The Science Fiction Hall of Fame* (edited variously by Ben Bova and Robert Silverberg), and anything edited by Groff Conklin. The current Norton and Oxford anthologies are not particularly good in the older works.

Feder listed Olaf Stapledon, but from the response noted that he was probably preaching to the converted. Stapledon at least stays in print because he is taught. Also, Dover (who publishes Stapledon) tends to keep its works in print (and reasonably priced). C. S. Lewis is also in print for similar academic reasons.

Yalow recommended John W. Campbell as an author, and noted that in addition to editing the finest science fiction magazine of all time (*Astounding*), he also edited the finest (in Yalow's opinion) fantasy magazine of all time (*Unknown*). Campbell defined hard science fiction to such an extent that stories were sometimes blurbed as "this is a story John W. Campbell would not buy." In discussing how current fantasy differs from what was published in *Unknown*, Feder said, "It's easier to just stick your hand in that Celtic bucket and pull out a lot of stuff."

Martin said that there was a particular tragedy in forgotten authors who aren't dead yet. John Brunner was entirely out of print before he died. Other good authors who are out of print (at least in the United States; see below) included Keith Roberts (I find it surprising that *Pavane* does not get reprinted in the United States what with all this current interest in alternate history) and Wilson ("Bob") Tucker (who also had a somewhat alternate history novel, *The Lincoln Hunters*).

Other recommendations included James Blish, Thomas Burnett Swann, and Clifford Simak (Feder); Richard Matheson and Henry Kuttner (Flynn); Edgar Pangborn, Theodore Sturgeon, and Fritz Leiber (Martin); James Schmitz (especially *The Witches of Karres*) (Yalow); and Avram Davidson (Olson). Tor will soon be releasing a new Davidson collection. NESFA has been publishing collections of classic authors, including Murray Leinster, Charles L. Harness, Zenna Henderson, Cordwainer Smith, James Schmitz, and the solo short work of C. M. Kornbluth. Kornbluth is so forgotten that a publisher suggested to Frederik Pohl dropping Kornbluth's name entirely from a re-issue of *The Space Merchants*!) Feder suggested Karel Capek, not just *R.U.R.*, but also *War with the Newts*, *The Absolute at Large*, *Krakatit*, and *The Makropoulis Secret*.

Poul Anderson novels used to create a big stir but don't seem to any more. There is a new Alfred Bester and Roger Zelazny novel coming out, *Psychoshop*.

Someone in the audience asked about H. Beam Piper. Apparently Ace owns not just the rights to his works, but his entire literary estate, but no one there is interested in reprinting it.

Flynn said even if you had read these authors, you should buy them in the dealers room and take a copy home to a friend.

Yalow said he has a list of fifty novels in the field everyone should read, but I haven't found it yet. [It turns out the reason I couldn't find it is that it's still only in his head.]

[Note: many of those books described as "out of print" are in print in Britain, so check there as well. Also let me recommend <http://www.mxbf.com> and <http://www.bibliofind.com> as two good places to search for used books on-line.]

Y2K: Science Fact and Science Fiction

Wednesday, 4PM

William Barton (m), Kent Brewster, Mark Fabi, Yves Meynard

"Some experts are predicting havoc when we reach January 1, 2000, and computers suddenly think we've gone back in time to the year 1900. An update on the current thinking on the extent of the problem and discussion of the ways Y2K can be used in SF."

Most of the panelists were programmers or software engineers. Meynard said he wouldn't want to do Y2K remediation, which he described as "lucrative work but rather boring."

Barton summed this (and pretty much anything else) as: "Some of them are serious problems and some of them aren't." He thinks the biggest problem is educating the users to use critical thinking skills about what the computer is telling them. The problem where he works does exist and is pervasive, but he says it is not serious and is easily solved.

Fabi is a psychiatrist who says that he works with software, just software that runs on a different system. He thinks the Y2K bug is what makes people hysterical rather than any real problem and connects it to a millennialist tradition.

>From the audience, Robert Rosenberg asked about the embedded chip problems. The panelists seemed unclear on this. In general, it's a bad sign when the audience knows more than the panelists.

The consensus was that the Y2K problem exists because no one expected the software to stay around this long. Someone said a similar problem was addressed a hundred years ago in Hollerith cards for railroads, but it was pointed out that the uses of those cards was very limited and "addressed in wetware." Someone pointed out that we know about the UNIX date problem; and no one is working now on fixing that. The basic problem is that we don't plan.

I asked the panelists to rate their projections of what will happen on 1 January 2000, with a one as end of the world and ten as no change. Barton (after talking about his projected headache and sorting out what the ratings were) gave it a 9, but then also agreed with Brewster that there would be some civil disorder—an interesting concept for a 9. Even more ironically, Barton had major power problems in storms in North Carolina and New Hampshire, but still seems to think we'll all be fine in 2000. (Then again, maybe he figures power outages of a month or so don't really constitute a problem.)

Someone in the audience raised the issue of the "Iron Triangle": utilities, communications, and banks. If one goes, they all go. The panelists did not have any comments on this aspect.

However, they did say that there was no complete collapse in 1000 because the Pope said "this is not the year." People also did see any omens. And Barton said that when people saw pregnant women in late 999, they "knew" God would not destroy the world with babies in utero.

Someone in the audience said, "It's the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle: With nuclear war it's assured destruction, but you don't know when. With Y2K, you know exactly when, but it's not assured."

As if the Y2K problem weren't enough, there is also a GPS rollover 21 August 1999. But one audience member said that airlines get FAA certification only if they have a system with the newer software that can handle the rollover.

On the whole, I didn't think this a particularly knowledgeable panel. Mark described it by claiming that apparently "the first manifestation of Y2K is that midnight drunk panels start running at 4PM."

Is Classic SF Becoming Outdated?

Wednesday, 5PM

Moshe Feder (m), Michael F. Flynn, John Norman

"Many readers of SF find the authors of '30s and '40s dated and even unreadable. Yet a recent reprinting of the E. E. "Doc" Smith's Lensman series is wildly popular. Have we outgrown the work of SF's Golden Age?"

Norman was a late addition, and other than describing the science fiction genre and establishment as "Pink World," he avoided political and philosophical discussions.

Feder said there were two ways science fiction could become outdated: style and content. Norman described this as the "word/world distinction." He also pointed out that if one defines "classic" as something that cannot be outdated, then the question is meaningless. He wondered if science fiction itself is outdated. He said he looked in B. Dalton and found the science fiction section taken over by Star Wars, Star Trek, and other media tie-ins. Many people immediately pointed out that the flaw in his reasoning was that he had taken only one sample, and that at a mall bookstore.

Norman said that the criteria for a classic are value, readership, and longevity. He noted that value can certainly include entertainment (Gargantua and Pantagruel has value as well as Thucydides). As he said, "No one reads Olaf Stapledon for his fast-paced action and fire-engine prose."

He also distinguished between vertical readership (total readership over time) and horizontal readership (the readership at any one time). Or as Nietzsche said, "Some people are born posthumously."

The questions "Can a classic die?" and "Are classics the best books?" are different questions, Norman added. But most people do agree that the science fiction of the 1930s and 1940s is outdated scientifically.

Flynn responded to all this with, "What he said." But he elaborated by pointing to Norman's notes and asking, "Is that a professor of philosophy or is that a professor of philosophy?"

Of course, the question still is, "What do you mean by a classic?" These days, one can almost hear younger fans say, "Neuromancer-boy, they should bring back those old-time books!" As Flynn noted, "The beauty of some of these classics is that we were young when we read them." He claimed that among the earlier authors, Weinbaum and Stapledon stand up, but agreed that a lot of the science of the fiction of that period is outdated. As he said, "There are no intelligent vegetables on Venus. [pause] I think. [pause] There might be."

Feder said that some books become classics in an academic canon, but we judge the other ones. Outside the science fiction field he gave the examples of Bach and Melville, who were forgotten for decades before they became classics. But he said, "The tropes of science fiction have become so universally recognized and respectable that they are losing their power." People are using Star Trek to explain something that happened at their office ("I'm a doctor, not a water cooler technician"). Flynn agreed: "That's about right." Someone referred to all this as "genre drift."

Norman felt that Norman Spinrad's comment that "science fiction is over" is more a comment on publishing conglomerates than on the writers or the readers. Someone in the audience said that perhaps Spinrad was also worried about the lack of young readers. The attitude seems to be, "Reading ain't cool, man." I asked if Oprah was making reading cool, and people seemed to think there was at least some truth in that.

Of course, even if we all decide we would buy author X, "the Worldcon audience is not enough to make a publisher profitable," according to one panelist (Flynn, I think). From the audience, Patricia Olson said that the question what is a classic and what stays in print are two different questions. In any case, NESFA can do it as a non-profit venture and can do it for a Worldcon-sized audience.

I asked if Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is a classic and *The Last Man* not, and if so, why? Feder admitted he hadn't read the latter, somewhat reinforcing my question. (My suggestion was that it might be because *Frankenstein* has media tie-ins.) Norman thought it was because there was enormous sympathy for the creation in *Frankenstein*. As he said, there is a little bit of the monster in all of us. Norman told the parable related by Konrad Lorentz. The dove is vicious and attacks other birds but has a blunt beak, so its viciousness is not really noted and we think of it as a bird of peace. The raven, on the other hand, has a strong beak but is actually friendlier. But we think it is vicious because of the beak. We are the dove who has just been given a sharp beak in the form of our atom bombs.

Returning to trying to define a classic, Flynn said that a classic is something other people start writing on and against. Feder reminded us that literature at its best is a conversation that takes place across the ages—for example, *The Forever War* responding to *Starship Troopers*, or anything on time travel against *The Time Machine*.)

There was a discussion of whether libraries were moving away from having enough classics to stocking mostly best-sellers and current favorites. This seems to be more true of neighborhood libraries than of the main branches, but it is also true that libraries can't always replace classics that wear out or get lost.

Someone asked if the Internet was promoting reading. Feder thought it was promoting writing more, and returning us to an epistolary culture.

Classics recommended by the panel included Edgar Pangborn's *Davy* (Feder), Edmond Hamilton's *Haunted Stars* (Flynn), and anything by A. Bertram Chandler and Cordwainer Smith (Norman).

Did We Win? SF and its Takeover of Popular Culture

Wednesday, 6PM

Camille Bacon-Smith, George R. R. Martin, Lawrence Person

"Works that at least have SF&F trappings have taken over a large portion of TV, the movies, and the best-seller lists. Are we happy with this embarrassment of riches?"

Someone began by quoting Dena Brown as saying, "Let's take science fiction out of the classrooms and back into the gutter where it belongs."

Person said he had won the Bruce Sterling Rant-Off at Armadillocon, and he described himself by saying, "I'm a low-calorie Bruce Sterling substitute. I have only two-thirds of the calories but I don't taste nearly as good."

Regarding science fiction becoming known to the wider culture, the good thing was perceived as being that authors can make a living at it; the bad thing is that people think these authors write the trashy stuff. But the common response of authors to the people who make a lot of money in science fiction is not "How dare they?" but "How can I get in on their bonanza?" On the flip side, Chris Carter says *The X-Files* is not science fiction. And someone described *Babylon 5* as just a retelling of the Bosnian War.

Martin reminded us that Rocky Jones et al "don't really stand up that well" when fans rewatch them

either. Bacon-Smith asked, "But were they enough to bore [you] into catatonia when you first watched it?" "Not when I was eight," Martin replied.

Person described it thusly: "Media science fiction is shadows on the cave wall cast by the Platonic forms of written science fiction." He felt that "media science fiction is like a cargo cult" of people looking for things to use, often incorrectly. "Not only do people take the tropes from written science fiction, but they trademark [them]" (e.g., hyperspace, warp drive).

Martin told the story of how Warner Brothers had trademarked the Tasmanian devil and then told the State of Tasmania they couldn't use it. The lawyers for Warner Brothers apparently didn't realize it was a real animal.

Person noted, "The upside of a capitalist society is that it gives us everything we want. The downside of a capitalist society is that it gives us everything we want, whether it's good for us or not." He also said, "Popular culture science fiction is pretty bad, but the core is better than ever."

Bacon-Smith said that Independence Day is really Henry V. People complained that the dreck drowns the good stuff, and the audience loses its ability to discriminate. Martin said that he was happy that Alien brought back steam-powered spaceships. (Pete Rubinstein added, "With sodium and magnesium computers.")

Someone in the audience said, "We need to educate the masses," a reasonably sure sign that people might be getting a bit full of themselves.

I left early.

We had dinner with another Lucent person from Illinois, then I dropped by a couple of parties. I got so confused that I carted thirty pounds of fanzines halfway to the Holiday Inn before I realized that the Fan Lounge was not in the Holiday Inn, but in the Hilton. Thanks to Morris Keesan, Jim Mann, and Laurie Mann, who helped me get them to their proper destination.

First Fantasy: Greek & Roman Roots

Thursday, 10AM

Stepan Chapman, C. J. Cherryh, Richard Garfinkle, Kij Johnson (m), Robert Silverberg

"Hermes and Athena, Mars and Jupiter. The Ancients were writing fantasy thousands of years ago. Why do these stories still have power today? How do modern authors continue to use these classic tales and to what effect?"

Cherryh said that she has never written a book with Graeco-Roman mythology, but she did teach it for eleven years.

Garfinkle said that the myths have power because the Romans carried them all over Europe and hence they are prevalent over Western culture. They are not inherently more powerful than any others. Cherryh added that the extent of the Roman Empire meant that there were echoes of this mythology from India to Britain. Silverberg said, "[Robert] Graves knew more about myth than this whole panel put together," and Graves said, "There's only one story." Silverberg added, however, "If this were true, we'd all be out of a job," but said there was a certain truth to this. (Silverberg recommended Graves's book *The White Goddess*.)

Silverberg went on to say that "these stories are what we package in fat trilogies and sell to you over the last 10 or 15,000 years." But other cultures have equivalent gods and stories.

Chapman felt that these expressed some archetypal myths. "Like the cockroach and the shark they have been around forever because they are so good at it."

Johnson did most of his research in Asian myths. Similar beings occur throughout all mythologies-the sun god/goddess, the mother goddess-but often have different relevance. He agreed with Garfinkle that the strength of the Graeco-Roman myths is more because of the weight of our culture than their inherent strengths.

Silverberg reminded us that there is a "big leap from myth to magic," and that much of what had been mentioned was magic rather than myth.

Cherryh said that to the Greeks and the Romans, there was "no magic there-these are the doings of the gods, [and] the gods work through nature."

Garfinkle said that magic was what people invented to achieve their basic goals: healing, good weather, a good harvest, the smiting of their enemies, and fertility. Silverberg said, "I think we're beginning to drift already," to which Johnson added, "We made it eleven minutes."

Silverberg asked if science fiction authors really draw that much on Graeco-Roman mythology. As he said, it "leads me a little late in the game to question the whole thesis of our panel." He felt that these images are more prevalent in mainstream. On the other hand, he said, "all this Celtic drivel ... pardon me, it's early in the morning for me to be lashing the audience."

But Johnson agreed that there is so much fantasy rooted in Celtic myths, while the only authors using the Graeco-Roman mythologies were Harry Turtledove, Somtow Sucharitkul, and Esther Friesner. (Chapman noted that psychology does use Graeco-Roman myths. I wonder how well that works with non-Western patients.)

Cherryh said there was a real difference between "what the ancient world was like and what the modern world believes the ancient world was like." Unfortunately, she "can't work with what everybody thinks was going on."

Someone (probably Silverberg) mentioned Jean-Paul Sartre, Andre Gide, and Mary Renault as mainstream authors using Graeco-Roman mythologies. T. S. Eliot turned Euripides into *The Confidential Clerk*. Silverberg said that he used Gilgamesh but that he demythologized it.

Silverberg also told the story of Philoctetes, the wounded archer, which he made into *The Man in the Maze*, which he said all of three people have recognized, including the screenwriter who is adapting it for a movie. The screenwriter apparently wants to tell the original story in an introduction, but Silverberg said he is willing to bet large amounts of money that the introduction will be deleted.

Cherryh said that she has studied enough so that she says, "I am a Roman," to which Silverberg replied, "I'm nobody's Roman and not much of a Greek." But he did say, "After you've been through second-year Latin you're never the same again." These are ur-legends that we were not born on, but were raised on.

Garfinkle, in his *Celestial Matters*, used not the mythology, but the religion. There is very little Roman ritual preserved. Silverberg speculated that "from late Roman times, the Romans had no religion and that was why they were so easily taken over by Christianity." I see a lot of similarities with what Mordecai Kaplan called "civic religion": in the United States, we have our sacred documents (e.g., the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution), our sacred symbols (the flag, the eagle), and the temples (the Capitol, the Lincoln Memorial). As has been noted, orthopraxy was more important in Rome than orthodoxy.

Cherryh reinforced this, saying that temples were essentially centers for the expression of community. Household or family gods were different. The Roman religion was secret within the family and never shared with other families. And the conquered peoples didn't have family gods, so they had only the state religion, and, as Silverberg said, "The state religion had no emotional impact."

Greek religion was fairly different: it was terrifying and spooky, and also tied to magical places.

At this point, more authors occurred to the panel: A. A. Attanasio, Marion Zimmer Bradley, Gilian Bradshaw, June Brindle, Kara Dalkey, David Drake, Dave Duncan, Esther Friesner, Anne Rice, S. M. Somtow [Sucharitkul], and Gene Wolfe. Someone also cited C. S. Lewis's *Till We Have Faces*.

Garfinkle pointed out, "When you tell a story of gods as being human, everything the gods are doing is wrong." (This is true in every mythology I can think of.)

Someone mentioned the enormous popularity of Hercules in many media, often violating the true myth. Cherryh said she loves the television version. Silverberg asked, "What do you mean by a true myth?" The myths were never really codified; the Romans didn't say, "This is it." (With our familiarity with the way the Bible is canonical, we probably project this attitude onto mythologies.) Regarding the Graeco-Roman myths, it's our job and the job of the writers to use these myths, an authors still do. A recent story named "Call Me Titan" had the Titans wandering the world, one in the guise of Roger Zelazny. As Silverberg said, "The debased television use which offends your classical purism is the extension of the classical myths into our own time and should be cherished-well, maybe not cherished."

Garfinkle disliked the Disney version of Hercules. Cherryh liked it, "but it was *Damn Yankees*." Garfinkle claimed that the Trojan War has no beginning and no end, but Silverberg disagreed, saying it begins with Judgment of Paris and ends with the Fall of Troy.

Someone in the audience asked "why [Zeus] wasn't always the same animal." Johnson's response was, "What man is?" The answer was a reiteration, or expansion, of what was said previously. Hesiod unified the stories, but they had a variety of origins. Johnson reminded us that we also see this in Native American stories: a lot of variation based on which animal was special to which tribe.

There was more discussion when an audience member suggested that all mythologies are carried by oral tradition at first and have a similar story structures. Myths were claimed to be teaching structures for promoting desired social interaction, while writing promotes the rebel. Silverberg mentioned Prometheus as a counter-example and disagreed with the social acculturation theory. And Garfinkle said that Australian aboriginal dream stories are radically different in story structure from other cultures.

Someone asked if ancient humor holds up. Johnson mentioned Aristophanes, two of whose plays were merged to form *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*.

Asked to distinguish between myth and religion, Silverberg said that "myth is a means by which the base concepts of a religion are illuminated and made known to the populace," and Cherryh said that "religion is an organized system of magic because it hopes to get a result." Johnson said that "myth is a discussion of human interactions and religion is a discussion between humanity and a higher power."

Noting that the Romans had Etruscan and other underpinnings of religion and myth, Silverberg reminded us, "The winners write the myths."

Defining SF

Thursday, 11AM
Stephen Baxter, David G. Hartwell, Paul Kincaid, Fred Lerner (m)

"Our panel attempts the task that has eluded so many. Should we endeavor to keep ourselves pure, defining SF so as to exclude fantasy? Must a definition of SF include a reference to science or technology?"

Hartwell described himself as the oldest working science fiction book editor in New York. Kincaid said he was the senior editor of *Vector* (the publication of the British Science Fiction Association) for more years than he cares to remember and probably will be for more years than he wishes to contemplate.

Lerner said he had a very simple definition: "Science fiction is the stuff on the bookshelves in my living room." But more seriously, how do you try to define it? Do you use a subject matter approach, a narrative strategy approach, or a provenance or origins approach?

Lerner himself prefers the origins approach, saying that Albanian fiction is fiction written by Albanians. I have a problem with this: while Albania is well-defined (more or less) outside literature, "science fiction is literature written by science fiction writers" is recursive.

Baxter gave as a first cut the definition as fiction which features the universe as a protagonist (changing, rather than a fixed stage). The problem here, he said, is that things leaks in: *Earthquake* (the movie) fits this description. The idea of narrative strategy may work better: a worldview that the universe is rational and explicable. He said that he uses a combination of the two as his definition.

Hartwell felt it was useless to try taxonomic definitions (those which define a category by what is in it). Science fiction, he said, is like poetry: it is a large body of dissimilar works. "A genre is a transaction between a body of texts and a reading audience," he said, and so science fiction is what people read as science fiction. This harkens back to Samuel R. Delany's "reading protocols," where "Her world exploded" will mean different things in a science fiction novel and a psychological novel. As he said, when we read about Mars in science fiction, "We are on the real planet Mars in the solar system that has certain physical characteristics, and not on a metaphor of the human condition." He felt this solves "most, but not all" of the problems.

Kincaid said that all the definitions seem to have a whole lot of exceptions. Defining science fiction as "books that come out of science fiction" runs into problems with first novelists, and books such as Pynchon's *Vineland*. On the other hand, calling it fiction about science excludes works like Keith Roberts's *Pavane*. And the narrative strategies are used in other genres and areas. He proposed no solution, just said that he is comfortable with this problem. He would prefer not to separate science fiction from the rest of literature.

Hartwell interjected here, "One of the strengths of science fiction is the amount we argue about it," leading Lerner to suggest, "Science fiction is written by people who spend part of their time arguing about what science fiction is."

Regarding his definition that science fiction is material arising from the science fiction community, I asked if Stapledon was therefore not science fiction. Lerner seemed to agree that Stapledon was science fiction, but would exclude *1984* and *Brave New World*. He also proposed the approach that science fiction is about problem-solving, as are mysteries. This is why there is a lot of cross-over between those two genres.

Baxter and Kincaid pointed out that two recent winners of the Arthur C. Clarke Award do not seem to have come out of science fiction: Mary Doria Russell (*The Sparrow*) and Amitav Ghosh (*The Calcutta Chromosome*).

Kincaid said that writing is about synthesis, definition is about analysis.

Hartwell reminded us that publishers' categories don't particularly apply. The purpose of those is to get the book distributed. And a related field, horror, is defined by its subjective effect.

Regarding who is writing in the field, Baxter says he is clearly in the center of science fiction, so what he writes is clearly science fiction. Then I asked about his Sherlock Holmes and Shakespeare stories. The former ("The Adventure of the Inertial Adjuster") he felt definitely qualified as science fiction, but he could not say the latter ("A Midsummer Eclipse") was really science fiction.

Someone in the audience suggested any definition needed a narrative component and a scientific component. Someone else suggested Darko Suvin's "cognitive estrangement": all fiction diverges from reality in some way, but how much of a leap is there? Another proposal was that science fiction is what science fiction readers read.

Lerner said that he could propose that "The Lord of the Rings" was a science fiction story: "[It] is the extrapolation of the science of philology." Kincaid pointed out that science fiction is a form of fantastic literature, and that "fantasy has an element of the irrational." A classic "definition" is "in science fiction, the background is foregrounded."

Asked whether Anne McCaffrey's "Dragonflight" books were science fiction, Hartwell said, "You'll have to take her at her word. She says that she intended them all as science fiction, so you'll have to say that some of them are good science fiction and some of them are not good science fiction." He also noted that the fantasy category was created for "a repeatable product." The result is that the category as known today is narrow and excludes most of the historical material. (Baxter said, "My definition of fantasy would be 'a better career choice than mine.'")

There seem to be two types of definitions-inclusive and exclusive. There are also objective and subjective definitions. I also began to feel that this was all very English-language-based, and wondered if any of these distinctions were even meaningful in other languages.

Little-Known Fantastic Films to Look For and Why

Thursday, 1PM

Stepan Chapman, Mark R. Leeper, Nicki Lynch

"Every seen the silent version of 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea? How about New Zealand's The Quiet Earth? Come hear our panel's suggestions for great, unknown SF, fantasy, and horror on film, and make your own suggestions."

Leeper said that he was the Internet's longest-running movie critic (or enthusiast, as he prefers to be called), having been on the Internet for fifteen years, which he said in Internet years was since the Fall of Rome. He had a hand-out, which is an appendix to this report.

The questions to ask about these films, as with authors, is "Why are films neglected? Why do they disappear?" Leeper gave as an example what he termed the "Mt. Everest" of little-known films: Unearthly Stranger. He gave a brief plot summary, then noted that it had no special effects, and was in black-and-white. It was also made by Anglo-Amalgamated Productions, not exactly a major studio.

Chapman recommended Woman in the Moon (which he incorrectly claimed based on Jules Verne's From the Earth to the Moon). The countdown in that film was not entirely original to Fritz Lang, by the way, but was used during World War I for the firing of guns so that people knew when to cover their ears. However, Lang was the first to use it for rockets.

Chapman also liked the 1959 Columbia film *The Mouse That Roared*, and the applause from the audience indicated that this film was not forgotten. ("All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and their entrances; And one man in his time plays many parts," but Peter Sellers does this more than most in this film)

The panelists suggested that one category of little-known films are those that are fantasy but that fans don't embrace, for example, *The Purple Rose of Cairo*. Chapman liked *Stargate SG-1* (the series, not the movie), but someone else pointed out that it was on a pay cable channel so not everyone gets it. (Someone else did say it was going to be syndicated next year.)

One audience member recommended *Seconds*, which is another science fiction film without special effects.

Leeper, as usual, plugged *Five Million Years to Earth*, which is now more available than before, and the serial on which it was based (*Quatermass and the Pit*) is available as well.

Chapman thought that *The Black Room*, with Boris Karloff playing twin brothers, one good and one evil, had its virtues.

Lynch asked if these films are perhaps forgotten because they are bad. Leeper felt they weren't bad, but that forgotten films will often have rough edges. Also, the pacing of films has changed, so older films in general are not seen as often.

Other audience recommendations were *The Navigator: A Medieval Odyssey*, *Fallen* (with Denzel Washington), *Monolith* (with Bill Paxton), *Sherlock, Jr.* (as a companion piece to *The Purple Rose of Cairo*), *Nightbreed*, *The Last Man on Earth*, *Portrait of Jennie*, and *Phase IV*. It was pointed out that it was ironic that the latter was made by Saul Bass, who was famous for title sequences, and this film didn't have a title sequence.

Chapman recommended *Track 29* (by Dennis Potter, who he described as specializing in "colliding realities").

Lynch asked about new obscure films, asking, "What do you see as the future of obscure films?" One audience member mentioned the recent documentary *For All Mankind*, and another cited *The City of Lost Children*. It was suggested that there were really two classes of little-known films: art house films and Hollywood films that seemed bad at the time but improved with age.

Leeper felt that one of the latter would be *The Postman*, which he said that contrary to the coming attractions was not *Backdraft* with mailmen.

Another obscure film made from a literary source Leeper mentioned was *Who?*, from the Algis Budrys novel. The problem with this film was literally a problem with the film-it faded to the point when a release was deemed impossible. It has gotten some limited exposure, however.

Other film based on literature that were noted included *The Seven Faces of Dr. Lao* (from *The Circus of Dr. Lao* by Charles G. Finney), *The Power* (from the Frank Robinson novel), and *The Terminal Man* (from the Michael Crichton novel).

Someone asked about "La Jetee," which is cited as the inspiration for *12 Monkeys*. I reminded people about *The Secret of Roan Inish*, and someone else listed a French fantasy named *Pure Formality*.

Someone asked about silent films and quite a list was provided: *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Nosferatu*, *Metropolis*, *Siegfried and Kriemhild's Revenge*, *Faust*, *The Golem*, *The Student of*

Prague-basically all the silent films are lesser-known.

Leeper said that a film he felt was vastly underrated was *Dragonslayer*. Someone suggested that the problem was that people thought it was a children's film when they heard the title. Another Leeper suggestion was *Something Wicked This Way Comes*.

Final suggestions of films to look for were *Orlando* (Chapman), *Dark City* (which Lynch called "an obscure film in the making"), and *Count Yorga, Vampire* (which Leeper said introduced a much more feral view of the vampire).

SF Magazines: The Past (and Future?) of SF

Thursday, 3PM

Charles N. Brown, Ellen Datlow, Stanley Schmidt, Gordon Van Gelder, Sheila Williams (m)

"Modern SF was born in magazines. The editors of today's major genre magazines discuss where they've been and where they're going."

Datlow announced *Event Horizon* (<http://www.e-horizon.com/eventhorizon>), a webzine launching on August 14. In response to the commonly expressed belief that there no quality control on the web, she said that the webzine editor was the person who would provide the quality assurance. Schmidt later expressed this as, "You haven't the special skills I have to determine very quickly what interests you." Datlow felt *Event Horizon* had a better chance than *Omni* because there was no forethought in how *Omni* was done.

Brown said that magazines were no longer the central part of the field as they once were, but that they were not going away either. Williams said the problem was that it was often hard to find your target audience these days. The result is that while the magazines will stay on paper, they will have web sites to advertise and reach out to find subscribers.

During a recent scan, Van Gelder found 140 webzines. As he said, the web is "not an unknown territory any more but still a big mess."

Datlow seemed to be the only person who realized that people do download books to palmtop readers, though she did express this more as something that was coming than something that was here.

Van Gelder worried that, while people used to start in science fiction by reading old copies of magazines that they found, this won't happen in the future with webzines. I'm not so sure-only time will tell.

Brown, probably the most accurately, said that the future would be a combination of all these things.

One advantage of web sites, according to Datlow, is that they can be changed often, not just every month. This means corrections can be put in immediately. Brown pointed out that this immediacy was also a problem: "There is no difference between rumor and fact [on the web]." And people still want something tangible-most of the people who are buying the CD-ROMs of the indices are sold to people who could get it for free on the web. In addition, one could have web sites which were not issue-based, but readers generally prefer a schedule.

However, Brown continued, different methods of fictional narrative may develop. He gave the example of Geoff Ryman's *253*, which first appeared (and still appears) as a hypernovel on the web. It has been published as a "traditional" novel, though it might be better considered an adaptation from the hypernovel in much the same way that a film can be adapted from a novel, or vice versa.

(The latter is my opinion, not Brown's-at least not that he expressed.)

Datlow said that she wants to print anthologies to preserve the stories. It isn't clear to me whether the web may preserve them better than anthologies. Many authors now maintain their stories on the web, and this makes them more accessible, at least for now. There was in fact some disagreement on whether authors want their stories kept on the web site indefinitely. Some thought that authors would want to "reclaim" their stories for possible future sales, but Datlow said most had no problem with leaving them up indefinitely, and the self-maintained sites seem to bear this out. (One supposes if they had an offer for a reprint anthology or collection, they might want to withdraw that story or stories, so they do want some control over this.)

Returning to the advantages of a webzine, Datlow said that a big one was that there were no space limitations per story. In a paper magazine, there is a certain page count, hence a certain word count, and stories have to fit. On the web, this doesn't happen. One result is that Event Horizon will be printing many more novellas than the paper magazines.

Of course, one question is, where is the money coming from? Experience has shown that people do not (at this time) want to pay to read the fiction (or articles). So advertising will be the main support at this time. But those annoying banner ads are not the preferred method-in addition to being annoying, they appear to be ineffective. So other types of advertising such as sponsorship will be tried.

The editors all said that they were still picking up readers from bookstore displays, and those sales would not stop. Van Gelder said that at one point he had predicted disposable paperbacks, but now wasn't so sure. He said, however, that Tom Doherty (of Tor) thinks of the books that don't sell (that is, those that are pulped) as advertising in the stores in much the same way magazine displays are.

One possibility not discussed was the use of webzines to reach more easily an international readership.

Great Forgotten Fantasy Authors

Thursday, 4PM

Kathryn Cramer, P. C. Hodgell, Marvin Kaye (m), James D. Macdonald, Priscilla Olson, Darrell Schweitzer

"They never won a Hugo; their books have been out of print for years; but these authors made a difference on the field, and their works are well worth a look today. Compare our panel's suggestions against your own list of forgotten fantasy greats."

Programming seemed to re-use the blurb from "Forgotten Science Fiction Authors" for fantasy and horror as well, but it's worth noting that fantasy and horror have in general won a lot fewer Hugos than science fiction.

The usual questions: What is a truly forgotten author? Is it sales or is it influence? And so on.

Schweitzer said that the way the market is, anything more than five years old is forgotten (and out of print); it would be easier to list remembered fantasy writers. Cramer agreed, saying she hears people say, "Oh, I love fantasy. I read Jordan/McCaffrey/Brooks/Eddings all the time." Someone else observed that Stephen Donaldson has fallen off the list. And Kaye claimed he heard one clerk in a bookstore ask another, "Where does this go-Kuh-jo? It's by some guy named King." (The latter might have been more appropriate for the "Great Forgotten Horror Authors" panel, though.)

According to Cramer, the Ballantine "Adult Fantasy" series was intended to sell to Tolkien fans, but

failed to do so. Lin Carter had said that the books sold as a function of how close they were to Tolkien: William Morris, Evangeline Walton, and the Dunsany novels sold well, and F. Marion Crawford, G. K. Chesterton, and Arthur Machen were the worst sellers. (Lester Del Rey told Carter that he would publish Dunsany, but would have told Dunsany that he didn't need all those words to tell a good story (!).)

Alan Garner and Joy Chant sold well at one time but are now forgotten. But as someone else note, Jack Vance is also forgotten by the mass of the fantasy audience. C. S. Lewis (other than his "Narnia" books) and A. Merritt are forgotten, though Kaye felt Indiana Jones couldn't exist without Merritt. Another author mentioned was Mervyn Peake.

Someone cited Leslie Barringer's *Gerfalcon* and a lot of children's literature.

Kaye suggested L. Frank Baum's (and others') "Oz" books and Frederic Brown. Cramer named Lucy Clifford. Hodgell suggested Lucy Boston. Schweitzer listed James Stephens, Anatole France, James Branch Cabell (particularly his works other than *Jurgen*), and John Bellairs. Olson added Thomas Burnett Swann, and MacDonald cited Robert Chambers.

Audience members contributed Joan Aiken, F. Anstey, John Kendrick Bangs, Lawrence Durrell, E. R. R. Eddison, Richard Garnett, Nicholas Stuart Gray, Andrew Lang's "Fairy" books, Talbot Mundy, John Myers Myers, Fletcher Pratt, Clark Ashton Smith, Thorne Smith, and Ellen Parker Young.

The panelists also talked about fantasy authors not in the fantasy audience's view: James Blaylock, Steven Brust, Jonathan Carroll, Robert Holdstock, Ellen Kushner, Megan Lindholm, and Sheri Tepper.

Schweitzer closed by recommending Mervyn Wall, an Irish author who wrote *The Unfortunate Furzey* and *The Return of Furzey*.

When someone in the audience asked, "Is Philip Jose Farmer worth reading?" I knew things had gotten out of hand.

An interesting postscript: Last weekend I went to a used bookstore at the Jersey Shore and there among the Grishams and such were a copy of A. Merritt's *Moon Pool* and Thomas Burnett Swann's *Tournament of Thorns*, as well as *The Best of Fritz Leiber*. You can find these books in the most unlikely places! But in case you can't, let me recommend <http://www.mxbf.com> and <http://www.bibliofind.com> as two good places to search for used books on-line.

Alternate History 101

Thursday, 5PM

Richard Garfinkle, Evelyn C. Leeper (m), Jack Nimersheim, Harry Turtledove

"Change one thing in the past and... presto! You've got a story! Introduction to alternate history. Is it properly part of SF&F? What are the over-used historical events to change? What other historical events, if changed, would make a good alternate history story?"

[Thanks to Mark for taking notes on this one.]

Leeper began by announcing that the panel would leave on time, because she had Crab Feast tickets. She also announced that the handout would be available on the Web at <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/4824/ah101.htm>, and that everything would be on the test. (The handout is also attached as an appendix to this report.)

The first question was "Why is alternate history considered science fiction?" and its subsidiary question, "Is it science fiction or fantasy?"

Turtledove said he usually treats it as science fiction, because "science fiction is good at the thought experiment of changing one thing and looking at the result." Garfinkle thought that not all alternate history is science fiction.

Nimersheim thought that the genre was somewhat outdated even now. But he said that the rule of "change one event" for a good story usually holds. If you change too many things, you have a weak story.

Leeper quoted Kim Stanley Robinson as having said, "Science fiction is the history that we cannot know," and then noting that this applied to alternate history as well. Attempting to justify alternate history as science fiction by saying history is a science will not fly, however. History is not a science; it does not fit rules of science.

>From the audience, Moshe Feder suggested that another way of looking at this was from the readers' side: reading alternate history, readers get many of the same reactions as they get from science fiction.

Nimersheim thought that one reason alternate history is emerging, is the sense of wonder it gives. Much of the sense of wonder is disappearing from science fiction because wonder has become reality ("To my son, the wonders are everyday"), fandom is aging, and a genre of wonder is lost because the real world has caught up.

Someone asked if all alternate histories were science fiction because they were just time travel stories. After mentioning a few "exceptions" which did have time travel, Leeper did manage to name a couple of alternate histories that did not have time travel: *The Man in the High Castle* and *Worldwar*. (The latter did have aliens, though.) Turtledove pointed to his own *How Few Remain*. (Leeper the panelist had difficulty coming up with titles of non-time-travel alternate histories, but Leeper the person writing this report has no problem coming up with a bazillion of them. Such is life.)

Leeper mentioned at this point some other names for alternate history: alternative history, uchronia, allohistory, and counterfactuals.

As for the most common what-ifs seem to be World War II, the American Civil War, World War I and the Russian Revolution, FDR, and Waterloo. Wars are popular, but the underused turning points are those dealing with things missing from our timeline (e.g., what if a new general were introduced in the Confederate Army rather than what if Lee did something different).

Turtledove said that his advice was that an author needed two things when looking for a story: "you need something to change and some interest to someone besides you. [The reason that World War II and the Civil War are popular is that] the biggest thing in the 20th century is World War II, but everything we are has to do with what happened 1861 and 1865."

Nimersheim added that you want to choose an event familiar to reader: "We pick what you will know so we don't have to educate you."

Leeper said that one rule was that there should be no implausibilities, but this was immediately contradicted by Garfinkle, who pointed to his own *Celestial Matters*. Garfinkle said that you need a plausible alternate history only if you are going to track events, if you are writing about a world that shares a piece of our history, but he doesn't. Leeper modified her statement to say that a realistic alternate history should not have implausibilities. (Boy, does that sound redundant! She probably

meant that adding Aristotelian science or magic or aliens from outer space results in an alternate history different in feel from one grounded in strict historical changes based on a materialistic approach. Yeah, that's it.)

At any rate, Leeper also mentioned Esther Friesner's *Child of the Eagle*, in which the Roman Gods really existed. The reader is willing to suspend her quite logical disbelief for the period of time needed to read the book.

Turtledove said that one of the worst things that ever happened in college was that after spending a week on the science of the Greeks, when the professor went on to the science that followed and disproved what the Greeks believed, one student asked, "If that stuff wasn't true, why spend a whole week on it?"

Garfinkle said that after *Celestial Matters* came out, he was bombarded by a geocentrist who was sure he was a "fellow traveler." Leeper suggested one non-committal response could be, "There may be something in what you are saying." When someone in the audience asked about the hollow earth, Leeper decided it was time to move on.

Every course has a reading list, and the classics in this field are (at least by some consensus on the Net): L. Sprague de Camp's *Lest Darkness Fall*; Philip K. Dick's *Man in the High Castle*; Randall Garrett's *Murder and Magic*, *Too Many Magicians*, and *Lord Darcy Investigates*; Mackinlay Kantor's *If the South Had Won the Civil War*; Ward Moore's *Bring the Jubilee*; H. Beam Piper's *Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen*; Keith Roberts's *Pavane*; Robert Sobel's *For Want of a Nail*TM; *If Burgoyne Had Won at Saratoga*; and Norman Spinrad's *Iron Dream*.

The Sobel, in particular, was just re-issued. It reads like a history textbook of what would happen, complete with fake bibliography. In fact, it can often be found in the history sections of bookstores. (Turtledove said the same is true of his *Guns of the South*, particularly in the South.) In addition, *For Want of a Nail*TM; *If Burgoyne Had Won at Saratoga* just won the Sidewise Special Achievement Award.

An audience member asked about George Chesney's *Battle of Dorking*, but Turtledove said that was more of an early 20th century techno-thriller, since it was set in the author's future. Some other well-known authors also tried their hands at alternate history, among them G. K. Chesterton and Winston Churchill.

Other suggestions for classics were Kingsley Amis's *Alteration* and Harry Harrison's *A Transatlantic Tunnel, Hurrah*.

Someone asked what should not happen in alternate history-what are the screw-ups? Nimersheim said one needed to be careful with contemporaries and to use good taste, but anything is fair game. When he worked on *Alternate Kennedys*, the authors discussed the fact that many Kennedys were still alive, so they need to be respectful. He gave the example of Nicholas DiChario's "Winterberry," which did not step on people's toes. One must also be careful of using the story as a pulpit for a vendetta. Other than that, everything has to flow from the twist.

Garfinkle expanded on part of that, saying that the decision a persons makes should be true to their character-you can't have Gandhi just snap (although I think that *Alternate Outlaws* did something like that). Nimersheim said that he was trying to do Mother Teresa as an abortionist, but the character would not let him.

Recent alternate histories that were recommended were Stephen Baxter's *Voyage*; Richard Dreyfuss and Harry Turtledove's *Two Georges*; Richard Garfinkle's *Celestial Matters: A Novel of Alternate Science*; Robert Harris's *Fatherland*; Harry Harrison and John Holm's "Hammer and the Cross"

trilogy; Paul J. McAuley's Pasquale's Angel; Kim Newman's Anno Dracula and The Bloody Red Baron; Harry Turtledove's Guns of the South: A Novel of the Civil War, How Few Remain, and the "Worldwar" tetralogy; and Robert Charles Wilson's Darwinia and Mysterium.

For the shorter fiction, the recommended anthologies were Gregory Benford and Martin H. Greenberg's Hitler Victorious: Eleven Stories of the German Victory in World War II, Gregory Benford and Martin H. Greenberg's "What Might Have Been" tetralogy, Martin H. Greenberg's The Way It Wasn't: Great Stories of Alternate History, and Mike Resnick's Alternate Kennedys and Alternate Presidents. (Nimersheim noted that Resnick's various alternate history anthologies have gathered twenty-one Hugo and Nebula nominations.)

Turtledove said regarding Fatherland that it felt real except for the major "discovery" in the story. (I'm trying to avoid even mild spoilers.) This reminded people of other "what if Germany won World War II" stories such as SS-GB by Len Deighton and Moon of Ice by Brad Linaweaver. One reason for the popularity of this scenario, it was suggested, is that the Nazis are the only politically correct target.

Regarding his new series, "American Front," Turtledove would say only, "In an alternate world it is darn good."

Another recent work worth noting was Kim Newman and Eugene Byrne's Back in the USSA, where the Russian Revolution didn't happen, but we had a socialist revolution in the United States instead.

One problem in writing alternate histories is that too many people don't know the real history. The latest anthology, Turtledove's Alternate Generals, left out all the authors' notes and many of the stories were hard to follow.

Turtledove summed it up by saying that good alternate histories are character-driven, not centered on the idea.

Crab Feast

Thursday, 6PM

The crab feast was a little less organized than the one fifteen years ago, so we didn't have the entire group seated at the same time banging with mallets while waiting for food. I got a chance to talk to a few people, including some folks from Toronto (where we'll be going for the Toronto International Film Festival next month).

SF Audio Drama from Golden Age to the Internet

Friday, 10AM

James Patrick Kelly, William Alan Ritch, Kurt Roth, Brian Smith (m), Allen Steele

"The power of the imagination in this overlooked medium; writing and directing audio drama."

Ritch is with the Atlanta Radio Theatre Company. Smith is with the SciFi Channel, as well as the ARTC and Alien Voices.

The first audio clip they played was from a 1932 production of Buck Rogers in the 25th Century. After it finished, Steele burst out, "I love this stuff! Man, you could just hear those diesels going!" The plot centers around a "gyro-cosmic-relevator"-Hugo Gernsback would be proud. Smith described this as "before Norman Corwin." (Corwin, by the way, is still alive.)

They then ran some of Corwin's "Undecided Molecule" (from the early 1940s), with very Seuss-like verse. What is perhaps most amazing is that Corwin wrote, directed, and produced a show every week.

In the 1950s, there was a sense of "if you have television which can do sound and pictures, why do you need radio [which can do only sounds] any more?" But the invisibility of the action could be used as a strength. For example, "Sorry, Wrong Number" used the claustrophobia of no vision to enhance the drama. The Shadow is another character who doesn't work well in a visual medium. (Think about it.)

Even though there is some interest in older shows, a lot of them are full of stereotypes, which Smith says is another reason to do new stuff. One example of newer material that he played was Ruby (1982) from ZBS, which started out as three-minute shows for drive-time radio, with a complete story taking three hours over a three-month period. ZBS also did Jack Flanders. These shows featured internal monologues that could never be done visually. Steele said he thought that Buck Rogers would age better than Ruby, but I disagreed, saying while I might listen to Buck Rogers once out of historical interest, I had already listened to Ruby two or three times.

Kelly said that part of the question was one of interpretation: "One person's parody is another person's postmodernism." Mark described Ruby as being more like Alice in Wonderland, with philosophical chestnuts in it.)

Returning to a comparison of media, Steele said that the problem with visual media is that you can't put any of the underpinnings that are common in literature in there, while adapting for audio ("screenplays for the blind") sometimes allows more of those. Smith said, however, that he doesn't want an omnipresent first-person narrator above and external to the action. Kelly said that this meant that while in writing you can inject background in narration, and in visual media you can show it, in audio you need to do it with sonic cues (walking on a steel deck, sounds from stores, etc.).

He also described the theatrical term "cheating toward the audience." In the theatre, this is geometric: characters speak while facing the audience rather than each other. In audio it means having characters say things they wouldn't normally say. Smith said that sometimes this could be made logical. For example, in "The Death of Captain Future," a character is reporting back to the other ship as a means of narrating to the audience. That show also uses the technique of having a computer deliver information.

One advantage that audio drama has over radio (at least old-time radio) is that it doesn't have to be compressed or expanded to fit a time slot.

Someone quoted J. Michael Straczynski as having said that the four most important elements in audio drama are words, sound effects, music, and silence.

They then played an excerpt from "George and the Red Giant" (based on Stephen Baxter's "George and the Comet") to show how you move in space and time, or as one person described it, "Visual has cuts and dissolves; radio has gongs and bongs." The story demonstrates the advantage of the lack of visuals as well: the main character is transferred 5,000,000 years into the future and turned into a flying lemur in a banyan tree, but the audience can't see that he's a flying lemur and doesn't know it until he realizes it himself.

Ritch said that you could not blindly take a written story and turn it into an audio drama. "To do an audio adaptation, what you have to do is to pick the story up by its spine and shake it into a slightly different shape"

However, Steele said, "It becoming hard to get anything on radio except for community radio or

public radio. Radio has become increasingly conservative over the last ten years." Where DJs used to do requests, for example, everything is now computer-decided. As he summed it up, "Seeing Ear is the first and last best hope of audio drama."

Seeing Ear Theatre can be found at <http://www.scifi.com/set>. The Sci-Fi Channel and Alien Voices will be doing a live dramatization of The War of the Worlds on October 30.

It's All SF: Science Fiction/Southern Fiction

Friday, 11AM

James S. Dorr, Andy Duncan, Mark L. Van Name

"Why are so many Southern writers drawn to SF and fantasy? Are there distinctly Southern themes that appear in their works? What is the tradition of Southern SF that they draw upon (Wellman, Wagner, Leinster, etc.)? In what ways are SF and Southern literature not only compatible but natural allies?"

Duncan said he was born in South Carolina, but his family then moved to North Carolina because they wanted to see what it was like up north. Van Name is from Florida, as is Dorr.

My first "question" was to ask the panel to define what they meant by "the South." Dorr suggested the old Confederacy, but Van Name pointed out, "Texas would object. Texas is its own damn thing." Duncan disagreed, saying that when he was driving through Texas to LoneStarCon, he kept thinking, "Yep, these are our people."

The panelists seemed to agree that the South is not a geographic idea, but a mindset and a set of tropes. These include the legacy of the Civil War, segregation, integration, civil rights, family, history, land, climate, and eccentricity. The latter is perhaps best shown in Southern Gothic - Edgar Allan Poe, William Faulkner, and Tennessee Williams. (Note that this makes Maryland part of "the South.")

Someone asked why this wouldn't include The House of Seven Gables as well. Duncan felt it might, saying also H. P. Lovecraft was as Southern as a non-Southerner has ever been. And New England also has a set of tropes. But Southern writers have an obsessive self-reflection and self-awareness. Southern writers feel they not only need to know William Faulkner, Flannery O'Connor, Eudora Welty, and Ralph Ellison, but "to be constantly and actively engaged in a dialogue with them."

Or as Van Name summed it up, "The South is just fucking weird. ... [They] built a culture on the back of owning other people, and have to deal with that." One quirk mentioned is that most Southern writers summer in Montana. The South, Van Name said, is an "extraordinarily indirect culture." Southerners can talk for an hour and you still don't have any more data at the end. "The South is all about hiding things in its history," he said (e.g., that the slaves they bought and sold in the open were often ones they had fathered in secret).

Dorr said that the South has a kind of a story-telling tradition that the Southern writers can draw on. It used to be agrarian, but then there was a merging of cultures from 1920 to 1940 (Atlanta has now become more like Indianapolis), and then the writers got self-conscious.

He said that Eudora Welty said that she heard family stories as a child which she didn't understand, but she knew there was passion, importance, and power in them. And when Faulkner won the Nobel Prize in 1950, he said, "The only subject matter worth the agony of creation is the human heart in conflict with itself."

Duncan asked, "Isn't Southern fiction antithetical to science fiction?" He referred specifically to the

agrarian versus technological philosophies. But the other panelists said that agrarian culture was a throwback even in the 1920s. In a speech, Paul Green had said, "Technology would be the best darn thing that ever happened to the South. ... And every slob behind the wheel of a Ford going down the highway at sixty miles per hour is drawing ever closer to God."

It was noted that Murray Leinster was from Norfolk, Virginia, and his first published work was an essay on Robert E. Lee published in a Virginia paper. "Sidewise in Time" in particular was said to read as a white Southerner's ever-shifting take on his past. And the panelists in general suggested that many authors are best read "through Southern eyes."

Someone in the audience claimed, "The true turning point in Southern history was not the Civil War but the introduction of air conditioning."

Someone else said that there is a tendency to lump the South together, but that (for example) the Smoky Mountains are completely different from Carolina tidewater region. Van Name partially agreed, but said they had a commonality in "Gothic and guilt."

Dorr said that one area with differences is that of the Gulf seaports, which have the influence of foreign cultures (French and Spanish): "Jackson and Biloxi are different countries in a way" In general, though, much of the South has the experience of living side-by-side with alien cultures (again, Black, French, and Spanish).

I commented that so far the panelists had named only white authors and wondered if, for example, Zora Neale Hurston was considered a Southern writer. Duncan said, yes, Hurston is a Southern writer, and repeated that the South had an intermingling of cultures that the North and other areas didn't have. He pointed out that Southern food, Southern accents, and Southern music all are as much descended from African roots as white ones. Southern politics, however, spent (spends?) a lot of time trying to keep the blacks marginalized, which has caused politics to center around race.

Van Name said that a lot of Southern fiction was based around the South's class-ist structure. Everyone knows who is which class, he said, and there is "not just the willingness but the right to oppress." He said this was brought home to him when he attended a school in Alabama and discovered that the fumes from cleaning the paper mill went past the poor section of town, but not the good part. (He also said that the school had a psychiatric treatment center associated with it, and on the dorm beds when they arrived were forms for scheduling shock treatments-"sort of a 'Welcome to Alabama.'")

Someone asked about the "uniquely Southern approach to religion and numinous themes you sometimes find in science fiction." Duncan suggested Michael Bishop's "Among the Handlers" and John Kessel's Good News from Outer Space as examples. (He said he once told Kessel that he felt guilty for things his parents and grandparents did, and Kessel said, "And you're sure you're not Catholic?")

Duncan suggested that they wrap up by naming various science fiction authors with a Southern influence, and he named Gregory Benford, Michael Bishop, Terry Bisson, John Kessel, and Gene Wolfe. Van Name added Manly Wade Wellman, Harry Kruse, Rudy Rucker, Joe Lansdale, William Gibson, Bruce Sterling, and Avid Drake. Door added two horror writers, Anne Rice and Poppy Z. Brite.

Audience members listed Al Goingback, William Dietz, Elmore Leonard, Robert E. Howard, Orson Scott Card, Sharyn McCrumb, and Joan Hess.

The Ethical Dimensions of Contemporary Fantasy

Friday, 1PM

Brenda W. Clough (m), Claire Eddy, Jane Fancher, Vera Nazarian, Mary Stanton, Sheila Williams

"To what extent are writers responsible for the impact that the fantasies they create have on the prejudices of their readers? Should authors be more sensitive to their underlying messages or is this mere political correctness?"

Note: Brenda Clough's last name is pronounced "cluff." (I mention this mostly because "ough" seems to have the most pronunciations of any letter combination in the English language.) Mary Stanton writes as Claudia Bishop.

Clough began by asking, "Do readers care about ethical dilemmas?" (I don't think they ever really distinguished between books presenting a different philosophy, and books which present ethical dilemmas to their characters, which are certainly different aspects of the question.)

Fancher said that authors need to write stories with the current readership in mind, rather than copying themes from older books for a different age.

Williams pointed out that stories generate complaints for all sorts of reasons. For example, apparently a nun objected to iconoclasy in a Harry Turtledove story-not that it was even portrayed positively, but that it was portrayed at all.

Fancher said that at least novels allow more room for more ambiguity.

Clough addressed the problem of what to name your "villains": Make everyone generic and named Smith "and then the people named Smith will write to you."

Someone in the audience said that it was necessary to make a distinction between the evil man and the unethical man, though exactly what he had in mind wasn't clear. Someone else suggested that the writer needed to make the reader "empathize, not sympathize" with the villain.

Arguing with people who disagree with what you've said in your book (or what they think you've said) is usually futile. Fancher said that you don't say, "You idiot"; you say "I understand, but ...". And Clough advised, "Confrontation leads to heat and light, but not a whole lot of thought."

Fancher said that you can also make some decisions by fiat: "In science fiction you can say certain issues are not issues in those societies." So, for example, you can make your main characters gay without having to have any discussion of whether that is good or bad.

Nazarian asked the other panelists, "What point would you stop at?" Eddy said that pedophilia seemed to be beyond the pale for most and mentioned the whole furor over the new Lolita, saying there was a review which said, "If you in a pedophile, you'll come out a pedophile. If you go in not a pedophile, you'll come out not a pedophile." The movie does not show Humbert Humbert as either evil or misguided, and is not a satire, but has a "sick kind of sweetness and pathos." She felt that if a work opens up a discussion it can be worthwhile.

Williams agreed, saying, "What stops us from publishing a story is bad writing, writing not good enough." Clough noted, "Children's writers have an extra layer of gate-keeping" in that they must please both the readers (children) and the purchasers (adults). Stanton said she didn't believe that a writer should teach or be didactic.

Clough asked if it is possible to write without presenting an ethical standpoint, but people pointed out as soon as a character eats a hamburger, you've given him an ethical standpoint.

Topic drift set in, with the panelists talking about how an editor of a reprint anthology wanted to change "Oriental" to "Asian" in a Hugo-winning story. (Someone quipped that "N-- Jim" is now "African-American Jim.")

Regarding editorial requests for language changes, Fancher said she must remember she is affecting her readership. "I'm writing a whole novel to make these points. A single line I will change," but not the whole novel.

Returning to where one sets one's own limits, Clough said, "I would not want to write a book that would push a suicidal person to commit suicide," to which someone responded, "You can't really control what the Froot Loops of the universe are going to do."

An audience member said that Books of Wonder republished some of the Oz books with changed words and redone plates. Fancher wasn't entirely against this, pointing out that, unlike Twain and some other authors, the Oz books are something that children will read out of context and without adult guidance. Williams said she thought Tarzan was being similarly rewritten.

Eddy thought it was better to teach the power of the word than to hide it, and remembers telling her daughter about some "adult" book, "If you can read it, you can read it."

Apropos of not much else, one of the panelists said that Mika Waltari's *The Egyptian* is really set in the 1950s with Eisenhower.

Literary Hard SF: Is This an Oxymoron?

Friday, 2PM

Roger MacBride Allen, Pat Cadigan (m), Alexander Jablovkov, Maureen F. McHugh, Patrick O'Leary

"How can a writer get the nuts and bolts correct without info-dumps? Can sense of wonder be enhanced by 'literary writing'? Is it too much to ask that the realism of hard SF be extended to the characterizations?"

McHugh said she wasn't sure why she was on the panel, observing, "I don't write hard science fiction, I write limp science fiction." Cadigan said the subtitle should be "Literary Viagra-Oxymoron or Myth?" to which Jablovkov added, "And will your HMO pay for it?" (Indeed, for most of this hour, the panel was apparently out of control, or focus.)

McHugh said she felt the panel arose from the fact that the answer to "what's wrong with hard science fiction" is usually "bad characterization," so the two are considered antithetical.

Allen said that some authors write with an eye to awards, not the story, though whether he thought this led to idea stories with no characterization or vice versa wasn't clear.

McHugh said that what she was doing was attempting to create an experience rather than to tell a story, to take tropes and write them so that the reader experiences them new.

Jablovkov thought that the problem was that science fiction was a literature of estrangement, and "the clunky prose of hard science fiction is a guarantee of authenticity." "Sometimes the clunky prose is a signifier." The literary technique is used to estrange you from the familiar, but if the situation is not familiar, he pointed out, the literary effect is not needed or wanted. "The true heir to the triple-decker 19th century novel is the disaster novel."

Allen said the two skills were not exclusive, leading me to wonder if perhaps writing and science both require training, and it's hard for an author to be trained in both. Allen said too many beginning writers write "HAITE Stories": Here's A Idea, The End. He doesn't want to write about postage-stamp size stories. (Mary McCarthy once complained about the trends in literature, saying that modern literary fiction is not allowed to write about an execution, a sunset, or a Congressional subcommittee.)

McHugh pointed out that Salman Rushdie is not writing postage-stamp size stories, and that "literary" refers to a marketing genre just as much as "science fiction" does.

Cadigan said she tried to think of hard science fiction novels that were also literary and came up with Arthur C. Clarke's *Childhood's End*, Gregory Benford's *Timescape*, John Brunner's *Stand on Zanzibar*, William Gibson's *Neuromancer*, James Gunn's *Listeners*, and almost anything by Samuel R. Delany or Bruce Sterling. Jablovok said that Iain Banks writes literary and hard science fiction but not at the same time. "It would be interesting," he said when asked if there were other authors like this, "to discover that Pournelle wrote poetry." So someone pointed that Joe Haldeman does write both poetry and hard science fiction.

Talking about backgrounds, McHugh said, "I have a biology background," to which Jablovok immediately responded, "We all do."

Someone asked who is setting the standard for "literary." Basically, it's become a marketing category like everything else. (Ann Maxwell's books are being re-released as Harlequin "science romances.") Allen felt that at least in England they are more willing to treat science fiction seriously.

(For other literary hard science fiction I would recommend Russell Hoban's *Riddley Walker* and *Fremder*.)

Modernism and SF

Friday, 3PM

Gregory Feeley, David G. Hartwell (m), John J. Kessel, James Morrow, Michael Swanwick

"Modernism-Faulkner, Joyce, Eliot, Pound, Cabell-was the dominant literary mode when modern science fiction had its formative period during the 1930s and early 1940s. What unappreciated influences did it exert over the evolving pulp genre?"

This panel may well have been the high point of the convention for me. (If I had won the Hugo, I might have felt different.) This probably says all you need to know about me to put this report into perspective-sercon all the way.

The panelists presented their credentials. Kessel said he was the only Ph.D. in American Literature on the panel, and therefore "[knew] more than anyone else here." Feeley had been on a similar panel at another convention and said it was the "funnest topic I've been on in three or four years." Morrow said he writes science fiction but has never read it, and also that he considered it postmodern rather than Modernist. (Morrow later said that when he first heard the title of the panel, he thought it was a joke: "Let's discuss the influence of Jane Austen on the Spice Girls." But it turned out to be anything but.) Swanwick announced, "I killed science fiction," and said the panel should have held twenty or thirty years ago when Modernism was still alive and had some relevance to science fiction.

Hartwell began by attempting to define Modernism: "Modernism is a literary, artistic, cultural movement that characterized art in Western Civilization from the early 20th Century through the mid-20th Century." Around the turn of the century, "the Moderns" stopped being everything since the Fall of Rome. The Moderns generally include Henry James, Gertrude Stein, Sherwood Anderson,

William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, and F. Scott Fitzgerald. "Modernist literature in general was very right-wing," he added, and Modernism was very elitist.

Kessel felt this was not a definition per se, and "if we're going to say science fiction is anti-Modernist we better fucking well define Modernism." He said some characteristics of Modernism were the use of Freudian and Jungian psychology, language, themes of loss and despair, discontinuity, and alienation through experimental style.

Feeley quoted Edward Mendelson, who said that Modernists had turned nostalgically away from a flawed reality to a utopian past "where life was unified, hierarchy secure, and the grand style a natural extension of the vernacular art."

Morrow described Modernism as the literary equivalent of the Counter-Reformation. "'The Waste Land' requires either footnotes or a professor standing there who mediates as a priest between the reader and the text."

Swanwick, citing Thomas Disch's *Dreams Our Stuff Is Made Of*, said that the Founding Father of Science Fiction was really Edgar Allan Poe, a crackpot, a fraud, and a compulsive liar. The fact that T. S. Eliot felt obliged to spend time and effort to refute Poe rather than to ignore him because Poe was Eliot's Jungian shadow: Poe appealed to a wide audience interested in entertainment and—perhaps most importantly—willing to pay him money. Swanwick felt that "all this [Modernism] provides no answers."

Kessel thought this all very ironic, because he felt that Eliot was actually a literary descendent of Poe, through Baudelaire and the French symbolists. As he said, Eliot attacking Poe was sort of like the science fictional trope of killing one's grandfather.

Hartwell asked (rhetorically, one presumes) who opposed Modernism. One of the most vocal opponents was H. G. Wells, who had a fifteen-year argument with Henry James over it. In the academy and in the dominant culture, James won, and we see a lot of the inner life of characters and a characteristic and unique style of each author. Modern literature is about the ordinary doings of ordinary characters in ordinary settings.

But while Wells himself parodied James in "Kipps," Wells's ideas were adopted by John W. Campbell. H. P. Lovecraft was also anti-Modernist, and wrote a parody of "The Waste Land" called "Waste Paper." (But, Hartwell added, Lovecraft was a different kind of elitist than the Modernists.) Another unlikely anti-Modernist was Stanton A. Coblentz, who wrote *The Revolution in Literature*.

At this point things started heating up. Kessel echoed the feelings of at least some of the audience when he burst out, "This is a ludicrous pantheon of anti-Modernists!" These are not formative influences, he said. And in any case the Wells the science fiction writers knew (pre-1905) was pre-Modernism (Modernism started in 1914), so this doesn't matter anyway. Lovecraft and Coblentz were not major influences either, and none of these writers (Kessel claimed) were reading literary criticism about the Moderns anyway)

Swanwick responded that it doesn't matter if people read the critics or not—the critics merely reflect what people were thinking. And he said it was also not fair to claim pulp authors didn't read outside their field.

Kessel shot back that these writers were not consciously anti-Modernist—they wrote for money, not thinking that T. S. Eliot would be reeling from the blow.

This (by now) shouting match between Swanwick and Kessel about whether science fiction authors could be considered consciously anti-Modernist or not continued, with Hartwell finally suggesting

that Campbell wrote "The Machine Stops" in opposition to Wells, to which Kessel replied, "To his socialism, not his anti-Modernism."

Feeley said he was less bothered by Hartwell's schematic of James and Wells than Kessel was, but James Joyce, Marcel Proust, Franz Kafka, and the early Hemingway were the real Modernists, not James.

Feeley thought that "Amazing Stories was very consciously anti-Modernist." Most Modernists were deeply ironical. In contrast, science fiction writers were deadly, deeply earnest. "Nothing interested Gernsback less than the use of art for aesthetic ends." He also disagreed strongly with Kessel, saying that by the 1940s the Futurians were definitely reading James Joyce and all the other Modernists. Lovecraft fulminated against the Modernists, because he didn't realize that they were not modern life; they were more Lovecraft than Lovecraft.

As for conscious influences inside science fiction from outside, Isaac Asimov used Edward Gibbon, Doc Smith used Will and Ariel Durant, and A. E. Van Vogt used Alfred Korzybski. They all followed the model of taking a philosophical work that explains the universe and using that to base their work on.

Swanwick said he thought Kessel's argument very odd: "This is such a strange defense of the Modernists that they had such a small readership that anyone writing in America would not have read them or been influenced by them." Feeley pointed out that the widely-read Luce magazines regularly beat up on Modernists.

Kessel agreed that "the Modernists had a large influence and were well-known." And so he agreed that writers were reacting against Modernism in this sense. What he said was true was that a specific anti-Modernism movement arose in science fiction after the Modernism movement itself arrived in science fiction (the New Wave).

Hartwell responded, "The reason you are partially incorrect although your characterization of the '60s onward is precisely correct" is that only sometimes did the "mainstream" mean pop fiction; other times it meant Modernism.

Feeley agreed that only in 1967 and 1968 were "the mechanisms of Modernism openly played with." But earlier James Blish, Damon Knight, Alfred Bester, and others were doing this, just not openly. Returning to whether the writers knew about literary movements, he said that there are records of Blish haranguing the Futurians about Modernism. Except for Blish and Asimov, none of the Futurians went to college, but they were self-didacts. "And whatever Henry Luce hated was at least worth a look-see" to them.

Feeley thought that one reason for an anti-Modernist trend in science fiction was that the big Modernist theme is exile. W. H. Auden wanted to return from exile and rebuild our cities, not dream of islands. But science fiction has always dreamed of islands.

Morrow mused, "I feel sorry it was James that took on Wells rather than Herman Melville, but he wasn't alive at the time." He quoted someone as having said that "James chewed more than he bit off." And Swanwick opined, "We can talk so openly of Modernism because it is dead."

Kessel graciously said to Hartwell (who couldn't even get the microphone most of the time), "Do you want to have the last word? You deserve the last word. I won't say anything."

(There was something almost surreal about watching Kessel vociferously arguing Modernism wearing a Cat in the Hat T-shirt.)

Short Films

Friday, 4PM

"If you don't see it here, face it-you just won't see it. Continuing our Films About Authors Series with: 'Chekhov's Gun,' '15-Minute Hamlet,' 'The Nervous Breakdown of Philip K. Dick' and others!"

I had time only for "Chekhov's Gun." Chekhov is the one who said that if you show a gun in the first act of a play, you must fire it before the end. In this film, three characters are in an apartment when a gun suddenly is noticed. They spend the next fifteen minutes trying desperately to avoid the dictates of Chekhov, which they are all too aware of.

Sidewise Awards

Friday, 6PM

Moshe Feder, Evelyn C. Leeper, Steven H Silver

"The annual awards recognizing the best work in alternate history. (Of course in a parallel world, another nominee would have won...)"

The Sidewise Awards are named for Murray Leinster's short story "Sideways in Time" and Leinster's granddaughter was on hand to say a few words about her grandfather. She also answered one nagging question: how does one pronounce "Leinster"? It's pronounced "LEN-ster".

The nominees for Long Form were Peter Delacorte's *Time on My Hands*, Michael Swanwick's *Jack Faust*, and Harry Turtledove's *How Few Remain*; the winner was *How Few Remain*.

The nominees for Short Form were Lee Allred's "For the Strength of the Hills," Roland J. Green's "The King of Poland's Foot Cavalry," Kim Newman and Eugene Byrne's "Teddy Bear's Picnic," and William Sanders's "The Undiscovered"; the winner was "The Undiscovered." (Harry Turtledove accepted for Sanders.)

A Special Achievement Award was announced for Robert Sobel for his book *For Want of a Nail ...; If Burgoyne Had Won at Saratoga*. This is a gem of a book, written as a history textbook rather than a novel, and is complete with fictional bibliography and footnotes. Sobel wasn't present, but Moshe Feder, Robert Schmunk, and I met him in New York a couple of weeks later and presented him with his certificate then. He has quite an interesting background, having written for *Monarch Notes*, *EC Comics*, and some of the pulps while in college. His latest book, on Calvin Coolidge, is not an alternate history.

Hugo Awards

Friday, 8PM

Charles Sheffield, Toastmaster

"The Science Fiction Achievement Awards are fandom's highest honor to those who create the work we love. Come join us in celebrating the best of our field."

The First Fandom Awards will be given out at Dragoncon, but were announced here (no, I can't explain that): Milton A. Rothman, John V. Baltadonis, and Jack Agnew, founding members of Phil.SFS. The Big Heart Award went to Jonie Nappensberger.

The John W. Campbell Award went to Mary Doria Russell (not a big surprise to me).

The other awards (in the order in which they were given) were:

- | Best Semiprozine: Locus
- | Best Fanzine: Mimosa edited by Nicki & Richard Lynch
- | Best Professional Artist: Bob Eggleton Best Professional Editor: Gardner Dozois

Bill Johnson is believed to be the tallest Hugo winner ever (though there was some question about whether J. Michael Straczynski is taller). I clocked the ceremony at 85 minutes; Janice Gelb said 95 minutes. I think the shortest ceremony was 75 minutes, but this was certainly close.

The Aussies threw the traditional Hugo Nominees Party afterward, which apparently cost them a bundle because of the hotel charges and rules (\$5 for every drink poured, even soft drinks, plus the cost of a hotel bartender).

The State of SF Films: 1997

Saturday, 11AM

Dr. John L. Flynn, Mark R. Leeper (m), Karen Meschke, Mark Owings, Martin Morse Wooster

"A panel discussion about the State of SF Films, part of a series with many of the same participants that has continued for each of the last four Worldcons. This year's panel will discuss the current year's films and revisit their predictions from last year."

(Leeper handed out a list of science fiction and fantasy films from the last year and a half. It's probably too long to include here; you can regenerate it from the Internet Movie Database.)

Wooster said that his preference in films was foreign, art, science fiction, and life-denying, and that he was really sorry that Tarkovsky had died because he was the person doing these.

Owings started by saying, "The state of the science fiction film overall is on video." The really good items don't seem to be getting into theaters. (Presumably he means theaters throughout the country/world, since many of the films people said they couldn't see in the theater did play in New York or Los Angeles.)

Leeper said, "You can't talk about the state without talking about the trends. The interesting films are the ones that buck the trends." He gave as an example of a film that followed the trends Armageddon, which he described as "not so much written as assembled after a scavenger hunt of other films." On the other hand, there is a film like Gattaca-serious, thoughtful, dark, and slow.

Flynn stated, "The state of the science fiction film has been declining over the last several years." He claimed that 1968 (for example) had two good films (2001: A Space Odyssey and Five Million Years to Earth), but not many other science fiction films either good or bad. (I should point out that 1968 also had Charly, Rosemary's Baby, and probably a bunch of bad films we have forgotten.) Now we have a hundred science fiction films a year, he said, but no more than four or five good ones. On the other hand, television has better science fiction than ever before.

Wooster said that some big-budget films are bad, but not all. He thought The Fifth Element wasn't bad, but was driven by set design rather than plot. (The same might be said of Metropolis.)

Flynn asked (rhetorically) how many want to see more remakes of old movies and television shows.

(On the other hand, I don't know what I want to see until someone surprises me with it.)

Flynn thought it was important to distinguish between science fiction and Sci-Fi, and gave the following descriptions:

SF or Science Fiction:

- | Speculative element is integral to the plot. present-day knowledge. point-of-view, interesting plotting and style, believable dialogue, etc. disbelief) and enhance the overall production.

Sci-Fi:

- | The stories tend to borrow from SF's pulp origins rather than current speculative fiction. for the sake of plot. sidekick, mad scientist, etc. to hide a weak story, or exist solely for the "gee-whiz" factor.

Unfortunately, these distinctions seemed to result in audience members objecting to anything being labeled "sci-fi." Though Flynn claims that he was not saying sci-fi was worse than science fiction, the choice of words ("stereotypic," "weak story," "solely") implied otherwise. Some people wanted to say that calling something "sci-fi" was due to ignoring the differences between the written form and the visual form. And one person even brought up the old saw about why can't you just sit back and enjoy it?

I suggested that some of what we call sci-fi might better be called fantasy-particularly since they do tend to violate the laws of physics as we know them.

Wooster said as far as good science fiction goes, he thinks the introduction to a new future is important, and the examples he gave were Brazil, Johnny Mnemonic, and even Titanic.

Leeper said he thought that The Postman will increase in respect as time passes. The problem, he said, was that it was interpreted as Backdraft with mailmen, when really it was about crystallization: society was just ready to recover as soon as the catalyst hit. Meschke said he thought it was similar to The Music Man. Wooster thought it was a half-hour too long, and that Costner was too self-indulgent.

Kimmel said one trend was that we are seeing more films based on literature.

The panelists had pretty much drifted away from the topic, so I asked them to name three films from the last year and a half each that they would recommend. Leeper named Contact, Gattaca, and The Truman Show. Owings named Gattaca and Spirit Lost. Flynn named Gattaca, Contact, and Merlin. Meschke just reiterated Merlin and Gattaca. Wooster listed The Truman Show, The Postman, and The Relic. (It was a bit disappointing that people repeated what the early panelists had said-I had hoped to get a longer list. It wasn't as if I asked each for their favorites.)

Picking the Best: How We Do It

Saturday, 12N

Ellen Datlow (m), Gardner Dozois, David G. Hartwell

"The editors of the various 'Year's Best' anthologies discuss their process for selecting the best stories of the year."

The panelists said there were two approaches to the question of the panel, one of logistics and one of

philosophy.

Hartwell said that philosophically, his stance is in opposition to Dozois's-that is, he tries to choose different works than Dozois. Historically, he pointed out, there is plenty of room in the field for multiple "Year's Best" anthologies: at one time there were three major ones, edited by Donald A. Wollheim, Terry Carr, and Gardner Dozois.

Dozois, on the other hand, didn't think there was that much difference in his and Hartwell's stances. He also said that not everything in Hartwell's anthology is as pure science fiction as Hartwell claims.

Datlow said she reads more anthologies than magazines to find the year's best horror, though she does try to read everything in the field. (Terri Windling reads literary magazines or has other people do so for her half.) Datlow said that while you have to balance your anthology, you don't necessarily have to pick stories to represent each aspect of horror. Hartwell agreed about the balance, saying that last year there were three good stories about visiting an aged relative in rest home, but he really could use only one. (I noted that the Australian "Year's Best" anthology had three stories about teratogenesis.) On the other hand, three robot stories could be sufficiently different for him to be able to use them all.

Dozois said an additional concern he had was that since he was also the editor of Asimov's, he needed to make sure he wasn't favoring that magazine over other sources.

The panelists suggested that better titles for the books might be "Dave Hartwell Liked These Stories" or "Some of the Best of the Year."

Datlow works in a slightly different format than the other two. She shares space with Windling (she does the horror and Windling does the fantasy). The result, as she said, is, "I have half the space Gardner does," to which Hartwell added, "When Ellen and I walk down the street we are often mistaken for Gardner." Dozois warned, "Editing 'Best of the Year' anthologies will make you fat."

Datlow said that editing these anthologies gives one a sense of power that she can influence the field or promote a writer. Dozois said, "I try not to have a conscious aesthetic agenda with my anthologies" but obviously personal definitions matter. Datlow felt that horror is more subjective than science fiction, and that affected how they chose their stories. Also, because horror is read for effect, her opinion rarely changes on rereading.

In terms of logistics, Dozois rates the stories throughout the year but doesn't commit until the end. Hartwell follows a similar approach, saying that he doesn't commit early because there may be better stories, or even better stories by the same authors. Datlow, on the other hand, will commit on some immediately.

Not all stories that the editors choose are in the anthologies, though. Neither Datlow nor Hartwell could get Stephen King's "Everything Eventual," for example, and the panelists thought John Crowley's refusal to let "Gone" be reprinted probably cost him the Hugo. Horror and fantasy authors who publish in the mainstream often don't want to be in fantasy anthologies. And Dan Simmons didn't think "Entropy's Bed at Midnight" was horror, so he didn't want Datlow to reprint it.

When the publicists ask the editors for some names to put on the cover (which is done before the book is actually finished), Hartwell and Dozois said they lie. But then they did observe that they usually can provide names for authors who are multiply represented on their working lists.

Dozois said that one side-effect of all this is that he doesn't have time to read more than five or six science fiction novels a year because Asimov's and The Best of the Year tie up 80% of his waking time.

All agreed they could easily make their anthologies longer, and Hartwell said there were stories he couldn't include because of their length. Hartwell said, "An honorable mention list of more than a hundred is silly." Datlow disagreed. In the Datlow/Windling anthology, each gets 125,000 words, so occasionally they will split the wordage on a story that is both fantasy and horror. They said they didn't want to rule out any particular type of story since there could be a great one, but Datlow did say, "I'm not too fond of gross-out stories." Dozois said, "You never get a talking tree story, then suddenly you get six of them."

As for the financial aspect, Datlow pays a per-word fee and royalties. Dozois pays a flat-rate and a pro rata split of royalties. Hartwell gives people a choice between a small advance against royalties, or a large advance and no royalties. Mainstream authors such as Clive Barker, Stephen King, and Ruth Rendell want flat rates rather than dealing with on-going small royalties.

Ultimately, Dozois said, "you can't follow trends, you have to follow your heart."

- | Favorite Fanzines, Past and Present) Saturday, 1PM

I had agreed to be on this panel shortly before the convention. It was originally scheduled for the Fan Lounge in the Convention Center, but then an announcement was made that the Fan Lounge would be in the Hilton during the day as well as in the evening. Information claimed the programming had also moved, so when I realized this would mean walking several blocks in Baltimore heat (with no time since I had panels abutting on both sides), I decided to skip it. (Later, I heard differing statements from various people as to whether the programming had moved or not, merely confirming that there was confusion.)

So instead I went to TM.

Alternate History World-Building: The Pirate Empire

Saturday, 1PM

Ellen Asher, Jamaica Rose, Katya Reimann, Steven H Silver, S. M. Stirling (m)

"A world-building panel for alternate history buffs... What would the world look like if an independent pirate kingdom arose in the Caribbean in the early 1700s?"

Stirling pointed out that there was a pirate state in Madagascar which hit the Grand Mogul's treasure ship from Mecca to India, netting \$300,000,000 in 1998 dollars. But eventually they were thrown out by the locals. And in fact, that was basically the answer to the question: They would either cease being pirates or be wiped out by the other maritime powers.

Most of the rest of the time was a general discussion of piracy rather than the premise. Random observations made included:

- | The way to get rich was not to be a pirate, but to run the tavern, the brothel, and the powder-and-shot concession. countries' cities and ships.

How to Become Invisible

Saturday, 2PM

William Barton, Michael A. Burstein (m), Sabrina Chase, Larry Niven

"From fairy tales to H. G. Wells, we have always loved stories about people becoming invisible. Our panel discusses a variety of ways, scientific and silly, that humans might accomplish this wonder.

Join this exercise in creative thinking."

Niven felt that the point of invisibility is voyeurism, but said the mechanics are fun to work out. On the other hand, why not be invisible by being somewhere else and have a screen that shows you everything? He said that this not being enough implied some desire to affect things.

Burstein said that Wells realized that his Invisible Man would be blind. But the first question for the panel was how they would render something or someone invisible. It was suggested that one could use a lot of fiber optics to project what is in back of you from the front, etc. Chase felt you needed to define invisible as not being detected by a particular method: invisible to infrared camera is not the same as invisible to a person. Adaptive optics used to compensate for atmospheric effects could be adapted. Camouflage is possible but true invisibility is not. Burstein mentioned "The Purloined Letter" in this regard because (he said) he felt he needed to mention Poe in Baltimore or I would chastise him later. (No, but I will chastise the convention newsletter for consistently misspelling Poe's middle name as "Allen.")

Barton talked about evolutionary disguise and camouflage as a form of invisibility. Parrots are very visible to each other and invisible to monkeys because of differences in color vision.

Burstein said that no chemicals will do it. He would define invisible as having someone look at you and see what is behind you.

Niven suggested telepathic methods (shrinking the optic nerve, etc.) Chase suggested an opaque hologram, and also talked about aerogel, a basically invisible substance. (Once when they dropped some on the floor in the lab, they couldn't find it!).

At the end of the panel, someone asked, "What would you do if you could become invisible?"

Barton voted for voyeurism and getting away with things. Chase wanted to be "the voice in people's heads," but also to observe animals unobserved. Niven wanted to go to south Los Angeles and observe. And Burstein said he wanted to stand behind some poor Iowa farmer and say "If you build it, they will come"

Mining Mesopotamia

Saturday, 5PM

Brenda W. Clough (m), Hannah M. G. Shapero, Harry Turtledove

"Gilgamesh is hot! More and more SF authors seem to be going back to the Tigris and Euphrates for inspiration. Come find out why."

Though the description claims "more and more science fiction authors seem to be going back to the Tigris and Euphrates for inspiration," the only ones the panelists could come up with were Clough (How Like a God), Turtledove (Between Two Rivers), and Robert Silverberg (Gilgamesh the King). (Later people mentioned Geoff Ryman's book The Warrior Who Carried Life, Neal Stephenson's Snow Crash, and unspecified works by John Gardner and Gene Wolfe as well.) Shapero isn't even working in that area but is a Zoroastrian scholar more familiar with Persia.

(Turtledove seems to use everything plus a little Julian Jaynes.)

One reason that Gilgamesh appeals to these authors is that no one reads cuneiform. So it's easier to "cheat" and the translations are often questionable in the first place. (Clough said one of the translators also claimed the Ark of the Covenant was cubical, so she doesn't trust his translation at all.) There's also the feeling of "This is mine!"-it's not Celtic or Arthurian or Graeco-Roman or

anything else everyone is doing. (But Turtledove added, "And in consequence it doesn't sell nearly as well.")

Clough mentioned one difficulty if you try to write in the style of the original epic (or any epic from an oral culture): the repetitions that were common then are not common now. So when one character says, "Go to the house of your father and ask of the merchant," and another responds, "I will go to the house of my father and ask of the merchant," this seems prolix. As Clough said, when she was reading Turtledove's *Between Two Rivers*, her late twentieth-century instincts kept saying, "He could chop this by a third." Turtledove said, "I was trying for atmosphere and not for boredom. I hope I succeeded."

(A similar stylistic attempt was made by Charles Whitmore when he wrote *Winter's Daughter* in the style of a Norse epic.)

Clough said that one reason the book reads differently is that there is a definite literary tempo these days. In films, it's the difference between *2001: A Space Odyssey* and *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. Turtledove agreed, saying that the grand expository lump is less common and more annoying than it used to be. On the other hand, he said, it's also less necessary in most books. Where at one point a story set in Paris had to explain Paris to most people, people are now familiar with Paris, and no lump is needed. For Mesopotamia, a lump is still needed.

Clough said that for her research she relied heavily on National Geographic. At one point she needed a map of Kazakhstan. She knew someone who worked for Kyrgyzstan (right next door), so she asked him for a map and the trade ministry sent her a map-from National Geographic!

The panelists talked a bit about how Zoroasterism was still practiced (unlike the ancient Mesopotamian religion). Shapero said that Mithra was a charioteer with a chariot made of clouds, but that some earlier gods were now "demoted" to intermediaries to the one high god as a concession (or adaptation or evolution) to monotheism. She also mentioned that Zoroasterism forbids fasting and allows drinking, setting it somewhat apart from the other religions. Turtledove said that Western monotheistic religions owe a lot to Zoroasterism: the conflict between good and evil, the idea of an adversary to God, and the ideas of Heaven and Hell. Shapero said that Zoroasterism also invented angels (semi-divine intermediaries).

Turtledove also noted that the legend of the Flood comes from Mesopotamian myth in general and the Gilgamesh legend in particular. He also claimed the *Restaurant at the End of the Universe* comes from Gilgamesh, though I'm not sure how.

Clough said there seemed to be some tradition that the two heroes have to fight before becoming friends. Shapero asked, "Isn't that a man thing?" to which Clough replied, "I don't know, but it's a Mesopotamian thing."

Someone said that Mesopotamia is popular in academia, with courses on Mesopotamia at Stanford, Johns Hopkins, etc. Someone else mentioned Saddam Hussein reconstructing the Ishtar Gate, and Clough said, "This is a very traditional way to consolidate your rule if you're a son of a bitch."

There is a lot more Mesopotamian source material out there, the panelists said, but it's more like dunning letters, requests for money, etc., than anything useful for writing a story.

Someone mentioned James B. Pritchard's *Introduction to the Near East*; I couldn't find a book of that title, but he has several books on the ancient Near East that are probably what was referred to.

Someone asked, "Is there a historical Gilgamesh?" Well, there's a semi-historical Gilgamesh like Romulus and Remus. And there is supposedly a Gilgamesh story in the *Arabian Nights*.

Regarding authors using Gilgamesh, Turtledove said, "One is a happenstance, two is a trend, three is a movement." Fantasy is searching for something to replace the Arthurian and Celtic cycles that are starting to wear down. Someone apparently suggested at one time that the South Seas would be the next mythology to mine, but that never took off. Shapero said, "Every Iranian child is brought up on the shahnamehs ("books of kings") like every English child is brought up on Arthur and every American child is brought up on Star Trek." (The best known shahnameh is The Epic of Shahnameh Ferdowsi (1010 C.E.). This is even available on-line at <http://www.cit.ics.saitama-u.ac.jp/hobbies/iran/shahnameh.html>.)

Speaking of popular mythologies, Shapero claimed, "The adulation of Celtic things in our community here has a basis in the racist attitudes of the late 19th and early 20th century white people." Clough attributed it to less sinister motives: "Celtic stuff has keen jewelry."

Regarding the racial aspect, someone said, "Indo-Iranian is the nice way to say Aryan after World War II." Someone in the audience, trying to be helpful and probably equating "Aryan" with simply "white," added, "Most of the people in this room aren't really Aryan, you know." To which Turtledove could say only, "Gevalt!" (Clough could have added the Chinese equivalent, but didn't.)

This reminded Clough that someone was trying to create a "virtual Temple" on-line. Shapero asked, "Can you virtually sacrifice a bull?" Someone in the audience said, "Virtual blood," causing Turtledove to muse, "What is Christianity?"

Shapero mentioned "Mystical Mesopotamia" and Hellenistic-Chaldean mysticism, as popularized by Madame Blavatsky, who she said created a "huge snowball of culture." Turtledove described Blavatsky as "an aggressive plagiarizer."

Shapero also said that Marie Corelli wrote a series of fantasies set in this milieu and felt there should be a Society of Mesopotamian Anachronism ("Mesopotamia as it should have been").

Turtledove summed up Mesopotamia by saying there was more room to maneuver in it but also more room to be an idiot.

Masquerade

Saturday, 8PM

Unlike the last Baltimore Worldcon masquerade, this did not take three and a half hours for the first run-through; it took two and a half. It was, however, plagued with technical problems, including a fall off the stage by the Master of Ceremonies Marty Gear which left him badly bruised but otherwise uninjured (i.e., no broken bones).

SF and Religion -- Compatible or Incompatible?

Sunday, 12N

Janice Gelb, Joe Mayhew, James Morrow (m), Gene Wolfe

"Are religion and Science Fiction fundamentally at odds with each other? The Great Galactic Spirit in Asimov's 'Foundation' trilogy, the Great God in Fritz Leiber's Gather Darkness and the Therns portrayed in Edgar Rice Burrough's Barsoomian novels all portray religion as charlatanry. The Increate from Gene Wolfe's 'Book of the New Sun,' Elbereth and the Valar from J. R. R. Tolkien's 'Lord of the Rings' portray religion in a more sympathetic light. Which is right?"

("Which is right?" Who writes these things?)

Wolfe started by saying, "I wanted to be on this panel,' he says, lying through his teeth, because it is about one of the most fundamental questions of science fiction" (i.e., how we look at religion). He continued by saying that Christians should be allowed to write science fiction, Jews should be able to write Jewish science fiction, and so on. (This of course immediately led me to wonder why Christians shouldn't be allowed to write Jewish science fiction, and vice versa. I mean, Mary Doria Russell is a Jew and just won the John W. Campbell Award for writing *The Sparrow*.)

Gelb said that things have gotten a lot better than they used to be; Gelb is Jewish. (Wolfe is Catholic.) Mayhew said he was thrown out of seminary for being a Protestant. And Morrow described himself as a satirist by trade who critiques dark side of religion, continuing the conversation that began in the eighteenth century with the Enlightenment, an as a secular humanist atheist.

The panelists began with the question of whether it is an accident or inevitable that Asimov (an atheist) wrote hard science fiction and Tolkien (a believer) wrote fantasy. Wolfe thought it was not inevitable. In more general terms, he felt it was foolish to say, "I can't believe in anything I can't prove," because if one espouses a very materialist philosophy, then to be consistent one must first prove that philosophy is correct. He claimed that Asimov was an atheist because it was convenient to avoid Jewish dietary laws. Gelb said that the route most people take (to do that) is to be a Unitarian. (Someone in the audience said that Asimov once said that he was outwardly an atheist because it annoyed so many people.)

Wolfe also quoted George Bernard Shaw as saying, "Sex, religion, and politics are the only things worth discussing."

Mayhew rambled a bit about morals and ethics and email (?) and cloning, but seemed to be supporting at least examining religious issues in science fiction. "Lesser writers assume this posture that religion has nothing to offer," he said, thereby somewhat insulting Morrow (whom I would not call a minor writer).

Morrow responded by saying that we are a very religious animal, but are science and religion actually compatible? Religion assumes a supernatural dimension, but science confines itself to the natural. (There was much shouting from the audience at this point.) He went on to say, "Science really has nothing to say about our moral systems, nor should it." (First of all, he seems to be talking here about science, not science fiction, and second, this sounds to me less that he is claiming science and religion are incompatible and more that they are orthogonal.) Morrow also distinguished among varieties of religious "personnel," saying "I can imagine Jerry Falwell dropping the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, but I can't imagine Jesus doing it."

Mayhew thought the difference between science and religion was not a contradiction: "You wear socks and shoes. They're not the same, but they both fit on your feet." "The best religious items are the ones that ask the best questions," he said. "What we're talking about here is vocabulary." He was willing to say that religion often didn't mesh with "science," but felt that didn't matter: "Sometimes [religion is] a wonderful load of bullshit that helps us live." He compared this to the Ptolemaic charts, which were "wrong," but worked.

Morrow quoted Stephen Jay Gould as saying science is irrelevant to these big questions. Wolfe responded that if science says it has nothing to do with ethics, then we will start seeing a lot more bad science. (I completely disagree with him. Science isn't saying that scientists can ignore ethics, just that science cannot derive ethical laws within its own structure. An audience member said something similar: "You cannot use the scientific method to study ethics." That is, you cannot do an experiment to determine if someone has ethics.)

Asked for positive images of religion, the panelists mentioned James Blish's *Case of Conscience*,

Michael Bishop, and Gene Wolfe. (I would add Mary Doria Russell. As an example of changing perceptions, someone claimed that *The Sparrow* wouldn't have been published twenty years ago.)

Mayhew claimed, "God is a whole lot better than any description we can come up with and is probably pleased with you atheists because you have rejected something shabby." Mayhew also claimed that traffic jams and driver rage are evidence for the idea of original sin, which he implied was common to all the religions represented on the panel, leading Gelb to explain, that, no, Jews do not believe in "original sin." (Along these lines, I highly recommend Abba Hillel Silver's *Where Judaism Differs*, also known as *Where Judaism Differed*, which talks about some of the common aspects of religions and how Judaism is not in agreement with other religions (primarily Christianity). I highly recommend it so that when someone starts talking about "the Judeo-Christian religion" you will realize that there is no such thing.)

Morrow returned to a theme he has examined in his books by saying "One is left with the problem of evil." That is, if one assumes a "relevant interventionist God," one runs into the problem of explaining human suffering. "If God is evil, or God is an under-achiever, it matters." Wolfe said that given the problems of the world, he envisioned someone saying to God, "Six days? It took you six days to make this." (Gelb added, "And we have mosquitoes.")

The panelists also talked about science fiction that glorified religion over science, such as Theodore Roszak's *Memoirs of Elizabeth Frankenstein*, and *Star Wars*'s "Use the force, Luke!"

Someone said, "Religion has things you have to take on faith; science says you must prove things. How do you draw the line?" Morrow responded that the word "proof" is a weasel-word. One needs to look at the evidence and see if this theory is a good way of explaining it. He asked how one could "prove" the existence of God. I suggested Sagan's proof (from *Contact*), but Wolfe said that proofs would have no effect on people who didn't already believe in God.

At the end, someone in the audience pointed out that the panel was addressing religion only from a Western perspective. One would hope that if the panel is done again, a wider range would be represented.

Great Forgotten Horror Writers

Sunday, 1PM

Jack L. Chalker (m), Ellen Datlow, David G. Hartwell, Darrell Schweitzer, Diane Weinstein

"They never won a Hugo or HWA Award; their books have been out of print for years; but these authors made a difference on the field, and their works are well worth a look today. Compare our panel's suggestions against your own list of forgotten horror greats."

Schweitzer began by saying, "In the current state of horror publishing, a forgotten horror author is anyone who is not Stephen King, Dean Koontz, Robert McCammon, or Clive Barker." (This sounded a lot like the fantasy panel, who listed the five major fantasy authors and said everyone else was pretty much forgotten.)

This panel turned into much more of just a listing of authors than either the science fiction or fantasy panels.

Hartwell listed E. T. A. Hoffman, Sheridan LeFanu, Ambrose Bierce, and Julian Hawthorne (son of Nathaniel Hawthorne, who probably also should have been listed).

(I felt that if LeFanu and Bierce are forgotten, then what Schweitzer said at the start was true, and this was a pointless panel.)

Weinstein named Daphne du Maurier and Edward Lucas White.

Schweitzer went all the way back to the Golden Age of Lucius Apollonius, but also listed FitzJames O'Brien, Robert W. Chambers, F. Marion Crawford, E. F. Benson, Henry Whitehead, Lord Dunsany, Walter Delamare, and Jane Rice's "Idol of the Flies."

Datlow mentioned Ashtree Press (which won a World Fantasy Convention Award). Schweitzer said, "We are familiar with all the followers of Lovecraft," but M. R. James had another circle and that is what Ashtree Press is working through. Datlow also listed Ray Bradbury and Gerald Kersh.

Chalker named Seabury Quinn, Arthur Machen, and Norvell W. Page's "But Without Horns."

Someone mentioned Ray Russell's Case Against Satan.

Hartwell suggested they list anthologies where people could find these authors. (Many of these are out of print, but available in used book stores.) The list included:

- August Derleth's anthologies (there are several) similar titles) Supernatural Stories, 100 Wicked Little Witch Stories).

(Apparently Hugh Hefner's first appearance in print was in the letter column of Weird Tales. Weird Tales also published Tennessee Williams's first story.)

Other places to look for these authors included Project Gutenberg and other on-line book repositories, and Dover books.

Recommended reference works were Everett F. Bleiler's Guide to Supernatural Fiction and H. P. Lovecraft's Supernatural Horror in Literature. (The latter is in print from Dover.)

(Other authors I would add would be Sax Rohmer, Victor Hugo, Bram Stoker, Gaston Leroux, and Guy Endore.)

Let me again recommend <http://www.mxbf.com> and <http://www.bibliofind.com> as two good places to search for used books on-line.

Must Reads: Authors on their Favorite Authors

Sunday, 2PM

Rosemary Edghill (m), Gardner Dozois, George R. R. Martin, Harry Turtledove

"Your favorite authors talk about who THEY'RE reading and why."

This didn't quite turn out as I had hoped, though I'm not sure quite what I expected.

It started with which writers the panelists admired (not the same as who they're reading). Martin said, "The greatest living SF writer without a doubt is Jack Vance. He will throw away ideas another writer would have made three-book trilogy." Turtledove expressed admiration for Vance, Avram Davidson, R. A. Lafferty, Poul Anderson ("That's what I want to be when I grow up!"), and L. Sprague de Camp.

Edghill moved away from the classics into what she had read recently: Matthew Woodring Stover's Heroes Die and Jericho Moon, Scott Westerfield's Polymorph and Fine Prey, Laura Resnick's In Legend Born ("I love the politics because they're so political"), Robin Hobb's "Liveship" series,

James Alan Garner's *Expendables*, and James Stoddard's *High House*.

Dozois also recommended Vance, both his well-known "Demon Princes" books and his lesser-known *Emphyrio*. Martin said that Vance is still working at the top of his form.

Dozois also recommended Cordwainer Smith; *The Rediscovery of Man* is a collection of his short fiction from NESFA. NESFA was mentioned as a source of collections of out-of-press authors: Murray Leinster (*First Contacts*) and Charles Harness are their recent projects. Other recommendations included Edgar Pangborn's *Davy* and Alfred Bester's *Stars My Destination*.

Edghill recommended C. L. Moore and Theodore Sturgeon, but by now they seem to have drifted more into the "forgotten authors" panel than "what they're reading." There were a lot of authors and books listed, but not much said about any one of them.

Dozois listed another seven or eight authors. However, earlier he had said that he reads only five or six science fiction books a year, so when is he reading these? (Admittedly some are probably writing short stories, but still)

Someone mentioned *The Dragon Waiting* by John M. Ford and someone else asked, "What would you call that?" Martin responded, "I call it the book that beat me for the World Fantasy Award."

In a rather desperate attempt to get the panel back to the topic, I asked, "What three books did you last read and what do you most want to read next?"

Martin said he had read *The Black Ship* (a non-fiction book), Lawrence Sanders' mystery *Even the Wicked*, and one of Kate Elliot "King's Dragon" series. Turtledove had just read two books by Patrick O'Brian, a Terry Pratchett, and *Komar* by Lois McMaster Bujold. He was going to be reading some William Sanders (*The Next Victim*, *A Death on 66*, and *Blood Autumn*). Edghill listed *The Partner* by John Grisham, *A Likely Story* by Donald Westlake, and some histories of the Templars, ice skating, the sea, and Alzheimer's. Dozois read *A Dying Light in Cordoba* by Lindsay Davis, *First Eagle* by Tony Hillerman, and *A Walk in the Woods* by Bill Bryson.

Someone asked for each author's favorite obscure book that would stump everybody in the room. Dozois said somewhat cynically that these days that would probably be *Dune*. Edghill nominated *The Butterfly Kid* by Chester Anderson. Turtledove picked Chris Morris's *I, the Sun*, which Martin described as "obscure but probably the best known book about the Hittites." Martin himself named Ward Moore's *Greener Than You Think*.

Dozois (more seriously than before) cited Avram Davidson's *Masters of the Maze*.

Someone asked how the panelists avoid dross. Edghill said, "You read three pages, it doesn't interest you, and you don't do it again."

Dozois put in a final plug for R. A. Lafferty: *The Fall of Rome* (Alaric), *Okla Hannali*, *The Reefs of Earth*, *The Devil Is Dead*, *Space Chantey*.

Liars Panel

Pat Cadigan, Joe Haldeman, Susan Matthews (m), Robert Silverberg, Connie Willis

Gay SF 101: A History of Gay SF, Fantasy and Horror

Rob Gates (m), Peter Knapp, Susan Matthews, Steven Piziks, Lawrence Schimel

I listened to these two panels on cassette. On the whole, the recordings seemed adequate, though the panelists didn't always repeat comments or questions from the audience. I am not, however, going to try to describe these in detail. The "Liars Panel" was probably funnier in person, though I was getting tired of the Monica Lewinsky jokes even then. "Gay SF 101" seemed to be mostly a bibliographical-type panel, with not as much meaningful discussion of the books as I hoped for. Then again, that's probably in "Gay SF 102."

Miscellaneous

The "no-zone" amendment for Worldcons was passed. If passed in Australia next year, this would eliminate the North American zones and say merely that a Worldcon cannot be within 500 miles (or 800 kilometers) of where site selection for it is being held.

The distributed nature of the convention (spread over five hotels and the convention center) combined with the heat and humidity of Baltimore, made enjoying it somewhat of a problem. The Con Suite was in one of the hotels, meaning dropping in during the day was not a possibility; the same was true of the Fan Lounge. (And maybe someone can explain to me the difference between the two.)

Kate reported that some woman stopped Guest of Honor Michael Whelan, hiked up her skirt, and asked him to autograph the tattoos on her thighs which were based on his art.

For future conventions, let me include a couple of quotes from Patrick Nielsen Hayden. First, regarding the many tracks of fairly mediocre programming one all too often finds at Worldcons these days, he says his slogan is "Better programming and less of it." And he also quotes "Rule 3 of Worldcon programs: more people are interested in the science track than you'd ever expect."

Philadelphia won the bid for 2001. The convention will be called the Millennium Philcon and be held 30 August through 3 September, 2001. The Guests of Honor are Greg Bear, Stephen Youll, Gardner Dozois, and George Scithers. Toastmaster is Esther Friesner. They can be reached at Philadelphia in 2001, Suite 2001, 402 Huntingdon Pike, Rockledge PA 19046; <http://www.netaxs.com/~phil2001/>; or phil2001@netaxs.com.

Next year in Australia! (On the way down, I was saying that I would go to a Worldcon just about anywhere. Then I modified that by saying, "Well, I wouldn't go to a convention in Congo, for example." To which Mark replied, "Why not? The name is perfect.")

Little-Known Fantastic Films To Look For

Bucconeer, 1998
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One of the things I like to do occasionally in my film reviews is to make reference to some very good film that I doubt most of my readers have heard of and that I would like to call some attention to. There are a lot of decent films, and a handful of very good ones, that at this point may exist only in the film libraries of obscure television stations, and when these few prints disappear the films will be gone. I would like to generate some interest in four of these films, if not to help save them, at least to alert people that if you do get a chance to see these films, it is a rare chance and you should give them a try.

Of course, there are a lot of obscure films that are showing up on videotape today, many of them

very poorly-made films, and it is ironic that some terrific films are being over-looked, but in each case I think I can understand why some producer would think the film would not sell well on tape. There are three science fiction films and one horror film. However, none of the film has special effects. Particularly for science fiction, people have come to expect visual effects. I guess they feel that if they do not really enjoy the story then at least there will be something interesting to watch. These films are just actors in front of a camera, perhaps with a very rudimentary make-up effect thrown in (but very little). Three of the films are in black and white and unfortunately that is also considered to be a strike against a film. I still recommend these films highly to watch for.

The Mind Benders (1962) (directed by Basil Dearden)

This film combines Cold War thriller elements with science fiction and a compelling human story. A scientist working on sensory deprivation commits suicide and is discovered to have been passing secrets to the Soviets. Was he to blame or could his mind have been twisted while under the influence of the sensory deprivation tank? The government decides to experiment to find out. Another scientist working in the same field (played by Dirk Bogarde) is very devoted to his wife and family. Can they change that in his personality while he is in the tank? This film is well-acted, enthralling, and atmospheric.

Unearthly Stranger (1963) (directed by John Kirsh)

A secret project is working on space exploration right in the heart of London. The approach to exploration is a novel one. Rather than sending the whole human into space, they are working on a sort of technological out-of-body experience. Project your mind to another planet and there have it take on physical form ... invasion by mental projection. The rub is that scientists on the project are being killed in some mysterious way involving super-high energy. And the wives of some of the scientists seem to have no background that project security can trace. The script is tense and the acting is quite good, with a cast that includes John Neville (*A Study in Terror*, *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen*) and Jean Marsh (*Upstairs, Downstairs*). (This film is so obscure that Leonard Maltin's usually very complete *Movie and Video Guide* overlooks it.)

Dark Intruder (1965) (directed by Harvey Hart)

This film is only 59 minutes long and originally was intended as a television pilot, but was released to theaters to play with films such as William Castle's *I Saw What You Did*-which it far out-classed. Leslie Nielsen plays a detective in late 19th Century San Francisco whose foppish appearance hides a man very knowledgeable and adept in matters of the occult and the supernatural. A series of unsolved murders and a friend's blackout spells may be connected and have some occult significance. Mark Richman and Werner Klemperer also star. The latter, best known as the gullible commandant from *Hogan's Heroes*, does a terrific job in a sinister role.

Quest for Love (1971) (directed by Ralph Thomas)

This film is loosely adapted from the short story "Random Quest" by John Wyndham. Colin Trafford (played by Tom Bell) is a leading scientist at Britain Imperial Physical Institute when one of his experiments goes wrong. Suddenly he finds himself in a parallel London in a parallel Britain that has not been to war since the Great War in the early part of the century. Trafford here is not a physicist, but a popular playwright. He is also now married to a beautiful woman (played by Joan Collins) whose life he has made miserable with his selfish ways and his philandering. Can Colin convince the world he is the playwright while convincing his new wife that he is different? Then there are plot complications that lead to a fast-paced climax across parallel worlds. Denholm Elliot also stars in the story which is part science fiction adventure and part love story.

Of these four films only the last is in color. At present, the only one available on video, *Unearthly*

Stranger, is offered only by a tiny specialty house, Sinister Cinema. Of the four, only Quest for Love has played on New York area television in the last fifteen years. I would much like to get my hands on copies of The Mind Benders or Dark Intruder.

Additional Films to Look For

Faust (1926)

Director F. W. Murnau is better known for Nosferatu, but there is a lot of good visual fantasy in this film version of the famous play by Goethe. There is a terrific image of the Devil spreading his cape over a village, and many other visual surprises throughout.

The Man Who Laughs (1928)

The story could be better, but Conrad Veidt is terrific in the role of a man whose face is carved into a huge involuntary grin. Veidt conveys a full range of emotions through his eyes alone. The grinning Veidt was the visual inspiration for Batman's foe The Joker.

The Dybbuk (1939)

At times this is very slow but also at times a very effective horror film. This was a low-budget film done in Yiddish. The "Dance of Death" scene had become an eerie classic. The story deals with a man's soul returning from the dead to possess the woman he loved.

The Seventh Victim (1943)

Other Val Lewton films get more attention but this film is blacker and bleaker than anything every done in film noir. This is a solid mood piece that stands above Lewton's other films. A woman searching for her sister runs afoul of murder and Satanists.

Night of the Demon (a.k.a. Curse of the Demon) (1957)

This film has gotten some attention because of an allusion in a song in Rocky Horror Picture Show but it is rarely seen. That is a pity because it is quite a nice little supernatural thriller. It suffers a little from showing the audience too much too soon, but it still is suspenseful and well-written.

Night of the Eagle (a.k.a. Burn, Witch, Burn) (1962)

When Richard Matheson and Charles Beaumont co-write a screenplay based on a novel by Fritz Lieber, you just naturally expect a good thriller. This story about an empirical college professor discovering that his wife and several other professors' wives around him are actually witches is very well-produced.

Devil Doll (1963)

This is a wildly uneven film, but it has many very good moments. There have been several attempts to do the stories of ventriloquist dummies who have lives of their own. This is the most intriguing treatment of the theme. For once the secret of the dummy is not a let-down.

Crack in the World (1965)

The first and last ideas of this film are pretty silly, but in between this is a fairly exciting super-disaster film. Some of the visuals are spectacular. There is also some complexity to the characters.

Quatermass and the Pit (a.k.a. Five Million Years to Earth) (1968)

This film is finally getting a cult following and some recognition. It is much better known in Britain. The model of what a science thriller should be, it unfolds like a science fiction detective story uncovering a discovery that has greater and greater implications about the nature of mankind. This is one of the great idea films of science fiction cinema.

The Devil Rides Out (a.k.a. The Devil's Bride) (1968)

Richard Matheson's adaptation of the black magic novel by Dennis Wheatley takes a science fiction-like approach to Satanism. It is fast-paced and at times fairly intelligent. Also worth seeing is Hammer Films' other adaptation of Wheatley black magic, *To the Devil a Daughter*.

Witchfinder General (a.k.a. Conqueror Worm) (1968)

A vital and well-made historical fringe-horror film about one of the great villains of English history, Matthew Hopkins. Even Vincent Price does a reasonable acting job. The original musical score is actually quite beautiful, though there is a version with an entirely different and much less enjoyable score.

Satan's Skin (a.k.a. Blood on Satan's Claw) (1970)

In some ways an imitation of the style of *Witchfinder General*. A 17th Century English ploughman turns up the remains of a demon and the artifact exerts satanic influence on the children of the region. This is a very atmospheric film with an authentic historical feel.

Count Yorga, Vampire (1973)

This low-budget horror film redefined the concept of the vampire. As a reaction to the staid, hypnotic, and slow vampires of British horror films, this film makes most vampires fast moving predatory deadly animals who hunt in packs. At the time this was pretty scary stuff and the film still has a lot of its impact.

Phase IV (1974)

Two mutually alien intelligences in the beginnings of a serious war. It is really more about how each side collects information about the other and uses its physical differences against the other. Ants somehow develop a gestalt mind and prepare to make themselves the masters of the world. Visually very impressive with direction by visual artist Saul Bass (best known for creating striking title sequences for other directors' films). There is also some terrific insect photography.

Who? (1974)

This fairly accurate adaptation of Algis Budrys' novel had film stock problems (!) and could not be released to theaters. That is a genuine pity. Cold War story of its near future has a scientist important to military defense in a bad accident. The East Germans get ahold of him and return him to the West more prosthetic than living matter. Now the problem is, how do you prove that he is who he says he is?

The Last Wave (1977)

Australian Peter Weir build his reputation on this strange, mystical film about a lawyer who finds he might be the fulfillment of an Aboriginal prophecy. Images of nature out of balance and an intriguing story make this story a real spellbinder. This is a hard film to pigeon-hole and the intelligence of the

writing never flags.

Dragonslayer (1981)

Lots of films try to do Medieval high fantasy, but this is probably the best. With the death of a great magician, his young apprentice must see if he has mastered enough of his master's art to destroy a terrific dragon who is ravaging the countryside. There are lots of nice touches in the script and the dragon is the best ever created on film.

Knightriders (1981)

George Romero says he got this out of his system and never has to make another film like Knightriders. What a pity! This was one of the best films of its year. Superficially this is the story of a traveling Renaissance Fair that features jousts on motorcycles. But it has some terrific characters and a theme of the struggle between integrity and commercialism and between idealism and practicality. And late in the film the viewer realizes that the film has also been doing something else all along.

Lifeforce (1981)

Very few fans are willing to look beyond the naked woman and the zombies to see what is one of the most bizarre and audacious concepts for any science fiction film. Vampires, we learn, are really beings that leak lifeforce into the atmosphere like a tire with a slow leak leaks air. They must replenish the force regularly or they die. Much as we put bacteria into milk to multiply and make yogurt or cheese, some huge, incomprehensible, amoral, alien race seeds earth with vampires. The numbers of these numbers will increase exponentially, leaking more and more lifeforce into the environment so the aliens can vacuum it up.

A Chinese Ghost Story (1987)

Hong Kong is making their own horror film movement for their own audience. Their films are fast-paced, usually liberally laced with comedy and martial arts, but also having some interesting horror concepts. No one such film is all that terrific (at least among the films I have seen so far) but some are astonishing and full of unexpected touches. Look for the "Chinese Ghost Story" films, Wicked City, and Mr. Vampire (which must have a different name in China since it is really about Chinese "Hopping Ghosts").

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Alternate History 101

Bucconeer, 1998
compiled by Evelyn C. Leeper

Will Shetterly's Rule: "There are no correct alternate histories; there are only plausible alternate histories."

"Plausibility, as the necessary brake and control element, has been our most essential guide." -Harold C. Deutsch, introduction to *What If? Strategic Alternatives of WWII*

"It is easy to argue persuasively the truism that the lessons of history are best derived from what actually happened, rather than from what nearly happened. It should be added, however, that what happened becomes more fully comprehensible in the light of the contending forces that existed at moments of decision. Understanding of the total historical setting is bound to contribute to a clearer view of the actual course of affairs." -Harold C. Deutsch, introduction to *What If? Strategic Alternatives of WWII*

Why is alternate history science fiction?

- | Kim Stanley Robinson: "Science fiction is the history that we cannot know." very science fictional technique: change one thing and extrapolate from that."

It is important to distinguish among alternate histories, parallel worlds, alternate universes, and secret histories. Alternate history fiction requires that the world described be historically the same as ours up to some point prior to when the author wrote the story, after which things begin to get different. (*)

Other names for alternate history:

- | Alternative history: Brian Stableford noted, "Some years ago I used the term 'alternate worlds' in front of Brian Aldiss, who took me to task for it. 'They should be called alternative worlds', he said. 'Calling them alternate worlds makes it sound as if they somehow take turns.'" used by Charles Renouvier in an anonymous article in *Revue Philosophique et Religieuse* in 1857. "Uchronie" is still the preferred term in French for alternate history literature. term preferred by Gordon B. Chamberlain. professional historians and economists.

Common abbreviations:

ACW = American Civil War

AH = alternate history

ATL = alternate timeline

OTL = our timeline

POD, PoD = point of divergence

WI = what-if

Most common what-ifs in literature:

At the "Histories: The Way We Weren't" panel at Boskone 28. Mark Keller said that the most common change points were (in English-language science fiction, anyway) was "What if Germany (Japan) had won World War II?" (over a hundred that he found). The next most popular was "What if the South had won the Civil War?" (about eighty). Third was "What if the Spanish Armada had not been defeated?" The most popular in French was "What if Napoleon had not been defeated?" which Keller said usually resulted in a better world than we have, while most American alternate histories show things as being worse. When someone in the audience asked why, Mark Olson replied, "We look at this as the best of all possible worlds, but the French know it isn't, because most people speak English."

Looking at the Uchronia list, the most common PoDs (by story) seem to be:

- | World War II 1939-1945 131 (plus 19 in 1946)
- | Civil War 1860-1861 75
- | World War I/Russian
- | Revolution 1914-1918 24
- | Death of Richard Coeur
- | de Lion 1199 18
- | Kennedy Assassination 1963 14
- | Cuban Missile Crisis 1962 13
- | FDR 1932-1933 13
- | Waterloo 1815 12
- | Spanish Armada 1588 12
- | Jacobite Wars 1746 11
- | Fall of Moorish
- | Spain/Columbus Discovers 1492 11
- | America

Most common by author:

- | World War II 1939-1945 119 (plus 7 in 1946)
- | Civil War 1860-1861 57
- | World War I/Russian
- | Revolution 1914-1918 25
- | Kennedy Assassination 1963 13
- | Cuban Missile Crisis 1962 11
- | FDR 1932-1933 13
- | Waterloo 1815 12
- | Fall of Moorish
- | Spain/Columbus Discovers 1492 10
- | America
- | Vietnam War 1968 9
- | Watergate 1968 6
- | Spanish Armada 1588 6
- | American Revolution 1776 6
- | Jacobite Wars 1746 1
- | Death of Richard Coeur
- | de Lion 1199 1

Bibliography and Recommended Reading

Alternate history book list: <http://www.skatecity.com/ah>

Recommended books about alternate history:

- | The best is Charles G. Waugh and Martin H. Greenberg's *Alternative Histories: Eleven Stories of the World As It Might Have Been* (Garland 1986).
- | Ed McKnight's doctoral thesis (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill 1994) *Alternative History: the Development of a Literary Genre* is available from UMI Dissertation Services as order number 9508228.
- | If you can read German, Jorg Helbig's dissertation (Freie Universitaet Berlin 1987) has been published as a book (*Der Parahistorische Roman. Ein Literarhistorischer Und Gattungstypologischer Beitrag Zur Allotopieforschung*) and it focuses on two general types of alternate history: intellectual study vs. fictional allegory.

- | There is also J. C. Squire's *If It Had Happened Otherwise: Lapses into Imaginary History* (Longmans, Green 1931; exp Sidgwick & Jackson 1972; St. Martin's 1974); rev as *If: Or, History Rewritten* (Viking 1931; Kennikat 1964).

Recommended alternate histories:

- | Classics:
 - | de Camp, L. Sprague, *Lest Darkness Fall*
 - | Dick, Philip K., *The Man in the High Castle*
 - | Garrett, Randall, *Murder and Magic, Too Many Magicians, and Lord Darcy Investigates*
 - | Kantor, Mackinlay, *If The South Had Won the Civil War*
 - | Moore, Ward, *Bring the Jubilee*
 - | Piper, H. Beam, *Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen*
 - | Roberts, Keith, *Pavane*
 - | Sobel, Robert, *For Want of a Nail™; If Burgoyne Had Won at Saratoga*
 - | Spinrad, Norman, *The Iron Dream*
- | Recent:
 - | Baxter, Stephen, *Voyage*
 - | Dreyfuss, Richard and Harry Turtledove, *The Two Georges*
 - | Garfinkle, Richard, *Celestial Matters: A Novel of Alternate Science*
 - | Harris, Robert, *Fatherland*
 - | Harrison, Harry, & John Holm, *The Hammer and the Cross Trilogy*
 - | McAuley, Paul J., *Pasquale's Angel*
 - | Newman, Kim, *Anno Dracula and The Bloody Red Baron*
 - | Turtledove, Harry, *The Guns of the South: A Novel of the Civil War*
 - | Turtledove, Harry, *How Few Remain*
 - | Turtledove, Harry, *Worldwar Tetralogy*
 - | Wilson, Robert Charles, *Darwinia*
 - | Wilson, Robert Charles, *Mysterium*
- | Anthologies:
 - | Benford, Gregory, & Martin H. Greenberg (eds), *Hitler Victorious: Eleven Stories of the German Victory in World War II*
 - | Benford, Gregory, & Martin H. Greenberg (eds), *What Might Have Been Tetralogy*
 - | Dozois, Gardner, & Stanley Schmidt (eds), *Roads Not Taken*
 - | Greenberg, Martin H. (ed), *The Way It Wasn't: Great Stories of Alternate History*
 - | Resnick, Mike (ed), *Alternate Kennedys*
 - | Resnick, Mike (ed), *Alternate Presidents*

Sidewise Awards (<http://www.skatecity.com/ah/Sidewise.html>):

- | 1995:
 - | Long Form: Paul J. McAuley, *Pasquale's Angel*
 - | Short Form: Stephen Baxter, "Brigantia's Angels"
 - | Long Form: Stephen Baxter, *Voyage*
 - | Short Form: Walter Jon Williams, "Foreign Devils"
 - | Long Form:
 - | Delacorte, Peter: *Time on My Hands*
 - | Swanwick, Michael: *Jack Faust*
 - | Turtledove, Harry: *How Few Remain*
 - | Short Form:
 - | Allred, Lee: "For the Strength of the Hills"
 - | Green, Roland J.: "The King of Poland's Foot Cavalry"
 - | Newman, Kim, & Eugene Byrne: "Teddy Bear's Picnic"
 - | Sanders, William: "The Undiscovered"

(*) Some of this is excerpted from previous versions of "Frequently Asked Questions in soc.history.what-if" (copyright 1994-1998 by Craig Neumeier and Robert B. Schmunk).

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