

# Intersection 1995

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[continued from Edinburgh festival report]

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We got up, finished packing, had breakfast, and called for a taxi to the train station. We got tickets for the 10 AM train to Glasgow's Queen Street (#6.50 each) which arrived about 10:30 AM. (Actually it was a little bit late due to some delay or other.) On the train we met a couple of other fans from DC and talked about Boskone and Disclave. There were some who thought that swapping the weekends used for these would be a good idea, and while that has much to recommend it, it probably won't happen. It's a pity, because besides the Boston weather situation being better in May, the swap would return Boskone to a three-day weekend (it's President's Day weekend now, which everyone in DC gets, but not most of the Boskone attendees). The one major obstacle is that the Boston-area hotels are usually pretty busy around May with college graduations.

We took a taxi from the station to the hotel and checked in. The rooms are small compared to American hotel rooms, and compared to the flat, but it does have a shower.

## **Introduction**

Intersection, the 53rd World Science Fiction Convention, was held from 24 August through 28 August 1995 in Glasgow, Scotland. There were approximately 4800 people attending, making this larger than Confiction but smaller than Conspiracy. (It was also smaller than ConAdian, but it felt larger.)

## **Convention Centre**

We decided to walk from our hotel to the SECC (Scottish Exhibition and Convention Centre), since it appeared to be only a fifteen-minute walk (or someone may actually have claimed that). As Mark noted, however, "It's a fifteen-minute walk ... for Pheidippides." (Or for the classically challenged, Roger Bannister.) And it wasn't even an interesting walk, but rather along the Clyde through a basically deserted area.

This is the probably the place to note that Intersection is the most inconvenient convention we have attended in this regard. Our hotel in The Hague was further away from the convention centre, but the tram ran from in front of our hotel to within two or three blocks of the centre. Most North American conventions have the hotels within ten minutes walk, and the main hotels are frequently attached. Even Brighton was more compact, and the area around the Convention Centre was full of shops, restaurants, etc., which made the walking more pleasant and safer (or at least gave one that feeling--it may be perfectly safe in Glasgow, but it doesn't feel that way).

(Later we found out that there was a train station at the SECC connected to the city centre, but it was flooded earlier this year and is still being repaired. With the train, things would presumably have been more convenient. Still later, we found out that a city bus ran from a block from our hotel to the SECC, but the convention never told anyone about it. There was a special shuttle bus to the major hotels, #7 for a pass or #1 per ride, but it ran only once per hour. The city bus was 30p.)

## **Registration/Program Books/Etc**

Registration was very fast--there were no lines, pretty amazing for noon Thursday. We picked up the freebies, which included an anthology of Scottish SF and some sample chapters from Voyager books. Luckily there were no heavy books.

I looked through the Pocket Programme, which is in a small loose-leaf binder for no really good reason, and discovered that while I was credited for the Glasgow Bookshop List, I was not listed in the Programme Participant Index. Well, I suppose they wanted to limit to three pages and needed to include all the pros first. The Pocket Programme requires a larger than normal pocket, and still fails to provide a convenient daily grid, as only the (somewhat non-descriptive) titles of the panels are on the grid--the descriptions are elsewhere in it (for most of the items). As is distressingly common, the film schedule is not included in the grid (though it is in the book), and the video schedule is not in it at all.

My suggestions for a Pocket Programme are:

- | It should fit in a standard man's shirt pocket.
- | It should have daily grids which include all programming tracks. These should have a *useful* title, participants, room, and time. Evening grids should be part of the daily grids.
- | It should have an index by participant.
- | It should have an art show map, a dealers room map, site maps, street map, and pertinent local information (e.g., ATMs, chemist's, etc.). It is more important to locate the restaurants on the map than the bookshops.

While I'm at it, I should also mention that there were no schedules posted outside each room, giving the day's schedule for that room. These help early-arrivers determine if they're at the right place, and also remind people of things they might want to attend that might get lost in the longer full lists.

One request for future conventions with a large international attendance: if you use abbreviation for the various countries, publish a list of what they stand for. Telling people, "Oh, they're the same as what you see on license plates" may be meaningful to European fans, but meaningless to people from other continents.

The SECC is very nice, with a glass-roofed concourse and lots of food stands. The Dealers Room is a bit smaller than North American Worldcon Dealers Rooms, but with a higher concentration of books. (Some people even claimed there were too *many* books.) Of course, at shipping rates, I can't afford to buy a whole lot....

There are, however, two problems. One, there are no clocks. Two, there are too few non-smoking areas, particularly on the concourse itself.

### **Art Show**

I got to this briefly once, but then every other time I had free, the art show was closed. Part of the problem was that the art was nor arranged in aisles which made resuming a tour of it easy, but rather it was laid out in unmapped islands. Friends I spoke with had major objections to the bidding process, which was remarkably undefined (how many bids *did* it take to send something to auction?) and having most of the pieces labeled "POA" ("Price On Asking") didn't help. There should be a sheet with the rules given to bidders, and the rules should be followed. (Apparently, some pieces without bids ended up in the auction.)

### **Programming**

Intersection had fewer panels that I was interested in than any other Worldcon of recent memory, and only one or two more than Boskone. The Green Room was actually three separate Green Rooms, with coffee not available in the Moat House one, only drinks. (In my opinion, more panelists need coffee than alcohol before a panel.) One could supposedly get a chit for a drink later, but whenever I tried they said they were running low on chits and to just go over and get my drink--I didn't need a chit. I don't think they quite understood.

The mechanics of the panels were not thought out. The rooms had no clocks, and no one came in with signs for ten- and five-minute warnings. It wasn't until Sunday that Programming asked the panelists (via tiny notes on the tables) to wrap up about ten minutes early. The signs for the panel titles and panelists' names were hand-lettered instead of printed, making them at times hard to read. (Apparently the convention organizers 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.)

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.

### **Horizon 10--American Futures**

Thursday, 15:00

Jim Young (m), Joe Haldeman, Allen Steele, Harry Turtledove

"The rise of the right and the fundamentalists, a boom and bust economy and the largest debt on the planet. Where is America going? Factionalism and terminal decline? Or are these problems only

temporary--will America rediscover global leadership and turn outwards again?"

["We" and "us" in the following refer to the United States.]

Young said that the panel would focus on the United States for next thirty years, and asked the panelists for three scenarios each: very likely, moderately likely, and least likely.

Haldeman said that the least likely is that the United States would get a single vision and become the moral and economic leader of the world. The most likely is that we would spend money on small, disastrous wars until we became a Third World country. In between is his prediction of the primacy of fundamentalist religion (he note that there are a *lot* of new churches being built in the South). What Haldeman said he would *like* to see would be a slow increase in respect for education rather than for accumulating money.

Steele said that the 20th Century is called the "American Century," but that it is unlikely this will continue. Currently, Steele said, the United States is "the tough guy on the block that nobody wants to play with." In the future, the United States won't dominate affairs; the European Community or Japan will. For one thing, "Every four years a whole bunch of zeroes come in who want to be President of the United States." Also, the United States won't completely break up, but some states may secede. For example, five or six years ago, Vermont had a debate and a non-binding vote, and voted to secede. There is also a movement in the Pacific Northwest (Washington, Oregon, and northern California, as well as parts of Canada) to form Cascadia. Certainly, Steele says, no one wants to become a state, citing the recent Puerto Rican referendum and the separatist movement in Guam. So in 2095 (so much for "focusing on the next thirty years") there will probably be forty to forty-five states, not fifty-one.

Turtledove saw the most likely scenario as a rough continuation of status quo. He didn't see a rosy future, saying, "God knows the United States of America has its problems," and its emphasis on short-term results exacerbates the other problems of racial/economic problems. But he thinks we may have more than fifty states, because some of the Canadian provinces might join the United States if Canada breaks up. He also observed that this was the "American Century" because "we built up our industrial base over two world wars and haven't had the living crap kicked out of us at least once." (Someone in the audience pointed out that Switzerland and Sweden also avoided getting the crap kicked out of them.) The key question may be if we have learned the lesson of Vietnam (and stay out of wars we can't win).

Young said that he believed there was a hundred-year cycle of domestic upheaval that the United States follows (the Whiskey Rebellion in the 1790s, strife in the 1890s, and now unrest in the 1990s). Frankly, I think he has too few data points to generalize. He said, "Reform is the ideological goal toward which we want to move," but no one agrees on what it is. So everyone comes up with insane ideas on how to reform. He also foresees lots of technological revolutions at hand (e.g., a biotechnological one) with ethical, moral, economic, and other implications. These revolutions are more market-driven than previous revolutions, though. Young also asks, "If we are entering into a period in which literacy is primarily dependent on the computer, is it likely that we will build a new kind of society built on a class structure based on [the skills of] reading, writing, and typing?"

Young somewhat agreed with Turtledove, saying that the most likely scenario is that we fumble along. He believes the Religious Right will eventually collapse because, he said, Jesus will not return in 2000. (I suspect it will hang on until at least 2033 or 2034, but maybe the magic of the round number 2000 will overcome historical logic. There are certainly groups who have predicted the end of the world in the past, and survived as a group even when it didn't happen.)

Turtledove noted that Young had a baby-boom perspective in that Young appeared to believe that rough economic equality and equality of opportunity are the norm. This is not a God-given right, Turtledove observed, or even very common.

Steele said that the microelectronics revolution is a double-edged sword, and "Newt Gingrich's solution [to the economic problems some people would have in accessing the Net] of giving everyone a laptop computer is absolutely asinine." (Young then noted that Sturgeon's Law applies to Gingrich's ideas.) Steele said that the computer revolution has brought back the salon, conversation, and letter-writing, albeit in somewhat different forms. And it may even bring back literacy: even smart people look idiotic if their posts are full of grammatical errors.

Haldeman saw as fairly likely an apocalyptic future. For example, he talked to the War College about military futures in 2020, predicting the "dis-urbanization" of the United States following terrorist nuclear or biological attacks on cities. We will have virtual cities instead. As far as the problems of the information superhighway requiring that people have computer equipment, Haldeman said there was an obvious parallel to the interstate highway system, which requires that people have a car to use it directly, but clearly benefit even if they don't. (For example, their groceries get to market faster and cheaper.)

As far as literacy goes, Haldeman thought we would skip over that to voice-recognition systems, leading to a discussion of how soon we actually would have such systems. Young claimed that "voice recognition is one of the hardest nuts to crack." Haldeman countered that they used to claim computers wouldn't be able to play decent chess or speak a sentence in this century. Of course, only time will tell.

Young said that the issues the panelists needed to look at to make predictions are the "functional questions" such as energy problems. Haldeman said the answer to the energy problems was cold fusion, getting a big laugh. Steele said fusion--hot or cold--would help, but thought the answer was solar power satellites and mining the moon, and said that Japan and Germany are actually planning to do something like this. Haldeman responded that in his upcoming book *The Forever Peace* (must everything have a sequel?) he has "warm fusion."

Turtledove noted that history has shown that if you absolutely run out of a resource, you will figure out how to make do without it somehow, and gave the example of whale oil in the 19th Century. Of course, he also observed that our problems in solving the energy crisis are due in part to the fact that "for the last twenty years, we're been afraid of fuel which contains atoms in any way." (Steele said he had once seen a protest sign that said, "No atoms in New Hampshire.") The problem with fossil fuels, Steele claimed, was "they're not making dinosaurs like they used to," to which Turtledove replied, "In Congress? Are you kidding?"

Someone asked about the "new world order" and Haldeman said that the phrase was deceptive: the world won't change in an orderly fashion; we won't change until we have to. We are a nice people, but bumbling, and war-like, and we have killed more people than Nazi Germany. (Turtledove later pointed out that Stalin and Mao were probably ahead of us as well. And one needs to look at equivalent periods of time--is Haldeman comparing two hundred years of our history to shorter periods of others'?) Turtledove also said in defense of the United States, "God knows we're not perfect but for the pack of bumlbers we are, we haven't done too bad."

Steele said, "The nastiness is surface detail, [and] a lot of cooperation happens under the surface." He told the story of seeing Congressmen fighting bitterly on the floor of Congress, then going into the men's room afterward and planning their golf game together, to which Young noted, "I've heard of standing in the middle of a pissing match before...."

Someone in passing quoted S. I. Hayakawa as saying, "The reason we have a two-party system instead of a three-party system is that the latter has never worked."

Haldeman and Turtledove talked about one of the downsides of being a super-power: "You have to pay for all this stuff. That's why there's not a Soviet Union any more; they couldn't pay for it."

Someone in the audience asked if it was possible that the United States would solve their energy problems by learning to conserve, using public transit, etc. The quick answer was "no" (though I will point out that in the United States we have more recycling of Styrofoam, glass, and other trash than I see here in Britain). Turtledove pointed out that public transit doesn't work in United States because of the spread-out scale of cities, and that this diffuseness is not really appreciated by Europeans. Steele said that in fact we did start conserving, to the extent that we brought about the failure of the nuclear industry, which had been predicated on the assumption that the use of electricity would increase, or at least stay level. But instead we started using more efficient appliances and decreased our usage.

Someone else claimed that the United States was more energy-efficient for its standard of living than any other country. (How does one actually measure that?)

An audience member said that the panel was ignoring that the rest of the world exists. Then she went on to talk about energy problems, saying that the rest of the world will use energy to get at the United States. Someone else asked about illegitimacy: "Is this as big a problem as some of the politicians say it is?" Turtledove replied, "Nothing is as big a problem as some of the politicians say it is." Haldeman thought that there was a problem with the break-down of the "nuclear family," although he didn't think that marriage was a necessary ingredient; two people bringing up a child together with or without benefit of a marriage license was what he was talking about. Of course, he didn't completely define what he meant by a nuclear family.

Steele said that in spite of all the negative comments, he has faith in coming generation. He said that he finds young people today are more interested in sciences than they used to be. And he also said that he is seeing less drug use at concerts, to which Haldeman responded, "They just don't offer it to you any more."

To wrap up, Turtledove suggested that people who feel the United States interfered in Iran, Chile, and Guatemala (as someone suggested earlier) compare and contrast those with other situations such as Hungary and Czechoslovakia. And Haldeman noted one pitfall when he observe, "People like me are not paid to think in optimistic terms." But in spite of that, he personally remains somewhat optimistic.

We then spent an hour or so talking to our friend Pete Rubinstein, who always has bizarre travel stories to tell. I also manage to determine that the panel on Timebinders that I was scheduled for had been canceled, which I had guessed by noticing that it did not appear on my schedule or the program grid. (It later resurfaced with a single panelist on Monday.) There was free wine provided at the entrance to the hall containing the Dealers Room, Art Show, and other displays, I suppose in conjunction with the opening ceremonies.

I also left a message for a German fan who is producing an alternate history issue of his fanzine. It's DM8, and since I have some left-over DM from our stop-over on the way to India, I figure it's easier to pay him cash now than to try to send him a check or something later. (In fact, I did find him and gave him DM10, getting 90p change.)

### **Further Visions**

Thursday, 18:00

Stephen Baxter

"A talk on sequels to *The Time Machine*, from the first anonymous sequel in 1900 through Jeter, Priest and Dr Who."

This being the centenary of H. G. Wells's *Time Machine*, there were several program items focusing on *The Time Machine* in specific and Wells in general, of which this was the first.

Baxter began by restating the direction of his talk: "What if Wells had written a sequel or prequel, and

what have other authors done?" In 1897, Wells published "In the Days to Come," later developed into *When The Sleeper Wakes*, with upper and lower levels. (One wonders if this is where Lang got his idea for *Metropolis*.) But Wells was not as "strong" as he might have been. For example, Baxter said that Wells depicted horrors of lower levels more or less as "fist fights on Saturday night."

Baxter also said that in "Chapter 11: The Further Vision," Wells shows the possibilities of the future, with the crab-like monster and the giant white butterfly. This vision of a "terminal beach" has become a regular metaphor in science fiction. But the first draft of 1887 ("The Chronic Argonauts"), serialized in 1894, had an extra stop between Weena and the beach, with something between a rabbit and a kangaroo, as well as an immense centipede. The traveler speculates that these are remnants of humanity, and it may be that the crabs and butterflies are also. And again, the round thing the Time Traveller finds on the beach is another aspect of man's devolution.

Wells later wrote "The Man of the Year Million," where man has heads and hands more greatly developed than now, and bodies less developed. (This idea was later adopted by Olaf Stapledon, who must have read Wells's works, for part of *Last and First Men*.) Wells still later used echoes of this idea in his Selenites, and possibly even his Martians, but he wanted to be somewhat ambiguous regarding this in *The Time Machine*. He also cut out an episode in the year 12,000, and other sections as well. But Baxter said that the round thing was the "Man of the Year Million stranded on the Terminal Beach."

Baxter speculated that one reason Wells was fascinated by this idea of the supremacy of the mind over the body was that Wells himself was sickly, or as Baxter put it, "Wells was alive in mind trapped in an ailing body."

Baxter then went on to discuss other authors' sequels to *The Time Machine*. (Some spoilers occur in these descriptions. You have been warned.) He said that the best known is probably K. W. Jeter's *Morlock Night* (1978). This may be true in the United Kingdom, but I suspect it is not the case in the United States. In this, we discover that the Time Traveller missed the smarter Morlocks the first time, and that the smart ones are using the time machine to invade Victorian England. It gets a little far afield after that: King Arthur is the only one who can save England, etc. As Baxter said, "It's a fun book, I suppose." There is not much more about the Time Traveller, however, as he is killed on his return journey to the future.

The first sequel to *The Time Machine*, however, was apparently a 1900 book, *Leeds Beatified*. Baxter has been able only to find one reference to it and couldn't find the author's name or any other description.

The next sequel Baxter discussed was David Lake's *The Man Who Loved Morlocks* (1981). In this, it is revealed that the Eloi are actually dying off and the Morlocks are kidnapping them to take them to laboratories underground to try to analyze what is killing the Eloi and hence to save them.

Christopher Priest's *Space Machine* (1977) was described as a cross between *The Time Machine* and *The War of the Worlds*. (Baxter did not stick to a strict chronological order.) This book is "recursive science fiction": it has H. G. Wells as a character. In fact, this has been done several times since, resulting in a blurring between Wells and the Time Traveller. Baxter noted here that one thing that readers need to keep in mind is that while the landscape of the base story *The Time Machine*, and that of *The War of the Worlds*, was indeed familiar to Wells's readers in the 1890s, it is an alien landscape to us now. He also said that Priest does not resolve what happens to the Time Traveller.

In what Baxter described as Michael Moorcock's "Multiverse" series, there is a trilogy which is a sequel to *The Time Machine*: "The Dancers at the End of Time" (1972-1976), comprising *An Alien Heat*, *The Hollow Lands*, and *The End of All Songs*. Baxter described this as a comic epic of a decadent future in which Moorcock's hero meets Wells, and the Time Traveller becomes a time tourist in a chrononibus in a variety of time lines.

Other sequels mentioned briefly included Eric Brown's "Inheritors of Earth" (1990) and Brian Stableford's "Hunger & Ecstasy of Vampires" (1995). I recently reviewed the latter on the Internet and highly recommend it.

In the visual media, Baxter mentioned *Time After Time* (1979) in which Wells has built a time machine and follows Jack the Ripper in it to modern-day San Francisco. There was also an episode of *Dr. Who*, "The Time Lash," which has H. G. Wells as a character, and has him get the idea for the book *The Time Machine* from what happens to him in the story. And an episode of *Lois & Clark* has Wells as an inventor of time machine visiting a utopia founded by the descendents of Superman. (Baxter described this as "postmodern meta-fiction.")

Baxter said at this point that one reason that many sequels in the popular media confuse Wells with the Time Traveller is that "a lot of people outside the science fiction world don't read much Wells these days." I would note that the same is true *in* the SF world; I suspect most people who started reading science fiction in the last twenty years have not read any Wells at all. Oh, they know about it (at least *The Time Machine* and *The War of the Worlds*), but have they actually read it?

Baxter said that the strangest sequel was probably Egon Friedell's *Return of the Time Machine* (1946, published in an English translation by DAW in 1972). This is an exploration of the scientific and philosophic implications of time travel. It has a narrative frame somewhat like the original, with an account of the second journey into time. The Time Traveller tried to go back to 1870, but couldn't, so he went forward to 1995 (a 1995 not much like ours, of course). Then he went forward to 2123, still trying to pick up enough momentum to break through back to 1870.

Baxter said this book might have been written as early as the 1920s, and that Friedell committed suicide in 1938 because of his Jewish ancestry when Austria was seized by Nazis.

Baxter then talked about his own recent book, *The Time Ships* (published recently in the United Kingdom, but not yet in the United States). In this, the Time Traveller changes the future by his actions and reportage in Wells's time. Baxter said this project attracted him because "people say that science fiction lacks characters but the Time Traveller is a great character." In fact, Baxter feels that *The Time Machine* is emerging as perhaps Wells's greatest novel.

Mark asked Baxter about George Pal's novelization of *Time Machine II*, a proposed sequel to the film. Baxter had never hear of it, so Mark will be sending him information on it.

Someone asked about the recent British Post Office stamps honoring Wells. Baxter liked them, though I would have preferred a more Edwardian feel rather than the modern look. (Mark says these are honoring the sub-genres of science fiction that Wells created, rather than Wells himself.)

Baxter said he would now like to do a book about time paradoxes, and to push the limits of time travel: for example, to have time travelers from our time found a human colony fifty million years ago, to use time travel to get oil from the Devonian, etc.

Baxter mentioned he had thought of doing time travel in a Dr. Who book, but decided that was not for him. Getting authorization for *The Time Ships* was not difficult, and there were no legal problems with any of Wells's thirty-six descendents. In the United Kingdom, all of Wells's work is still in copyright, since copyrights run until fifty years after the death of the author, and soon (starting in a year or so) seventy-five, leaving everything in copyright until 2016. In the United States, however, most of his science fiction works are in public domain.

However, no one is sure who has the film rights now, so a film is unlikely unless someone wants to spend a lot of effort untangling them.

After this we got together with our friend Hannu Pajunen from Finland and went to dinner at the Jade



Dragon. Afterwards we tried to go to:

### **SF Myths--Physics**

Thursday, 21:00

Del Cotter (m), Stephen Baxter, Hal Clement, Howard Davidson, Geoffrey Landis

"[The panelists] look at scientific misconceptions that authors have inadvertently promoted to the extent that they have become 'common knowledge' amongst readers. We're not talking about *obvious* scientific errors, but rather the more subtle mistakes that slip by both author and reader. Examples include:

- | Superconductors also have no *thermal* resistance
- | FTL travel is possible if you 'get around' travelling at  $c$
- | Single-molecule objects or wires are indestructible"

Well, we walked back to this after dinner, in the rain, but couldn't find the hotel! Apparently it is visible only from one side of the block, which is not quite what the map indicated. At any rate, I figured that it didn't pay to spend a lot of time looking for it--by the time we found it, the panel would be over.

### **TERMINAL FORCE**

Friday, 10:00

Since we had no panels we wanted to attend until 1 PM, we went to this free sneak preview of a new science fiction film starring Brigitte Nielsen, Richard Moll, and John H. Brennan; written by Nick Davis; and directed by William Mesa. It is therefore Nick Davis we have to thank (?) for such lines as, "[The crystal] is the soul of our culture; it is the antithesis of our ways." (After the film, Iain McCord in the row in front of us turned around and asked "What is antithesis?" My answer: "The wrong word to use in that sentence.") I haven't seen a movie this bad since *Ice Pirates* and had it been in the SECC I would have walked out, but since it was a considerable taxi ride away I figured I might as well wait for Mark and Kate.

When we did arrive at the SECC, I left messages for a bunch of people I hoped to make contact with. The "Voodoo Message Board" was conveniently placed on the Concourse, but the board itself was "unpinnable"--it was what we call in the United States beaverboard (but which undoubtedly has some other name everywhere else).

I did actually manage to meet one of the AT&T Science Fiction Club members from Dundee (Stephen Massie); there may have been others at the convention, but as day members, since they weren't on the message board lists. We were supposed to get together with Carl Aveyard from Leeds on Monday, but that fell through.

I also talked to George "Lan" Laskowski a bit, and we kept running into him at various times throughout the convention.

### **Alternate Technological Histories**

Friday, 13:00

Simon Bradshaw (m), Stephen Baxter, Evelyn Leeper, Pat McMurray, Harry Turtledove

"How might history have been affected by changes in the way technology developed, and how could alternate history have influenced technology?"

The more elaborate description given the panelists was:

"1. The way in which history might have been changed had technology developed differently, e.g.,

WW2 with better-developed radar or the Cold War without ICBMs to give two recent examples.

2. How technological history might have been affected in alternate historical paths, e.g., US technical progress had the South won the Civil War, or aerospace if WW2 had never happened."

[Many thanks to Mark for taking notes for this panel.]

Bradshaw began by asking the panelist about the first aspect: how small changes in technology have had a big impact on history. Turtledove cited the example of the invention of the stirrup, which had a remarkable effect on riding and control, and would have resulted in some battles coming out very differently if it had been used in Alexandrian times. (I am sure there is a frieze with a rider using a stirrup from a period before it was assumed to have been developed, but Mark thinks that what is theorized was that it didn't catch on at that time. This would partially answer the question of why someone didn't think of it before--they did, but maybe it was tried in an imperfect form and people decided it wasn't very useful.)

Baxter said in his next novel, *Ares*, will be based on a small change in technological history, the idea that the Apollo landings were followed by a Mars program. In our timeline, NASA did advocate such a program, but the times were wrong: we were involved in the Vietnam War, social programs were soaking up the government's money, and so on. Still, it was very close, and if Nixon had needed to go to Mars it could have been done, and wouldn't have cost much more than the shuttle. This was all very interesting, but it didn't actually address the question of what would be different now.

Leeper mentioned technology in Asia, saying that many times it could have moved toward more progress, and had a big effect on history. For example, China had a navy at one time, but burned it because the Emperor decided there was nothing outside of China worth going to. And Japan had an opportunity in the 17th Century to adopt Western technology but instead banned it and closed their doors to the West for two hundred years. If one considers how far they have advanced in the hundred years since they did adopt Western technology, where would they be if they had started two hundred years earlier?

McMurray said his education was in mathematics, not technology or history, so he tended to look for things that might have been observed earlier. He gave the example that dairy maids didn't get smallpox, and asked what might have happened if vaccination had been around earlier. I noted that in Turkey, old women had been "vaccinating" people against smallpox for centuries, but Jenner gets the credit for adopting what others had been doing. Turtledove noted that in Turkey they used actual smallpox and hoped for a mild case instead of a deadly one, while Jenner used cowpox, which was considerably safer. In any case, had vaccination started earlier, it would have made a great difference, at least in Europe. McMurray claims it could have been eradicated sooner, but I am skeptical of that--there was a lot more than just the knowledge of how to vaccinate against smallpox that allowed the disease to be eradicated throughout the world.

McMurray also said that the yoke could have been invented earlier. The Roman Empire, for example, didn't have the yoke, which was why you needed so many horses to pull just a small chariot.

McMurray added that they seemed to have the concept in some ways, but never applied it. (Oddly enough, less than a week later, we saw what were described as terrets from a yoke in the National Museum in Cardiff, Wales, which were supposed to be from between 50 B.C.E. and 50 C.E.) Leeper added that the same was true of the wheel in the Americas, and said a guide had claimed that while it was all right for children to use wheels in toys, they were too similar to the sacred sun to be used for work. Turtledove said it was probably not because of any religious prohibitions, but because they had no suitable draft animal. (Afterwards I wondered if llamas would have worked--it seems to me I have seen them used to pull carts now.)

Turtledove said that movable type has had a profound effect on everyone, and was discovered, oddly enough, in China, which has a poor language for it. (Actually, I had heard it was Korea, which does

have an alphabetic language.) Had it been developed sooner in the West, things would be very different. Of course, for many of these suggestions of discovering or developing a technology sooner, one wonders if "very different" just means that we would be where we are sooner. This probably would have been an interesting direction to go off in. For example, if there had been movable type in the time of the Crusades, would the spread of the printed word have changed the course of them? If there had been better disease control in the 14th Century, would the rise of the middle class and the mechanization of tasks been delayed because there was no great "die-off" in Europe? (Of course, one must also ask if this mechanization wasn't necessary *before* disease control could be perfected enough to have the desired effect.) However, the panel didn't follow through on this train of thought.

Baxter said that when he began *Anti-Ice*, he realized that an easy-to-handle antimatter would not have helped, because the Victorians would have no way to use it, so he had an anti-ice comet hit the moon (and Antarctica) instead. And trying to have the Victorians do space travel was difficult. They would have to have some way of making the ship airtight, and some way of recycling their air. And Bradshaw added that even with the plans, the jet engine could not be developed until materials for it had been made, but that radar could have been developed from World War I technology. Along the lines of this "single-point" technology, Turtledove said that the Germans knew about radar, but were not aware of implications, which is almost standard: look at the tank. Leeper said that was true and that basically they were fighting with the same tactics as previous wars, in spite of having such weapons as tanks which required different approaches.

Baxter said the main problem the Greeks had with using any technology they developed was that they did not have the scientific method, so they had no way to test a hypothesis, or even the concept of doing so. That is why they thought heavy objects fell faster than light ones, though admittedly the fact is that most of the light ones they observed (such as feathers) probably did appear to fall slower (due to air resistance). Still, the fact that any sort of labor was beneath the aristocracy would have limited the amount of testing they would be willing to do, so developments such as Hiero's Engine remained isolated curiosities. Baxter said it needed a social invention: the scientific method. Leeper said she thought this was more a scientific invention than a social one, but everyone agreed that it was needed. In any case, L. Sprague de Camp wrote about a time traveler trying to teach the scientific method to Aristotle in "Aristotle and the Gun"; needless to say, it did not work out as planned.

Baxter also suggested that going back to the Civil War and giving one side the Sten gun would have interesting effects, since they would have some idea how to use it, but not how to make it. Turtledove naturally noted that in *The Guns of the South* he used AK-47s. He even had his researchers try loading them with black powder, with the results described in the book. Leeper said that much of this was encapsulated in "Hawk Among the Sparrows" by Dean McLaughlin, a classic story in which a jet plane somehow gets thrown back in time to World War I, before jet fuel, before its heat-seeking missiles could find anything to seek, before there were any planes of a sort that its radar could detect, and when all the other planes could out-manuever it. (Eventually it uses its sonic boom to shatter the other planes, however.)

Bradshaw asked how history might have been different without the catalyst of some wars. Wars provide a catalyst, he said, so what might things be like if there hadn't been a World War II? (This was drifting away from the technological aspects.)

Baxter said that one would need some basic changes in Germany to have no World War II, and Leeper agreed that you would have to come up with a scenario without Naziism. She said that without World War II, however, there would be many social changes from our time, or rather, there would not have been the social changes that World War II brought about: women working outside the home, changes in race relations, and so on. The GI Bill led to a lot more people going to college, which led to further changes. (For that matter, without World War II, it's not clear what if anything would have pulled the United States out of the Depression.) These are all very Americentric, of course.

Turtledove said that World War II was the first time there was government-directed scientific

research, but Bradshaw said it existed in World War I when Germany had its supply of guano (used to make nitrates) cut off and needed to develop artificial nitrates. Later, someone in the audience pointed out that the British navy was paying people in the 19th Century to build chronometers, and Turtledove recalled that the tyrant Dionysius paid inventors to come up with catapults.

McMurray said that without World War II, there might have been a Cold War with Germany. I'm not sure--a Cold War requires some reason not to start a hot one, and without World War II, we wouldn't have had the atomic bomb.

Bradshaw returned to the idea of the way in which society looks on technology. In Greece there was a slave class to do all the work, but in Elizabethan times, there was a working class that could better its position through effort. Turtledove said that the major shift was the Industrial Revolution, since that was when someone could see change in his or her own lifetime, and different often looked better. This caused a change in attitudes toward artisans. Leeper noted that the Black Death brought a big cultural change, as an "underpopulated" Europe started using more efficient methods to do what had been done by brute strength before.

Baxter said that there is one type of change we are not familiar with, though it shows up in science fiction a lot, that of the crypt with the ruins of a previous civilization, or often that of bits of spaceships used by primitives.

Someone asked how difficult it would be for someone in the room to go back and change something (assuming a time machine, I suppose). Turtledove said, "Keep it simple," and I said the hardest part might be to avoid being burned as a witch through most of history. Bradshaw said that one could have the biggest impact by pointing out the wrong turnings. McMurray gave the example of a simple invention that would probably be quickly adopted: everyone in the room could invent movable type. Leeper suggested the concept of zero and place notation, but McMurray said this had been known for quite a while before its adoption, but was avoided because it made it easier for people to "fiddle the accounts."

Baxter felt that the Battle of San Jacinto could easily have been tipped. Someone in the audience suggested stopping the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, but McMurray pointed out that Europe in 1914 was just itching for an excuse for World War I, and would have found something else. The audience member said the technology might have been different with a delay, but Turtledove reiterated that war was inevitable. Leeper suggested that a war without so much chemical warfare might have resulted in more chemical warfare in World War II, unless the solution to World War I also precluded World War II.

An audience member accused us of talking as if technology inexorable, but claimed things would have changed if there had been no Einstein. Bradshaw responded that Einstein was ahead of his time, but his discoveries would have happened fairly soon anyway, because people had already observed too many anomalies in Newtonian physics.

Leeper observed that, for example, if Newtonian calculus hadn't caught on, Leibnitz's would have, and Leibnitz had a better notation (at least according to Mark Leeper).

Someone commented about what might have happened if Germany had developed the atomic bomb first. One has to postulate something that could lead to that, and that means either a much different way of doing the research, or of Germany not driving all their Jewish physicists out, and the latter change would probably have far more interesting causes, and results, than just the bomb.

Someone in the audience reiterated what the panelists had hinted at, that it is the technological change that people have a use for that gets adopted. Turtledove noted that movable type reached the Ottoman Empire and in the first hundred years, only a hundred books were printed, because the Ottoman Empire was not ready or willing for large-scale information exchange McMurray said that relativity

didn't really have much practical application either at first, so a few years' delay in its discovery would not make a lot of difference. Leeper observed that in the case of many technological inventions, you find six or seven people all working on the same thing. Edison, for example, stole a lot of inventions from other people, though Turtledove said Edison did invent sound recording on his own.

Baxter thought another interesting, if overlooked, invention that could have been introduced at any time was double-entry bookkeeping: it was the powerhouse behind the Italian businessmen. Someone on the panel noted that L. Sprague de Camp had that invention introduced much earlier in his *Lest Darkness Fall*.

An audience member said he still thought that inventions coming late would be of interest. Along these lines, Bradshaw suggested that without the development of the rocket in World War II there would have been no development of nuclear weapons (with no effective way to deliver them), and no real space program, but someone said that rocket travel would have come eventually.

McMurray said that if canals had been developed later that would have delayed a great deal; one audience member said that one thing it would have delayed was the compulsory buying of land by the government.

There was a discussion of the Romans. An audience member said that if Archimedes had survived, things would have been different, and this was possible since his death was somewhat accidental--the Romans had specifically said he was to remain alive. McMurray claimed the Romans were not technologically advanced, but Turtledove said, "You would be surprised." Apparently there has been a Roman pump found with a tolerance in tenths of a millimeter. Leeper asked if Babbage didn't have parts problems, and McMurray said Babbage's problem was that he could not find materials of sufficient strength, and that his search for such materials had a great effect on British engineering. Someone in the audience asked what might have happened if Babbage had succeeded, to which Leeper replied, "Read *The Difference Engine*." Baxter said his first experience with calculating machines had been with those that had turn cranks, and Bradshaw noted that the first application was cryptography, not the sort of data manipulation postulated by Gibson and Sterling. Leeper noted that computers would have been very useful in ballistics, and Mark Leeper in the audience mentioned calculating trigonometric functions. Someone noted that the Manhattan Project used dozens of people performing sequential calculations to achieve results similar to computers. Leeper said another story along these lines was Sean McMullen's "Soul of the Machine," about a machine that used no electricity but instead had hundreds of people doing calculations and pulling on ropes and levers.

Baxter spoke about getting all knowledge generating words at random. Someone compared this to Arthur C. Clarke's "Nine Billion Names of God" and Leeper suggested a parallel with Jorge Luis Borges's "Library of Babel."

Bradshaw asked if all ideas will be investigated sooner because so many people working on them. McMurray thought not, saying we still need to have people who have insights. Turtledove agreed, saying, "We will come up with surprises a good while longer." Leeper said that when things were primitive and basic it was clear which way to go, but now with more possibilities there will be more ways to go, so not all of them can be investigated.

### **Deus Ex Machina**

Friday, 15:00

Brian Stableford

"A talk by Brian Stableford on how to achieve the perfect science fictional climax. If the archetype of all fiction is the sexual act, what types of climax are uniquely appropriate to hard science fiction stories?"

[In the discussion below, Stableford was talking primarily about hard science fiction, even when he referred to it without the qualifier. The thoughts expressed here are Stableford's even if not stated explicitly at each point; I have interpolated very few of my own comments.]

It was difficult to tell from the title and description whether this was a serious panel or a humorous one, and even after attending I can't be completely sure, but it did seem to take at least a reasonably straight approach to its subject.

The talk was based on comments by Robert E. Scholes in *Fabulation and Metafiction* in which he considers the climax of a story as an "orgastic act," complete with tension and resolution. (The fact that the tech crew was stroking the microphones to test them during this section of the talk did not go unnoticed by either Stableford or the audience.

Stableford said that his talk was not only a discussion of the two types of climax, but also a pun on "hard science fiction." The basic climaxes in genre fiction are expected (the boy and the girl get together at the end of a romance story, the good guy beats the bad guy in a shoot-out at the end of the western, the murderer is revealed at the end of a detective story, etc.). Twist endings require this expected ending to exist, else there's nothing to have a twist on.

(At this point, they got the microphone working, but Stableford said this meant that "we missed the foreplay.")

Stableford defined the two basic endings. There are normalizing endings, in which the situation is returned to that of the beginning of the story. An example of this would be a story in which some evil force enters a town but is eventually defeated, and everything returns to the way it was. There are wish-fulfillment endings (also called "eucatastrophes" by Tolkien), in which the situation of the hero is bettered. Examples of this would be stories in which the hero gets the girl, or wins the election, or acquires wealth, or gains revenge. In terms of the parallel of Scholes, sexual orgasm is essentially normalizing, but some are eucatastrophic.

But hard science fiction stories encounter awkward logical problems in achieving these types of climaxes. For one thing, there are no stereotypical science fiction endings except as they are also of other genres. That is because science fiction is about the socially transforming effects of science, and these are of a different nature than the problems in other genres. Normalizing endings assume that status quo is both desirable and securable, and assume that change is bad--both of these assumptions are directly contrary to the underlying philosophy of most hard science fiction. In fact, Stableford noted, a show such as *The X-Files*, with its repeated normalizing endings leads to paranoia rather than satisfaction. Accepting the inevitability of change was part of early science fiction, and this is still true of much of it today.

But conventional eucatastrophic endings have their own stereotypes (e.g., get rich, get revenge, get love). Though editors often favor these (John W. Campbell comes to mind), extrapolators often question whether our ideas of betterment are arbitrary. In fact, Stableford says, science fiction which refuses to question our existing values in eucatastrophic endings are cowardly. Hard science fiction demands eucatastrophic endings, but these endings cannot satisfy the reader if they cling to contemporary accepted values.

The history of eucatastrophic endings in science fiction goes back a long way. Edgar Rice Burroughs constructed "daydream fantasies" with such endings. Much early science fiction in the pulps was dedicated to the "myth of technological development as progress," and the technophilic Campbell certainly promoted this ideal. The two key figures in the analysis of plot in hard science fiction in the 1940s were Robert A. Heinlein and L. Ron Hubbard. Heinlein said that he believed there were only two basic plots: boy meets girl, and the little tailor. Then Hubbard pointed out a third: the man who learns better.

The latter results in a climax of "climactic enlightenment," in which the hero learns to place his life in the context of what science had revealed. And hard science fiction since 1939 has been a quest for new and more compelling eucatastrophic endings.

In hard science fiction, Stableford said, there are two types of eucatastrophic endings. One is what he termed an existential breakthrough: PSI, acquisition of new mental powers, etc. He summarized these as, "The mentally blessed but conscientiously meek to inherit the earth." The other is the "cosmic breakout," involving rockets et al. Both of these usually start in a claustrophobically narrowed society so as to emphasize the breakthrough. (Cyberpunk is just a variation on the cosmic, or extravagant, breakout.)

The cosmic breakout is closely linked to sexual act, and Stableford attributes this to the male domination of hard science fiction. The eucatastrophe of the cosmic breakout is, as he describes it, essentially thrusting and penetrative.

Existential breakthrough stories also had sexual implications, but they avoid the masculinity of the cosmic breakout and are the other half of the masculine/feminine dichotomy.

Scholes thinks much popular fiction is as coarse as "slam-bam-thank-you-mam" and he notes how often writing is compared to prostitution. (Scholes had an even lower opinion of science fiction, and once said to Kurt Vonnegut, "Among the forms of popular fiction, science fiction was the lowest of the low.") But Scholes goes on to say that "the act of fiction is a reciprocal relationship--it takes two." His description clearly sees the writer as male, and the reader as female, even though he refers to both of them as "he."

Stableford feels that this low regard may be in some sense justified by the failure of most science fiction to follow the standards of characterization, mood, and so on that are applied to mainstream fiction. For example, characterization requires the author to fit a character to an environment, but in science fiction the environment isn't even there yet. Other standard techniques are equally difficult to apply to SF. The result is that science fiction foreplay is significantly different from other types. Other works construct realistic worlds with acts of *normalization*, while science fiction requires acts of *differentiation*. It is not the goal of the science fiction author to paint our world accurately, but to paint a world different from ours and emphasize the differences.

Another difficulty is that hard science fiction is usually determined to extrapolate hard scientific principles, and because of this, the world described is more tightly bound than most fictional worlds. Indeed, most fictional worlds are allowed more leeway than the real one (we know Rhett Butler did not exist, but we allow him anyway).

According to Stableford, hard science fiction is judged on its potency, its ability to maintain its hardness, and its ability to penetrate the world, thereby reinforcing its masculine nature.

Sexual and narrative climaxes need no further justification other than their pleasure. But just as sexual climaxes serve a function in the reproduction of the species, so narrative climax is used to reproduce society and its mores. Readers want good to be rewarded. If this does not happen, this produces the feeling that is labeled as "tragedy." The supposed improbability of the happy ending is artificial in the fictional context, that is, no matter how unlikely the success of the hero, we know that he will triumph. When the starship Enterprise is attacked by Romulans on the television show, we know that it will defeat them, no matter how large the odds against it.

Which brings us to the *deus ex machina*. Religion and magical fantasy are full of *dei ex machina*, i.e., completely arbitrary happy endings of all the types discussed above. The harder the science fiction, the less room one would expect for *dei ex machina*, but this isn't what we see, because people (such as Campbell) say the technophilic moral order ought to be maintained at all cost. So hardness is confined to the early stages of the story (or foreplay, as Stableford said). As the stories progress, a metaphoric

"divine wind" bursts forth to set everything right.

In Greek drama, however, it is the god-like power itself which matters; in hard science fiction, it is the source of the power that matters--technology. It is said that hard science fiction can insist that normality and moral order are transient, and that this end justifies the means (i.e., unrealistic climaxes that show this). The opposing view to this is that it's all essentially empty, and all we're getting are "miracles in technological disguise."

Stableford said he wants to discover and disclose a third type of climax. "L. Ron Hubbard was right--and wrong," he said. The man who learned better exists and is the best of the three plots, but Heinlein and Hubbard both misinterpreted this. Both men wrote and formulated their lives on this pattern. But Stableford noted, "We cannot know today what we will discover for the first time tomorrow." So we can't make claims about the next great breakthrough without making fools of ourselves. The man who learned better works when we set these tales in the past, but not as well in tales set in the future.

Stableford's answer is that we need to tell tales of men who never lose sight of the desirability of learning better, even if their successes are modest. These, he feels, are more satisfactory because this is how growth really proceeds. Progress is through the collective and collaborative efforts of many people, not through greedy individuals and supermen. Stableford said there are those who advocate avoiding the climax altogether (just as there are those who advocate the same for the sexual act), but he finds this too extreme. We must, however, be prepared to forsake the dramatics of the explosive climax.

Stableford insisted that we must "look with suspicion upon all the things we are bound to take for granted." In hard science fiction, eucatastrophic endings must be ironic and skeptical. "Satire is to be preferred to sermonizing." And in this leads to a parallel with what could be described as unorthodox and non-reproductive sex, in that its purpose is specifically not the reproduction of society as it is.

### **The Wheels of If**

Friday, 17:00

Hermann Ritter

"A talk by Hermann Ritter about alternate history theories."

Ritter began by saying, "History taught in schools is usually a very dull business," explaining that there were no vampires, no magic, etc. In other words, everything that makes fantastic literature interesting is missing. So he became interested in counter-factual histories (which oddly enough also rules these out). Ritter makes a distinction between alternate histories and counter-factual histories, and in fact his talk centered on this. Counter-factuals are distinguished by specific realistic change points. To justify a purpose for this, Ritter said that the laws of historical thinking define it as a science.

Ritter explicated four rules which separate counter-factuals from parallel worlds, etc. These are:

1. Laws of Nature: i.e., no aliens, superpowers, etc.
2. Law of Historical Evidence: i.e., you cannot have a counter-factual if there is no historical evidence of the period (on which to base a factual, I suppose). Therefore counter-factuals cannot have change points before 4000 years ago or so. (The figure is Ritter's; I suspect Egypt's history goes back further than that.)
3. Law of Effect: Things happening with no observation (e.g., Shangri-La) don't count, and if the timeline merges back into our own (as in *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*) it doesn't count either.
4. Law of Intention: The author must intend to write a counter-factual. For example, James Bond is not a counter-factual. In counter-factuals there is usually a reference to our own world (as in "Isn't it nice that X happened?"), or to famous people in different roles, or to counter-factuals to



their own world. This also means that non-fiction that turns out to be wrong is not a counter-factual. But Ritter considers just about every fiction book as alternate history, even if it is not counter-factual.

Ritter described three groups of material published on the topic:

1. Wargaming: as used by the military. Ritter said he doesn't like this, because people are described as numbers, and it sees history only as battles.
2. Cliometrics: a new economic history based on explicit models of human behavior. It still uses formulae, but relies on a causal analysis of fact, e.g., "If slavery had not existed in America, then the Civil War would not have been fought." Sometimes people add a factor--if Hitler had invaded England--but cliometrics does not do this; it only takes factors away. These seem at first difficult to separate, but since cliometrics uses numbers, it can only work if it has numbers--it cannot make up numbers for additions, but can "not use" existing numbers for deletions.
3. Wheels of If: addresses the question of the individual in the stream of time. This is an area overlooked by the other two.

Ritter claims counter-factuals date from 1931 and J. C. Squire's anthology *If It Had Happened Otherwise* (later published under the title *If, or History Rewritten*). Ritter listed many other articles, mostly in German, whose names I could not understand. I will assume most of them appear in Robert Schmunk's alternate history bibliography.

Ritter noted that although not the most popular change point, World War I changed more governments than any other war. Popular change points, working backward, include the Chinese Revolution, World War II, World War I, the American Civil War, the defeat of the Spanish Armada (here Ritter listed John Brunner's *Times Without Number*, though earlier he had said that book wasn't a counter-factual), the Black Death, and the death of Alexander the Great. Two other possible change points he mentioned were not often used were if the Irish Christian Church broke from the Roman Church, and if the Scandinavians conquered Europe. (The former was used in books by L. Sprague de Camp, hence the title of the talk. The latter was discussed in Arnold J. Toynbee's "Forfeited Birthright of the Abortive Scandinavian Civilization," in *A Study of History, Volume II*.)

All this, Ritter claimed, is part of the process of history learning from science.

As part of the discussion, Michael Cule said that alternate histories (counter-factuals) emphasize the consequences of our actions. Alexei McDonald said that wargaming just says what *the player* would get if he or she did something different, not (for example) what Hitler would have gotten. And perhaps we should distinguish commercial wargaming from military wargaming. (I think Ritter was talking about military wargaming, but in English anyway, the term covers both of them.)

People pointed out that asking "what if X?" invariably leads to "how X"? For example, asking "what if the Loyalists won the Civil War?" leads to asking "how could the Loyalists win the Civil War?" (Fooled you there, didn't I?)

Someone asked whether this didn't lead to questions of free will versus determinism, and Ritter agreed that to some extent it did. But he believes that history is primarily a flow. In other words, in general he supports the "Tide of History" over the "Great Man" theory. However, most counter-factuals deal with specific people and not with more general causes. Could this be because it's easier to postulate changes if individuals can have large effects?

The talk ended on a sad note, as Ritter announced that John Brunner had died of a stroke earlier today.

I went from this to the "High Road" party (for the Internet mailing list), but apparently almost everyone had left already. I did talk to Keith Lynch, who told me about the trials and tribulations of bringing his bicycle from Washington to Glasgow.

## **BABYLON 5 Interview**

Friday, 18:00

Marc Scott Zicree

(It was very difficult to hear this interview. Hall 3 had paneling put up to divide it into four rooms and corridor space around them. Unfortunately the paneling did not extend to the very high ceilings, but only about half-way up (eight feet or so). Yesterday there were no microphones, and no one could be heard. Today they had installed the amplification systems, but they don't work very well. And if there is more than one item going on, they compete with each other.)

Since there was no party going on, I dropped in on this part way through. Zicree was saying that it was Warners who insisted on getting rid of O'Hare, not any sort of "mutual agreement" as was described on the Net. Who knows what's accurate? However, Zicree said that Warners usually doesn't interfere with the series. In any case, Straczynski is a pragmatist, and is willing to concede to Warners when necessary.

Zicree said that the networks getting more adventurous in what they will run, and that some network executives even watch *The X-Files*.

Someone in the audience asked about "gratuitous spaceship shots." (I can agree with that description.) Zicree says they're popular, and besides, they need to write scripts to have crescendos before commercial breaks, and spaceship shots make that easier. It's also fairly cheap: while the opening credit sequence on *Star Trek: Voyager* cost US\$1,000,000, the Mars matte shot on *Babylon 5* cost only US\$2,000 and took one evening. This is almost definitely the death knell for models.

As far as how much the scriptwriters are told, Zicree said that for "Survivors" he was merely told to have Garibaldi fall off wagon, but not given any reason for that. Zicree says that in general outside writers get the non-arc stories, so they don't need a lot of information about future developments. Unlike with other series, the *Babylon 5* books and comic books are canonical and do connect up with the television story.

Asked about contradictions in various on-going series, Zicree said that they come in because everyone gets exhausted. Then later, writers try to write something to cover up the contradictions introduced.

Zicree is currently working on *MagicTime*. The premise of *MagicTime* is that all the machines stop and magic comes back; Zicree describes it as having a "mythic structure within a modern context." He thinks that Straczynski's "five-year plan" is a good length and is looking at something like that for *MagicTime*.

He said something about bringing Kirk back in future *Star Trek* film scripts. When someone pointed out that Kirk was killed, Zicree said, "Kirk's dead, but so was Spock."

The rest of the evening was taken up with dinner at the Ashoka, with a long wait beforehand and relatively slow service. I guess that eating out is considered the evening's entertainment here, not a quick prelude to something else.

## **More than the Sum of the Parts**

Saturday, 10:00

Pete Crowther (m), David Garnett, Stephen Jones, Mike Resnick, Alex Stewart

"What makes a good anthology--the concept, the writers, the story selection? How much does the need for a balance and a complementary set of stories over-ride the quality of the individual piece? How often do you have to turn away a good piece because it just doesn't fit? When do you know if an anthology is 'working'? And is the whole really more than the sum of the parts?"

From this description this sounded like an interesting panel. Alas, Crowther started by saying that he supposed a "good" anthology was one that sold well, and most of the rest of the hour turned into a marketing discussion. However, considering that the audience barely outnumbered the panel (surprising, with Resnick as a draw--it must have been the early hour), it didn't disappoint a lot of people.

Crowther said he sees too many anthologies in the United States but Resnick replied that he thought we don't see enough, and would like to see more opportunities for short fiction.

As far as marketing, Resnick said that if the publisher invests enough money in paying the authors, they will spend a reasonable amount on publicity to recoup their investment, but usually this isn't the scenario. Instead, the best-selling anthologies are the ones linked to movies. Even then, publishers screw up. Resnick's *Dinosaurs* was delivered in plenty of time, but missed *Jurassic Park's* opening by three months, and *Aladdin* missed the opening of that film by four weeks. These were both DAW, indicating the problem may be specific to them, and the fact that *Alternate Presidents* did make its window (albeit a larger one) supports this. In October 1992 I saw *Alternate Presidents* in the front window of a bookstore along with all the books by and about Clinton, Bush, Perot, Gore, Quayle, and so on. It also got US\$20,000 from the Book-of-the-Month Club, which outbid the Science Fiction Book Club by a considerable amount. (Usually the Science Fiction Book Club can get any science fiction book for a very small fee.)

Jones said that the editor at Penguin in the United Kingdom was fired in part because she paid decent rates to authors. Jones feels that word rate should be the same as for a novel, but rarely is, and in fact, the United States small press pays as much as British mainstream press for anthologies.

Garrett contrasted magazines with anthologies, claiming that anthologies don't have as firm a deadline. (There was some eyebrow-raising over this. I think it's probably true that the deadline is slightly more flexible, but there is--or should be--a deadline. I would mention *Last Dangerous Visions* here, but since Resnick noted at the end that we had gone through an entire hour on anthologies without mentioning it, I guess I can't.)

Resnick said the difference was that anthologies are sold around a theme, and are usually by invitation, while magazines are usually not themed (except by accident or perhaps a special issue) and open to everyone. Asked why anthologies are by invitation only, Resnick went through the arithmetic: the average anthology gets a US\$8,000 advance for 100,000 words. At the standard rate of 7 cents a word, that leaves only US\$1,000 for the editor, who almost invariably is splitting it with Martin Greenberg. It takes about three weeks to do the work involved if it is by invitation, resulting in an annualized "salary" of under US\$9,000, or an hourly rate just slightly above US\$4. If it's open and the editor has to read through a slushpile, it's considerably lower.

Stewart said that publishers insist on having big names to put on the cover, so you need to be sure you will have a few of those in any case. And Jones said that you don't make money editing anthologies unless you're very lucky or very prolific (or a crook, Garrett added).

Jones feels most United States anthologies are junk, and wants to see more open slots for new writers. Resnick pointed out that he *does* publish new authors. He has done twenty anthologies (though won't be doing any for a couple of years because he can make more money writing), and they have had six Hugo nominees, forty-one first stories, eight Campbell nominees, and two Hugo nominations for him as best editor.

Stewart mentioned he tries to encourage new writers and so sends personal rejection letters rather than form rejections. Garrett joked, "No one did us any favors so why should we help anyone else?" More serious is Resnick's philosophy (given at ConAdian): we can't pay back the people who helped us, because they don't need our help; we can only pay forward.

Crowther, returning to the marketing aspects, said that if you go with a proposal without a theme, it's a difficult concept to sell unless you are an established name--such as Robert Silverberg--or a series--such as Bantam's *Full Spectrum*). Jones mentioned that the themes get ridiculous, and gave the theoretical example of "vampire angels," at which point everyone on the panel pointedly bent over their pads of paper and wrote it down.

Garrett said that *New Worlds* in the United Kingdom had problems with bookshops knowing where to file it: was it a magazine or an anthology? Its numbering is high enough now that it could easily confuse the bookseller; the latest one I have is number 172, but I'm sure it's much higher than that now. Garrett noted that now that *Amazing* is dead, *New Worlds* is the oldest name in science fiction, having been started in 1946. He didn't mention *Weird Tales*, but the revitalization of that changed its name and now appears to be dead as well.

Regarding getting name authors, Resnick says that one way he does this is to let authors "double-dip" with their award-quality stories; that is, he lets them sell the stories to a magazine before book publication. This is a bit deceptive to the reader, since the book usually claims all its stories are new and written especially for the book, but it is not, strictly speaking, dishonest, since the book publication delay is why the story shows up elsewhere first. Me, I don't care--if the story is that good, the author should get some extra money and more visibility for it.

Regarding timing, Jones said his aim was to publish his big anthologies right before summer vacations when people want something like that to take. He also said that bargain book reissues help. (We see that occasionally in the United States, although seeing original anthologies published by Barnes & Noble or other bookstores is more common.)

There was some discussion of the artistic end. Resnick best explained the dilemma by saying, "As a writer you have to be an artist until you write the words 'THE END,' then you have to metamorphize into a businessman. With an editor, it's the reverse."

There was a brief discussion of the short form versus the thick novel or trilogy. My observation would be that not every author is a Victor Hugo or a Leo Tolstoy. In fact, most authors are not, but only some of them realize it and the rest try to write 1500-page epics.

Someone suggested that magazines are actually the replacement for general anthologies, but historically that doesn't make sense. Magazines were around long before anthologies, and the 1950s were the height of both.

Someone else said that a factor in buying anthologies was their trust in the editor. But Resnick noted that he will edit anthologies that he has no interest in if Greenberg sells the concept and asks him to edit. Still, I think Resnick has enough pride that he will do a good job even if not inspired by the editing Muse, whoever that might be. As Jones said, "If your name is on the book, then you have to be able to stand up and defend that book."

Resnick said that one factor in the decline of the anthology is that the readership has changed: "More people reading sub-literate trash based on media events than science fiction," which I suppose is why publishers like media tie-in anthologies. Stewart added, "Publishing is run by bean-counters who don't read books and [who] talk about product."

Resnick did observe that novellas by new authors are easier to place in anthologies than magazines. "Magazines won't turn over half an issue to a name they can't put on the cover." He also told us to look for Brian Tetrick's "Angel of the Wall" and Nick DiChario's story (the last one in Piers Anthony's *Tales of the Great Turtle*). Resnick said that in an anthology, the last position is the strongest, and the first the second strongest.

There was some mention of one-author novella collections, and Bantam publishes some stand-alone

novellas by such well-known authors as Robert Silverberg and Connie Willis. Young-adult books are also closer to novella-length. But in general, short stories (meaning shorter than 40,000 words) are dead outside of the science fiction and mystery fields.

Asked what anthologies most influenced them, Garrett named the Penguin science fiction anthology edited by Brian Aldiss (adding that ironically he now edits Aldiss), Resnick named the anthologies edited by Groff Conklin, Jones named the *Pan Book of Horror Stories* and *Dark Forces*, and Stewart named the John Carnell series "New Writings in SF."

Resnick closed by warning that the literary history of the field will be lost if we can't convince publishers to reprint some of the classic early anthologies.

Next I had to arrange for a bus from Heathrow to Cardiff. This was not easy. I had the number for the National Express bus company, and knew that the city code for it had been changed by having a "1" prefixed, but I was getting some sort of message about having dialed incorrectly. When I first tried calling, it was in the very noisy Concourse, and I couldn't hear the message. Here I found a quiet phone in the Moat House, and discovered that all Perth numbers had been changed as well by having a "6" prefixed. So I tried *that* number. But it had been changed to something entirely different, with a city code I didn't recognize. I called the operator. It turned out to be a special code for a number that costs the same from anywhere, and I finally got through and made the reservations for the bus. The three-hour bus ride is #27 for a return ticket each, versus something like #55 for a two-hour train ride from Paddington--and we'd have to get to Paddington. I made the reservations on our Visa card and arranged to pick up the tickets at Heathrow when we got there.

After this I had some time to kill, so I dropped by the Green Room, where I dried out my feet and shoes (it had been raining fairly heavily this morning, and even though we took the shuttle bus from the Marriott we got pretty wet just getting there). I also listened to Jan Howard Finner talking about auctioneering, and chatted with Steven Glover.

### **Deconstructions: THE GUNS OF THE SOUTH**

Saturday, 13:00

Paul Kincaid & Harry Turtledove in discussion

"The deconstructions thread is a new concept for Worldcon programming. To provide greater focus, we take a single work and look at its genesis, evolution, content, ideas, and at the author's view on it now. The format is somewhere between an interview and a conversation, and the focus should be clearly on the specific work."

Kincaid began by asking the obvious: "I want to ask how you came to write this book."

"This was not a book I planned to write," Turtledove responded. But Judith Tarr wrote him at one point about her new book, saying that the "cover art [was] as anachronistic as Robert E. Lee holding an Uzi." This led Turtledove to ask, "Who would want to give Robert E. Lee Uzis? Time-traveling South Africans?" And so it began.

Kincaid then asked about the problems involved in tackling Civil War. Turtledove said that the main problem is that a lot of people know a lot about it. As Turtledove put it, "I knew the vast yawning depths of my ignorance." (I think he's being too modest, or maybe he just does research really well.)

Was he nervous about stepping into an area that's been very heavily worked by science fiction authors? "Somewhat nervous, but I knew I could create my own place."

Turtledove said he started in the spring of 1864 in order to make the South examine the assumptions under which they gained their independence. By that point, the South had seen black troops, had experienced the occupation of some Southern areas, and had seen the (at least theoretical)

emancipation of the slaves in states still in revolt. As Turtledove said, he wanted the book to say, "You got everything you thought you wanted. You're so damned smart, what are you going to do with it?" (As Turtledove explained later, the Emancipation Proclamation did not apply to Northern slave states--Missouri, Maryland, and Delaware--or the occupied South.)

Turtledove said he had read Lee's letters twenty-five years ago, and based almost all of what Lee said in *The Guns of the South* on what Lee actually wrote. There is a lot of documentation on the Civil War, Turtledove said, not like Byzantine history which is a little piece of information here, a little piece there, and a lot of leaps of inference.

Kincaid asked about the fact that revisionists now present Lee as not such the great honorable gentleman, but Turtledove disagreed. Turtledove explained, "I respect him as a man. He had a great many admirable qualities, but he has a lot of attitudes I don't agree with at all." He also added, "If the South had won on their own, I don't think Lee would have been as liberal as in my book." He explained that it was what he called a "Hegelian relationship": the South Africans being so racist served to make the Southerners in his book less so because they saw the horror of the extrapolation of their racism.

Turtledove also said that there would have been emancipation in the South even if they had won in 1862 but it would have taken longer, and gave Brazil as an example of a slave-holding society that phased it out without a war.

Kincaid asked about the lack of technology in the South. Turtledove said he had help from Chris Bunch on how the South would have tried to reproduce the AK-47, and they concluded that it would have been possible for the South to reproduce it as in the book.

Turtledove also noted that the South seceded on the basis of states' rights, but became more draconian than the North (in terms of conscription) and also more centralized than they intended.

In any case, a Southern victory in 1864 would throw Northern politics into turmoil. So, as Turtledove said, "I had McClellan running as an act of ego, which he came equipped with a large economy size of." And Turtledove's projections of vote totals led to throwing election into House of Representatives, but he felt that this would be considered unlikely by the readers. As he said, "All history has to do is happen. Fiction has to feel real too." Kincaid joked, "McClellan could never have won the election; he would have just overestimated Lincoln's votes and assumed he lost."

Turtledove noted, "One of the stupidest things the South ever did was replace Joe Johnson with Fighting Joe Hood against Sherman outside Atlanta."

Turtledove announced, "I do not ever intend to write a sequel to *Guns*." His reasoning is that the changes he postulated are so radical that it's too difficult to figure out which possibilities are the most likely much further down the line. But he is working on a different aftermath of a different Southern victory. This one assumes General Lee's courier did not lose Lee's General Orders #191. Hence there was no Emancipation Proclamation, the South was recognized by England and France, so the South eventually was recognized by the Union as well. Then the Union allies with Germany in the late 1800s, leading to the Quadruple Entente. In passing, Turtledove noted that in 1914, Custer would have been seventy-five years old.

Turtledove talked a bit more about his research for the book. As he explained, there are a lot of documents about Greek history (for example), but the amount of detail/minutiae available for the Civil War is far greater. But, "one of the nice things you find out as a writer is that people will help you for no good reason." He wrote someone asking about information about the 47th North Carolina Regiment and the person asked if he would like the regimental history and the complete roster of that regiment, for US\$30. Turtledove said it was the best \$30 he ever spent. The result is that all the people in the book in that regiment are real.

And this includes the woman in the book who served in the regiment in disguise. "There *was* a woman in the regiment," and she was well enough documented that he could use her. Other details include the high percentage of those dying of disease, which was twice that of those dying of wounds. The reason for this is that many North Carolinians (who had lived in relative isolation) were not immune to childhood diseases and died shortly after enlisting.

Regarding the South Africans in his novel: "Anyone willing to go back in time and noodle with history to preserve a racist state has a strong ideological commitment to begin with."

(At this point someone in the audience asked some question about whether the 14th Amendment was actually legally passed. The question seemed to be based on some theory that the state legislatures passed it under coercion, but no one really wanted to follow up on this complete side-track.)

In response to a question, Turtledove said he ignored time paradoxes--he said he could always argue they are starting a new branch and then going up that branch and down the old one to get home.

Why the AK-47? Turtledove said it was produced in large numbers and is the terrorist weapon of choice; it also will take the most abuse of any weapon when used by amateurs.

There was some discussion of the war in the West, but I couldn't follow it.

Someone asked how Turtledove could rationalize the invasion of Canada, given the sea power of the British empire. But as Turtledove noted, "Ruling the seas does you a limited amount of good in a war against Canada." However, the beginnings of independence for Canada came because "Britain decided it was a good idea to start to create the semblance of an independent country because of the United States's drum-beating" in the real Civil War.

Turtledove also talked a bit about his new book, *The Two Georges*, which he co-authored with Richard Dreyfuss. It is set in the present in a world in which the American Revolution did not happen, the Gainsborough painting is a secular icon, and American separatists hijack it.

Someone asked why, when the South Africans have lost, they don't they pull out through the time gate? Turtledove's answer was that they still want to try to save the situation. Asked about recent changes in South Africa, Turtledove said there were "fewer malcontents than I expected," to which someone in the audience responded, "Perhaps they all ran away in a time machine."

### **Great Contributors to Screen SF**

Saturday, 14:00

Jane [someone], Janet Ellicott

What a fiasco! This panel seems to have been added at the last minute. The two panelists introduced themselves as "Star Trek" fans, and one was wearing a "SeaQuest DSV" T-shirt because Spielberg's name had been among the ones listed in the description.

To make a long story short, the panelists were totally unprepared, and kept asking the audience what the audience wanted to talk about. When someone suggested Ray Harryhausen, the panelists thought about it a moment and said, well, yes, they *could* talk about films as well as television.

They, however, ignored the question and said something about Gerry Anderson. They also said that the critics said *Waterworld* was a flop and didn't give audiences a chance to make up their own minds. (But it was.) They also claimed that "Star Trek"'s vision was driven by the author. (I didn't know that Roddenberry was an author?)

I left; it was too painful to listen to.

## No More Noble Savage: Technology and Genocide of Native Peoples

Saturday, 15:00

Henry Balen (m), Daniel Marcus, Dale Skran, Amy Thomson

"Does technological growth mean genocide for native peoples? This has been the rule for the last century, but are there other better ways?"

I will insert my own observation here that occurred to me on reading about this panel. We are the result of some cultures being absorbed by other more technological ones. If no culture had ever wiped out another, we wouldn't be here. And, as I noted at one point, there have been previous cases of one superpower trying to control the world and force its government, religion, etc., on everyone else, and that was imperial Rome. And certainly the Roman culture was more advanced technologically than Greek or Middle Eastern culture, and did in fact conquer them, legislate Roman ways, and disperse the people. As I observed, this must be why we have so many temples to Jupiter and Mercury, and why the religions and customs of the Middle East have totally vanished. Or put less sarcastically, which had the more lasting influence: the technological conqueror or the native peoples of Judea?

But back to the panel.

Balen began by asking if it is possible to have technological societies coexist with non-technological cultures? Marcus said that there really seemed to be two parts to the question: "Is genocide a bad thing? Yes. Is technology a bad thing? That's harder to answer."

There was discussion of forcible change inflicted by the over-culture. The example mentioned was that of child-napping (basically) of American Indian children in the early part of this century to be sent to boarding schools and taught "American" ways. (A similar example would be the conscription of young Jewish boys into the Russian military in the last century for twenty-five-year terms.)

There was also mention of the fact that the United States government seemed (seems?) less concerned about the pollution of Indian lands than of other areas.

Thomson noted that child-napping is not technological, and not really the focus of the panel. We should stick to discussions of technology, she claimed, and gave the example of Meiji Japan. Thomson said that they themselves decided they had to become technological. (This is debatable, at least based on what I know about the period.)

Skran asked if it was *possible* for the two levels of technology to coexist. His answer was that it was possible only if the technologically advanced society enforces it. They may want to do it for ethical reasons, or in the interest in cultural diversity, but they have to actively decide to follow this sort of a "Prime Directive." (He gave the example of Michael Armstrong's *Agviq*, a post-holocaust world in which native skills are critical.)

Thomson suggested that another reason for preserving the "native" culture was that the "more advanced" culture might want the feeling of power it got from controlling the native people. (All these terms are loaded of course, and in fact the whole issue of cultural relativism was later raised.)

Skran returned to the question of what would be an ethical way to manage a relationship with a native people. The panelists pretty much agreed that it has to be possible for individuals to leave the native culture. For example, in Mike Resnick's "Kirinyaga" stories, a dissatisfied member goes to a certain spot and a certain time, and says the equivalent of "Beam me up, Scotty," and they're out. In Sheri S. Tepper's *Sideshow*, on the other hand, members in one society can be restrained from leaving, which results in a much less stable set of societies.

Marcus raised the question of whether a technological culture is intrinsically expansionist, but this remained unanswered.



Thomson noted in regard to letting the decisions be made by the native culture, "They will absorb what they want and that may or may not be good for them but you have to let them make those decisions."

Balen asked what the difference is between adopting a culture and having it forced upon it, but this too wasn't dealt with, although Marcus gave the example of the Marshall Islands culture being totally destroyed by the United States.

Some people also expressed concern about cultures being supported as folk cultures instead of as "material" cultures (by which I assume my note meant real cultures). Skran asked if there are any currently surviving native cultures that haven't adopted the material base of the main culture. Thomson claimed the Navajo fit this description, but other panelists disagreed, saying the Navajo have adopted the material culture, and also make most of their money from tourism, which would not seem to describe a culture viable outside of the "folk culture" context. Someone in the audience suggested that the Hopi may be doing a better job of saving their culture than the Navajo. Everyone did agree that cultures don't exist in a vacuum in any case. Someone mentioned the book *In the Absence of the Sacred* by Jerry Mander on this subject. Marcus asked if a static culture, as people seemed to be favoring, was in fact a good thing. Skran noted that a perfectly preserved native culture would of necessity be one you couldn't leave, and that would be unethical--in effect, condemning all members born into that culture to imprisonment within it. Skran also said he agrees with Mander that genocide is bad, but disagrees with Mander's contention that technology is bad.

It is true, if one looks at history, that static cultures can survive a long time; examples would be ancient Egypt and China. But static cultures have problems when they come up against another equally powerful or more powerful civilization and may find it more difficult to adapt. A static culture can easily become the tree that breaks rather than the tree that bends.

Someone in the audience said that native developments need to be valued by the technological culture, and said this wasn't happening. Someone (Balen?) suggested *Tales of a Shaman's Apprentice* by Mark J. Plotkin as an example of this happening, though others felt that this was *not* what Plotkin was doing. The claim they made was that Plotkin was picking and choosing what he wanted to use from the native culture rather than taking it as a whole. Skran raised what seemed like the perfectly obvious objection to this attitude: if the native culture should be allowed to pick and choose what it wants from the technological culture, then any culture should be able to pick and choose what it wants from another culture.

Thomson pointed out that the panel was starting to talk about "better" and "worse" instead of looking at how cultures function from different basic cultural assumptions. True, but one could also say that antebellum Southern culture had the basic cultural assumption that slavery was commanded by God. Does that mean that we cannot apply the term "worse" to that culture? Or even more paradoxical, if our culture has the cultural assumption that judging cultures as "better" or "worse" is valid, by their own rules it would seem as though cultural relativists cannot criticize us for doing so.

### **THE TIME MACHINE--100 Years On**

Saturday, 16:00

Robert J. Sawyer (m), Stephen Baxter, Robert Silverberg, Brian Stableford

"How influential has Wells been for today's writers? Is he still someone we can learn from, and if so, what? How readable is his work now--does it have anything to say to us in a contemporary sense, or is it becoming a period piece. And how well does *The Time Machine* in particular stand up after a hundred years?"

The audio problems still exist in Hall 3, and while the panelists fiddled with their microphones, someone noted that hard science fiction writers are the ones who can find the switch on the microphone.

The panelists began with the question, "Is *The Time Machine* a seminal work for today's writers?"

Baxter said yes--the language was fresh and modern, and Wells invented the idea of using a mechanical, controllable method of time travel where previous writers had relied on magic or wishing. *The Time Machine* is simultaneously an adventure, a social parable, and evolutionary parable, and a parable about science. It can be read by a twelve-year-old, or analyzed by literary critics.

Stableford agreed, adding that it served as an example of both a novel and a short story, being the first item in Wells's *Collected Novels* and also in Wells's *Collected Short Works*.

Silverberg was more ambivalent. He said that Wells was the best writer who ever wrote science fiction, and that it's been going downhill ever since 1910. Wells, for example wrote the first time travel story, the first alien invasion story, and the first superman story. But *The Time Machine* is no longer seminal for a science fiction writer, because it has been so thoroughly assimilated that it is not necessary to go back to the source--it is more necessary to see what has already been done with it. It is, however, seminal for science fiction readers. As he said, "The ten-year-old Robert Silverberg found that book in 1945 and was never the same again."

Sawyer said he first encountered it as the "Classics Illustrated" comic book and the movie. He finally read the book, coincidentally enough, in the *Science Fiction Hall of Fame, Volume I*, edited by Robert Silverberg. But Sawyer noted that the novel can be read in a lot of different ways and suggested the panelists start with it as a work of science fiction.

Baxter said that one important thing to observe was that *The Time Machine* has precisely imagined and described details. Many of these are in some of the parts taken out of the serial before book publication. Stableford said that the novel provided the method for the genre, as well as providing the basic stories. (The method referred to was that of searching the environment for nuggets of ideas and then extrapolating them.) Silverberg reminded us that Wells regarded his science fiction as apprentice work while preparing to do his real novels. As Silverberg noted, most of these are not read today, just as the other novelists of Wells's style such as Henry James and Joseph Conrad are no longer still popular entertainers, but Wells as an author of science fiction is.

Sawyer talked about the scene in which the Time Traveller arrives in a rainstorm in 802,701 C.E. and how Wells was able to reveal the scene gradually, rather than abruptly giving a 360-degree inventory of what the Time Traveller saw.

The panelists then turned to the Morlock/Eloi dichotomy and Wells's social commentary. Baxter said that the Time Traveller tries to interpret what he sees, but he can't be sure if he's right, and he knows it. Stableford said that although Wells was a brilliant writer, he was not of the intelligentsia, but was the son of a servant, and spent a lot of his youth living underground ("below stairs") in servants' quarters. In fact, one reason that Wells wanted to write serious novels was for respectability. Silverberg said that he always found the Eloi/Morlock story the least interesting, probably because he aspires to be an Eloi.

In passing, Sawyer noted that the most 1990s thing Wells did was to leave room for a sequel. (And as Baxter's talk earlier showed, authors have taken advantage of this.)

It was noted that we still have time travel stories, but not a lot of alien invasion stories, anti-gravity space ship stories, or invisible man stories. (Yes, I know there are exceptions.) Why is this, and is *The Time Machine* Wells's greatest novel?

Baxter said that it probably was, although *The War of the Worlds* may have been greater when the pastoral English countryside was more familiar. A twelve-year-old can read *The Time Machine* much as he or she would read *Gulliver's Travels*--as an adventure story, without worrying about the

underlying meanings. Stableford felt that *The Island of Dr. Moreau* might actually be more relevant today (as well as *The First Men in the Moon*).

Silverberg partially disagreed, saying *The First Men in the Moon* seems merely quaint now, but *The Island of Dr. Moreau* is as "alive and quivering" as it was when it was first published. He also thought that *The War of the Worlds* still has relevance and is a perfect novel. In fact, he intends to write a response to it (whatever that means). (He also mentioned that Wells also wrote seventy short stories.) The only one of Wells's seven best-known novels that Silverberg thinks is antiquarian is *The First Men in the Moon*. And of Wells's lesser known works, Silverberg recommends *Mr. Blettsworthy on Rampole Island* as well. He also mentioned the extrapolated technology in *The War in the Air*, which Wells wrote after earlier denying the role of the airplane, and speculates that this turnabout was due in part to others' writings. Stableford agreed that much of *The First Men in the Moon* was dated, but said that what was valuable was the Selenite society.

I asked, "This may be more a question about the readers perhaps, but if one of these were unearthed today and hence eligible for a Hugo, would it get nominated? Would it win?"

In response, Stableford said he wondered if the Verne novel was genuine or just a clever fake. Sawyer said that Stanley Schmidt (editor of *Analog*) said that if Wells had cut the first ten pages of *The Time Machine*, Schmidt would have printed it. And Silverberg noted that the real test is whether an author is read, and Wells *is* still read.

Mark Leeper asked about the one novel of the "Big Seven" that they hadn't mentioned, *In the Days of the Comet*. Baxter responded that Wells believed we were in a collective madness, but the basic implausibility of the novel works against it. This is also true of *The World Set Free* and *The Shape of Things to Come*.

Stableford thought *In the Days of the Comet* belongs with the other books in which Wells was developing his Utopian dream, saying, "Resentment works better in fictional form."

From the audience, Jack Cohen proposed that the Eloi/Morlock stuff is boring because Wells, by writing about it, has changed the world away from a path that would lead to it. The panelists thought that this was a possibility, though they said that Wells was a believer in the "Tide of History" rather than the "Great Man."

Someone asked about what Wells did about time paradoxes and the answer was that he didn't worry about them, or about the fact that the Time Traveller was in two places at one time. Someone else in the audience objected to Wells's sexual stereotyping and terrestrial chauvinism (and also to his apparent belief that there are things that science shouldn't probe), to which Silverberg replied, "Bless you, I haven't heard a word of PC since I left California two weeks ago."

### **Kaffeeklatsch--Harry Turtledove**

Saturday, 17:00

This was very well attended, with its full complement and a waiting list besides. As we were settling in, someone asked if it didn't bother Turtledove to let the bad guys win in *The Guns of the South*, and Turtledove noted that S. M. Stirling did an even more thorough job of it in his "Draka" series.

Turtledove began by talking about his new book coming out, *The Two Georges*, co-authored with Richard Dreyfuss. I asked him why they didn't use the Gainsborough on the cover, and Turtledove said that the marketing people thought it more important to get the names of the authors on the cover.

How did this book come about? Well, apparently Dreyfuss had been interested in alternate history for a long time and liked *The Guns of the South*, which he read after seeing an article about Turtledove and the book in the *Los Angeles Times*. So he called Turtledove to suggest they have lunch together

because he had this idea for a book and, while Turtledove was skeptical, he went ahead anyway, and thus the project began. It was delayed somewhat, since Dreyfuss was also making movies at the time and couldn't always keep up to the writing pace Turtledove was used to. Turtledove admitted that the writing in *The Two Georges* was mostly his own, but said that the characterization and dialogue are heavily Dreyfuss's.

Later I asked him if he had seen the episode of *Sliders* with a similar premise about there being no successful American Revolution, but Turtledove said he had never watched *Sliders* (probably a wise move on his part--it's not that good a show).

Someone mentioned that *The Guns of the South* didn't seem to be marketed as science fiction, often showing up in the mainstream fiction section, and occasionally even in the history section! The latter is primarily in the South, supposedly. In connection with this "cross-over" aspect, Turtledove said that he had received the John Esther Cook Award for Southern Fiction in 1993 from the Order of the Stars and Bars, and described attending the awards dinner. Labeling himself as a conservative, Turtledove said at this event he felt like a far-left liberal, and wondered what some of the black waiters felt about the whole affair--but hadn't the nerve to ask. *The Guns of the South* has been translated into Italian, Spanish, and probably Russian at this point, but not French.

Turtledove got started writing alternate histories with his "Basil Argyrios" stories. In the first one ("Unholy Trinity," a.k.a. "Etos Kosmou 6824" in *Agent of Byzantium*, 1985), Basil Argyrios finds the Franks in Spain using gunpowder and adopts it. The idea behind this series is that Mohammed became a Christian, and because there was no Muslim threat, Byzantium never fell, but instead faced a technologically sophisticated Persia. Asked whether he had any "Salman Rushdie sorts of problems" with his Basil Argyrios stories, Turtledove said no, because he is just an infidel, not an apostate.

Someone asked what Turtledove used to do before he quit his day job; he had been a technical writer for the Los Angeles Board of Education. Now he is a full-time writer. He writes two and a half to three hours a day, 350 days a year. (He takes time out for a few conventions.) The rest of the day is not idle; it goes toward reading and research for his writing. He is working on four things now, which is the maximum multi-tasking he can do. Someone said at this point, "I always worry when a writer quits his day job," to which Turtledove responded, "So does the writer." But he forces himself to write every day, because "if you wait for the Muse to strike, you will starve." He writes his first drafts by hand, because when he types, "all the crap comes out." Writing is slower, and forces him to edit as he writes. Currently he is working on a straight historical novel about Justinian II.

Someone asked about his books written as "Eric Iverson." When they were first published, Belmont wanted to use "Eric Iverson" as the byline, saying no one would buy a book by an author named "Turtledove." As Turtledove explained, he was a new author who had just sold his first story and wasn't about to argue: "The first time you lose any cherry you don't care how. You worry about quality later." (Well, I'm not sure I'd agree with that philosophy as being true of everyone.) Later when he sold a story to Lester Del Rey, Del Rey insisted on using "Turtledove." So Turtledove was pressured first to use a pseudonym and then to use his real name.

Currently he is trying to place a collection which will feature his Hugo-winning story "Down in the Bottomlands." (Why should it be difficult to place such a collection? Maybe it's a question of who will pay the most, or market it the best.)

"Oct 1984 ANALOG sequel to Road Not Taken ".P

Asked about important turning points that still remain to be done well as alternate histories, Turtledove suggested that the Romans conquering Germany and keeping it would qualify. But he reminded us that the key point in choosing a turning point or alternate world is to remember that "the interest in alternate history is the light it sheds on the world we have now."

Turtledove referred a bit about the problems that occur when you try to write an alternate history too far in the future of the change point. I call this the "Via Roma problem" (after Robert Silverberg's novella). Silverberg avoided the extreme unlikelihood of there being any sorts of parallels people, place names, etc., in a world 2000 years after the Exodus failed and Rome never fell. But the result is that the story could as easily be set on a different planet; there is little that ties it to our earth.

### **Masquerade**

Saturday, 19:30

Well, we queued for the masquerade outside Hall 5, and got another taste of the disorganization of Intersection. At 5 PM, Mark asked at the Information Desk, "Where does one queue for the masquerade?" "Nobody has told us anything." "Who would know?" "We suggest entrails of a goat." (And they didn't even offer to supply the goat. Actually, this reminds me of the time at work when someone asked in a meeting when some product would be ready, and someone suggested reading the entrails of a goat, to which I responded, "But could we then voucher the goat as a business expense?")

At 5:30 PM, the answer was to start a queue outside Hall 5. "What if no one queues behind me?" "Make them--that's how you start a queue." So Mark did this. At 6:15 PM someone came and moved the entire queue to somewhere else.

This was all to some extent moot, as the doors opened at 6:30 PM, and the hall (which appeared to have a capacity of about 3500) was only two-thirds full for the masquerade. As usual, there was reserved seating which was at the end opened up to everyone, meaning people who arrived the earliest did not necessarily get the best seats.

The Masquerade itself actually started on time!!! There were only about twenty-five costumes, so we were out before 9 PM. The costumes were not bad, but there were no Master Class Awards (I think someone said there were only two Master Class costumes in the Masquerade). It's a trade-off--the costumes might not be as amazing as those at a North American Worldcon (it is hard to transport the costumes transatlantically), but you don't spend hours and hours seeing bad costumes either, and you get out at a reasonable time.

### **Parties**

Having gotten out at a reasonable time, we decided to hit a few parties. Well, there *were* only a few parties, and I think we got to most of them. Other than bid parties, the party situation was grim.

The Chicago in 2000 party had the gimmick of science fiction author trading cards, available for purchase through some complicated scheme involving pre-supporting memberships. The Kansas City in 2000 lacked any identifying feature. The Australia in 1999 had the best party: it had the biggest room, the most interesting people, a ban on smoking, and Australian wine. The Moscow in 2017 was (I think) a hoax bid, and had enough vodka to cause problems with drunken fans in the hallway. The Zagreb in 1999 had plum brandy, though in somewhat smaller quantities, and very little chance of winning even if the bidders are serious. (Rumor has it that the last Zagreb bid was not entirely serious, but that the bidders were getting support from the Yugoslav tourist bureau to promote it at conventions around the world.)

### **The Funny Bones Connected to the Head Bone**

Sunday, 10:00

Eileen Gunn (m), Jody Lynn Nye, Mike Resnick, Connie Willis

"Can humour help you to put across serious points? If so, why? Are people just more receptive to the message wrapped up in a pleasant package?"

I missed the beginning of this; the panel must have started on time in spite of it being so early.

Willis was saying that comedy and tragedy have the same material; it's how you deal with it (the treatment) that makes the difference.

Gunn thought that comedy is a form of avoidance, a way of avoiding reality.

Resnick said that he has written so much humorous fiction that his problem is being taken seriously. In his opinion, comedy is the unexpected happening in an expected place, or vice versa. Given that simple definition, Resnick asked why only about half a dozen people can sell humor.

Nye said that humor in general gets no respect, and said to look at the Academy Awards, where the last comedy to win for Best Picture was *It Happened One Night*. (I guess she doesn't count *Annie Hall* as a comedy.) Resnick said that shouldn't be given too much weight; the Academy Awards are voted on by fewer people than the Hugos.

Willis said that she was on a panel about humor and someone asked her why no funny story had ever won a Hugo--and this was right after she had won one for "Even the Queen." (And there are lots of others. The point is that no one seems to remember them.)

Nye also felt that displaced cultures have the deepest humor to compensate for feeling out of place. Resnick agreed, saying that writing comedy is an outlet for pain and gave the example of George Alec Effinger who would write his serious work when he was feeling good, but when he was in pain he could write only comedy. Willis said she had read somewhere that after being taken to Bergen-Belsen, Anne Frank had only happy dreams. Willis also said that Hitchcock understood laughter as the release of tension to a way filmmakers since seem to have forgotten.

Resnick said that returning from ConAdian on his Winnepeg-Minneapolis flight, there were a lot of professional authors, editors, etc., and the conversation turned to, "If the plane crashes, who will be on the front page of *Locus*?"

Willis said that she thought that writers who dabble in comedy fall through into an alternate world and funny things happen to them, and related a humorous travel of trying to get to Kyrie Muir from Glamis. I'm not sure i agree--equally strange things happen to Pete Rubinstein ... or to us. As someone in the audience said later, "It's the presentation. You made us laugh, but if we told the same stories, people wouldn't laugh."

Willis told how one year she bought a full-size cardboard mock-up of Harrison Ford, thinking she could carry it on the plane, and then won a Hugo which she also had to carry on. "I owe all my success to Harrison Ford," she said. Resnick said he won a Hugo the year they were clear acrylic and when they questioned what it was at airport security, he said, "This is a rectal thermometer for an elephant." In all of these stories, Willis said, it was important to be able to laugh at yourself.

Someone quoted Asimov as once saying that humor is a bull's-eye with no target around it--you're either funny or you're not. Gunn said that was what was nice about writing humorous stories: in a story, you have many chances to be funny; it's not just one shot.

Willis noted that there are many types of humor: topical, visual, language, and general humor. She also said that humor builds. Some people will laugh at some parts of a scene, others at different ones, but everyone laughs at the end because they've been built up to it. Gunn asked if Willis actually thought about this when she was writing, and Willis instantly replied, "Yes, I do." Gunn said, "I don't think about it" at the time but she hones it later.

Gunn talked about telling or hearing a story about Nixon in which the audience laughed at the jokes because they were structured like jokes (or in scientific terms, they were joke-like objects) even if

they were too young to remember Nixon.

Resnick said that once "someone asked me to record *She* with Ursula LeGuin," which led to great amusement until he corrected himself to say "Ursula Andress." But the point was that his reaction to the film was, "If they could be that funny by accident, what could they do if they tried?" And apparently this led to his creation of Lucifer Jones.

Resnick emphasized that the writer must be conscious of the audience or you could tell tales to yourself in the shower and save wear and tear on your fingertips.

What humorists do the panelists like? Willis like Goulart: "Humor does date, but his holds up well." Resnick said that Thorne Smith used to be very funny, but his Prohibition/drunk jokes aren't funny now, especially with our concern over alcoholism. Gunn said, "I think it's the tropes of humor that age." She like Robert Benchley and Finley Peter Dunn (who wrote in Irish dialect at turn of the century). As an example of Dunn, she quoted him as having said, "If the American people can govern themselves, they can govern anything that walks." (This was apparently in regard to the Philippines.)

(Mention of the turn of the century led Willis to say, "I don't see how we can possibly cope with the turn of the century because we have nothing to call it." Personally, I like "The Naughts.")

Resnick recommended John Sladek, Frederic Brown, Henry Kuttner, and William Tenn. Gunn recommended Lesley Black and Harry Harrison's *Star Smashers of the Galaxy Rangers*. Willis suggested Thomas Disch's "Santa Claus Compromise." Asked about Mark Russell, Resnick said he was just a watered-down Mort Sahl.

One problem humorists have now is what Willis called the battle cry of every group: "That's not funny." (Of course, 90% of the time it's not funny. It's only when someone with the talent of a Willis or a Resnick writes about it that it's funny. And denigrative humor that isn't funny is worse than other types of non-funny humor, in that it makes the "humorist" look bigoted.)

Gunn gave her example of telling ethnic humor: "How many Polish popes does it take to unscrew a pregnant woman?" She had this printed in the college newspaper and someone complained. (What a surprise.) Resnick added, "The Polish pope performed his first miracle: he made a blind man lame."

Resnick closed by saying that humor was an essential element, even in a serious work, and that one can't carry a serious scene more than 1700 words without relieving some tension with humor.

### **Can We Take Populare Science Seriously? (The Abuses of Popular Science)**

Sunday, 12:00

Caroline Mullan (m), Steve Brewster, Christine Carmichael, Daniel Marcus

"An enquiry into the uses and abuses of popular science."

Mullan brought a lot of books which she stacked up as examples of popular science books. Some were mentioned during the talk, but as best as I could tell, the stack included:

- | *The Collapse of Chaos* by Jack Cohen and Ian Stewart
- | *What Do You Care What Other People Think?* by Richard Feynman
- | *Chaos* by James Gleick
- | *Eight Little Piggies* by Stephen Jay Gould
- | *The Tangled Wing* by Melvin Konner
- | *Fuzzy Logic* by Dan McNeill
- | *The Descent of the Child* by Elaine Morgan
- | *Mind Tools* by Rudy Rucker
- | *The Density of Life* by Edward O. Wilson

Brewster began by saying that he reads popular science for the sense of wonder it gives him rather, and finds it better in this regard than most science fiction. He specifically mentioned Daniel Dennett's *Consciousness Explained*. (Dennett has also written *The Mind's Eye* with Douglas Hofstadter.) Mullan asked if Dennett actually intended to induce a sense of wonder, but I'm not sure that's a fair question in judging the reader's reaction.

Mullan said she reads popular science as a way to keep up with science without reading dense material that one may not have time for. Marcus said that this could be dangerous, and holding up Gleick's *Chaos*, said, "This book detracts from the sum of human knowledge." Why? Because it has spawned a non-rigorous treatment of the subject in the media, resulting in what Marcus termed a "chain of distorted reflections."

Mullan noted that at least science fiction says it's fiction, while the non-fiction treatments masquerade as truth. From the audience, Anita Cole asked, "What book on chaos theory would you recommend?" Marcus suggested *Order and Chaos* by Boulet and two others whose names I didn't get (and I couldn't find any reference to this in *Books in Print*), and then added Stephen H. Kellert's *In the Wake of Chaos*, which starts out, "Chaos theory is not as interesting as it sounds. How could it be?"

Carmichael recommended *Science* or *Nature* magazines, and also *The New Scientist*.

Someone in the audience asked why there are so many popular science books now. Catherine Kerrigan, also in the audience said it was due in large part to the success of Stephen Hawking's book, and to various political attempts (at least in the United Kingdom) to promote science.

Carmichael says that one way to keep up is to look for review articles of the books in journals, since they often summarize the book. Marcus said that the review articles cover the information, but don't entertain the way the books can. Mullan added that the problem was also to know which reviews to read; Marcus said the trick was to read the reviews in the specialized journals.

Carmichael also suggested just picking up the book and reading a page at random to see if it is what you're looking for.

From the audience, Kerrigan reminded the panelists that popular science is written for people who are not trained scientists, not for the panelists, most of whom *were* trained scientists.

Asked for specific recommendations, Marcus said James Trefil is a good popular science writer. Mullan said that although Jered M. Diamond's *The Third Chimpanzee: The Evolution & Future of the Human Animal*, which purported to be an examination of the evolutionary history of mankind, was well-received, it never showed a link between the evolutionary theory and the current state of mankind. Brewster compared it to *The Bell Curve* in that it shows that what is needed is a popular science book on statistics, correlation vs. causality, false positives and negatives, and so on. (Someone in the audience suggested that John Allen Paulos's *Innumeracy* fit this description.)

Someone in the audience suggested that there are two types of pop sci books: one by the popular science writer who is trying to inform, and one by scientists pursuing their own agenda and trying to make a name for themselves. Brewster agreed, but said the latter was not necessarily an absolute obstacle. For example, Roger Penrose's *Emperor's New Mind* was a splendid book in spite of being wrong, but then again, Penrose made clear it was his own agenda. Carmichael said she actually prefers when the author does have an opinion (e.g., Paul Davies). Mullan gave the example of *Fuzzy Logic*, which has a political agenda vis-a-vis why the Japanese have used it

Someone in the audience complained that we concentrate on the glamorous stuff and forget to teach the basics.

I asked for the panelists' opinions of Asimov as a popular science writer. Carmichael said it would be



difficult for many of the panelists to answer, since Asimov's science writing was (and is) not generally available in the United Kingdom.

Marcus summed up the panel by asking, "What good does good science writing do?" and then answering, "It inspires young people to go into science."

### **High Tech Meets Low Tech**

| Sunday, 13:00

| Sam Lundwall (m), Brian Aldiss, Gwyneth Jones, Ian McDonald, Jaroslav Olsa

"Is contemporary SF/F relevant to the 'pre-industrialized' world, and vice versa? Can the Third World be portrayed by First World writers without being exploited? Why do so few writers include the Third World in their work--lack of knowledge of the subject, a perceived unattractiveness of the subject, or is the low-tech subject simply at odds with a high-tech genre?"

Aldiss started by asking who invented the term "Third World"? Was it Tito or Nehru? No one really answered this, and that's because it was neither; it was G. Balandier in 1956, who said, "La conference tenue a Bandoeng en avril 1955, par les delegues de vingt-neuf nations asiatiques et africaines ... manifeste l'acces, au premier plan de la scene politique internationale, de ces peuples qui constituent un "Tiers Monde" entre les deux 'blocs,' selon l'expression d'A. Sauvy." (This according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, which has other references if you want to look it up. I will not type them in from that teeny-tiny type! Neither will I attempt to get all the accent marks correct, since I could barely see the letters!)

In any case, Aldiss pointed out the term was misleading, since it implied some commonality to the Third World, which is actually much more "miscellaneous" and diverse than the First or Second Worlds. Aldiss also observed, "Life may be pretty tough in the Third World, but the people there appear to be, if not more happy, then at least more tranquil than we are in the West." He attributes this to the caste system in India, for example. There is no struggle to improve.

Olsa agreed, and said Singapore is successful precisely because it is not a democracy. (This led to a fixation on Singapore that ran through the whole hour and seemed to replace any discussion of the Third World in science fiction.)

Jones said there is a decline in the use of the term "Third World," and that it is being replaced by the term "the developing world."

McDonald said that by any workable definition, Belfast is part of the Third World, with its politics, violence, unemployment, etc. Just as streets in Los Angeles are showing "signs of spontaneous malling" in the words of some commentator, other areas show "signs of spontaneous Third World-ing." The division of the planet into First, Second, and Third Worlds is not a simple map; it's more of a fractal pattern. But McDonald agreed with part of what Aldiss said, saying that the lives of the have-nots seem to be richer and more energetic than those of the haves. (Aldiss noted here that this is true of people "outside the system" in general; science fiction conventions are more vibrant than anything Iris Murdoch ever goes to.)

Aldiss returned (metaphorically) to Singapore, saying it is a city of the future, and that we mustn't sentimentalize about some of these places. "These places ruled by dictators with rods of iron can be good places to live." Olsa reported that in Singapore, chewing gum is produced and sold by the underground like drugs (so prohibiting things doesn't necessarily work). Lundwall describes Singapore as a trade-off of giving up freedom for security. (Benjamin Franklin's ghost hovered over me, whispering, "They that can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety." I suggested he talk to the panel, but he wasn't listening.)

Jones said that the Third World can show First World characteristics; Elizabeth Hand writes about

Indonesia as the last great imperialist nation. And the panelists agreed that such changes as the Internet may have a major effect: it is hard to enter the Internet without giving up the control of information that such societies seem to require.

Someone on the panel suggested that Singapore was an attempt to apply Western concepts in a Third World context.

The panelists were asked where Third World countries are going. Jones said she was not qualified to predict. McDonald said that the question was from a First World perspective, just as Singapore is a First World fantasy city.

From the audience, Chris Higgins asked if the First World needs a Third World. McDonald hinted that to some extent he would be addressing this in his upcoming book about aliens giving the Third World alien nanotech.

Someone in the audience asked why there were no panelists from the Third World. Olsa said that while the First World's science fiction had reached the Third World--he had just seen a Batman T-shirt in Kigali (Rwanda)--science fiction requires a middle-class that thinks about the future. McDonald expressed it differently: "Science fiction is the mythology of developed nations."

David Zink noted that the First, Second, and Third Worlds are not permanent arrangements; China and Egypt used to be the First World. This led John Sloan to ask about the results in China of a whole generation of "only children," most of whom are male. Will this lead to an increased level of violence? Or will there just be, as someone suggested, a rise in mail-order brides? One of the panelists suggested that there was a similar imbalance in Europe after World War I.

Jones actually returned to the topic to ask how science fiction treats the Third World, and to answer by saying, "We talk about them as if they don't exist." She noted that when Arthur C. Clarke wrote *Childhood's End*, his description of the race problem in South Africa focused on the "persecuted whites."

I was disappointed that the panelists didn't talk more about writing science fiction set in the Third World, since that what I particularly like about McDonald's and Jones's writing. The hour was very disconnected in that when someone asked a question, one panelist would answer it, then go back to the audience without letting the others answer it.

After this, we went to lunch with Kate and Barbara at Molinare's, the restaurant upstairs at the SECC. It was priced about the same as restaurants in town, and I was getting tired of fast food and wanted to sit down.

### **Alternate Histories: Turning Points** Sunday, 17:00

Evelyn Leeper (m), Michael F. Flynn, Kim Newman, Herman Ritter, Harry Turtledove

"The 'tide of history' vs the 'great man' theories."

[Thanks to Mark for taking notes, especially since I asked him at the last minute after my tape recorder wouldn't work.]

I started by asking everyone in the audience to turn off their cellular phones and alarm watches--as I said earlier, some guy had a phone that kept ringing during panels.

I started by asking the panelists to comment on the dichotomy between the Great Man-Capitalism-Free Will-Aristocracy Theory and the Tide of History-Marxism-Determinism-Democracy Theory. Most said that they generally believed in the Tide of History, though there was room for the effects of individuals as well. Flynn pointed out that as long as authors are stuck making stories out of history,

they will probably use the Great Man Theory even if they don't completely agree with it.

Newman expressed his feelings by saying that aside from agreeing with Turtledove on the Great Man versus the Tide of History, every now and then there is a fulcrum where history will be radically altered. For example, if someone else had been President he would have handled Reconstruction better than Andrew Johnson did. When we talk about changing history, what do we really mean about that? Maybe if things had gone differently, we would be living in Cabotland but things would still be similar.

Leeper said that she was reminded of a line from Tom Stoppard's play *Travesties*, in which a character expressed Marx's belief in the Tide of History by quoting Marx as saying, "I believe if Lenin had not existed, it would not have been necessary to invent him."

The panel talked a bit about history itself as a character, Leeper mentioned that Kim Stanley Robinson has done that, with such stories as "A Sensitive Dependence on Initial Conditions" (about the bombing of Hiroshima), "Remaking History" (about faking the Viking discovery of America), and "A History of the Twentieth Century (with Pictures)" (about how to look at history).

Leeper asked the panelists, "What makes alternate history believable, what makes it good, and are they the same?"

Turtledove said that alternate history doesn't have to be believable to be good; there can be a "gonzo" story that was still good. In any case, we do not write about alternate worlds, we write about our world, and alternate history gives us a different mirror. Turtledove said his story "The Last Article" was set in a post-World War II in which Germany was victorious. Set in India, it looked at a situation in which Gandhi's civil disobedience was likely to fail. It is looking more at the limits of civil disobedience than the specific alternate history.

Leeper asked Ritter if he as an historian saw things differently. Ritter replied that utopias and dystopias also show the world in distorted ways. Historical fiction is bound to some worlds, but you can throw in all sorts of silly things as well. (Leeper joked that nobody would throw in alien invaders, though.)

Flynn said you can't write alternate history unless you are holding up some sort of mirror. World War II is popular as a base because our parents and grandparents lived through it.

Flynn added that it is possible to write alternate history with no science fiction content. Turtledove responded, "There is a 'but' to that." Even though you are not talking about science, there is still the theory that every decision "splits" the universe. Flynn suggested that E. L. Doctorow's *Ragtime* was an example of an alternate history that did nothing with science. Ritter disagreed, saying, "I think history is a science," and Flynn said that in the 1950's the big hip science was geography.

Newman agreed that not all alternate history was science fiction. For example, his *Anno Dracula*, having a vampire marry Queen Victoria, would not be science fiction--it would be fantasy.

Leeper mentioned one problem with making alternate histories believable is that if a story takes into account how much things would change, it will be completely unfamiliar. For example, Robert Silverberg's "Via Roma" takes place about our century after a change back more than 2000 years ago. There is no similarity to our world. "He did a good job of realizing everything would be very different, but it was so different I did not like it," bemoaned Leeper.

Newman said that he found the most irritating alternate history is that Rome did not fall, and everything is the same centuries later. Flynn said that is a stasis society. Leeper noted there was one like that in which Jesus wasn't crucified, but Turtledove noted in the specific three-book series they were all talking about, there were two changes: Rome defeated Arminius in the Teutoburg Wald, and

twenty years later Jesus was not crucified. (Well, actually he was not crucified any of the other years either.) To be fair, the author did connect these two changes, but he assumed that after this, nothing would change for centuries.

Flynn pointed out that if you start making changes, all sorts of people would not be born; even if their parents did meet they would have a different child. Turtledove said that sometimes he would have an historical personage existing where he shouldn't, but he knows he's cheating. Flynn said while the child might be different, the parents could well give him the same name. Leeper mentioned Howard Waldrop's "Ike at the Mike," which does things entirely differently but is not an alternate history in the classic sense. What makes things really unbelievable is, for example, if six people come along and destroy Rome. Turtledove mentioned that something like that occurs in Poul Anderson's *High Crusade*, but even that is more believable, and oddly enough, in the end does touch on alternate history.

In any case, things have effects. If you change history, none of the same people born. If World War II doesn't happen, but you have John Kennedy become President anyway, you had better explain how. Ritter said he thought all the Kennedy brothers were fascinating, and any of them could have been President.

Ritter also said that although changes in World War II are a very popular subject for alternate histories, there are no more than five German works about such changes. Leeper asked if this was due to any restrictions in Germany on what can be published about the Nazis; for example, can someone write an alternate history in which Nazi Germany wins? Ritter said yes; there was one such book, and it was banned, and there was such an uproar that it was allowed. There were problems with Norman Spinrad's *Iron Dream* in that the original cover had a swastika, which *is* banned, but when that was removed, the book was published with no problem.

Turtledove commented that given all the material about World War II, he was surprised there weren't more such stories in Germany. Flynn noted the same phenomenon in the United States; we don't write alternate histories about wars we lost. Leeper said that she believed one reason was that the most famous such war, the Vietnam War, was too recent and too many people find it too painful (she knew someone who wouldn't go to see *Miss Saigon* because he found the reminders too painful). With World War II, while veterans are still alive, it was long enough ago to dull the bad memories, and after all, the United States did win. As far as the Korean War goes, no one remembers it and alternate histories about it would be met by puzzled looks by most readers. Also, Flynn said with the Korean War you would have to have one side or the other win, instead of a stalemate. And the War of 1812 is another one no one remembers which, if the United States didn't lose, they at least didn't win: having your capital burned doesn't really constitute a victory. (And the best known battle of the war, which the United States did win, was fought *after* the war was over.)

Turtledove said that part of what makes a change point good is not only that they are relevant, but that there is a story that the author can write as well. Flynn agreed, saying that is interesting to think of a Europe with five more geniuses like Freud, but then you have to write that. Newman said it's even more difficult if you choose to try to write about something happening that didn't happen in our world. Leeper said this tied in with Ritter's comments Saturday on cliometrics, and asked him to repeat them. Basically, Ritter said, you can only subtract out data, you cannot add it, so cliometricians say the only thing that is interesting is subtracting. Newman said all this implies the use of numbers, but thought this could be done without.

Newman suggested that an important factor, for example, was the proportion of people traveling; this will determine how fast an idea spreads. For example, adding a bunch of soldiers moving around will result in a ferment of ideas, not a static society.

Leeper agreed with Turtledove that the problem was in making the change interesting, and that to some extent requires not treading the same ground as everyone else. She asked what change points

have not been overused that panelists think would be promising.

Turtledove suggested that having the Romans win at Teutoburg Wald and then romanize Germany seemed like a critical change point to him. (Although this was done, albeit badly, in the series mentioned earlier.) Ritter suggested that if in the 1845 vote about making Austria part of Germany, the Austrians had not voted against their own proposal, but instead had voted to join Germany, that would have greatly changed European politics.

Flynn said his mind toward trivia: what if Fatty Arbuckle did not go to that party? Who would have had better careers? Flynn suggested Louise Brooks. He said that Mae West wouldn't have made it, since she relied on being just on the edge of the Hayes Code.

Newman said he tried to come up with something off the wall, and while everybody does World War II, the American Revolutionary War doesn't get much play, and World War I is almost forgotten. He suggested von Gluck's turn not happening, or the Second Dynasty in Egypt not breaking down. What if Pharaohs had not able to unify, and the Nubian Kingdom had started a thousand years earlier? (The only (von) Gluck I can find is the composer who had a great effect on opera, but from context, I would have thought von Gluck was a military figure.)

Leeper said an alternate history she would like to see would be what Christianity would have been like without St. Paul. As she expressed it, "What if more followed what Jesus said, instead of Paul's interpretation of it?" (One she didn't have a chance to mention was what if the British had known that Jiddah, the leading force for partition of India, had tuberculosis and would die soon. One speculation is that they might have delayed the decision until he was dead, and people would have decided to keep India together instead of splitting into India and Pakistan. See page 109-111 of Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre's *Freedom at Midnight*--or at least those are the page numbers in my edition.)

Someone in the audience, responding to an earlier comment, said that it used to be true that for ideas to travel, people had to travel, but now was that still true? Leeper suggested that modern communications could be looked on as "out-of-body" travel.

Someone asked whether the break-up of the Soviet empire would inspire more alternate histories. Turtledove said that this may be what's inspiring all the stories of Hitler winning, and then seventy-five years after the war Fascism starting to break up. Flynn said that the end of the Cold War will cause some, and old spy stories will come up as well. (Leeper mentioned Norman Spinrad's *Russian Spring* as an "instant" alternate history: near-future science fiction when he wrote it, but by the time it was published it was alternate history.)

Leeper asked for last thoughts. Newman said he thought of another example of projecting different past from what didn't happen but could have: using Hiero's steam engine as a Roman catapult. Flynn said that because alternate history which has grown out of science fiction, it tends to dwell on technology; he would like to look at political fields or religion, Leeper agreed, saying that she likes to read alternate histories that look at social change, and particularly at religion. History is after all trying to change the future the way we want it, which is the whole idea of Flynn's *In the Country of the Blind*.

Ritter thought that it used to take longer to write an effective alternate history in the sense of waiting until after a given event. Where before it took a generation to assimilate and collect the information about something, now information flows so fast that it may take only five or ten years. This led Flynn to ask about real people suing writers for portraying them in alternate histories; Ritter responded that Hermann Goering filed a lawsuit against a writer for doing this.

Turtledove summed up a lot of people's feeling when he said, "A friend once described alternate history as the most fun you have with your clothes on."

## The Fan in the High Castle

Sunday, 17:00

"Fandoms of If. How changes in history and technology would have affected fandom.... And what about changes purely internal to fandom itself?"

Well, fandom might have become smart enough *not* to schedule this opposite the literary track's alternate history panel.

### Hugo Awards

Sunday, 19:15 (20:00)

Diane Duane and Peter Morwood, Toastmasters

Summary: Nothing went amazingly wrong, and many of the awards were predictable.

But before the detailed commentary, the awards:

- | Best Novel: *Mirror Dance* by Lois McMaster Bujold
- | Best Novella: "Seven Views of Olduvai Gorge" by Mike Resnick
- | Best Novelette: "The Martian Child" by David Gerrold
- | Best Short Story: "None So Blind" by Joe Haldeman
- | Best Non-fiction Book: *I. Asimov: A Memoir* by Isaac Asimov
- | Best Dramatic Presentation: "All Good Things" (*Star Trek: The Next Generation*)
- | Best Professional Editor: Gardner Dozois
- | Best Professional Artist: Jim Burns
- | Best Professional Artwork: *Lady Cottington's Pressed Fairy Book* by Brian Froud & Terry Jones
- | Best Semiprozine: *Interzone* edited by David Pringle
- | Best Fanzine: *Ansible* edited by Dave Langford
- | Best Fan Writer: Dave Langford
- | Best Fan Artist: Teddy Harvia
- | John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer: Jeff Noon
- | E. Everett Evans Big Heart Award: Kenneth F. Slater
- | First Fandom Awards: Jack Speer and Harry Warner, Jr.

There were also the Seiun Awards for works in translation: novel for *Hyperion* by Dan Simmons, and short story for "A Planet Named Shayol" by Cordwainer Smith.

The ceremonies began with Robert Silverberg giving a moving eulogy for John Brunner, at the end of which he asked, not for a moment of silence, but for a standing ovation for Brunner. After this, Duane's and Morwood's opening humor fell somewhat flat, though I'm not convinced it wouldn't have done so anyway. (Or maybe it's just not to my taste.)

The awards went without a hitch. Langford's two wins were predictable, *Interzone's* somewhat less so, but that was one I was pleased to see. I think *Interzone* is doing some of the best and most interesting fiction around, but it doesn't stand much chance at a North American Worldcon, with only 250 North American subscribers. Best Nonfiction was another predictable one.

(Langford's win were so predictable that I didn't bother to bring my tuxedo. I had no desire to cart it all over Britain for a month when I wasn't even going to be on stage. I did bring a dressy jacket and bow tie however.)

The business meeting earlier voted to eliminate the Best Professional Artwork category; this needs to be ratified by L.A.Con III next year before it actually happens.

It was nice to see yet another artist win the Best Professional Artist Hugo; now if only the Best Professional Editor Hugo would start moving around to some of the other deserving candidates. Dozois is very good, but I don't think he's the best every year.

The less said about Best Dramatic Presentation the better. I voted all the candidates other than *Interview with the Vampire* below "No Award."

Mike Resnick was the first person to be nominated for four Hugos in a single year, but missed being the first person to *lose* four Hugos in a single night. He is now tied with Ursula K. LeGuin, who also lost three Hugos, and Connie Willis, who lost three Hugos in 1992. (If there's some earlier "big-time loser," I'm sure someone will tell me.)

Michael Bishop has now had ten Hugo nominations without a win, the current record. However, he still has a ways to go to beat Robert Silverberg, who had a string of sixteen nominations without a win (although Silverberg had won a Hugo previous to the string).

The only major problem from the point of view of the participants was that they didn't give us any directions: which side of the stage the winner should walk up, how they should exit the stage, and so on.

The Hugo ceremonies were over by 10 PM. For a change they asked all the nominees to gather on the stage for photographs before having photographs of just the winners. (I suspect the low percentage of nominees attending made this possible; one could normally expect about sixty nominees, but there were probably only about half that there.) That they wanted everyone there was also not announced beforehand.

We then proceeded to the:

### **Hugo Losers Party**

Sunday, 10 PM

Okay, it's officially called the "Hugo Nominees Party," but all the nominees call it the "Hugo Losers Party." I suppose one should not look a gift horse in the mouth, but this is the first HLP in six years that had a cash bar. Yes, I know things are done differently in Britain, but to throw a party with the nominees as your guests and then to ask them to pay for their drinks (including soft drinks) seems, well, just a bit tacky. The nominee souvenirs were travel flashlights (oops, this is Britain, so they were torches).

It was claimed that we would be able to see the fireworks from the HLP, and this was true if you were willing to sit on the floor directly under the window and practically under the buffet table. Someone had failed to take into account the awning, which blocked most of the view.

There was some food (for which we did not have to pay), but it was pretty heavy for that late: chicken drumettes, samosa, and donner kebab. For vegetarians or anyone avoiding fat, there was nothing. Maybe I'm out of step with what everyone else wants, but fruit, crackers (biscuits here), cheese, and raw vegetables are much more appealing to me.

We left about 11 PM, when it got too crowded to move around at all. Going towards the taxi rank, we saw two women standing to one side and discovered they were waiting for the city bus which ran from the SECC to the Marriott for 30p (a lot cheaper than the #1 convention shuttle). So we waited with them and took that. Why didn't the committee tell us about this city bus?

### **What Makes a Good Short Story?**

Monday, 10:00

Terry Bisson (m), Martha Soukup, Maureen Speller, Ian Watson

"A short story is not just a cut-down novel. So what is it that makes it work, and what is the difference between writing a short story and a novel? How much can you pack into a short story before it isn't really a short story anymore--is a 'short story' really defined by a word count or by other characteristics? And which is the more natural length for SF--if Fantasy is naturally the blockbuster trilogy, is SF naturally the short story?"

Speller claimed that Terry Bisson once said that what makes a good short story is that it subverts all the rules of a good short story. Bisson said this was what he called a retro-story: "A wild idea dressed up just enough to get it out on stage and let it clank around a little bit." But he warned it can be done only occasionally. Soukup said that her story "The Story So Far" fit this description, being told from the point of view of a minor character with only a few scenes in someone else's story (something like *Rosenkrantz and Guilderstern Are Dead*, but without scenes interpolated between the "real" scenes). The story, Soukup said, was workshopped and everyone (except Vonda McIntyre) told her she needed to change it completely. She didn't, and it was nominated for a Hugo.

For a look at what a good short story is, Bisson recommended the Dozois anthologies. He said now it's pretty much a given that science fiction stories have dialogue, characterization, etc.--all the things that used to be missing. (Someone said that whenever they hear someone talk about wooden dialogue, they think of Pinocchio.)

Watson said one difference between short stories and novels was that "with short stories, I just start them. With novels you need a little more planning." Bisson said another way of expressing this was, "A short story you can hold all in RAM at one time." You can always see the "big picture." It exists all at one time.

Bisson also said that a short story doesn't have an arc like a novel; it's like more two photographic plates that have a shift between them. Speller said that a short story is much more compressed, like a snapshot, encapsulating just a single moment. Soukup continued this analogy, saying "A novel is a whole series of photographs of a city." Bisson claimed a short story is like sex and a novel is like a love affair.

(There was a long aside here about some analogy with photographing naked men. I'm not relating it because I want people to realize that they don't get *everything* from my con reports.)

Watson said that one advantage short stories have is that it is easier to deal with obsessional or uncomfortable material in a short story than in a long novel, both for the writer and the reader. Watson also declaimed, "It is necessary for short story writers to be physically short." He noted that (the very tall) Geoff Ryman has not done short stories, and "look at Ellison." (Ryman has written novellas, which many would include under the rubric "short fiction.")

Speller said that the attitude she hears that short stories are just training for novel-writing bothers her. (Karen Joy Fowler, in the introduction to her short story collection *Artificial Things*, said she was repeatedly asked, "When are you writing a novel?") Bisson said that it worked in reverse for him: he started with novels, then switched to short stories. (For that matter, so did Mike Resnick.)

Bisson, speaking about the dearth of short stories outside of the science fiction field, said "There are very few Ray Carvers in America making a living writing short stories." Soukup mentioned that she had just sold a short story collection to Dreamhaven. Someone in the audience pointed out that in the 1930s there was more market for short stories in magazines, but few markets for novels, and that now the situation was reversed.

Watson said that the problem with writing a novel is that people say, "I haven't seen a story from you for a long time; are you dead?" However, he also added that you can fix a story after it's published before it's reprinted, but with a novel, you're stuck. Bisson responded, "That's cheating," leading to a discussion of whether the text is the author's or the readers' after it is printed? Bisson noted that



authors used to change their text all the time, but that has been phased out.

An audience member asked what freedoms short stories give an author. Watson said he had no real answer, but later noted that in general books have to give you a sense of believability that isn't as necessary in short stories. Soukup said they let you go after a tone, a certain emotional and philosophical feeling at the end. In that sense, she said, they were narrowcast rather than broadcast (although those terms usually apply to the audience, not what is being transmitted). Watson said a short story is black-and-white, a novel is Technicolor.

Bisson said he likes to write short shorts that are all dialogue (the one I thought of was his Hugo-nominated "Press Ann") or that use other tricks, but editors don't usually buy them. Sometimes short stories can grow; *Fire on the Mountain* started as a short story. But Watson and Bisson agreed that, in general, expanding a short story to a novel doesn't work, even though (as Bisson said) many novels we see today are really short stories swelled up.

The panelists agreed that using standard conventions (e.g., faster-than-light travel) helps do shorter pieces, because you don't need to explain everything. Speller thought this was allowed, but said she hates the re-use of historical characters, to which Soukup replied, "Sometime Mike Resnick twists our arms." Bisson said the problem was that a few people did it and it turned out to be fun, but then people got carried away.

The panelists also mentioned "fix-up" novels of connected short stories, such as A. E. Van Vogt's *Voyage of the Space Beagle* and Edgar Pangborn's *Davy*, but Bisson observed that these are out of fashion now. (I expect we'll see one for Mike Resnick's "Kirinyaga" stories, and Harry Turtledove's *Agent of Byzantium* was a "fix-up" novel.)

After this I hung out in the Green Room for a while. Connie Willis came in, totally exhausted from lack of sleep, but when programming asked her if she could fill in on a two-person panel which was short one person, she immediately agreed, without even asking what the topic was. (Later, the other person on the panel must have withdrawn as well, because I saw it was canceled.) A bunch of us discussed having a convention at the Mall of America--Mallcon, obviously--with Somtow Sucharitkul and Barry Longyear as Guests of Honor. Several female fans and pros (whose names I will conceal for their own protection) petitioned the ribbons committee of L.A.Con III to have "Studmuffin" ribbons. (I asked how one got one of this year's "Lady from Hell" ribbons, but apparently one requirement was that you had to be a mother.)

I also managed to get on the computers in the fan area and check my email: 2102 messages in 3.3 Megabytes so far!

### **The Reviews We Deserve**

Monday, 14:00

Simon Ings (m), David V. Barrett, Greg Cox, Kathleen Ann Goonan

"Do reviews have a function? If so, what is it? Why are SF/fantasy reviews primarily confined to the semi-prozine and amateur press? Surely if SF readers wanted reviews there would be more of them available in the mass market? How does reviewing differ from criticism--is it for instance fundamental that a review is directed at the general readership to support selection, whilst criticism is directed at an audience of experts? What makes a good review--or a good reviewer? And *do* we get the reviews we deserve?"

It sounded really great, but like so many other Monday afternoon panels, was canceled at the last minute (even after the day's schedule had come out). I don't know if panelists changed their plans and left earlier than they had said, or if the schedule failed to take the panelists' travel plans into account, but this seemed to be common.

What follows is Mark's report on a panel I *should* have gone to, but the description sounded as though it would be more about Conan Doyle's forays into criminology in his own life than about Sherlock Holmes:

### **Conan Doyle and Forensics**

Monday, 14:00

Duncan Lunan (m), Owen Dudley Edwards, David Hall

[written by [Mark R. Leeper](#)]

This was an excellent idea for a panel. It brought together an expert on the writings of Arthur Conan Doyle and a police forensics expert. The panelists included moderator Duncan Lunan, Owen Dudley Edwards (a professor at Edinburgh University and a great enthusiast for the writings of Doyle), and David Hall (a local forensics expert for the Strathclyde Police Department). Hall explained that he is not a policeman and does not wear a police uniform; he wears a lab coat.

Lunan began by suggesting that Holmes did have a place at a science fiction convention. We think of the Holmes stories as detective stories, but the detective story was not fully formed at the time they were written and neither was forensic science. Doyle was suggesting that the limits of forensic science could be much extended. In fact, that was a true statement. Lunan thinks that the Holmes stories were science fiction when they were written.

Edwards said that the real-life precursor of Holmes was not so much Dr. Joseph Bell, but another professor from Edinburgh earlier in the century, Professor Christianson. The incident in *A Study in Scarlet* in which Holmes is supposed to have beaten a corpse to determine to what extent bruises can be induced after death was based on fact. It goes back to the notorious case of Burke and Hare. Apparently on one of the bodies the notorious pair provided there were bruises on the body and the pair claimed they were induced putting the corpse into a barrel. Christianson doubted that bruises could be induced after death and decided to find out.

Hall talked a bit about how forensics has changed. Of course, in the time of Holmes there was no such thing, but certainly it is no longer just one person examining a crime scene; it is a team of experts with various specialties. Hall himself was a chemist and a forensic scientist; someone else might be an expert in examining with laser light and ultra-violet light.

Edwards mentioned another difference was the willingness to experiment on oneself. He read off an example from *A Study in Scarlet* where Holmes was using his own blood in an experiment. In "The Adventure of the Devil's Foot" he applies a hallucinogenic to himself and to Watson, just the sort of thing that Watson was warned against in *A Study in Scarlet*. It was not that Holmes was malicious or even unconcerned for Watson's welfare but that Holmes is shown as a consummate scientific enthusiast. And in this period many scientists did experiment on themselves. Edwards said that this, and not Deacon Brodie, was the inspiration for "The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde." (Deacon Brodie, a notorious figure in Edinburgh history, was a pious church deacon by day and a dangerous criminal by night.)

Hall added that any forensic scientist who experimented on himself would be sacked on the spot. Holmes at one part is elated to find a chemical test that proves something is blood. Things are much more advanced. Today they would be able to prove not just if a sample is blood, or if it is human blood; today they could probably tell if a sample found was blood from on particular person or not. And in fact, they may not even need the person himself to make that judgement, but can determine it if they can get blood from near family members.

The conversation turned to Doyle's style. Edwards said that Doyle knew he was following on from the style of Poe. He said that not only do the Holmes stories tend to have the same structure repeatedly, but it is the structure of a medical investigation. The client comes to Holmes with a problem, Holmes collects data, Holmes builds a theory, he tests it, he may be right or wrong, and then the case is

solved. That structure is based on how medical students do inference. The Holmes stories are derived from teachers at medical schools and how medical students are trained to look at problems.

At this point Lunan asked if the conversation could also bring in Professor Challenger. He felt that while the subject matter of the Challenger stories was different, there are certain parallels and that Malone was a sounding board a lot like Watson, Challenger was a lot like Holmes. In addition, the Challenger stories were science fiction by any measure.

Edwards said that certainly there was a common theme running through Doyle of the Scientific Mind at war with lesser minds. For him a major moment in *The Lost World* is when Summerlee admits to Challenger that he has been wrong about the presence of dinosaurs on the plateau. Even with this theme the Doyle stories were not all resolved on a rational basis. Edwards read a piece from Doyle's first science fiction story, "The Silver Hatchet," in which the real villain is not a human but it is the cursed hatchet at fault.

Lunan pointed out that on the subject of Challenger, a recently-discovered pterodactyl was named for Doyle. Edwards pointed out how Doyle manages to make the pterodactyl a sympathetic and even tragic character in the book.

From the audience I asked if Doyle didn't seem to salt his clues into the story. For example, while it is true that a particular type of mud on a shoe might be a telling clue that most people would overlook, it would be unlikely to show up on a shoe in recognizable quantities anyway and its presence is contrived. Curiously Edwards, the Holmes expert, was the more inclined to agree with me. Hall said that "every contact leaves a mark" and it would in fact be detectable one way or another to show exactly where a suspect had been. Edwards said that this was based on a real police case, but the person had been in another part of the country. It is unlikely that Holmes would know dirt from all over London or that a particular kind of dirt would be unique to a particular part of London. [-mrl]

Instead I went to:

### **Three Fandoms--Travellers**

Monday, 14:30

Frances Dowd, Oliver Gruter-Andrew, Lynne Ann Morse

"This short item will explore culture clash, and will feature people who have travelled to other countries for fan meetings, who have lived in other countries and who have perceived the differences in life there."

The problem with a half-hour panel is that there is less than half the effective time for the panel, since the introductions, etc., still take the same amount of time as a one-hour panel.

The panelists, all of whom were living in a country other than the one they had grown up in, had a variety of anecdotes, but no real generalizations. Then again, how could they?--the whole idea is that one can't generalize.

For example, one panelist who had moved to Holland had her husband arrange a birthday party for her. It was only afterwards that she found out she had been considered very rude because she wasn't bustling about serving everyone--in Holland that is the responsibility of the person whose birthday it is. (In the United States, that person is the honored guest.)

Body language and other clues also differ. Gruter-Andrew said it took him a while to learn that the slower an American speaks, the angrier (not the more polite) he or she is. And when he speaks slowly to an American, it is interpreted as patronizing.

Social structures, even in fandom, differ. In Germany, the first thing a group of fans will do is to

register as an official organization with the government. And in Holland, people travel long distances for meetings, but a lot of time is spent in the meeting part, rather than the socializing aspect. Gruter-Andrew said this was similar in Germany; in fact, Germans coming to conventions in other countries at first didn't realize there was something (parties) after the program was over.

The panelists noted that what was considered liberal varies from place to place. One had been told Madison, Wisconsin, was a very liberal town, but discovered that her punk clothing and hairstyle were a bit *too* liberal, and she needed to get the T-shirt, the jeans, and the Birkenstocks.

After this we went back to the hotel where we were supposed to meet with other AT&T-ers from Britain, but the only people who showed up were Dale, Jo, Pete, Kate, Mark, and me. So we went out to dinner at the nearby Thai Royale as a smaller group than we had planned.

After dinner we walked over to the Forte Crest for the Dead Dog Party, announced for 9 PM. In one last screw-up, that turned out to be open to gophers only, though the door guards said that they could probably allow people with ribbons (program participants, etc.) in. This was too exclusive to be interesting, so we left.

### **Miscellaneous**

At each of the last five conventions I've gone to, someone has mistaken me for Connie Willis. This time it didn't. (Maybe now that they know I'm not Willis, they'll realize I'm not getting any Hugo awards. (-) )

The WSFS Business Meeting defeated an amendment (passed on from ConAdian) to restrict Worldcons from being held within 60 miles of the NASFiC held in the voting year. They passed other pass-on amendments to require the release of statistical information about Hugo voting, to reduce the "overlap" of the Hugo fiction categories to 5,000 words or 20% of the new category limits, and to clarify the counting of ineligible candidates for site selection.

The WSFS Business Meeting passed original amendments removing the Hugo Award for Best Original Artwork, adding "related subjects" to the description of what is eligible for the Best Dramatic Presentation, and making various technical changes; if these pass at L.A.Con III, they will take effect.

I used to rank all the Worldcons I had been to, but it was getting harder and harder to fit the new ones in, perhaps because the cons of twenty years ago are hard to remember in detail, so instead I will split them into three groups: the good, the average, and the below-average. Within each group they are listed chronologically.

The good: Noreascon I (1971), Midamericon (1976), Noreascon II (1980), L.A.Con II (1984), Noreascon III (1989), and MagiCon (1992).

The average: Discon II (1974), Seacon (1978), Chicon IV (1982), Confederation (1986), ConFiction (1990), Chicon V (1991), ConFrancisco (1993), and ConAdian (1994).

The below-average: Iguanacon (1978), Suncon (1977), Constellation (1983), Conspiracy (1985), Nolacon II (1988), and Intersection (1995).

This con report runs about 27,000 words (not counting Mark's write-up), the same as last year's.

At Intersection, I went to thirteen panels, six lectures, and one film; at ConAdian, I went to twenty-two panels, a one-man show, and a film; at ConFrancisco I went to twenty-four panels and two lectures; at MagiCon I went to sixteen panels; at Chicon V I went to twelve panels (I was a real slacker in those days!). In this regard, Intersection was clearly underprogrammed for me. (-)

The 1998 bid was won by Baltimore in what turned out to be a not very close race--after the NASFiC, no one wanted Atlanta, and Niagara Falls and Boston were considered to have insufficient facilities. The Baltimore convention will be called Bucconneer and will be held August 5-9, 1998. (You will note this is not the traditional Labor Day weekend. The committee lost the convention center for the holiday weekend and decided to bid a different set of dates. The convention will start on Wednesday and end on Sunday.) Current rates are US\$30 for a supporting membership, US\$80 for an attending membership. Guests of Honor are C. J. Cherryh, Milton A. Rothman, Stanley Schmidt, and Michael Whelan; Charles Sheffield is Toastmaster. Bucconneer can be reached at P. O. Box 314, Annapolis Junction MD 20701, [baltimore98@access.digex.net](mailto:baltimore98@access.digex.net), or <http://www.access.digex.net/~balt98>.

Next year in Los Angeles!

[continued in Wales log]

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