

recognition, since Judge Greene says the name cannot have the word "Bell" in it and having in our new any of the letters "B," "E," "L," or "L" must be negotiated. In fact our new CEO apparently called Judge Greene the other night just to say he would like to buy a vowel. However, there is great pressure to fix on a name and

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to get it into the news media and in front of the public in this all-important window between O. J. Simpson trials. And as the days go by it is becoming increasingly clear that "Yet to be Announced" is the name that the public associates with our new company.

I did my own survey to verify this. You probably didn't know this about me, but I am a great believer in collecting customer data. It shows the customers you respect them, and some of them don't get a whole lot of respect in the natural order of things, if you know what I mean. I did my own on-the-street interviews in Manhattan. Most people wouldn't talk to me, of course. Well, 85% of perfect strangers that you walk up to will assume that anybody who approaches them is not someone they want to be around. They must lead lonely lives, I guess. Most perfect strangers you approach in Manhattan look at you like a piece of moldy cheese and back away from you. So my secret is I wait for people to come up to me. The only problem is that way about all the people you can ask are carrying Styrofoam cups with coins in the bottom. Now, most of you people don't think much of this kind of person. But I say they deserve a little respect. I went to school in the 60s when we were all idealists. We all thought that when we got out of school we would be working for change. Well, the guys with the Styrofoam cups really did end up working for change.

So these guys who came up to me with their Styrofoam cups asking for loose change were willing to talk and most of them said that if they were looking for a telephone switch for a mid-range to large corporation they would definitely consider a "Yet to be Announced." One of them, Stan--you probably know him, he stands by the entrance of Penn Station and wears those gloves that have the fingers cut off--even told me that his broker was buying him a thousand shares of AT&T that very day. (He was sorry he said that. When I realized he could afford stock better than I could I reached into his cup and took my quarter back.) But the fact remains that Yatba

has come to be the name that the public is expecting and we have to find some way to trade off of that. I think we have to capitalize on that as soon as we get over the shock and surprise of this one-two punch. This double whammy. Not only that the company is being broken up again, but that we are doing it to ourselves. I am not sure which is worse. As Bob Allen said, "This is not something that the government is doing to us and we don't get a vote. This is something we're doing to you and you don't get a vote." Tell me, is it worse to hit your thumb with a hammer or to have someone else hit your thumb with the hammer? Either way it's going to be worse for the thumb than it is for the hammer, I suppose. [-mrl]

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

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What Makes a Good Short Story?

Monday, 10:00

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

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

Speller claimed that Terry Bisson once said that what makes a good short story is that it subverts all the rules of a good short story. Bisson said this was what he called a retro-story: "A wild idea dressed up just enough to get it out on stage and let it clank around a little bit." But he warned it can be done only occasionally. Soukup said that her story "The Story So Far" fit this description, being told from the point of view of a minor character with only a few scenes in someone else's story (something like ROSENKRANTZ AND GUILDERSTERN ARE DEAD, but without scenes

interpolated between the "real" scenes). The story, Soukup said, was workshopped and everyone (except Vonda McIntyre) told her she needed to change it completely. She didn't, and it was nominated for a Hugo.

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

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

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

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

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

Speller said that the attitude she hears that short stories are

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

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

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

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

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

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

The panelists also mentioned "fix-up" novels of connected short stories, such as A. E. Van Vogt's VOYAGE OF THE SPACE BEAGLE and Edgar Pangborn's DAVY, but Bisson observed that these are out of fashion now. (I expect we'll see one for Mike Resnick's "Kirinyaga" stories, and Harry Turtledove's AGENT OF BYZANTIUM was a "fix-up" novel.)

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

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

The Reviews We Deserve
Monday, 14:00
Simon Ings (m), David V. Barrett,
Greg Cox, Kathleen Ann Goonan

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

It sounded really great, but like so many other Monday afternoon panels, was canceled at the last minute (even after the day's

schedule had come out). I don't know if panelists changed their plans and left earlier than they had said, or if the schedule failed to take the panelists' travel plans into account, but this seemed to be common.

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

Conan Doyle and Forensics
Monday, 14:00
Duncan Lunan (m), Owen Dudley Edwards,
David Hall
[written by Mark R. Leeper]

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

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

Edwards said that the real-life precursor of Holmes was not so much Dr. Joseph Bell, but another professor from Edinburgh earlier in the century, Professor Christianson. The incident in *A STUDY IN SCARLET* in which Holmes is supposed to have beaten a corpse to determine to what extent bruises can be induced after death was

based on fact. It goes back to the notorious case of Burke and Hare. Apparently on one of the bodies the notorious pair provided there were bruises on the body and the pair claimed they were induced putting the corpse into a barrel. Christianson doubted that bruises could be induced after death and decided to find out.

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

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with laser light and ultra-violet light.

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

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

The conversation turned to Doyle's style. Edwards said that Doyle knew he was following on from the style of Poe. He said that not

only do the Holmes stories tend to have the same structure repeatedly, but it is the structure of a medical investigation. The client comes to Holmes with a problem, Holmes collects data, Holmes builds a theory, he tests it, he may be right or wrong, and then the case is solved. That structure is based on how medical students do inference. The Holmes stories are derived from teachers at medical schools and how medical students are trained to look at problems.

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

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

the real villain is not a human but it is the cursed hatchet at fault.

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

From the audience I asked if Doyle didn't seem to salt his clues into the story. For example, while it is true that a particular type of mud on a shoe might be a telling clue that most people would overlook, it would be unlikely to show up on a shoe in recognizable quantities anyway and its presence is contrived. Curiously Edwards, the Holmes expert, was the more inclined to agree with me. Hall said that "every contact leaves a mark" and it would in fact be detectable one way or another to show exactly

where a suspect had been. Edwards said that this was based on a real police case, but the person had been in another part of the country. It is unlikely that Holmes would know dirt from all over London or that a particular kind of dirt would be unique to a particular part of London. [-mrl]

Instead I went to:

Three Fandoms--Travellers
Monday, 14:30
Frances Dowd, Oliver Gruter-Andrew,
Lynne Ann Morse

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Miscellaneous

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

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

The WSFS Business Meeting passed original amendments removing the Hugo Award for Best Original Artwork, adding "related subjects" to the description of what is eligible for the Best Dramatic

Presentation, and making various technical changes; if these pass at L.A.Con III, they will take effect.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Next year in Los Angeles! [-ecl]

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