Noreascon 3 '89
Con report by Evelyn C. Leeper
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Noreascon 3, the 1989 World Science Fiction Convention was held August 31 through September 4 in Boston. The attendance was approximately 7200.

Hotels

The convention was in two hotels and the Hynes Convention Center. The Dealers' Room, the Con Suite (more on that later), and most programming items (including the Hugo Award Ceremony and the Masquerade) were in the Hynes; the Art Show and the film program was in the Sheraton. Louis Wu's 200th Birthday Party was in the Hilton, across the street from the Sheraton.

Registration

Registration opened on time, had no lines, and ran very smoothly. The souvenir sales table was in the registration area rather than the Dealers' Room, which meant people could get the T-shirts immediately,

though no con since LACon has had a real sell-out problem on T-shirts. The propeller beanies sold out in less than an hour, though.

There is no longer a pocket program. Instead there was a 64-page program book. This is not to be confused with what is usually called the program book, namely the convention souvenir book. This is turn is different from the convention book, in this case a Norton bibliography for sale in the Dealers' Room. Got that? The program book was indexed by program participant, by track, and chronologically. It had all the hotel maps, and was basically the only item you needed to carry with you. There were daily updates of the schedule (one or two sheets) which listed the *entire* day's program and flagged the changes, so you could even forgo the program book if you knew your way around.

We got registered and picked up the usual freebies (*New Destinies* and some bookmarks). This was a little odd--there were freebies in both the registration area and in the message area of the Con Suite. Books I can understand not leaving lying around unwatched, but the flyers could have been consolidated. We also picked up our program materials, including a sticker for the back of our badges listing our program items with time and place--very handy! The badges were the usual Boston "readable-from-across-the-room" type which almost everyone seems to prefer. You also had a choice of pins or clips for the badges--MCFI thinks of everything!

Because we didn't arrive until about 1 PM, we missed the opening ceremonies, but other than that, programming started slow and built up gradually--a wise decision since the attendance does the same.

Dealers' Room

The Dealers' Room (a.k.a., the Hucksters' Room) was smaller than I expected, certainly smaller than some previous Worldcons. (It was probably comparable to Nolacon 2--it will be hard to beat the one at Conspiracy though.) As usual, books probably represented less than half of the room and there were used book dealers as well as antiquarian-type book dealers (and of course, new book dealers). I had a very short list of books I was looking for, but still managed to find a half dozen books I was looking for, as well as William Contento's *Index to Science Fiction Anthologies 1977-1983*, our big splurge (but worth it!). Kate finally managed to find *Six Science Fiction Plays* edited by Roger Elwood, but it cost her a bundle.

My major complaint about the dealers is that so many of them don't alphabetize their books. My want list is such that I don't feel it is worth my time to browse through hundreds of randomly-ordered books, though I will go through the entire alphabet of the same number of sorted books. The two best dealers (largest stock, best organized) were Dick Spelman for new books and Southworth Books for used books. (Shameless plug for them here--I have no financial interest in either of them, but think they do a lot to raise the quality of any Dealers' Room they're in.)

Art Show

I got to look at the Art Show only once (Sunday morning). It was well-lit and moderately well-arranged, though the three-dimensional pieces were somewhat cramped (probably the artists' decisions not to buy extra table space more than anything the con could control). We bought a couple of prints in the Print Shop--it was quick to do, since they were all numbered and filed. I got a bidding number and bid on one piece of art ("The Hound of the Baskervilles"). The only problem was that they wanted a photo id and New Jersey drivers' licenses have no photos. So after producing almost a dozen non-photo pieces, I remembered that I had my AT&T badge, with my picture on it. Note to con goers: bring a picture ID. (Not a problem for me next year--I will have my passport with me in Holland. Of course, transporting the art will be the major problem!)

The quality was high overall, higher than in some previous years, though the best pieces are either marked "Not for Sale" or priced such that they may as well be marked "Not for Sale." I noticed one artist had marked minimum bids of $1 on all his pieces, trusting the crowd to bid them up. They did, though I'm not sure if he got as much as he had hoped. Still, it shows he has confidence in his work

speaking for itself. The amount of media art was down--thank goodness!

Con Suite

Rather than a traditional con suite, Noreascon 3 had the Concourse, a large exhibit hall with areas set aside for various exhibits (History of Worldcons, History of Fanzines, Costuming), freebie tables, message board, food service (fast food catered by ARA), and a lot of sitting areas where you could sit down and talk or read. (They also had a separate reading room, to which Mark and I donated a couple dozen books. We also lent our Constellation crab mallet and bib to the Worldcon exhibit.) While there were complaints about having to pay for the food (usually there are some free munchies in the Con Suite), I think the Concourse was a better idea, particularly as it was in the Hynes near the programming, rather than a long walk away in the Sheraton or the Hilton.

Programming

As I have said in previous con reports, it's impossible to see everything at a Worldcon, and this was no exception. (The Program Book lists 833 programming items!) I will therefore cover just the programming I attended. It's by no means complete, but it should give you some idea of what went on.

Panel: Computer Networking
Thursday, 2 PM
Saul Jaffe, Chuq von Rospach, Ben Yalow (mod)

This began with a summary of the existing networks (UUCP, Arpanet, Fidonet, etc.). The best summary available is probably John Quarterman's article of a few years ago (in the ACM?). Quarterman was at Noreascon 3; one wonders why they didn't invite him. Or maybe they did but he declined.

The largest and best known "electronic fanzine" is *SF-Lovers' Digest* (of which Saul is the current moderator). It began as a research project to see if it could work. It could, and currently has thousands of readers. No one really knows how many; the arbitron statistics published monthly on Usenet don't take into account machines that gateway the Digest to internal networks (IBM is using BITNET gateways for a beta-test of TCP, and that is a huge hidden readership). The best guess the panel would make for its range is more than 100,000 machines (from PCs up to mainframe computers), and several million readers.

This success has not been without its drawbacks. It is generally agreed (by the panelists, and just about anyone else you ask) that the volume has increased faster than the content. "Flame wars" abound (several academic studies have been done on "electronic flaming," or insulting via electronic bulletins boards and/or mail). As Chuq said, "The computer flame war is a fine art. I have been practicing it for many years.... The best way to react is silence." Or to quote from *WarGames*, "The only way to win is not to play."

The proposal was made that electronic bulletin boards in general and Usenet in particular need a "farm team" structure to solve the problem of uneducated users swamping the system with such postings as, "Has anyone ever read any Heinlein?" or "What time does the SF Bookstore close today?" As Chuq put it, "Usenet is 100,000 people running an apa." The results are what you would expect. Chuq's response, of course, was to go off and found *OtherRealms*, which started as a strictly electronic fanzine, and later switched to producing hard-copy as well. Since he (and it) were nominated for Hugos this year, one can't say nothing good has come out of the system.

Another solution is mailing lists rather than newsgroups (bulletin boards), since mailing lists are much more limited in scope and the members generally more sophisticated. Several people proposed intelligent newsreading programs (for example, a program that could identify articles on topics you were interested in or by people whose opinions you valued) to filter news. But of course that would mean that the garbage is still being transmitted, and that's not cheap.

As one audience member put it, the user education/sophistication level is a people problem and one shouldn't try to apply technological solutions to it, even though that seems to be the standard approach to any problem.

[The nice thing about computer panels is that the panelists are rarely pushing their own books while they're on the panel.]

Panel: The Writers Strike Back--Writers Review Critics
Thursday, 4 PM
George Alec Effinger, Kathe Koja, Sandra Miesel,Lewis Shiner, Susan Shwartz (mod)

Are reviews valuable? The panelists agreed that a good review may help get your next book published even if the current book doesn't sell especially well. And if your current book *does* sell well, a bad review probably won't affect getting your next book published. And a good review means respect and "ego-boo" and everyone enjoys that. (A bad review means you tell yourself the reviewer just didn't understand the book.)

The panelists were less agreed on whether a reviewer needs a science fiction background to review a science fiction book. Some claimed yes, and asked if Beowulf could be judged fairly by contemporary standards. Miesel said no and Shiner said yes, almost at the same instant. This may be more a reflection of their writing styles--Shiner's work (especially *Deserted Cities of the Heart*) is much more based in mainstream tradition and doesn't have a lot of science fiction trappings.

Effinger finds science fiction criticism apologetic: reviewers want to get science fiction "accepted" and at the same time impress the reader with their own erudition rather than review the book. He says that authors should never try to refute a reviewer, especially in public, though he concedes that if a reviewer makes some obvious error of fact, a letter to the reviewer pointing this out is not out of order. But a lengthy diatribe about how the reviewer was too blind to see the point the author was trying to make merely makes the author look foolish. Effinger claims he would rather have a well-thought-out bad review than a shallow good one, but also said he had never seen one such of his works (such chuckles here).

A member of the audience asked if an academic critic wasn't needed to put science fiction criticism at a literary level because s/he has the tools? Thomas Clareson (from the audience) responded that, "Some science magazines are for the general public, others for specialists. Literary critics are talking to themselves in ever-narrowing circles," and expressed the opinion that criticism should be accessible to all. Miesel recommended (and I second) C. S. Lewis's *Experiment in Criticism*. (Note that this is much more readable than Ezra Pound's *ABC of Reading* or Thomas Eagleton's *Literary Theory*, both of which were heavily recommended at Readercon. My opinion is that this is typical of the differences between Readercon and a Worldcon--without criticizing either.)

As far as actually reviewing the critics, there wasn't very much. Effinger and Shiner both said (in response to a question from the audience) that *The New York Review of Science Fiction* had fallen flat on its face, printing two kinds of articles. One was the very esoteric literary analysis that didn't make any sense, and the other was the shallow sort of review one finds everywhere else ("I really enjoyed this book because it had good characterization and a believable plot.")

As with most panels, the questioners from the audience tended to ramble on and on before getting to their question (if they ever did). A detailed review of critics will have to wait for another con and another panel.

Panel: Literary Incest--Are You Reading Fourth Generation Novels?
Thursday, 5 PM
John J. Kessel, Kathe Koja, Claudia O'Keefe, James Patrick Kelly (mod)

While the panelists agreed on the type of novel they were discussing (derivative works), they weren't

sure which of the following four categories in specific was the topic:

- Theft (e.g., [possibly] *Red Alert* and *Fail-Safe*, which case was settled out of court)
- Imitation (e.g., Terry Brooks's *Sword of Shannara* imitates Tolkien)
- Share-cropper (e.g., "Robot City" farmed out to various authors by Isaac Asimov)
- Homage (e.g., Solar Pons books as a homage to the Sherlock Holmes books)

Sometimes imitations or homages are an example of an author "trying to get it right" (or at least claiming that). The example one panelist mentioned was Alexei Panshin's *Rite of Passage*, written as a response to Heinlein's juveniles, which Panshin felt didn't handle female characters very well.

O'Keefe claimed one reason old ideas get reworked is that publishers don't like new ideas. (Neither do moviemakers--consider *Friday the 13th Part whatever-it-is*.) Kelly said it was "okay to borrow the furniture" but out and out theft is not permissible. I was all set to ask about shared universes (such as "Heroes in Hell") when the panelists mentioned Darkover, which has all sorts of people writing in that universe. And it sells. I would also suggest that repetitive series are nothing new--what about Tarzan? And Nancy Drew and Tom Swift still sell (though it is true that their audiences "turn over" more quickly than the audiences for adult novels).

Quest fantasies are overworked, according to some (which is not to say that there can't be good new quest fantasies). Willis pointed out that even fourth-generation novels descended from original ideas. *Jane Eyre* was original; Harlequin novels are not. Sometimes the story changes a bit. Yes, "Star Trek" took Fredric Brown's "Arena" and changed it. And Eando Binder's "I, Robot" begat Isaac Asimov's "Bicentennial Man." And Isaac Asimov's "Bicentennial Man" begat Star Trek's "Measure of a Man." And, verily, we will see this story even unto the fourth generation.

Readers prefer the familiar and identify with it, according to O'Keefe. And as Kelly said, "There's a lot of competence out there, but not a lot of originality." Kessel said this is because originality means challenging basic assumptions, and people have difficulty with that. On this subject of challenging basic assumptions and looking at things differently, Russell Hoban said in *Pilgermann*, "We are, for example, clever enough to know that a year is a measure of passage, not permanence; we call the seasons spring, summer, autumn, and winter, knowing that they are continually passing one into the other. We are not surprised at this but when we give to seasons of another sort the names Rome, Byzantium, Islam, or Mongol Empire we are astonished to see that each one refuses to remain what it is."

[This panel ties in with the *Seven Samurai* described later.]

Panel: Computer Networks and Viruses: How Close Are *Neuromancer* and *Shockwave Rider*?
Thursday, 6 PM
Richard Stallman, Chuq von Rospach, Ben Yalow, Saul Jaffe (mod)

First the panelists' credentials: Stallman is developing a free operating system (and seems to be a bit of an anarchist), von Rospach works for Apple, Yalow works for City University of New York, and Jaffe works for Rutgers University, all in the fields of computers and networking. Though the title was "viruses," one of the major topics was the "Internet worm." When someone described that worm as benign and harmless, it was pointed out that the time spent tracking it down, combined with the time spent by engineers and others who sat idle while their computers were inaccessible, amounted to a considerable financial damage. Eventually, even those audience members who started out saying "Well, it was only the big companies who were hurt and it felt good to see them suffer" had to admit that a lot of other people were hurt as well. IBM, for example, cut themselves off from the Internet and this meant that the usual electronic means of communication customers could use to get questions answered or problems resolved were not functioning.

Some basic principles were stated. More security in operating systems leads to less functionality in information exchange by making it more difficult. Mac viruses tend to be more benign than PC ones. (No one gave any reason or justification for this.)

Several non-standard examples of disasters were given. Accidentally deleting your own files is the most common example of destruction and, all things considered, may cost the most in terms of person-hours. Then there is the migrating head-crash. The technicians put the diagnostic pack in a drive that has had a head-crash and damaged it, but not realizing this, proceeded to put this pack in several other drives and destroyed them all as well. The example the panelists gave was of a PDP-11, so must be several years old, but I know of at least one recent instance with Vaxes. And Stallman observed that the "adventure" program was a virus--it merely used a human vector to transmit it from machine to machine. People *wanted* to put it on their machine!

The panelists also agreed that backups are vital, but.... How do you know your backups are good? The most dangerous virus, they felt, would be a "time bomb" that did nothing but randomly scramble the data on backups for a year or two, then deleting everything on the system. This suggests that having different types of backups would help, unless the perpetrator was an insider who knew of all the types. This also works only if no one reads the backups in the interim and discovers what's going on. So having users who regularly need files restored from backup may be a blessing in disguise!

Why do people write worms and viruses? Many reasons were given: ego-boo, social malcontents, "see what I can do," and even industrial espionage. Stallman saw viruses and worms as an almost political protest, people fighting against a repressive system. He claimed that the more restrictive the operating system, the more likely people were to attempt to sabotage it. However, the statistics presented by other panelists seem to indicate that it is the most open systems which are attacked, and that familiarity has more to do with it than repressiveness. (UNIX® systems are attacked far more frequently than MVS systems, even though the latter are much more restrictive.)

One of the major dangers is that systems will become too top-heavy with virus protections. And as Yalow summed up, "What you can build you can break."

This panel was very well-attended. In spite of the subtitle, neither *Neuromancer* and *Shockwave Rider* were mentioned at all.

After this panel, Kate, Mark, and I went out and had dinner nearby at a restaurant whose name escapes me (two initials and a last name). Very good, and luckily not extremely crowded.

Party: Meet the Pros
Thursday, 8:30 PM

As program participants, Mark and I actually each got a free drink at this. Therefore we felt obliged to mingle with the rabble.... But seriously, this gave us a chance to see a bunch of people that we probably wouldn't have run into otherwise, including a whole bunch of Midwestern fans that Dale had been telling us about (and telling them about us). Now we all got to attach faces to names. We also spent some time talking to the people who ran Contraption and Mark got an update on how the fantasy origami book was coming from David Stein.

Panel: Creationism, Educationalism, & the End of the U. S. Space Program
Friday, 10 AM
Arthur Hlavaty, Charles R. Pellegrino, Milton A. Rothman, Hal Clement (mod)

The panelists started by saying that while there was a lot of talk about creationism in schools, there wasn't actually very much of it in the public schools. There isn't much evolution either, at least in the textbooks, but this is changing, according to Rothman. As for the situation in private (religious) schools, it was pointed out that not many physicists were coming out of Catholic schools fifty years ago, but now they are producing their share.

A connection with science does not preclude religious belief: one astronaut did ESP experiments while orbiting the moon and another went searching for Noah's Ark when he got back from the moon. As to whether there was any correlation (either positive or negative) between religious belief and scientific

belief, no one provided any answers.

One problem in the schools is the teacher (usually a science teacher) who says, "Question everyone, but not me." This inconsistency is almost guaranteed to convince students that all the talk of science being open is bunk. Of course, science has a negative image in general--everyone blames it for society's ills and no one thinks about how life would be without science ("nasty, brutish, and short" is the operative description here).

Science looks for the causes of events. Creationism attributes everything inexplicable to God. For example, the latest creationism argument against carbon dating of fossils is that there were massive changes in decay rates about 10,000 years ago (or perhaps it's that there was a single massive decay event at that time). The fact that such an event (or the rates necessary before the slow-down) would have created temperatures so high that the earth would have melted is apparently not addressed. (One is reminded of Clarence Darrow's description, during the Scopes Trial, of what would *really* have happened if Joshua made the sun stand still.)

Pellegrino summed up the dichotomy as, "Science is based on doubt; creationism is based on faith." But as Hlavaty said, "Objectivity is an idea which we prize more as an ideal than as a way of life."

Panel: Alternate History Stories
Friday, 12 noon
Victor Raymond, Melissa Scott, S. M. Stirling, Stu Shiffman (mod)

First the authors promoted their alternate history books. Stirling will be coming out with *Under the Yoke*, a sequel to *Marching Through Georgia*. Scott cited her *A Choice of Destinies* and *Armor of Light*. Shiffman is doing a graphic novel, *Captain Confederacy* (which I think is coming out as a book under the title *The Confederates*).

They then broke alternate histories into two types: those about the alternatives (the change-points), or those set in the societies after the change has occurred. The most important thing for an author to do in either type is to separate the improbable from the impossible. Fantasy *is* allowed, if that is part of your premise, but having Viking invaders in South America meet dinosaurs is definitely out. One book cited as not supporting the society derived from the change is Terry Bisson's *Fire on the Mountain*, described as a Marxist alternate history in which a slave uprising in the mid-19th Century results in a utopian society, apparently devoid of most government, with no explanation of how this came about. *Operation Chaos* was cited as a science fantasy which (I think) they agreed was not alternate history. There has to be a common history up to a certain point, not just the idea that "magic has always worked." Esther Friesner's *Druid's Blood* has magic, yes, but there is also a definite split point at the Roman invasion of Britain.

Part of the trick is to try to get into the minds of people raised in different environments with different assumptions. Harry Turtledove's "Counting the Potsherds" does this, examining a world in which democracy never developed and people could understand only rule by a single individual.

Other books mentioned were John Brunner's *Times without Number*, Mack Reynold's *Other Time*, and Robert Sobel's *For Want of a Nail* (a wonderful alternate history in which the British win at Saratoga, written as a history book, complete with footnotes and bibliography! Some libraries have even unknowingly filed it in the history section!). When asked for change-points so far overlooked, the Russian Revolution and the rise of the Tokugawa Shogunate were mentioned. (What if the Japanese *hadn't* decided that guns were dishonorable?) I would note that Allen Appel's *Time After Time* does deal with the Russian Revolution, but no others come to mind.

I asked if "Wild Cards" was alternate history or whether it was too impossible. Stirling's response was that it was since it was scientifically presented and "if aliens had released gene-tailored viruses over New York in 1946 things would be very different." No one disagreed with this statement.

This panel also featured the first of many broken chairs. It seems that the backs of the audience's chairs were attached to the uprights with very short screws, so that if a large person leaned back, spreading the uprights apart, the back fell out. Just thought you'd want to know.

Panel: The Envelope Please--What Films Were Nominated and Why
Friday, 3 PM
Edward Bryant, Terry Erdmann, Craig Miller, Lee Orlando (mod)

(Kate began this panel by whispering to me, "Don't buy Canadian gummi fish--they're awful." I thought I'd share that with you.)

The panelists began by listing (with some difficulty) the nominees: *Alien Nation*, *Beetlejuice*, *Big*, *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, and *Willow*. Rather than go through why they were nominated (fairly obvious, one supposes), they said a little bit about each one. *Big*, for example, though it is often lumped in with the many "body-swap" films of last year, was *not* a body-swap film. *Alien Nation*, on the other hand, *is* a police buddy picture (and apparently has spawned a television series!). Erdmann expressed surprise at its nomination.

Beetlejuice is a typical Tim Burton movie: it has no plot. (Burton's other films include *Pee Wee Big Adventure* and *Batman*.) According to Erdmann, Burton doesn't work well with people, so when he was chosen to direct *Batman*, he asked for Keaton as Batman since he had worked with him before (in *Beetlejuice*) and wouldn't have to learn to deal with someone new.

Erdmann related what happened during last year's Hugo ceremonies. Apparently Orion was so sure they would win for *Robocop* that they sent a crew to videotape the award ceremony, thinking they could use it for publicity. Of course, *The Princess Bride* won instead and that was what the crew taped. When Erdmann returned to his seat after getting the award, one of the crew members leaned over and said, "Do you want this tape? We don't have any use for it." (This sounds odd; in effect, Orion would have been financing someone else's film--they paid the crew. But, hey, in Hollywood anything's possible.)

Films from 1988 overlooked in the Hugo process but still recommended included *Burning Love*, *Half of Heaven*, *The Milagro Beanfield War*, *Monkeyshines*, *They Live*, and *Wings of Desire*.

Films mentioned for consideration for 1989 included *The Abyss*; *Field of Dreams*; *Honey, I Shrunk the Kids*; *Miracle Mile*; *The Navigator*; *Paper House*; and *Vampire's Kiss*. I would add to that list *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*. And I'm sure *Star Trek V* will be on the list.

The consensus was that *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* would win. (It did.)

Panel: Build an Alternate History
Friday, 4 PM
Mark Keller, Sandra Miesel, Stu Shiffman, Harry Turtledove (mod)

When building an alternate history, one must pick a change-point. The panelists said it was easy to pick a military change-point, but difficult to pick an economic one. They talked about the "Paren Thesis" (I'm guessing on the spelling; it looks like a bad pun!), which claimed that Mohammed made the Middle Ages. They also talked about Hagarism, which postulates a Jewish empire instead of an Islamic one.

In building alternate histories, "one has to fudge a bit." So if things seem to work out too neatly in the next one you read, keep that in mind.

One scenario that was discussed at length was, "What if Lincoln died in 1864, the radical Republicans got into the White House, and at the end of the Civil War, the South was treated as conquered provinces?" Some suggested continuations included Texas joining Mexico instead of the United States, a slower Western expansion, a clamp-down on immigration in 1880 (instead of 1920) to keep potential

Democrats out, and so on.

Examples of well-researched alternate histories were L. Sprague de Camp's *Lest Darkness Fall* and Sobel's *For Want of a Nail* (again!). Examples of badly researched alternate histories were John Jakes's *Black in Time* and Kirk Mitchell's *Procurator* (I'm glad I'm not the only one who disliked this, though I wouldn't be quite this harsh on it). It's interesting that one of the best and one of the worst each deal with "What if Rome never fell?" One symptom of a bad alternate history is to postulate one change and then no change after that. The example given was a hypothetical novel in which Carthage wins the Punic Wars and we (in 1989 A.D.) are living under a Carthegenian Empire. Since we're not living under a Roman Empire now, this seems unlikely.

Miesel mentioned that she has a book coming our soon which has multiple alternate histories on the first page, but I didn't catch the title (*Shawmut*?). She also has another which lists seven different things that could have happened to Abraham Lincoln. (Neither are listed in *Books in Print* or *Forthcoming Books*.)

Panel: *Seven Samurai*, *Magnificent Seven*, and *Battle Beyond the Stars*--What Makes Them the Same?
Friday, 5 PM
Mark Leeper, Jim Mann, Darrell Schweitzer, Edward Bryant (mod)

To the films listed in the title of this panel, Mark added a fourth, *World Gone Wild*, which he described as being done on such low a budget that they had only six gunfighters.

There seemed to be a lot of interaction among these films. Though the samurai film preceded the Western, Kurosawa was obviously much influenced by Westerns in general. And in *Battle Beyond the Stars*, the planet is Akir and the people the Akira, an obvious tribute to Kurosawa.

As to why Hollywood felt it necessary to remake *Seven Samurai*, Mark said it reminded him of a cartoon of a board room meeting at which the chairman says, "Ms Preeble's idea has merit; would one of you gentlemen like to suggest it?" In other words, Hollywood recognizes only Hollywood products as valid. A look at the Oscars supports this idea, and in fact, a great deal of discussion about the Oscars ensued. People didn't seem to realize that the films in the "Best Foreign-Language Film" (*not* "Foreign Film") are nominated by their respective countries; the Academy merely picks five from the list of one from each country they are given. The category "Best Foreign-Language Film" would seem to include films made in the United States in a foreign language. Would a bilingual film (such as *Chan Is Missing*) count? But I digress.

The love of retellings was expressed by Schweitzer as "producers try to be the first one to be second." The linkage between Japanese and Western films goes beyond this one instance and goes in both directions. There is, for example, *Throne of Blood*, which is a retelling of *Macbeth*. In the other direction we have *Yojimbo* (which was retold as *A Fistful of Dollars*), *Rashomon* (which was retold as *The Outrage*), and *The Hidden Fortress* (although I don't think of *Star Wars* as being a very close retelling of it).

My feeling on listening to this panel was that people would enjoy a panel on Japanese films in general, though how they could tie it into science fiction I'm not sure. ("Japanese Fantasy Films," perhaps?)

After this panel we went to the hotel lobby where we met Manavendra Thakur, a contributor to **rec.arts.movies.reviews** on Usenet. We had arranged (somewhat ineptly on my part) to have dinner with him. I say ineptly because had originally planned to meet at the Mandalay Restaurant in Boston with him and Jerry Boyajian, but when we arrived we discovered that there was no longer a Mandalay Restaurant in Boston. We managed to call Manavendra and change the plans, but couldn't get in touch with Jerry. (I still don't know what happened with him.)

We went to a Chinese restaurant nearby and spent a couple of hours talking about film. This was made somewhat difficult by the fact that we were joined by someone who wanted to talk about *Spaceballs*

when Manavendra wanted to talk about Tarkovsky, but eventually it sorted itself out (the fourth person had to return for another event) and we had a good time.

Party: UMSFS
Friday, 7 PM

Well, the party started at 7 PM, but we didn't arrive until about 9. The biggest surprise was finding John MacLeod there. John was Mark's roommate in college twenty years ago, and we're seen him twice since graduation: once at a 15-year party for UMSFS, and now at the 25-year party. (I should explain that UMSFS is the University of Massachusetts Science Fiction Society, which when we were there was called UMassSFS.) John hadn't really changed in all this time and seeing him and Mark talking was like going back in time to college. I heard from Chrissy that she received "Gidget Goes to Gar" (a.k.a. "Gidget Goes Gorean") from me, and we may actually see something produced by Boskone. I tried Razcal (raspberry/lime soda); it was good. Because of the corkage fees, there was no alcohol, though the UMSFS bunch usually has home-brewed beer. We also saw other people we hadn't seen for years, and I got to return to Matt the cassettes we had borrowed from him 2-1/2 years ago!

We looked out the window at one point to discover that the line for the Boxboro Party ("Louis Wu's 200th Birthday") was wrapped around the block. I had planned to drop by, but changed my mind and hung around with old friends instead. It was great, and we made sure to get addresses for people we had lost touch with. (Later on we ran into some other people from college as well who weren't at the party. Of course, having the convention in Boston made this particularly likely.)

Panel: Back to Byzantium--Eastern Influences Are Here!
Saturday, 10 AM
Lillian Stewart Carl, Brenda Clough, Susan Shwartz, Judith Tarr, Harry Turtledove (mod)

This panel began with long (and to me, boring) descriptions of how each of the panelists got interested in Byzantine history. To all of them, the Germanic and Celtic cultures lack subtlety; Turtledove described this as the Germanic wolves versus the Byzantine snakes. The only other interesting item was that Turtledove wrote under the name Eric Iverson (*Wereblood* and *Werenight*). Mark and I both left early.

Panel: The New Classics
Saturday, 12 noon
Robert Colby, Alexis Gilliland, Brad Linaweaver, Lewis Shiner, David Hartwell (mod)

They began by observing that at Conspiracy the classics that people discussed were from the 1960s, not the 1940s. When a poll was taken of how many audience members had read *Beyond This Horizon* or *Slan*, the result was about 50%, the highest percentage Gilliland had seen in several conventions. It's true, though, that when people discuss the "classics of science fiction" they seem stuck forty years ago. One can of course argue that it takes that long to decide what's a classic, but then it's probably true that little is, because how much is it read today by the younger fans? Shiner claims that much of 1940s fiction is no longer relevant, with the role of women (and just about anyone else who wasn't white, male, and educated) being as ignored as it was. Perhaps the cyberpunk trend toward focusing on the less well-off members of society is a rebellion against this. Shiner in general is very articulate and literate on panels, much more so that many of the authors one sees, who know science fiction, but nothing outside the field (this is not meant to single out the other panelists on this panel, but is a general observation). Linaweaver felt that classics must have audacity; Hartwell said they needed originality.

Asked to name recent classics, they mentioned Ursula K. Leguin's *Left Hand of Darkness*, Samuel R. Delany's *Nova*, and Robert Silverberg's *Dying Inside*. Apparently a recent *Lan's Lantern* did a correlation about the various "100 Best Novels" lists and the results of that matched the panelists' feelings pretty closely. Hartwell recommended *Arslan* by M. S. Engh. Gilliland named Tom Clancy's *Hunt for Red October*, the novels of Stephen King, and Edgar Rice Burroughs's *Thuvia, Maid of Mars*. (I have to disagree on the last one--I don't think anyone still reads it today.) Colby suggested Gene

Wolfe's *Book of the New Sun*, Keith Roberts's *Pavane*, Barry Malzberg's *Herovit's World*, and Scott Bradfield. Bradfield is a new author that Colby claims will have a cult following in five years. If he doesn't, Colby says you should remind him of this at a convention and he will buy you lunch. (He will probably never forgive me for printing this!) Shiner named *Left Hand of Darkness*, William Gibson's *Neuromancer*, *Dying Inside*, David Brin's *Startide Rising* (Shiner says he does not consider this a classic, but suspects other people will), and *Book of the New Sun*. Linaweaver mentioned Michael Shaara's *Herald*. And Eric Van (from the audience) suggested Shirley Jackson's *Haunting of Hill House*.

I also found out at this panel that Brad Linaweaver won the Prometheus Award for Best Libertarian SF Novel (for *Moon of Ice*) and L. Neil Schulman the Prometheus Hall of Fame Award (for *Alongside Night*). It wasn't announced here, but Victor Koman was sitting in front me and had the plaques in his bag. At one point he took them out to get something else out and I could read them. I also saw that he had a copy of his novel *The Jehovah Contract* which I was looking for, but which one dealer said wouldn't be out for a couple of months. So after the panel I asked him when it would be available. He said it was out now. I said I had looked everywhere in the Dealers' Room but couldn't find it. His friend suggested, "Why not sell her this copy?" which he did and even autographed it. I mentioned the plaques and he asked me not to say anything to Linaweaver since the awards hadn't been announced yet. Since by now they have been announced, I can include them here.

Panel: What Would Fandom Be Like Today with No Computers?
Saturday, 1 PM
Teddy Harvia, Saul Jaffe, David Dyer-Bennet (mod)

Well, no one actually tried to answer the question. Instead, they discussed how fandom uses computers. There was the usual (desktop publishing, networking) and the frequently overlooked (mailing list management, program books). The panelists agreed that there would be no way to do a program book of 833 items, indexed, without computers. Some use computers heavily for correspondence, allowing them to send the same comments, slightly revised perhaps, to different people. One formats on the computer, then prints the output such that it will fit on a postcard, cuts it, and glues it onto one. One person mentioned publishing as shareware, but I don't think it's been done yet.

One hint of where fandom might have been is that apas are on the decline as networking becomes more widespread. Unfortunately, the computer graphics are not up to the level needed for fanzine art, even though some editors try to pretend they are. What the graphics do allow is their misuse; everyone is now a graphics designer, but not everyone is a *good* graphics designer. We've all seen the convention flyers with eight different fonts (eight being the standard number provided with most graphics packages). The panelists recommend using two fonts in different point sizes to provide variation instead. They also said that while it used to be true that just producing a fanzine was considered praise-worthy, now that it's so much easier to do the mechanics, the content of fanzines has become more important.

Having authors on networks allows an interaction between fans and authors that didn't exist before. (As Timothy Zahn said at the @ party, though, it can also tie up a lot of an author's time, and he avoids it for that reason.)

There is still a lack of knowledge about computers, and a certain amount of fear (I note that the Confiction sign-up forms require that you sign a statement saying that you realize this information will be stored on a computer, and think this is the result of stricter information control laws in Europe).

Fax was mentioned, but people agreed that fax was for pictures; e-mail was for words.

Presentation: 20th Century Fox Films
Saturday, 2 PM

The first film presented was Clive Barker's *Nightbreed* (based on his novel *Cabal*). It's about Midian, where the monsters, and has lots of shape-shifters and special effects, and is due out February 9, 1990.

Terry Erdmann's description of *Millennium* gets some of the details wrong: It's the NTSB (National Transportation Safety Board), not the NAB (National Aeronautics Board), and the watches run backward rather than being set 45 minutes into the future. (I wonder if the script was changed during filming, or if it was re-edited after he saw it.)

Then was the documentary short on *The Abyss* (a.k.a. *Heaven's Tank*). Most of what was talked about here has been discussed at great length already so I won't re-iterate it all. Erdmann did say that Biehn's psychological transformation was mostly cut, making him somewhat two-dimensional. A scene of a giant tsunami wave hanging over a city was also cut, but the footage may show up in the version that makes it to cassette or television.

Exorcist 1990 is due out next June, and Roger Corman's *Frankenstein Unbound* in September. An *Aliens* videodisk is due out, and plans are in the works for *Alien 3* and *Alien 4*. *Alien 3* will not have the William Gibson script; he wrote it with Ridley Scott in mind as the director and when Scott pulled out, the script would have needed rewriting that Gibson didn't want to do.

For some reason William Shatner's *TekWar* was mentioned at the beginning of this presentation (though it's actually by Ron Goulart rather than Shatner). Maybe it's published by a subsidiary or something.

Panel: Things You Should Have Read
Saturday, 4 PM
Steven Gould, Karen Haber, Fred Lerner, Arthur Hlavaty (mod)

For this panel it's probably best just to give you the list:

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Bayley, Barrington J. (Hlavaty)
Bester, Alfred, The Stars My Destination (Gould)
Coover, Robert, Public Burning (Hlavaty)
Coover, Robert, Universal Baseball Association, Inc.,
         J. Henry Waugh, Prop. (Lerner)
Hesse, Herman, The Glass Bead Game
         (a.k.a. Magister Ludi) (Hlavaty)
Kinsella, W. P., Shoeless Joe (Gould)
Langguth, A. J., Jesus Christs (Hlavaty)
Myers, John Myers, Silverlock (Lerner)
Panshin, Alexei, Anthony Villiers novels (The Star Well,
         Masque World, and The Thurb Revolution) (Hlavaty)
Silverberg, Robert, Dying Inside (Lerner)
Williams, Walter Jon, The Crown Jewels (Gould)
Williams, Walter Jon, House of Shards (Gould)
Wright, Austin Tappan, Islandia (Lerner)
Yates, Alan, Coriolanus the Chariot! (Hlavaty)
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Panel: Sherlock Holmes and SF
Saturday, 5 PM
Thorarinn Gunnarsson, Evelyn Leeper, Tony Lewis, Stu Shiffman, Joe Siclari (mod)

Various books were mentioned. I noted only the ones new to me:

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Poul Anderson's Midsummer Tempest (cameo at the end)
something by Daniel Pinkwater (title not mentioned)
Cthulhu by Gaslight (I'm not sure if this is a graphic novel
         or not; it sounds like a sequel to Scarlet by
         Gaslight, which is)
A Case of Blind Fear (graphic novel)
The Rainbow Affair (in the "Man from U.N.C.L.E." series)
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Much of the hour was devoted to listing books (with all the panels scribbling down titles frantically), but some topics were raised. What people liked or disliked in Holmes pastiches was discussed (I said

they should take place in Victorian times--Holmes does not translate well to other times). Lewis claimed that Holmes was popular with adolescents because Holmes gets to eat when he wants, sleep when he wants, do what he wants, and be rude to grown-ups.

Gunnarsson has acted in some Holmes plays in Iceland, so some discussion was made of the "visual Holmes." Brett was obviously the favorite actor, and I can't recall any runners-up.

(Since I was on this panel, my notes are spotty, so please forgive the short synopsis. There really was not a lot new added to the opus of Sherlockian scholarship.)

Panel: The Closing of the American Mind
Saturday, 6 PM
Gregory Benford, David Brin, Hal Clement, Joyce Scrivner (mod)

The ironic note of this panel was that Clement talked about how we need to teach more science, but Allan Bloom in his book *The Closing of the American Mind* called for more "education" in the liberal arts and less "training" in science and technology. (At least that's how I read it.) It's possible, of course, that the title of the panel was not supposed to refer to Bloom's book, but it is still ironic that the panelists emphasized the engineering that Bloom had such distaste for.

One person claimed that the book *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten* (by Robert Fulghum) was fairly insightful. The room was packed, but it was once again an example of preaching to the choir. We had to leave this early so Mark could go to the Green Room for his next panel, but it didn't seem like much of a loss.

Panel: Arthurian Movie Reviews
Saturday, 7 PM
Darrell Schweitzer, Mark Leeper (mod)

The panel was somewhat smaller than usual. Luckily Darrell was able to take up the slack and talk for two, throwing out comments such as "Wearing armor at a banquet in peacetime is like coming to dinner in a welding mask."

For this panel, Mark and I had prepared a handout ([Attachment 1](#)) which summarizes a lot of what was said. Several other items were mentioned: a television show called "Sir Lancelot," a Richard Basehart television version of *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (for which I have searched in vain for references to), *The Court Jester* (which is not Arthurian but is always mentioned at Arthurian panels anyway) and a 16th Century play called *The Birth of Merlin*.

The background of the Arthurian legends is Geoffrey of Monmouth, who wrote about 6th Century events as if they were taking place in the 11th Century (when he lived). There are some interesting attempts to Christianize the legend--the Green Knight of the legend is merely a version of the Druidic "Green Man," and the whole search for the Grail is added to bring a Christian overtone to the story. Certainly if one looks at how marriage (and sex) was viewed in the legend it is a more pagan view than a Christian one.

Not all the films were commented on. , but I made the following notes. *Black Shield of Falworth* and *Feuer und Schwert* got very poor reviews. *Knights of the Round Table* was an excuse for a spectacle film *Camelot* was considered grossly inaccurate and almost not even Arthurian; *Excalibur* was visually interesting but also grossly inaccurate. *King Arthur, the Young Warlord* tries to remove all the fantasy elements. *Knightriders* is much better than people expect, without being very good. *Legend of King Arthur* is perhaps the most accurate, but a bit dry for some tastes. Everyone likes *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*.

Hugo Awards
Saturday, 8:30 PM

First the awards:

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Novel:           Cyteen, by C.J. Cherryh (Warner; Popular Library/Questar)
Novella:         "The Last of the Winnebagos," by Connie Willis
                     (IASFM, Jul 88)
Novelette:       "Schrödinger's Kitten," by George Alec Effinger
                     (OMNI, Sep 88)
Short Story:     "Kirinyaga," by Mike Resnick (F&SF, Nov 88)
Non-Fiction:     The Motion of Light in Water, by Samuel R. Delany
                     (Morrow)
Dramatic Pres.:  Who Framed Roger Rabbit
Pro Editor:      Gardner Dozois, IASFM
Pro Artist:      Michael Whelan
Semi-Prozine:    Locus (ed. Charles N. Brown)
Fanzine:         File 770 (ed. Mike Glyer)
Fan Writer:      Dave Langford
Fan Artist:      Brad W. Foster and Diana Gallagher Wu (tie)
John W. Campbell Award: Michaela Roessner
Seiun ("Japanese Hugo") for Best Novel in Translation:
                     Footfall by Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle
Seiun for Best Short Story in Translation:
                     "Eye for Eye" by Orson Scott Card
Gryphon Award:   Elizabeth Waters
                     Lee Barwick (Honor Book)
First Fandom Award: L. Sprague de Camp
                     Donald Grant
                     Frederik Pohl
Big Heart Award:     Arthur L. Widner, Jr.
Special Awards:      Alex Schomburg
                     SF-Lovers' Digest
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Now the comments: The most comment (*all* negative) was for the Gryphon Award, given by Andre Norton for the "Best Unpublished Fantasy Manuscript by a Woman"! Her rationale for this was that "the women" don't win as many awards, so this is needed. Did she ask for Cherryh's or Willis's opinions, I wonder. (Both were too polite to say "So there!" in accepting their awards.) The Con Committee found itself between a rock and a hard place on this one--Norton was a Guest of Honor, and apparently made a fuss when this award was originally scheduled to be presented at one of her panels or talks. It is expected (and hoped) that Confiction will feel no obligation to have it presented at the Hugo ceremony.

The prizes for the Seiun were sake sets; I commented to Mark that I wasn't sure what Card (a Mormon) was going to do with his. When he accepted, he said that he couldn't use it for tea (!) but would find some use for it. As someone pointed out, he also talked about how nice it was that cultural barriers are being broken down and people were learning about other cultures. Open mouth, insert foot.

As with last year, I got the definite impression that First Fandom has embarked on a "let's award everyone before they die" campaign--they gave out four awards last year and three this year.

There were twelve Hugos presented in eleven categories, and eleven non-Hugos. While some of these non-Hugos have traditionally been awarded at the Hugo ceremony, I think the Seiun and the Gryphon (and other awards such as the Prometheus Award) should be awarded at a separate ceremony--perhaps during the Masquerade intermission?.

Pohl's stories were enjoyable. He told how the Fantasy APA was founded in the Parker House Hotel Bar. He also told about the time in Cleveland in 1966 when the Worldcon shared the hotel with a group of World War II veterans. When some of both groups got stuck in an elevator, he said the veterans were sobbing and clawing the walls and crying, "For the love of God, Montressor!" and the fans were saying, "Oh, good, let's filk!" (I claimed that the veterans starting sobbing et al *after* the filking started.)

Effinger, in reference to his past medical and personal troubles, said, "Some people may say I got a bad break. But today I feel like the luckiest man on earth." (For those who don't recognize it, this is from

Lou Gehrig's farewell speech.) In her acceptance speech, Connie Willis said, "After I saw my picture on the cover of *Locus* after I won the Nebula, I vowed if I won this tonight I would not grin from ear to ear and look like a deranged chipmunk again. But, aw, what the heck!"

The crowd control was excellent--there were no lines! The decision was made to open the auditorium well in advance of the starting time, so no lines built up. (This was possible because the decision was also made that there would be one setup for everything--they would not try to rearrange the chairs between the film presentations and the Hugos, etc. Wise decision!) Everyone could see; everyone could hear. It was great.

The program ran on time, in part because there was a schedule--to the second--of how long was allowed for each step. I can't recall it exactly, but it had entries such as "Hand over Hugo, not blocking view with podium--10 seconds" and "Winner mounts stage--20 seconds." Each Hugo was scheduled to take 300 seconds (5 minutes) and they kept to this schedule pretty well.

The processional (in which all the nominees marched in, complete with banners and Hugos leading the parade) was to the music from *Ben Hur*. (Mark wants me to point out that I couldn't identify it and had to ask him.)

Panel: Media SF for the Literary Fan
Sunday, 1 PM
George R. R. Martin, Bill Rotsler, Melinda Snodgrass (mod)

At starting time, only Snodgrass was present. Martin came in about half-way through (his wife's purse had been snatched in Au Bon Pain and they had been filling out a police report), and Rotsler showed up even later (he had found himself next to the Guests of Honor at the Brunch and didn't feel it proper to just walk out in the middle).

I had hoped that this would discuss some of the more literate fantasy and science fiction films, such as *Field of Dreams* and *Brazil*, but instead the hour consisted mostly of people discussing the "Star Trek" and "Beauty and the Beast" television shows and why the scripts aren't better and whether writing to the producers would help. "Max Headroom" was mentioned briefly, but the audience seemed firmly fixed in those other two shows (probably because they came knowing that Snodgrass works on "Star Trek" and Martin on "Beauty and the Beast," facts that probably would have steered me away had I known them ahead of time.

My feeling is that literary television doesn't work because literary people don't watch television; people expect something else from television. And since the major market for films these days is the under-21 crowd, literary films must appeal to all those over 21 to make money, and science fiction and fantasy may have a difficult time doing that.

The panelists claimed that television series also have the problem that characters can't change radically, but I would note that series other than theirs have change. I agree, though, that multi-episode stories or radical changes destroy the interchangeability almost required for syndication.

The panelists finally ended up listing ideas they never wanted to see again: evil twins, shape-shifters (Clive Barker should hear this!), GLAs (god-like aliens), the Enterprise meets God, and computer viruses. (Well, the last is probably topical now, but I suspect the flood of virus stories will pass.)

On the whole, I found this a very disappointing panel, in large part because the description was misleading.

Panel: Historical Fantasy
Sunday, 2 PM
Lisa Barnett, Kim Stanley Robinson, Delia Sherman, John M. Ford

After the usual credentials listing (in this case the panelists seemed more concerned with establishing their experience with the subject than in selling their books, a delightful change), the panel tried to define historical fantasy, and in particular to distinguish it from alternate history. They described historical fantasy as the underlying story to match the surface story one gets in history class. In other words, historical fantasy does not contradict any known events, while alternate history does. It is for this reason that Barnett classifies her *Armor of Light* (co-authored with Melissa Scott) as historical fantasy rather than alternate history--all the events are true, just the motivation and background is based in magic.

Another example is the Lord D'Arcy series of Randall Garrett (and now Michael Kurland). Lord D'Arcy uses magic in the forensic parts, but the murders that he solves are *not* done by magic but by ordinary means. While this series is obviously alternate history as well (given a real divergence with actual events) the handling of magic as limited in how it is used in the novel was a factor in causing the panelists to rate this book highly. (It also makes them better mystery stories, since the reader has a chance of figuring out the solution, where if magic were used, it would be much more difficult.)

The discussion seemed to lead to the conclusion that historical fantasy and alternate history were orthogonal: Ford's *Dragon Waiting* is both, Keith Roberts's *Pavane* is alternate history without being historical fantasy, and *Armor of Light* is historical fantasy without being alternate history (at least according to the panel). Other historical fantasies mentioned were Robinson's "Black Air," Mary Renault's works, and Gene Wolfe's *Soldier of the Mist*. The last, like MacAvoy's "Damiano" trilogy is unusual in that it contains no famous people; most historical fantasies center around famous people and events.

One thing that makes writing historical fantasies both easier and harder is that there were no real historians between the Roman Empire and the French Revolution. Oh, people noted down events, but not really with an eye to recording history for the future. As someone pointed out, this means a lot of things were never written down (floor plans for houses, for example). So on the one hand an author can make up a fair amount without contradicting any known facts. On the other hand, it's almost impossible to find out some things that you may need for your story. (One suggestion was to read fiction of the period for some details, but this is really only applicable after about 1500. Another suggestion was to use children's books, which state the "obvious" a lot more often than adult books do.) All this led Ford to note that "history is not the lie agreed upon because it isn't even agreed upon." And Sherman added (either footnoting or quoting Ford; I'm not sure which), "Research is like foreplay: it's a lot of fun but you have to get on to the next step if you're going to produce something."

Reading: Lewis Shiner
Sunday, 3 PM

I don't usually go to readings, but on the basis of Shiner's "performance" on his panels, I decided to go to his reading. He read the beginning of his next novel *Slam* (due out May 1990). It is a mainstream novel about a man who gets out of prison (where he did time for tax evasion) and who gets a job taking care of the dozens of cats a rich old lady left her fortune to. (It is *not* a comedy.) The line that stuck me the most was, "The city [Galveston] was like a blonde with dark roots, sitting on a barstool with a line of empty glasses in front of her and an afternoon to kill."

Shiner will also be editing an issue of Pulphouse's *Author's Choice Monthly* and a Greenpeace anthology (for which I didn't catch the name), and may be writing for DC's *Hacker Files*.

Panel: Phantom of the Opera
Sunday, 4 PM
John Flynn, Heather Nachman, Lynne Stephens

I had hoped this panel would discuss all versions and interpretations of *The Phantom of the Opera*, but instead it was meant to cover only the musical version. I like the musical, but long discussions of which actor makes the best Phantom in the musical left me somewhat bored. When the panelists asked why

people had come to a panel about the musical, I commented that I had expected a somewhat wider scope, and after that other people talked about different versions, including the most accurate film one, the animated special on HBO! There was also some discussion of Erik as someone who was ugly on the outside and beautiful on the inside; Mark drew the parallel to John Merrick (the "Elephant Man").

We did get a chance to buy some nice hand-colored buttons of the Phantom "logo" (the mask and the rose) from one of the artists in the audience.

Dinner was supposed to be at Legal Seafood (about a mile down the road) but someone warned us that it was really crowded, and since we wanted to be back for the masquerade, we opted for The Atlantic Fish Company instead (we being Mark, Kate, Barbara, Dave, Dale, Jo, John, and I--John's friend Marjorie joined us later). The food was very good, though our table seemed to be in the line of traffic, which made for sporadic disturbances. Since this restaurant was right across the street, we had no problem eating a leisurely meal, complete with dessert and coffee, and still being back in time for the masquerade.

Masquerade
Sunday, 8:30 PM

We got our seats (in the balcony rather than on the floor). We ended up sitting almost even with the stage, which pointed up one problem. Many of the costumes, or the skits that went with them, didn't take into account the 180-degree audience. So there were examples of costumed people who were supposed to be hidden behind other people, but were clearly visible to us. There were other instances of costumes where we never saw parts of them because the wearers didn't turn in our direction. Someone pointed out that the costumers are playing to the judges rather than the audience but I suspect that's not entirely true--if there were no audience I don't think the costumers would be as enthusiastic about doing the costumes.

It was in this area that the Con committee made its two "fluffs"--they almost lost the tape to accompany one of the costumes (but did locate it just in time), and they never got the newsletter out announcing the winners. So I can't tell you which costumes won. I can say that there were about fifty costumes, varying in quality from the very good to the really bad ("Merlin" waving a scarf to Kermit the Frog singing the "Rainbow" song).

After the first run-through we left for a couple of parties. (I suspect if the committee scheduled and announced some real entertainment during the judging break, more people would stay around.)

Parties
Sunday, 10:30 PM

First, we dropped by Lan and Maia's room, consoling him on his runner-up status for the Fanzine Hugo. (He missed by *4* votes--amazingly close, though the tie for Fan Artist this year indicated just how close it can get. Ties in Australian ballots are nearly impossible.) We got to see a few people whom we hadn't seen since Contraption, and it was a very low-key sort of get-together.

I was a bit disturbed by something at this party. The Gaylaxians (a gay SF fan group) had an ad in the Souvenir Book listing their various chapters and mentioning at what conventions they had parties. In particular, they mentioned several conventions in the Detroit area (such as Contraption) and one person present pointed this out to everyone, with comments such as "Who would have expected that this is how Contraption would be advertised?" and much laughter. When I asked (disingenuously) what was so funny, I got a little whispered comment about how the Gaylaxians are a gay group and they were saying they were present at these conventions. (I'm reminded--unpleasantly--of how people used to whisper that someone was a Jew, as if saying it aloud were shocking.) Why is it that I don't think the reaction would have been the same for Christian Fandom (another organized group)? On the whole, I've come to expect science fiction fans to be more mature and tolerant/accepting than the population at large, and it always comes as a surprise when I find the same reactions there that I find in the "real" world.

The @ party was held once again in Nick Simicich's room (thanks, Nick!). It was loud, often too much so. After a couple of visits from the hotel security people, we took to shushing everyone on general principles every five minutes or so, just to get the noise level down. The usual one-shot was put together (with emacs, an editor I don't know any better than the IBM thing Nick had last year). We arrived late and missed a lot of the people I had hoped to see, but did have a chance to talk to Tim Maroney, who seems very different in person than electronically. (See, Tim, I didn't say you look different!) Mark spent a fair amount of time talking to a couple of people including someone who works for AT&T in another location about 3 miles from ours. (For this we went to Boston?) The conversation included libertarian science fiction, and since I recently panned a couple of libertarian science fiction books because of gratuitous rape scenes, one of the people was wondering if I was just down on the Libertarians or what. At least he will be relieved to hear than I will not be making the same criticism of Koman's *Jehovah Contract*.)

Panel: Editing Reviews
Monday, 12 noon
Donald D'Ammassa, George "Lan" Laskowski, Charles N. Bown (mod)

I probably took the most notes for this panel as for any panel, since I am on both the giving and the receiving end of this. The panelists also covered the spectrum: D'Ammassa writes reviews for *Science Fiction Chronicle*, Brown edits *Locus*, and Lan writes reviews and edits *Lan's Lantern*.

D'Ammassa specializes in 100-word reviews. He likes to be edited for factual errors, the use of "the almost right word," grammar, and spelling. He does not want to be edited for substantive change in his review. I asked about a middle case: what about if something he feels is important is edited out of a review? He said this was usually a matter of negotiation. (This works if there is an easy communication path between editor and writer. In the case of long-distance editing without benefit of electronic mail, this is harder to accomplish.) His basic philosophy is that the review is not as high a form as the work being reviewed, and so shouldn't be considered as sacrosanct.

Brown edits at several levels. First, he chooses who will review which book, usually on the basis of background or knowledge. (When I reviewed for *Delap's F&SF Review* he asked each reviewer for a list of authors s/he felt most knowledgeable about. So when the Olaf Stapledon collection came along, he sent it to me, as the only [I'm sure] person to list Stapledon.) Then he avoids strongly critical reviews (as he said, he basically runs only recommendations, on the theory that there are enough good books that people will miss otherwise to avoid using up that space for bad books). And finally, he edits for terseness. He wants to run as many reviews as possible, so he doesn't want his reviewers rambling on.

Lan doesn't edit except for obvious errors and typos. Actually, that's not quite true. He once moved a closing parenthetical paragraph from the end of one of my reviews to the beginning. Unfortunately, I made an error in that paragraph which he didn't catch, but several readers did.

As far as reviewing short fiction, some do it by reviewing individual pieces, others by reviewing the collection or magazine as a whole. Lan also includes reviews of music and other related forms that the professional (and semi-professional) zines tend to bypass.

Brown said he will review small press or books outside the field without being sent review copies, but won't give ordering information for them. He gave some reasons for this, but it still sounds a bit petty. After all, the cost of a single volume sent out as a review copy can put a substantial dent in a small press's profits on a given volume. He also insists on bound books (not stapled)--he finds that a book often changes considerably between advance proofs and the actual text published. And he avoids running multiple reviews of the same book; he can run only about 480 reviews a year and there are about 1200 books published.

While he tries to avoid reviews of fiction that discuss the book as an artifact, the physical book itself is considered if the book is an art book. Similarly, the accuracy and scope of a reference work is what is important in a review of that category. Spoilers are not a major consideration to Brown; since *Locus*

reviews are often what sell the overseas rights to a work, if the reviewer includes the denouement of the plot, that's acceptable.

For most reviews, the panelists seemed to agree that having the reviewer state a clear opinion is important. Is this book the greatest thing since sliced bread or is it just rancid butter? In this regard, Lan likes the capsules that some reviewers put at the beginning--two or three sentences and a rating.

Miscellaneous

The hotel problems with the Sheraton seemed to have been worked out. Some functions were there, some parties were there, and the staff was polite and friendly. There was no evidence of a feared hostility if they were forced to keep their contract. There was a direct connection from the Sheraton to the Hynes (actually two, one into the Concourse and one into the Dealers' Room), or one could walk outside past the Au Bon Pain, which did a very brisk business.

The elevator situation was no worse than usual, though one elevator in the South Tower of the Sheraton was out the entire weekend and other times it seemed as if only one of the four was running. During the parties, elevator patrols helped keep the elevators from getting jammed up and express elevators to the party floor sped things up considerably.

We found ourselves recognized by many people, both because of *SF-Lovers' Digest* and because of *Lan's Lantern*. We were even asked permission by the folks who run GEnie to download our writings to there!

There were plenty of eating places nearby, both cheap and expensive, and I was very pleased with all the meals I had time for.

My only major complaint was that the beanie propeller hats sold out in under an hour and I couldn't get one.

As usual, I'll list the Worldcons I've attended and rank them, best to worst (the middle four are pretty close together):

- Noreascon II
- Noreascon III
- Noreascon I (my first Worldcon)
- Midamericon (on the basis of the film program, perhaps)
- LACon (I don't fault them just because they avoided bankruptcy!)
- Discon II
- Seacon
- Confederation
- Chicon IV
- Conspiracy (mostly due to hotel problems)
- Iguanacon (partially done in, in my opinion, by politics)
- Suncon (the location change from Orlando to Miami didn't help)
- Nolacon II (see this report for details!)
- Constellation (they over-extended themselves)

Orlando won the bid for 1992. This was no surprise; since DC had to withdraw, Orlando was unopposed. Jack Vance and Vincent DiFate are the Pro Guests of Honor, Walter A. Willis is the Fan Guest of Honor, and Spider Robinson is the Toastmaster. Next year's contest is a three-way race for 1993: Phoenix, San Francisco, and Zagreb.

Next year in Holland!

A Brief Filmography of Arthurian Films
(Attachment 1)
Compiled by Mark R. Leeper & Evelyn C. Leeper
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- **Adventures of Sir Galahad** (1949): Directed by Spencer G. Bennet. Starring George Reeves and Lois Hall. Serial.
- **Arthur the King** (1985): Directed by Clive Donner. Starring Malcolm McDowell (King Arthur), Candice Bergen (Morgan Le Fay), Edward Woodward, Dyan Cannon, Lucy Gutteridge, Joseph Blatchely, Rupert Everett. Made for CBS television. Cannon falls down a rabbit hole in Stonehenge to get to Camelot.
- **Black Knight** (1954): Directed by Tay Garnett. Starring Alan Ladd, Patricia Medina, Peter Cushing, Andre Morell, Anthony Bushell (King Arthur), and Jean Lodge (Guinevere). A blacksmith's son becomes a mysterious knight.
- **Black Shield of Falworth** (1954): Directed by Rudolph Maté. Starring Tony Curtis, Janet Leigh, and David Farrar. Based on Howard Pyle's *Men of Iron*. *("Yonda lies da castle of my fodda.")*
- *Camelot (1967): Directed by Joshua Logan. Starring Richard Harris (King Arthur), Vanessa Redgrave (Guenevere), Franco Nero (Sir Lancelot), Laurence Naismith (Merlyn), David Hemmings (Mordred). Musical by Lerner and Lowe, based on the T. H. White novel The Once and Future King.*
- *Camelot (1982): Filmed version of the stage play, shown on HBO. Starring Richard Burton (King Arthur).*
- *A Connecticut Yankee (1931): Directed by David Butler. Starring Will Rogers (Hank/Sir Boss), William Farnum (King Arthur), Myrna Loy (Queen Morgan Le Fay), Mitchell Harris (Merlin). Based on the Mark Twain novel.*
- *A Connecticut Yankee at King Arthur's Court (1920): Directed by Emmett J. Flynn. Starring Harry C. Myers (the Yankee), Charles Clary (King Arthur), Rosemary Theby (Queen Morgan La Fay), Wilfred McDonald (Lancelot), William V. Wong (Merlin). Based on the Mark Twain novel.*
- *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court (1949): Directed by Tay Garnett. Starring Bing Crosby (Hank Martin), Sir Cedric Hardwicke (King Arthur), Virginia Field (Morgan LeFay), Murvyn Vye (Merlin). Musical version based on the Mark Twain novel.*
- *L'Éternel Retour (1943): Directed by Jean Delannoy. Starring Jean Marais and Madeleine Sologne. Screenplay by Jean Cocteau. The story of Tristan and Isolde in a modern setting. Also known as **The Eternal Return** and **Love Eternal**.*
- *Excalibur (1981): Directed by John Boorman. Starring Nigel Terry (Arthur Pendragon), Cherie Lunghi (Guenevere), Nicholas Clay (Lancelot), Robert Addie (Mordred), Helen Mirren (Morgana), Nicol Williamson (Merlin). A very Germanic interpretation of Arthur with a little Siegfried mixed in.*
- *Feuer und Schwert (1981): Directed by Veith von Fürstenberg. The story of Tristan and Isolde.*
- *King Arthur, the Young Warlord (1975): Directed by Sidney Hayers, Patrick Jackson, and Peter Sasdy. Starring Oliver Tobias (King Arthur). Series made for HTV Ltd. and later condensed to feature-film length.*
- *Knightriders (1981): Directed by George Romero. Starring Ed Harris (Billy/Arthur), Amy Ingersoll (Linet/Guenevere), Gary Lahti (Alan/Lancelot), Tom Savini (Morgan), Brother Blue (Merlin). Arthur story retold set in a sort of SCA-on-motorcycles traveling fair.*
- *Knights of the Round Table (1953): Directed by Richard Thorpe. Starring Mel Ferrer (King Arthur), Ava Gardner (Guinevere), Robert Taylor (Lancelot), Stanley Baker (Mordred). Anne Crawford (Morgan LeFay), Felix Aylmer (Merlin). MGM's first Cinemascope film.*
- *Lancelot and Elaine (1910):*
- *Lancelot du Lac (1974): Directed by Robert Bresson. Starring Vladimir Antolek-Oresek (King Arthur), Laura Duke Condominas (Guinevere), and Luc Simon (Lancelot). Winner of the International Critics Prize at Cannes.*
- *Legend of King Arthur (1974): Directed by Rodney Bennett. Starring Andrew Burt (King Arthur), Felicity Dean (Guinevere), David Robb (Lancelot), Maureen O'Brien (Morgan Le Fay), and Robert Eddison (Merlin). Made for BBC television and shown in the United States on PBS.*
- *"Last Defender of Camelot" (1986): Episode of the new "Twilight Zone." Based on the Roger*

Zelazny short story.

- ***Lovespell*** *(1979): Directed by Tom Donovan. Starring Richard Burton, Kate Mulgrew, Nicholas Clay, Cyril Cusack. Also known as* ***Tristan and Isolde***.
- ***Monty Python and the Holy Grail*** *(1975): Directed by Terry Gilliam and Terry Jones. Starring Graham Chapman (King Arthur), John Cleese (Lancelot), Terry Gilliam, Eric Idle, Michael Palin, Terry Jones.*
- ***Parsifal*** *(1904): Directed by Edwin S. Porter. Edison production.*
- ***Parsifal*** *(1912): Italian.*
- ***Parsifal*** *(1951): Directed by Daniel Mangrané and Carlos Serrano de Osma. Starring Ludmilla Tcherina and Gustavo Rojo. Based on the opera by Richard Wagner which was based on the epic Parzifal by Wolfram Von Eschenbach. Also known as* ***The Evil Forest***.
- ***Parsifal*** *(1981): Directed by Hans Jürgen Syberberg.*
- ***Perceval Le Gallois*** *(1978): Directed by Eric Rohmer. Starring Fabrice Luchini (Perceval), Marc Eyraud (King Arthur), and Marie Christine Barrault (Guinevere). Based on Chrétien de Troyes's poem.*
- ***Prince Valiant*** *(1954): Directed by Henry Hathaway. Starring Brian Aherne (King Arthur), Jarma Lewis (Guinevere), and Don Megowan (Lancelot).*
- ***The Siege of the Saxons*** *(1954): Directed by Nathan Juran. Starring Mark Dignam (King Arthur), John Laurie (Merlin), and Janette Scott.*
- ***The Sword in the Stone*** *(1963): Directed by Wolfgang Reithermann. Animated; voices by Ricky Sorensen (Wart), Karl Swenson (Merlin), Sebastian Cabot (Sir Ector). Based on the T. H. White novel.*
- ***Sword of Lancelot*** *(1963): Directed by Cornel Wilde. Starring Brian Aherne (King Arthur), Jean Wallace (Guinevere), Cornel Wilde (Lancelot). Also known as* ***Lancelot and Guinevere***.
- ***Sword of the Valiant*** *(1982): Directed by Stephen Weeks. Starring Miles O'Keeffe and Sean Connery. The story of Gawain and the Green Knight.*
- ***Tristan et Iseault*** *(1972): Directed by Jean Lagrange.*
- ***Unidentified Flying Oddball*** *(1979): Directed by Russ Mayberry. Starring Dennis Dugan (Tom Trimble), Kenneth More (King Arthur), Jim Dale (Sir Mordred), Ron Moody (Merlin). Also known as* ***The Spaceman and King Arthur***.

Evelyn C. Leeper may be reached via [e-mail](mailto:) or you may visit her [Homepage](#).

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