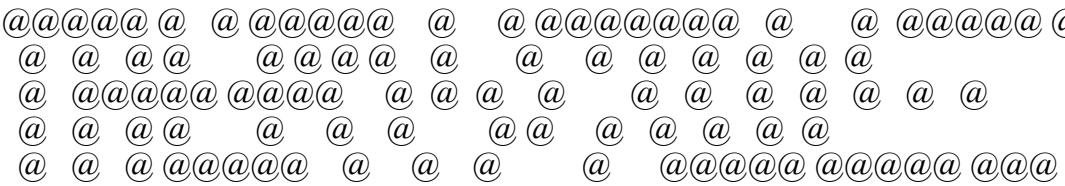

Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society
Club Notice - 10/06/95 -- Vol. 14, No. 14

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

Unless otherwise stated, all meetings are in Middletown 5T-415
Wednesdays at noon.

DATE	TOPIC
10/25/95	Book: BEYOND THIS HORIZON by Robert A. Heinlein
11/15/95	Book: MIDSHIPMAN'S HOPE by David Feintuch
12/06/95	Book: TBD

Outside events:
The Science Fiction Association of Bergen County meets on the second Saturday of every month in Upper Saddle River; call 201-933-2724 for details. The New Jersey Science Fiction Society meets on the third Saturday of every month in Belleville; call 201-432-5965 for details.

MT Chair: Mark Leeper MT 3F-434 908-957-5619 m.r.leeper@att.com
HO Chair: John Jetzt MT 2E-530 908-957-5087 j.j.jetzt@att.com
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1. I want to defend a very unpopular cause these days. It is a cause to which everybody pays lip-service, yet surprisingly many people seem to detest. It is the cause of objective truth.

Truth gets a bad rap these days. Most people seem to think that if you believe in truth you are a bigoted troglodyte. You hear a lot of people who say that there is no such thing as an "absolute" truth. This is the age of belief in "relative" truths or no truths at all. And this is in spite of the fact that "relative truth"

really is an oxymoron. I happen to admit to the possibility that there is no real absolute truth. Then again I also admit to the possibility that there are leprechauns. It is possible, but not likely. I believe that in fact absolute objective truth does exist. But it is one of the peculiarities of our age to assume

that it has actually been proven that there is no such thing as absolute truth. This supposed proof usually employs the old story of the blind men and the elephant. That is the story in which blind men feel different parts of an elephant depending on where their hand happens to fall. (This experiment is not recommended, incidentally, unless you have a very docile elephant.) One blind man feels the tail and says an elephant is very like a rope. One feels a leg and says the elephant is very like a tree. One feels the trunk and says that an elephant is very like a snake. These days the point of this story is taken to be that there are many different realities and in different realities an elephant has very different natures.

That's all a load of duck tires.

It is time you knew the truth about the story of the blind men and the elephant. The real point of the story, the meaning that modern people did not want you to know, is that incomplete knowledge and prejudice can lead you to incomplete and even to false conclusions. But you see that story predates the advent of political correctness. Today we know that no well-intentioned visually-challenged person can actually be wrong. If the blind men are not wrong they must be right and so if they say different things about the nature of the elephant, then, in fact, the elephant must indeed have different natures depending on point of view. This is a nice comforting philosophy since you never have to turn nasty and tell someone--particularly a blind man--that he or she is wrong. Under this delusion, there is no right or wrong, just different opinions and different realities. If Jimmy says on his homework that six plus seven equals fifteen, well, maybe in his reality it is. Suddenly we live in a no-fault world. If Jimmy clubs Tommy on the head with a toy fire truck, well, from his point of view it might have been the right thing to do. It is all in how you look at it.

Now let me be clear about this. There are incompletely stated truths; there are no relative truths. And there must be some absolute truth. Any logical system in which {A is true} and in which {B implies {A is false}} darn well better not have B being true and I don't care whose toes that steps on.

I heard on the radio a woman saying the most important thing that she could teach her children is that there is not just one reality, there are many. She had investigated a politically motivated kidnapping and because the two sides disagreed on what the situation was, there really were multiple realities at play. Can it really be that it did not occur to her that at least one side was not giving a full and objective and fully informed version of the incident? She could teach her children to have open minds and to question what they think they know, but she must think that would be a real kick in the slats to the kids' ego. And if it comes to her loyalty to truth or to her kids, she is picking her

kids' side.

Do your kids a favor; do enlightenment a favor. Don't teach your kids that there are only relative truths. If you are going to believe there is no such thing as truth, have a good reason for believing that. [-mrl]

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2. Okay, that was serious. You people who insist on getting a joke, here goes: Why did GREEN LANTERN's bathroom smell so bad?

Because he had no control over anything that was yellow. [-mrl]

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3. AXIOMATIC by Greg Egan (Millennium, ISBN 1-85798-416-1, 1995, 289pp, L8.99) (a book review by Evelyn C. Leeper):

Reading this was a delight, and worth hauling the trade paperback all over Britain in my luggage. (Why is Egan so hard to find in the United States? Of the eighteen stories, only four have appeared in a United States magazine, ISAAC ASIMOV'S SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE.)

Egan writes science fiction stories the old-fashioned way. No, not with a quill pen--with a plot based on a scientific idea. What if there were a drug that let you swap places with your alter ego in a parallel world? What if you could send messages back to the past? What if you could make your unborn child a genius? What if you could use an implant to change your belief system? What if every morning you woke up in a different body? What if they could recreate you in a computer? What if people could custom-design a virus to do what they wanted it do? What if a wormhole appeared at random, trapping whole city blocks inside it? What if...? What if...?

Science fiction used to have a lot of "what if?" stories. They didn't have elaborate convolutions, or enough padding to make a multi-book series. They were just, "Here's an idea. Where does it lead?" Egan goes back to this pattern which served authors so well for so long, and uses it.

All but one of these stories are from 1990 through 1992, which indicates that Egan is a prolific writer. His appearance on this year's Hugo ballot (for "Cocoon," another idea story) is an indication that if his work were seen by more people, he would be

on the ballot more often.

If you're looking for that "what if?" sort of science fiction that seems to have gone out of style, look no further. Ignore the back blurb ("Greg Egan's fiction ... is cyber-wonderland") and trust the quote from THE TIMES on the front: "One of the genre's great ideas men." -[ecl]

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4. THE GOLDEN NINETIES by Lisa Mason (Bantam Spectra, ISBN 0-553-09503-X, 1995, 384pp, US$12.95) (a book review by Evelyn C. Leeper):

Well, if she had titled it THE GAY NINETIES, it would have been very misleading--especially with its San Francisco setting. More proof, I suppose, that the English language is ever-changing. But I must admit I keep thinking of it by that name, a much more common epithet for the decade that "The Golden Nineties."

In any case, we have here a sequel to Mason's SUMMER OF LOVE. Now since SUMMER OF LOVE took place in 1967, and this takes place in the late 1890s, it might seem strange that this is a sequel, but that's because these books are about time travel and the part of THE GOLDEN NINETIES that takes place in the future takes place after the part of SUMMER OF LOVE that takes place there. Got that?

When I read SUMMER OF LOVE I thought it was basically a non-science fiction novel with a little science fiction thrown in to make it more marketable. I suppose that whether or not this was true, THE GOLDEN NINETIES was written as a science fiction novel, but in spite of that it also reads like a work of historical fiction with just a thin veneer of science fiction. A time traveler is sent back to make sure a certain piece of jewelry ends up with a certain person. (Could the fact that Mason's husband is a jeweler have anything to do with this?) But this is like Hitchcock's "McGuffin"--it's not really important except to give an excuse for the rest of the plot.

As with SUMMER OF LOVE, I like what Mason has done with the historical period, but I don't like the science fiction aspect, and ultimately it distracts from the rest. Does science fiction really sell that much better than historical fiction that it makes sense to do this? [-ecl]

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5. FULL SPECTRUM 5 edited by Jennifer Hershey, Tom Dupree, and Janna Silverstein (Bantam Spectra, ISBN 0-553-37400-1, 1995, 483pp,

US$14.95) (a book review by Evelyn C. Leeper):

I don't know if it's that the series is getting old, or the new editors' tastes are not as close to mine as the old editors' were, but I found FULL SPECTRUM 5 a disappointment. Even the stories by authors I usually like seemed below par.

The best story was Karawynn Long's "Of Silence and Slow Time," about what happens when we are able to "fix" genetic defects in the womb. The rest are a mixture of moderately interesting ideas not fully examined, or old ideas reworked, or exercises in style or mood that don't appeal to me.

The various theme anthologies (some might say "multitudinous theme anthologies") that have hit the market over the past few years have come in for a lot of criticism, much of it probably justified. Yet the fact remains that when I pick up one of these edited by Resnick or Kerr or whoever, I can be reasonably that the stories will be mostly mildly entertaining, with one or two very good stories, and probably one or two duds. On the average, this is better than FULL SPECTRUM 5 delivered. It's possible that the series may return to its former level, when it was published such stories as Norman Spinrad's "Journals of the Plague Years," but this volume is a real disappointment. [-ecl]

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6. DEVIL IN A BLUE DRESS (a film review by Mark R. Leeper):

> Capsule: Walter Mosely's Easy Rawlins detective stories come to the screen in a moderately complex mystery about a missing woman who figures into an election. Denzel Washington is likable as an L.A. factory worker who gets pulled into the search and involved in murder. The film is strong on atmosphere and paints an appealing picture of the post-war black community. Rating: high +1 (-4 to +4)

It's a hot summer night in L.A. Somewhere across town Philip Marlowe is getting too close to the truth. And he is also getting a mouthful of knuckles for his trouble. But that doesn't matter here because this story is about Easy Rawlins. And Easy isn't even a private dick. Not yet anyway. Right now Rawlins is just another factory worker from Texas who likes to go around in a sleeveless undershirt. In fact, he is not even that. He's had a little hard luck so Douglas Air is building their airplanes without his help, and he is trying to get by without their paycheck. With a bank account that's crawling under a duck, perhaps Easy is getting a little careless about whom he lets pay him and what he has to do

for the money. In 1948 L.A. that just isn't Einstein-caliber thinking. So maybe his job tonight does smell like yesterday's fish, but at least it is easy enough and pays enough. Too much, in fact. Easy is looking for the mayor's missing girlfriend. Losing her is making the mayor feel so bad he's not even going to run for reelection. That's what the newspaper says. But somebody thinks she has a taste for black men and is hanging out in Easy's part of town. Easy is getting a C-note just for the looking for her. But the next few days are going to get tough as a one-dollar steak for Easy. He is going to be involved in murder and gunplay and crooked politicians. And he isn't even a private dick. Yet.

Holding the megaphone was Carl Franklin of ONE FALSE MOVE. That film showed Franklin had a taste for the rough stuff. But this job didn't call for quite so much. Maybe some gunplay. What it called for was late '40s atmosphere. For that he got Tak Fujimoto, a good man with a camera. And Fujimoto lathered the '40s feel on like he had to use it up. He had shot Denzel Washington before on the PHILADELPHIA job. Washington slipped into the role of Easy like it was a suit cut just for him. But muscling in on his scenes is Tom Sizemore, whose creepy panache grabs the eye like a zoot suit at a monastery. Lagging behind is Jennifer Beals as a femme fatale, playing it stiff as a rusty gate hinge.

DEVIL IN A BLUE DRESS was the first of Walter Mosley's Easy Rawlins novels, and Franklin wrote the script as if the series was a meal ticket he was expecting to punch again. While Franklin's telling of the story gives it some twists, they seemed not so much after seeing THE USUAL SUSPECTS with a plot that's tangled like a five-year-old's first fishing line. But Franklin is playing the first Easy Rawlins story with just some easy-to-take twists and some openings like he is hoping to be invited back. Easy is not just a black Philip Marlowe. Mosely and Franklin give him a simple charm and the sly smarts to make him a character worth seeing again. Not so welcome is Rawlin's sidekick Mouse, played by Don Cheadle. Mouse is a loose cannon with a looser gun and has all the appeal of green mold on a stick of butter.

DEVIL IN A BLUE DRESS was a likable piece of noir and racks up a high +1 on the -4 to +4 scale. [-mrl]

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7. Intersection 1995 (a convention report by Evelyn C. Leeper) (part 3 of probably 6 parts):

The Wheels of If
Friday, 17:00
Hermann Ritter

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

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

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

1. Laws of Nature: i.e., no aliens, superpowers, etc.
2. Law of Historical Evidence: i.e., you cannot have a counter-factual if there is no historical evidence of the period (on which to base a factual, I suppose). Therefore counter-factuals cannot have change points before 4000 years ago or so. (The figure is Ritter's; I suspect Egypt's history goes back further than that.)
3. Law of Effect: Things happening with no observation (e.g.,

Shangri-La) don't count, and if the timeline merges back into our own (as in A CONNECTICUT YANKEE IN KING ARTHUR'S COURT) it doesn't count either.

4. Law of Intention: The author must intend to write a counter-factual. For example, James Bond is not a counter-factual. In counter-factuals there is usually a reference to our own world (as in "Isn't it nice that X happened?"), or to famous people in different roles, or to counter-factuals to their own world. This also means that non-fiction that turns out to be wrong is not a counter-factual. But Ritter considers just about every fiction book as alternate history, even if it is not counter-factual.

Ritter described three groups of material published on the topic:

1. Wargaming: as used by the military. Ritter said he doesn't like this, because people are described as numbers, and it sees history only as battles.
2. Cliometrics: a new economic history based on explicit models of human behavior. It still uses formulae, but relies on a causal analysis of fact, e.g., "If slavery had not existed in America, then the Civil War would not have been fought." Sometimes people add a factor--if Hitler had invaded England-

--but cliometrics does not do this; it only takes factors away. These seem at first difficult to separate, but since cliometrics uses numbers, it can only work if it has numbers--it cannot make up numbers for additions, but can "not use" existing numbers for deletions.

3. Wheels of If: addresses the question of the individual in the stream of time. This is an area overlooked by the other two.

Ritter claims counter-factuals date from 1931 and J. C. Squire's anthology IF IT HAD HAPPENED OTHERWISE (later published under the title IF, OR HISTORY REWRITTEN). Ritter listed many other articles, mostly in German, whose names I could not understand. I will assume most of them appear in Robert Schmunk's alternate history bibliography.

Ritter noted that although not the most popular change point, World

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

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

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

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

Someone asked whether this didn't lead to questions of free will versus determinism, and Ritter agreed that to some extent it did. But he believes that history is primarily a flow. In other words, in general he supports the "Tide of History" over the "Great Man"

theory. However, most counter-factuals deal with specific people and not with more general causes. Could this be because it's easier to postulate changes if individuals can have large effects?

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

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

BABYLON 5 Interview
Friday, 18:00
Marc Scott Zicree

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

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

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

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

As far as how much the scriptwriters are told, Zicree said that for "Survivors" he was merely told to have Garibaldi fall off wagon, but not given any reason for that. Zicree says that in general outside writers get the non-arc stories, so they don't need a lot

of information about future developments. Unlike with other series, the BABYLON 5 books and comic books are canonical and do connect up with the television story.

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

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

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

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

More than the Sum of the Parts
Saturday, 10:00
Pete Crowther (m), David Garnett, Stephen Jones,
Mike Resnick, Alex Stewart

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

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

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

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

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

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

Resnick said the difference was that anthologies are sold around a theme, and are usually by invitation, while magazines are usually not themed (except by accident or perhaps a special issue) and open

to everyone. Asked why anthologies are by invitation only, Resnick went through the arithmetic: the average anthology gets a US$8,000 advance for 100,000 words. At the standard rate of 7 cents a word, that leaves only US$1,000 for the editor, who almost invariably is splitting it with Martin Greenberg. It takes about three weeks to do the work involved if it is by invitation, resulting in an annualized "salary" of under US$9,000, or an hourly rate just slightly above US$4. If it's open and the editor has to read through a slushpile, it's considerably lower.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

epics.

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

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

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

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

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

Asked what anthologies most influenced them, Garrett named the Penguin science fiction anthology edited by Brian Aldiss (adding that ironically he now edits Aldiss), Resnick named the anthologies

edited by Groff Conklin, Jones named the PAN BOOK OF HORROR STORIES and DARK FORCES, and Stewart named the John Carnell series "New Writings in SF."

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

Next I had to arrange for a bus from Heathrow to Cardiff. This was not easy. I had the number for the National Express bus company, and knew that the city code for it had been changed by having a "1" prefixed, but I was getting some sort of message about having dialed incorrectly. When I first tried calling, it was in the very noisy Concourse, and I couldn't hear the message. Here I found a quiet phone in the Moat House, and discovered that all Perth numbers had been changed as well by having a "6" prefixed. So I tried *that* number. But it had been changed to something entirely different, with a city code I didn't recognize. I called the operator. It turned out to be a special code for a number that costs the same from anywhere, and I finally got through and made the reservations for the bus. The three-hour bus ride is L27 for a return ticket each, versus something like L55 for a two-hour train ride from Paddington--and we'd have to get to Paddington. I made the reservations on our Visa card and arranged to pick up the tickets at Heathrow when we got there.

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

Deconstructions: THE GUNS OF THE SOUTH
Saturday, 13:00
Paul Kincaid & Harry Turtledove in discussion

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

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

"This was not a book I planned to write," Turtledove responded. But Judith Tarr wrote him at one point about her new book, saying

that the "cover art [was] as anachronistic as Robert E. Lee holding an Uzi." This led Turtledove to ask, "Who would want to give Robert E. Lee Uzis? Time-traveling South Africans?" And so it began.

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

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

Turtledove said he started in the spring of 1864 in order to make the South examine the assumptions under which they gained their independence. By that point, the South had seen black troops, had experienced the occupation of some Southern areas, and had seen the (at least theoretical) emancipation of the slaves in states still in revolt. As Turtledove said, he wanted the book to say, "You got everything you thought you wanted. You're so damned smart, what are you going to do with it?" (As Turtledove explained later, the Emancipation Proclamation did not apply to Northern slave states--Missouri, Maryland, and Delaware--or the occupied South.)

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

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

South Africans being so racist served to make the Southerners in his book less so because they saw the horror of the extrapolation of their racism.

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

Kincaid asked about the lack of technology in the South. Turtledove said he had help from Chris Bunch on how the South would

have tried to reproduce the AK-47, and they concluded that it would have been possible for the South to reproduce it as in the book.

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

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

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

Turtledove announced, "I do not ever intend to write a sequel to GUNS." His reasoning is that the changes he postulated are so radical that it's too difficult to figure out which possibilities are the most likely much further down the line. But he is working on a different aftermath of a different Southern victory. This one assumes General Lee's courier did not lose Lee's General Orders No. 191. Hence there was no Emancipation Proclamation, the South

was recognized by England and France, so the South eventually was recognized by the Union as well. Then the Union allies with Germany in the late 1800s, leading to the Quadruple Entente. In passing, Turtledove noted that in 1914, Custer would have been seventy-five years old.

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

And this includes the woman in the book who served in the regiment in disguise. "There *was* a woman in the regiment," and she was well enough documented that he could use her. Other details include the high percentage of those dying of disease, which was twice that of those dying of wounds. The reason for this is that many North Carolinans (who had lived in relative isolation) were

not immune to childhood diseases and died shortly after enlisting.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Great Contributors to Screen SF
Saturday, 14:00
Jane [someone], Janet Ellicott

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

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

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

I left; it was too painful to listen to.

[to be continued] [-ecl]

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The trouble with our times is that the future is not what it used to be.
--Paul Valery