

**Renovation**  
A con report by Evelyn C. Leeper  
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**Getting There**

Renovation was held Wednesday, August 17, through Sunday, August 21, 2011, in Reno, Nevada.

A description of our pre-convention travels can be found in my "Reno, San Jose, and Points (More or Less) In-Between" travelogue.

**Hotels**

We were staying in the Atlantis. This was the hotel right next to the Convention Center, the hotel where the Con Suite and parties were, but which sold out its convention room block in less than twenty-four hours. Luckily for us, I am the sort who is there clicking at the instant that

booking opens, and we were not somewhere where we had no Internet access. (It is not clear whether people with no Internet had any way to book at all!)

The claim was that the other main hotel, the Peppermill, was a "short walk" from the Convention Center. It was actually a mile. In the early morning or in the evening, that might not be bad for most people, but if you wanted to return to your room during the day, it was really too far. Someone staying there said that the room had snacks sitting on sensors like the idol in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, except instead of triggering a death trap, moving the snack just charged your room for it.

There was supposed to be a continuous shuttle between the Convention Center and the Peppermill, running at least every 15 to 20 minutes. The two times we took it the major problem was figuring out where the departure point was, especially from an unfamiliar hotel, and especially since it seemed to be from a different place each night!

For that matter, it was a long (and complicated) walk from the Atlantis to the Convention Center. It was enclosed and air-conditioned, but it took about ten or fifteen minutes from our room to the convention.

Restaurant-wise, there were few cheap restaurants near the Atlantis. (Nothing in the hotel really qualifies as cheap, and outside the hotel there were not really any non-cheap restaurants nearby, meaning a half-mile or less.) However, the cheap Mexican restaurant a half-mile away was open 24 hours, so while it was not the best Mexican food in the area, there was a good breakfast place.

Other non-expensive restaurants within that radius include a Peruvian restaurant, an Indian restaurant, a Chinese restaurant, an Italian restaurant with some Greek dishes, a sports bar, Olive Garden, Boston Market, Applebee's, and McDonalds. The closest restaurant, a Chinese one in the mostly defunct shopping center next door, decided that August would be a good month to close for remodeling.

### Registration

Registration opened slightly early Tuesday afternoon, and there were no lines to speak of. One thing that helped a lot was that the badges were not pre-printed. Instead, when you registered, a transparent adhesive overlay was printed and applied to the badge form. This meant there was no need to get in line by last name (a real nuisance for families whose members have different last names), and no need for the staff to rummage through boxes of badges to find the right one.

Alas, by Wednesday morning, the line situation was not as good, though still only about a half-hour wait. At least one Program Participant was unhappy that Program Participants had to wait in the same line rather than having a separate registration. Again, having everyone register in one area meant families could register together.

Program Participant registration did not open quite as early, but was still ready ahead of the announced time. And none of the publications except the Souvenir Program Book and Convention Guide had arrived, but this is somewhat expected. In part this is because we were at registration *so* early, and in part because those two items are limited to one to a member and handed to them with their badge, while most of the rest are found on tables free for the taking. However, the souvenir water bottles also arrived later, and we had to go back for them, and then again later for the program grids.

Registration was open until 7PM the day *before* the convention, but only until 5PM on the first day of the convention. I suspect a lot of people arrive the first day (to save money) and registration should really be open later that day rather than the day before.

### The Green Room

This was not as sparse as I expected, given Convention Center prices: coffee, tea, cheese, veggies, and entirely too tempting chocolate chip cookies. The Con Suite was also well stocked, with a lot of soda--good in the Reno climate! One thing that was odd was that everything in the Con Suite was packaged in individual serving packs (cookies, nuts, chips, etc.--even soda was in cans). This was required by Nevada law, but made everything more expensive--not to mention more wasteful, particularly soda in cans versus two-liter bottles. On the other hand, one is less likely to keep gulping down potato chips if one has to keep opening a new bag.

#### The Dealers Room

The Dealers Room was fairly large, though nothing like the Dealers Rooms of the 1980s and 1990s. Books were well-represented, but there were few (if any) DVD sellers. Luggage space considerations and a surplus of books at home meant we did not spend a lot of time looking through all the used books.

#### Exhibits

The Exhibit Hall was much larger than it needed to be for the exhibits. The display case of vintage paperbacks was something not displayed before, as were some constructions (South Seas dalek, steampunk room, etc.). A replica of the throne from HBO's "Game of Thrones" was very popular, as you were allowed to sit on it and this led to a lot of picture-taking.

The Hugo display had mostly recent Hugo designs. At some point, it became standard for the Worldcon to produce one extra Hugo for this display (labeled "Sample Hugo"), but before then, the exhibit depends on donations of actual Hugos from winners. (Mark suggested changing one's name to "Sample Hugo" and then pointing to these as being all one's awards.) In my opinion, the best designs were those for L.A.Con III 1996 and Nippon 2007.

#### The Art Show

There was nothing spectacular in the general art show. I noticed that the Alan F. Beck pieces seem to have less elaborate frames than his earlier ones, but this may be because it is trickier to transport those to a distant Worldcon than to a local Philcon.

A friend of ours from college won First Place for 3-Dimensional work for his bronze sculptures. Unfortunately, he did not sell any. I think in general even at Worldcon the recession has affected sales. There are specialized "conventions" for artists and art buyers where he thinks he might have more success. It did seem as though there were a lot fewer bids on everything this year.

The retrospective from Kenneth A. Moore's collection was impressive, but none of the works was labeled with its title, origin (e.g., "book cover for *Who?* by Algis Budrys, Lancer Books, 1968"), or even year. (Several were even missing the artist's name!) One label added at the convention misspelled Jack Williamson's name. Also, it was supposed to be open the same hours as the Art Show, but on Thursday it was still closed at 10:30AM.

[I later found out that there had been labels on the owner's computer, but it had suffered an irrecoverable hard-drive failure shortly before the convention.]

#### Publications

The Convention Guide (a.k.a. Pocket Program) was pocket-shaped (4" by 10" by 3/8"), indexed by track (e.g., Costuming, Real World, etc.) and by participant. The binding was a bit stiff; spiral bindings are easier to open, but do not fit well in the pocket.

The Souvenir Program Book was the usual size, but with full color interior pages.

Grid sheets arrived Wednesday, as did the first of the pink sheets of changes. (Speaking of program changes, Renovation claimed that all time changes would be tweeted with a hashtag of

"#renotimechanges"; they were not.)

At first, there was no restaurant guide. Then, you could get a guide of restaurants in the Reno-Sparks area from the tourism bureau, but this was pretty useless for us. Finally, by Thursday, there was a convention restaurant guide. It did not list either Hong Kong Diner (less than a half-mile away and open until 3:30AM) or La Michoacana (a half-mile away and open 24 hours a day).

There were eleven official newsletters (plus the traditional hoax issue), each four pages long. After the first day, all program changes appeared in these. The staff did not completely understand that the *latest* issue always went in the same slot on the freebie racks, even if that meant moving old ones or being slightly out of order.

#### Programming

The room where Mark taught origami had circular tables. This would seem obvious, but it is surprising how many conventions have scheduled origami sessions in rooms set up for panels, with rows of chairs, and no tables.

Because the committee got the preliminary schedules to panelists early enough to incorporate changes in the program book, there were a lot fewer at-con changes than usual. Mostly the rooms seemed to be big enough.

#### A Trip to the Creation Museum Wednesday, 1PM John Scalzi

Description: "John Scalzi shares photos and stories from his visit to 'the very best monument to an enormous load of horseshit that you could possibly ever hope to see.' Hilarity ensues."

Attendance: 350 (in a room designed for under 300)

Scalzi lives in Bradford, Ohio, so he is very close to the Creation Museum which was built in 2000 in Kentucky. People kept asking him to go and report on it, and eventually he said on his blog that if he could raise \$250 in a week from contributions to donate to Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, he would go. (A friend offered to pay the actual admission of \$19.95.) It took him 48 minutes to raise that \$250; he eventually got \$5182.76. When he called the AUSCS and said he wanted to make a donation, they asked how much, and when he responded, "\$5182.76," there was a pause and then they said, "That's an oddly specific number."

Scalzi said at the beginning that he was not anti-Christian, but rather anti-literalist.

The Creation Museum does a lot of group tours as well as individuals. It starts with a fifteen-minute short film "Men in White", which apparently uses the guy from *Wham* (?), which people in the audience found funny. If I knew what *Wham* was, I might also. Or maybe not.

[Scalzi had a lot of photos that he had taken at the Museum. My summary will not give you any sense of those, but maybe there are some images on the Web.]

After the film there is a line that takes about 90 minutes. Scalzi said it was a "very, very polite queue." It runs past a wall of fake rock; Scalzi said, "It is really nice that the set designer from *Land of the Lost* is still getting work." (That one I got.) The Museum cost \$27,000,000 to build. They are currently adding an amusement park and a life-sized ark.

There are "Seven C's in God's plan: Creation, Corruption, Catastrophe, Confusion, Christ,

**Cross, Consummation". The Museum starts out by saying that there are "different views of dinosaurs because of different starting points." Scalzi thought the picture of the "vegetarian" dinosaur at this point looked very carnivorous.**

**In the Creation story, Scalzi thought that on the fourth day God must have been on speed, because while on the first day He created light, on the second Heaven (the firmament), and on the third the seas, dry land, and vegetation on Earth, on the fourth day he created all the rest of the universe--the sun, the moon, the stars, etc.**

**There was a lot about the Flood (which destroyed most of Mankind because it was evil) and how it created all those fossils, etc., but Scalzi asked, "[If he was a vegetarian], what did the Utah raptor do to deserve this?" (All the animals were herbivorous before the Flood.)**

**Scalzi said the next thing was a timeline, which showed Jesus being born in A.D. 1. Since even Christians admit it should be 4 B.C. (because St. Dionysius Exiguus got it wrong), Scalzi said that if the Museum cannot even get something as basic as this right, how can you expect that they get anything else right?"**

**He overheard in line, "I never heard this before in school," which made him think that the whole idea of separation of church and state was unknown to many of the attendees.**

**One section asked, "Why start with God's Word?" and answered, "Because God's Word offers hope." But as Scalzi noted, hope is not a basis for science. "God's Word is true" [because forty authors listed say it's true]. But Scalzi pointed out that even more authors write about unicorns. "God's Word has triumphed against every attack." "God's Word is the biggest bestseller." But per Scalzi, "He gets no royalties--He should join SFWA."**

**As another example of inaccuracy, the Scopes Trial was given as an example of godlessness triumphing--but the Creationists won that one!**

**There was a picture of a graveyard with headstones saying "Genesis", "God's Word", "Truth", and "God Is Dead"--but the last is not a parallel idea to the first three. (If you bury the idea "God Is Dead", isn't that a good thing by their standards?)**

**The section "Scripture is abandoned in the culture" has everything red and urban.**

**The Museum gives eyes as an example of Intelligent Design, but Scalzi says that eyes are an exceptionally bad example, since there were four different evolutionary paths to eyes: eyes in octopuses and other cephalopods, eyes in worms, eyes in other invertebrates, and eyes in vertebrates.**

**Scalzi found the claim "Long ages would undermine the basic teachings of Christianity" just wrong.**

**A section on the results of the Fall said that thorns came after the Fall, and because one finds thorn fossils with dinosaurs, this proves that all of them came after Adam. Venom also came after the Fall but snakes had venom sacs before. This was explained by a changed use of chemicals. Other post-Lapsarian aspects of the world include disease, the struggle for survival, and weeds.**

**[There is not a chronological order to the Museum, apparently, and it goes from Creation to Flood to Fall, etc.]**

**Where did Cain get his wife? According to the Museum, there were no genetic problems before the Flood so incest was okay.**

Scalzi said about the only thing they got right were trunnels (tree nails).

Where did the waters of the Flood come from? Well, in addition to all the obvious ones, water was released from the lava of volcanoes.

A picture of innocent children playing a game, with a mile-high wall of water bearing down on them from the background, led Scalzi to ask 1) Why were they deserving of death? and 2) Why couldn't they hear it coming at this point?

According to the Museum, "the Flood rearranges the earth." Pangaea forms underwater, then everything moves around as shown in plate tectonics, only much faster.

As an example of diversity, they show how from the gray wolf we get all dogs from the Chihuahua to the Great Dane, but Scalzi notes that these are all still the same species, and do not explain genetic diversity at all.

The Museum places Upper Jurassic dinosaurs contemporaneous with the Pharaohs. They must have seen the movie 10,000 B.C.

They claim that paleontologists call *archaeopteryx* a bird. Paleontologists do not.

How did they fit all the types of dinosaurs on the ark? There were fifty dinosaur "kinds" on ark, then they speciated. And most were small, especially as juveniles or young adults.

They also say that dragons are evidence of dinosaurs after the Flood. Have human bones been found with dinosaur fossils (which would provide some support for their theory that they were co-existent in time)? "Not yet." (Scalzi pointed out that in Michael Swanwick's story about time travelers to the Mesozoic (*Bones of the Earth*), the time travelers were careful to avoid having any of their bones or other artifacts left near dinosaur bones, for fear of providing evidence for Creationists to use!

There was a bookstore, and a gift shop with a medieval theme that Scalzi found inexplicable.

I asked if they attempt to explain recorded human history going back further than 4004 B.C.E.? Scalzi said it was the same as with dinosaurs--very busy years. I do not think that addresses the chronology found in ancient documents, though. Writing was invented about 3000 B.C.E., so I do not think you can compress history after that, leaving an awful lot to fit in only a thousand years--or less, once you fix the Flood in time, which Bishop Ussher did at 2349 B.C. There is only about 850 years between that and the Exodus, which is pegged to historical pharaohs and hence known timelines, so a lot of speciation and extinction had to be going pretty fast, not to mention that art that clearly dates back into that gap has no illustrations of any dinosaurs.

Someone asked about how they explained light from older galaxies, which would have to travel billions of years to get to Earth (assuming one accepts modern astronomy's distances to them), but I thought that was easy: the light was created already on the way.

Scalzi did not say so, but clearly the intent of this talk was that he went so you do not have to.

Designing Believable Physics  
Wednesday, 2PM

Gregory Benford, Ctein, Steve Gillett, John G. Hemry, Alvaro Zinos-Amaro (mod)

Description: "Is it possible that the laws of physics behave differently in different parts or times of the universe? How would that impact world creation? Would biological development even happen, or might intelligence arise in some other way?"

Attendance: [I forgot to check]

Hemry also writes under the name Jack Campbell. Gillett is a professor and geologist, and wrote the book "World-Building" With Ben Bova. Ctein (pronounced ka-TINE) is a physicist and photographer. Zinos-Amaro studied physics, but writes book reviews.

In regard to the first question ("Is it possible that the laws of physics behave differently in different parts or times of the universe?"), Zinos-Amaro said that there was some doubt about whether the fine structure constant ( $\alpha$ ) is constant in space and time. Ctein thought it possible but unlikely that the laws would vary, and said that for the panel the question is a tempest in a tea pot, because the variations are far too small to matter. Hemry said that we do not know enough yet to answer this; we are "still scratching the surface of reality." He did say that "[some] laws behave differently by place" (e.g. gravity on Earth versus Mars), but that this was not quite the same thing. [For one thing, the gravitational differences are predictable and fit in the framework of the law.]

Ctein agreed that on the whole, there are is a whole bunch we do not know. However, we make astronomical observations and look back in time, and the spectra we see from the past seem to look like what we expect. The most embarrassing error in this regard is the energy density in the universe, whose estimate at one time turned out to be off by a very large factor.

Hemry said that in an article about the hundred great discoveries of last year, the phrase "according to current theory this is impossible" recurred several times.

Zinos-Amaro stressed the importance of local conditions such as gravity and speed of light. What others would there be? Hemry thought that gravity was one of the most important, and that evolution under low or high gravity would be very different (e.g., *Mission of Gravity*). But the amount of radiation, the relative abundance of elements, the availability of water, and substitutes for water or carbon would all affect it as well. This led to some discussion of extremophiles.

Gillett addresses element variations, saying that the relative abundance of elements depends on the nuclear forces. If the nuclear forces were stronger, helium-2 would be stable and just sit there, so we would not get heavier elements. In our universe, carbon, oxygen, and neon are the most abundant elements after hydrogen and helium; we need carbon and oxygen for life. He said that chemistry is really just applied quantum mechanics, and that valences and other aspects of chemistry are just empirical facts from quantum mechanics. There is now computational chemistry to determine the properties of simple molecules.

Ctein thought that extremophiles were interesting, for example, the high-radiation fungus now growing near Chernobyl. Gillett said that it was unusual among extremophiles in being a eukaryote to boot.

Ctein said that if you changed the weak force, either the sun does not burn or it burns too slowly. If you make the weak force weaker, it will build up heavier elements without nucleosynthesis.

The question of silicon versus carbon. Hal Clement had a paper that showed that if you had both, carbon-based forms out-competed silicon-based forms. Gillett said that although they are all in the same column of the Periodic Table, silicon was more like germanium than like carbon due to its size. The carbon atom is small, and can make double bonds, while silicon does it poorly.

Zinos-Amaro said that there was a paper in 2006 about a universe without a weak nuclear force. The conclusion was that if other parameters were changed as well, our universe *could*

happen.

Benford arrived (late) at this point. His excuse was that it was against SFWA rules to turn down a drink from an agent or a publisher. Benford, a professor at UC Irvine, said all this was due to the insidious influence of string theory: some say we cannot make up our mind among the  $10^{123}$  choices in string theory, so they must all exist. Benford said that this is an insult to William of Ockham. It is not falsifiable, hence not scientific. "It's not SF ... it's not even fantasy. I think it's horror," he said.

Zinos-Amaro talked about the dependency on quantum mechanics, Erwin Schroedinger's "What Is Life?", and the difficulty of explaining life in terms of physics. Does quantum mechanics play a non-trivial role in how life is formed?

Hemry talked about how birds navigate by magnetic fields, and that a study in the United Kingdom determined that birds were using entanglement to determine their position. (Ctein defined entanglement for the audience as "everything is connected to everything else and some of it matters." Hemry gave the popular "definition" of "spooky action at a distance.")

Ctein said that there is a quantum mechanical effect at work in chlorophyll, and Gillett said that photochemistry is a quantum mechanical phenomenon to begin with.

However, Ctein also said, "quantum mechanics is not physics; quantum mechanics is a model of physics. We are talking here about changing the universe, not about changing our description of it."

Benford observed "Quantum mechanics affects life many, many different ways." We do not understand the origin of life. Is entanglement a way to get self-organization started? "I don't think there is a deeper question than the origin of life," he added. But science needs experiments, and he noted that it is hard to do experiments with the origin of life.

Zinos-Amaro said that there is quantum information theory, and that in "Quantum Aspects of Life", Schroedinger said that genetic information is discrete bits (hence the importance of quantum mechanics).

Hemry said that genetics is a lot more complicated than people thought; chemicals affect whether genes turn on or off, etc. Gillett said that it is "very glamorous to invoke quantum mechanics or entropy", but is it necessary when chemistry is enough? Benford clarified, "You mean classical chemistry, not quantum chemistry, don't you?"

Ctein said that many of these theories do not suspend his disbelief because they are too facile. For example, he said, "'Quantum mechanics could explain free will' isn't even wrong."

Zinos-Amaro asked, if one thinks of the molecules of life as information processors, do they transmit classical or quantum bits? Benford said that he doubts q-bits--it looks very classical. Nature does not have to be parsimonious because everything is being selected all the time. If you win the first round, you win all the succeeding rounds. But he would bet on classical bits.

Zinos-Amaro asked what range of fundamental constants for stellar fusion, carbon formation, etc. were required for alpha for a double helix structure to be possible? [That sentence does not look right, but that is what is in my notes.] Benford said that if you alter the fine structural constant (about  $1/137$ ) by as little as 10%, you will not get carbon. He added that anthropomorphic arguments about string theory are similar to arguments about constants. Ctein said that just because we do not know something does not mean there are selection rules in place. There are big gaping gaps in our knowledge, and most matter formed in the Big Bang is dark matter, not any form of matter that we are familiar with.



Benford thought that whatever dark matter is, it is fairly boring because it does not interact with gravity, "so the hell with it." Henry said, "Our current model of universe resembles the late stages of the Copernican model" and will be replaced by a cleaner model. Benford said, "That classes you as an optimist."

Zinos-Amro asked, "What about non-biological intellectual development?" Benford thought that there could be silicon-based life in other places--but we are not looking there. Henry asked, "Can it be artificial life if it develops?" (As opposed to being developed, one supposes.) Ctein agreed with him, and mentioned Fred Hoyle's (fictional) sentient clouds. Benford said he had written a novel about magnetically-based life in plasma loops on sun (*Sunborn*)

Someone asked about universes where math is different. This sounded like Greg Egan's "Luminous".

Someone else asked whether it was possible that constants are different elsewhere. (This sounds a lot like the basic question they started with.) The answer was, "Probably not." Benford observed that this was, however, the basis for some science fiction, such as Isaac Asimov's *The Gods Themselves*.

There was a question about universes with a different number of spatial dimensions. Benford said that orbits were stable in 3 or 5 dimensions, but not in 1, 2, or 4.

There was some long, complicated question about what law controlled the half-life of Beryllium-8. Benford said it was the strong nuclear force. (After the panel, the questioner said to someone, "My question was asked out of pure sadism," which struck me as an inconsiderate waste of the panel's and the audience's limited time.)

Henry closed by observing, "A crackpot theory is one that hasn't been proven or disproven yet."

**Done to Death: Program Topics that have Out-Stayed Their Welcome  
Wednesday, 4PM**

Evelyn C. Leeper, Louise Marley, Priscilla Olson (mod), Steven H Silver

**Description: "Which common panel topics should be retired and why? When does a topic become outdated and clichéd?"**

**Attendance: 40**

Marley thought the issue was often not the topic but the panelists. Olson talked about the perennial line in panelists' self-introduction: "I don't know why I am on this panel." They must think it is funny, because far more often than you would guess, they *asked* to be on the panel. (I did have one instance where I was scheduled for a panel on scratch art. But I contacted the programming people when I got my schedule and told them this was probably a mistake--and it was.)

I noted that when I told Mark about this panel, he said, "I can't believe they're doing another panel on topics done too often."

Olson said there were indeed some panels that qualified, such as "Women in Science Fiction" and "The Death of the Science Fiction Magazine". Silver said "Filk 101" was another one, and more focused topics would help.

Olson disagreed somewhat, saying that there are always first-timers who have not seen these panels. Silver agreed that panels such as "So This Is Your Fist Con" are important. Olson

added "How to Behave" (aimed at pros). I said in part it depends on how many new versus how many repeat members your convention gets.

Marley said that some panels are just not good panels. For example, "Religion in Science Fiction" never gets anywhere except arguments. Olson said that some program planners want controversy. Silver said he thought that a discussion was better than controversy.

Olson said that another oft-repeated panel is "The Year in Film" (or whatever), but this is actually a new panel each year.

Leeper said "Why Can't Hollywood Get Science Fiction Right?" shows up a lot.

Marley thought "The History of Science Fiction" is too large. Also, she said, she is tired of looking backward, and would prefer more forward-looking panels. A better one would be "Where Is Science Fiction Going?"

Olson said that some panels are better as one-person lectures. Others would be better in a shorter time slot, but that is hard to do.

Silver said that we have been having panels on "The Death of Science Fiction" for 55 years, along with variations on "What Happened to the Science Fiction I Read When I Was Growing Up?"

Olson talked about meta-programming a convention, by starting the weekend with panels on first novels, and ending with the death of science fiction. There was also mention of interactive items, and role-playing items, such as "The Worst Panel Ever" done as theater, where the panelists took roles in arriving late, building a wall of their books, etc. Some liked this; I attended it once at Boskone and found it annoying and tedious, and left early.

Silver suggested combining all the overdone panels into one, with five minutes for each one. Conversely, one could split up the overdone panels into more narrowly focused ones.

Olson said that although many people think that panels on electronic publication, podcasting, rights, etc., are overdone, they are also constantly asked for.

Leeper observed that most conventions ask panelists on the sign-up questionnaire what panels they do not want to be on, but Silver responded that certain people are expected to be on certain panels (e.g., Harry Turtledove on a panel on alternate history). Marley talked about the idea of the non-participatory moderator, but I do not think Turtledove as a non-participatory moderator is what people expect. And Olson said that there are not many non-participatory moderators because there are not enough good moderators to start with.

Olson said that the programming staff are like editors, and must pick and choose. At Boskone 10% of membership is on programming, with a 25% turn-over each year.

As for topics (rather than specific panels) done to death, Silver thought that steampunk has been done to death. Olson wondered if zombies have been done to death. The answer was, yes, until Mira Grant's *Feed* came out and revitalized the genre. Audience members seemed to think that zombies, werewolves, vampires, and all that have reached their nadir. Leeper mentioned the whole "mash-up" sub-genre (e.g., *Sense and Sensibility & Sea Monsters*)= Olson added *Pride and Prejudice: The Wild and Wanton Version*.

Leeper said that she thought an excellent panelist could make an overdone topic interesting and named Robert Silverberg, Barry N. Malzberg, and Howard Waldrop as three examples. Marley said it was important to see new panelists as well, rather than always the same people, and also

stressed the need to look forward, with not as much looking backward.

Olson said it is easier to program a Worldcon than a smaller convention, because there is more room to try things, and you can do more single-person items (such as John Scalzi's talk on the Creation Museum).

Leeper thought "drunk panels" (usually late at night) and its cousin, the "Midnight Horror Panel", were overdone.

**Before the Boom: Classic SF, Fantasy & Horror Movies before 2001 & Star Trek  
Wednesday, 5PM**

**Richard Chwedyk, Bob Eggleton, Mark R. Leeper, Yvonne Penney (mod) panelists**

**Description:** "From *Forbidden Planet* to *Godzilla*, from *King Kong* to *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad*, the years from the '30s to the mid-'60s had a number of good (and fun but not-so-good) films that we all remember from watching the late show."

**Attendance:** [I forgot to count]

Eggleton described himself as "an expert all things Godzilla." Chwedyk said he was warped by *Famous Monsters of Filmland*, *Castle of Frankenstein*, and Carlos Clarens's *Illustrated History of the Horror Film*. Leeper said that in 1956 he realized that he had missed six years of 1950s science fiction film and has been making it up ever since. Penney's main influence was *Starlog*.

Penney began by asking for the panelists' favorite films. Eggleton named the original *King Kong*, *The Creature from the Black Lagoon*, *Godzilla*, *Them!*, and *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms*. Penney said that she first saw *The Creature from the Black Lagoon* in Super-8.

Chwedyk said the first film he could remember was *King Dinosaur*, and regarding restorations, he said there was no way to restore a film that bad. The first film he saw in a theater was *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad*, and he realized that this was no magnified lizard; Ray Harryhausen's creatures had tics and gestures and a life of their own. His family used to go to the drive-in, to save on baby-sitters, and that is where he saw *Psycho* and *Angry Red Planet*. (Chwedyk went on a bit longer than everyone else.)

Leeper said the first science fiction film he saw was *War of the Worlds*. He hated it at age 3, and for weeks afterwards was terrified to take a shower (because of the showerhead image of the Martian heat ray device). But by age 6 he was desperate to see the film again. Another early film he saw was *Godzilla, King of the Monsters*.

Eggleton mentioned the films produced by Joseph E. Levine, who released foreign films such as *Godzilla, King of the Monsters* and *Hercules* in the United States. "In the 1950s radiation was [presented as] our friend," Eggleton said, so many of these films provided an opposing viewpoint. Toho sold the rights for *Godzilla, King of the Monsters* for \$25,000 and it made \$3,000,000. *Gigantis the Fire Monster*, Eggleton noted, was dubbed by Keye Luke and George Takei. Harryhausen disliked *Godzilla, King of the Monsters* and felt it had stolen *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms*, but Eggleton said that *Godzilla* had a name, whereas Harryhausen's monsters did not. Eggleton also likes *Monster Zero*.

Chwedyk said that in the Toho films, the miniatures are recognizable as miniatures, in what he describes as "the world's biggest railroad layout" (like at the Museum of Science & Industry). Eggleton said it is not as easy as it looks.

Eggleton also observed that after the 2010 earthquake/tsunami the New York Times and others referenced *Godzilla* and the destruction he caused. (I found it ironic that in one of the Toho

films, a couple of schoolgirls are in front of the Sendai train station, explaining that they are safe because they are away from Tokyo. And while in an American film science solves the problem, Eggleton pointed out, in a Japanese film, science *causes* the problem.

Leeper felt that *The Mysterians* and *Battle in Outer Space* were not given enough attention. Eggleton liked the oxygen destroyer in *Godzilla*. Leeper said that the Japanese wanted to show they would do it right by committing suicide in order to prevent future use of such a dangerous weapon.

Leeper said that historically, there were four waves of science fiction: German Expressionism in the 1920s, Universal Studios in the 1930s and 1940s, 1950s SF films, and Hammer Films in the 1950s and 1960s. German Expressionism includes *The Cabinet of Caligari*, *Nosferatu*, *Der Golem*, *M*, *Metropolis*, *Frau im Mond*, *Cold War*, where aliens substituted for Russians (like they did in *The Day the Earth Stood Still*). Chwedyk claimed that *The Day the Earth Stood Still* does not qualify (I think because the aliens are somewhat friendly and the Russians are not), but that *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* did. Eggleton mentioned the *The Thing from Another World*.

Chwedyk said these were all part of the 1950s paranoia, which also included *Invaders from Mars*, in which William Cameron Menzies designed sets to intensify the paranoia.

Leeper said that in the Universal horror films the monsters have too much emotion. In *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, the monsters have no emotion. Chwedyk said that Don Siegel claimed that most of the people he worked with in Hollywood were pods, and he hated the new ending that the studio insisted on adding to the film.

Eggleton mentioned the classic film magazines such as *Monster World* and *Castle of Frankenstein*. These were before the before Internet and YouTube, he pointed out, and kids would see these teasing photos. Chwedyk said that Calvin Beck (*Castle of Frankenstein* was not as prompt as Forrest J. Ackerman (*Famous Monsters of Filmland*), but produced a better magazine. *Castle of Frankenstein* covered comics and books as well as movies. "I cant think of a more corrupting influence," he concluded.

Leeper said, "*Famous Monsters of Filmland* was the big one when I was growing up but it was a mixed blessing. It covered silent films, but it never said anything negative about films." In fact, when Joe Dante wrote something negative Ackerman got into trouble. Ackerman was positive even on *Creeping Terror*. *Cinefantastique* was the peak, and had excellent writing. Eggleton and Chwedyk agreed on this, but Chwedyk said that it hit a rut. Leeper agreed, saying they shifted to heavy coverage of one big film in a "double issue" rather than shorter coverage of more but smaller films.

Someone in the audience asked about zombies. Leeper said that what everyone calls zombies are really vampires. In face, George Romero calls them the (un)dead rather than zombies. They acquired the name when *Dawn of the Dead* became *Zombie* in Italy. (Then the Italian *Zombie 2* became *Zombie* in the United States, leading to much confusion.)

Someone said that in *Invisible Invaders*, aliens take over recent corpses.

Apparently *Island of Lost Souls*, *The Incredible Shrinking Man*, and *Forbidden Planet* are now out in Blu-ray.

Leeper talked about flaws and bad films. Eggleton noted that Ed Wood was trying to make good films, and said one should distinguish between a lack of talent versus cynicism and greed. Chwedyk said that Ed Wood's films have a weird surrealism, and that there is a beauty to some of these pictures. Eggleton mentioned *Robot Monster* (as one of these?). Chwedyk said that in those days you needed a lot of equipment to make a film, so it was a lot harder to be lousy in

then. Someone suggested that the budgets were below what they are today, but the acting was above. Eggleton said that then they had character actors who did their jobs, but now we have celebrities. Chwedyk said that Roger Corman was a great training ground for actors, and that the lack of money forced more creativity than now.

Trivia: James Cameron was the art director on *Battle Beyond the Stars*.

Chwedyk said that now everyone has read books on how to write scripts.

Leeper said that in spite of the "wave" of 1950s science fiction, in the 1950s science fiction films were a rarity, but now there are multiple science fiction films each week. And Eggleton said that in the 1950s you did not see special effects until much later in the film. And contrary to popular belief, they also sometimes had serious subplots. For example *Giant Gila Monster* had a subplot about a returning veteran and class tensions in a small town.

### Short Films Wednesday, 8PM

- | "The Kinematograph" (PG): Francis is an inventor. His invention is supposed to change the world. He forgot about one thing: dreams always cost too much.  
<http://thekinematograph.com>
- | "Cost of Living" (PG): What would you pay to live forever?  
<http://costoflivingthemovie.com>
- | "Ascension" (PG-13): Searching for the cause of a blackout late one night, exhausted trains spotter Tim mistakenly enters a neighbor's apartment--unfortunately for Tim, they need a sacrifice! <http://vizpoets.com/ascension1.html>
- | "Man vs. Woman" (PG-13): A man, a woman, a cloned velociraptor and a heavily armed robot--fighting for survival on a desolate dry planet. <http://jcvfilms.com>
- | "Un-Gone" (PG-13): "It is upon the flaws of man, not the laws of nature that the thread of our existence hangs." <http://theungone.co.uk>
- | "Ray Harryhausen Presents: The Pit and the Pendulum" (PG-13): This newly-created adaptation of the classic Edgar Allan Poe story embraces the same retro technology used on Tim Burton's "Corpse Bride": good, old-fashioned, stop-motion puppets.  
<http://thepitandthependulumshortfilm.com>

### The 1960s, 50 Years On Thursday, 11AM

Jim Frenkel, Jerry Kaufman, Parris McBride, Robert Silverberg, Alvaro Zinos-Amaro (m)

Description: "The 1960s saw a number of great SF writers come into the forefront--Roger Zelazny, Philip K. Dick, Samuel Delany, Ursula Le Guin, Michael Moorcock, and others. It also saw huge changes in SF, with the coming of the New Wave and the reactions for and against it. Looking back, how do we view 1960s SF."

Attendance: 150

(McBride is George R. R. Martin's wife.)

Zinos-Amaro pointed out that he was not even alive in the 1960s. Frenkel was alive, Kaufman was alive then (in his teens) and went to his first convention in 1966. And Silverberg said, "I'm Robert Silverberg, and if you don't know why I'm on this panel, you're probably in the wrong room." McBride responded to him, "You totally rocked my world in the 60s."

Zinos-Amaro said something about "The Persistence of the Beach" (which I think he said was in the June 1966 issue of *New Worlds*). Frenkel said it was a parody of J. G. Ballard. Zinos-

Amaro said it was Ballard, and Silverberg said that that was the same thing. I think the claim was that this marked the beginning of the New Wave, at least in Britain--Silverberg said that in the United States it ran from 1968 to 1973. Zinos-Amaro if there was an American New Wave (as opposed to just British imports). Frenkel said that the American New Wave would be represented by Harlan Ellison's *Dangerous Visions* and *Again, Dangerous Visions*, and asked Silverberg if he was finishing *Last Dangerous Visions*. Silverberg said that he offered to--twenty-five years ago.

Frenkel added that the British New Wave was brought here by Judith Merrill with *England Swings SF*, and that the New Wave was not all one thing. We had the Beach Boys and the "British Rock Invasion" simultaneously, and "people like Barry Malzberg doing extremely weird shit and being bitter about it."

Kaufman said that United States authors did not think they were part of a movement as much as British authors did. Silverberg concurred: "You're absolutely right, Jerry." The New Wave in Britain was connected to the "Nouvelle Vague" in French cinema. In Britain, authors collaborated and interacted. In the United States, Judith Merrill's anthologies included British authors, but also authors from outside the genre such as Jorge Luis Borges and John Cheever. (She claimed no one read *England Swings SF*.) Other changes were in the air: *Astounding* became *Analog* and *Galaxy* transitioned from H. L. Gold to Frederik Pohl, *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction* went from Ed Ferman to Robert P. Mills. There were authors with literary rather than pulp credentials: Roger Zelazny, Samuel R. Delany, Philip K. Dick. Silverberg said that he and Ellison had been pulp authors, as had been John Brunner.

New Wave was "a movement that went on flourishing without a readership until 1973 when publishers looked at the sales figures and said, 'What is this? Get rid of it.'" according to Silverberg.

McBride said that the stories were reflecting chaos in our society, and particularly mentioned "A Rose for Ecclesiastes" by Roger Zelazny and "A Song for Lya" by George R. R. Martin. Silverberg said, "'A Song for Lya' made me cry too--when it beat 'Born with the Dead' for the Hugo."

Frenkel said that it was a time of sex, drugs, and rock and roll. Before it (in 1966), there was *one* hall at Stonybrook where people smoked pot. Birth control made the notion of "shop-worn goods" passé. So it was not surprising that Philip K. Dick was writing about fracturing reality.

Zinos-Amara saw science fiction as "a literature trying to give a sense of the future, but this is strongly fixed in the [then] present." The "real feeling" of the future was missing.

Silverberg disagreed, saying the real feeling was there, but not the technical tools to express it. Other things were either not in demand by readers, or were prohibited by publishers. The shift from magazines to paperbacks freed things up. Magazines depend on subscriptions, loyalty, and a consistent image. Paperbacks were a bit more liberal, but varied. Ace under Donald Wollheim (founded in 1953) was fairly conservative, but Ballantine under Ian and Betty Ballantine (founded in 1952) was less so. The problem was that more advanced books were not selling.

Kaufman talked about "branding by cover artist," with Richard Powers being appealing as a New Wave cover artist. Silverberg said that Powers's style was based on Yves Tanguay's, and that Ace used artists such as Emsh. Kaufman mentioned Roy Krenkel and Frank Frazetta.

Zinos-Amara asked for a poll of how many in the audience had read Norman Spinrad's *Bug Jack Barron* (about 40%). He said Wollheim hated it.

Frenkel said, "Science fiction is always about the present. It's set in the future, but it's about the

present."

Silverberg said he has been asked, "Why did you write such depressing books?" His response is, "Have you read *Hamlet*--Hugo winner 1602?" He also said, "When the readership reads not for the beauty of the prose or the power of the prose, then our paths diverge," and added, "Swimming upstream is a young man's game and I don't do it any more."

Someone asked which experiments of the 1960s succeeded and which failed? Frenkel said that different narrative techniques were tried which have remained with us, and Zinos-Amara said that there was an overall raising of the literary bar. Silverberg said that writers began looking at technology through their characters. Also, there was more sex (as in *The Lovers* by Philip José Farmer).

Someone asked how writers like Aldous Huxley and Kurt Vonnegut fit into the 1960s science fiction scene. Silverberg said that Vonnegut once said, "Don't give me one of your awards; I can't afford to make the sort of money you do." Someone else asked about David R. Bunch, who Silverberg said was *sui generis*, as was R. A. Lafferty.

**And the Debate Rages on: The Fanzine and Semi-Prozine Hugo Categories  
Thursday, 1PM**

Neil Clarke, Chris Garcia, David G. Hartwell, Guy H. Lillian III, Stephen H. Segal (m)

**Description: "Some Hugo categories are in an almost constant state of clarification and discussion. What are the current issues with the Fanzine and Semi-Prozine categories?"**

**Attendance: 10**

Hartwell edits *The New York Review of Science Fiction*, now in its twenty-fourth year, with twenty-one nominations. He said that in the 1970s you started to see the rise of magazines such as Richard Geis's *Science Fiction Review*, *Locus*, and *Delap's Science Fiction Review*. These dominated the Fanzine category, so in 1978 and 1979 the Semi-Prozine category was created. It became a sort of catch-all category, and by 2000 too many nominees were marginal--and *Locus* always won.

Garcia said that the guidelines were based on *The Alien Critic*. Hartwell said, "Fans have long memories--and fix their memories in their youth." People think that *Locus* makes no money, and pays no one. (Neither is true.)

Lynch said he wants to see a return to the notion of discrete issues which are read, rather than blogs, podcasts, etc., being in the Fanzine category.

Garcia said that the shift away from *Locus* winning every year started when the conventions started distributing Hugo packets and people could see what all the nominees looked like. Clarke said that helps the nominees, but not everyone else.

The problems of paid versus free subscriptions, and how to define circulation on-line were raised. Hartwell said that *Locus* is definitely under 10,000, though it had come close in the past.

Segal asked what the issues really are.

Clarke said that the old definition did not rule out professional magazines, but the field has changed and the first step is to define "professional". He felt that for starters, on a fanzine no one should be paid. Also, the self-selection aspect of the Semi-Prozine category annoyed him. Garcia disagreed, but did not explain why.

Clarke suggested that "professional" be defined as providing a quarter of the income of anyone person. (Mark points out that anyone with no income who is producing a fanzine is getting a quarter of their (zero) income from it and hence is a professional. Saul Jaffe and others have pointed out that people may not feel like revealing their financial information to the Hugo committee.) Lillian thought that paying anyone anything meant you were not a fanzine.

Clarke said that people were trying to use SFWA qualifications, but they do not apply. He said that "semi-professional" is "*non*-professional", but that it can pay, or be available for pay.

Hartwell said that in his opinion, fanzines can ask for money, but not require it. As far as *The New York Review of Science Fiction* goes, it costs \$15,000 a year to produce and mail it, and he pays \$10 per review.

Segal said that the effect of the "quarter-income rule" would be to eliminate *Locus*, *Interzone*, *Weird Tales*, *Lady Churchill's Wristlet*, and *Lightspeed* from the Semi-Prozine category.

Segal closed by saying that the magazine was not the editor, to which Hartwell responded, "You're thoroughly and completely wrong."

A few observations by me:

The Fanzine/Semi-Fanzine division is orthogonal to a print/audio one, yet the latter kept being raised.

There seemed to be multiple proposals being discussed here, which tended to confuse the discussion, as some comments were addressing whether an income test was reasonable, and others concentrating on circulation questions.

Do not eat a bowl of crunchy cereal when you are on a panel.

**Short but Containing the World: A Look at Novellas**  
Thursday, 2PM  
panelists

Description: "Novellas (often called simply short novels outside the genre) have been described as long enough to contain the world but short enough to be read in an afternoon. Some of the great works of fiction both in SF and elsewhere are in this form. What makes novellas such a good form and what are some of the best examples."

Attendance: 60

Gardner Dozois (m), Robert Reed, Robert Silverberg, Jonathan Strahan

Dozois said that he and Silverberg both consider the novella to be the perfect length for science fiction. Reed noted that he won his Hugo for short fiction for a novella ("A Billion Eyes"), and Silverberg said he had also. (It is true that he won for both "Nightwings" and "Gilgamesh in the Outback", but he also won for a novelette, "Enter a Soldier. Later: Enter Another".) Dozois lamented that he too had written some novellas, but never won a Hugo for any of them. Strahan said he had read some novellas. Silverberg, Dozois, and Strahan have all edited anthologies of novellas.

Reed said that he likes the limited number of markets for novellas because it focuses and challenges him. He says that he writes two or three a year.



Silverberg said that when an editor asks for a re-write you can argue back. Reed said that Dozois once wanted changes to one of his novellas, but he refused. Silverberg said that once the editor changed the narrator in a first-person story he had written, but would have accepted the originally if Silverberg had insisted. Dozois said that some writers do not want changes, and that A. Bertram Chandler once lamented, "But I still wanted to write the story I wanted to write in the first place."

Silverberg said that editors like novellas because they like stories that fill space. Dozois said that he gets bored reading novels; Silverberg said that he gets bored writing them. Eighty pages gives you room to create a world without requiring hundreds of pages of writing.

Strahan said that a novella can be read in a single setting, unlike a 425,000-word novel. Dozois said that a 40,000-word novella meant he still needed many short stories for the rest of the magazine. He also said he hates breaking a novella into two parts. (Why would he even consider doing that?)

Strahan said that expanding a novella into a novel is often unwise: expanding Lucius Shepard's "R & R" to *Life During Wartime* magnified every flaw. Strahan said there are two ways to expand a novella, either by putting in three words for every one, or by continuing the story.

Reed said that a novella has more characters and more setting than a short story. The result is that one has to work harder on a novella, not just longer. Silverberg said that when he starts a story he knows what length it will be. He does not know he knows it, though (sort of like the centipede who does not know how he manages all his legs).

Dozois said that according to some authors, they were writing a short story but it turned into a novel. When this happens, he said, "You're doing it wrong." Strahan said that Howard Waldrop worked in the other direction, whittling "You Can Go Home Again" down from a novel. Dozois said this was the reverse of *Them Bones*, and said that we used to have 50,000- to 60,000-word novels, but now these are considered too short. Silverberg said that even longer novels are not enough any more, and talked about how someone said, "Yes, it sold very well for a stand-alone novel."

Dozois said that he had shrunk the novel-length version of *The Hemingway Hoax* to a novella by cutting out the sex scenes. It was not clear whether this statement would encourage people to seek out the longer version or the shorter.

Reed pointed out that if a novel is going to be made into a movie, it has to be boiled down to a novella anyway.

Silverberg felt that Kim Stanley Robinson was best at novella length, because he is more calm and controlled at that length.

Someone asked what Silverberg would do if he had an idea that would be a 60,000-word novel. Silverberg said he would do it, because he could pad it out if necessary (as he did for *The Long Way Home*). Someone asked why he did not leave it at 60,000 words, and Dozois said that people want a big thick book for their money. Silverberg did note, however, that THE GREAT GATSBY has stayed in print, even at its short length (probably about 60,000 words).

Silverberg said that e-book publication is changing this, and that the 60,000-word size had been driven by the three-part serialization that was traditional in magazines.

Dozois said that on the other end, overly long books were limited by cost, the size of dump bins, etc., so publishers split books to get around this. Subterranean Press is the foremost publisher of science fiction novellas, though there are others (e.g., PS Publishing).

Silverberg said that the word limitations were based on magazines, and that in the mainstream, novellas are not as problematic. "The Heart of Darkness" is 30,000 words long, "Death in Venice" is 40,000.

Dozois said that the novella category for the Hugos is always stronger than all the other fiction categories (and Jo Walton observed the same thing, in her Hugo retrospective columns). Strahan thought this was because an author needed greater skills to write a novella than any of the other lengths, but Silverberg disagreed, but said that he was surprised at fantasy authors who wrote only novels. And in response to what many authors claim, Dozois said that "if one of your characters takes over your book, you're writing the wrong book."

A long list of classic novellas was mentioned; Silverberg started with:

- | "Call Me Joe" by Poul Anderson
- | "Who Goes There?" by John W. Campbell
- | "A Case of Conscience" by James Blish
- | "Nerves" by Lester del Rey
- | "The Star-Pit" by Samuel R. Delany
- | "The Second Game" by Charles C. DeVet and Katherine Maclean
- | "The Machine Stops" by E. M. Forster
- | "By His Bootstraps" by Robert A. Heinlein
- | "Universe" by Robert A. Heinlein
- | "Dio" by Damon Knight
- | "Vintage Season" by Henry Kuttner and C. L. Moore
- | "In Hiding" by Wilmar H. Shiras
- | "Born with the Dead" by Robert Silverberg
- | "On the Storm Planet" by Cordwainer Smith
- | "Houston, Houston, Do You Read?" by James Tiptree, Jr.
- | "The Miracle-Workers" by Jack Vance
- | "With Folded Hands" by Jack Williamson
- | "The Fifth Head of Cerberus" by Gene Wolfe
- | "A Rose for Ecclesiastes" by Roger Zelazny

Dozois added:

- | "Oceanic" by Greg Egan
- | "The Hemingway Hoax" by Joe Haldeman
- | "The Earth Quarter" by Damon Knight
- | "Beggars in Spain" by Nancy Kress
- | "Breathmoss" by Ian R. MacLeod
- | "Griffin's Egg" by Michael Swanwick
- | "The Dragon Masters" by Jack Vance
- | "The Last Castle" by Jack Vance
- | "He Who Shapes" by Roger Zelazny

Dozois also said that Kage Baker, Ian McDonald, and Walter Jon Williams were great novella writers. Silverberg named James Patrick Kelly and John Kessel.

Collaborative Fan Editing

Thursday, 3PM

Jerry Kaufman (m), Evelyn C. Leeper, Mark R. Leeper, Nicki Lynch, Rich Lynch, Suzanne Tompkins

Description: "Couples who have worked together on fanzines talk about fan editing and fan writing."

Attendance: 10

Because I was on the panel, it was hard to take good notes. In any case, every couple's process was different, especially as other people used art in their fanzines. So I will use this space to describe our process (which I did recount on the panel).

For each week, Mark writes an "editorial," though it is not necessarily an opinion piece--it could be an article about some scientific discovery, or some other type of reportage. He also has short humorous "quips", and "features"--short items pointing out web sites or giving snippets of information. He also writes film reviews, though not every week. I write a column about books, and also do occasional articles on other topics. Then we also get reviews and letters of comment from other people. In this we apparently are unusual for electronic fanzines. While apparently most electronic fanzines get very few letter of comment, and paper fanzines get letters from ten percent of their subscribers, over the previous year, we had received letters and submissions from a quarter of our two hundred subscribers.

On Monday I take all these submissions and format them. On Wednesday I add in anything else that has arrived, and send Mark a draft of the week's issue. He proofreads it, and adds responses to letters of comment if he wants to. On Thursday, I then incorporate all these changes and create an HTML version for the web page. (What we mail out is straight text.) On Friday morning, I mail the issue to the mailing list. On Sunday or Monday, I upload the HTML issue to the web page, update the indices there, and post the table of contents to [rec.arts.sf.fandom](http://rec.arts.sf.fandom). And the process starts again.

As of *Renovation*, we had published 1662 issues. No, that is not a typo. Currently, each one runs six to ten pages, so on a quarterly basis, we would be producing a hundred-page fanzine every quarter.

However, I think the weekly format is one reason we get so much response from subscribers--there is something much closer to a dialogue than if there were three-month delays between comments.

### Understanding Casino Gambling

Thursday, 4PM

Dave Cantor (m), Susan T. Casper, Chris Garcia, Joan Slonczewski, Connie Willis

Description: "Thinking about trying out one of the casinos? This panel will talk about some of the basics of casino gambling."

Attendance: 50

Cantor had been a professional blackjack dealer at Foxwoods. Slonczewski wrote a book involving a casino. Willis described herself as "an expert at nickel video poker."

Cantor said that the first thing to understand that "what the casinos are selling is entertainment." You are paying for entertainment, so pick the amount you are willing to spend. Garcia said that the last time he went to a casino, he was lucky but stupid, because he was betting too much. Slonczewski said that she did not gamble, but wanted to replace the entire tax system with gambling. She claimed, "All living organisms gamble."

Various films were mentioned and recommended, including *Ocean's 11* and *Rounders*. I would add *The Cooler*, *Hard Eight*, and (of course) *Casino*.

Slonczewski said that the math says that the odds are against you, so why is there so much excitement about gambling. The answer seemed to be that losing \$10 is not life-changing, but

winning \$10,000,000 is.

Cantor explained the rules of Keno, one of the most popular games. The player can mark between one and twenty numbers out of eighty on a card, with each mark costing \$1. Then the casino draws twenty numbers at random. Each number hit wins \$3 for the player.

Slonczewski thought that imagining winning is better than actually winning, and the "Skinner box mode" is the problem.

An audience member said that random reinforcement encourages more play, and that Keno (and its cousin, the lottery) have the worst odds of all the games.

Casper said she tended to stick to craps, blackjack, and video poker machines. Willis played nickel video poker. She said that it gave you the illusion of control: "You can draw to an inside straight." Cantor said in this regard, never split tens.

Garcia said that it when it came to illusions, the chip was the greatest illusion. It makes it not money. I noted that none of the machines seem to take coins anymore; they all require magnetic-strip cards. Someone else said that even the machines labeled as "penny slots" often have a minimum of forty cents or more.

Cantor said that a "Players Card" gives the player "comps" based on a percentage of what you are betting (sort of like S&H Green Stamps).

Slonczewski said that people never remember their losses. Garcia said that was not true in poker--you always remembered the hands you lost. Willis compared that to spelling bee losses. But she said you get a rush from the wins, and when she played, she always felt like she was winning, but somehow all the nickels were gone.

Slonczewski said that you needed to slow down the speed of your playing, because the faster it is, the more addictive it is.

Regarding misinterpreting odds, Willis said that many people fall for the argument regarding ESP that it "takes a while to ramp up, then you see runs, then it cools off," so they count only the runs.

Cantor said there are minor differences among the casinos that it pays to learn.

Regarding casino etiquette, Cantor said that the dealers are pretty tolerant of minor gaffes," but other players may not be. For example, in a craps game, you should ask if you may join. Casinos have player's guides of rules. Willis said they also often have tutorials. Another approach is to watch for a while from a short distance away.

Cantor said that before you start playing at a blackjack table, you should have an amount equal to thirty times the basic bet. At craps, it should be fifty times the basic bet.

According to the panel, the worst games are Wheel of Fortune, the roulette, the state lottery, and the stock market.

The Autumn of the Modern Ages  
Thursday, 5PM  
Michael F. Flynn

Description: "The Modern Ages were the Age of Europe, the Age of the State, of Science, of

Privacy, of the Book, of the School, of Industry, of Representation in the Arts. As George Bernard Shaw wrote, "A civilization disappears with the kind of man, the type of humanity, that has issued from it." How is the transformation of these areas changing humanity?"

Attendance: (unknown)

I took a lot of notes, but I have absolutely no context for them. They were from a set of PowerPoint slides and the presentation either did not elaborate on them enough or did not make what was said in conjunction with them interesting enough to stick with me. I will give you what I have; maybe you can glean something from it.

Flynn first talked about the "Autumn of Late Antiquity", which he placed at A.D. 500. He claimed there was a big shift every 500 years. Caesar crossed the Rubicon about 2000 years ago, 1500 years ago was the last of the Romans and the first of the Medievals (and Boethius), and 500 years ago was the Renaissance. (I missed the shift 1000 years ago.)

Books were mentioned:

- | *The House of Intellect* by Jacques Barzun
- | *The World of Late Antiquity* by Johann Huizinga
- | *The Autumn of the Middle Ages* by Johann Huizinga
- | *The Dark Age Ahead* by Jane Jacobs
- | *The Passing of the Modern Age* by John Lukacs
- | *At the End of an Age* by John Lukacs
- | *The Promise of the Coming Dark Age* by Leften Stavros Stavrianos
- | *The Coming Dark Age* by Roberto Vacca

We are in the Age of Europe, the Age of the Book, the Age of the State, and the Age of Secularism.

G. K. Chesterton said that medieval people never worried about being medieval, but modern people worry about being modern. Flynn referred to *The Napoleon of Notting Hill* by Chesterton.

This is the Age of Europe. It has a geographical range (Europe minus the Balkans). (What about America, I wondered.) I have that Flynn said that the first "European" pope was Pius II in 1470, and the first "modern" Pope was in 1580. Actually, Pius II was Pope 1458-1464 and 1470 falls in the middle of Gregory XIII's papacy, so I have no idea whether the names and/or years are correct. It cannot be when the words were first used--the OED shows "modern" as dating to around 1500 in English. I also have a note linking "primitive" with 1540.

One of the Indian nationalists said in the late 1940s, "We're glad the British left, but we're also glad they came."

World War I killed European control of the world.

Now the terms "modern" and "progress" are used ironically.

What will happen to Europe?

This is the Age of the Bourgeoisie. "I think that ..." has been replaced by "I feel that ..." We see a lot of the old versus the new in "Star Trek", Sherlock Holmes, and all the other film remakes that update the old ones. We have the triumph of the will over the intellect that Friedrich Nietzsche talked about.

The Modern Age is the Age of the State. The last bastions were education and marriage. Until the late 1800s, no state license was needed to get married.

Flynn talked about "besserwissers", which seemed to mean things he felt were intrusions of the state into private affairs: the size of toilet tanks allowed, the energy efficiency of light bulbs, how well-cooked meat should be, etc.

Other notes include mentions of the impotence of technology, that warfare has become democratic, the deterioration of sovereignty, the internalization of human personality, subcontracting, government-sponsored entities and supra-government entities.

The whole lecture had a definite libertarian bent.

### Earth Abides: After We're Gone

Thursday, 7PM

Karen Anderson, Howard V. Hendrix, Laura Majerus, Tom Whitmore (m)

Description: "George R. Stewart's *Earth Abides* was one of the first novels to explore what happens to the environment once humans no longer dominate. How has it held up after 60 years?"

Attendance: 40

Anderson said that she had also read Stewart's *Fire and Storm*, both of which were idea stories where the characters did not matter much. *Earth Abides*, she said, was very California.

Regarding characters, Whitmore said that the real protagonist in *Earth Abides* is the land. Anderson disagreed, saying that no, it was humanity--not individuals, but the human race. Ish abandons many of the trappings that individuate us: religious marriage, racism, education. Hendrix said that Ish wants to transmit culture and technology, but fails when the Chosen Child, the Beloved Son dies. But we *do* care about Ish as a character.

Whitmore noted that Ish did succeed in building a community. Anderson points out that Ish also decides that Charlie has to die. Majerus said that the scene with the black family in the rural South grates today. Hendrix said that the various book covers never show Em as black, and readers often miss it. (Well, Ish missed it too for a long time.)

Majerus said that Stewart tries to be forward-thinking in his social attitudes, but fails by today's standards.

Anderson noted that John W. Campbell would have made Ish successful in rebuilding a technological civilization. Majerus said that she sees the book as a tragedy because knowledge is lost, and Hendrix agreed. Majerus said that Jared Diamond feels that the agricultural revolution was humanity's biggest mistake.

Hendrix said that there are cycles of boom-and-bust, not just for humans, but also for rats, flies, ants, ...

Regarding the names given in the novel, Anderson said that Stewart had written the definitive work, *Names on the Land: A Historical Account of Place-Naming in the United States*. He also wrote *Names on the Globe*.

Someone in the audience wondered why they hanged Charlie instead of shooting. The response seemed to be that culturally, that is what is done. Hendrix notes that it is not a tragedy for society, but it is for Ish.

I observed that Ish failed to recognize resources as resources: he thought the only way to make metal arrowheads was from metal ore, rather than taking coins or other already-processed metal. Someone else said that the book was about the failure of technology. Whitmore said spiritually it was a *Galaxy* story, not an *Astounding* one.

Hendrix said that stylistically, the book is a combination of first person and omniscient third person.

Whitmore summarized by saying, "It's held up. It still makes people think," and Anderson added, "Stewart abides."

#### Sidewise Awards

Thursday, 9PM

Jay Lake, Evelyn C. Leeper, Stu Shiffman, Steven H Silver (m), Alan P. Smale, Eric Swedin, Sheila Williams

(These were the listed panelists, but since I cannot find any notes for the panel, I am not sure if they all were there.)

Description: "The Sidewise judges present the awards, then debate whether a book or story is alternate history or something else. What makes something alternate history instead of secret history? Is steampunk a subset of alternate history or does each story have to be examined on its own merits? What happens when magic gets involved?"

Attendance: 60

The Short Form nominees were:

- | Eleanor Arnason. *Mammoths of the Great Plains* (PM Press)
- | Barry B. Longyear. "Alten Kameraden" (*Asimov's Science Fiction*, April/May 2010)
- | Ken MacLeod. "Sidewinders" (*The Mammoth Book of Alternate Histories* (eds. Ian Watson and Ian Whates), Robinson Publishing and Running Press)
- | Alan Smale. "A Clash of Eagles" (*Panverse Two* (ed. Dario Ciriello), Panverse Publishing)
- | William F. Wu. "Goin' Down to Anglotown" (*The Dragon and the Stars* (eds. Derwin Mak and Eric Choi), DAW Books)

The winner was Alan Smale. "A Clash of Eagles".

The Long Form nominees were:

- | Adam Chamberlain and Brian A. Dixon. *Columbia & Britannia* (Fourth Horseman Press)
- | Robert Conroy. *Red Inferno: 1945* (Ballantine Books)
- | Jay Lake. *Pinion* (Tor)
- | Eric Swedin. *When Angels Wept: A What-If History of the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Potomac Books)

The winner was Eric Swedin. *When Angels Wept: A What-If History of the Cuban Missile Crisis*.

Swedin said of his book that he tried several academic presses, but they turned it down. That is interesting, because a previous Sidewise winner, *The Severed Wing* by Martin Gidron, was published by the University of Mississippi Press, and Greenwood has published several alternate history books. He said that with Potomac, it would be sold in the history section to reach historians.

Interesting fact: Robert Lincoln was at three Presidential assassinations: his father's, Garfield's, and McKinley's.

(Alas, I did not take many notes here.)

## The Hidden Monkey Wrench in Cloning

Friday, 10AM

Nancy Kress, Sam Scheiner, Joan Slonczewski (m), Dan Wells, Patricia Wheeler

**Description:** "How can two cats have identical DNA and yet look and act differently? What's going on? Speculation on what we might not know and why cloning might be a whole lot more complicated than we think."

**Attendance:** 100

Wells described himself as "the designated idiot," although Kress said that she was challenging him for that position.

Slonczewski said that there is a mutation that means you need a lot less sleep, as in Kress's *Beggars in Spain* and its sequels. One theory is that people like Thomas Edison had that mutation. She also said that Shakespeare seemed to think that fraternal twins would look alike (in *Twelfth Night*). (This is actually somewhat odd, since Shakespeare himself had fraternal twins, but maybe by chance they did look alike; I have known brothers not even of the same age who looked a *lot* alike.) Scheiner said that even the same genotype did not mean that twins would look alike; the environment both in the womb before birth and outside after birth would affect it. (This is certainly true to some extent, since I have known apparently identical twins that I could tell apart.) Scheiner said that sibling rivalry starts in the womb, and environmental effects cascade down.

Wheeler said that twinning itself is a mutation. Slonczewski disagreed, saying that the process of twinning is not in itself a mutation, because a mutation involves a change in the genes. Epigenetic changes are a third way of affecting the genes.

Kress said that if you want to get really extreme with sibling rivalry, sometimes one twin absorbs the other. She reminded the audience that "fiction is about stuff that gets screwed up. Writers [are] looking for the place where stuff went wrong."

Wells said there is also such a thing as "reflective twins" (or possibly "reflected twins"). The claim is that this is common ut that only one survives.

Scheiner says that all this is "way more complicated than we thought forty years ago." For example, there are fully parthenogenic species. Armadillos have only twins. As you age, your chromosomes get shorter. Slonczewski said that the exception seemed to be egg cells, which regenerate their telomeres. (Sperm are created all through life, but a woman is born with all the egg cells she will ever have.)

Wheeler said that we had thought DNA was inviolate but now we know that methylation turns chromosomes on and off. Slonczewski said this was by having a methyl group attached to the DNA.

Kress aid that someone had made a musical of *THE SELFISH GENE* by Richard Dawkins, and that it had run at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Apparently one of the songs was "Your Genes Are Using You Like Machines", but she wondered if epigenetics would change all this. Slonczewski thought it would not. Scheiner said that was "because Dawkins is a complete idiot," but Slonczewski said that was not true. "Let's be fair; Dawkins had a good idea." Scheiner said that Dawkins ignores phenotype and assumes that genes are independent of each other.



Wheeler noted that all calico cats are female, but the axion activation is random, so the coloration varies.

Slonczewski said that in humans the failure to make sweat glands is on the X chromosome; having it results in random patches without sweat glands.

Kress used this opportunity to ask writers not to write "mindless clone" stories, or for that matter, "evil clone" stories. I am reminded of Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*, and asked about it. Kress said, "He is way out of his depth; he is out of my depth, which is pretty shallow. Because Ishiguro can write, it is an interesting and moving book," but it is socially unbelievable.

Slonczewski said that in terms of raising clones for body parts, you need match only immune system genes. Wells said you could put a checkpoint backup into a *similar* body; it did not have to be identical.

Someone in the audience said they had heard of fused fraternal twins; Slonczewski said there are such things as chimeras, where the gonads are a different genotype from the rest of the body.

Someone else asked about genetics to deal with weightlessness. Slonczewski referred to the "Quaddies" of Lois McMaster Bujold. Wheeler mentioned Lois McMaster Bujold's *Cyteen*, which involves cloning in order to provide body parts, but Scheiner said we would grow the parts, not whole bodies, and Kress pointed out we were already doing some of that. Slonczewski later said that pancreas cloning requires a vector to repair it which is not entirely there.

Slonczewski said we needed to recognize that "natural reproduction is the most imperfect form."

Someone said he would not mind having just a similar body for another fifty years.

Regarding gene therapy, Wheeler noted that turning off genes for recessive problems does not help, but it does work for dominant problems.

Kress said, "A writer has to walk a very careful line" between accuracy and the need to extend possibilities. And whatever a writer does, next year something invalidates it anyway.

Someone asked if all this new information about epigenetic changes and such meant that we owed Lysenko an apology. Scheiner and others chorused, "No." Wheeler said that none of these new discoveries involve changing DNA. Slonczewski claimed that we do see this in bacteria, but Scheiner disagreed.

Someone said that "neural innervation is a stochastic process" and therefore cloned brain will have a different pattern of connections.

Wheeler said that the maternal and paternal genomes have different goals, particularly in size. The paternal genome selects for a larger fetus (with greater chance of survival), but the maternal genome selects for a smaller one (with a greater chance of *her* survival).

Someone asked if sexual orientation was epigenetic. Wheeler said it was not a single-gene effect, and also that environmental exposures in the womb affect sexual identity.

The Solar System and SF: Setting SF on the Planets We Know  
Friday, 1PM

Greg Bear, Geoffrey A. Landis, Henry Spencer (m), Allen M. Steele, J. Steven York

**Description: "In early SF, the planets of the solar system were simply exotic locales for adventure. The next generation of SF writers--Heinlein, Clarke, and others--tried for more realism, but their solar systems were very different from the one we know today. What are good examples, and how do the new limitations on what writers can do and still be realistic make for good SF."**

**Attendance: 60**

**Steele said that lately he has been more involved in interstellar investigation than in studying the solar system. York worked on PC games, and said there there is a lot less astronomical fiction these days. Spencer said that he was involved in the space side rather than the fiction side. Bear said he was interested Mars and other solar system objects. Landis works more on spaceships and as a writer.**

**Spencer said that planets were more than just exotic locales for adventures. For example, Barsoom *was* a dying world. Steele said that even into the 1960s, people were writing stories set on the surface of Jupiter. And Venus was written as having jungles and oceans into the 1970s. But exploratory spacecraft changed everything. Mariner and Viking changed the way authors wrote about Mars, and Mariner and Magellan changed our perceptions of Venus. He also said that Pluto used to be the ninth planet, but is not any more. (Of course, that does not change anything about what the actual conditions on Pluto are.**

**York said that we know there are extra-solar planets, we know what their gross physical characteristics are (with a great degree of inaccuracy).**

**Bear said that our ideas of Mars (and other planets) were shaped by the Chesley Bonestell paintings in *Conquest of Space*: craters, and no canals. Spencer said that Mariner 4's impressions of Mars were a bit inaccurate, because it surveyed the oldest part of Mars, not a typical part. Landis said that better equipment and eyesight made the canals go away.**

**Steele summed it up as "Post-Mariner, Canal Mars became Dead Mars." But it is now swinging back; Mars is much more dynamic, it has seasons, it has an atmosphere. The 1992 film *Labyrinth of Night* showed a dry Mars, but the 2010 "Emperor of Mars" has sub-surface water. With Landis, he is advocating for the "Ethical Treatment of Mars."**

**Bear felt that in spite of changing perceptions, his novel *Moving Mars* is still accurate.**

**Landis said that Mars is salty, so any water would be brine. And the rocks are incompatible with acid (amino acids?). However, under the rocks are phyllosilicates.**

**Spencer said another example of more knowledge outdated stories was Larry Niven's "The Coldest Place", which he said was the dark side of Mercury. But now we know that Mercury has no dark side.**

**York observed that the solar system used to be static, but now it is dynamic. Planets (and moons) have weather, and so on. Spencer said this was because "when we get a close look at something we thought we understood, it is more complicated and interesting" than we thought. York gave Titan as an example, and Spencer mentioned Europa, which was discovered in 2010 to have a subsurface ocean. The big question now is whether the ice is thin enough for radiation to penetrate to generate or support life, though Landis thought that hydrothermal vents could substitute for radiation. Bear said that what you needed was an energy gradient. Landis was dubious about life in a low-energy environment. This led to a discussion of anaerobic bacteria and vent life forms.**

**York said they are trying to find "an island of scientific stability." They are still revising their**

views of the moon from the lunar prospector. Steele said that in his 1991 novel, *Lunar Descent* he had lunar ice, and then in 2011 they actually discovered some. Landis said there is also ice on Mercury, discovered by Messenger, and said that Mercury is "the neglected planet."

Spencer said you need to dig into the details, not just read the Sunday supplements. "Venus had several models in the scientific literature."

Someone suggested that stories about the solar system should have a date in the title, but Mark's idea was a "best if read by" date. Steele said that some fiction needed an expiration date, like milk, but York said that ultimately it is the story that is important.

Someone in the audience said that "lunar polar volatiles include many other compounds besides water."

I was wondering to myself if anyone had ever done an anthology or collection with the theme of "The Science Fictional Solar System" when Steele mentioned Ben Bova's "Grand Tour".

Kandis said, "Economics is the science most poorly treated in science fiction." Historically, there have been two reasons to explore: to make money, or because you have been kicked out because of religion. Without these motivators, exploration probably will not happen.

Someone thought that asteroid belt colonies are becoming less likely because the asteroids have all turned out to be weird in different ways, so no consistent mining operation would be possible. Landis noted that the asteroids are also far apart, and the "asteroid belt" is not a place the way we think of places. And why have humans do the mining anyway, instead of robots? (Steele said this question could be asked of a lot of science fiction.) None of this stops authors, however--*Leviathan Wakes* by James S. A. Corey (which ended up on the Hugo list for 2011) us about asteroid mining.

It was suggested that science fiction will substitute for reality, but Steele said that the situation is not permanent. People are more interested Mars than in low-Earth orbit, the moon, etc.

Bear observed that for years we asked NASA to get out of the way of commercial space travel. Now NASA is doing it (by getting out the Shuttle business, etc.), and we are complaining. Spencer said that one result is that we are harder up for shirt-sleeve habitats than we used to be.

York said he was still intrigued by the notion of robot whores of the asteroid belt.

There seemed to be a consensus that the moons of the solar system were where the action is and will be.

**The Role of the Science Advisor  
Friday, 2PM  
Michael Cassutt, Kevin R. Grazier, John Scalzi**

**Description:** "Some SF TV shows and movies have science advisors. What do science advisors do? How much say do they have? Can they prevent mistakes or are they generally ignored? Science advisors tell all (or at least some--). John Scalzi, science advisor for *Stargate: Universe* and Kevin Grazier, science advisor for *Battlestar Galactica* and *Eureka*, discuss."

**Attendance: 200**

Cassutt started by saying, "*CSI* is the most successful science fiction show of all time."

Cassutt said that science fictions shows and films need an advisor from the very start, but he said it is not always obvious from the result when they have had one.

Scalzi said he was hired to track the science, but he also tracked the characters and other aspects. He spoke of the guy who is the stereotyped nitpicker and said, "My job is to be that guy before that guy can be that guy. My job is to rob that guy of all his joy."

Cassutt said that one of the first things you learn in telling them what to cut is that "you don't cut cool." Scalzi said that you could not insist on kill-offs with only sixty crew to start with, and you could not overuse bullets, etc.

Cassutt said that television producers do not care if at Minute 61 you are blogging errors, as long as you stay tuned in until then.

Scalzi said he was once asked by the producer, "Do we really need the entire planet?" (I cannot remember the exact context, but clearly it was an attempt to save money by having a smaller set or less special effects or something.)

Cassutt said that on television as in everything else, the perfect is the enemy of the good. Scalzi said that one way to avoid that is to remember that we can speculate with things we do not know. He also said that writers try to show off and end up making mistakes; the thing to do is to tell them that they are over-explaining. The important thing to remember is that consistency counts.

Cassutt said that another important thing to remember is, "When it's shot, it's done." Big things should be caught earlier, because later is no good. Someone asked about consistency with earlier shows; Cassutt said he would like it, but it is not always possible to take the time and effort. Scalzi said, "You can plan for the trilogy but you have to write the first book."

Cassutt referred to what Scalzi was doing as "Stargate University". Referring to adapting Stephen King's work for film and television, Cassutt said, "Stephen King has many virtues, but conceptual rigor is not high [among them]." Asked about the fact that *Firefly's* episodes were aired out of order, he said, "No one screws up a show like Fox. You have no idea. That is the least of their sins." But he also said that Josh Whedon was mostly to blame.

Someone asked about *Star Trek*, and Scalzi said, "Don't get me f\*\*\*ing started on the 'Star Trek' reboot! Okay, you got me started. They got butts in the seat, but f\*\*\* the science!" He said his wife kicked him out of the room when the trailer was on because of his reaction to it.

Cassutt said that movies are more one person's vision. (Is this the return of the auteur theory?) He said that James Cameron is scientific, but Michael Bay is not.

Someone mentioned "the CSI effect." Scalzi reminded everyone that Hollywood entertains, not educates. Cassutt said there is also a "Star Trek effect," but that we need to remember "fiction is lies."

The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction: A Q&A Session with the Editor  
Friday, 4PM  
Gordon Van Gelder

Description: "Information on what's coming up over the next few months in F&SF."

Attendance: 20

Van Gelder began by saying that with the current economic situation, "flat is the new up in

sales."

The shift to bimonthly issues (begun in April 2009) is permanent. They have just launched a free Kindle version: all the non-fiction plus one story from each issue, or you can buy the entire issue for the Kindle.

Van Gelder did admit that with a bimonthly magazine, it is harder to do special issues, but it is easier to include novellas. He is pleased with the physical materials (paper, cover stock, etc.). Reprints of older stories will continue.

In response to a question he said that self-publishing is somewhat a problem. (I imagine it is like making an independent film rather than a studio film.)

Since 1949, *F&SF* has always gotten more fantasy submissions and fewer science fiction ones than they wanted. Now he is seeing more steampunk, more urban fantasy, more "many worlds", and more time dilation, but fewer zombie stories. Eighty-five to ninety per cent of the slush is rejected. He said that authors seem to think that fantasy is easier to write and more commercial.

Asked about his experiences with *Borders*, he said that it was not well-run for a long time. *Books-a-Million* does better with magazines, he added. Traditional newsstands are on a steady decline.

The big slicks had taken a big hit over the last twenty years. Not surprisingly, there is more growth in e-sales.

Van Gelder was asked why *F&SF* does not take submissions electronically. He replied that he has only three readers, and the process they use would not work with electronic submissions. The bottom line is that most submissions would not get read. It does bother him for overseas writers, who have to spend an inordinate amount for postage, but apparently no one here has realized they could make money taking electronic submissions, printing them up, and submitting them.

In the 1990s he said they were getting 800 to 1000 submissions a month, and buying 8 to 10 of them (or 1%). What he is looking for, he said, were stories distinguished by their character-driven and literary aspects.

The readership is getting *slightly* older. [In some cases, the best way to attract younger readers might be to have parents point out stories to their kids that they think their kids might like.] He said that Stephen King praised *F&SF* in a "Best of" and that had good effects.

#### The Future of Cities Friday, 5PM

Lauren Beukes, Cory Doctorow, Gary Ehrlich, Ian McDonald (m), Kim Stanley Robinson

Description: "Our panel discusses the challenges facing urban populations around the world and how they translate into interesting story settings."

Attendance: 200

Beukes was probably the most "exotic" writer, being from South Africa, and has written *Zoo City*, set in Johannesburg. ("Exotic" is not meant disparagingly here, but in the sense of writing about the most unfamiliar city to most readers in the audience.

Robinson said that contrary to what some people believed, he was actually fond of cities--it was suburbia he disliked. (One wonders if it is possible to have cities and countryside without some

sort of suburbia in-between.

Ehrlich said that building codes are a major barrier to innovation in the United States, and pointed to the islands of Dubai as a place doing cutting-edge innovation, along with Hong Kong and Shanghai. We seem to have gone full-circle, he said, from natural to high-tech to sustainable (which turns out to be mostly natural).

Beukes said that the traffic in Johannesburg is awful (we were there; it is) and the fenced-off suburbs make it worse. But it is the "New York of Africa" and immigrants make the center vibrant.

Doctorow said, "Cities are the environmental hope of the planet." (Many articles have been written about how much more efficient cities are than suburbs--there was a reason for all those giant residential towers in science fiction after all!) Robinson agreed that we cannot have a pastoral future. He said that currently a small town is better than suburbia, but the pastoral (rural) model just won't work. In particular, he put in a pitch for the 50,000-person small town. Cities are the most promising for reducing the carbon footprint, which he said should be a 2000-watt (per day?) average per person. (It was not clear whether this included pro-rated industrial use.) Robinson felt that what was most unsustainable was sprawl (Los Angeles, Phoenix). More expensive land tends to create something more sustainable. The phrase "hedonistic sustainability" came up.

Beukes said that China Miéville's *The City and the City* reflects the South African experience of two different cities interleaved together. She describes the result in South Africa as dense cities, huge sprawls of shantytowns, and pseudo-Tuscan houses. (I will add that the pseudo-Tuscan houses are surrounded by electrified fences and often armed guards.) Oddly enough, she said, South Africa was warning people not to travel to the United Kingdom because it was too dangerous.

Ehrlich felt that Washington, DC, may work, but the metropolitan area as a whole does not. There is a "sweet spot" between too large and too small.

Doctorow said there was a difference between "most livable" and "most popular". Portland is among the most livable, but New York, Los Angeles, and London are among the most popular. As he explained it, the most livable means that there is less friction, but less friction also means less heat. High-density living has its challenges, and he bemoaned the homogenization of "high streets" (main shopping streets in a city or town).

Beukes said that this homogenization is both scary and sad. These days, one finds McDonald's settings in Istanbul and Delhi. Doctorow added that Shanghai and Beijing have Starbucks, Bentley, and Ferrari.

Robinson predicted that over the next few decades there will be a lot of deconstruction (and not of the literary sort!). We are already seeing this in industrial cities such as Detroit and Youngstown, but eventually this will spread to the suburbs as the cost of living there becomes unsustainable. Doctorow said that our model seems to be to build lots of cheap things, wait forty years for most to collapse, then treasure the rest.

Beukes said that in writing about cities, it was not surprising that the cities were unpleasant, because utopias are not interesting. [You can use a utopia as a base for another story, though.] Ehrlich mentioned Lawrence Watt-Evans's *Newer York*.

Robinson pointed out that the coastal cities will end up underwater, and 25% of the world's population will have to move. In a reference to science fiction, he added, "Manhattan is the Trantor of our world."

Doctorow asked about surveillance in future cities: are humans bar codes or sensors? Are we the watched or the watching?

Someone noted that Ray Bradbury used the car, the elevator, and air-conditioning, but wrote about robotic transport, on-line life, and social networks. Beukes pointed out that this was all "developed world" ("First World") stuff. Robinson agreed, saying that the capital discrepancy was not sustainable either. Beukes said that cities did create some mental health problems from more tensions, stress, and poverty, all beginning with joblessness. Ehrlich said that suburbia had its own stresses--long commutes, time away from families, etc.

Recommended books on South Africa in particular include:

- | S. L. Grey, *The Mole*
- | Deon Meyer, *Thirteen Hours*
- | Fiona Snyckers, *Trinity Rising*

and non-fiction:

- | Peter Harris, *Birth: The Conspiracy to Stop the '94 Election*
- | Antjie Krog, *Country of My Skull: Guilt, Sorrow, and the Limits of Forgiveness in New South Africa*
- | N. Brody, *Inside Joburg*
- | *The Joburg Book*

### Masquerade Friday, 8PM

Description: "This is a unique show created by fans, for fans, live. In seconds, each entry conducts us all into their fantastic vision. Entries come from all genres of SF; characters recreated from film, television, anime, comics and art, others brought to life from the pages of literature, and still more from the imagination of their creators. Doors will open for seating at 7:30pm, and at 8:00pm. MCs Phil and Kaja Foglio will be your guides. While the judges deliberate, author and bon vivant Paul Cornell will host a special Worldcon edition of 'Just a Minute'. If you want to enter or volunteer, come by the Masquerade Desk in the RSCC lobby on Wednesday or Thursday, even if you have already pre-registered for the show online."

Attendance: lots

There were about thirty costumes/presentations. Nine of them I did not understand, and six more I understood but were boring. I may be too "out of it" to appreciate masquerades any more.

### SF Physics Myths Saturday, 10AM

Gregory Benford (m), Michael F. Flynn, Joe Haldeman, Corry L. Lee, Alastair Reynolds

Description: "The panel looks at scientific misconceptions that authors have inadvertently promoted to the extent that they have become 'common knowledge'."

Attendance: 250 (proving that the attendance for science panels is always more than expected)

Benford said that most physics myths are the things we see in movies but not in *Analog* (and maybe *F&SF*).

Lee said that he was a particle physicist, to which Benford added "hence out of work." One

myth he cited was that there are people who are both theoretical and experimental geniuses. (This is the whole "jack-of-all-trades" myth. One sees it in shows like *CSI*, in which the same person collects the evidence, runs the lab test, questions the suspects, and then chases down and arrests the perpetrator.)

Reynolds said a common myth was "all stars go supernova." Another was "astronomers spend all their time looking through telescopes." (But then he said that he did.)

Haldeman claimed that he went to school so long ago that there were only four elementary particles ... earth, air, fire, and water. (Benford later said that he and Haldeman went to school together at the University of Oklahoma.) Haldeman said he was reminded of a Keith Laumer story in which the spaceship could achieve almost infinite speeds by having the pilot "floor it," then change the frame of reference to one in which their speed was zero, then floor it again, and so on. To which he added the coda: "I'm not the stupidest science fiction writer."

Flynn said that the biggest myth may be "it always works and it always works right."

Benford described science myths as "mythconceptions", and his example to parallel Flynn's was "you can do anything quickly." In terms of a more specific myth, he mentioned the idea of "centrifugal gravity" (spinning a space to create gravity). Most people ignore the Coriolis effect on a short moment arm; you need an arm of a hundred meters or more. (I have experienced this in one of those spinning drums at amusement parks. You feel yourself pressed against the side, but if you try to lift your head, it is not a pleasant sensation!)

Reynolds said that a very common myth (at least at one point) was "breaking the speed of light was like breaking the speed of sound."

Lee said that authors seem to think it is reasonable to have two spaceships randomly cross (meet) in space. Reynolds added that they also line everything up: "We passed Neptune, then we passed Jupiter." Even adding "the orbit of" does not help, because that still puts everything in a two-dimensional plane.

Benford said that his novel *Timescape* had tachyons, and was the only paper of his with no equations. He claimed that supposedly a tachyon was once seen, but never again. He also said, "The technical problem of a grant proposal is science fiction; the budget is the fantasy."

Lee said another physics myth (more in non-science-fiction action films) is that someone can get hit by high voltage and just get up again with no effect.

Flynn sees the idealized versions of the scientist as a "noble seeker of truth" or as a "descendent of Victor Frankenstein" as another myth. (This harkens back to the jack-of-all-trades theory, or the astronomers spending all their time at telescopes.) He noted, "Stars are facts; constellations are theories."

Someone suggested the myth "brains have to observe something to collapse a wave function." Someone else asked whether the idea of cheap, plentiful energy was a physics myth. Reynolds said all this discussion of "peak oil" made him think of predictions during the (literal) horse-power era that we would "drown in horse shit," and made him conjure up the term "peak horse." Haldeman and Benford noted that the real problem is that there are limits to energy storage capacity, to which someone suggested space solar power. (See "Exponential Economist Meets Finite Physicist" by Tom Murphy, 04/10/12, posted on <http://www.dothemath.com> for more on all this.)

Someone said another myth is that nuclear energy is always dangerous. Another added the entire concept of impulse drives. Benford said yet another was a hovering craft with no



environmental effect.

Reynolds said that scientists are not immune: astronomers were as "wrong-footed" as anybody else about extra-solar planets. In reality, other solar systems look even weirder than our own. Flynn said a related myth is that every solar system has a terrestrial planet with attractive humanoids "just slightly dumber than screenwriters."

Pete Rubinstein said that the entire way mutation was treated in movies was full of myths. I would also add the myths of artificial gravity, exploding computers, and cloning an army (or cloning myths in general).

### Historical Figures in Action!

Saturday, 11AM

Mary Robinette Kowal, Tim Powers, Kristine Kathryn Rusch, Steven H Silver, Harry Turtledove (m)

Description: "What are the pitfalls of using people 'everyone knows' in their fiction? How can you get the depiction 'right'. What are the legal ramifications of fictionalizing real people?"

Attendance: 70

Rusch said that often these things seem to be made up even when they are not, e.g., Martin Luther King, Jr., being at the premiere of *Gone with the Wind* (he was ten years old at the time and living in Atlanta, so that is not too surprising). Her story "Recovering Apollo 8" dealt with people still alive, so she needed to be more careful in what she wrote.

Powers said that he avoids alternate history and writes secret histories instead.

[The difference between alternate history and secret history is best shown by example:

Alternate history: A standard one is that the Axis won World War II and everyone knows it (e.g., *Fatherland* by Robert Harris, *The Man in the High Castle* by Philip K. Dick).

Secret history: The classic one is that there is a hidden organization that controls the entire world, but most people are unaware of it and still think that nations, etc., are what counts (e.g. *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*). Better-known science fictional examples of secret history would be *In the Country of the Blind* by Michael Flynn and the "Men in Black" films.]

Powers says he looks for gaps and weird behavior. For example, why did Albert Einstein's hair go white in 1928? A secret history comes with most of the background already prepared.

Turtledove said that World War II is within the living memory of people still alive, but it is not within *his*, and this gives him a strange feeling.

Kowal said that her grandmother was 104 and was her primary source for historical information. She talked about a story of hers in which one could only time travel within one's lifespan. You would therefore need to get the oldest time travelers possible.

Kowal agreed with Rusch that if you were writing about a real person (particularly one still alive), you needed to be careful of what you claimed were their beliefs and intentions. Powers felt that for him, if the person were still alive, that would preclude using them. Rusch said that there are rules about public figures that let them be used more freely than non-public ones. Powers pointed out that even dead celebrities may have living children (e.g., Bugsy Siegel or Kim Philby). Rusch noted that others (e.g., Martin Luther King, Jr.) have foundations or other organizations attempting to preserve their reputations. One thing she never does, Rusch said, is

to make up dialogue for real people.

Powers said that fictional behavior should be consistent with the character's real behavior, and this is based more on good taste than on legality. (There goes "Ma Teresa and the Hole-in-the-Wall Gang" by Jack C. Haldeman II.) Turtledove said that there are fewer rules for satire, and gave as an example his story "Bedfellows" (which depicts a same-sex marriage between two characters intended to be George W. Bush and Osama bin Laden). Kowal somewhat agreed, saying, "If it's totally obvious you're making sh\*t up..." Turtledove said you can also "file the serial numbers off" the real people (i.e., call them something else). Silver said that all this plays off the assumptions people have.

Rusch said an alternate history of Hitler (for example) would not work because if it went back early enough he would not be memorable to the other characters. Silver said that you cannot just flip a switch in a given year--you must go back far enough. Turtledove suggested that Anna Russell was right<sup>5</sup> "You can do anything as long as you sing it."

Moving on to another aspect of using historical figures, Turtledove said that copy editors are like "the little girl who had a little curl" ("when they are good they are very very good, but when they are bad they are horrid"). He has seen copy editors make corrections on precise quotes from the King James Bible, Shakespeare, and in made-up languages.

Kowal said that some language just *seems* wrong: "Dude" in a Regency-period novel, or "Groovy!" in the 1920s. Turtledove said that he liked "Sacre Merde!" in a story set in medieval times.

Powers said that he does not like it when a review says (for example), "The reader should really know the Wild West to appreciate this."

Someone mentioned the problem of all the things we think we know that are false (e.g., Toneypandy).

Someone else asked whether the authors ever contact the real people. Turtledove said yes, for his Yellowstone novel, *Supervolcano: Eruption*. Silver said that sometimes people are contacted about Tuckerization (using a real person's name for a minor character as a tribute). Rusch said that she did. Powers said it was convenient to know the person. But the panel agreed that the best historical figure to use was a "cold desiccated corpse with non-litigious heirs." Reynolds noted that Sherlock Holmes is not real, but his heirs are litigious anyway.

Rusch said that it was important to document your sources (not necessarily in the story!), and to use only public figures. As she said, "My whole goal in life is not to get sued." Silver said it was important to know the rules of libel and slander, both in the United States and in Britain.

*From the Earth to the Moon* by Jules Verne  
Saturday, 1PM  
John Hertz

Description: "Discuss *From the Earth to the Moon*. We did go to the moon, a century later; we did leave from Cape Canaveral, with a crew of three; the Apollo XI command module was the Columbia, and the command-service module was the size and shape of Verne's projectile. But never mind; science fiction is not in the prediction business. What a storyteller Verne was!"

Attendance: 20

(This was not so much a discussion as a lecture with some question.)

John Hertz publishes the fanzine *Vanamonde*. Vanamonde is a character in *The City and the Stars* by Arthur C. Clarke (in both cases, the terminal 'e' is silent).

Hertz said that a classic was an artwork that has survived its time. "It is not necessarily influential, or popular, or one I like," he added. He also said that in his opinion, science fiction was not primarily social satire or prediction.

When Verne wrote *From the Earth to the Moon*, "scientific romances" were just novels. ("Romances" here does not mean what we call a "romance novel", but something about the external world, usually involved adventure, fantasy, etc., as opposed to a work about a character's inner world, which were then called "novels." Eventually the latter came to include all fictitious prose narratives of a certain length.)

Verne's first success was *Five Weeks in a Balloon*, though it is not recommended as the work to start reading Verne with. (According to Hertz, that would be either *Around the World in Eighty Days* or *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, though I have a real fondness for *The Mysterious Island*, which was the first Verne I read.)

Hertz prefers Verne to H. G. Wells, quoting Theodore Sturgeon's comments on Wells: "He sold his birthright for a pot of message." Hertz says that the least preachy Wells novel is *The Invisible Man*. Being topical is dangerous, he noted, because it fades.

Hertz spent a lot of time talking about how a character says, "I will not come back," and how "will" is conditional while "shall" would be definite. While this was interesting, I am not convinced that a lot of this was more the translator's decision than Verne's, and translations of Verne's are notoriously bad. (In addition, I am not sure if French even has this distinction; I do not believe that Spanish does, and English barely does these days.)

My opinion on all this is that *From the Earth to the Moon* is a classic because we still read some Verne that are real classics and some others tag along. The "real" classics are, in my opinion, *Around the World in Eighty Days*, *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, *The Mysterious Island*, and *Journey to the Center of the Earth*.

(I wrote a long article about the various translations of *From the Earth to the Moon* which can be found at <http://lepers.us/evelyn/reviews/verne.htm#fromearth>.)

SF: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow  
Saturday, 2PM  
James Patrick Kelly, Michael Swanwick

Description: "Two of SF's most award-winning writers discuss SF (and anything else they feel like touching on)."

Attendance: [unknown, but probably appreciable]

Kelly said that both he and Swanwick had the same idea of where their careers would go. Swanwick said he thought he would be the new Brian Aldiss, with beautiful writing but little money. Of Aldiss's writing, he said that the "Helliconia" trilogy was not Aldiss's best, but it brought him the most money.

Kelly said he envisioned himself as the new Robert Silverberg, prolific and known for short stories. He said that Silverberg had bad stories at the beginning, and so did he. (In fact, none of his first ten stories have been reprinted).

Swanwick said that his first two stories were nominated for the Nebula--against each other! He

started writing at seventeen, but was twenty-nine when he first finished a story. He said that Gardner Dozois and Jack Dann helped him learn how to finish a story. Kelly said it takes ten years to master an art.

Swanwick said he learned to write from pain, such as his father's Alzheimer's. His "Empire of the Air" uses his memories of his father. But it is hard to write from life.

Kelly said he started after his divorce, and during the Cuban Missile Crisis he could see the lights of New York "not fifty feet away", which was also stressful. (For them to be "not fifty feet away" wouldn't he have to be *in* New York?)

Kelly saw (sees?) a divide between cyberpunk and the humanists, and mentioned "A User's Guide to the Postmoderns" by Swanwick. Swanwick said that William Gibson was getting all the attention and he wrote that to get publicity for the rest. There was also Bruce Sterling's "Cheap Truth" and various manifestos. He did not think it would be taken seriously, but it was. (People would come up to him and ask, "Why am I missing?") And then Orson Scott Card refuted it.

Kelly noted that many trends pass--no one reads any of the Nobel Prize winners from the 1920s. (Well, except for George Bernard Shaw and William Butler Yeats.)

Kelly said that Swanwick also wrote about the coming wave of fantasy. Swanwick said that he started as a fantasist, but that before a certain point, most fantasy was bad. Ellen Kushner noted that good fantasy is "unschoolable" and *sui generis*. Swanwick said that "In the Tradition--A Journey Through the Fantasy Archipelago" had a much better response than "A User's Guide to the Postmoderns". He said the most different fantasy is what is worth reading (e.g. *Moonrise*. (Alas, if he said who the author was, I failed to note it, and the ISFDB lists five novels with that title.)

Mention was also made of "Mannerpunks"--those people writing fantasies of manners. Swanwick's book, *the Postmodern Archipelago: Two Essays on Science Fiction and Fantasy* was also cited.

Kelly said that now the fantasy field has splintered and the readers are choosy. Swanwick disagreed, saying that the writers are choosy and ignorant of anything outside of their niche. The sheer quantity available is one issue. It is okay for readers, but deadly for writers. For example, Neil Gaiman reads widely, but a writer reading only Gaiman limits himself too much.

Kelly said that the entry level for reading science fiction and fantasy is high--you cannot start with (for example) *Accelerando*. (But you cannot start in the mainstream with Vladimir Nabakov or James Joyce.)

Swanwick said that one thing he had in common with Kelly was that "we have never chased after the money. Where is Nick Yermakov now?" [Yermakov also wrote as Simon Hawke, and his latest works, in the early 2000s, were murder mysteries with Shakespeare as a detective.] His business plan is to be poor. (I guess he is emulating Howard Waldrop.) He quoted Bruce Sterling as saying, "All we want is a quiet place to work while God finishes eating our brains."

Kelly said that his new plan is to champion the fix-up novel, in part because he has no novels in his history. He points out that Kim Stanley Robinson gave up short stories. [Harlan Ellison never wrote a science fiction novel either, and Charles Stross's *Accelerando* was a fix-up novel.] On the other hand, he has had a story in every June issue of *Asimov's* for twenty years.

Asked for their own favorite stories that they have written, Swanwick chose "The Iron Dragon's Daughter" and Kelly chose "Think Like a Dinosaur". However, Swanwick said he really

prefers his novel *Jack Faust*.

Still Fresh: Why Philip K. Dick is Still Relevant  
Saturday, 4PM

Grania Davis, Jim Frenkel (m), Caroline Mullan, Charles Oberndorf, Tim Powers

Description: "While Philip K. Dick has been dead for nearly 30 years, much of his fiction is still in print, widely read and inspires new generations of writers and filmmakers. What makes his fiction so relevant?"

Attendance: [unknown]

Powers said he had personally known Dick for ten years. Davis knew Dick during the 1960s in Northern California. Frenkel knew Dick around 1971. Mullan, being from Ireland, did not know Dick but related finding Andre Norton's *Daybreak--2250 A.D.* in the adult section of his library and Dick's *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* in the children's section!

Frenkel observed that Dick wrote from the 1950s to 1982, so why is he relevant now? Powers felt that of Dick's writing, "What was best was obscured by what was relevant at the time," and that what Dick was writing was really "a new kind of scary, a new kind of nightmare." Examples of this, he said, were *Martian Time-Slip*, *Maze of Death*, and *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*.

Davis described much of Dick's work as being about ordinary protagonists in extraordinary situations (unlike a lot of science fiction of that era, which was about extraordinary protagonists).

Mullan said, "Relative to me, [Dick] was living in the future." He described Dick's fiction as being about "hell in a suburban bungalow."

Oberndorf thought that *Martian Time-Slip* was Dick's best book. Now, he said, "we can change our personalities on-line, change our realities--this is Dickian." He also said he finds Dick a more visceral writer than, say, Don DeLillo.

Frenkel said that Dick saw the reality beneath consumerism, and addressed the basic question of "what is normal?" Mullan agreed that questions of normality ran through Dick's work. Frenkel added that "normal" would be the least likely word for Dick himself; "'anxiety' is the word." Later, Frenkel also added "paranoia".

Powers said that Dick was always ready to believe in outlandish theories--at least for a while. He recommended *Radio Free Albemuth*. Mullan noted that the world's favorite Dick was *The Man in the High Castle*. He also said that in a British Library on-line exhibit of science fiction, there were 548 hits for books by Dick.

Oberndorf thought that some of Dick's books felt "rushed", e.g., *Galactic Pot Boiler*. And some are sympathetic to heroes, not just ordinary men.

Davis said that contrary to popular opinion, Dick was influenced more by music than by drugs. Regarding drugs, Dick began with anti-depressants that had been prescribe for him. Then he later got a prescription for speed added in order to write faster. It was after these that he started experimenting with psychedelics.

Powers said that Dick took LSD only twice, and once had a vision. Between 1972 and 1982 he smoked marijuana if it was available. He also used snuff and drank Scotch. Frenkel said that Dick was taking no drugs during the time he knew him.

Someone in the audience suggested that Dick was not relevant today because he couldn't write about women. Mullan responded that a friend told him, "You should read Philip K. Dick because his women menstruate." Davis said that the anger towards women in Dick's books was always directed towards his latest ex-wife. However, Dick also had "the dark-haired girl, the Rachel who needs to be rescued."

Another audience member felt that Dick wrote about the basic questions of human existence: How can we trust what we perceive? What is reality?

Powers described Dick as "circling Christianity." Davis thought he was a mystic. Powers said that Dick had his biggest visions after he quit drugs. Someone in the audience said this all was similar to Robert Sheckley and John Sladek, but he did not seem to still have an audience.

Oberndorf felt that Paolo Bacigalupi's *The Wind-Up Girl* was influenced by Dick. Frenkel thought that some of China Miéville's work was, and that, yes, there was still a market. He also noted, "When Philip K. Dick was alive, he didn't sell worth crap," with the exception of *The Man in the High Castle*.

**The Future in Physics: How Close Are We to Time Travel or Breaking the Light Barrier?  
Saturday, 5PM**

**Greg Bear, Howard Davidson (m), Corry L. Lee, G. David Nordley, Alan P. Smale**

**Description:** "The latest news from the front lines."

**Attendance:** [unknown]

[I found most of this panel impossible to follow, so this write-up will be somewhat short.]

In response to the program title, Lee answered, "Not very." Nordley talked about "trying to evade the consequences of the International Date Line by digging a tunnel under it." He also talked about "how many joules it takes to put a mole up to tens of TEV [tera electron volts, where a tera is  $10^{12}$ ]."

Someone asked if dark matter were really just the equivalent of epicycles, but for gravity, i.e., a desperate attempt to explain something we have no other explanation for. Nordley felt that we were confident about gravity. (Then again, so were people about the geocentric system.)

He also talked about achieving faster-than-light travel by creating a bubble in space, then compressing space ahead of it and rarefying space behind it.

Bear thought that time was not a moving point, but a variable smear.

Nordley recommended *How to Teach Physics to Your Dog* by Chad Orzel. He concluded by saying, "Science proceeds by successive approximation."

**Hugo Awards Ceremony  
Saturday, 8PM**

**Description:** "The Hugo Awards, nominated and voted for by your fellow Worldcon members, are presented for excellence in SF and fantasy for 2010. Masters of Ceremonies Jay Lake and Ken Scholes will introduce the presenters: our Guests of Honor and previous Hugo Award winners (Robert Silverberg, George R.R. Martin, Nancy Kress, Stu Shiffman, and others.) The ceremony will also include the Big Heart Award, and a video highlighting Japanese Fandom including the Seiun Awards for the best SF published in Japan."

Attendance: thousands

- | Best Novel: *Blackout/All Clear* by Connie Willis
- | Best Novella: *The Lifecycle of Software Objects* by Ted Chiang
- | Best Novelette: "The Emperor of Mars" by Allen M. Steele
- | Best Short Story: "For Want of a Nail" by Mary Robinette Kowal
- | Best Related Work: *Chicks Dig Time Lords: A Celebration of Doctor Who by the Women Who Love It*, edited by Lynne M. Thomas and Tara O'Shea
- | Best Graphic Story: *Girl Genius, Volume 10: Agatha Heterodyne and the Guardian Muse*
- | Best Dramatic Presentation, Long Form: *Inception*
- | Best Dramatic Presentation, Short Form: *Doctor Who: "The Pandorica Opens/The Big Bang"*
- | Best Editor, Short Form: Sheila Williams
- | Best Editor, Long Form: Lou Anders
- | Best Professional Artist: Shaun Tan
- | Best Semiprozine: Clarkesworld
- | Best Fanzine: The Drink Tank
- | Best Fan Writer: Claire Brialey
- | Best Fan Artist: Brad W. Foster John W. Campbell Awar for Best New Writer: Lev Grossman

*Radio Free Albemuth* (PG-13)  
Saturday, 10PM  
panelists

Description: "POST HUGO SPECIAL FEATURE: This Phillip K. Dick story takes place in an alternate reality of the USA, where a Nixon-like President burned the Watergate tapes and three terms later is still in office. <http://www.radiofreealbemuth.com>"

Attendance: [unknown]

Starting in the same room as the Hugo Ceremony at 10PM? What a joke! It was almost midnight, because even after the ceremony was over, people hung around talking and no one from the committee would say, "We have another event scheduled in this room, so if you are not staying for the film, please take your conversations outside."

Miscellaneous

Walking from the Atlantis to the Convention Center on Tuesday, we ended up having a long conversation with one of the guards about old movies like *The Atomic Kid*.

I rode the shuttle from the airport with Hugo Pro Artist nominee John Picacio, who said that some of the art samples submitted by nominees for the "Hugo Nominees Packet" were not from the year being judged, but that the committee was not eager to try to figure out what exactly was eligible. They do vet that the *nominee* is eligible, but I suppose that they cannot possibly recognize every piece of art. Still, I think they should at least ask the artists, fan writers, etc., to sign something saying that their submitted samples are from the year of eligibility.

Steven Silver said that when he arrived he wanted to check his materials in the Dealers Room. He was told he needed a badge to get into the Dealers Room, but when he went to Registration he was told that the Dealers badges were not there, but in the Dealers Room. He also needed a special "MIMO" ["Move In/Move Out"] badge, and said that sorting this out took a surprisingly long amount of time.

The Convention Center had very strict rules about bringing food in from outside. Their prices were not cheap, however. Beverages were \$3 for a bottle, \$3.50 from the Cafe. Snacks from

vending machines were \$1 and up, a burger was \$6, a hot dog \$4.50, and fries \$3.

The Convention Center, as usual, was woefully devoid of wall clocks.

The Voodoo Board was centrally located in a spot where it did not cause traffic problems.

The Sky Bridge from the Atlantis to the Convention Center (including access corridor) is about a football field in length and carpeted. Now think about trying to push a wheelchair over that.

There were fewer freebies than previous years, but the table and racks still needed constant monitoring by Filthy Pierre, as people persisted in dumping flyers, bookmarks, and other "rackable" items on the small table. Because the table was so small, freebies trickled out over the weekend, with someone showing up every few hours to unpack a few boxes of books from publishers or whatever. The best were *The King of the Elves*, a collection of Philip K. Dick stories, and *Up the Bright River*, a collection of Philip José Farmer stories.

Speaking of bookmarks, if ebooks are the wave of the future, why are so many authors, publishers, etc., using bookmarks as promotional items?

The UPS station was empty on Saturday, but had a long line on Sunday (the last day of the convention), and needed more boxes and extended hours.