

Interaction (Worldcon 2005)
A convention report by Evelyn C. Leeper
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Ten years ago, Intersection, the 53rd World Science Fiction Convention, was held from 24 August through 28 August 1995 in Glasgow, Scotland. There were approximately 4200 people attending.

This year, Interaction, the 63rd World Science Fiction Convention, was held from 4 August through 8 August 2005. There were about the same number of attendees.

This similarity, but not equality, of names, has led to people referring to this one (and sometimes to the last one) as "Interthingy".

Convention Centre

The walk to the SECC (Scottish Exhibition and Convention Centre) was about a twenty- or twenty-five-minute walk along a basically deserted street with some car traffic, but few people except the occasional convention-goer. (A slightly different route was less deserted by involved walking uphill for part of the way.)

Ten years ago I said that Intersection was the most inconvenient convention we have attended in this regard. It is still somewhat true, although the train is running this time, so it is tied now with The Hague (which required a streetcar trip). (Last time the Glasgow train line had been flooded.) The city bus that ran last time has been discontinued. There were shuttle buses Saturday and Sunday nights, which was good, because the train station nearest the Marriott is closed on Sunday.

Registration/Programme Books/Etc

Registration was very fast--even at 10AM Thursday, the lines were very short. Freebies included publishers' sampler volumes, three books (we did not take the two that were thick parts of long series) and drawstring backpacks. (The latter were gone fairly quickly.) We opted for the standard paperback souvenir book, rather than the more expensive hardback. The programme book was not quite pocket-sized, but rather A8 (that is, the size of an A4 sheet folded in half--an A4 sheet is a little taller than the standard US 8.5x11 sheet). The grid was pretty good, and the program item titles more descriptive than last time. Also, this time the rooms had the daily schedules posted outside them.

A CD-ROM was also part of the convention package. (No one there knew whether it was an audio CD or a CD-ROM, so we had to wait until we got home to find out which it was.) It includes a lot of photographs of earlier British Worldcons, archives of British fanzines, a copy of the souvenir book, galleries of the artwork of Frank Wu and the photographs of Lars-Olov Strandberg, pictures of all the previous Hugo designs, copies of previous Worldcon souvenir books, and a lot more.

The badges had the names in very readable type, but they had chosen to list the city and country for each person. This is okay for most European countries, but "Matawan US" is not as informative as "New Jersey US" would have been. Still, it is probably a nuisance to try to say "if the country is US or CA, print the state or province, else print the city."

There were also buttons designed to generate conversation. I chose "Ask me about my favourite author." Other included "What is your favorite book?" and "I chat about Worldcons."

The Dealers Room is a bit smaller than North American Worldcon Dealers Rooms (but then, so is the convention). The percentage of book dealers seems about what it is at North American Worldcons. (Last time it was higher.)

There are still no clocks. And while most areas are now non-smoking, the concourse is still a smoking area.

Eating was very inconvenient. If you had only a hour between panels, you pretty much had to eat at the convention center, which at least had a lot of reasonably priced food. (By reasonably priced, I mean #3 for a sandwich and #1.25 for (bad) tea.) If you had two hours, you had only a few places within walking distance. You could take the train into the Central Station area, but allowing for waiting time and all, I am not sure you could do it in two hours. Almost everywhere we went this weekend had very slow service (by American standards, anyway).

I think the solution is to vote against convention centers set off somewhere by themselves and vote for places like Boston, Philadelphia, and Chicago.

The newsletter was very well run, and came out on time every time! This is, I believe, a first.

I should note that a lot of people who wanted to fly to Glasgow rather than London found that they could get a very good fare if they went through Toronto. This seemed like a really good idea until an Air France jet crashed there after being hit by lightning and closed the airport for a day or so, right when everyone was flying through. It seems that even when Toronto is not hosting the Worldcon, they can mess it up.

Art Show

I got to this early, which was good, because I had no time until Sunday, at which point a lot had been taken out for auction. The bidding process was much better defined this time than last. Friends pointed out that for some items the "buy-it-after-auction" price was lower than the minimum bid, which they found strange. They also objected to the proliferation of prints, often disguised under other media descriptions ("ink-jet on paper"), particularly when coupled with prices more in line with one-of-a-kind original works than prints for which there can be many copies.

Of particular note were David Mattingly's 3-D lenticular screens (selling for #300 each). I also liked the work by Martina Pilcerova, Franz Vohwinkel, Cottier Didier (3-D multi-media), and Jackie E. Burns. Burns did a series of rocket paintings, postcard-size on wood, in styles of Inuit, Native American, Ancient Egyptian, Inca, African, and Celtic art.

Programming

For the first time in many years I decided to take a break and not volunteer for programming. (For one thing, doing hand-outs would have been a lot more complicated logistically.) It had a lot of panels that I was interested--much better than Intersection. There were also five-minute warnings and "stop" announcements, and panelists' name cards were printed rather than hand-written as they were last time. (Apparently Intersection's convention organizers had dismissed a lot of suggestions from North American convention organizers, saying, "We don't want to put on a North American convention." It was only after a day or so that they decided that some of these suggestions were good ideas for any large convention. Interaction used this knowledge.)

Last time, I wrote, "And finally, a problem that the convention planners may not have any control over. Some dip had a cellular phone that kept ringing during panels, to the extent that by Sunday moderators were requesting at the beginning of panels that people turn their cellular phones off and their pagers to mute." This time there were dozens of dips.

[I forgot to count attendance at the various panels I attended, but I suspect the figures would not be very useful for planning room sizes for a North American convention, and the safety regulation limitations may have affected these as well, with people turned away from their first choice going to another panel instead.]

**The Plague After Next: How Are We Going to Die?
Thursday 12.00, L(Dochart)**

Alma Alexander (mod), Greg Bear, Sabine Furlong, Colin Gavaghan, Frank Wu

Description: "We've seen HIV, SARS and now Avian Flu. Global pandemics are a staple of SF disaster, but how realistic is the fiction, and how worrying are the facts?"

I arrived at this late. First, lunch (a pub snack) took longer than we expected, and then I went to a different panel as my first choice but it was full, and the guards were not letting in more people than the room was approved for. (People quickly learned that they need to get to popular panels early, or at least on time. Drifting in ten minutes late would not work.)

Bear was saying that in the United States "there are people who are pro-life, but they don't know what life is."

In regard to some statement about how many people might die from a flu epidemic, Furlong said that raw numbers are less important than percentages. Several thousand may sound like a lot (and of course it is to those affected), but it is a fraction of a percent, and nowhere need anything like the major epidemics or plagues of the past. (What is the difference between a plague and an epidemic anyway?)

Furlong also said that the government needs to get the population supporting the government's plans. Saying "we have this under control" when they obviously do not loses the public. What she thinks would get more support is the government saying, "We haven't a clue".

Alexander thought that the next plague might more likely be caused by idiotic things like accidentally dropping a vial, rather than by either intentional action or natural causes. And she said that rather than focusing on the plague itself, we should be asking what we do when the infrastructure goes. In response to this, Furlong said one needed to focus on one's own part rather than try to fix everything.

Wu pointed out that most viruses come from people or animals, not dropped vials, and that people who have no human contact will survive the next plague. Someone in the audience responded, "Fans!", but I suspect that they are both underestimating the amount of contact with other people that even stay-at-home types have.

Bear talked about why one hears of viral plagues occurring as often as they do on cruise ships. As he put it, old people go to bathrooms a lot, do not wash their hands well afterwards, and use the handrails a lot to steady themselves, making the handrails the main method of transmission. He said that if you watch the staff on cruise ships these days, you will see them wiping down the handrails a lot.

He also noted that historically, plagues may cause 30% to 50% deaths, not more. (I do not think this includes subsidiary diseases, famines, etc.) He also pointed out that this revitalizes population, and that the Black Plague was one of the main triggers for the Industrial Revolution, to which Gavaghan responded, "The geeks shall inherit the earth."

Bear asked the question of who gets priority for vaccines (if we have them). Is it the most vulnerable (the very old and very young)? Or is it the most necessary--probably health workers, police, etc., but who decides?

Wu talked about the ability to build targeted attacks through genetic engineering. An audience member asked how fast we could react to these, and Alexander said that it takes six to eight months to build a vaccine. Bear talked about something called RNAi (RNA interference) that would disable the reproduction of viral genes, but this is probably ten years or so in the future.

Someone in the audience said that Ebola and Marburg kill people too fast to spread widely, but what about something that does not kill quite so fast. Bear said that for any plague there would be some people with an immune response, but that animal viruses are the most adaptable.

Someone in the audience said that in the past we were mostly agrarian, so people did not starve when the infrastructure collapsed. But now we have shipping issues and so on, which would increase the death rate in and after a plague. Alexander agreed, and added that the widespread traveling now would also spread the plague much faster. (It took months for the Black Plague to get from Asia to England; now it would take hours.) Bear disagreed, saying that the London Plague was also in a non-agrarian, urban area, and that after a plague, the physical infrastructure will still be there. True, but one could get food into London then via horse cart from nearby farms, while to feed London now would take motorized transport, which would require oil, and so on. Just because the physical infrastructure is there does not mean there would be enough people to run or maintain it. Bear claimed that from a societal point of view, in twenty years the dead would not be missed, and compared a plague to a forest fire, which rejuvenates the environment.

Someone pointed out that when societies have hunger or famine is when the most animal viruses cross over because people will eat anything. Bear said that a lot of foods that we think are "desperation" foods are cultural rather than desperation. He thinks that it is such practices raising pigs and ducks together, which tends to cause avian flu, that are the real problems.

Bear talked about "super-infection", which I think is when viruses block other viruses from attacking your system, so then bacteria move in. As he put it, "There's many, many ways that you are an attractive career opportunity for pathogens."

Wu ended by noting that cats and dogs would be good as vectors to engineer a virus to kill the developed world, since we have so many pets.

So, Private Spaceflight Is Here
Thursday 14.00, L(Lomond)
Simon Bisson (mod), Dan DeLong, Aleta Jackson

Description: "SpaceShip 1 has won the X-Prize and Branson is buying a batch of the next model. We've been talking about what happens when we hit this point in programme items at cons for the last 20 years, so what do we think now that it's happened?"

With only three of projected five people on the panel present, the discussion was a bit skewed, as both DeLong and Jackson were involved with XCor Aerospace. Jackson talked about Mojave Spaceport and said that the X Prize win made private space travel a serious question--"removed the giggle factor", as she said. Sir Richard Branson and Scaled have already formed "The Spaceship Company". There is also Virgin Galactic and Steel Composites. The projection for early spaceships is for seven passengers plus a crew of two.

(I have to admit to not following a lot of the discussion, because it assumed one was familiar with all the current players in this field.)

The FAA is looking only at third-party liability, not the safety of the crew or passengers when they approve spaceports. However, the panelists pointed out that companies have an incentive to not kill the crew or passengers

One approach used is "build a lot of things and see what works", rather than settling on a fixed design now. Companies are less forth-coming about their plans, but Bisson said that many directions

being tried. Jackson quoted Kipling, "There four and twenty ways . . ." DeLong noted that in 1925 we had steam-powered cars and battery-electric cars as well as internal combustion cars. The market will decide; that is what makes it private.

But what are the private companies going to do? Travel between points? Sightseeing jaunts? And how much will it cost?

Virgin Atlantic has said it would cost #100,000 (about \$200,000) to go up and down in same place, i.e., as excursion rather than as transportation. They claim to have a hundred fully-paid tickets and over a thousand more with deposits. The panelists said that the low-hanging fruit is to take people into space for the sake of saying they have been in space--this is what people will pay ridiculous amount for. They cited parallels to early automobiles and airliners in this regard. Jackson said, "Remember Atari computers? Atari computers were play toys."

Bisson noted that most of the funding for all this is coming largely from people who got rich in the computing industry.

Privacy or Paranoia?
Thursday 15.30, L(Carron)
Roz Kaveney, Mike Scott, Renee Sieber, Karen Traviss, Britt-Louise Viklund

Description: "How justified are concerns about ID cards, RFID and the like? Are social and communitarian interests being undermined in the name of freedom?"

Viklund introduced herself as a member of Liberty--is this like the Libertarians? Traviss said that she was the token right-winger, and Scott said he was the token geek.

The moderator (Scott?) asked for each panelist to give an example of where curtailing privacy is a good thing. Kaveney gave the Nixon tapes (a hoist-by-one's-own-petard sort of thing). Viklund gave the very topical one of the use of CCTV (closed-circuit television) to catch bombers. Sieber thought that devices like RFIDs to track your own children was a good thing.

Traviss said that credit cards provide lots of information and mine-able databases but do make life easier. Scott explained a little about RFID technology, saying it used small transceivers that can be read from six to twelve feet away. There have no batteries themselves, but are energized by the reading device.

Scott noted that in regard to CCTV et al, one can take photos in a public place without getting the permission of all the people there. (Unless otherwise stated, people here were talking about British law, not United States or otherwise.) He also said that CCTV takes a massive effort to backtrack someone's day. Several people in the audience disagreed. Sieber said that the system was a combination of hardware and software, so one needs pattern recognition software.

Traviss pointed out a conflict in that the British did not mind CCTV until it was focused on them. Everyone wants their neighbors watched, she said, but no one wants themselves watched. On the other hand, "People don't need their privacy taken from them, you just have to ask them questions, and they'll tell you anything."

She also talked about how her credit card was flagged in a foreign country at a DIY shop (do-it-yourself hardware store), but not at the jewelry or liquor store. "What does this say about what sort of person the credit card company thinks I am?"

Kaveney said, "One of my problems with the transparency culture is the illusion of safety." She also said that being "queer and gender-queer", when she was growing up, she did *not* want her parents to know where she was. "My life would have been completely screwed if my parents had known where I was and what I was doing."

Viklund observed that "different societies have their own paranoias." For example, Swedes have national identification numbers, and have no problem with that. The British have CCTV, but the Swedes have fought against it even in limited areas.

Traviss wondered why there is fear of a national identification card--if it was implemented by the government, it would not work anyway. She pointed out that Brits already have a bunch of numbers: NI number (tax number), NHS number, etc. And people complain about RFID cards but use supermarket cards all the time. Scott thought a key point was whether it was voluntary or compulsory, and also whether one knows when it is happening? (E.g., If you were buying contraceptives, you could choose to not use the supermarket card. And there is a reason the hotel says that your X-rated movie will show up on the bill as "room service 2".)

Sieber said that she works in geo-demographics, and that cards can be one component of data-mining exercises.

Kaveney said that the United States Patriot Act lets you (well, the government, not individuals) monitor which books people buy or read. But the problem is that governments make completely arbitrary judgments without transparency.

Traviss said that there are also problems with the software, and that the costs are often high. For example, the cost of catching people surfing the Net for porn is probably higher than most businesses want to deal with.

Viklund pointed out, "Every method of investigating a crime is an invasion of privacy: search warrants, DNA samples," Scott felt that the difference is that those methods are more focused while CCTV is more scatter-shot. Kaveney said that an analogy would be searching everyone's homes.

Sieber talked about human intelligence versus artificial intelligence, and said that people watching monitors is really a better system than a lot of the high-tech stuff that is installed now. (I will add that dogs are apparently more reliable than machinery in sniffing out bombs.) Traviss agreed, saying that people are better at processing subtleties than mechanical systems. And the vast majority of breaches are by people voluntarily giving things away, through "social engineering". Someone recommended "Kevin Mintick's book", by which I assume they mean **THE ART OF DECEPTION: CONTROLLING THE HUMAN ELEMENT OF SECURITY**.

Returning to science fiction, Sieber recommended Stephen Baxter and Arthur C. Clarke's **LIGHT OF OTHER DAYS** as a future in which people are used to having no privacy. Scott said that there are more examples of a lack of privacy in Bruce Sterling's **SCHISMATRIX**.

Traviss said, "It's when you have secrets that you become vulnerable to other people using them." And Sieber thought that blogging from one's very early years may come back to haunt the bloggers. Traviss agreed, saying that people think that the volume of the blogs make them unidentifiable, but "these are computer-literate people who do not know the value of Google."

Someone in the audience mentioned a very low-tech example of feminists watching brothels, writing down the license plate numbers, finding out whose cars they were, and writing the wives.

I asked how much privacy people had in the past. Traviss said that big cities are anonymous even if

they have a relatively fixed population, but small villages know everything about everyone without CCTV and all that stuff. Sieber added that women and children could not have privacy in earlier cultures in any case because of their lack of status.

[One complaint: the panelists told people not to ask questions during the panel, then during the question-and-answer period said would call on people who had their hands up during the panel, thereby rewarding rudeness.]

UK: Media SF vs. "The Two Cultures"
Thursday 17.00, L(Dochart)
Martin Easterbrook, Roz Kaveney, John Medany, Dave O'Neill

Description: "The divide between the cultures of the sciences and the arts are often discussed in the UK. While SF is sometimes invited out of the gutter to dine with the literary establishment, its media cousin does not. Despite this, the only shows on UK radio and TV discussing the human soul were Melvyn Bragg (UK TV's champion of the intellectual) and Buffy the Vampire Slayer. Is it time for media SF to be taken more seriously in the UK?"

[I missed the first half of this panel, and ended up so far back I could not always tell who was talking, so this is a brief summary.]

People seem to regard written science fiction as a monolith, rather than as a variety of types, styles, and qualities. And various authors have crossed over to areas outside the field: Mary Gentle in combat, Neil Gaiman in comics, and Alex (?) in table-top games.

Media cons have changed in the UK and become more commercial. Someone said, "Eastercon is the ideal place to be a true media fan," even though it is "looked on (mistakenly) by many of the people who go there as a literary con."

Someone else said, "You wouldn't ever see anything like [the Kaffeeklatches] at the modern media cons," But that they are a really great idea.

Peter David is sometimes looked down upon for writing media fiction. [Well, the person called it fan fiction, but it is not what I would call fan fiction.] John M. Ford got away more successfully with writing media fiction. And at some point, popular writers got divided from literary society (e.g., for the Booker Prize).

Someone pointed out that while authors can socialize in the bar, many actors cannot come into the bar to socialize because they will get mobbed.

An audience member asked if the BBC did less costume drama, could they move that expertise to more science fiction? Apparently, the BBC did go through something like "We realize we have done Jane Austen to death" so they did "Gormenghast".

People talked about the assumption that "science fiction fans" means literary fans, and media fans have to be specified differently.

Someone complained that PBS carries "Black Adder" but will not carry "Dr. Who". A panelist pointed out that the fee structure is very different for the two shows. (At some point, the fees for "Dr. Who" went *way* up.)

Someone in the audience suggested that literary snobbism may be due to Hollywood butchering of

any science fiction that they have tried to do.

Someone else said that perhaps conventions should have a recommended reading list. They do not, so there is no common literary background. There is still a common media background. This all sounds like "One Convention, One Book". Someone recommended Eric Flint writing with S. M. Sterling about Belisarius, with sales around 40,000 each volume. I would hate to think that this is the "One Book".

Room 101 with the Guests of Honour
Thursday 18.00, L(Carron)
Bridget Bradshaw (mod), Greg Pickersgill, Christopher Priest, Connie Willis

Description: "According to George Orwell, Room 101 contains 'the worst thing in the world,' the thing you most hate and fear. Our guests will provide some pet hates and argue why they deserve a place there; the devil's advocate will try to argue them out."

[Before the panel, Willis saw my button ("Ask me about my favorite author") and asked. I said my favorite author was Jorge Luis Borges, which took her somewhat aback. She said her favorite science fiction author was Philip K. Dick, and non-science-fiction was Dorothy Sayers. I mentioned George Eliot, whom she liked except for SILAS MARNER, which was what she had to read in school. I said it was like there are two Kiplings, the good one and the one you have to read in school. And we agreed that Shakespeare is on almost everyone's list of favorite.]

The room for this was way too small, especially since the convention center was enforcing occupancy rules.

According to Orwell, Room 101 contains the worst thing in the world, the thing you most hate, the things you most fear. Bradshaw asked the panelists what this was.

Pickersgill said it was "the moving wave of the present", the idea that the only part of fandom that matters to a fan is the part since they found fandom, and that nothing earlier ("before my time") is important. (Here he was speaking of fandom itself, not science fiction, though one sees it there as well.) He said he, on the other hand, was "looking for something that would give me a cultural context in life," and that fandom gave him that.

Acting as Devil's Advocate, Bradshaw said that most old fanzines are crap. Pickersgill agreed that they followed Sturgeon's Law, which adds that most of everything is crap.

Willis said it was the same in science fiction (and fantasy) itself. She would tell someone, "If you like Incredibly F. Derivative you might like J. R. R. Tolkien," and then the person comes back and says, "I tried him but he was pretty much copying everyone else."

Priest hates filk. Why? Well, filkers comb their hair backwards. And once started playing, they are physically incapable of stopping. Also, they look you in the eye and encourage you to sing along, and they are profoundly unfunny. He then clarified, "I don't hate filk. I do fear it."

Bradshaw then said, "But you've not said anything bad about filk yet." Priest agreed to a dispensation "as long as the doors are not actually locked."

Willis talked about "The Panel from Hell". Her classic was a "Death and Dying" panel, where she was all prepared to talk about death and dying in science fiction, but before it was her turn, Barry Longyear talked about his heart attack, the artist Guest of Honor talked about when his cat died, and

a nurse gave an impassioned plea for euthanasia. "And I have to say that at that point I was in complete agreement," said Willis.

And when Willis did start to talk about science fiction and death, she was told, "You are off-topic. You need to share something personal." Then someone in the audience said that no one present was ever going to die. Willis then said, "This is not the worst part. The worst part is I looked at my watch and it said ten after." (At a previous convention when Willis was on a "panel from hell" panel, she started by saying "at a Worldcon", and someone in the audience yelled out "death and dying".)

Pickersgill hates "dinner party fandom", where assembling the group takes longer than eating. Because it is so common, he said there is no point in programming those hours. Someone asked, "What time was that, 6 to 7?" Pickersgill responded, "About 5 to 8." His feeling is that there will be food, but "it's fuel; it's all you need."

Willis talked about saying, "Table for 46", getting everyone seated, and then someone says, "You mean they don't have vegetarian?" Pickersgill reiterated his feeling that "all you need to do is just give everybody a bowl of gruel and a large brandy." He disliked the idea "We must go out to eat or else it isn't like fun." Priest told a story of a convention in Gloucester, where he said, "I can only tell this story because most of the people involved in this are dead." It was just as Willis had described, except with Brian Aldiss leading everyone on an incredibly long walk, constantly saying, "It's just around the corner." I added my twist to this--I did this at a Boston convention in the dead of winter, and when we got there, the entire block had burned down.

Someone said that this raises whole question of what one does at a convention: should it be self-contained? Willis did not think so, and said that while she often has (fleeting) moments of "I've got to get out of this field", there was a time when a wonderful dinner party kept her in it.

Priest got to a more serious problem when he talked about an American writer (James Owsley) who has changed his name to "Christopher Priest", later "Christopher J. Priest". His agent told Priest, "He thought it was cool." Priest said that, unlike Actor's Equity, there seems to be no rule against it. This pseudo-Priest writes comics (including one named "Xero"!). [I would think this would be considered changing one's name with intent to deceive, and mentioned this to Priest.] Willis said that perhaps, "I could change my name to Jane Austen and my sales would just skyrocket!" Priest said, "I proposed he should change his name to Harlan Ellison, but it didn't go down very well." He added, "When you're a writer, all you have is your name," and that in fact there were publishers who would not deal with him because they thought he was this other person. (I hope he contacts a good lawyer to get this pseudo-Priest defrocked.)

Willis talked about the Panel from Hell 2, or rather several variants. There is the Blowhard Panel: one person talks for forty-five minutes and then calls for questions. There is the Crackpot Panel, for which she gave the example of a panel on gender at Wiscon, which turned into how women would love their periods if the male patriarchy had not convinced them it was a curse. Willis said she got more and more confused and alarmed, and finally asked "What are you talking about?!" The other panelists told her she was brainwashed and a traitor to the sisterhood. They complained that she was not writing about women's issues, but had written about the Blitz instead. An audience member (at Interaction) asked, "But you didn't leave?" Willis replied, "No, because it was kind of fun actually." And then later, Willis decided to write "Even the Queen", thinking, "You want women's issues? I'll give you women's issues!" And the result? "And you know, they haven't said a word since."

Priest's Panel from Hell was one on science fiction and God with fifteen people who speak different languages, with one panelist says, "I don't know why I'm here, I am an atheist, I have no views on God" and then gives his views on God, repeated several times.

(At one point one of the potted trees was bumped into and almost fell on someone, leading Willis to

announce, "That person was attacked by a shubbery!"

(Pickersgill referred to something as "a little concretized globe of turdishness"--I wish I could remember what.)

Film Premiere: GamerZ
Thursday 20.00, L(Lomond)

Description: "Interaction is proud to host the premiere showing of GamerZ, a new comedy movie from Scotland--an engaging love triangle with a strong twist of fantasy."

This was a better film than we expected, but I will leave it to Mark to provide a full review.

Pseudo-Hard SF
Friday 10.00, M(Barra)
Ellen Asher, Jonathan Cowie, John Douglas (mod), Ian McDonald, Geoff Ryman

Description: "Fiction that looks superficially like science-oriented SF, but on closer examination is little more than a hackneyed rehash of Frankenstein or some such. Michael Crichton has a lot to answer for!"

[Ryman arrived late, which is why there is some discussion of him as if he were not there.]

Douglas introduced himself by saying that he has been a fan since 1969, and "can summon up an opinion on almost anything." McDonald said, "I'm from Belfast, where peace has spontaneously broken out over the last week or so." Cowie co-authored ESSENTIAL SF: A CONCISE GUIDE" with Tony Chester. (This seems to be a list of science fiction that has won awards voted on by fans.)

Douglas pointed out the somewhat obvious: that Michael Crichton can make more money if he is not published as science fiction. Also, Crichton's thesis is "science is evil and will bite you", not exactly the consensus among science fiction fans. Asher said that in spite of this, "Crichton sells extremely well to science fiction readers." Cowie said a deeper problem is that "Michael Crichton does not understand science. [Contrary to how he is sometimes described], he is not a scientist, he's a medical clinician." Doctors are technicians; they apply technology developed by scientists. In JURASSIC PARK, it was not the science that went wrong, it was the application.

Asher asked whether the application of the science actually part of the science? Cowie said no, at that point it becomes technology.

Asher than asked whether fiction books about science per se (rather than about technology) not very interesting? Cowie gave the counter-examples of CONTACT and TIMESCAPE. But Asher said that it is probably easier to write exciting books about applications.

Someone in the audience said that the pop audience does not know if you get your science wrong, to which someone else added, "How much science does the average author know?"

Douglas said that there are many who do know science, and you have to distinguish between an author like Greg Benford, who is a working scientists, and an author who has gotten all of his science from science fiction.

McDonald said that when writing fiction you need to know which bits of science to keep and which to throw away. The fringe stuff is where the story bits happen, he felt.

I asked about the fact that while some authors (such as Isaac Asimov) who have made mistakes will admit that in a section *before* the novel, while Crichton puts his in afterwords. Someone said that another problem is that Crichton will admit to exaggerations, but not to mistakes. The example given was at STATE OF FEAR, Crichton says that everyone has an opinion on climate change except for him, when it is clear that he does also. Cowie said that he finds this incredibly insulting, but McDonald reminded everyone that "his motivation is to sell a sh*tload of books."

Cowie felt that there was a place for pseudo-hard science fiction in science fiction. For example, he said that "Superman" is pseudo-hard science fiction. Asher added time travel and faster-than-light travel to the category of pseudo-hard science fiction. Douglas said, "We don't expect real intellectual rigor from comic books." Cowie said that the term one sees sometimes for this is science fantasy.

Asher thought that declaring a premise (such as time travel) is okay, but trying to explain it is a mistake. As she noted, "handwavium" powers so many starships. McDonald said one can get carried away--"there was almost no story arc on STAR TREK that can't be solved by the transporter or the holodeck." (He pointed out that in regard to this, the transporter could be used to give people immortality.) This, he said, was a "gaping hole that the scriptwriters have put at the heart of the series."

Cowie found it very irritating when in "Star Trek" they break their own rules. For example, they could not use the transporter in one episode, but for some reason did not use the shuttlepod either. (I can remember some problem in STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE 9 that everyone agreed could have been solved by the matter creator that was used to produce food.)

Someone in the audience said, "Crichton is almost pathologically perturbed by change" while science fiction fans embrace change. Someone else called Crichton's attitude an "extraordinarily neurotic attitude towards change." Cowie was very annoyed that opponents to bio-technology quote JURASSIC PARK as arguments against it, without realizing that 1) it is a work of fiction, and 2) it is not the technology, but the greedy capitalist application of it.

Someone talked about requiring evolution stickers on text books (i.e., "Evolution is a theory. . . ."). Asher said one might as well point out that the Theory of Gravitation is just a theory. But she does not want to limit the field to having a particular feeling about science, about how it is always good. Someone pointed out that one of the field's classics, Jack Williamson's "With Folded Hands", is not entirely positive on change. (A similar story is Robert Silverberg's "The Iron Chancellor".)

An audience member said that it is the difference between examining change and denying change. In Crichton's works, the thing that you are afraid of does not happen; there is always a reset button at the end. McDonald said this was a distinction between comedic and tragic--the comedic version always has the reset button.

McDonald described the "Mundane Science Fiction Manifesto", of which Ryman is a proponent. He said that he would be the apologist for it even though opposes it. According to this manifesto, "Star Trek", space opera, time travel, alien invasions, etc., are science fantasy, not science fiction. The basis thesis is "We should be writing science fiction about that science that is mostly likely to be happening to us." So aliens, faster-than-light travel, time travel, etc., are not allowed. In many ways this is similar to to Dogme 95. At one time, according to McDonald, it used to be that this would produce best science fiction, now the claim is that this is the only science fiction. McDonald closed his description by saying, "There is a lot of good in it, but I do disagree with the dogmatic nature of it."

Douglas observed one problem: "It's going to be hard to recruit the twelve-year-old reader with it." I found myself wondering if H. G. Wells's ISLAND OF DR. MOREAU was Mundane Science Fiction because we have some possibility of genetic engineering to achieve similar results. Cowie said that he had used WAR OF THE WORLDS as an example of antibiotic resistance, so there were mundane elements in it.

An audience member asked about Mundane Science Fiction and the Singularity. McDonald said that it was not a likely happening, but then Ryman arrived and disagreed. He said that the goal of Mundane Science Fiction was to get people to do some serious speculation. It is a good game to play, but he also said that one can play other games as well.

Ryman said that one of the motivations for Mundane Science Fiction was that Julian Todd (?) said that faster-than-light travel implied "we could burn through this planet and then move on to the next one". So some authors decided to take a moral stand against this sort of fiction, and instead to "privilege scientific likelihood." It started as a "jokey manifesto," but just as Dogme 95 forced people away from manipulating physical reality, they hope to achieve something similar. "It's a challenge, a game to be played."

Someone asked about having peer review of science in science fiction. Cowie said that some authors are hard to review in general without criticizing their science. Ryman wondered if this was a problem more with big-name authors. Cowie said the problem was not usually with the "what if?" premise, but more with the logic of the premise going wrong. Ryman said, "I had hoped that Mundane Science Fiction could be a place hard science fiction meets the humanities." It was suggested that more information on this could be found via Google, McDonald's blog, and the Mundane Science Fiction web site's blog.

Cowie said that there have been some examples of this in the past, such as John Brunner's THE SHEEP LOOK UP and Harry Harrison's MAKE ROOM MAKE ROOM. Asher said, "In that period there was a lot of cautionary science fiction that did not give ways out." Douglas re-iterated that it is a tough sell, in part because the core market for science fiction is the younger reader, and "serious science fiction tags along in the wake of that." "It is hard to get any readership for serious science fiction that is grim."

Ryman wondered if there are any stories set in the oil crunch period rather than the aftermath of it. Someone suggested Kim Stanley Robinson's FORTY SIGNS OF RAIN, but Ryman said that was eco-catastrophe rather than the oil crunch.

An audience member asked how Mundane Science Fiction differs from hard science fiction. Ryman said not much, but hard science fiction allows more leeway. Mundane Science Fiction is limited to the solar system, but even then is difficult and costly. The drawback is that no one is buying it.

Someone mentioned a story called "Air" (which I cannot seem to identify any better), which Douglas said could be considered Ur-Mundane-Science-Fiction. However, to be Mundane Science Fiction, the author must agree (so I guess Wells would not qualify in any case).

Ryman said that a lot of Philip K. Dick probably would have qualified, because he "chose not to do the planet-hopping thing." Also it is easy to make his stories into film because of this [though BLADERUNNER has implied planet-hopping]. "We're writing sense-of-wonder Mundane Science Fiction," he said, "and then checking the science and it's amazing how long that takes." Someone suggested that this would all descend into cyberpunk. Ryman said that authors realize we missed out on the development of computers until it was already here. And we missed the information revolution; it had already happened by the time NEUROMANCER came out.

**Visions of a Small Island (SFF)
Friday 11.00, L(Boisdale-1)
Paul Kincaid (mod)**

This consisted of two short papers.

**Militant Protestants and Gun-Toting Vampires: One Anime View of Britain
Jeana Jorgensen (Indiana University)**

Jorgensen talked about the "Helsing" anime and manga, which deal with religious conflict, fascism, and interspecies blending. She noted that the word "vampire" first appeared in English in the 17th century, and that (obviously) DRACULA was its most notable story. [Strangely, she made no mention of James Malcolm Rymer's VARNEY THE VAMPIRE.]

Jorgensen talked about "the foreign other", and explained the fascination with the English setting in Japanese anime and manga by describing parallels between Japan and England (e.g., both are island nations with conflicting relationships with their continental neighbors). Japanese anime often sets stories elsewhere; for example, KIKI'S DELIVERY SERVICE takes place in a pastiche of Italy. Jorgensen also said that "Alucard" was popular as a pseudonym since the 1940s (but did not mention what I assume was its origin in SON OF DRACULA).

When she started talking about "hetero-normative ideology", however, she lost me.

**Visions of Wales Seen Through Thursday Next
Dr Neil Hook (University of Wales, Glamorgan) (co-authors Mark Brake and Rosi Thornton)**

Hook showed a map of the United Kingdom in red with Wales in black and explained, "Wales is the black bit. It's got nothing to do with the rest of the red bits." Wales is known more as a source for fantasy than for science fiction (e.g., Mabinogi). What Welsh science fiction there is tends to be political, dealing with such topics as the loss of language (WYTHNOS YNG NGHYMRU FYDD, Elis 1957; THE GATES OF HELL, Jones 2003). Elis, he said, shows two alternate futures for 2000: an independent good Wales or an "English" bad Wales. So politics, rather than technology, drives much of Welsh science fiction.

Brief history: 1534 saw the Act of Union. In 1538, The Blue Books written for Henry VIII equated speaking Welsh with were intrinsically untrustworthy. Hook added, "Welsh language and culture traditionally elevated the pastoral idyll," even having a word ("Hiraeth") which meant "the Welsh longing for a pastoral past." It also "demonized industrialization," in large part because the Welsh experience of mining has not been a positive one. Hook described this as "inherent Luddism with the Welsh psyche."

Jasper Fforde, the author of the "Thursday Next" books, is not Welsh, but is a long-time resident of Wales (just outside Hay-on-Wye). The political content in these books includes the Crimean War, McDonaldisation (e.g., the Toast Marketing Board), religion (e.g., Goliath Corporation), and politics itself (e.g., English policorporate domination, Welsh Socialism).

Hook said as an aside that librarians like to collect definitive editions, but Fforde provides (optional) updates on his web site ([http://www.jasperfforde.com](#)) which drive them crazy. In Fforde's novels, Wales is an independent socialist republic (THE EYRE AFFAIR, page 131). While almost all alternate histories are dystopias, here Wales is a utopia (though England is a dystopia). Fforde bases his utopia on

Voltaire's CANDIDE: "This is the best of all possible worlds", which implies that all alternate histories are dystopias. Fforde flips this around.

An audience member pointed out that one reason for dystopias is that there is not a lot of conflict in a utopia, but dystopias provide conflict. Hook responded that Ursula K. LeGuin's THE DISPOSSESSED is a utopia with conflict. [THE DISPOSSESSED is a utopia?! This is news to me.]

Moving in Time as Well as in Space: the Fractured Narrative & the Causal World
Friday 12.00, L(Boisdale-2)
Claire Briarley, Fiona Patton, Alastair Reynolds

Description: "[Christopher] Priest's novel THE AFFIRMATION presents a story in pieces which readers have to reconstruct like a puzzle. This may be a valid way for a writer to depict extreme experiences--but what are the pitfalls? Do films like MEMENTO represent a 'mainstreaming' of this approach?"

[Note: THE AFFIRMATION was written in 1981.] Patton said that books are fairly non-linear to start with, but "THE AFFIRMATION has so much in it that demands quiet attention." Reynolds said that his early novels had this fragmented approach, mostly because he found writing 150,000 words of linear narrative terrifying. His first novel, REVELATION SPACE, dealt with interstellar non-faster-than-light travel. This necessitated having strands start at different points so that when they joined together they were at the same time. His last two books are somewhat more linear.

Patton said she likes delusional characters and characters who lie to themselves, and that lends itself to fractured narratives. However, she felt it does frustrate readers to have to leave one strand and jump into another.

Reynolds said that THE AFFIRMATION "dealing with murky areas of concealed identity and faulty memory." Briarley said that when she began it, she did not realize that there were clues in the chapter headings, the quotations at the start of each chapter, etc.

Patton said that when she went to get a copy, she could find only one copy THE AFFIRMATION in all of Canada, in Winnipeg for \$53. (Ironically, right after the panel I went to the Dealers Room and found a stack for #5 each.)

Briarley said that both MEMENTO and Christopher Priest novels both make you want to sit afterwards and sort them out. But Patton thought that films are not capable of the nuances that writing can have (because there is a lot of visual going on). (Isn't that part of the nuance?) Briarley gave as a counter-example, or perhaps just an example of a fragmented narrative, ETERNAL SUNSHINE OF THE SPOTLESS MIND. Reynolds said both that and MEMENTO make you feel like think you are in the hands of a director who knows what he is doing, as opposed to a film that starts with an exciting scene and then says "three weeks earlier". Patton observed that FIGHT CLUB made her incapable of functioning for a while after the film.

Reynolds said that in Priest's work, "on a sentence by sentence basis, the narrative style is very transparent." They are definitely page-turners. But their structure is different from two alternating strands working contemporaneously. Iain Banks's THE BRIDGE and THE WASP FACTORY are also fractured.

Patton admitted, "I've read enough Philip K. Dick already to be insecure about reality."

[I have a note that says "The Negation", "The Renunciation". Does this mean there is a trilogy?]

Brierly said that in addition to all this, Priest has re-written some of his novels over the years. Patton wondered if the fact that he wrote books in a series in reverse internal chronological order was why she was chosen for this. Reynolds warned that flashbacks are "dangerous unless used well"; one can end up with flashbacks within flashbacks. (That is what happened to Oliver Stone with ALEXANDER. For that matter, almost all of Roger Zelazny's LORD OF LIGHT is a flashback.)

Reynolds said that he added strands to a short novel to pad it out to what became CHASM CITY. (When he turned in 100,000 words, the publisher said, "That's not really long enough.") But Reynolds said that Priest said that he writes from page one to the end, not a strand at a time.

Patton explained why a publisher might say 100,000 words was not enough. Apparently, the rule is that mid-list books should not take more space than best-seller authors, and should fit in a "dump bin." That is why long books get split, so you need something long enough to split. Of course, I do not think this applied to CHASM CITY.

Patton also said that novels get long because authors say to themselves things like, "I like dogs, I'm adding one." She said that "at times" this is a problem, but it does make books longer. Well, I would say this is the main problem. Returning a bit to the topic, she added that THE AFFIRMATION does not have any excess words--every word counts.

Reynolds said that the "New Yorker" magazine had an article on the increased complexity of television. For example, shows in the 1960s (e.g. "Starsky & Hutch") did not have A plots and B plots the way so many shows do now. In fact, "24", "West Wing", and many others have lots of multiple plots.

Patton said she was hooked by "Lost", which has an airplane crash-landing on a tropical island which apparently has a polar bear on it, and one person not on passenger manifest. Brierly talked about the narrative complexity in "Coupling". And I will add that there was an episode of "CSI" that played like "Memento" by showing the end of the day, then three hours earlier, then another three hours earlier, and so on.

Audience members said that Andrew Vachhs's latest novel (DOWN HERE, I think) is a fractured narrative, and that Scotland has a long tradition of unreliable narrators, including some of those of Robert Louis Stevenson and James Hogg. Another added Alasdair Gray's LANARK. Patton named James Joyce's FINNEGANS WAKE, not Scottish, but definitely mainstream. All of these, she said, set up a mindset of having to pay attention. In the dramatic media, Reynolds added MULHOLLAND DRIVE and Patton listed most of the works of Tom Stoppard.

[Is the fractured narrative more common in books because one can pause, flip back, etc.? Will this change with DVDs? And are there any bibliographies of this sort of work?]

The BSFA 'Best of British Science Fiction' Contenders

Friday 13.00, L(Boisdale-2)

Stephen Baxter, Paul Billinger (mod), Paul Kincaid, Maureen Kincaid Speller

Description: "Panel to consider the contenders for the British Science Fiction Association poll on the best of British SF, as well as a great British SF author to join the BSFA's New Order of Merit."

Billinger introduced the panel by saying that the British Science Fiction Association got so "cheesed off" with all the "best" lists the media do, they started a poll to do their own British Science Fiction Hall of Fame." They began by deciding that Mary Shelley, H. G. Wells, George Orwell, and Arthur C. Clarke as charter members, but created a ballot for another author as well as a novel, a film, a TV

series, and an author newcomer (someone whose first novel was published in 2000 or later). It was not clear if fantasy was included, but based on the comments about Peake, it probably is not.

For the additional author, Kincaid said that he disagrees with Brian Aldiss about where science fiction starts. Aldiss says it starts with Shelley, but Kincaid thinks it starts with Sir Thomas More and "Utopia". This work, Kincaid said, actually changed the world significantly--without "Utopia", there would have been no Karl Marx. Another possibility for inclusion would be Frances Godwin, who wrote the first "voyage-to-the-moon" story, with people on the moon (and yes, this pre-dates Cyrano de Bergerac). He also suggested Brian W. Aldiss or J. G. Ballard. However, his first choice is Christopher Priest.

Baxter said that he is the vice-president of the BSFA and its "objective is to promote the best of the genre and to widen the appeal of the genre." He also said it should come with a disclaimer: "This Valhalla of the Hacks". He said of one of the flaws of the existing awards, there is what he called the Clarke Paradox: "If Sir Arthur C. Clarke wrote the best novel of his life this year, it wouldn't win the Clarke Award next year." His choice for inclusion is Aldiss, who "can write in a Wellsian mode on one hand but is accepted in the pulp traditions of the States." And he would pick as the novel HOTHOUSE.

Speller picked John Wyndham as the author. She said that Wyndham was "working in 'Jane Austen' mode," taking it at a very domestic level (but not "cozy catastrophe"). His works are very personal examinations of how one deals with what happens on a personal level.

Billinger said he would have picked Wyndham, but since he was already chosen by another panelist he would pick John Brunner.

An audience member named Jonathan Swift (I guess he counts as British), and I would at least mention Samuel Butler, Aldous Huxley, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Olaf Stapledon.

For novel, Billinger picked THE DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS by John Wyndham. Kincaid picked THE AFFIRMATION by Christopher Priest, saying that when you re-read Priest's books, you discover another book; Priest turns everything in the world around him into whirling bits of air.

Baxter said he had changed his mind about HOTHOUSE, so his back-up is Olaf Stapledon's STAR MAKER, which he described as "not the easiest read, but a huge mind-f*ck." (He may have been quoting someone else here.) He also said that it was technically quite a triumph, and very British, in that the universe shapes us as much as we shape the universe. Its scope is such that it dismisses the entire span of Stapledon's LAST & FIRST MEN in a couple of paragraphs. He would compare it to something like Dante. Kincaid said that it was "the most astounding work of perspective in science fiction, that's for sure."

Speller nominated the "Gormenghast Trilogy" by Mervyn Peake, which described a "very dark, very self-contained world, a world weighed down with ritual and ceremony and meaningless acts." She admitted that it looks like a fantasy novel, but is more "a series of novels of the grotesque" and "dripping with imagery." And she added, "His characters are hugely grotesque." It is a "terrifying trip into Peake's own mind."

[I was surprised that no one mentioned any Wells novels, and I would probably pick LAST & FIRST MEN.]

For TV series, Speller liked the BBC dramatization of THE DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS, and possibly "Doomwatch", but settled on "Bleep and Booster". I have no idea what that is. Baxter picked the "Quatermass" serials, saying that Nigel Kneale was obsessed by possession. Kneale was "very much in the shadow of the Second World War" and "very elitist, in that scientists and military take control,

and the common people are not good for anything. He felt this clearly a precedent for "Dr. Who". Baxter thought that Pertwee in particular was a Quatermass-like figure, and that one of the "Dr. Who" producers was Kneale's neighbor. "Dr. Who" transcended the genre fans, and became a cultural phenomenon, but "without Quatermass there would be no 'Dr. Who'."

Kincaid said that he was too young for "Quatermass" and too old for "Bleep and Booster", so he might pick "The Avengers" or "The Prisoner". He also named two others I am unfamiliar with, "The Flip Side of Dominic Hyde" and "Another Flip for Dominic".

Billinger said that he felt he should go for "Dr. Who" but did not. "Clangers" was a close second, but he finally went with "Thunderbirds".

[No one mentioned "Survivors".]

They did not discuss film, so I will suggest THINGS TO COME AND 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY. I have no idea who they might choose for newcomer.

They said that each year they would add only one in each category. Apparently anyone can vote--you do not have to be British--but you are voting on a pre-selected short list, which is:

Novel:

- | George Orwell's 1984
- | Mary Shelley's FRANKENSTEIN
- | Brian W. Aldiss's GREYBEARD
- | Douglas Adams's HITCHHIKERS GUIDE TO THE GALAXY
- | Jon Grimwood's PASHAZADE
- | John Brunner's STAND ON ZANZIBAR
- | M. John Harrison's THE CENTAURI DEVICE
- | John Wyndham's THE CHRYSALIDS
- | Sir Arthur C. Clarke's THE CITY AND THE STARS
- | J. G. Ballard's THE DROWNED WORLD
- | Christopher Priest's THE SEPARATION
- | Stephen Baxter's THE TIME SHIPS
- | Iain Banks's USE OF WEAPONS
- | H. G. Wells's WAR OF THE WORLDS

Film:

- | 1984
- | 28 DAYS LATER
- | A CLOCKWORK ORANGE
- | BRAZIL
- | CODE 46
- | DOPPELGÄNGER
- | DR. WHO AND THE DALEKS
- | ISLAND OF TERROR
- | QUATERMASS AND THE PIT
- | THE CURSE OF FRANKENSTEIN
- | THE DAY THE EARTH CAUGHT FIRE
- | THE MAN IN THE WHITE SUIT
- | THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH
- | THINGS TO COME

Newcomer:

- | Neal Asher
- | Tony Ballantyne
- | Jon George
- | Gary Gibson
- | Ben Jeapes
- | David Mitchell
- | Richard Morgan
- | Adam Roberts
- | Alastair Reynolds
- | Martin Sketchley
- | Charles Stross
- | Steph Swainston
- | Karen Traviss
- | Liz Williams

TV:

- | BLAKE'S 7
- | DOOMWATCH
- | DR. WHO
- | HITCHHIKERS GUIDE TO THE GALAXY
- | QUATERMASS
- | RED DWARF
- | SAPPHIRE AND STEEL
- | SPACE 1999
- | THE AVENGERS
- | THE CLANGERS
- | THE DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS
- | THE PRISONER
- | THUNDERBIRDS
- | ULTRAVIOLET

(The BSFA apparently alphabetizes counting the leading articles!)

Five Horror Books You Shouldn't Read (YAFA)
Friday 15.00, S(Hall3)
Kim Newman

Description: "Kim Newman talks to us about a selection of books that will give you nightmares."

This was supposed to be for young adults, but everyone in the audience was older an adult. Newman's credentials include editing with Stephen Jones HORROR: 100 BEST BOOKS, chosen by a hundred writers, plus a sequel. One horror book that you should not read, he said, was THE SUCKING PIT by Guy N. Smith. :-) He also said that for young adults, JUSTINE would be accurate to the panel title

The first book that scared Newman was WAR OF THE WORLDS (at age 8 or 9). The really creepy and scary things were in short stories (e.g. "The Monkey's Paw").

"These days," he said, " one hesitates to dissuade people from reading anything." He described the

1960s as the "Golden Age of the rubbish paperback", such as DRACULA AND THE VIRGINS OF THE UNDEAD. However, there were also "affordable paperback re-issues of [H. P.] Lovecraft." And of course there was also Mary Shelley's FRANKENSTEIN and Bram Stoker's DRACULA. In fact, FRANKENSTEIN was written *by* a teenager. Robert Louis Stevenson's "The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde" is short and perfectly constructed.

"When we first start reading, we want stories," Newman said. In addition to what was recommended, Newman added Shirley Jackson's THE HAUNTING OF HILL HOUSE. (This ended up more a panel of recommendations, which of course was the original idea of the title--tell teenagers not to read something and of course they will.)

Audience members suggested Robert Lory novels, and the works of Edgar Allan Poe. Newman thought that Poe's pre-Civil war Southern manner has worn a bit thin these days. (He mentioned in passing that *all* of Poe's surviving letters include a request for money.)

Lovecraft was recommended. Ramsey Campbell published his Lovecraft pastiches that he wrote as a teen, then spent the rest of his life trying to burn all copies. When kids start reading, they think, "If I am reading this it must be good." They must get past this. (Newman said that THE RATS by James Herbert did this for him.)

Someone suggested the various series books (e.g., Tom Swift), but Newman thought that young adults would be too old for them. They are an interesting idea, thought, and he can understand why they are successful. There are also a lot of possibilities in the "Dennis Wheatley Library of the Occult" (though many are out of print, and almost all are dated). Someone in the audience said that the future was Ian [Fleming], not Dennis [Wheatley]. Sax Rohmer is also problematic, because of the social attitudes. Of course, Fleming retains this as well--no Brits are villains in his books.

[No one suggested THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES.]

Presentation of Sidewise Awards Friday 16.00, M(Jura)

Description: "The Sidewise Awards for Alternate History were first announced in summer 1996 to honour the best "genre" publications of the year. Two awards are given: short form and long form."

The short list this year for Long Form was just one work, Philip Roth's THE PLOT AGAINST AMERICA, and it did win. (Well, "no award" is always an option.) The short list for Short Form was:

- | Duchamp, L. Timmel. "The Heloise Archive"
- | Ellis, Warren, et al. Ministry of Space
- | Klein, Sean. "Five Guys Named Moe"
- | McDaid, John. "The Ashbazu Effect"
- | Roberson, Chris. "Red Hands, Black Hands"
- | Tilton, Lois. "The Gladiator's War: A Dialogue"

The winner was Warren Ellis et al. "Ministry of Space".

Breadth of Character (SFF) Friday 17.00, L(Boisdale-1)

Faye Ringel (mod)

This consisted of three papers.

The Green Knight's Progeny: Medieval and Modern Romance(s) Dr Sylvia Kelso (James Cook University)

This was about how elements of Gawain and the Green Knight have been taken and modified in later stories. It was not one of the papers I was interested in, so I did not take notes.

John Dee in Science Fiction, Fantasy, and the Historical Novel 1527-1608 Dr Peter G Christensen (Cardinal Stritch University)

John Dee occurs as a character but his connection to British history is usually not touched on. He was of Welsh descent and helped establish the Tudor right to throne. He also helped plan the Martin Frobisher voyages to find the Northwest Passage, and assisted in other efforts as well. Christiansen talked a lot about "The Matter of Britain", which is apparently a technical term that pertains specifically to Arthur (see Wikipedia for more details). Later, we got some statements that the "Matter of Britain" was a belief system relating to claims of legitimacy of kingship dating back to Aeneas, Brutus, Arthur, etc.

The specific books Christiansen mentioned were Peter Ackroyd's *THE HOUSE OF DEE*, Gustav Meyerink's *THE ANGEL OF THE WEST WINDOWS*, and John Crowley's *DAEMONOMANIA* (which was influenced by W. B. Yeats's approach to Dee). (Lisa Goldstein [*THE ALCHEMIST'S DOOR*] and Frances Sherwood [*SPLENDOR*] also used Dee as a character, but were not mentioned.)

Christiansen talked about "Renaissance hermeticism as related to magic" and said that early scholars have combined threads that later scholars feel should have been kept separate. He recommended Benjamin Woolley's 2001 biography, *THE QUEEN'S CONJURER*.

Dee did refer back to Arthurian times, and could be a fantasy, science fiction, or historical subject. The three novels Christiansen chose capitalize on the fantasy rather than the science. Ackroyd's deals the most with "The Matter of Britain" and is more in the tradition of Henry James's ghost stories and less in the tradition of the esoteric novel (as are Meyerink and Crowley's).

James Bond and the Borders of Fantasy Albrecht Fritzsche

Fritzsche quoted Greg Bear as saying, "The great thing about science fiction is that in science fiction you can write anything." Science fiction, Fritzsche said, is defined by what it is not--it is not everyday life. So it could be technological progress, another planet, or alternate history. He said something from Isaac Asimov about "peculative fiction"--I do not know if he meant speculative fiction, or if it was an odd mis-translation.)

There are stories that are somehow fantastic but are not called science fiction. "The world of Bond is much less plausible than the world of Orwell's 1984 or of Asimov's robot stories," Fritzsche said, and gave the example of Michael Crichton. He quoted Kingsley Amis as saying, "A secret agent is

confronted with technological possibilities not encountered in our normal life." Both genres attract similar types (e.g., those who like the "merchandising"). Umberto Eco has said that James Bond has a quest (mission), gets (magical) tools to help him, has M as an authority figure, and acts like an adolescent.

Fritzsche, however, still does not think it can be labeled science fiction. The spy novel is the British answer to traditional American crime novels. We must believe that the world is real before we can believe there is a secret behind it. As he put it, "Science fiction explores and the spy novel investigates." The secret agent doesn't prove anything; he finds out. There are other differences between the secret agent and the fantasy hero. For example, James Bond relies on our acceptance that James Bond could be real, but Frodo could not be real. (He seems to have chosen a fantasy character to contrast with, not a science fiction character.)

[References to MOONRAKER in this talk showed that Fritzsche was talking about more about the films than the novels.]

Fractured: Is British Politics Too Broken to Stay Together?
Saturday 10.00, L(Carron)
James Lovegrove, Ian McDonald (mod), Ian R. MacLeod, Nicholas Whyte

Description: "UK politics and race, class, geography, and changing political alignments."

Whyte said he was from Belfast, lives in Brussels, and works on Balkans and the former USSR. MacLeod said his book THE HOUSE OF STORMS is an alternate England. Lovegrove said it should be called the "Untied Kingdom" because of the fractured society. And MacDonald said he was Irish.

Whyte started by saying, "The United Kingdom is dead; it is fractured." Scotland has its own Parliament, and people are not thinking about the nature of Britishness. The only people who think of themselves as British first are the Scots, and there is even more English nationalism now in England. MacLeod said that he had a Scots background, but grew up in Birmingham, and thought of himself as English. Now it is a militant sort of Englishness that one sees; when one sees the flag of St. George now, he expects trouble. On the other hand, people do not worry when they see the Scottish flag. Whyte mentioned that the Cross of St. George was adopted by Georgia (the country, not the state).

Lovegrove is one-quarter Cornish, and says that Cornwall has some notion of separateness as well. Britishness seems a loose coalition of states. Old movies and Richard Curtis movies bear no resemblance to any notion of real Britishness.

MacLeod observed that frequently "England" is used to refer to all of the United Kingdom. MacDonald said that one of the problems of being from Northern Ireland is what do you call yourself? It is not Britain. "You are UKian ['you-kay-ee-an']," he suggested.

Whyte pointed out that a "Yugoslav" identity was invented, but when people could check off "Serb" or some other choice in Montenegro (in addition to "Yugoslav"), the term "Yugoslav" disappeared.

On Englishness, MacDonald quoted Victor Hugo who said, "It's perfectly easy to eat well in England. Just have breakfast three times a day." MacDonald added that a Scottish breakfast is an English breakfast with haggis. To his company, he said, everything outside the M-25 is a separate nation or region, so even Brighton is a separate nation or region. He also said that it was "ironic that the first region to have a devolved government [Irish Free State in 1921] may be the last region to

have a devolved government."

MacLeod said that divisions now seem more local (by street rather than large areas), and that fundamentalism (Protestantism in the case of Northern Ireland, Islam in other areas) is claiming allegiance to other areas that do not actually care about them. MacDonald said that in Northern Ireland the Loyalists (primarily Protestants) fly Israeli flags, while the Republicans (primarily Catholics) fly Palestinian flags. And everyone says, "We are the oppressed."

Lovegrove said that what used to define politics in the United Kingdom was the class system, but now "we have a right-wing Labour government, and a left-wing Tory opposition." And MacLeod said that people are now making a selective choice as to what they are, rather than following expectations according to class or income. Even in sports, people no longer automatically support the local team, they choose which to support. Beliefs, ethnicity, etc., are the factors now.

(Whyte said that when the split between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland happened, Northern Ireland football survived very well, but the Irish part somewhat collapsed.)

MacDonald talked about "me-too politics" and "identity politics." There is apparently a lot of money for Irish-language education, etc., so the Unionists invented "Ulster Scots" as their own language for which they want equal education and so on. MacDonald said, "Anyone who had drunk six pints of Guinness and fallen over on their face could speak perfect Ulster Scots," but it is now one of the official languages, so everything has to be translated into it. "This linguistic emperor has no clothes," he declared. Lovegrove said that most Welshmen he has talked to want to speak English, but there is still a lot of education being done using the Welsh language.

MacDonald cited recent statistics that 500,000 Britons have moved to Spain, and another 500,000 to France. MacLeod said that there is now an idea that the British (and other nationalities) should all think of themselves as European. Whyte thought this was good if it was as an additional identity. In the 1980s the Irish realized you could be Irish and European, not just Irish and not British, he said. (Someone in the audience said that he had lost the feeling of being British but did not feel particularly European either.)

MacDonald threw in the idea of an Indian living in Britain saying, "Let's go out for an English. Can you make it a bit more bland?"

I asked about the parts of the British Isles I have trouble understanding: the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, the Shetlands, and the Orkneys. First they said that the Isle of Man is separate, but then it turned out that was not quite true. Maybe it is like Puerto Rico. I did not get an answer on the rest.

MacDonald talked about learning the "Orangeman's Toast", and Lovegrove said that it was interesting that we can laugh about these things. [Note: I am unable to find anything called the "Orangemen's Toast" through Google.] He said that once a year in his home town they burn an effigy of the Pope, and no one thinks of this as anti-Catholic. (It is really an effigy of Pope Urban something-or-other (VIII?). I still think there is an anti-Catholic element here.)

MacDonald said that Tony Blair was attempting to use the Spanish model of strong regionalism, and MacLeod made reference to regional assemblies. The problem then is the people who regard that as "being ruled by Birmingham" rather than by London, which is least far enough away to take no notice of them. Whyte said that Belgium has only the army and the king in common, but otherwise is divided in two, and MacDonald cited Czechoslovakia's "Velvet Divorce".

MacDonald said that neither the Labour nor the Conservative party can get established in Northern Ireland because it is all identity politics: you are either Unionist or Republican. Lovegrove said a big problem was that Muslim youth find no identity in mainstream politics at all.

Someone asked about the effect of the possible dissolution of the monarchy. MacLeod said that would hasten the dissolution of the United Kingdom. However, there is usually more fragmentation when a country is not under threat, but there is less now because Britain is under threat.

It was pointed that the government structure is not necessarily the determining factor: India is very fragmented even though it uses the British voting system.

Whyte said when the Norwegians gained independence from Sweden in 1905, they picked a new king to establish an identity. Asked how, he said, "I think it was the usual method that there was a spare German prince floating around," but someone pointed out that Haakon VII was actually Danish.

(By the way, in Britain, "Red" (Labour) and "Blue" (Conservative) are flipped from United States.)

Harry Potter Has Put Children's Fantasy Back Fifty Years Saturday 11.00, L(Lomond)

Julie Bertagna, Sharyn November, Graham Sleight (mod), Elizabeth Wein, Jane Yolen

Description: "Children love Harry Potter. But his universe is quaint, relies on gimmicks and is, 'a little derivative' in its plots. Has its success been a good thing? Does New material, by the likes of Steve Augarde, Cornelia Funk, and K. A. Applegate, match up to the classics of the past?"

Asked to make the case against "Harry Potter", Yolen said she could do it in one word: adverbs. That is, Rowling has far too many of them. "I'd start with writing," Yolen said. She quoted Bruce Coville describing fantasy writers' reaction to "Harry Potter": "Oh, God, why not me? Why not me?" Yolen says that the public's reaction to "Harry Potter" has been astonishing reaction, but wishes it could have been for Diana Wynne Jones or someone else better.

Sleight asked whether it was successful *because* it was derivative and comfortable. Yolen responded that one can find all that in better authors, and carried on her complaint by saying, "I think I'm going to write the Book of Adverbs next."

November said, "I think that at this point 'Harry Potter' is not even about the books, it's about the phenomenon." "I'm glad it's books, but it could be anything," she pointed out.

In the United States, every publisher turned the first volume down, and they all turned down Eoin Colfer's "Artemis Fowl" as well. November said, "This is like Diana Wynne Jones crossed with Roald Dahl and not as good as either of them." Now there are lots of manuscripts showing up that are copies. Yolen, figuring to take advantage of two phenomena, said, "I'm sending you THE WAND OF SHANARRA next," to which November replied, "I'm out of the office now." She is also seeing a rise in popularity of anything with authors with initials, but the teens themselves are tired of reading about a teenager who will save the world.

Bertagna said that the last "Harry Potter" book was so large they were getting complaints from osteopaths. Sleight said, "I was hoping it would get so large it would collapse and become a self-sustaining singularity." Wein pointed out that the single-volume edition of THE LORD OF THE RINGS is heavier than any one volume of "Harry Potter". And someone in the audience thought the complaints would be better directed at the people who make kids carry thirty pounds of school books every day.

As for it being derivative, Bertagna observed that Shakespeare and the Bible are also derivative. What appeals, she said, is that Rowling takes moments of high tension and injects a slice of humor in

them. Rowling injects magic into Enid Blyton-type stories. Also, while the Cinderella story of Harry Potter attracted children, the Cinderella story of J. K. Rowling attracted adults.

Bertagna said that the Bloomsbury children's department was failing before "Harry Potter" came out, and "Harry Potter" is what saved it.

Yolen said that another downside is that people who were used to writing critical papers and teaching children's literature are now spending time posting on listservs, saying things like "It's not terribly well-written, but how about this part?" "Why are we spending our time on this?" Yolen asked.

Pointing out that a lot of these criticisms can apply elsewhere, Sleight re-introduced himself by announcing, "I am Graham, and I saw THE RETURN OF THE SITH."

Yolen cited an article that asked, "Can no one criticize Rowling?" "It's not sour grapes," she said. "I hope I'm a better writer than that."

Sleight wondered if the books were popular because they are not that troubling. Someone said that people are discussing whether Harry Potter will die at the end of the last book, to which November said, "Who cares?"

The panelists said that best sellers appeal to a common denominator (though not necessarily the lowest) and "Harry Potter" is no different. Someone said that one reason that lists of recommended books for children will have award-winners on them is because parents buy for children.

Someone pointed out, "Diana Wynne Jones's books are all back in print--every single one. Would this have happened without 'Harry Potter'?" And Bertagna said that children's authors are getting bigger advances and getting more money now than before "Harry Potter".

November agreed; in 1990, fantasy did not sell, but now she can publish a lot of it. She is starting to see a split in children's literature between literature and what people read. Adults say, "I didn't realize this was all so good." which she says "pisses [her] off" because she always knew this.

Yolen said that even if more is being published, publishers are still asking, "Can this make Harry Potter numbers? Can this make Philip Pullman numbers? Can this make Lemony Snicket numbers?"

Wein re-iterated that had it not been for Bloomsbury, "Harry Potter" would have sunk. It was a combination of things that made it successful. November said, "I've had books that were successful because it was the right book at the right time." And the subsequent sale of the United States rights for \$60,000 certainly added to the interest.

Yolen mentioned another "phenomenon" author, fifteen-year-old Christopher Paolini (whose work she said derived from Anne McCaffery and J. R. R. Tolkien). His parents printed it for him and took it around to schools and eventually sold to Random House. The back story is so interesting that publicity is easy. Bertagna agreed, saying that the publicists are always looking for a selling point, a marketing hook, a human-interest story. But also, Paolini's book came out in a year when there was no "Harry Potter" book to compete with. She pointed out that few child prodigy authors go on to have writing careers. She said personally, "I do not publish the writing of teenagers," but she does have teenage readers.

November said that a large part of the phenomenon is that "it's media hitting children's books in a way they never did before."

Yolen talked about actual book production of children's books, saying, "Book-making values were

going on towards the Book of Kells but then it got too expensive." Lemony Snicket, she said, is pseudo-Edward Gorey with a huge tongue stuck in the cheek, but beautifully packaged and gorgeously produced at an affordable price. November thought that Lemony Snicket started from a concept rather than from a story.

One problem seems to be that adults think all children's books should be edifying, and all children's books should be uplifting, to which Sleight said, "Roald Dahl is not edifying!" and someone else added, "He's a sick, sick bastard, and anti-Semitic." Yolen described the Dursleys in "Harry Potter" as channeling Roald Dahl, while the candies are straight from CHARLIE & THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY and other "British candy things."

Bertagna said that the Britain portrayed in "Harry Potter" is the Britain of the 1950s, which has a lot of charm/appeal for both British and American audiences, and she wondered if maybe this was what was meant by saying that "Harry Potter" had "put children's fantasy back fifty years." Sleight said that "Harry Potter" was also "profoundly elitist." When an audience member asked whether "Harry Potter" will seem dated in the future, Bertagna responded, "It already is dated." (For example, it has red phone boxes.)

Yolen reminded us that if we look at fifty-year-old best-seller lists, everyone is now unknown.

November said, "One of the unspoken rules in children's books is get rid of the parents--make the parents go away."

Wein thought that the first book was not edited very well (at least in the British edition). For example, "practise" is the verb, "practice" is the noun, but they were misspelled. November suggested that deadlines may not give enough time for editing. Bertagna said that there are (or will be) seven books that fans love, but most writers think they would have been much tighter as four books.

Yolen said that she had heard that when one book was two-and-a-half years late, and Scholastic's budget had been based on that book, they fired four hundred people and cut a full line of books. All this seems to indicate that while a rising tide floats all boats, but a falling tide sinks them all as well.

Someone in the audience said that they have gotten children reading, and when the children ask what else there is to read, we can recommend Diana Wynne Jones and others. Yolen agreed, and said that the "Oz" books were a similar phenomenon. When she re-read THE WIZARD OF OZ a few years ago to her eight-year-old niece, though, she was appalled: it was repetitive, simplistic--and her niece couldn't wait for the next chapter. Wein said, "If I read 'Harry Potter' when I was eleven I would have absolutely adored it."

How Do We Reinvent Time Travel?

Saturday 12.00, L(Lomond)

Stephen Baxter, Harry Harrison, Kim Stanley Robinson (mod)

Description: "The genre seems to have run out of steam, no one even wants to subvert it anymore. What can we do?"

Robinson introduced Baxter as "one of our great big thinkers." Connie Willis had been scheduled for this, but was not present, leading Baxter to say, "Of course, you have to be late for a time travel panel." Robinson said he had asked to speak about time in the novel, thinking about it in terms of pace of narrative, the time scales of Stapledon versus Virginia Woolf, etc., but they gave him this instead.

Harrison asked whether time travel was dead or not. He then answered himself that it was not dead, but moribund. To write a good time-travel story you have to do a little research and work. If you go to the future, it's easier. (The same is true of alternate history.)

Baxter disagreed, saying that time travel was not moribund, because it does keep popping up, citing "Dr. Who" as a prime example.

Harrison said that Wolfgang Jeshcke wrote a very funny time travel story about going back to the Jurassic to steal oil from Mediterranean, which seems very topical now. Baxter said that Robinson's *YEARS OF RICE AND SALT* is about the manipulation of history and so is in a sense about time travel. He added that Jared Diamond's *GUNS, GERMS, AND STEEL* talks about geographical determinism, a new view of history, so you can write a new alternate history (or several) based on his ideas. This led Robinson to remind the panel that the topic was time travel, not alternate history.

Someone said that the humorous writer finds the problems and paradoxes to write about. This has already been done by so many writers (Robert Silverberg, Stanislaw Lem, etc.) Harrison said that in the old "Astounding", time travel had to be explained. Now one can do it without explanation, or by having character 1 ask, "How does your machine work?" and character 2 respond, "You're too stupid to understand."

Robinson said, "There's always a new mechanism," but what do you do about plot? Connie Willis's *TO SAY NOTHING OF THE DOG* had no explanation for the apparatus, but lots of interesting, comic effects of time travel. Baxter said that a faster-than-light starship is a time machine, and also suggested a story of a library of possible futures as two sides of a war keep sending information back.

The panelists then shifted to a different notion of time in a novel: how many minutes per page are being described? Some writers go slower than real time, some faster (Olaf Stapledon's *STAR MAKER* covers about 500,000,000 years per page). Robinson said he does not mind covering a lot of time in a novel, but does not like the generational saga as seen through a family tree. He said that you care about people, but not their grandchildren. In his "Mars" books, he gets around this by having the characters themselves live very long lives. In *YEARS OF RICE AND SALT*, they keep getting reincarnated. (He also said that "repeated failures of compressing characters in *RED MARS* have led to abandonment of the project [to make a mini-series of it].")

Robinson said that this "deep time" was not common, because covering a lot of time often involves summarizing. But we think of novels as dramatized scenes, and summaries are put in second place. However, he gave the example of *ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF SOLITUDE* as a novel considered a masterpiece that is almost entirely summarized. "Time in the novel is much more fluid [than people think]. You're in a time machine and it's called a novel. It's like an accordion."

Harrison complained that people persist in seeing his "Eden" books as taking place in the "Lizardzoic" rather than today in an alternate universe.

Speaking of H. G. Wells's *TIME MACHINE*, Robinson said that Wells was writing for a general audience and also "in our current terms you would call it a novella." (But perhaps "short novel" would be better.) Baxter mentioned his sequel, *THE TIME SHIPS*, which deals with the consequences of tangling time streams. And his *TIME'S EYE* has a sort of time travel by pasting different eras together. (Robinson compared this to Fred Hoyle's *OCTOBER THE FIRST IS TOO LATE*.)

Robinson talked about Olaf Stapledon and Virginia Woolf. Stapledon wrote *LAST & FIRST MEN* and *STAR MAKER* and made a splash, then sent a copy of *STAR MAKER* to Woolf. Woolf wrote back saying, "This is exhilarating and this is what I've always tried to do in fiction." Robinson said

that in her last two novels (THE YEARS and THE LAST ACT) you can see Woolf trying to incorporate deep time. (Robinson said that these letters are not included in the "complete" letters of Virginia Woolf and or in the books of letters of Olaf Stapledon, but I am assuming he has seen some evidence of them and is not making this up.) This letter was written after she wrote TO THE LIGHTHOUSE in 1938. The chapter that Robinson referred to as "time passes" in that work was a problem for a stream-of-consciousness writer like Woolf. "It's not an easy thing to do to write sentences that convey the passage of long periods of time."

Robinson also said, "The deep time perspective is one of the main things the novel is about. It's what distinguishes the novel from the movies." The notion of "deep time" during World War II helped keep things in perspective, he said.

Baxter felt that the mass audience now is used to time travel. TITANIC was like a science fiction movie, because Rose is more like a time traveler rather than a realistic character. He described this as "historical portrayals with a modern viewpoint character."

Other works mentioned that play with time are Robert A. Heinlein's "All You Zombies" and "By His Bootstraps" and Isaac Asimov's "Thiotimoline" and THE END OF ETERNITY.

Alternative Americas Saturday 13.00, L(Dochart)

Pat Cadigan, Andy Duncan, Ken MacLeod, Farah Mendlesohn (mod), Patrick Nielsen Hayden

Description: "Not all American visions of America were capitalist. Not all Americas are the US. What other plausible Americas can we imagine?"

Mendlesohn began by describing the United States as "the country that most thinks it can achieve perfection."

Duncan quoted Greil Marcus, the director of the remake of THE MANHURIAN CANDIDATE and the author of a BFI monograph on the film, as saying that that film prefigures "the assassination culture" and that the folly is when we start thinking the whole thing is homogenous. (I have no idea what this means.) There is also a lot of America that does not make it into the history books; Marcus calls this "The Invisible Republic."

Nielsen Hayden gave as an example Harry Smith's collection of folk music, and said that Marcus also calls it "The Old Weird America." MacLeod claimed that Highlands psalm-singing styles can be recognized in black Gospel singing, including "giving out the line" (the leader sings the line, then the congregation sings it back). There is also a Scottish connection with Communism in America (secular as well as religious). Robert Owen set up various communities in America that all failed, but were also the roots of libertarianism.

Cadigan described herself as a "recovering American" who moved to the United Kingdom nine years ago. She said that neither Americans nor others understand how large America is or how small other countries are. But Americans also think they are one country, rather than many which depend on economic class: "Part of the terrible beauty of America is that it's so diverse without understanding the nature of the diversity."

Mendlesohn asked whether it was really a confederation rather than a federation. Nielsen Hayden said that some states had been independent "countries" before joining the Union (e.g., Texas), while others were merely administrative units (e.g., Kansas), and this affects how they perceive their participation.

He also said that Scotland is more the Mother Country (than England?), and "in Scotland with the noticeable exception of Glaswegian taxi drivers, everyone is pretty much understandable."

Mendlesohn thought that people are more willing to call themselves "working class" than "lower class". Duncan said that in America, race is the great substitute for class, and Nielsen Hayden claimed, "The Civil War is the real American Revolution." Cadigan said she was fascinated by Ang Lee's film *RIDE WITH THE DEVIL*, covering a little-known aspect of the Civil War. It was said that Southerners claimed all they wanted was to let everyone live the way they wanted, while the North wanted everyone to live the way they did. (Yeah, right--let everyone live the way they wanted, unless they were black.) MacLeod said that almost every United States writer writing alternate histories "obsesses about different outcomes for the Civil War."

Mendlesohn asked about Edward Bellamy, socialists in the 1890s, and communists in the 1920s. Cadigan said that the women's movement began during World War II and that the war made a very different America. Nielsen Hayden thought that in the 1950s a hyper-femininity was enforced against the women's movement.

Duncan said that seeing "the South" as a single unit was wrong. There is "the Wet South and the Dry South". The coastal areas tend to be Catholic, cosmopolitan and tolerant, with liquor flowing freely. Inland it is Protestant, intolerant, and anti-liquor. Currently, he said, the Inland forces have completely vanquished the Coastal forces and a lot of the rest of the nation. Nielsen Hayden added, "There's a lot in American history that encourages a paranoid view." He talked about geographic gerrymandering and how Appalachia was gerrymandered into powerlessness by being divided among many states.

MacLeod warned the audience to remember that what comes through music, films, and other small slots to Europe is not a true picture of America.

The Art of the Anthology
Saturday 15.30, L(Carron)

David Hartwell, Patrick Nielsen Hayden, Sheila Williams (mod), Andrew Wilson, Jane Yolen

Description: "Is there more to the anthology than compiling stories?"

Wilson co-edited *NOVA SCOTIA*, an anthology of new Scottish speculative fiction. Hartwell edits *THE YEAR'S BEST FANTASY* and *THE YEAR'S BEST SCIENCE FICTION* (or at least one of each of those titles), as well as "numerous anthologies of enormous size." Williams edits *ASIMOV'S* and various reprint theme anthologies. Yolen has edited three dozen anthologies over forty years, both reprint and original, including *THE YEAR'S BEST SCIENCE FICTION & FANTASY FOR TEENS*. Nielsen Hayden said that in the "not-the-YA line" at Tor he has edited the "Starlight" anthologies.

Williams suggested starting with the differences between original versus reprint anthologies. She finds the original more involving.

Wilson talked about his experience. The anthology *SHIP-BUILDING* was published at the 1995 Worldcon in Scotland, so this time around when someone asked, "Should we do another one?" the response was, "Yes, but do it professionally." So he and Neil Williamson sent out seventy-five solicitations, got fifty submissions, and selected twenty-one stories for *NOVA SCOTIA*. Having two editors saves a lot of time, even though they agreed a lot on the stories. (This actually gave them some assurance.)

Hartwell disagreed about doing original anthologies as being more involving. He did an original Christmas anthology ten years ago and it took less work than his more ambitious reprint anthologies. Yolen said that she agreed with Hartwell. Both are an equal amount of work, but different. For a reprint anthology, the reading and tracking down is enormous, but they are all good stories. For an original anthology, you have seventy to ninety stories, but many are not very good. You cannot edit stories in reprint anthology, but you really should in an original anthology, so more editing time is needed. And there is very little recompense for editors in either. (She said twenty cents an hour, and others said this was a generous estimate.)

Hartwell noted that while editors are not usually paid well, *THE DARK DESCENT* was picked by the Book-of-the-Month Club (*not* the Science Fiction Book Club), which result in an additional \$100,000 royalties that year!

Nielsen Hayden said that *NEW SKIES* and *NEW MAGICS* in the young adult line were the most work. They had set a cut-off date of 1980, and wasted a year over-thinking the project. They tried to read everything, then decided that they did not have to read everything. It was enough to produce "an excellent selection" rather than "the best of".

Williams said that an original anthology has work in opening up submissions and editing, while for a reprint anthology she has in her head all the stories from *ASIMOV'S* and *ANALOG* so she does not have to re-read them.

Yolen said that one problem is not wanting to ask professionals--particularly well-known ones--to rewrite, but even Anne McCaffrey was willing to do revisions on stories submitted for original anthologies. (Of course, then she turned them into novels.)

Hartwell said that sometimes it is appropriate to lightly edit reprint material to correct typos, undesired editing, etc. Williams said that usually she does not want to change a published text (except for typos). However, young adult anthologies asked for changes to language. For these, she did consult the authors beforehand. However, sometimes this is not do-able. (For Jack McDevitt's "To Hell with Stars", they asked, "But can we change the title?")

As far as arranging an anthology, Nielsen Hayden said that one puts the second-best story first, and the best story last. Hartwell referred to a "33 Sardonics" essay that became the traditional way of structuring anthologies (unless one decided to make it chronological or alphabetical). This is "best first, second-best last, unless the best is substantially longer." The rest of the stories should build towards the middle. Hartwell recommended that the third-to-last be a longer, stronger one, and the second-to-last a short funny one. Williams said she prefers the longest at the end in the magazine (it is usually the best, she said, or we would not have bought it), and either it or the first story is the cover story. She said not to put a very short story first even if it is brilliant. And the strong or long should go in the middle, alternating types (serious/funny, short/long). Yolen said that she did not want to put a story first that had been first in its original anthology.

Hartwell said that there are two questions about an anthology: Are the stories good? Is the organization good?

Nielsen Hayden compared it to music; even before iTunes, he was putting together play lists that flow. The tables of contents of anthologies are his absolute favorite parts.

Nielsen Hayden said that with co-editors, one needs to articulate a lot that is obvious to oneself, and that makes the anthology stronger. Williams said that a story has an introduction, then elaboration, conflict, crisis, and resolution. She actually tries to do an order somewhat based on this.

Nielsen Hayden said there is also the "anthology with an agenda." Hartwell described himself as the

"Master of the Axe-Grinding Agenda." He also said that he had wanted to be an anthologist since he was young and read the anthologies of Groff Conklin and Judith Merril. He started with three ideas, one of which was a horror anthology to demonstrate a theory of horror (this ended up as two, one of reprints, and one original. For this, he went back to Herbert A. Wise & Phyllis Fraser [Cerf Wagner]'s GREAT TALES OF TERROR AND THE SUPERNATURAL (1944) and other classic anthologies so as to cover the area entirely. He read ten stories for each one chosen, and at the time he did this (the late 1980s) everyone was available, he said--he could even buy Stephen King stories. It ended up a thousand pages long, but Tom Doherty did it anyway, as THE DARK DESCENT.

For anthologies, Hartwell decided to use an idea to be explored, not a theme. Yolen said that a theme can be so narrow that the stories can be repetitive. (Nieslen Hayden suggested "Great SF about Eggs".) Roger Elwood and Martin H. Greenberg fall into this trap at times. A theme can restrict you in other ways as well; Williams said that she once did a reprint solar system anthology, but had no story about Uranus, so she had to ask for one about Uranus. And the story order was pre-defined. But she does have fun with themed anthologies.

Hartwell said that an anthology should have an introduction and story notes or afterwords. Wilson said that he used story notes to categorize the stories in the Scottish anthology, because they spanned many genres. He reminded us that people say, "Short stories don't sell; anthologies don't sell." He was able to do NOVA SCOTIA because of Worldcon and the tie-in for press, marketing, etc. (There was also a New Mexico science fiction anthology--A VERY LARGE ARRAY, edited by Melinda H. Snodgrass.)

Williams said that she usually did not have problems getting stories for anthologies, but did lose a couple of stories from MERCENARIES (a Niven because it was coming out in N-SPACE, and a Pournelle). So she used a Bujold instead, but needed her to rewrite it somewhat.

Hartwell asked her, "Are you restricted because you can't use stories from elsewhere?" Williams that technically they can always use the stories (by contract), but they don't push it if the author objects.

Yolen said that she hoped her young adult anthologies would be taught in schools, so story notes would be useful and could recommend other works to readers. Hartwell said that another reason for introductions and notes is that "the science fiction field historically likes to know things." Williams mentioned that Isaac Asimov edited an anthology titled WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? with science questions at the end of each story.

Someone in the audience asked for the distinction between an anthology and a collection. An anthology contains works by several authors; a collection is works by a single author. (Hartwell said another distinction, or perhaps rather a consequence, is that with an anthology the editor chooses the stories and the order, while with a collection the editor has to negotiate both. Yolen gave the example of not wanting the NESFA collection of her stories to overlap her SISTER EMILY'S LIGHTSHIP collection a lot.

Someone asked about whether editors struggle for a title. Yolen said for her latest, the publisher insisted on "The Year's Best Fantasy & Science Fiction for Teens."

I asked about the impermanence of anthologies. That is, one often hears that some great anthology cannot be reprinted, because the editor no longer has the rights to the stories. Hartwell says that this is only because people do not save the permission forms. Yolen said that anthologists hate chasing down rights, but do not want to run an anthology with a note asking for the holders of the rights to contact them and then get sued. (Williams said that when Dell acquired ANALOG and ASIMOV'S, they did not get Conde Nast's rights or records. ("The Swordsman of Varnis" by Clive Jackson was mentioned as an example of a story that she would like to reprint, but cannot locate the author.) But the panel seemed to feel that if a good faith attempt was made to find the rights holders, then if they

turn up later, courts would usually grant them only the same price the other authors got. (From the audience, Jo Walton asked what if they really don't want to be in it, instead of just wanting money--for example, an anthology titled "Great Fascist Stories of All Time"?)

Nielsen Hayden said that some anthologies are pitched by having saleable authors, and so that author must be secured first--and may be paid considerably more than the others. Wilson said it was important to keep the proposal to a single page. Nielsen Hayden said that the whole process was "convincing a publisher to do something against their financial interest because they should do something cool."

Returning to editing and revising, an audience member asked about authors who want to revise a work for a reprint anthology. Nielsen Hayden said that was okay, as long as it was in small ways.

Yolen said that one problem with publishers taking a hand is that some snappy one-line introductions can get stuck to stories even though she did not write them. Jo Walton said it was important not to give away the story in the blurb. (On the hand, for his anthology *ALTERNATE GENERALS*, editor Harry Turtledove carefully wrote story introductions letting readers know the divergence point for each story--and then the publisher dropped them!)

What should an anthology do? Hartwell said the important goals were education and entertainment.

Yolen said that some readers feel they cannot get immersed in a short story, and so prefer novels.

Someone in the audience said he was a "newbie anthologist"--how could he get credentials. It is difficult, Hartwell said. Once every ten years someone comes along with a dynamite idea (such as Sheri Thomas with *DARK MATTER*), or they partner with a well-known anthologist. But it is difficult to get started on one's own. Hartwell said that you have to have an entertaining, commercial, really good idea. Wilson said that you get the publishers hooked with the first line of your pitch, such as "Let's do an anthology of Scottish science fiction for the Scottish Worldcon!"

Hartwell said that although now anthologies have a reputation of not selling well, before 1970 the average anthology outsold the average novel. This was destroyed in a four-year period by Roger Elwood, who sold four hundred bad anthologies (not all of which were published), mostly original anthologies. "He had no taste and no standards whatsoever," Hartwell said, although he admitted that Elwood's anthology *EPOCH* was good. But this flood destroyed the credibility of anthologies in the science fiction field; by 1977 or 1978, everyone knew that anthologies did not sell. Elwood then went to Laser Books, another venture that was a failure. (Jo Walton claimed, "Elwood is what caused me to develop taste," as opposed to liking everything.) Nielsen Hayden said that a Charles DeLint collection sells two-thirds to three-quarters as many copies as a Charles DeLint novel. But most authors' collections, he said, sell about a quarter as many. Someone in the audience said that collections and anthologies sell, but they do not become best-sellers.

Nielsen Hayden said that a collection is sometimes done as a sweetener. Yolen said this is more common with small presses, who can get a well-known author's novel they might not otherwise get, if they also do a collection of that author's work. Hartwell said that it used to be the other way around; Judith Merrill was told, "We'll do your novel if you do an anthology."

**Jules Verne: First Hard SF Writer?
Saturday 17.00, L(Dochart)**

Brian Aldiss OBE, Dan DeLong (mod), Jean-Claude Dunyach, G. David Nordley, Lars-Olov Strandberg

Description: "Jules Verne died in 1905, one hundred years ago. Was he the first 'hard SF' writer, and how well has his future tech stood up to the test of time?"

There was a very international flavor to this panel: Strandberg was Swedish, Dunyach was French, Aldiss was English, and Nordley was American. (Nordley said that his first encounter was watching the Walt Disney version of 20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA.)

Aldiss said that Penguin books was bringing out new editions of a lot of both H. G. Wells and Jules Verne, and he was asked to write introductions to Wells's WAR OF THE WORLDS and Verne's AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS. The latter Aldiss described as a romance with geography more than with science. Most people are familiar with Michael Todd's film version, but the book, Aldiss said, is "a different kettle of fish." Verne's excitement was in realizing that you could actually get around the world, including crossing the Pacific and across the United States, and in under eighty days. But is it science fiction? Aldiss answered himself: "I think it is. It rejoices in innovation."

DeLong said he always wanted to be Captain Nemo.

The question was asked whether anyone could think of a hard science fiction writer earlier than Verne. Nordley suggested Francis Bacon. Dunyach agreed, and added that Mary Shelley was hard science fiction at the time. (Strandberg said that he does not accept Shelley as hard science fiction. Verne did research before he wrote the books; Shelley did not.) Then Dunyach explained why Verne was hard science fiction, which seemed a bit obvious. Nordley said there was a kind of singularity around 1895-1910, with enormous changes in communication, transportation, and so on, and Verne anticipated most of those changes. (PARIS IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY has faxes and computers, even though they are more like Babbage's machines than like current computers.) However, sometimes Verne had to ignore science for the sake of the story.

Aldiss said that 1871 saw the publication of ALICE IN WONDERLAND by Lewis Carroll, EREWHON by Samuel Butler, and THE COMING RACE by Edward Bulwer-Lytton. The latter had flying people powered by "vryl" (extrapolating from electricity), and it was so popular that two foods were named after it (Vryal and Bovril).

Dunyach said that while Verne did extrapolations from science, they were all from Newtonian science: Freud, Marx, and information theory are all absent. Verne's books became dated in science, but remained popular as adventures in unknown places. Dunyach also noted that the equations in FROM THE EARTH TO THE MOON and AROUND THE MOON have mistakes in them. (In fact, a physics exam he had in high school asked him to find the mistakes and correct them!) DeLong thought that they were very accurate in some details of moon launch and process, however, such as launching from Florida, and orbiting the moon before landing. Nordley added that the astronauts get a boost to compensate for low fuel by figure-eighting around the moon, a la Apollo 13. He also pointed out that Verne did not have his astronauts weightless, but that was because people would not accept that in Verne's time. Verne did have water cushioning and lots of details on launches, though. Dunyach pointed out that Verne had a technical advisor, which no one else had at the time.

Aldiss cited Verne's claim to accuracy ("Wells invents and I stick to science"), but then asked, "What about A JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH?" DeLong talked about what to some seems to be an error when he said that when he first read 20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA, "I didn't know what a league was but that sure sounded deep." (Verne obviously was referring to the distance traveled, not the depth achieved.)

Dunyach said that they attempted to ban Verne in France in the 1970s because he was using technology to build weapons. (It is not clear who the "they" is in this case.) DeLong said that sodium batteries and electric motors (*not* atomic energy) powered the Nautilus, and added, "in the 1870s sodium batteries were the great thing just around the corner, and they're still the great thing just

around the corner."

Aldiss reminded the audience that Verne was translated very badly at first, and was also abridged, knocking out a lot of the science. To which Dunyach responded, "Count your blessings," pointing out that Verne was writing serials and when he was out of ideas, he would write three pages of algae classification or technical equations. Aldiss agreed, saying that AROUND THE WORLD IN EIGHTY DAYS had a long description of Mormons. (So, for that matter, did Arthur Conan Doyle's A STUDY IN SCARLET.) Dunyach said that in THE CHILDREN OF CAPTAIN GRANT, they make nitroglycerine, and Verne gives the details on how to do it, and as a child he [Dunyach] wanted to make it. As an adult, he thinks that it might be better if this is abridged!

Aldiss mentioned that in HECTOR SERVEDAC (a.k.a. OFF ON A COMET), the claim is made that a still body of water can be super-cooled, and cited the Battle of Lake Ladoga. (According to a Finn in the audience, this is a myth rather than historical fact. Since I do not know the incident referred to, I cannot comment.)

Asked for their favorites, the panelists were almost unanimous. Dunyach, Nordley, and DeLong all picked 20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA. Dunyach said that Captain Nemo and the Nautilus are unique; Nemo has a dark secret, and looks like a modern tormented person, and the Nautilus is also very mysterious. Nordley agreed about Captain Nemo, and said the book also comments on imperialism and the occupation of India, anticipates the rise of terrorism, and expresses the joy of exploring the oceans. DeLong said that it "appealed to the young geek in me"; he also picked THE MYSTERIOUS ISLAND as a co-favorite. Strandberg picked FROM THE EARTH TO THE MOON, which he said he knew was impossible but still loved the idea. Aldiss said that his favorite used to be A JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH, but is now AROUND THE WORLD IN EIGHTY DAYS.

**Video: SFX in Space
Saturday 18.00, L(Boisdale-1)
David A. Hardy**

Description: "Video contrasts 1950s movies, especially Destination Moon, with the reality of the Apollo landings -- quite accurately, but not necessarily seriously."

Titled "Destination Moon 1950 - 1969", this showed various clips from DESTINATION MOON, ROCKETSHIP X-M, CONQUEST OF SPACE, and FLIGHT TO MARS, comparing and contrasting them with each other and with the reality of space travel. One thing I observed: the bad animation in DESTINATION MOON is more obvious on the big screen. I recommend this if a DVD release ever comes out (or if it is presented at other conventions).

**Masquerade
Saturday 20.00**

This was somewhat shorter than masquerades at North American Worldcons, meaning I could drop in for part of a 9PM panel afterwards. Since this is reported elsewhere (with pictures), I'll skip it.

**SF Before 1960: No Sex... and Who Cleaned the Toilets?
Saturday 21.00, L(Dochart)**

Pat Cadigan, Fred Lerner, John Meaney, Richard Morgan

Description: "What has changed in science fiction since the 1960s and why?"

I missed the first part of this because I was at the masquerade. When I came in the panelists were saying that we can have Catholic science fiction and Jewish science fiction, but they could not conceive of Methodist SF. There is also Mormon science fiction (not just Orson Scott Card). The panelists said that John Crowley's works ask the question, "Is there more than one history to the world?" and this applies, because Mormons don't share our consensus reality. Also, they said, the fiction is more acceptable to publishers because the Mormon version of history doesn't have any political significance the way the neo-Nazis's does. (I would think that this different reality would apply to the belief systems of any religion other than one's own.)

It was said that it is also quite likely that a lot of the lesser-known pulp authors may have been black. Sam Moskowitz had said that science fiction magazines sold very well in Harlem.

**Have the Tolkienistas Misread Tolkien?
Sunday 11.00, A(Gala2)
Esther Friesner, Robin Hobb, Justina Robson**

Description: "A lot of fantasy that is apparently derivative of Tolkien is searching for an object of power to make everything right. Whereas the entire point of Lord of the Rings is that if anyone has the object of power then everything is wrong."

Friesner started, "Tolkien was my gateway drug to this sort of thing [fantasy]." She has a book coming out called "Temping Fate"; this started out as a typo. (As did Anne McCaffrey's GET OFF THE UNICORN, which was supposed to be "Get of the Unicorn".

Hobb said, "Tolkien was a life-changing experience for me." She said that a "Tolkienista" must a person who reads Tolkien and decides it was about someone's fun trip with his mates. A Tolkienista focuses on the trappings rather than on the heart of the story. Friesner said that she thought of a Tolkienista as being like a Starbucks barrista or a fashionista (who wears all black, has no hips or backside, and wears nothing off the rack). Tolkienistas she sees as dilletantish in their approach to Tolkien. Robson said that she thought of it as someone who had attached to the original and everything else was a pale imitation.

Friesner asked, "What would we call the person who says that the one true flavor is Tolkien?" Suggestions included fundamentalist and purist. She said, "One person's right is another person's Stepford Wives." Hobb added, "Power corrupts, absolute power corrupts absolutely."

Someone in the audience suggested, "Tolkien has inverted the Grail quest." Robson asked, "Is the Grail an object of power or just supposed to bring peace to the world?" The audience member responded, "If they healed Arthur with the Grail, that would also heal the Land." because the King is connected to the Land. Friesner said that in Parsifal (Percival), the spear is the healing object. Hobb noted that we see that in THE LORD OF THE RINGS with Denethor--when he is restored, the people are restored/refreshed.

Friesner said that Aragorn's sword is another symbol of power, but an emblem of power rather than an object of power. Robson said that she always thought it was a symbol of shattered self-belief, and that the elves repair it as they are leaving mankind.

Hobb returned to the idea that Tolkienistas think it is all on the surface--gathering up companions,

winning a war, coming home.

Someone in the audience said that Tolkienistas provide definitive interpretations of how things should be seen, and noted that the panelists are talking more about material objects than the people and characters. Robson said that this is the saddest part of academia, because there is no more to talk about. The audience member said that this was the same as people saying, "Okay, we have castles, knights, ladies, . . .--that's enough for a story."; it leads to false medievalism.

Friesner said that gamers are highly creative people, and gaming has proliferated since the advent of Tolkien. But the time limits in gaming mean you end up dealing with the trappings rather than the substance (e.g., there is always a heterogeneous group--elf, thief, this, that). And when the gamers write books, they do the same. And some editors would rather see plot than beautiful writing, so they get published. Hobb said it was a pre-fab world, with a company of seven, a ranger, a dwarf, a wizard, and a quest. Friesner did say, "Some of the manuals for some game systems are very layered and very complex." Robson talked about how it seemed to be about acquiring tokens and collecting prizes.

Someone described these scenarios as, "Fundamentally cozy worlds that must be protected at all costs." In these books, no social or political change occurs at the end of the book; it is just your fantasy of what you wish would happen. And Hobb said, "The whole point [of these other works] is to come back to the beginning and to find that nothing has changed." Friesner notes that in Tolkien, even Sam has changed by the end of *THE LORD OF THE RINGS*, and the members of the fellowship seem to be undergoing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in the Shire.

Someone suggested that the unwilling hero appeals to us, and Friesner said that the unwilling hero goes back to Achilles. There is also the concept of the unlikely hero, which one also sees in Orson Scott Card's *ENDER'S GAME* and the works of David Eddings. For that matter, Friesner said, in *DON QUIXOTE* Sancho Panza becomes one of the best governors of an island (and Don Quixote himself is pretty unlikely as a hero).

Someone said that while authors such as Tolkien and Poul Anderson (and others) draw from a rich background of literature and myth, "a lot of the David Eddingses of the world have roots that go back all the way to Tolkien." (This sounded to me like someone who reads the "Narnia" books, does not know anything about Christianity, but tries to write a copy of them anyway.)

Someone said that in *THE LORD OF THE RINGS*, only Sam has a "proper" family. Someone asked, "Merry and Pippin, do they marry?" The response came, "They both marry." Then someone added, "Not each other."

Hobb said that she "would never ever describe Tolkien as Christian fairytale," even though an audience member claimed that Tolkien said it was. Someone said, "It is not a story of accomplishment, it's a story of change." The elves are leaving, and the Age of Man is coming. Immortal individuals are out, teams and groups are in.

Hobb said regarding trilogies, "Telling things in threes is a very old part of our storytelling." Friesner called this the "Sitcom Syndrome": If they loved it, they will keep buying it. Publishers say that readers expect trilogies. In fact, it also serves the publishers' ends by dominating more shelf space. Robson said that there is a size limit for books, and trilogies get around this. (Once again, I'll note that *LES MISERABLES* is about 1600 pages, so the upper physical limit is *not* 700 pages.) Regarding publishing, Hobb cited an Internet poem by Clive James which begins:

The book of my enemy has been remaindered
And I am pleased.
In vast quantities it has been remaindered
Like a van-load of counterfeit that has been seized

And sits in piles in a police warehouse,
My enemy's much-prized effort sits in piles
In the kind of bookshop where remaindering occurs.

The whole poem can easily be found by googling. Hobb recommended George R. R. Martin's "A Song of Ice and Fire" and Carlos Ruiz Zafon's THE SAHDOW OF THE WIND (this should be shelved/filed under "R"). Friesner recommended Larry Gonick's THE CARTOON HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSE.

The British Boffin: An SF Stereotype Dissected
Sunday 12.00, L(Alsh-1)

Liz Batty, Stephen Baxter (mod), Ken MacLeod, Francis Spufford

Description: "For every Bond, there has to be a Q. Who were the Boffins, where did they go, and are they coming back? Francis Spufford, author of the acclaimed Backroom Boys, talks to Ken MacLeod, Stephen Baxter, and others."

MacLeod began by saying that in 1960s and 1970s, the United Kingdom was a big center of engineering and ship-building; now it is not. He saw the stereotype of the boffin--"a remote man in a white coat working in a lab somewhere and doing strange and mysterious things"--not just in science fiction, but elsewhere as well. Science teachers were like that too. Baxter described the stereotype as "elderly eccentric men with stained coats and so on." Batty thought that was still a somewhat valid description--people think that science can be understood only by people who wear glasses, etc.

Baxter said that Scottish engineers have become a global cliché, with the myth that Scottish engineers had built the world.

Spufford summed up that this is not an extinct stereotype, but the British boffin is more stuck in the past (WWII) than other countries' boffins. The stereotype is alive because there is just enough of an element of truth in it, and the public image of engineers and scientists has so little to do with what they are really like. He also said that British technology was conducted more by enthusiasts than elsewhere. In America, there is the entrepreneur Thomas Edison. In Russia or Germany, there is a Faustian figure making a pact with power. In Italy, there is Ferrari, a designer with machinery. In France, there is the technocrat in Napoleonic colleges. But in Britain, there are the Saturday afternoon hobbyist clubs putting it together in a hut. The (human) networks are very important. There is also a symbiotic relationship between this and low budgets--people develop a desire to use low-budget, old stuff. (Delta wings were tested by a man on a bicycle throwing balsa models.)

Baxter said that Edison was used as the hero in a few stories. And you have films like THE AVIATOR, about Howard Hughes. He said that scientists are called "Northern chemists" (this seems to be a term at Oxford for students doing science degrees; I am not sure how widespread it is), and mentioned C. P. Snow's "Two Cultures".

Regarding these "two cultures," Spufford said that Sir Arthur C. Clarke gets pissed off at C. S. Lewis, especially when Lewis says that space travel is sinful because it spreads the vomit of our culture to other planets. Apparently a group of people attended a meeting to argue about technology, but had nothing to say because they began from different premises. (My notes list Clarke and Val Cleaver of Rolls Royce versus Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien.)

Batty said that now scientists look down on arts students, and within science there is a whole hierarchy. MacLeod said that his tutor said of psychology, "You might as well be doing theology."

Baxter said that regarding boffins, one should compare and contrast Colin Pillinger (with the Beagle

probe) with David Southwood (with the Cassini probe). Spufford said that Pillinger blackmailed the British government by making Beagle so cool that the government would have to back it. MacLeod said he would have liked to see it backed by industry so we could have had the "Marmite Beagle" or the "Tesco Beagle II", but it is difficult to get more money after a million-to-one shot does not work.

Batty said that she read space fiction, but became a biologist. It was always clear to her that science fiction was fictional, but some are more plausible than others. LIFE by Gwyneth A. Jones is plausible, at least, but Robert Sawyer's FRAMESHIFT is implausible. (She also hated the central microbiologist character in the latter.) MacLeod said that ROCKET TO LIMBO by Alan E. Nourse was the first science fiction that seemed different from boys' adventure stories.

Baxter said of the image of the boffin, if he's good, he's harmless (Q in the "James Bond" films). If he is directed and serious, he's bad (as in the "Frankenstein" films). The exception to the latter is Bernard Quatermass. Spufford suggested Dr. Who as a boffin, since Dr. Who solves problems, while at least one time Quatermass caused them. He also mentioned Einstein as the stereotype "uber-boffin," and he talking about reading Heinlein juveniles where you had to be good with your hands to be a boffin. (Someone asked whether Professor Challenger was an early, good mad scientist.)

Someone (Batty?) said, "We didn't have radio when I was young," leading someone in the audience to ask, "Did you have books when you were young?"

I mentioned the films TUCKER and the quintessential British boffin film, THE DAM BUSTERS, and Spufford said that these demonstrate the differences between the United States and the United Kingdom. (OCTOBER SKY is another boffin film.)

Someone suggested that if boffins are successful they are engineers; if not, they are scientists (e.g. Isambard Kingdom Brunel).

MacLeod recommended THE SMALL BACK ROOM by Nigel Balchin about bomb disposal. Also mentioned were the non-fiction SLIDE RULE by Nevil Shute (about his days in the early British aviation industry), the novel THE BLACK CLOUD by Fred Hoyle, and the non-fiction LONGITUDE by Dava Sobel.

Alan Turing was called (by MacLeod?) "the great British boffin we never heard about"--the British equivalent of the persecuted scientist. Baxter said that Turing's image was that of a flawed, doomed scientist. Spufford recommended the biography of Turing by Andrew Hodges (ALAN TURING: THE ENIGMA OF INTELLIGENCE).

A woman in the audience pointed out that Sir Arthur C. Clarke was once a boffin working on radar, and that her mother talked about those "madmen who produced these incredible things that save Britain." Someone said they liked the notion of the British Royal Astronomer saving the day, but Baxter noted that they left the engineering to the Americans.

MacLeod said that he tries to avoid making his science British rather than international. Batty said that the stereotype there but we are moving away from it. And Baxter said that Michael Crichton has rewritten the Pandora and Tower of Babel myths over and over.

**An Encounter with Chris Priest
Sunday 14.00, L(Lomond)
Christopher Priest**

Description: "'The Matter of a Briton: Forty Years on the Atlantic Shore'" -- a presentation by our

GOH Christopher Priest."

Priest had titled this "The Condition of a Brit: Forty Years on the Atlantic Shore", but somehow it got changed. Priest said that he has previously been a Guest of Honour at conventions, and he has been to Worldcons, but this is the first time the two have intersected.

He described the terrors of the modern-day Briton as the lack of a Labor Day weekend and the strong pound.

Of him as a Guest of Honour, Priest said that people expect a portly demeanor, BBC announcer speech, the manners of John Gieglud playing a butler, and the fashion sense of Darth Vader.

Talking about Guest of Honour speeches, Priest said that at the 1972 Eastercon some Guest of Honour (someone said Larry Niven) gave a tedious speech with his back to the audience, and the audience embarrassed because they were bored. Brian Aldiss even faked a nosebleed to be able to leave! So when at the 1979 Novacon he was the Guest of Honour, everyone in the front three rows had a handkerchief ready.

He reminisced about the 1965 Worldcon in London, where the hotel cost seven pounds a day--for full room and board! The board, however, seemed to have led to "heroic farting" from a big-name author he then shared a panel with.

Being German, the 1970 Heidelberg Worldcon ran on time, Priest said. However, the Hugo ceremony at Heidelberg Castle, but there were no buses to return, it was pouring rain, and he was too broke to pay for a taxi. So he watched "plutocrats like Robert Silverberg" race by in taxis. He remembers that Forrest J. Ackerman picked him up in a taxi.

In 1975, he missed Aussiecon I even though he had a Hugo-nominated novel (INVERTED WORLD). That was the year, he said, of the Harlan Ellison story "Adrift Just Off the Islets of Langerhans: Latitude 38°54'N, Longitude 77°00'13"W", which Priest described as "almost as long as the title, but not as well told."

In 1979 for Seacon, he had a novella nomination (for "The Watched"), and in 1980 for Noreascon II he had a novelette nomination (for "Palely Loitering"). (He later said that Noreascon II was his biggest convention, and a week later Othercon in Texas was his smallest.)

Priest then wrote four more novels (THE AFFIRMATION, THE GLAMOUR, THE QUIET WOMAN, and THE PRESTIGE) and some short pieces in the next fifteen years. All his novels are science fiction, but his best works are further away from the center of the field. "There's a lot of muscle in fantastic literature," he said, "but a lot of it remains unflexed." He is less comfortable with the outer workings of science fiction, and warned, "The curse of all genre fiction is in-breeding." Priest continued, "Whenever someone said 'SF is' or 'SF should be' I immediately start thinking of exceptions."

Priest has done investigative journalism, so he used this on science fiction, and particularly on "Last Dangerous Visions". He wrote a famous essay about "the lousy way the book had been edited" and nothing (he said) has changed in the twenty years since he wrote the first draft of the essay. The only change is that the facts grew more detailed and supported. In 1994, this was published as THE BOOK ON THE EDGE OF FOREVER. Ellison demanded its withdrawal ("so much for freedom of speech," Priest noted), but he had no legal leg to stand on. In 1995, Priest got a Hugo nomination for his book, and Ellison led a lobbying campaign for the competing book, I. ASIMOV, which eventually won in a very close vote (four votes difference). Priest claimed that Ellison had a plan B if Priest won: having goons beat him up. Priest was told, "If you should win, and you spot, say, John Henry Holmberg or Norman Spinrad, in the audience, keep your speech short."

Priest told the story of James Owsley, who changed his name to "Christopher Priest" because "he thought it was cool." Priest is finding this very damaging, because publishers cannot keep them straight. "His professional incompetence is damaging me," Priest said. But he is not asking for recompense. "All I want is for him to change his name back." Priest said he said to Owsley's lawyer, if Owsley did not like his own name, "Why doesn't he call himself Harlan Ellison?" "That's not a cool name," was the answer.

Priest noted that many of his books are about imposters, doppelgangers, twins, doubles, etc., "so if anyone deserved this it is probably me."

He said that Winston Churchill learned there was an American novelist of the same name, so "Winnie" switched to using "Winston S. Churchill" for his writing. But Owsley has changed his to "Christopher J. Priest". All of this is reminiscent of Robert A. Heinlein's DOUBLE STAR. Hitler and Stalin routinely used doubles, Churchill used a voice double, and someone impersonated Field Marshall Montgomery. There is even a crank conspiracy theory about Rudolph Hess that it was not Hess who flew to Scotland, but an actor double. So, Priest summarized, "World War II had been fought and led by doubles, look-a-likes, and wannabes."

And speaking of name confusion, King George VI was Albert George (Bertie), King Edward VII was Edward Albert George, and there was also George Edward (who died in a plane crash of a flying boat over Scotland with an extra body--Rudolph Hess? his double? another George?). All this provided part of the inspiration for THE SEPARATION, which has finally appeared in the United States. As Priest put it, this was "the background, the wallpaper of the mind while I was writing it." He is now stalled on a new novel. He said that now it may seem impossible to conceive of writing science fiction without mentioning terrorism or climate change, but you cannot have everything written about them

His novel THE PRESTIGE won the World Fantasy Award, but he said it was very difficult for British writers to make the Hugo short list, until the recent extensions (which allow an extra year of eligibility for works not published in the United States in their first year). THE PRESTIGE, he said, is science fiction, not fantasy.

Regarding a movie of THE PRESTIGE, Priest said that he had to pay for all the copies sent out to producers. He got three offers (Film Four, Sam Mendes, Newmarket and Christopher Nowlan). He was tempted by Mendes, then but then Newmarket sent a tape of FOLLOWING, which pulled him in that direction. Then he saw Nowlan's MEMENTO and the next day got a contract from him. It was renewed a few times, and they are currently [as of August] casting, with production starting in November. It is a real adaptation of the novel, he said, but treated differently visually. (Priest had some other comments on film, which he asked not to let leave the room, so I will not print them here, though I suspect someone will.)

Priest said that whenever he publishes a book, he almost always gets one review in United States that says, "We thought he was dead." But then again, he has had only one book in the last seven years, and that was not published in the United States (until recently, assuming he means THE SEPARATION). Regarding Owsley, he said, "If he is cashing in, he's really picked the wrong person."

Priest said that his idols are Robert Sheckley, Brian W. Aldiss, John Wyndham, and H. G. Wells. Of John Norman, he said, "Anyone in his right mind would put a pseudonym on that stuff."

**Get Out of My Ghetto!
Sunday 15.30, L(Carron)**

Tom Doherty, Christopher Priest, Geoff Ryman, Simon Spanton, Gordon Van Gelder (mod)

Description: "The mainstream is ready to try cohabitation. Now it's F/SF that's acting coy." [M. John Harrison]. A number of mainstream writers have tried SF recently, why do we get so prissy?"

[People tended to use the term "SF" here as meaning speculative fiction and being inclusive of fantasy as well as of science fiction.]

Doherty said we get so prissy "because they've been pissing on us for decades." Doherty said that in publishing, "The guy who does SF is treated as odd in a relatively benign way." SF has been a fairly steady business, though, and the "mainstream envies us our built-in audience, which they don't always have" and our greater freedom.

Priest, who said he was "sitting here with all [his] publishers," said he totally disagrees with Harrison. The mainstream is not ready to assimilate SF into the mainstream, if that is what Harrison means. SF writers are likeable curiosities. They are often compared with Martin Amis and Ian McEwan and Julian Barnes, but Christopher Priest is totally irrelevant to them. When a mainstream author writes a science fiction novel, he or she denies it. P. D. James wrote CHILDREN OF MEN (which Doherty described as a rewrite of GREYBEARD), and then said, "This is just a fable set in the future." Someone in the audience said that Margaret Atwood does this all the time, another named Michael Chrichton, and Doherty mentioned Philip Roth. We think "of course it is science fiction," but they say it is not.

A biography of Victor Gollancz (the publisher) written by Sheila Bush tells of taking on J. G. Ballard, but he decided that Ballard was too good to be published as science fiction. So he sent THE DROWNED WORLD to Kingsley Amis, but he wanted Ballard to be published as science fiction to show that science fiction could be good. Doherty said he would prefer no labels on any books. People said that without labels, trying to find science fiction or fantasy can be difficult.

Van Gelder said that he was always pushed to publish as mainstream, because science fiction readers would cross the barrier to buy mainstream, but mainstream readers would not cross to science fiction. (This makes me wonder why *anything* is published as science fiction.)

Doherty said that most SF readers that he knows read voraciously in SF and widely everywhere else, while most mainstream readers might read a crime/mystery novel. Mary Doria Russell was published as mainstream, but she knew she was science fiction.

Spanton said, "I'm not sure of the usefulness of labels when it comes to consuming books." They serve mostly as a marketing tag, alerting the trade as to where to stock a book. Van Gelder asked, "Is there nothing that holds science fiction together?" Spanton said, "Yes, but it's not the marketing tag."

Van Gelder gave Kirsten Bakis's LIVES OF THE MONSTER DOGS as a mainstream novel that was done before and better as science fiction.

Spanton said that marketing uses the term "science fiction" negatively, but we use it positively. The mainstream gets more attention, publicity, etc. But the science fiction tag allows the books to be published and not be at the mercy of "3-for-2" promotions and such, or of supermarket buyers. The tag provides security. (In other words, there's a floor--but also a ceiling. Van Gelder said that books marketed as mainstream may sell better and "neither your agent or your publisher will apologize for making you more money.") "H. G. Wells is not considered to be anything but a literary great now," Doherty said. "When mainstream writers do write science fiction, they write in a vacuum of knowledge" (like Bakis). And mainstream editors think that just okay science fiction is revolutionary.

Atwood has apparently now recanted in her claim that ORYX & CRANK is not science fiction. However, Philip Roth claimed that he had re-invented re-imagining the past.

Spanton asked whether it matters that people deny the tag; we should be judging the books, not the tags.

Priest said, "I'm often accused (as Mike Harrison is) of flirting with the mainstream." But after Priest explained to a journalist why he writes science fiction, the interview appeared as "Beam Me Up, Scotty".

Doherty said that Tor discovered that non-SF Tor books were not successful because they were considered science fiction, so they launched the Forge imprint.

Someone said his friend thinks we have a giant chip on our shoulder and we should just get over it.

Van Gelder said that SF can be invisible. Jonathem Lethem's MOTHERLESS BROOKLYN was a best-seller, but people repeatedly would say, "This book is wonderful; when are you going to write a second novel?" (He had already written four novels--GUN, WITH OCCASIONAL MUSIC; AMNESIA MOON; AS SHE CLIMBED ACROSS THE TABLE; and GIRL IN LANDSCAPE--as well as a story collection.)

Someone in the audience suggested another condescending phrase: "This transcends fantasy." Someone else said this made science fiction fans something like "fans of a slightly unfashionable football club."

When someone said that "mainstream is realism," Priest noted that only people in the speculative fiction world refer to it as mainstream.

Van Gelder said that author Jay McInerney said he read "Neuromancer" but dismissed it out of hand. Neil Gaiman and Neal Stephenson have had similar experiences with their books. Van Gelder said that Michael Chabon is choosing some SF stories, but he is not reading widely in the field to do so.

Someone said we have our own argot, our own language, our own ways of presenting, and the info-dump. Van Gelder said that Paul Auster was his thesis advisor and Auster said he did not want to know about SF.

People mentioned Dave Mitchell's CLOUD ATLAS as being on the best-seller list, and something called "Richard & Judy's book club." Doherty talked about SF being "intentional." Someone suggested the re-release of DUNE as a mainstream novel about desert terrorism and religion. Spanton said that it would appear too late and appear too dated.

Someone suggested one problem with the "science fiction" tag is that you reinforce people's expectations. A person reads a couple, and they are crappy, so he says, "I don't like that." Spanton said that if SF was published as mainstream, more people will read SF. Van Gelder talked about packaging, saying that books are packaged to sell to the Oprah genre. Doherty talked about Susanna Clarke's Bloomsbury marketing as appealing to the Jane Austen crowd. Spanton said that publishers do not do market research. Doherty said that "market research is publishing and either succeeding or failing."

I asked about the distinction one often sees in bookstores between literature versus fiction. Doherty said that "literature" means that the author is dead.

Someone asked if we invent sub-genres like cyberpunk so as to avoid the vast number of books. Van Gelder said, "Writers aspire to be genres unto themselves" (e.g., Steven King).

There is a rich tradition of the magazines; William Gibson wrote for several magazines, and when readers read him, they saw other material as well.

Priest recounted that he sent A DREAM OF WESSEX to Harper Row, who turned it down, saying it was "long and slow and furthermore British." Aldiss said that he got the same rejection for THE MALACIA TAPESTRY. Publishers liked it but had no category for it. He said that publishers need a new category: long, slow, and British.

David Hartwell pointed out that one fantasy book sold 7500 books total, of which 5000 were through amazon. Priest said that amazon discounts so highly, the author does not make a living wage. (That's odd: I thought that royalties were based on the list price, at least until a book is remaindered.)

Priest asked if publishers see amazon as a retail shift or an expansion? Spanton said it does not seem to grow the market, so it is probably a shift.

Van Gelder said there is a difference in marketing between the United States and the United Kingdom. Priest noted that his last novel was rejected by the United States, but was a best-seller for Gollancz. United States publishing is much more exciting.

[At this point Ryman arrived, which is why he had not said anything up to this point.]

Van Gelder said that in all this discussion the implication is that Gernsback was the one who split SF from the mainstream, and that is not necessarily true.

Ryman talked about "false literature," which he described as Michael Ondaatje et al. This is the "Classic FM" version of literature, where anything rough, difficult, or challenging is simplified. Mainstream writers, he said, want to go into something where everything is idiosyncratic and difficult. But as far as he is concerned, if you have ever written an SF novel, you are an SF author. (This seems to almost be a parallel to the "one drop of blood" racial definitions.) Slipstream might be okay, though.

Spanton observed, "SF by and large doesn't have a problem with difficulty. It welcomes it." But the marketplace is crowded, and we do not help by publishing more and more. Trade (meaning the distributors and stores) currently have the whip hand.

Someone asked about tie-ins. Spanton said his company publishes both tie-ins and original fiction. Van Gelder said that there is a tie-in market and a fiction market, but they are not the same. He said that tie-ins are such a market that he has even seen a novelization of "Great Expectations"! (The cover art for it originally very chaste, but the final art was not, and the YA [Young Adult] marketing collapsed.)

Someone else asked at what age do we create categories? We do not see them in YA. Spanton said that is because YA *is* a category. And the cover art categorizes books further.

Ryman pointed out that many of the categories are orthogonal: SF can be war, love, or any other kind of story. Van Gelder said that when he was in the field, it seemed very important to slot books correctly, but now as a consumer, it does not seem as important.

Spanton said that a higher percentage of mainstream writers fail than SF writers. Van Gelder added that Jack Womack and Jonathan Carroll failed in the mainstream but succeeded in SF.

I'll add that Octavia Butler's "Parable" duology had one book marketed as fiction and one as science fiction.

No one asked about authors taking new pen names, or different pen names for different markets. Nor did anyone ask for a distinction between "writer" versus "author".

Alternate Technological History

Sunday 17.00, L(Carron)

Simon Bisson (mod), Carolyn Dougherty, Lauren McLaughlin, Sean McMullen

Description: "What were the roads not taken in the development of science and technology? Could we have really had Babbage machines, steam motorcars or Betamax video?"

McMullen said that his alternate technology story, "Souls in the Great Machine", was modeled on a VAX 11/780 emulating a PDP-11. Dougherty writes about 18th century railways, but real ones rather than alternate histories.

McMullen said that when he writes about the history of computing, people ask why Romans et al could not have put a similar computer together. The Romans had slave labor, then later there were monks, and so on, and there were abacus beads. By the 19th century there were mechanical adding/multiplying machines. But each time a step was made, it was pretty much at the limit of what could be done at that time. In "Souls in the Great Machine", he had to invent a lot of things that most people do not think about, like computer language, etc. (This is what they had to do at Los Alamos, for example.) And since in battles in his story, some people get shot, he needed redundant components as well. In other words, he said, he was fudging, because he used a fully blown science of computing that we had and that he knew about because we had computers first. Authors need to be careful about using a theoretical basis that would not have been there. Hang gliders existed in Middle Ages, but the theory of powered flight did not.

McLaughlin pointed out that there were also social parameters at time of the invention of computers. Bisson said that early computers filled a pressing need (code-breaking), and that one had rooms full of "calculators" (a.k.a. "computers", a.k.a. people) doing flight design calculations, etc.

Dougherty said there is a feedback loop: "Technologies embody world views. World views embody technologies." She also thought that when technology A and technology B are competing, if technology A is chosen, it is never for a technical reason. Bisson agreed, saying that VHS is more popular than Betamax, not for any technical reason, but because Betamax (Sony) would not license pornography to be issued on their cassettes and VHS would. (There was also an issue of how long one could record without changing tapes.)

Dougherty gave another example of AC power instead of DC power; AC power loses less power in transmission, but Dougherty said that the real reason it was chosen was because of a propaganda war between Thomas Edison and General Electric on the DC side and Nikola Tesla and Westinghouse on the AC side. So we decided to build plants and drag wires around rather than to build smaller local power stations, because we chose losing less power. [Actually, another reason was that DC requires separate lines for different voltages.] Bisson summarized, "The value judgments we make are a key to this."

McLaughlin thought it was "interesting to look at what cultural prejudices were in place" when certain choices were made. For example, McMullen noted that the first man through the sound barrier was a Luftwaffe pilot, but no one talks about this. And the first interstellar probe was a manhole cover launched in Nevada at seven times the escape velocity of the solar system. (I have no idea how to verify this.) Also, he said, the Nazis were the first in space. And in 1949 Americans shot a ball-bearing out from a rocket, which possibly became the first artificial satellite. All of these are based on simple Vernian technology. And in 1959 was the first Mars probe, which was Russian.

(All this sounds like a lot of secret histories, or ideas for them in any case. It is the same as asking who discovered America--really the question is which one stuck.)

The questions about who discovered a certain technology seem to include: Is it publicized? Is it usable? Is it good publicity? (Would the wheel with the Incans be an unusable/unused technology?)

McMullen said that his book CENTAURION'S EMPIRE has Vikings in Australia. The Dutch, who traveled a lot in the East Indies, never even looked at the east coast of Australia. Economics is very important to all this. Bisson agreed, saying that most western European countries were fishing the Grand Banks before Columbus, but none never settled there, nor did they write down or publish this information. (McMullen later said that the Greeks and Egyptians had all sort of technology to perform magic in their temples, but of course it was not publicized.) Someone in the audience claimed that the land above the 42nd parallel was granted to Norway/Sweden by the Pope. (This is the first I have ever heard of this.)

Someone else suggested that any technology that has been around for five years and is not widespread is alternative. Maybe this is true in the sense that environmentalists use it now, but look how long movable type took to catch on.

This led someone to mention "alternative medicine", but Bisson pointed out that herbal technology led to the use of willow bark, which led to aspirin, so it is not entirely alternative. And Dougherty pointed out that Lady Montague brought the idea of vaccination back from Turkey to Europe. Someone suggested that many societies had more advanced medical technology than we think, but the soft tissues not preserved to prove this. Dougherty said, though, that technology is transmitted through people, not by digging up bodies.

Someone asked, "If it weren't for the Hindenburg, would we have airships?" Dougherty replied that if we valued sustainability, safety, capacity, etc., the zeppelin is better. (The Akron, the Shenandoah, and others, though, show that the airship also had its drawbacks.) But we value speed. Also, airplanes were better in war. Zeppelins were like ships (organizational teams), but planes were individualistic. McLaughlin noted that cars are also individual. Bisson said that politics also affected this: the United States would not sell helium to Germany, which had built zeppelins to helium safety standards.

McMullen added that by 1783 we had the first balloons; we do not hear about them a lot, but they were there. "The military actually drives things and if it's military it's not written about very much." The first manned military vehicles were in 14th century Japan. In the 13th century, there were rocket bombs in China. Signal kites were used in 1066. But when people write about old battles, they do not include this sort of thing.

Someone asked why it took so long for suitcases to have wheels. The answer was that people who were rich enough to travel did not carry their own luggage, and someone else said that one needed a particular configuration for the wheels, as well as the idea to rotate the suitcase (though the latter seems obvious, since steamer trunks were regularly rotated to transport them on dollies).

McMullen said that the stirrup showed up very late (2nd century). Chariots were very slow, but they served until the stirrup arrived. McLaughlin thought that technological development is a lot like evolution--it depends on random chance. Bisson said it also needs the base technologies (chemistry, machining, etc.). McLaughlin warned, "It only looks inevitable in retrospect."

Someone mentioned industrial archaeology, and the existence of a Greek clockwork orrery from the third century BCE. Someone in the audience said that the idea of publishing ideas is recent, and McMullen agreed, saying that for a long time people who did technology or journeys did not write. (I suspect that the rise of patents made publishing more common.)

Hugo Awards Ceremony
Sunday 20.00, A(Clyde)
Hosts: Paul McAuley and Kim Newman

The introduction to this was so great I am going to nominate it for a Hugo for Best Dramatic Presentation (Short Form). It was a whole riff on how Victor Hugo had founded "Fiction-Scientifique", which is why the awards are named for him. And according to them, "[Hugo] persuaded Marcel Proust to alter the title of 'A la Recherche du Temps Perdue' to 'Mind-Quest of the Tempunauts', and to issue his mammoth work in ten separate volumes, inventing the decalogy form which dominates the field to this day" Hugo also wrote a story about a gypsy girl, her pet goat, and a flying alien--"The Jetpack of Notre Dame".

The entire script can be found at.

The only real glitch in the presentation was during the presentation for the John W. Campbell Award. This is a plaque and, as with all the awards, it was brought out onto stage before the winner's name was read. But the camera operator focused in on the plaque, and Elizabeth Bear's name could be clearly read on the large screens before the nominees' names were read and she was announced as the winner. (The Hugos have much smaller engraving, so they were not a problem--or maybe someone told the camera crew not to zoom in so much!)

The winners of the Hugos (and other awards) were:

- | First Fandom: Howard De Vore
- | Big Heart: Waldemar Koenig, John Henry Holmburg, Ina Shoneroch

- | Best Novel: JONATHAN STRANGE & MR NORRELL by Susanna Clarke
- | Best Novella: "The Concrete Jungle" by Charles Stross (THE ATROCITY ARCHIVE)
- | Best Novelette: "The Faery Handbag" by Kelly Link (THE FAERY REEL)
- | Best Short Story: "Travels with My Cats" by Mike Resnick (Asimov's 02/04)
- | Best Related Book: THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO SCIENCE FICTION ed. by Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn
- | Best Dramatic Presentation - Long Form: THE INCREDIBLES
- | Best Dramatic Presentation - Short Form: "33" (BATTLESTAR GALACTICA)
- | Best Professional Editor: Ellen Datlow
- | Best Professional Artist: Jim Burns
- | Best Semiprozine: ANSIBLE ed. by David Langford
- | Best Fan Writer: David Langford
- | Best Fanzine: PLOKTA ed. by Alison Scott, Steve Davies and Mike Scott
- | Best Fan Artist: Sue Mason
- | Best Web Site: SciFiction (www.scifi.com/scifiction) ed. by Ellen Datlow, Craig Engler, general manager
- | John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer: Elizabeth Bear

(The Seiuns were not presented at this ceremony, or indeed at Interaction at all, but at the NASFIC instead. In part because of this, I believe this was the shortest Hugo Awards ceremony on record.)

Globalisation and Other Mysteries of Publishing
Monday 11.00, L(Boisdale-1)
Tim Holman, John Jarrold, Patrick Nielsen Hayden (mod), Simon Spanton, Simon Taylor

Description: "Publishing is getting more convoluted as it becomes more international. What determines where a book is released? Why are some releases concurrent and others delayed or never published in the UK or US at all?"

Holman works for Orbit/Time-Warner UK/Time-Warner US/Time-Warner. Taylor works for Transworld/UK Random House/NY Random House/Bertelsman. Nielsen Hayden works for Tor/Bertelsman. Spanton works for Gollancz/Orion/Hachette Livre/Lagardere Group.

Spanton began by saying that what has changed most radically for him is that Gollancz in the last three years or so has fallen into a policy of concentrating on British authors, but will only buy them if they can get world-wide rights. Instead of buying rights from United States, they are trying to sell them. However, he said that for major sellers like Stephen Donaldson and Dan Simmons, they still use the traditional set-up. For everyone, there is a need to publish as close as possible to United States publication. (He noted that Donaldson's last book sold more in the United Kingdom than in the United States.)

Nielsen Hayden said this is because "fans won't wait." Holman said that the fact that consumers buy the edition of their choice does not affect his work. The availability of a United States edition can kick-start an author, as long as it is not so large as to erode the market. Nielsen Hayden said that the reverse situation does hurt in United States sometimes: consider an author with a fan base who might have made good mid-list sales (around 4000 copies). If the United Kingdom edition comes out a year in advance, then the hard-core fans buy that, and the United States edition sells only 3000 copies, and it is considered a failure.

Jarrold said that in the early 1990s, United Kingdom publication was about a year behind the United States. He talked about how in 1988 there was an "offset cupboard" with United States hardbacks from which they offer United Kingdom versions a year later. United Kingdom publication was often tied to Australia and a big change came when there was a change in Australian copyright law, which became that if you did not publish within a month of when the first overseas (usually United States) copies came to in Australia, you lost the rights there. Nielsen Hayden added, "Because they got tired of getting everything last."

So by 1992 United Kingdom editions had to come out simultaneously. Nielsen Hayden said this meant that the British sometimes get cheaper editions out faster: the hardbacks are so pricey, so C format paperbacks are brought out at the same time and they are cheaper than United States hardbacks. He added that he thought that Amazon is still a tiny percentage of sales, but Holman and Taylor both said that was not the case: Amazon is 10% of their sales.

Someone asked about title changes and re-editing for the United States market, particularly in the "Harry Potter" books. Spanton said that this is happening less in large part because of the demands of simultaneous publishing. (He noted as an aside that some spell-checkers in the United Kingdom no longer recognize the "u" in words like "honour".) Nielsen Hayden also thought it was becoming less of an issue, as popular taste is becoming more divergent. People seemed to disagree on whether or not the later "Harry Potter" books were being changed. (I suspect they were, if only to make the punctuation conform to American rules rather than British.)

(I still do not know why Mary Gentle's "1610: A Sundial in a Grave" was re-titled "A Sundial in a Grave: 1610" for its United States publication.)

Holman said the United States is the hardest market to crack for United Kingdom publishers; France, Germany, and even Russia are easier. Nielsen Hayden said that the reverse is true for United States publishers trying to sell to the United Kingdom. And, he added, Canada is often a subject of contention between the United States and the United Kingdom. Paperbacks become logistically difficult to do in the United States without Canada, because distributors actually cross the border.

Someone said often the United Kingdom publishers get the Canadian rights for British authors, and the United States ones get them for American authors. There are also Canadian publishers, and Canadian publishers also distribute other publishers' books.

I asked about the fact that books were so much cheaper in, say, India. Spanton said that books often get discounted in poor countries, but noted that McDonald's is the same price everywhere. (Is that true, I wonder?) Jarrold said that each market sets its own price, adding, "I believe in selling books for top dollar. I realize that this is not popular with readers, but it is popular with authors."

Someone in the audience asked about piracy issues (in the sense of selling a legitimate edition in a country where that publisher does not have the rights). Nielsen Hayden answered that a certain amount of leakage is allowed. For example, a United Kingdom edition of Gene Wolfe in a specialty store is okay, but piles of remaindered United Kingdom editions of Gene Wolfe in a Barnes & Noble is not. And, contrary to popular opinion, he said that it is not illegal to buy books from other countries. Spanton felt that for many authors, being pirated is in a sense a point of pride.

Ginjer Buchanan asked who was publishing the India books. It turns out to be Penguin India and other Indian publishers.

Someone asked why the publishers in the United States and the United Kingdom are separate. One answer was that there is a large ocean between the United States and the United Kingdom, which does not answer why they keep this system.

Taylor said that as far as the book trade went, booksellers are becoming more interchangeable and more uniform. In the United Kingdom, the chains are Waterstone's (with about 20-25% of the market), Borders, W H Smith, Ottakers, and amazon. Nielsen Hayden said that in Canada Indigo/Chapters is the only chain. Nielsen Hayden also noted that Borders and other stores in the United Kingdom carry a lot of copies of Tor books that he knows they have not sold the United Kingdom rights to, but they also have no United Kingdom publisher either. (So Tor has no real interest in pursuing a piracy suit, unless they think there is a reasonable chance that they might have been able to sell the United Kingdom rights.)

Someone asked about e-publishing. Spanton said this has a gradually increasing minority of the market, but we forget about the tactile pleasure of holding a book at our peril. And, he pointed out, you can drop a book in the bath, and it will get a bit round, but it won't blow up.

It was pointed out that Jim Baen is not only selling texts on line, but creatively giving them away: each new hardcover of the "Honor Harrington" series has a CD-ROM of the full text of the previous books in the series. Oddly enough, this seems just to encourage people to buy the actual books. As someone said, "People sample text on-line, and they buy books." It was said that Cory Doctorow uses this as well.

Taylor was worried about amazon's "Look inside this book" feature. Nielsen Hayden said that he was more concerned about the mis-use of this for a home repair book than for a novel. Spanton pointed out that amazon does not want to provide a reference library; they want to sell books too.

Regarding making predictions of what will happen in publishing, Holman observed, "The foreseeable future is getting very small"

Someone asked about the POD (print-on-demand) backlist. Nielsen Hayden described POD as "less romantic and fascinating than it seemed a few years ago." It is really a new printing technique rather than a major transformation. Nielsen Hayden also said that modern publishing houses are descended from retail booksellers. Spanton mentioned that the demise of the Net Book Agreement in 1997 changed things in United Kingdom. (The NBA allowed publishers to set the price of books, and

bookstores could not discount that.) Nielsen Hayden commented on a seemingly paradoxical concept: "All publishers feel fewer books should be published--fewer of theirs and more of ours." But all this means (I think) is that publishers wish they could publish only the best-sellers and not publish books that fail, or even have only moderate success. (One sees a similar attitude in Hollywood.)

Miscellaneous

Interaction as a convention was good, and the fact that the subway was running made the logistics better, but as I said before, eating outside the convention center in a one-hour (or even two-hour) gap was a problem. I took my notes for this on my palmtop, having forgotten to pack a steno pad, so oddly enough they were not as complete as usual. (Studies have shown that for long stretches, typing is faster, but in short bursts, writing is. And the ability to go back and annotate, or draw connecting lines, is much better on paper. All this fits in with that discussion of book versus e-book, I guess.)

Again, my apologies for taking so long to finish this. This time large chunks of it were written at various places while our car was being repaired. (Last year it was while the car was being serviced, so I'm beginning to sense a trend here. Alas.)

Next year in Anaheim!

Evelyn C. Leeper may be reached via [e-mail](#) or you may visit her [Homepage](#).

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