

Recollections



Introduction

By Chris "The Magician" O'Shea II

How to start...

"If this is Monday, this must be the Introduction!"

Nah, too corny!

"Consider, if you will, a man caught rigidly in front of a glowing sheet of glass, in a place between time and imagination, in a dimension not of space and time but of points, an area we call {doo de doo doo, da DA, da da da dum} the Twilight Zone..."

No.

"Call me Ishmael"

Better, but it sounds slightly familiar.

"Out of all the word processors, in all the machines, in all of fandom, this had to crawl out of mine"

Definitely not.

How do you write an introduction for a convention that you have grown to know more completely than the murderer of Laura Palmer?

The committee for this convention is the first that I ever joined. The fact that it has taken so long from original idea (see later articles) to convention means that I have been on many committees since, but none that were as enjoyable, as fun or as thought provoking.

Reconnaissance has been a labour of love for us all, and the great thing about it is that it has turned out closer to the original idea than any of us hoped.

The idea of not having guests but "special participants" has been welcomed by many (except those of you who would come up and say "...yes...special participants...yeah, but who's your Guest of Honour?"). Well, we still don't have one, because this is not a convention to honour any particular person, but the future of the field as a whole (as opposed to the future of a hole in the field!). Each of our special participants has been chosen for the contribution that they could make to our theme, and potted bios of each of them follow.

Enjoy!

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Special Participants

By Rob Meades

Gill Alderman

Gill now lives in Cork with her husband and four Lurchers. Her first novel *The Archivist*, published in late 1989, is set in an imperialist matriarchal culture on an alien planet where space flight is a thing of the past. Her second novel, *The Land Beyond*, was published in November 1990, and she is currently writing her third novel, which is set in rural England. She is interested in cooking and eating, and spends her new life in Eire going to the pub too often and meeting interesting people.

Lionel Fanthorpe

Lionel was born in East Dearham and lives in Cardiff. He has written over 100 SF novels, of which the most renowned is *The Black Lion*. He has been a school headmaster, has taught rock-climbing, weight training and judo, and is now an Anglican priest. With his wife, Patricia, he has spent 15 years researching the history of Rennes-le-Château, a French castle, just north of the eastern Pyrenees. His novel on the subject *Rennes-le-Château: its Mysteries and Secrets* has just been published.

Mary Gentle

Mary Gentle is the author of *A Hawk in Silver*, *Golden Witchbreed*, *Ancient Light*, *Scholars and Soldiers* and *Rats and Gargoyles*. In her spare time she hits people with swords and shoots them with lasers; she also participated in the recent demonstrations against war in the Gulf. She is one of the four directors of *Midnight Rose*, a shared world book packaging company, attending this Convention. Her next book, *The Architecture of Desire*, is due to be published in Summer 1991. She lives in Stevenage.

Colin Greenland

Colin was Writer in Residence at the Science Fiction Foundation, the charity adopted by this Convention, from 1980 to 1982. He now runs the reviews column in *Foundation* magazine, and he has also run the SF class at the City Literary Institute in London. He has stories in the first two *Temps* anthologies and writes

on books and films for the *Sunday Times* and *The Face*. He is putting together a series of interviews with SF writers, many of which are appearing in *Interzone*. In the midst of all this, Colin still finds time to write books: they include *The Hour of the Thin Ox*, *Other Voices* and *Take Back Plenty*, which has recently been nominated for the BSFA and Arthur C. Clarke awards.

John Gribbin

John is a science and science fiction writer living in Sussex. He is a consultant to *New Scientist* and his books include *In Search of Schrödinger's Cat*, *In Search of the Double Helix*, *In Search of the Big Bang*, *The Omega Point*, *The Hole in the Sky* and *Hothouse Earth*. He has also published *The Cartoon History of Time* with Kate Charlesworth. He is, unfortunately, unable to attend this Convention.

Simon Ings

Born in 1965, Simon is a freelance writer. His first novel *Hothead* will be out this year and he has already sold his second. His hobbies include moving house.

Roz Kaveney

Editor of *Tales from the Forbidden Planet* volumes 1 and 2, Roz has been a regular reviewer in *Foundation* magazine and *Vector*. She has reviewed fiction for the *Times Literary Supplement* and reviews SF for *City Limits*. She has taken over editorship of the *Good Book Guide* from Neil Gaiman and is a director of *Midnight Rose*, currently editing *Weerde* and *Villains!*. She has several forthcoming novelettes. Outside SF her other activities include founding Feminists Against Censorship, while she is also active in the council for civil liberties; she has no spare time.

David Langford

Dave Langford is known by SF fans for his humorous writing and publication of *Ansible*, the award winning British fanzine. He has won the Hugo award for Best British Fan Writer many times and his books include *War in 2080*, *The Space Eater*, *The Leaky Establishment* and *The Dragon-Hiker's Guide to Battlefield Covenant at Dune's Edge: Odyssey II*.

Lorna Mitchell

Lorna hates doing 100 word bios. She claims to be an ageing hippy and is involved in communal and cooperative living. She reads mainly religious texts and is studying Hebrew and the Bible. She has written one SF novel *The Revolution of St. Joan* and is working on a Book of the Dead she hopes to title *Nemo's Book of Death* which will include a description of what happens after death, how to cope with grief and a discussion of the meaning of life and death.

Terry Pratchett

Terry, having cut himself free from a job as PR officer for what was the CEEB, is now a full time writer. He has written the highly acclaimed and very funny *DiscWorld Series* (titles too numerous to mention), and has most recently published *Good Omens* with Neil Gaiman (another *Midnight Rose* director). He has a love for cats and carnivorous plants ('they are a lot less interesting than people believe').

David Pringle

Editor of *Interzone*, the monthly UK SF magazine, Dave has probably done more to encourage new SF writers in this country than anyone else. He was editor of *Foundation* magazine from 1980 to 1985 and has written several non-fiction books, the most recent of which is the immodestly titled *The Ultimate Guide to Science Fiction*. He is employed as editor at GWbooks, where he commissions novels and edits anthologies based on fantasy and SF games worlds. He has just launched a new bi-monthly magazine about popular and genre fiction called *Million*.

Geoff Ryman

Author of *The Warrior Who Carried Life*, *The Unconquered Country* (which won the World Fantasy Award) and, most recently *The Child Garden* (which won the Arthur C. Clarke Award), Geoff is one of the most prominent new SF writers in Britain today. He is also known amongst SF fans for his dramatic presentations, most recently *Gilgamesh* performed at Novacon in 1989. He is currently writing a novel set against the background of the filming of the *Wizard of Oz*. He regularly comes top of informal polls for the most attractive man in SF fandom.

Alex Stewart

Alex is a director of *Midnight Rose* and a freelance writer. He was involved in the organisation of SF conventions before becoming the first new writer to be published by *Interzone* magazine. He has recently edited the anthology *Arrows of Eros*.

Charles Stross

Born 1964, Charlie has been writing from an early age. He sold his first story to *Interzone* in 1986, and has sold more than a dozen since. He has degrees in pharmacy and computer science and has worked as a pharmacist and a technical author. His hobbies include moving house, drinking, collecting rejection slips, listening to strange music and being boring about anything other than SF.

Ashley Watkins

Ashley attended his first SF convention in 1976 (Lunicon), and his first Eastercon was Scicon; things have been going downhill ever since. He has always been interested in gaming - he helped play-test *Cosmic Encounters* for what has become Games Workshop, back in 1978. He is an active wargamer, artist, comics fan, and is especially interested in Japanese comics; he also enjoys Japanese animation and martial arts - he is learning to read and write Japanese. At the moment he is writing a column on BattleTech for GMI and has produced four issues of his own BattleTech magazine *Mektek*.

Dean Wayland

Dean is founder of the Fight School, which was established in 1981 by a handfull of people dissatisfied with the state of combat as taught in live role play and re-enactment of the time. Based in Stevenage, their aim is to teach unscripted combat techniques with maximum safety, using reproduction weapons modified for safety; they have not had a single weapons related accident requiring medical attention. He is also a combat instructor for Event Horizon, a company which organises laser tag battles.

The Science Fiction Foundation

by Rob Meades

...is nothing to do with Asimov's *Foundation* stories. It is an SF library based at the Polytechnic of East London and run by a council of SF critics and writers. Its intention is to promote SF to the public and to provide a reference library for researchers in the field.

It was set up in 1970 by a group of writers led by Geroge Hay. In the early seventies money flowed more easily from the coffers of the government into such hair-brained schemes, and the Polytechnic lent a sympathetic ear and hard cash. Then the sob story - I don't need to tell you of the state of publicly funded bodies under the Thatcher/Major/Tory government. From a full-time staff of two, one at senior lecturer level, resources have dwindled to a single, part-time and particularly over-worked secretary.

The Foundation has about ?? books. I say ?? since the library has been without the services of a full-time librarian for many years now and so no-one has had time to properly catalogue and count the books; there could be anywhere from 10,000 to 20,000 items (including magazines). It has a particularly large collection of reference works, though this has been neglected recently through lack of an acquisitions budget (in which it is not alone - the Polytechnic main library has suffered similar cuts). Cue Friends of Foundation ...

At a party many moons ago, a group of us got to talking about the Foundation and I became sufficiently interested to find out more. I was put in contact with John Clute, a well known SF critic who was, at the time, editing the reviews column in *Foundation* magazine (more of this later). With his encouragement, Friends of Foundation was formed, with an aim to take some of the burden from the shoulders of the Foundation staff, to buy books and equipment that can be placed on permanent loan at the Foundation, and to supply willing hands when assistance is required.

Friends has been in existence for over a year now. It has a committee and has had an AGM (last Novacon) - all those boring things an organisation has to have to make it an organisation. But that's not what it's all about; what it is about is enthusiastic people who

feel committed to SF. We have regular work-days at the Foundation, some of which are on Saturdays, to which all are welcome (providing they ring us beforehand to say they are coming). We publish a regular newsletter, and offer a subscription to *Foundation* magazine as part of our membership fee.

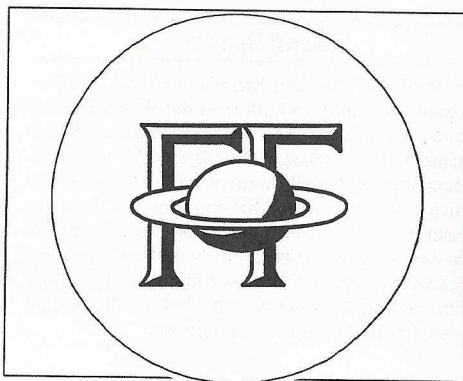
Which leads me on neatly to the magazine itself. Properly titled *Foundation: The Review of Science Fiction* it has a world-wide circulation of just under 1000, many of the subscribers being reference libraries around the world. It is edited by Ed James of York University, and many of the SPs for this convention write reviews for the magazine. It has just published its 50th issue; if you would like to see a sample of the magazine, come along to the Friends desk in the Convention Bar and talk to us.

And while you're there, why not join? You can be sure your money will go to supporting an SF library, the only public access SF library in the UK. We need help organising events and coordinating with other bodies (we are currently talking to researchers into Science Policy at Manchester University about a joint project, and we recently organised a performance of Philip K. Dick's 'Metz' speech) and if you don't have time to talk to us here, we meet in London every month. Or just come along to our desk and feed Robert (more information is provided in the *ReadMe!*).

For further details, contact:

Rob Meades, Coordinator FoF, 75 Hecham Close, Walthamstow, LONDON, E17 5QT.

And finally - *Reconnaissance* has adopted the Foundation as its charity. Any surplus we make will be given to the Foundation, through the Friends, including the 10% commission from auction sales.



Myths, Computers and Cyberpunk

By Charles Stross

Science fiction as a genre is multifaceted. On one level it purports to naively predict possible futures, both in terms of futurist extrapolations and in terms of the human reaction to such events; on another level, it is simply a subset of the broader literary field, with the question "but what if...?" appended to its exploratory remit. It is interesting to note that these views lie at opposite poles of an axis running through the genre, between "hard sf" at one end and the literary experimentalism identified by Bruce Sterling as "Slipstream" (see *SF Eye* #5) at the other. Other axes exist within the literature, but for the purposes of this article I intend to concentrate on a serious flaw in the gemstone: why it is that a supposedly visionary literature has completely ignored or trivialised the implications of what is currently the fastest-evolving technology on the planet.

This is quite a serious accusation to make. Writers at each end of the predictive/experimental axis may feel themselves to be quite justified in protesting loudly. The predictive tendency can rightly point to bigger and better mainframes, smaller and faster microprocessors, and even to the holy grail of Artificial Intelligence, the ghost in the machine. On the other hand, the experimentalists may well protest that they have explored the preoccupations of humanity from a human perspective, and that they have dealt adequately with information technology whenever it has trespassed within the arena of human interaction. Both groups are right; and, equally, both are wrong. I would like to use as my working example the sub-genre known as "Cyberpunk" which emerged during the early 80's and which positions itself about halfway along this hypothetical axis, combining human concerns with a future more rigorously extrapolated than those of its antecedents.

It's a shame that the computer-as-icon has been taken up as central to cyberpunk, because it isn't. Science fiction has always tended to reflect contemporary attitudes and concerns, and cyberpunk is no exception. This is a sub-genre obsessed with style and insecurity. Style and design were two buzzwords for the 1980's which may well be remembered long after all other memories of the decade have faded; insecurity was another. Cyberpunk reflected these neuroses by snapping up the trendy accoutrements of the

design magazines and splashing them across a broad canvas of contemporary human concerns. We read about television advertising as a form of art; brand-name implants; Japanese multinationals buying up everything in sight; and the omnipresent awareness of corruption and pollution in the background, like a danse macabre with dioxin. These are magnifications of today, projected onto the screen of the future. Computers, the burgeoning new technology of the 80's, were obviously part and parcel of this projection: and so it's no surprise that they feature prominently in books like *Neuromancer* and *Ambient*.

Being projections of the present day, the heroes and heroines of cyberpunk fiction aren't the classic Campbellian/Heinleinian "competent man", gung-ho in a space suit. These people are products of the anomie of the 80's, suffering the insecurity and alienation in the face of rapid change that is so typical of the period (for a vivid and non-Gibsonian example of this, I would cite *The Glass Hammer* by KW Jeter or *Metrophage* by Richard Kadrey). The protagonists are generally either losers or company (wo)men and hence, not directly responsible for their own circumstances - for in such an angst-extrapolation all our insecurity rises up to assault us and the only way to survive our fears is to evade them, typically by placing responsibility in the hands of a larger corporate identity.

Because cyberpunk seems so contemporary, it offers a mirror which the 80's sf community has used in order to scrutinise its own preoccupations to an incestuous degree. Unfortunately, this has led to certain problems of definition. Pinning down cyberpunk is like nailing jelly to a tree; it tends to slip and slide, and gets into places where it shouldn't. For example, some reviewers tried to lump Storm Constantine and Connie Willis in with the likes of Tom Maddox and John Shirley, perhaps because they weren't depicting 50's, 60's or even 70's people in their fiction. Both Willis and Constantine have aimed for striking levels of contemporaneity in their characterisation, but neither of them are writing in that curiously stunted vision of the future wherein *everyone* is a hustler. These two deal with human beings who are neither straitjacketed with the simplistic formulae of escapist wish-fulfilment nor manacled to the ball-and-chain of suburban angst; their protagonists are complex, contradictory, and thoroughly *modern*. But cyberpunk, whatever else it may be, is not a blanket label for modernity; hence the element of confusion.

At the same time as the initial cyberpunk explosion, other writers were discovering the 80's. Some of these - Kim Stanley Robinson primarily, but also

James Patrick Kelly, John Kessel, James P. Blaylock, Tim Powers - didn't particularly like where the Movement was going, or where it said it was going, or even where it appeared to be coming from. Whatever the cause, the effect has been obvious; acrimonious dispute. Cyberpunk was frequently misunderstood, disliked intensely by those who just wanted another dose of their favourite literary tranquilliser, and in the end the authors who originally promoted it moved on to newer pastures. The field has since been cannibalised by younger, less original writers (whom I once referred to as "Technogoths" in recognition of the fact that they adopted the gaudy clothing of their predecessor 'punks without paying enough attention to the controversial contents).

One question remains unasked (and thus unanswered) - the subject of this article; given that sf uses the future to reflect today's preoccupations, why did the appearance of a major new technology evoke such a trivial response? Because the use of computers in cyberpunk is trivial. This technology is, today, evolving so rapidly that it is possible to look at a machine built only ten years ago and describe it in terms of archaeology. Current research in virtual environments and nanotechnology is threatening to render reality itself obsolescent within a time scale of two to five decades. The possibility of creating a true artificial intelligence remains questionable, but the question is still fundamentally an open one. Surely the cyberpunks, with their position somewhere between the poles of rigorous techno-extrapolation and humanist self-scrutiny, should have been able to identify and address these questions. But why didn't they? In order to examine this problem, it's necessary to identify the nature of the beast - the intersection of computer science and sf - and the misuse to which it has been put.

Let's ignore the question of whether AI is *possible* for the moment. Many people have strongly-held, dogmatic views on the issue, and it's not strictly relevant to the issue in hand, which is the treatment of computers in sf. What is interesting is the fictional treatment that the hypothesis of AI has received. Possible or not, AIs *are* central to the portrayal of computers in SF, and cyberpunk in particular. They provide a kind of operating system for the imagination, a motivating force without which the fictional machines are nothing more than buzzing lumps of characterless background plastic; this is true to the extent that it's difficult to think of an sf novel in which computers are prominent but not gifted with sentience of some kind.

There is a popular image of the computer that became prevalent in the 50's and still persists; the vast white monolith surrounded by engineers and scientists, mysterious acolytes of the vast, brooding artificial intelligence. The personal computer has banalised this image, but it hasn't dispelled it completely; by analogy, where formerly Dr Frankenstein once lurked in his laboratory in his castle attic and the townspeople bolted their doors at night, now the spotty adolescent who lives next door to you is brewing trouble by night with the chemistry kit his parents bought him for his 14th birthday.

Several examples of the application of this image spring to mind. First, and most obvious, is the HAL-9000 syndrome - an example of the disobedient golem, the logical come-uppance for those who would play God. Next, and perhaps related to these fears of disobedience, is the God-in-a-box syndrome. If it's so damned powerful, why not make it responsible for the whole shooting match and have done with it? (Jack L. Chalker in particular has taken this tendency to an almost megalomaniacal extreme in some of his fiction.) Finally, somewhere within the spectrum between these two extremes of villainous villain and benevolent master, lies the third option: the machine as convenient alien for exploration. True Aliens, after all, are a lot less biddable than the big white box next door; Deep Thought is always on hand to provide a command performance of inscrutability, whereas aliens, by definition, are alien and Not To Be Trusted. Ever. That's what the myth of the alien is about... and computers have, now, been thoroughly mythologised.

Some human preoccupations are constant; that is, they do not change over a time scale short enough for us to conveniently observe. The continuing power of ancient mythic traditions is an example of this. Myths are essential to human culture insofar as they provide templates for behaviour; they outline the test-to-destruction of the human social organism along narrowly defined axes. They continue to speak to us because the history or our species is a continuous process in which information is *added* to our collected memory, and once included becomes very hard to destroy. Myths address the very core of our response patterns; jealousy, anger, revenge, love, territoriality... the litany of emotions that have been with us since before we became human. This baggage is so deeply rooted in the human psyche that it cannot, be destroyed: consider the difficulty of concisely defining any of those words as a measure of the degree to which they are integral to our experience.

Let's select Gibson as the key example of a cyberpunk writer. Gibson used computers (and AI) as a metaphor. Style is not the same as content, and Gibson appears to have been somewhat at a loss for an original plot in *Neuromancer*. Nevertheless, he seems to have eventually decided to use the trappings of contemporary society, projected onto the mirror of the future, as a tool with which to examine those myths that most interested him. These myths seem generally to have been preoccupations with helplessness; the 80's were very conducive to such feelings, with their cold-war ambience and neurotic technosleaze. The fictions Gibson developed used extremely powerful, even omniscient, beings (the AIs), and mortals who were condemned to search for the knowledge that would free them. The trappings were contemporary, the hermetic texts replaced with cool blue video screens, the high priest of Athene with the improbable figure of The Finn... but the patterns were the same.

Just as the B-feature primarily used socio-cultural images and conventions to convey its message, so did cyberpunk. Frankenstein corresponds to the fearful Pentagon officials in *War Games* and even the teen-aged nerd next door has his own cyberspace deck to play with. The hackers and cyberspace cowboys of *Neuromancer* have far more in common with Dr Faustus or Victor Frankenstein than they have with any real computer programmer, alive or dead.

Consider cyberspace itself, the mysterious domain in which information lurks in the raw, accessible only to those who already possess a little dangerous knowledge. It has hidden dangers; there is always a Mephistopheles to demand some frightful payment in return for access to it, or a Monster to come lurching down fearful dark alleys in search of retribution. AIs substitute for angels or devils - literally, in the case of *Count Zero* and *Mona Lisa Overdrive* - and cyberspace for the forbidden wisdom, in which they can be found. Sometimes the demon or the monster are actually parts of the hero(ine), summoned up by their own exposure to knowledge without wisdom, and sometimes they are cunningly disguised - but it always comes back to the tired old arcana, the pithy observation that A Little Knowledge Is A Dangerous Thing.

The characters in Gibson's work appear to be the inheritors of Faust or Frankenstein, who in turn were descended from Prometheus. And this is the level they function on, the level of myth. Gibson's novels, at plot level, don't constitute escapist fiction so much as reworked mythologies, in places this becomes overt. The end of *Mona Lisa Overdrive*, which

lurches to an escapist conclusion, jars precisely because it isn't an escapist-structured novel.

Computers therefore feature in Gibson's work on two levels: as elements of style - the present projected on the future - and, with added AI, as mythic components, the *deus ex machina*. Gibson can probably be excused responsibility for the subsequent abuse of these two distinct aspects of his work, but the net result has that any sensible exploration of the impact of information technology on the present has been completely obscured by the presentation of computers as either the latest gosh-wow God-substitute or as matt-black fashion accessories. A couple of contrary examples shine out - notably *Islands in the Net* by Bruce Sterling, and the pre-cyberpunk *The Shockwave Rider* by John Brunner - but in general, the treatment of informational technologies by sf has been execrable, tending to concentrate exclusively on the stylistic or the mythic levels of the stereotype.

Confusing style with content has been the downfall of the cyberpunk imitators. Cyberpunk muddled the waters by presenting itself as contemporary whilst of the most part emulating a trend-setter whose influences were, at root, obsolescent. This has made it a sub-genre particularly easy to parody unintentionally (as witness *Dreams of Flesh and Sand* by WT Quick, or *The Second Program* by Tom Maddox), simply because of the authors' failure to avoid the gaffes of previous works in the field. Among the elements that stick out like a sore thumb in any of the follow on cyber-epics is the gratuitous abuse of large quantities of silicon. Indeed, the endless proliferation of 21st century dystopias dominated by 1950's mega-mainframes has almost become a genre stereotype. Considering that within the next 20 years it is probable that the mainframe will become extinct, this is rather short-sighted. What we see portrayed as the reflection of today upon tomorrow is actually the reflection of yesterday upon tomorrow; the 50's myth of the Big White Box is being recycled *ad infinitum* while far more revolutionary developments are being ignored.

It is worth noting that sf as a predictive medium has consistently demonstrated a blind spot towards the potential of informational technologies, preferring the somewhat more gaudy moon-rockets and robots that, at the time, reflected the scientific aspirations of the day; relatively crude power technologies descended from the era of agriculture (the robot - "worker") and the early industrial revolution (the steam powered engine). Truly visionary sf treatments of computing are few and far between, because the distortion that a mature information technology will

face between our senses and the real world around us is totally alien to our experience. **Escape Plans** by Gwyneth Jones is an example that works - but even this is a conservative vision when the time span described is taken into account. Fundamentally, the computing industry is truly exhibiting exponential growth, and this - as Heinlein observed in the 1940's - is so frighteningly rapid that even a temporally conservative projection may seem like a mad fantasy to the uninformed.

depicting the contemporary information revolution is that of recrudescence style-mania, confined within the ghetto-ised enclave of cyberpunk. We who write in the sf field have betrayed our historic claim to reflect the future, in return for a treacherous stylistic enterprise based upon obsolete traditions; and unless we can dig our imaginations free of the post-cyberpunk quagmire, we may never regain the ability to see even the present day with clear eyes.

As a predictive medium, sf has failed the computer. The Technogoths, those cyberpunk assimilationists whose works currently dominate the pages of *Interzone*, have digested the lesson uncritically; and consequently, despite a proliferation of implants and cyberspace decks, we have little of any real significance here. Technogoth seems to present a reassuringly dull vision of a future that is not so far removed from those supposedly buried futures of the 1950's, with a little added sex as a concession to changing public appetites. If this isn't a telling example of the narrow-minded conservatism of the sf genre, I'm not sure what is.

Here I rest my case, and my keyboard. There's got to be a solution, a genre where at least *these* limits of precedent do not apply to the imagination. A genre in which the fictions accurately reflect at least *some* of what we may well experience as virtual realities in the next century. A genre which has the scope to reflect mythic structures, but which also has the breadth to avoid them if necessary. I'm talking, of course, about fantasy...

Science fiction has failed even to reflect the present state of the art; the only level upon which it has succeeded in

When approached for an article, Charles pleaded lack of time. However he had just written an article for Vector that would fit our brief and so they were contacted. Reconnaissance would like to thank Vector, the critical Journal of the British Science Fiction Association for permission to reprint this article.

"RENNES-LE-CHÂTEAU -- its Mysteries and Secrets"

by

LIONEL AND PATRICIA FANTHORPE

Rennes-le-Chateau is arguably the strangest enigma of all time: what ancient secrets still lie hidden in and around this remote French mountain top village? Fifteen years of research have gone into the Fanthorpes' latest book on the intriguing Rennes mystery.

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Heinlein, Herbert and Hubbard: Does your name have to begin with "H" to write SF about Religion?

by Lionel Fanthorpe

Hercules was once given a few unenviable and rather difficult little jobs. The king in *Rumpelstiltskin* asked the hapless girl who was handicapped by a boastful father to spin straw into gold, with the rather unfriendly alternative of being shortened by some ten or twelve inches in the morning if the miracle didn't happen. Various soldiers of fortune from the same epoch met weird ladies with pointed hats and matching lower manibles who set them amusing little tasks: such as sweeping up all the leaves in the forest before nightfall on a gusty November day. Power mad sergeant majors have been known to suggest pastimes such as whitewashing the regimental coal stocks with a toothbrush, or cutting the grass on the parade ground with a pair of nail scissors.

There're a few lines of the old ballad about Sir Patrick Spens and his less than succesful voyage to Norway in mid-winter which are reminiscent of the author's present situation: seeing a letter with the Royal Seal made Patrick leap about joyfully, delighted to hear from the King -- when he read the contents and found out *precisely* what the King wanted he wasn't quite as exuberant.

There's nothing an author likes more than a commissioning letter from an editor . . . I was leaping Spens-like around the study and chortling fruitily as I uncovered the word processor. . . Then I saw the title which Chris had put together with the subtlety excelling that of Dr Fu Manchu and Professor Moriarty

It's not the title I'd have selected: I'd have gone for the *Oak Island Money Pit Mystery* or *The Treasure of Rennes-le-Chateau*, but I was a journalist for long enough to learn that when an Editor really wants an article on a given subject, he has ways and means of getting it!

So here we go with *Heinlein, Herbert . . . etc.*

Robert Anson Heinlein was born in 1907, and educated at the University of Missouri and the US Naval Academy. He served as a naval officer until 1934 (the year before I was born!) and then studied physics before beginning to write in 1939. His first story, *Lifeline*, was published in *Astounding Science Fiction*, where his works appeared for several years. He made his name with stories like *Requiem* and *The Roads must Roll*, which were both part of a 'future history' series.

One of Heinlein's better known involvements with 'religious' SF was *Sixth Column*, a story based on an idea of John W. Campbell Jr., in which an invasion of the USA was defeated by a resistance movement disguised as a religion -- its apparent 'miracles' were actually the results of a super scientific technology. Another of Heinlein's 'religious' stories was *Beyond this Horizon* -- a description of a future society where people seek the meaning of life. (Is the answer still 42, we ask ourselves ?)

Frank Herbert was born in Tacoma, Washington, in 1920, educated at the University of Washington in Seattle, and (like me!) worked as a journalist in his early days. His first story *Looking for Something* appeared in *Startling Stories* in 1952 -- the same year that my first story *Worlds Without End* appeared in *Futuristic Science Stories*.

Probably best known for his *Dune* series, Herbert is often concerned with 'religious' ideas -- the hero of *Dune* becomes a messianic figure; and in *The God-makers* human effort actually creates a god.

And what can we say about Lafayette Ron Hubbard?

Born in 1911, Hubbard didn't only *write* 'religious' SF he *became* the real life founder and quasi-religious leader of Dianetics and Scientology -- a post which allegedly made him a millionaire.

Some of his 'religious' thought peeps through in *Typewriter in the Sky* (published in *Unknown* in 1940) where he sees the writer as a kind of god, with the narrator involved in this god-writer's fantasy world and trying desperately to get out.

But to give Chris's question a short, definite answer: no, you don't have to have a name beginning with H to write SF about religion. There's a case to be made for "F" as well.

How about Philip Jose Farmer ?

Born in 1918, Phil took a BA in English in 1950 at Bradley University, and is probably best known for his *Riverworld* series, in which he poses major religious questions about immortality and ethics.

Then there's another SF writer whose surname begins with F, whom I wouldn't be able to mention if I'd ever suffered from modesty. His first published story (*Worlds Without End*, *Futuristic Science Stories*, 1952) deals with the problems which beset a theistic space pilot who is sent out by an atheistic interplanetary council to test whether the universe is finite.

His *Derl Wothor* trilogy, of which volume one, *The Black Lion*, was published by *Greystoke Mobray* in 1979, asks a series of religious questions about morality and motivation.

The three main characters, The Black lion, The Golden Tiger and Zotala the Priest each personify an aspect of human motivation. Mark Sable, The black Lion, is straightforward Alexandrine ambition. Mark is the man who wants to conquer first the planet, then the system . . . then the galaxy . . . and anything else that may be waiting out there! But his competitiveness has moral boundaries: he must win, but he must win within the rules. He is ruthless in war, but magnanimous in victory. The Golden Tiger is the hypo-statement of hedonism and epicureanism: he goes after the good things of life like a pig after a truffle. Yet he, too, has moral boundaries: he will not take the last drink from a wine bottle if his friend's glass is empty. Zotala the Priest is the personification of goodness and altruism: he labours and seeks no reward except the knowledge that what he does pleases God and helps others. He gives and never counts the cost.

Central to the plot is the wreckage of the crippled spaceship in which Zotala, the Lion and the Tiger first came to Derl millennia ago . . . If only it could be repaired, they could escape from Derl's limitations to explore the infinite universe beyond . . .

The Lion, the Tiger and Zotala are counterbalanced by the forces of dark, sinister evil. There is Andros the Swamp Wizard, who is Mark's main antagonist: Andros is unlimited ambition without moral restriction -- he is Nero, Caligula, Attila the Hun, Genghis Khan or Hitler, but without any trace of redeeming human virtue. the Golden Tiger is matched not against an individual but against the League of Three Cities -- a corrupt and decadent urban civilisation beside which Sodom and Gomorrah would appear as pleasantly innocent garden cities! Zotala, the essence

of generosity and unselfish love, is pitted against Kelnos the Sand Wizard -- the essence of destructive, iconoclastic nihilism: Kelnos wants nothing for himself, he wants nothing for others . . . and ultimately *he wants there to be nothing to want!*

The three heroes try to work together, but not necessarily in perfect harmony all the time: it is Zotala's goodness which unites them. Mark's ambition operates within a framework of morality. The Golden Tiger's epicureanism is an ethical epicureanism.

The whole story is allegorical. Every human being is motivated by different degrees of ambition, hedonism and altruism. It is only when these three competing motivations inside a person can resolve their differences and pull in the same direction that the personality is fully integrated: the crippled spaceship takes off . . .

Another major problem in the general discussion prompted by Chris's title is the definition of our terms: what do we mean by SF and what do we mean by religion?

I'll leave the actual definition of SF to the experts attending *Reconnaissance*, but I will, as an Anglican Priest working for the Church in Wales, attempt a definition and description of religion. It's the feeling inside every thinking being that leaves him or her asking: "So what? What's it all for? What does life mean, anyway?" And it's the answer to those questions. When ambition and hedonism are burnt out, and you sit despondently stirring the ashes, there's something inside you that says: "There has to be more to life than this." I'd define that *something* as religious appetite for which the means of satisfaction are not provided, there must be something, or rather *Someone* who is able to satisfy this appetite too.

Whether expressed in 'religious' SF, in theology or in philosophy and metaphysics, I have found no better or more satisfying answers to the Riddle of Life than those which Bishop Anselm Genders (a contemporary saint and one of my real life heroes!) quoted in a characteristically superb sermon: "We have come from God. We exist to serve God. At death we shall return to God." That's good enough for me.



Hackers

Being the First Chronicle of the Dwarfs
by T. P. Ratchett¹

The sky snowed bitter. It froze brass monkeys. Two inches deep, it would only freeze the ankles of brass monkeys. But it was just the right height to freeze much more important bits of Dworkin.

Dworkin was a dwarf. He stood just four inches high. And he was very worried about the personal bits that were getting frozen by the snow. He sneezed a sad kind of wet sneeze, the kind of sneeze that leaves gooey gobs dangling on the end of your nose to freeze into icicles. And he coughed, the kind of rasping, dry, unproductive cough that leaves the victim wishing there were something nice and gooey in his lungs to dredge up and spit out. Nothing like a nice, slimy bit of phlegm to soothe a sore throat.

All the dwarfs in the tribe had colds. Always had, always would, it was congenital. They all coughed something rotten. They were known as the Hackers.

There was no mystery about it. All the dwarfs knew that they didn't belong on this cold, wet, germ-laden planet. Stood to reason. Somewhere, out there in the Universe, there must be a planet just right for dwarfs. Most probably -- at least, so old Dworfrith said, and he was at least nine years old, so he ought to know -- most probably, said the legends (as well as old Dworfrith), their ancestors had come to Earth across the void of space in a craft more advanced than anything the great, lumbering human beings they shared this forsaken planet with could even dream of.

Pretty obviously what must have happened was that the spaceship malfunctioned, stranding the ancestors of the dwarfs on Earth several thousand years ago. Ever since then, they'd been waiting for the humans to develop a spacefaring civilisation, so that they could hitch a ride back home.

I mean, it makes sense, doesn't it? If you were stuck on an inhospitable planet with a race of giant hairy apes, first thing you'd think of would be "I bet if we encourage these apes to bash stones together, in no time at all they'll be bright enough to build us a spaceship."

¹. "T.P. Ratchett" is an untranslatable Dworfish name, sometimes rendered in English as "Johnand-Ben Gribben".

That was the trouble, you see. Dwarfs were lazy. Always looking for the easy way out. Let someone else do the work. Which was why they were all standing out here, up to their unmentionables in snow, waiting for the night watchmen to go to sleep.

Dworkin blamed the books for it, really. The tribe had been living quite well for generations, thirty years or more, since they moved out of the middle of Cambridge. The Institute was a good home; shoddily built, it had lots of nooks and crannies for dwarfs to hide in, and there was plenty of food to be found in the fields nearby (mainly in the field where the canteen had been built). Much better than the old Cavendish Lab².

But the trouble was, the astronomers read an awful lot of books. And a lot of awful books, in Dworkin's opinion. Not that anyone listened to him. The ones the dwarfs read most avidly, when their owners were away, were the ones with the spaceships on their covers.

It had to be admitted that dwarfs were not very good at reading English; something to do with the way their brains were wired up. But they liked pictures, and they were, as we have seen, deeply interested in space research.

The book that had caused all the trouble was one of the several that proudly proclaimed "60th Year" on the top left corner of its cover. Dwarfs were always impressed by antiquity. They weren't quite sure what the proclamation meant, since this particular book also carried the date "May 1990" and that certainly wasn't sixty years ago. But whatever it meant, it had an impressive picture of a spaceship on the front. And it also had an article about wormholes inside it.

Sighing deeply, Dworkin broke an icicle from his nose and had a quick cough. He tramped up and down a little bit in the snow, breaking down the drifts and clearing a space for himself. Surely, not long to wait now. He wondered if his feet were still there and thought about wormholes.

Wormholes are shortcuts through space. Step in *here*, come out *there*. No need for spaceships, after all. No

². Look, where did you think the dwarfs would live? Out in the sticks? They want to get back to the stars, remember. So they live in the astronomy departments of universities, where they can keep in touch with space research. Stands to reason. Who do you think it was that pushed that apple off the branch and hit Isaac Newton on the head? Gnomes?

wonder the dwarfs had been excited. But did the humans showed any sign of trying to build a wormhole? Not on your life. That was when Dworlinda had remembered the other book. Hardly anyone had read it; the picture on the front was of a dragon, breathing fire, and if there was one thing most dwarfs hated it was a dragon. Dworlinda, though, would read anything. Labels on sauce bottles, the instructions for Japanese tape recorders, anything. Anyway, it was clear as crystal, when she showed them.

Books bend space and time," that's what it said. Plain as the icicle on the end of your nose. L-space, it was called -- but it seemed to be just like wormholes -- books made holes in space, if you had enough books.

Didn't take long to figure out how it worked, either. All to do with libraries and information. Knowledge, that was what libraries stored, and another book said "knowledge is power". Well, power was energy, wasn't it? Any dwarf knew *that*. And energy was the same as mass, lots of books in the institute said that. And *mass bends space*. So put enough information into one library, and you could make a wormhole!

Now, you'd need a big library, as Dworkin had tried to explain to Dworlinda. But Dworfrith, in his inscrutable way, had asked why you needed a library at all. Were there no more efficient ways of storing information? Which was they were all out here, waiting in the snow for the night watchmen to doze off, so they could get into the computer building.

Dworkin cursed the cutbacks that meant that the computer no longer ran a night shift. If it hadn't been for the cuts, he could have stayed in his warm hole tonight. But even while he cursed, stamped his feet and wondered if it was time to snap another icicle off his nose, he heard a loud cough from above and looked up to see the light from Dworgoroth's torch waving from side to side. Stationed on the window-sill, Dworgoroth had a good view of the night watchman, who had at last fallen asleep.

Dworkin roused himself, and ploughed back to the bushes under which the others were sheltering.

"It's the signal," he rasped. "Come on!"

The tribe followed his trail to the door, where Dworgoroth, swinging with practised ease from the window ledge, had already forced the handle down. Large though the door was, it yielded to the combined effort of the tribe, opening enough for them to slip through one by one, into the room.

Dworfrith, leaning on his staff, surveyed the room.

"Right." He coughed, triggering a sympathetic wave of hacking around the group. "You know what to do."

Immediately, the fast moving dwarfs³ scrambled to their places. While most of the tribe waited patiently for the wormhole to form, the most expert of the Hackers took up their positions at the computer console. Lights flickered as the mighty mainframe was powered up, and symbols marched across the monitor screens. Dwarfs were much happier with computer language than with English⁴, and soon had the communications links open.

Starting with Starlink and Econet, they began to gather in information from the outside world.

Enough information, and the computer building would disappear into a wormhole. Old Dworfrith was sure of it. They had to store the information, but that was easy -- there were thousands of disks in here, storing nothing but astronomical data. Most astronomical data was just random noise, anyway.

Within an hour, the disks were filling fast, and being stacked together by the central processing unit. Stock exchange information from Tokyo; the entire contents of the Library of Congress in Washington; the results of the 3.30 at Newmarket. As the information piled up, an unearthly glow seemed to gather around the stack of disks, and there was an almost audible humming in the air. The glow hovered at the edge of vision -- a strange, orange colour, a delicate hint of -- Jaffa? no, not quite. It was subtly different -- yes, that was it -- *nectarine*, the colour of entropy. *Something* was about to happen. Pressing the last few keys, Dworgoroth leaped from the console and joined his companions by the central processor

[Now, it is a curious thing about dwarfs (something to do with the way their brains are wired up) that they have great difficulty distinguishing fact from fiction. All that nonsense about being the descendants of a stranded spaceship crew, for example, was actually based on a short story in *Galaxy* that some dwarf read in 1953. And all that rubbish about L-space was

³Dwarfs only live for about a seventh of the human life span, so their physical and mental processes operate seven times faster than human ones. To a dwarf, a day is equivalent to a week for a human being.

⁴Something to do with the way their brains were wired up.

equally fictional. So what on Earth was happening in the computer room of the Institute of Astronomy on the second Sunday before Easter in 1990?

Information, of course, cannot be equated with mass as easily as the dwarfs believed. But information has another important, universal, property. It is the opposite of entropy. As the Universe expands and ages, things wear out, and entropy increases. The Universe evolves from a state of order into a state of disorder, a state of non-information. The arrow of time is defined by these fundamental thermodynamic processes; the past was a time of greater order and lower entropy than today; the future will be a time of less order and less information.

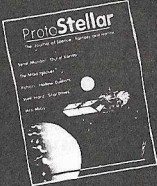
By creating a bubble of high information content, the dwarfs in their ignorance, were creating a bubble of low entropy. But entropy can only increase as time passes; low entropy states belong in the past...]

There was a slight popping sound as the central processing unit, the stack of disks full of information and the dwarfs left 1990. A critical threshold had been reached, and the strained fabric of the spacetime continuum had restored equilibrium by shifting the whole package back to the time of lower entropy where it belonged.

Dworkin looked around, and sniffed. His feet tingled with warmth. Steam rose gently from his boots. He took a deep breath through nostrils that were suddenly uncongealed. He felt no need to cough. The Sun, high in the sky of the Cretaceous period, shone brilliant. It shone down upon a warm and happy band of dwarfs. Convinced that they had succeeded in travelling through L-space to the planet where they belonged, they all lived happily ever after, on a diet of dinosaur eggs.

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Good Intentions

By James Steel

Part One - The Idea of Reconnaissance.

When the idea of Reconnaissance as a small hotel based convention was put forward in 1988 it was suggested that programming be given more emphasis than usual. We had all seen the way that cons usually ran, and it had occurred to us that there was little behind the planning of most con programmes beyond choosing a Guest. There was rarely any announced theme or philosophy, nothing to say what any convention was really offering. We decided to try to change this attitude.

In November 1988 I attempted to clarify our ideas. It had been agreed before we started that the convention was to have a theme based on its title. The idea of 'Reconnaissance - A Look Ahead' was tempting but vague. This title also suggested a second avenue, by removing the 'con' and leaving 'Renaissance, a look at new ideas in the field'. In the end we settled on 'New Works and New Ideas', but with the thought that the process of change in SF might also be looked at. With this in mind I attempted to put the idea of the convention on paper.

I ended up with the slightly pompous document which follows:

RECONNAISSANCE

Discussion Document

Reconnaissance is to be an SF convention staged in February 1991. It should be held in an easily accessible hotel site with facilities for 200+ members. The following proposals should be taken into account when arranging the programme and publicity for the event:

1. The theme of Reconnaissance, New Works and New Ideas in SF, should be heavily reflected in the programme. This broad title should cover a look ahead to where SF and its related fields are going as well as discussion as to where they should be going. In particular, items should concentrate on new directions rather than reviewing relatively stable fields.

2. A secondary idea is to create programme items on how various fields have reached their current condition. This would allow discussion of the influence of the "New Waves" of the past. An interesting idea might be to examine failed new directions of the past, as well "turning points" in various fields. An examination of these subjects

may be particularly suited to the construction of the film programme.

3. Programme items should not be purely SF or Fantasy based. Fields such as Horror, Comics, Media, Mainstream Literature, Science, and Art are also acceptable as subjects for talks and discussions. These fields have a profound influence on both SF itself and the perception of SF by others. The programme should be SF based, but by no means exclusively SF.

4. As many items as possible should be linked to the themes of the convention. Ideas which do not fit with the themes should only be included if there is good reason. This is less likely to apply to comedy or light hearted items.

5. There will be no single Guest of Honour. A number of authors and others will be invited as "Special Participants". New authors and those contributing to SF in new ways should be encouraged to attend in this way. This policy is likely to prove expensive, so don't be surprised if the committee has to chip in at the end of the convention.

6. Films should be given spoken introductions to explain their inclusion in the programme. It should be a film programme with a definite structure rather than a selection of otherwise unrelated films to fall asleep to as is usual at most conventions.

7. Any Science items might be able to take the title of the convention "Reconnaissance" in a more literal sense. It may be possible to commission items which examine actual reconnaissance, such as the unmanned planetary probes, SETI, or remote sensing. Biology and climate of the future might also be a good subject for discussion.

8. Publicity should emphasize the aims and objectives of the convention. Outside suggestions should be encouraged. The publicity should make clear what we are and are not providing.

9. There are no plans to hold a banquet, a masquerade, a video programme, a 24-hour charades marathon, a cuddly toy, a fondue set, or anything else which doesn't fit as part of this convention. Let's leave all that sort of stuff to the big conventions. An auction in support of the convention charity is reasonable. There will be a number of humorous items.

17. The Zen quiz is proceeding according to plan.

Please read this discussion document and comment on the points proposed at the next committee meeting. Your input is required.

James Steel,

November 1988.

Well, that was all very nice and fine. It was agreed that this approach was all right and that we should try to stick to it as much as possible. The idea that no single 'Guest of Honour' should be invited but rather a number of 'Special Participants' was adopted to encourage as wide a range of professional opinions as possible and to help new authors attend. Financial constraints meant we couldn't hope to offer very much to these participants but we hoped that the style of the convention would still attract a good number.

Part Two - The Practice of Planning.

After the philosophy came the detail. Many of the original ideas for programme items came directly from the discussion but others emerged from looking at separate areas of SF and its related fields.

The film programme was the first area finalized. This was the area in which we were least able to look at the future of the genre so we decided that an examination of the great turning points and defining moments of the past was the best approach to take. The films chosen were to be interesting, new in their approach in their time, influential, and not often seen at conventions or on TV. The single exception to this policy was to be something light at the very start of the con. In the event the films chosen were 'The Man in the White Suit', 'Forbidden Planet', 'Barbarella', 'Dr Strangelove', and 'Mad Max II'. When later the sole British 16mm copy of Forbidden Planet was eaten by a faulty projectionist and became unavailable it was decided not to replace it with another film, since no other fitted with our philosophy. A full description of the films and their reasons for inclusion written by our projectionist and film expert Andy Morris is somewhere else in the booklet. The Sword in the Stone was also allowed into the film programme because (a) it was fun and (b) it was produced when Television was beginning to bite deeply into the pockets of the film-makers and contains a number of quite interesting digs at its opposition. It was to be something light at the very start of the con.

Our original plan was to set up Friday as the day on which the history of SF would be examined, with items on major movements of the past and their influence on current writing. It was also intended to discuss 'why movements fail'. The item 'The Forgotten Heritage of SF' came directly from this idea as did a now abandoned item on cyberpunk, the new wave of the sixties, and other 'movements' to be called 'Making Waves'. Great predictive failures of the past would also be examined under the title 'SF Myopia'.

The State of the Art, Saturday's theme, was to include items on the present state of SF and related fields, with particular emphasis on current directions. The question 'Is there a new movement?' would be asked and there would be items on 'The Edges of SF' (on the crossover between SF and other genres, including the mainstream), 'SF in Europe', 'Archetypes versus Stereotypes' (on the current state of fantasy writing, now sadly abandoned), 'The Comics Grow Up' (on social realism in graphic novels now titled 'Back into the Phone Box'), and 'Shocking Liberties' (not on the author's right to shock, but on their duty to shock, if such a thing exists. Should writers try to constantly disturb their readership to make them think?).

Sunday was to be given over to the future. Obviously time would have to be given over to a discussion of the films, to the gripe session, and to the closing ceremony where we would thank everybody who had helped us, but otherwise the future of SF and its related fields, of publishing in general, and of the world would be under discussion. Of particular interest were 'The Death of Paper' (on the idea that books might become an obsolete media for presenting SF, paper replaced by screens), and 'The Future of SF' (as an open debate).

Nice idea. Did it happen?

Did it hell!

The first thing you learn in Programme planning is flexibility. If you don't learn that, you're dead. Knowing when to compromise is an essential part of this planning, but knowing when to stop compromising is equally important. My original reason for wanting to run a good convention was to encourage other people to run good conventions which I won't have to work at. My reason for encouraging a good convention programme was, by running a programme which I would be happy to attend, to show that con programmes don't have to be just a loose collection of items that someone thought was a good idea at the time.

Availability of participants is the major problem for all programming. You can't easily ask anyone to work for two consecutive hours, or more than four or five hours in total over the weekend. Similarly, you can't ask people to appear on three similar panels, or on items they know little or nothing about. Clashes of time and of personnel for items can play havoc with the best laid schemes, and they did. A number of people we asked were quite understandably reluctant to appear and we were unable to find suitable replacements. Items appeared, items disappeared.

We made no attempt to link humorous and light items to the theme. The 'build a flyer' competition, 'Hang-fan', and 'Time Police' were (thankfully) easy to set up, for us. The 'Filthy Prose' parodies item was considered far too good to miss, despite the work involved in organizing it. The Canadian animation is both good and free, and the pieces chosen are those which reflect SF themes or innovative techniques.

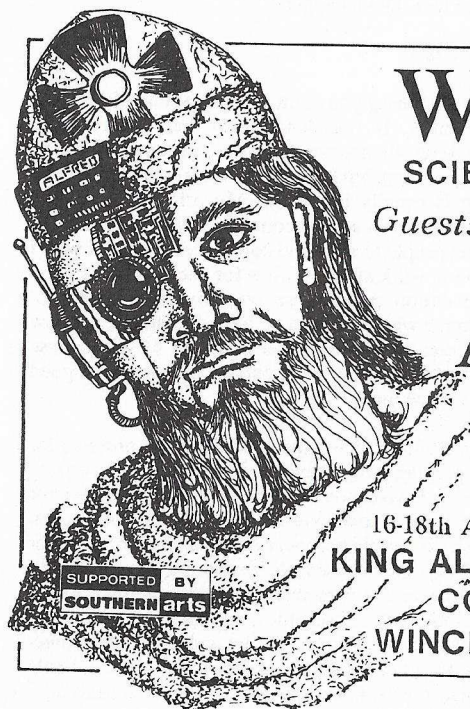
As you can see from the final programme, our idea of having a separate day for each of three refinements of the theme has failed completely. Expediency is all, and it was at least a useful exercise in making us think carefully about each programme item. It would have been a nice feature if it had worked, but for the general it was an extra constraint on the content of

the programme and became redundant as some sections expanded and some declined. I was sad to see it go, but needs must.

Finally there are a few items now in the programme which don't fit the philosophy at all. *C'est la vie*. In the final analysis this is a convention which the committee feel happy to run and which we hope you will be happy to have attended. Whether we got it right or not is up to you to decide.

James Steel,

February 1991.



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The Zen Quiz

While other conventions get bogged down in such minor matters as 'What is life?', 'Why are we here?' and 'How long is the bar open?', we at *Reconnaissance* ask the really important questions like:

1. What is the sound of one fan feuding?
2. Who buys new Reliant Robins?
3. When are they going to finish the Giant's Causeway?
4. What's in a name?
5. Why are there locks on 7-11 stores?
6. Of all the gin joints, in all the towns, in all the world, why did she have to walk into mine?
7. If this is the question, what is the answer?
8. How do snow-plough drivers get to work?
9. Why do one in a million chances come up nine times out of ten?
10. Does Schrodinger's cat have 18 half lives?

Points will be deducted for incorrect answers. ☐

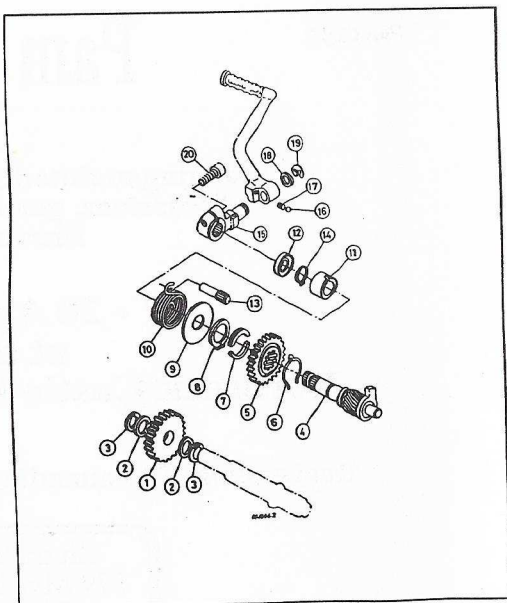
Zen Tie-Breaker

In the event of a tie, please answer the following questions:

1. What is the point of murder with a blunt instrument?
2. Do British Telecom do it on purpose?
3. Why does industrial action have such a low productivity?
4. Is pre-sentient thought a good idea?
5. Was the industrial revolution a turning point in history, or are we just going round in circles?
6. Is there a future in planned obsolescence?
7. How deep is a puddle?
8. Should intolerant people be banned?
9. Am I really a solopist or am I just imagining it?
10. Do traffic lights change colour when no one is around?
11. Which vegetable do you use vegetable oil to lubricate?
12. If confusion is rife, why don't people say rife when they mean it?
13. Are zebras colour blind or do they just lack imagination?
14. How well did Morgana do in *Which?* magazine?
15. What is the capital of Ulan-Baatar?
16. Was the Marie Celeste chartered by the Mysterons?
17. If you don't want to mix your words should you avoid a Kenwood word-processor?
18. When is a contradiction not a contradiction?
19. What is the difference between a question and a riddle?
20. Will you still love me tomorrow? ☐

Zen And The Art

1. Are BR Timetables SF or Fantasy?
2. What happened to the first, second and third bridges?
3. If a human life is beyond price, why does the cost of living keep going up?
4. When can I vote for the Boston Tea Party?
5. Would Angels have greater freedom if they had better footwear?
6. What happens to the cold light of day during Summer?
7. What do you print on a trouser press?
8. Are the Coast Guard there in case of theft?
9. How do Bumble-Bees fly?
10. Is turning water into milk an economic miracle?
11. How many staves does a biscuit barrel have?
12. What do 2 out of 10 cats have against Whiskers?
13. Why does the telephone always ring when I'm in the bath?
14. Is a milliHelen the amount of beauty required to launch one ship?
15. Why did Shakespeare use so many quotes in his works?
16. If 'I think therefore I am' what happens when I go to sleep?
17. Do we live in interesting times?
18. Why does cigarette smoke always drift towards non-smokers?
19. Why am I doing this?
20. When will it all end?



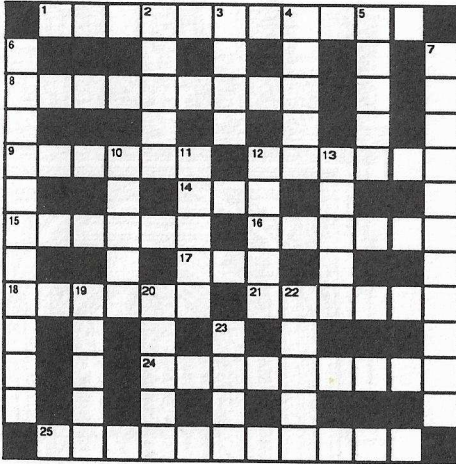
Zen Crossword

Across

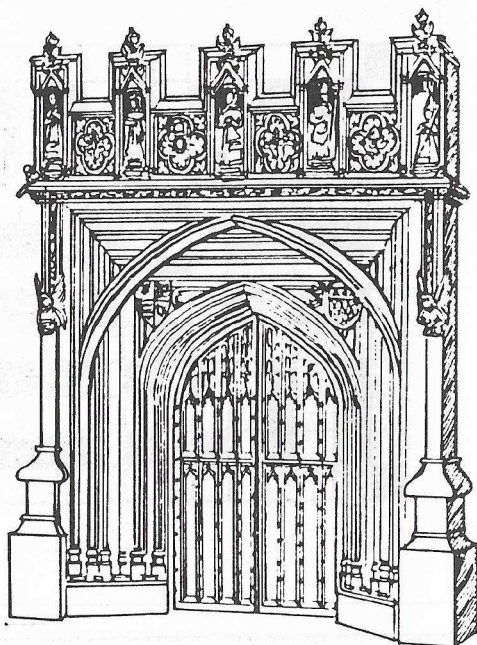
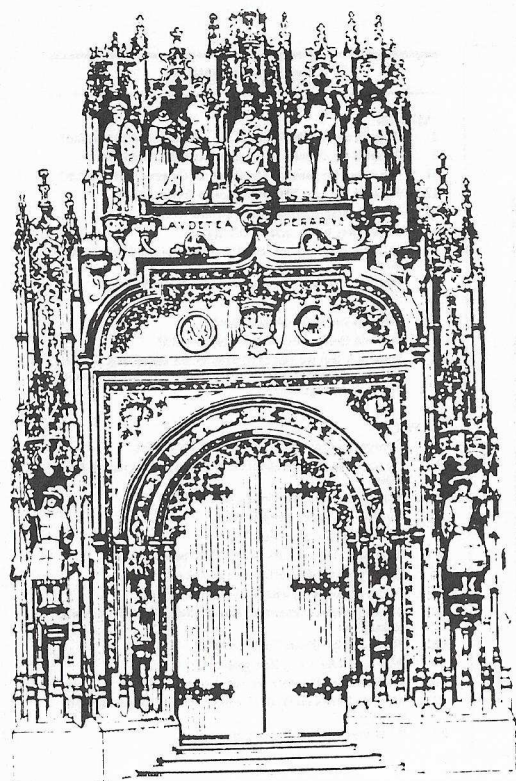
1. Who is the Windy Miller of the windmills of your mind?
8. What is the eutectic point of an expedient solution?
11. Who was the guest of honour at the Geneva Convention?
12. How do they get Teflon to stick to frying pans?
14. Does Schrodingers cat have 18 half lives?
15. How many books make a trilogy?
16. If I melt some dry ice, can I go for a swim without getting wet?
17. How many schools are there in a classless society?
21. How do you set an atomic clock?
24. How do Bonsai trees survive in the wild?
25. How is it that we can send men to the moon and perform open heart surgery, but we can't tell the difference between butter and margarine?

Down

2. Compare and contrast John Calvin Batchelor.
3. How can we be sure about Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle?
4. Who discovered that Haggis was edible?
5. How do 'go faster' stripes work?
6. Who is Norbert Dentressangle?
7. Why don't babies come with a 'best before' date?
10. When yoghurt goes off, how can you tell?
11. To be, or not to be, what is the answer?
12. If nothing works faster than Aaadin, why don't people take nothing?
13. When do Care Bears™ hibernate?®
19. Why aren't there any Zen golfers?
20. Where is the off switch for the Aurora Boralis?
22. What do lorries marked 'Harmless Food Product' actually carry?
23. What happens if I press this button?



Zen Spot the Ball



Programme

Friday

Main Programme

Alternative Programme

18:30	The Sword in the Stone Walt Disney's animated version of the life of the young King Arthur up to the point he gains the throne. The boy Wart finds refuge from the tribulations of the castle life in the company of Merlin who endeavours to teach the future King by example..
19:00	
19:30	
20:00	Pas de Deux A short animated film - see Programme Book.
20:15	Opening Ceremony The committee welcomes you; followed by ...
20:30	The Space Traffic Controllers Speech
21:00	The Forgotten Heritage of SF A discussion of writers whose work in SF and Fantasy has been forgotten by the genre, such as E. Nesbitt, J. M. Barrie, W. Churchill. Has the genre lost something by neglecting the work of these authors? <i>C. Mullan (c), Gill Alderman, Roz Kaveney, Dave Langford.</i>
21:30	
22:00	What I Would Have Done Ten Years Ago If Only I Had Known... The panellists look back at their achievements in SF. What do they regret and what are they glad to have done? <i>R. Robinson (c), S. M. Bader, Lionel Fanthorpe, Terry Pratchett, Alex Stewart, P. Weston.</i>
22:30	
23:00	The Man in the White Suit Alec Guinness plays a quiet but determined scientist who creates a new fabric that does not get dirty, almost demolishing his lab in the process. However, unions and manufacturers both realise the implications and combine forces



Morgan-le-Fay Meets the Star Trek Rebels
A storytelling session from Lorna Mitchell, a professional in the field.



Saturday

Main Programme

Alternative Programme

10:15	Barbarella The bizarre but spectacular (it says here) adventures of a beautiful young astronaut in the 40th century and the characters she meets; including a blind angel, a revolutionary and a megalomaniac. Risqué camp transfer from a comic strip famous for its anaemic pornography, complete with ingenious effects and design. Very much a vehicle for Jane Fonda in the title role, before she got into serious acting.	
10:30		
11:00		
11:30		
12:00	International Comics A discussion of the interactions between comics of different types, as produced in Japan, the USA and Europe. What are their similarities and differences? Why are they different, and how (if at all) do they influence each other? <i>M. Scott (c), S. Mason, H. Payne, P. Wareham, Ashley Watkins.</i>	
12:30		
13:00	Synchromy and Cosmic Zoom A pair of short animated films – see the Programme Book for a more complete description.	
13:30	Science Fiction Foundation Appeal A presentation on the convention charity, explaining what it does and why it is a worthy cause.	
14:00	The Edges of SF What is the overlap between SF, fantasy, horror and mainstream fiction – SF and fantasy elements now occur outside the field, having entered our culture in many ways. <i>P. Garratt (c), Gill Alderman, Lionel Fanthorpe, Terry Pratchett, Charles Stross.</i>	
14:30		
15:00	The Once and Future Myth A discussion of the use of Celtic mythology, such as the Mabonogin in modern fantasy. Are authors still finding inspiration in these myths, or should they be turning away from mythology in the search for truly original ideas? <i>D. Baynham (c), M. Cohen, P. Garratt, K. Maund.</i>	
15:30		
16:00	Shocking Liberties A discussion of shocking fiction, considering to what extent authors are expected to shock, what limits exist, and whether one should write with the sole intention to shock. <i>M. Easterbrook (c), Simon Ings, Mary Gentle, Roz Kaveney, David Pringle.</i>	
16:30		
17:00	Hungry Generations How and why do we group writers in generations? Is there a new generation of British SF writers, and if so how are they different from their ancestors? Colin Greenland shakes the family tree to see what falls out. <i>Colin Greenland.</i>	
17:30		
18:00	Back Into the Telephone Box The subject matter of comics: moving away from heroes towards social comment. Is this a good thing? How far should it go? <i>G. Strattmann (c), M. Abbott, R. James, Alex Stewart.</i>	
18:30		
19:00	Canadian Animation Another chance to see the short films Pas de Deux, Synchromy and Cosmic Zoom, plus Dreamflight, all from Canadian animator Norman McClaren.	
19:30		
20:00	Hangfan A quiz that will test the teams' skills in verbal visualisation as well as their general SF and fanish knowledge. Come along and see who gets hanged.	
20:30		
21:00	SF Myopia A serious discussion of predictions and why they can fail. Is it possible to predict revolutions in technology and philosophy? <i>A. Morris (c), B. Ameringen, Charles Stross, Roz Kaveney.</i>	
21:30		
22:00	Leaks Dave Langford gives us a sneak preview of his short story, <i>Leaks</i> , which is due to be published in August in a <i>Temps</i> anthology. <i>Dave Langford.</i>	
22:30		
23:00	Dr Strangelove A deranged USAF General unleashes atom bombers to attack Russia so as to protect his 'precious bodily fluids' against water fluoridation (finishes 00:40).	
23:30		

SF in Europe
A talk with slides about the current state of SF fandom in Eastern Europe, particularly the Soviet Union, Poland and Czechoslovakia. How have the political changes in Europe affected fans in these countries?
Bridget Wilkinson.

The Future of SF
Four panelists will discuss the possible future(s) of the genre with the audience. What could happen in the next 30 years?
Geoff Ryman (c), Colin Greenland, David Pringle, Alex Stewart, Charles Stross.

Build a Flyer
Several teams will attempt to immortalise the *Reconnaissance* logo by building a contraption which will fly a specified distance. Marks will be awarded by the judges for style of construction, style of flight, and distance flown. Materials (toilet rolls, helium-filled balloons, cardboard, tissue paper, etc.) will be provided. The rules for the competition are on the rear of this sheet. Inaugural flights will take place from 16:30.

Time Police
Ignore the growing rumours about police from the future and come to this press conference. Here, exclusive to this convention, leading scientists will announce a discovery that will CHANGE THE WORLD. This entertaining and thought provoking event will be in two parts with an intermission.

Magazines
Why are SF magazines run by individuals and not the big publishing companies? Do authors start their careers by writing for magazines, and if so, are the editors responsible for the appearance of new authors and styles of writing?
P. Weston (c), S. M. Baxter, J. Gilbert, David Pringle, E. Robinson

No Shame Theatre
No Shame is guerilla theatre. *Mike Ibeji* and other hopeless exhibitionists will perform sketches and monologues that will make you cringe, laugh and groan. Only one thing is certain – you won't be bored.

Hawaii and Fans Across the World Party
Fans Across the World and the Hawaii bid committee entertain you for as long as the drink lasts.

Sunday

Main Programme

10:15	Mad Max II The ex-cop from Mad Max has survived an ecological holocaust and become a wanderer. He is reluctantly persuaded to help the owners of one of the last sources of fuel, who are battling a marauding gang who want it and are prepared to kill for it. Moral: beware of feral children with razor-sharp boomerangs.	
10:30		
11:00		
11:30		
12:00	Filthy Prose This panel will look at parodies (the Lord of the Rings in the style of A. A. Milne ...). It will be a mixture of material prepared in advance, and frantic on-the-spot scribbblings.	
12:30	<i>J. Richards (c), Gill Alderman, Colin Greeland, Alex Stewart.</i>	
13:00	Zen, Hal or Holly A talk by <i>Nick Larter</i> on the future of computers in fiction and in fact. Computers are a common topic for SF authors from Asimov's UNIVAC to Gibson's AIs. How close are these vision to reality?	
13:30	<i>Nick Larter.</i>	
14:00	Earthdoom! A game of ecological disaster. The world is slowly roasting under the Greenhouse Effect and the team must try to save it ... or perhaps it will be flooded ... or maybe a new Ice Age is starting. An exercise in black humour.	
14:30		
15:00	Why Aren't You at Your Church? A talk by the reverend <i>Lionel Fanthorpe</i> , a prolific SF and fantasy writer, about religion and SF.	
15:30	<i>Lionel Fanthorpe.</i>	
16:00	Images of SF A discussion of the films that have been shown over the weekend considering how they influenced SF when they first came out and later when they became known as classics.	
16:30	<i>A. Morris (c), Geoff Ryman, J. Steel, Ashley Watkins.</i>	
17:00	Are Awards Worth Anything? Why do we give awards in SF and what do they mean to those who receive them? How many people vote and how informed are they in their voting - is it all worth while? A discussion between the givers, receivers and the voters.	
17:30	<i>R. Perkins (c), Rox Kaveny, N. Mahoney, J. Richards, Geoff Ryman.</i>	
18:00	Closing Ceremony The committee and guests gather for the end of the convention.	

Alternative Programme

Book Auction

Let *Roger Robinson* and *Brian Ameringen* persuade you to part with your money for those items that are only ever sold at an auction. The convention's usual 10% commission will be donated to the Science Fiction Foundation.



Medieval Weapons in Fantasy and Reality

A talk about the use of medieval weaponry with a live demonstration. How accurate is modern hack-and-slay fantasy? This demonstration will show how these weapons really were used.

Mary Gentle, Dean Wayland, M. Geering.



Reconnaissance De-Briefing

The business meeting, chaired by *Kathy Westhead*. Air your views on the convention - the programme, hotel, publications, etc. Members of the committee will answer questions about why we did what we did.

K. Westhead (c), R. Meades, J. Steel, J. Stewart, G. Stratzmann.



The Death of Paper

A discussion of how SF may be presented in the future, considering new media that could replace books, television, etc., as new technology is developed.

S. Davies (c), J. Dallman, Mary Gentle, N. Larter, Charles Stross.



Congregate II Congregate II

Guests of Honour

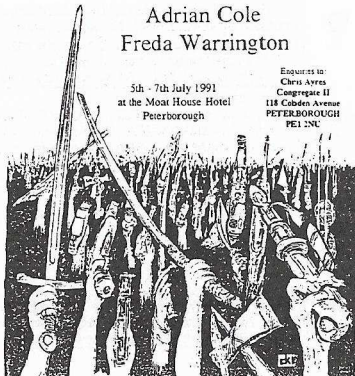
David Gemmell

Adrian Cole

Freda Warrington

5th - 7th July 1991
at the Moat House Hotel
Peterborough

Enquiries to:
Chris Ayres
Congregate II
118 Colindale Avenue
PETERBOROUGH
PE1 2NU



Guests of Honour

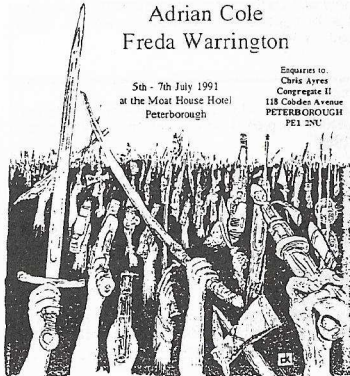
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Films, What Films?

By Andy Morris

The Sword in the Stone

1963 USA 80 minutes Dir: Wolfgang Reitherman
Walt Disney's animated version of the life of the young King Arthur up to the point where he gains the throne. The boy Wart finds refuge from the tribulations of castle life in the company of Merlin who endeavours to teach the future King by example.

The Man in the White Suit

1951 UP 85 minutes Dir: Alexander MacKendrick
Alec Guinness plays a quiet but determined scientist who creates a new fabric that does not get dirty, almost demolishing his lab in the process. However, unions and manufacturers both realise the implications of such a material (though the cerebral scientist does not) and combine forces to prevent it reaching the marketplace.

Dr Strangelove

1963 UK 94 minutes Dir: Stanley Kubrick
A deranged USAF General unleashes atom bombers to attack Russia so as to protect his 'precious bodily fluids' against water fluoridation. The desperate attempts to stop the resulting carnage triggering the Soviet 'Doomsday Machine', which will blow up the world, fail amongst a welter of incompetence and egomania on both sides of the conflict. The ending will have you wondering whether to laugh or cry.

Barbarella

1967 France/Italy 98 minutes Dir: Roger Vadim
The bizarre but spectacular (it says here) adventures of a beautiful young astronaut in the 40th century and the characters she meets; including a blind angel, a revolutionary and a megalomaniac. Risqué camp transfer from a comic strip famous for its anaemic pornography, complete with ingenious effects and design. Very much a vehicle for Jane Fonda in the title role, before she got into serious acting.

Mad Max II

1981 Australia 95 minutes Dir: George Miller

The ex-cop from Mad Max has survived an ecological holocaust and become a wanderer. He is reluctantly persuaded to help the owners of one of the last

sources of fuel, who are battling a marauding gang who want it and are prepared to kill for it. Moral: beware of feral children with razor-sharp steel boomerangs.

Pas de Deux

1967 Canada 13 minutes Dir: Norman McLaren
This is a look at the choreography of ballet, created by exposing the same frames as many as ten times to produce a multiple image of the ballerina and her partner. A bare, black stage and back-lit figures combine with the spacious music of pan-pipes to produce a quiet and detached result. Predates a similar visual effect that has now been used to excess in music videos.

Synchromy

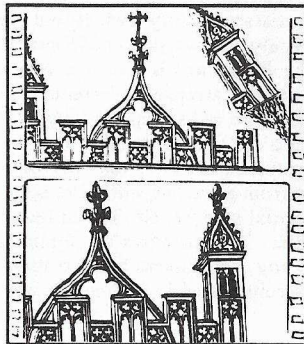
1971 Canada 8 minutes Dir: Norman McLaren
Optical techniques were used to compose piano rhythms directly on the sound-track area of the film. The resulting shapes were then used to create multi-colour images on the picture area so that in effect you see what you hear.

Cosmic Zoom

1968 Canada 8 minutes Dir: Norman McLaren
This film has a simple premise, first it zooms out to view the magnitude of space, then it zooms in on the minuteness of matter, finally returning to what we see as normal.

Dreamflight

1982 Canada 13 minutes Dir: Norman McLaren
A small creature lives on a distant planet and dreams of new horizons. As the bird that passes, he flies away through space and lands on Earth. Discovering Paris, New York, human beings, he wants to talk to them, but One of the earliest films produced by computer using the MIRA graphical language.



Reconnaissance Films

By Andy Morris

reconnaissance; n.: survey, investigate, review, study.

renaissance; n.: revival, renewal.

The original principle behind the choice of films was to fit with the ideas embodied in the name of the convention. 'New Work and New Ideas in SF' is the convention sub-title, but to show and analyse forthcoming SF films and trends would be beyond our financial capability. Instead we decided to choose films that were a new idea or new direction when they were released, or have subsequently been seen as such. Other criteria were set, including selecting a film from each of the last four decades and avoiding the 'blockbusters' whose main claim to fame has been to put Bums on Seats (as the film industry neatly describes it). The committee also wanted a film on a lighter note to start the convention (but with a fantasy/SF content) and some of the SF style short animated films from Canada that have been shown on Channel 4. Somehow things never quite work out the way you plan them.

After much deliberation a list of five main films resulted. These were **The Man in the White Suit** and **Forbidden Planet**, from the 50's, **Dr Strangelove** and **Barbarella** from the 60's, and **Mad Max II** from the 80's. The film to start the convention was Disney's **The Sword in the Stone**, and four Canadian shorts were found.

The first change of plan involved **Forbidden Planet**, which was scheduled for a Saturday night double bill. This film was made in Cinemascope at a time when the process was being show-cased and made full use of the screen shape. As a result it looks terrible when cut down to standard format, particularly on TV, with speaking characters partly or wholly out of the frame. Unfortunately there was only one 16 mm 'scope print left in the library and it was in a very bad state. Despite attempts at repair by the renter it was eventually withdrawn and scrapped as unplayable. With reluctance a replacement standard print was booked. This also turned out to be the only one and after returning from a booking with extra sprocket holes on substantial sections, also had to be scrapped as unplayable. The economics of 16 mm film rental preclude any replacements being made. The film will be sorely missed in fandom. It was a decade

before anything was made that matched its simplicity of style. Even now it's 'ho-hum, oh yeah, so what' attitude to the technology it depicted is in sharp contrast to the current fad for making the whizz-bangs of the future the most important part of the film. Only **Alien** has such a dismissive attitude to the hardware and comes anywhere near having as good a plot.

Walt Disney's animated version of the life of the young King Arthur reflects the times in which it was made. In **The Sword in the Stone** Merlin is depicted as a precognitive, but slightly forgetful, magician off in the habit of travelling in a world of his own (and travelling in time - SF turns up in the strangest of places). Wart/Arthur is the usual gawky adolescent, not quite attached to the world, that featured in so many Disney films in the 60's. Merlin has an interesting line in 20th century patter including some one-line jokes that were directed at the adult audience not the children. Disney was suffering from competition from TV at the time and it shows in the anti-TV punchlines that crept into the script.

The Man in the White Suit is usually depicted as just another Ealing Studios comedy, but was also an ingenious attempt to get around the restrictions that bedevilled post-war film production. Government control was still around in the form of rationing and financial limits. Anything that blatantly criticised industrial attitudes and the rebuilding of the country would not have found favour. Despite this, the film gave a serious account of industrial relations and is an acid comment on the conservatism in which preserving the status quo is all that matters. It is also an effective reminder of the social implications of scientific research. The plot is intricate and much enhanced by individual performances full of nuances. The director paid personal attention to the soundtrack as well as the picture, even to using a jazz record to choreograph the complicated (and much-imitated) sound effect that has come to represent the archetypal mad scientist's laboratory.

How I learned to stop worrying and love the Bomb is a pretty graphic sub-title and sums up the plot of **Dr Strangelove** very neatly. The director, Stanley Kubrick, originally conceived the film as a straight drama, but changed it when he realised that the only way to deal with the end of the world was as a black comedy. Consequently the nightmares are those of the early 60's sharpened with satire and thrown into raw relief. The result is the funniest film about nuclear holocaust yet made, and it is still more effective than anything produced since then (from *Fail Safe* to *The Day After* and *Testament*). Full of refer-

ences that have gone into SF folklore (General Turgidson's manual of statistics marked 'Casualties in Megadeaths', Vera Lynn singing 'We'll meet Again') it is a devastating indictment of military thinking, particularly with regard to the current US posturing over the use of nuclear weapons in the Gulf War (which may well have happened by the time you read this).

What **Barbarella** needed was a large dose of satire. What it got was interplanetary frolicking as Roger Vadim directed specifically to show off his then wife Jane Fonda, with the result that the action periodically halts for a set-piece and then cranks back into gear. the 40th century astronaut first appeared in a book and then a scandalous comic-strip. After the success of the camp *Batman* TV series, Paramount backed this film to cash in on the genre. Despite the handicaps it is a fairly successful interpretation of the original ideas with gaudy sets, strange characters (a blind angel who lives in a nest, a bisexual queen who tries to have Barbarella pecked to death by budgerigars), unusual social mores (sex by taking a pill then touching hands which promptly smoke), and technology which is simultaneously ancient and futuristic. Its portrayal of women is open to serious question, but is certainly more favourable than many other films of the same year (*Casino Royale* and *In Like Flint* to name two).

Mad Max II is that rare item, a sequel that shamelessly exploits its origin but ends up better, leaner, and tells a tale with a cracking pace. It also has to be the film whose style was copied (read: ripped-off) the

most in the last 10 years. Despite having elements that are completely over the top (plot, acting, effects, vehicles, violence) it comes over as a parody in the finest sense, and still has time for some long drawn-out visual jokes. The protagonists play out their unconventional battles to the strains of Brian May's music and in the weird background of the Australian desert. With just a small twist of surprise at the end, this is a thoroughly enjoyable film.

It's very difficult to obtain short SF films of any calibre for conventions, mainly because so few have been made, even fewer have been transferred to 16 mm, and not many of those have survived the rigours of the rental circuit. In our case the source of several shorts with SF style or content turned out to be the Film library at the Canadian High Commission in London to whom we extend our thanks. All made by famed animator Norman McLaren, none of them were produced with conventional film animation techniques, and all have won awards for breaking new ground.

If you want to voice any opinions on the films in the programme, disagree with what is written here, hurl brickbats, or just violently disagree with someone else, please come to Images of SF, the films discussion, on Sunday and make your presence felt.



Thanks and Credits

We would take this opportunity to express our thanks to all those people who have helped make Reconnaissance, er...Reconnaissance!

All the Special Participants.

The Park Hotel, particularly **Philip Mellor** and **Ann Gill** agreeing so willingly with all the strange requests that SF conventions make.

Store Street, for services above and beyond the call of reproduction!

Contributors to Dispatches; particularly **John Clute**, **Helen McNabb**, **Steve Bull**, **Colin Greenland** and **Frances Bonner**. We would also like to thank *The Face* and *Vector* for permission to reprint articles.

All the programme participants for saying yes and turning up.

The convention "staff" (gophers, tech ops, ops, green room etc.) for all the usual things.

Gary Larson for keeping us sane.

Special thanks to **Alice Kohler** and **Oliver Grüter** for doing more than the rest of the committee fallen apart.

OK so I admit it ...

...it is all my fault. Hang on you could be reading this during the con, it might still go wrong, in which case I take it all back - it's all Rob's fault.

By Marcus Streets

Way back in early 1988 shortly after the eastercon various impoverished fans were heard to moan that both unicon and Eastercon looked as if they would be off island in the same year. Contrivance had already won their bid to take the Eastercon to Jersey, and there was a bid for the Unicon from uNicon. Having some spare time on my hands I started thinking about a possible mainland bid. I therefore turned up at the 'ton with the intention of finding some other people to help. Early in the evening I bumped into Steve Bull, Steve very successfully ducked, but suggested that I talk to the Birmingham group. Of these I really only knew James, so I asked him. The fool said yes, and dragged in Rob. We also asked Andy to join the committee at this stage, on the grounds that this would ensure a good film programme.

At this stage none of us had been on a con committee, though we had gophered and had staff posts., Therefore we did not really know what we were letting ourselves in for.

The next stage was to find a site. My idea was to use Royal Holloway, now Royal Holloway and Bedford New College as Oliver would point out - but not to locals like me. This is an impressive Victorian mock gothic edifice that dominates the Egham skyline. They were available and had suitable rooms, unfortunately they wanted vast amount of money, we therefore looked for other sites, Coventry (Lanchester) was examined, as well as Birmingham and Kent Universities. Unfortunately for one reason or another they all fell through.

Therefore we reluctantly called off our bid and uNicon became the tenth Unicon unopposed. The Wincon committee were relieved they did not have to run the bidding session, but did not like having to stuff our withdrawal. *[Ed: into the programme pack presumably!]*

However we had by this time got a good working committee, the original four having been joined by Chris and Patrick, and a fully pencilled in programme. So instead of giving up in disgust, we decided to run the convention anyway, independent of any annual structure.

One important feature of the early committee meetings was a rambling style, the first two were followed by beer tastings, the next few were held over meals at conventions. However after a few more months and over a dozen hotel visits we had a site - a hotel I had been to at a Tolkien Society AGM, a date - at the time nobody ran conventions in February, the same thought however occurred to the Filkers, and we were ready to go.

From here on in things started to get serious, John was added to give the committee a degree of experience that we felt was missing. Meetings were scheduled every month, almost invariably on the last Sunday, though some of the carefree tradition remained, they always start with lunch, and are regularly distracted by bad puns and good films. However in the meantime work does seem to get done.

After the basics had been set, all that is left are the details, the only problem being that there are a lot of details. Not that I have had that much say in the details, work took me to the Netherlands for eighteen months, and I communicated with the other committee members by phone, or at conventions. However memberships came in, dispatches went out, special participants were confirmed, and finally programme participants had their arms twisted. As I write this, time presses on towards February and the last minute panics begin to happen. Hopefully however they will all get solved, and you will get to enjoy the best convention going. I have only one problem, I am going to be on shift, and I think I may miss some of the best bits.

Famous Last Words

By Patrick Lawford

Well, this is it. The last time that I will have to sit down and write something for a Reconnaissance Dispatches. I won't pretend that it has been easy. In fact the truth is that there have been moments when I have been close to jacking it all in, giving up and throwing in the towel.

But even at its darkest moments I have known that there is a whole team of people to spread the burden. A group of friends with a common aim. Help and support has always been readily available. Like a Happy family.

Oh, all right, it's all crap.

Report of the Reconnaissance Beer Tasting Sessions

Bottled Beers (includes Cans and plastic bottles)

Beers were drunk in the best condition possible. Lagers were chilled, ales were drunk at room temperature. Between beers twiglets or other snacks were eaten to freshen the palette and remove the taste of the previous beer.

Each beer is listed giving its name, then country of origin, county for British beers and strength. Ratings are out of ten for each of the four tasters, highest lowest and average marks are given. Where only one figure is quoted all four gave the same mark. Five is an average beer, that is pleasant to drink but not outstanding. Comments are spontaneous as recorded by the scribe, who was busy imbibing at the time.

Lagers may be marked down slightly as tasters are primarily bitter drinkers

Lagers

Guld Ol Export 1040

Rating 4-6 Ave. 5

Smelt of freshly cut wet grass

Had an innocuous slightly sweet taste with a bitter woody aftertaste

A good example of European Lager

Tzingtao China 1047-51

Rating 2-3 Ave. 2.75

Could have been water

Tasted like liquid plastic coating the tongue.

Would have to be drunk cold

Marginally better than a Party 7

Molsen Canada 1045-51

Rating 4-6 Ave. 4.75

Firm pleasant but light taste.

Good by Canadian standards

La Trappe Dutch 1073-77 Live

Rating 8-9 Ave. 8.25

Smell of Water Chestnuts.

Smokey flavour.

Full chewey texture

Budvar Budweiser Czech 1048-54

Rating 5-7 Ave. 6

Bites over the whole of the tongue
Pleasant good European style lager
Best drunk cold

Bitters And Traditional Ales

Newquay Steam Bitter Cornwall 1038-42

Rating 5-7 Ave. 6

First taste of Beer

Good British Beer

Newquay Stout Cornwall 1042-46

Ratings 5-6 Ave. 5.5

Not enough body for a stout

Not really smooth enough

Royal Oak Dorset 1046-51

Ratings 6-7 Ave. 6.75

Good flavour and body

Lasting taste

Ruddles Best Rutland

Ratings 6-7 Ave. 6.5

From a plastic bottle, but freshly opened

Gales's HSB Hampshire 1048-52

Rating 6

This was the drunk from a can.

Not as good as on draft

Ruddle's County Rutland 1048-52

Rating 5-7 Ave. 6.5

From a 2 litre plastic bottle opened the day before.

Still smelt good

Theakston's Old Peculiar Yorkshire 1055-63

Rating 8-9 Ave. 8.75

Competes with twiglets and wins.

Let's open another

Fuller's E.S.B. 1057-63

Rating 8

Fails the twiglets test.

Smells of barley wine.

Old Thumper Ringwood 1058-61

Rating 9

A pale coloured ale.

A well balanced refined barley wine.

Gale's Price Old Ale Hamshire

Rating 10

Citrus aftertaste

Full of body.

Lingering taste leaves twiglets in disarray.

Thomas Hardy's Ale Dorset

Rating 4-6 Ave. 5.25

A sipping ale

Taste of twiglets

Decided that we prefer twiglets solid.

Members

as at 14 February 1991

A=Attending, B=Baby, S=Supporting

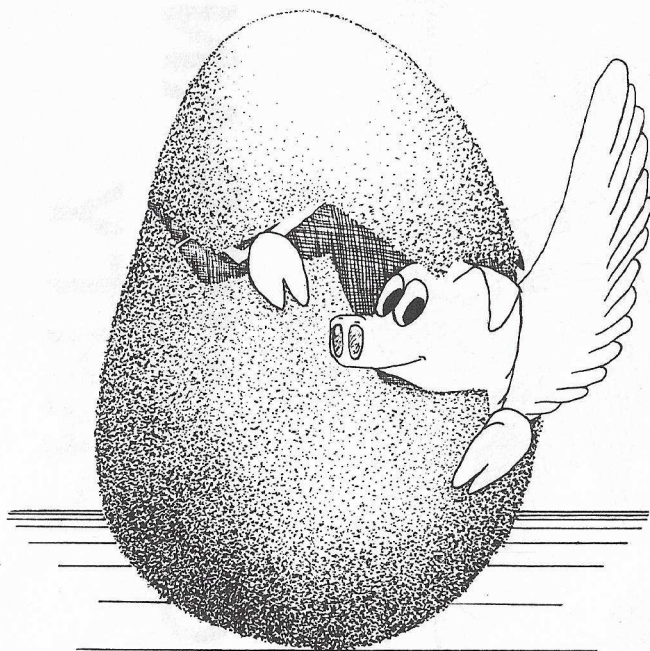
38	A	Mike Abbott	135	A	Martyn Dawe
4	A	Gill Alderman	71	A	Peter J B Day
101	A	Philip Allcock	171	A	Giulia de Cesare
173	A	Arwen Allen	211	A	Simon de Wolfe
79	A	Brian Ameringen	108	A	Iain Dickson
178	A	Fiona Anderson	235	A	Chris Dollin
153	A	Dafydd ap Thomas	46	A	Paul Dormer
59	A	William Armitage	136	A	Tim Duckworth
165	A	Margaret Austin	238	A	Jon Earl
102	A	Henry Balen	82	A	Martin Easterbrook
121	A	John Bark	137	A	Sue Edwards
215	A	Stephen M Baxter	112	A	Frances Elsworth
91	A	Stephen Baynes	36	A	John English
193	A	David Beasley	31	A	Fabian
202	A	Meike (A Penguin) Benzler	10	A	Lionel Fanthorpe
201	A	Meike (Howling Frog) Benzler	138	A	Mike Figg
130	A	Michael Bernardi	64	A	Colin Fine
32	A	Neil Blaber	73	S	Alan R Fleming
131	A	Lissa Blackburn	182	A	Mike Ford
162	A	Paul Blair	98	A	Richard Fox
227	A	Lucy V. Bond	24	A	Susan Francis
228	A	Adrian Bott	80	A	Gwen Funnel
172	A	Heather Brading	117	A	Peter Garratt
34	A	Jill Bradley	8	A	Mary Gentle
35	A	Phil Bradley	87	A	Jenny Glover
42	A	Alan Braggins	90	B	Robert Glover
66	A	Michael Braithwaite	88	A	Steve Glover
132	A	John Bray	89	B	Tara Glover
45	A	Jon Brewis	74	A	Tim Goodier
27	A	Ben Brown	65	S	Karen Goswell
196	A	Ceri Brown	28	S	Michael Gould
47	A	Pat Brown	3	A	Colin Greenland
155	A	Peter Brown	221	A	Peter Grehan
43	A	Steve Bull	139	A	Ben Gribbin
129	A	Steve Burrridge	11	A	John Gribbin
111	A	Julian Burrows	72	A	P J Groves
37	A	Steven Cain	219	A	Oliver Gruter
133	A	Mike Cheater	160	A	Tony Hammond
26	S	Paul Clough	163	A	Bridget Hardcastle
181	A	David "Eddie" Cochrane	22	A	Eef Hartman
156	A	Malcolm Cohen	140	A	Jackie Hawkins
58	A	Peter Cohen	179	A	Cornelia Heaney
157	A	Geoff Cook	166	A	Martin Hoare
114	A	Barbara Cooper	25	S	Trader Horn
97	A	Chris Cooper	177	A	Valerie R Housden
68	A	Keith Coslett	141	A	Paul Hunt
95	A	Rafe Culpin	106	A	Mike "The Fingers" Ibeji
184	A	Patrick Curson	174	A	Tim J P Illingworth
70	A	John Dallman	191	A	Simon Ings
40	A	Mike Damesick	30	A	Rhodri James
134	S	Penny M Davidson	54	A	Richard James
205	A	Barbara Davies	194	A	Peter Jeavons
203	A	Robert Lyn Davies	214	A	Helen B Jefferies
161	A	Steve Davies	39	A	Neil Jezard
			96	A	Steve Jones
			231	A	Sue Jones
			195	A	Kevin R Joyce
			189	A	Roz Kaveney
			206	A	Peter Keelan
			229	A	Chris Kelly
			53	S	Jane Killick
			176	A	Paul Kincaid

154 A	James F Klein	188 A	Marjorie Sachs
116 A	C. V. F. Knight	128 A	Bruce Saville
21 A	Alice Kohler	124 A	Alison Scott
223 A	Ophelia P. Kohn	123 A	Mike Scott
9 A	David Langford	56 A	D. M. Sherwood
77 A	Nick Larter	233 A	Ivan Sinha
23 A	Adrian Last	33 A	Anna Smith
225 A	Gareth Latchum	48 S	Chris Smith
15 A	Patrick Lawford	226 A	Lisa Smith
197 A	Ruth Le Sueur	186 A	Maggie A Smith
100 A	Steve Linton	29 A	Nick Smith
142 A	Justin Lloyd	113 A	Dan Smithers
236 A	Steve Lockley	143 A	Jane Smithers
152 A	Ann Looker	230 A	Robert Sneddon
207 A	J M Looker	120 A	Liz Sourbut
164 A	Nicholas Mahoney	151 A	Rob Southall
204 A	Barbara Mascetti	210 A	Gary Starr
158 A	Hugh Mascetti	17 A	James Steel
169 A	Sue Mason	67 S	John Steward
199 A	Kari Maund	51 A	Alex Stewart
168 A	W.A. McCabe	18 A	John Stewart
85 A	Helen McNabb	144 A	Mike Stone
192 A	Steve McWorthy	148 A	Gary Stratmann
49 A	Robert Meades	19 A	Marcus Streets
170 A	Mark Meenan	5 A	Charles Stross
109 A	Christine Milford	175 A	Vanessa Tattler
6 A	Lorna Mitchell	105 A	Graham Taylor
115 A	Anthony Neale Gerald Mittenshaw-Hodge	103 A	D Thompson
69 S	David C Moor	76 A	Toerag
16 A	Andy Morris	86 A	Ivan Towlson
20 A	Wim Morrison	126 A	John Trasler
183 A	Steve Mowbray	127 A	Karen Trasler
217 A	Simon Moxey	83 S	Martin Tudor
78 A	Caroline Mullan	41 A	Larry van der Putte
208 A	Tom Nansen	119 A	Angelique Van Toorn
198 A	Phil Nanson	118 A	Kees Van Toorn
234 A	Mike O'Driscoll	145 S	David Vines
12 A	Chris O'Shea II	92 A	David B Wake
167 A	Jean Owen	93 A	Helen Wake
104 A	Dave Packwood	94 B	Rachel Wake
237 A	Briar Parkinson	81 A	Peter Wareham
150 A	Nigel "Gunther" Parsons	190 A	Ashley Watkins
2 A	Phil Partridge	13 A	Ian Watson
107 A	J. M. Paxton	1 A	Nina Watson
122 S	Harry Payne	125 A	Jeffrey G Watts
99 A	Bernie Peek	7 A	Dean Wayland
61 A	Roger Perkins	84 A	Jonathan Weeks
187 A	Hywel T Phillips	63 A	Kathy Westhead
110 A	Phil Plumbly	62 A	Mike Westhead
218 A	Mark Plummer	180 A	Peter Weston
213 A	Alan Pomeroy	60 S	Elda Wheeler
212 A	Camilla Pomeroy	146 A	Mike Whitaker
55 A	Maureen Porter	159 A	Kim Whysall
14 A	Terry Pratchett	185 A	Colin Wightman
149 A	David Pringle	50 A	Bridget Wilkinson
57 S	Liam Quin	232 A	Sue Williams
216 A	Nicky Reen	224 A	Simon Windisch
200 A	John Campbell Rees	239 A	Adrian Windisch
52 A	John F. W. Richards	147 A	David Wingrove
222 A	Liz Robinson	209 A	Dave Wood
44 A	Roger Robinson	75 A	Melinda Young
220 A	Geoff Ryman		

CON RENAISSANCE

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Introduction

By Chris "The Magician" O'Shea II

How to start...

"If this is Monday, this must be the Introduction!"

Nah, too corny!

"Consider, if you will, a man caught rigidly in front of a glowing sheet of glass, in a place between time and imagination, in a dimension not of space and time but of points, an area we call {doo de doo doo, da DA, da da da dum} the Twilight Zone..."

No.

"Call me Ishmael!"

Better, but it sounds slightly familiar.

"Out of all the word processors, in all the machines, in all of fandom, this had to crawl out of mine"

Definitely not.

How do you write an introduction for a convention that you have grown to know more completely than the murderer of Laura Palmer?

The committee for this convention is the first that I ever joined. The fact that it has taken so long from original idea (see later articles) to convention means that I have been on many committees since, but none that were as enjoyable, as fun or as thought provoking.

Reconnaissance has been a labour of love for us all, and the great thing about it is that it has turned out closer to the original idea than any of us hoped.

The idea of not having guests but "special participants" has been welcomed by many (except those of you who would come up and say "...yes...special participants...yeah, but who's your Guest of Honour?"). Well, we still don't have one, because this is not a convention to honour any particular person, but the future of the field as a whole (as opposed to the future of a hole in the field!). Each of our special participants has been chosen for the contribution that they could make to our theme, and potted bios of each of them follow.

Enjoy!

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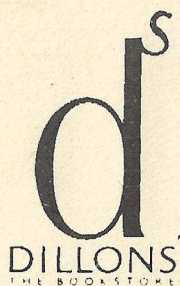
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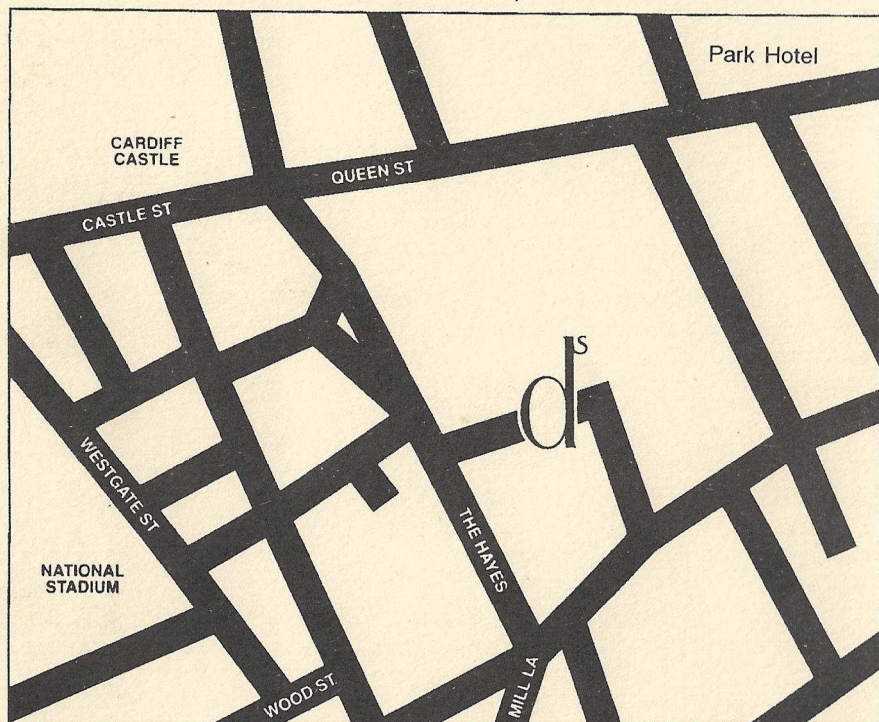
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