

Boskone 29
A convention report by Evelyn C. Leeper
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Traffic was very light most of the way (it got bad only between Hartford and Bradley Airport) and we managed to make the trip to Springfield in just over four and a half hours. Next year, if course, it will take longer to get to Boskone, since it's moving to Framingham. But more on that later.

Last year panelists registered in the regular registration area and were given their panelist information there. This year we had to go to the Green Room to get our panelist information. Since one was in the Sheraton and one in the Marriott, this was a trifle inconvenient, but at least we ended up in the hotel with the dealers room.

Hotels

This year the weather was warmer than usual, making the outdoor run across the street between the Sheraton and the Marriott not too bad, except for Saturday night, when it was raining. The connecting overpass was kept open (it usually closes when all the stores in Baystate West do), but it does add quite a ways onto the distance. This whole two-hotel situation is one reason the convention is moving next year. As far as space goes, there was never a problem with crowding. Boskone 29 was about the same size as Boskone 28 (900 or so members), and though I heard some of the parties got very crowded, none of the function space was a problem.

Dealers Rooms

Boskone stayed with the idea of a single dealers room (after having had one in each hotel for a couple of years). The number of dealers seemed to hold steady, though it appeared to me (and others) as though the number of *book* dealers was down. Non-book items included art, jewelry, Japanese videos, filk and folk cassettes, and knick-knacks. The woman running the table (well, corner) for Tales from the White Hart said that sales were a little better than last year, but still not high enough to make her happy about the cost, since Boskone charges the same for a table at their current conventions (of about 900 members) as they used to for the ones with a couple of thousand members. If attendance (and sales) don't go up next year, more dealers may drop out--Mary Southworth was at the convention, but didn't have a table in the dealers room for the first time in many years. I found several books, both for me and for a friend, but it was a somewhat disappointing selection, with only one table with a large supply of used books. I didn't get to either Treasure Island (a comic store in the mall) or Johnson's Bookstore across the street, due in part to lack of time.

Shortly after we arrived, we met Dave who said that Kate, Cynthia, and Barbara (all friends of ours)

had had several drinks in the bar when they arrived, and were somewhat "snockered." Where was Kate now, we asked. "Oh, she's in the Dealers Room." "You let Kate go drunk into the Dealers Room?!?"

Art Show

It seems to consist mostly of 1) well-executed pieces in which I have no interest in the subject matter of, and 2) poorly-executed pieces in which I have no interest in the subject matter. There is far too much fantasy, "cat art," and media art (e.g., pencil sketches of *Star Trek* actors) to suit me. There were some good etchings (a form one doesn't see often in art shows) and a few good pieces. The print shop had a good selection reasonably priced, but again, much of it didn't do anything for me.

Film Program

The film program consisted of *Aelita: Queen of Mars*. There was a video program, which was mostly Japanese animation, with Fritz Lang's *Spies* and *Spiders*, and the silent versions of *Nosferatu*, *Vampyr*, and *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. The video program was on a seventeen-inch screen; it would seem as though getting a twenty-five-inch screen might be a good idea. *Aelita* was shown with live accompaniment by the Shirim Klezmer Orchestra. This had its pros and cons. The accompaniment was good, but the fact that the film started twenty-five minutes late, and that there was a twenty-minute intermission between reels (for the band to rest) was not.

Programming

Last year I said I wanted the science track back. Well, there were some science panels this year: "Robotics," "What's New in Science?," "Worldbuilding 104: Destroying Planets," "Chaos and Ecology," and "Cosmology." Unfortunately, the panels I was interested in were opposite panels I was on. So it goes.

I also went to fewer panels this year (seven versus last year's eleven). I don't know if this means the panels are becoming repetitive, or if I'm less likely to rush from panel to panel. It is true that if I'm on a panel, I won't go to a panel during the immediately preceding hour, and tend not to rush off to one immediately following either. But it may be that there were fewer panels altogether. Certainly there were fewer panels in the evenings (after the dinner break), and that means fewer time slots I can go to panels in.

The First Night

The "Meet the VIPs" party was held in the Boscave (the con suite). This was probably because last year the Con Suite went virtually unused during the party. Free soda was provided, but drinks and munchies were on a cash basis. Entertainment was provided by the before-mentioned Shirim Klezmer Orchestra, and while the music was perhaps too loud to allow conversation (okay, not perhaps--it *was* too loud), I enjoyed it a lot. A couple of dozen of us danced a line to one of the songs earlier on, but then were too out of breath to try it again later. Dave Langford came over and introduced himself to me (claiming I was his competition, to which I replied I wasn't much competition), and gave me a copy of his latest fanzine. Given that he is normally hard of hearing, conversing with him in a room filled with loud music was almost impossible.

There were some panels Friday night, but I didn't get to any of them.

Guest of Honor Speech Saturday, 11 AM Jane Yolen

(Before the speech started, I asked Yolen to autograph a copy of *The Devil's Arithmetic* and she mentioned she had just finished another novel set in the Holocaust, *Briar Rose*, which would appear in

Terri Windling's "Fairy Tale" series.)

Yolen spoke about censorship, which I assume overlapped with her panel on censorship (which I didn't get to). She began with some introductory comments, including saying that somebody had said that the reason women are put on pedestals is because that way you can look up their skirts. Her response to this was to tell us, "That's why I'm not wearing a skirt--so you can put me on a pedestal."

She began by defining what she saw as the main problem, or rather, twin problems: PC ("politically correct") language, and the "Satan hunters" (which she labeled, in the way of fantasy novelists, as "Authorsbane"). She then read newspaper reports of many examples of both, some of which were *so* ludicrous that one had to laugh. For example, one person objected to a book because the number 33 appeared in it, and "two times thirty-three is sixty-six, which is just one digit away from the number of the beast." (I asked if this person also checked all the arithmetic books.) Another person objected to rainbows as "Satanic," in spite of their mention in the Bible as a sign from God. She related that a book she wrote in 1971 referred to a garden full of "gay flowers and beautiful plants"; the publisher insisted she change this to "gaily-colored." She tried quoting Lewis Carroll to him ("The question is who [between the words and the writer] is to be master, that is all"), but it didn't help. The Northampton Chief of Police once made a list of words he wanted to see banned, including the word "chitlins." Now as Yolen points out, she considers chitlins (which are hog intestines prepared as food) as certainly not kosher, not something she would ever want to serve or be served, and possibly obscene, but she would not want to see either the food or the word banned. It is believed, however, that the Chief of Police had not the slightest clue what chitlins were, and decided it *sounded* dirty. (By the way, he is no longer the Chief of Police.)

One school removed a book titled *Making It with Mademoiselle* from its library, only to reinstate it when it was pointed out that it was a pattern book. (Long-time science fiction fans or "Twilight Zone" watchers may first themselves thinking "It's a cookbook!" here. :-)) Another cancelled a Christmas play because one parent objected to the word "pregnant" although Yolen pointed out that no one has ever suggested that Jesus was delivered by the stork or found under a cabbage leaf. Another protest was against "Snow White" because it "encouraged mirror-gazing." As Yolen pointed out, the Wicked Witch who gazes into the mirror ends up being forced to dance in red-hot iron shoes, which doesn't sound like much encouragement to her (or anyone in the audience, for that matter). This reminded me of the school in Michigan that had a stress-management course that came under fire because it included deep breathing, which apparently "leads to out-of-body experiences, promotes mysticism, and undermines Christianity." My first observation was that anyone taking a deep breath of Michigan air would *want* an out-of-body experience, preferably into another state. A more serious observation is that any religion undermined by someone taking a few deep breaths has more serious problems than deep breathing. Yolen mentioned Texe Marrs's book *Ravaged by the New Age: Satan's Plan to Destroy Our Kids*, which has a whole chapter attacking fantasy. (I'm not recommending you buy this, mind you, because that only encourages them; check your library for it.) Perhaps one of the most ridiculous attacks was the one against C. S. Lewis and Madeleine L'Engle on the grounds they were "anti-Christian."

Yolen recently edited an anthology for young adults titled *2041*, which contains a Connie Willis story about censorship: "Much Ado About Censorship." The premise is that in the future so many special interest groups attack Shakespeare that only two lines are left in *Hamlet*. A side-effect of this is that students spend a lot of time and effort to get the unexpurgated Shakespeare and read it. "It's an ill wind that blows no one good," as someone once said. (Ha! Fooled you! It was *not* Shakespeare--go check.)

You can see that there have been some pretty flimsy reasons for the attacks. But as Cardinal Richelieu said, "Give me six lines written by the most honorable of men and I will find an excuse to hang him." In other words, it's not hard. As Yolen said, "Metaphor is right over the heads of these people." The result is that they are unable to see that the only good adult in *Huckleberry Finn* is black, and decry the book as racist instead, because it uses the word "n---." Nor is banning books new, Yolen pointed out. At one point, all of Dickens except *Oliver Twist* was banned, as were many others, including (from a list I had--Yolen listed only some of these):

Angelou, Maya	<i>I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings</i>
Anonymous	<i>Go Ask Alice</i>
Bannerman, Helen	<i>Little Black Sambo</i>
Blatty, William Peter	<i>The Exorcist</i>
Blume, Judy	<i>Forever ...</i>
Boston Women's Health Collective	<i>Our Bodies, Ourselves</i>
Brown, Claude	<i>Manchild in the Promised Land</i>
Buck, Pearl	<i>The Good Earth</i>
Childress, Alice	<i>A Hero Ain't Nothin' but a Sandwich</i>
Dickey, James	<i>Deliverance</i>
Frank, Anne	<i>The Diary of a Young Girl</i>
Golding, William	<i>Lord of the Flies</i>
Griffin, John Howard	<i>Black Like Me</i>
Hawthorne, Nathaniel	<i>The Scarlet Letter</i>
Hemingway, Ernest	<i>A Farewell to Arms</i>
Huxley, Aldous	<i>Brave New World</i>
Jackson, Shirley	<i>the Lottery</i>
Kesey, Ken	<i>One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest</i>
Klein, Norma	<i>It's OK if You Don't Love Me</i>
Knowles, John	<i>A Separate Peace</i>
Lee, Harper	<i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i>
Orwell, George	<i>1984</i>
Parks, Gordon	<i>The Learning Tree</i>
Salinger, J. D.	<i>The Catcher in the Rye</i>
Shakespeare, William	<i>Macbeth</i>
Solzhenitsyn, Alexander	<i>One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich</i>
Steinbeck, John	<i>Of Mice and Men</i>
Steinbeck, John	<i>The Grapes of Wrath</i>
Swift, Jonathan	<i>A Modest Proposal</i>
Trumbo, Dalton	<i>Johnny Got His Gun</i>
Twain, Mark	<i>The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</i>
Vonnegut, Kurt Jr.	<i>Cat's Cradle</i>
Vonnegut, Kurt Jr.	<i>Slaughterhouse-Five</i>
Vonnegut, Kurt Jr.	<i>Welcome to the Monkey House</i>
Zindel, Paul	<i>My Darling, My Hamburger</i>

Why do many of these (and other) books get attacked? Because, Yolen said, they carry the very dangerous message that we should "value our differences and speak out against authority when authority is wrong." Yolen also said that stories are what define us, because "only the human animal tells stories." Other animals may use tools, have language, or exhibit other behaviors frequently labeled human (though her claim that dogs and hyenas laugh is flawed, I think, in that the sound like laughter that they make is not to indicate that they find something funny). And also, she said, "Quite simply, stories change lives." To support this, she gave several examples of letters she had received from people whose lives or the lives of those they knew had been changed by her stories. Well, in this I'm sure the censors would agree with her, because if they believed that stories *didn't* change lives, they wouldn't be trying to ban them.

Yolen closed by saying that she had been called in a sermon "a tool of Satan." After thinking about that she decided that wasn't specific enough--which tool was she? So she declared, "I am a ball-peen hammer." And she produced "Satan's Toolchest" T-shirts, listing a variety of writers who opposed the censors:

Bruce Coville--crowbar
 Steven Brust--sickle
 Gene Wolfe--pencil-sharpener
 Patricia Wrede--astral plane
 Kara Dakley--Phillips screwdriver
 Suzy McKee Charnas--C clamp
 Steven Gould--tape measure
 Judith Reeves-Stephens (?)--torque wrench
 Delia Sherman--awl
 Tappan King--power drill

Beth Meacham--hex wrench
Theresa Nielsen-Hayden--spirit level
Patrick Nielsen-Hayden--thin edge of the end of the wedge

Someone from the audience then pointed out that the Bible has more sex and violence than all the books people were objecting to. Yolen again pointed out that these people were not operating under logic. (She also said that the statement was true, and "Dorothy Parker had a parrot she named Onan because he always spilled his seed.")

People asked what they could do. The ACLU, the American Library Association's Freedom to Read Foundation, and People for the American Way were mentioned, but Yolen felt that what was really needed was more grass-roots action: people should get more involved with their school boards and libraries and raise as much of a fuss when books were attacked as the attackers were raising. Otherwise, it's too easy for the school board to say, "Well, why don't we just drop this? It will be easier all around." If parents come in and give them hell when they drop books, and threaten to sue them for malfeasance, just as the attackers threaten to sue them for *having* the books, then the board will have to make their decisions on the merits of the books and the arguments, rather than just taking the easy way out.

(All this talk of school censorship struck a chord. My first-ever book review was of *The Passover Plot*. I wrote it in 1967, when I was seventeen, for the high school paper. The town was over 75% Catholic, the principal always checked over the newspaper's content, and my review didn't get printed.)

1991: The Year in SF on Film and TV
Saturday, 1 PM
Chuck Rothman (mod), Mark R. Leeper, Laurie Mann

The panel began, predictably enough, with each panel listing their favorite films from the preceding year. Leeper listed *Prospero's Books*, *The Silence of the Lambs*, *The Rocketeer*, and *Beauty and the Beast* as being not only his favorite science fiction, horror, or fantasy films, but also in his "Top Ten" list for *all* films in 1991. Rothman said that he didn't get to the movies as often as he would have liked (he has a seven-year-old and trips to the movies get expensive), but he liked *Alice*, *L.A. Story*, and *Defending Your Life*. Mann said the year was good, but derivative, and gave *The Addams Family*, *Star Trek VI*, and *Terminator 2* as prime examples. She described *Star Trek VI* as the "Jack Chalker of the *Star Trek* series" in that it threw out a lot of ideas, only some of which worked. (She has a ten-year-old, so she had some of the same problems as Rothman.)

Beauty and the Beast and *Star Trek VI* were given special attention. Leeper observed that the animated *Beauty and the Beast* drew a lot on the Cocteau version. For example, the Cocteau version showed a scene down a long hallway lit by candles held in candle-holders shaped like arms and hands, which on closer examination turn out to be live arms and hands. This was elaborated on in the recent version, so that the candlestick was a "live" candlestick--it talked, sang, danced, etc. As far as *Star Trek* went, Leeper pointed out that it was the first self-correcting television show, in that because of the enormous amount of discussion about it on electronic networks (such as Usenet), if the producers are doing something the fans/viewers don't like, they will find out about it very quickly and in great detail. (Fan posting: "Yet *another* Wesley-saves-the-universe story." Producer: "Okay, no more Wesley-saves-the-universe stories for a while.") Even so, *Star Trek: The Next Generation* was described as "infuriatingly uneven." One audience member claimed that every old *Star Trek* episode was better than any *Next Generation* episode, but he was clearly a minority of one in that opinion.

Little-noticed films or shows that panelists recommended were *Truly, Madly, Deeply* (originally titled *Cello* in Britain) (Mann), the made-for-cable *Cast a Deadly Spell* (Leeper), and the television show *Dinosaurs* (Rothman). Leeper also mentioned *Dead Again*, which he said was similar to a 1985 film titled *Deja Vu*. He also suggested *Icicle Thief* as a fantasy film not likely to be thought of (though it was actually a 1989 film), *Warlock*, and the various animation festivals.

Audience member Walter Kahn suggested that a lot of science fiction, fantasy, and horror was being done on the USA Network; unfortunately, no one gets good enough listings for it to figure out what's on when (one of the problems with the proliferation of channels that comes with cable). *Quantum Leap* was recommended as well for television.

In our equivalent of "Screened by Teens," I asked what the panelists' children liked. The seven-year-old liked *Hook*; the ten-year-old liked *Terminator 2*.

Other dramatic presentations mentioned included the new (to New York, anyway, though not eligible for a Hugo because it had already run in London--or is a play in a different country with a different cast a different production?) musical *Return to the Forbidden Planet*, the radio show *WBUR Sci-Fi Theater*.

Meeting of the Society for the Aesthetic Rearrangement of History
Saturday, 3 PM
Mark Olson (mod), Steven Brust, Steven Gould, Judith Tarr

The subtitle of this panel, given at the beginning of the panel rather than in any advance schedules, was "How History Ought to Have Been," and it was claimed that the title of the panel came from Ferdinand Feghoot. Well, it's been too long since I read a Ferdinand Feghoot, so I can't "confirm or deny" this, but I'm sure *someone* can.

Olson started this off by saying that he often thought it was a pity that the Roman Empire fell. Tarr countered this by saying that it never really did: it's now the Cosa Nostra. Gould offered the scenario of Isabella and Ferdinand (*not* Feghoot, but the Spanish king) having never been born, not because of any effect on Columbus, mind you, but because without them there probably wouldn't have been any expulsion of the Jews and Moors from Spain. Brust wanted the Huns to meet the Vikings (in a tag-team match? :-)). Tarr's scenario involved Charles Martel losing at Tours in 732 against the Muslims. (I wrote down "Poitiers" rather than "Tours," but I'm sure she meant Tours and I may have misheard it, as she has a slight speech impediment.)

There was some further discussion of Gould's scenario. Gould suggested that if the Moors and Jews hadn't been expelled, the Moorish civilization in Spain would have continued, but others disputed this, saying that Muslim fundamentalists destroyed Baghdad in the 7th and 8th Centuries, and could have as easily destroyed Spain. Checking later, I discovered my encyclopedia says that Baghdad was *founded* in 762 and remained a center of Muslim culture until 1258, when it was sacked by the Mongols, so there seems to be some contradiction here. (It makes one wish one had an encyclopedia right at the panel, doesn't it?)

Brust suggested somewhat frivolously that if Christianity hadn't gotten to Britain, we wouldn't have a lot of air-headed pagans today; presumably he meant we would have the real ones instead.

Someone in some context quoted Saki as having said that the Balkans produce more history than can be consumed locally. This led to a discussion of the Alexandria library and scenarios in which it wasn't burnt. One panelist (I can't remember which) observed that literary critics would now say that everything in it was by "dead white males." One person suggested a scenario in which the library was a circulating library and all the best works were checked out when it was burnt down.

Brust said (apropos of not much) that he would specifically not change anything about Richard Nixon: "My God, that was fun!"

Someone asked about looking at the topic from a different perspective: what if some fictional description of the world were true to it? As an example, what if John Norman's descriptions of people's motivations were accurate? Unfortunately, this didn't catch on (too complicated, I suspect), and the panel rapidly drifted back to such questions as "what would have happened if the United States had

lost the Revolution?" (One answer was that we would be speaking English.)

Olson, returning to the Roman Empire scenario, observed that the Jewish population of the Roman Empire in the 1st Century was about 10%, and in addition was rising (because Jewish men were considered good husbands, so non-Jewish women would convert to marry them--but did this mean that non-Jewish men converted to marry Jewish women or what?). Without Christianity, would we have had a Jewish Roman Empire? An audience member (either named Michael Wood, or quoting someone named Michael Wood--my notes are unclear) claimed that the Western world chose Christianity as its religion because it embodied the Western values of personal freedom, etc. This led to much heated debate on two counts. First, many people claimed that Christianity did *not* embody these values. And second, many thought that claiming these were Western values without defining Western was careless. In particular, I asked where the Native Americans fit into this East/West dichotomy. Two books mentioned as pertinent to this discussion in some fashion were the fiction book *Toolmaker Koan* by John McLoughlin and the non-fiction book *Less Than Words Can Say* by Richard Mitchell.

Somehow the panel got off onto a discussion of why Hungary had turned out so many great mathematicians. Brust (who in case you hadn't figured out, is of Hungarian ancestry) said that it might be because math does require a lot of expensive lab equipment. I suggested that it may also be that math does not require any particular language skills. With Hungarian being so different from any other language in Europe (with the exception of Finnish and Estonian, I think), the ability to work internationally in other fields might be limited, but you could read mathematics papers from anywhere without knowing the language, and become a world-class mathematician without having to write in a different language. (As a further example of the lack of need for any special equipment, Ramanujan was mentioned.)

The *Utne Reader* had an article about a year ago on "the World Championships" which talked about how long some empires had lasted, empires about which most people probably know very little these days. I said that my husband often pointed out that we were living in the short period following the fall of the Egyptian empire. Along these lines of "what everyone knows that isn't so," people also mentioned Stephen Robb's "A Letter from a Higher Critic," in which a historian from four hundred years hence analyzes World War II and proves it was as much myth and legend as the King Arthur stories that everyone used to accept as history. Given what we've learned about the sorts of "facts" that are thrown around during wartime (handless Belgian children and incubators come to mind), this story has a hard edge to it. It's sobering to think that it may be the lesson we learned about propaganda during wartime from World War I (the most common circulating atrocity story was that "the Huns" were cutting off the hands of Belgian children--large sums of money were collected to help them, but after the war, no one could manage to find any of the handless children that the stories had described) that made most people disbelieve the stories of the Nazi concentration camps until the first pictures started coming back as the camps were liberated. I have no way to explain the people who *still* claim the Holocaust never happened, however. But all these stories prove is that it is very difficult to decide what's fact and what's fiction until years later. Unfortunately, decisions have to be made at the time, not years later, and it is worth remembering that they can end up being made on "what everyone knows that isn't so."

Other examples of pointing out that what people know isn't so (and its flip side, what people don't know is) include Tony Rothman's essay "Genius and Biographers: The Fictionalization of Evariste Galois" (*American Mathematical Monthly*, Vol. 89 No. 2) in which he disproves all the commonly held beliefs about Galois's work--for example, it turns out that most of what Galois wrote on his last night was not fresh work, but just rewriting some older papers); the fact that Dumas was black (pere or fils was not clear); and the real meaning of Caesar's death (it was not a betrayal and murder by a friend, but the assassination sanctioned by law of a tyrant). As you can tell, we strayed off the topic a lot.

Of course, for most, if not all, of these scenarios, there are alternate history stories dealing with those ideas. The "non-fall" of the Roman Empire shows up in dozens of stories, including Robert Silverberg's "To the Promised Land," "An Outpost of the Empire," and "Tales from the Venia Woods"; Gregory Benford's "Manassas, Again"; S. P. Somtow's "Aquiliad" series; Edmund Cooper's "Jupiter

Laughs"; Kirk Mitchell's "Procurator" series; Frederik Pohl's "Waiting for the Olympians"; Clifford Simak's *Where the Evil Dwells*; and others. Ferdinand and Isabella? Well, a couple in which they were born, but not victorious, include Philip Guedalla's "If the Moors in Spain had Won" and Esther M. Friesner's "Such a Deal." Martel losing at Tours? Gordon Eklund's "The Rising of the Sun," Harry Harrison's *A Transatlantic Tunnel, Hurrah!*, and J. B. Ryan's "The Mosaic." (Tarr herself wrote a story in which upon hearing of Roland's death and Ganelon's treachery at Roncesvalles, Charlemagne converts to Islam. The story is called, not surprisingly, "Roncesvalles.") I know of none in which the Vikings meet the Huns, but I'll bet there are some.

The best story in which Christianity doesn't get to Britain is probably Esther M. Friesner's *Druid's Blood*, a Sherlock Holmes pastiche, but there is also Michael Moorcock's *Gloriana; or, the Unfulfill'd Queen*, and Cooper's "Jupiter Laughs" (mentioned above) has an epilogue in Britain. The Friesner is closest to what Brust was hoping for, I think. Even Olson's unlikely-sounding Jewish Roman Empire shows up in Kim Newman and Eugene Byrne's "The Wandering Christian."

I won't even bother listing the "what if the United States lost the Revolution" stories--there are too many.

**Hugoes for Electronic Fanac?
Saturday, 4 PM
Saul Jaffe (mod), Evelyn Leeper**

Originally Teresa Nielsen Hayden was scheduled to be on this panel, but she didn't make it. Probably just as well, because this way we didn't outnumber the audience. Well, actually, there were four people in the audience: Barbara Cormack, George Flynn, Mark Leeper, and Kate Pott.

The discussion centered more around whether electronic fanzines should be eligible for any Hugoes than whether a person could be eligible as a fan writer for what they had written in the electronic media. This is probably because asking the latter question is useless: if someone writes 100,000 words electronically, but has only 100 published in a traditional paper fanzine, s/he is just as eligible as someone whose work all appeared in traditional fanzines. Yet it's obvious that the 100,000-word writer is being judged on the electronic work far more than the non-electronic.

I somehow don't feel like recounting all the old arguments for electronic fanzines. An appeal to environmental consciousness is not likely to sway many minds, but what the hell, I'll throw it in here.

Okay: ground rules. Currently a "professional publication" (zine or other) is one with a press run of over 10,000. A semi-prozine is any "generally available" non-professional publication which fulfills two of the following conditions: a press run over 1000, accepts paid advertising, pays contributors in other than copies, provides half the support of at least one person, or declares itself a semi-prozine. A fanzine is a "generally available" non-professional publication which is not a semi-prozine.

The major problems seem to be in deciding what "generally available" means and what a "press run" is. I think we agreed that "generally available" did not mean universally available (of course, "we" here is a very small number). For example, a homeless person has no address to which a traditional fanzine could be mailed, yet that does not mean that a traditional fanzine is not "generally available." So the argument that "not everyone has a computer and a modem" doesn't apply; it's rather whether *enough* people have them, or access to them, to make an electronic fanzine "generally available." If someone insists on faxing their fanzine, is it "generally available"? After all, there are fax machines for rent in libraries, drug stores, and mail drop stores across the country. If faxing is allowed, then I should point out that ATTMAIL will send electronic mail to a fax number, so that straight-text electronic fanzines are at least as accessible as faxed fanzines. For that matter, if a fanzine publisher refuses to send any copies of his/her fanzine overseas (because of the trouble and expense), does that disqualify it? That would eliminate 95% of the potential audience, yet most people would not rule such a fanzine out as being not "generally available."

As far as press run, it would seem that changing that to "circulation" would make sense, since "circulation" is the commonly-used term these days. Of course, one then has to determine the circulation of a publication. But given that editors of hardcover lines have been nominated for best professional editor when those lines had average press runs/circulations of under 10,000, it seems as if it's only in the fanzine category that the committees have decided to be strict about the 10,000 limit. (It is, of course, ironic that on the one hand, the complaint is that the circulation of electronic fanzines is too high--though most have circulations comparable to paper fanzines--and on the other hand that the fanzines aren't "generally available.")

(As a side note, I would say that the first step is to say that a professional publication has to have some monetary aspect connected with it. If a science fiction fan won the lottery and started distributing 15,000 copies of his/her fanzine to everyone at every convention s/he went to, would that make it a professional publication?)

Fashioning rules to make things fit where they should isn't easy. The test cases we proposed were *Analog*, Baen hardcovers, *Fred's Fanzine for the Blind*, *Locus*, *New York Review of Science Fiction*, Pulphouse "Author's Choice" series, *Quanta*, and *SF-Lovers Digest*. *Fred's Fanzine for the Blind* is a fictional (not fiction!) fanzine--what if someone took a traditional fanzine, but recorded it on audio-cassette (or CD) for the blind? Assuming anyone, blind or not, could get it, is this still a fanzine? Even though it requires special equipment to play back? Does it matter if it's cassette or CD? *Quanta* is an electronic fiction fanzine that comes out quarterly and is transmitted in Postscript, so it must be printed to be read; does this make it a hard-copy fanzine? (By the way, it has a distribution of under 500.) (Postscript is a registered trademark of someone.)

Anyway, the consensus in categorizing these things was:

<i>Analog</i>	prozine
Baen hardcovers	prozine
<i>Fred's Fanzine for the Blind</i>	fanzine
<i>Locus</i>	prozine
<i>New York Review of Science Fiction</i>	semi-prozine
Pulphouse "Author's Choice" series	semi-prozine
<i>Quanta</i>	fanzine
<i>SF-Lovers Digest</i>	?

Since there's no consensus on which category *SF-Lovers Digest* falls in, I suppose I'll have to nominate both it as a fanzine and Saul as a professional editor and see what the committee decides. (If you're planning on nominating it, this may be the best approach to make sure it makes *some* category on the ballot.)

After the panel a bunch of us went to the Student Prince for dinner. Leaving the convention at 5 PM rather than 6 meant that we had no trouble getting a table, though it did get crowded later on. Dave ordered the grilled game assortment (bear, buffalo, venison, elk, and lion). Mark suggested that he order a plate of lamb chops as well, so the lion could lie down with the lamb.

After dinner we returned for the play, but the sound system was so bad that anyone who didn't attend the banquet had no chance of hearing the dialogue, so we skipped out after the awards for the parties instead. Yolen, in presenting the Skylark Award, told of her experience when she won it. The Skylark is a very nice piece of crystal, so she set it on the window ledge in her kitchen. Then, as she put it, something unusual in New England happened--the sun came out. The next thing she knew she smelled something burning and, rushing in, discovered that the sunlight through the award had set fire to her coat. So she called up the person in charge of the award to tell him to warn future recipients and closed her phone call by saying, "I am going to put it where the sun doesn't shine." Only later did she realize her choice of words could be misconstrued. In any case, this year they gave a smoke detector with the award.

The parties were not going very strong when we were there (but then, the play was opposite them). I

did drop into the Readercon party and buy a supporting membership in Readercon V--even if I can't attend, I like to get the publications. The Niagara bid party was small, but the bid sounded intriguing. It would be nice to get away from the "big-city" syndrome, and although the bid is officially only for the United States side, this might be the closest yet to a two-country convention.

1991: The Year in Review -- Nominating for the Hugos

Sunday, 11 AM

Evelyn Leeper (mod), Don D'Amassa, Janice M. Eisen, Jim Mann

Not surprisingly, this panel turned out to be more a listing of books people liked than a bona fide discussion. Mann started out by recommending Orson Scott Card's *Xenocide* and Robert Silverberg's *Face of the Waters*. D'Amassa (who read about five hundred books last year) chose Ian McDonald's *King of Morning*, *Queen of Day*, and Bradley Denton's *Buddy Holly Is Alive & Well on Ganymede*. Eisen suggested Roger McBride Allen's *Ring of Charon* (actually a 1990 book, if you're reading this for ideas for Hugo nominations), Stephen Barnes's *Orbital Resonance* (a 1992 book), and C. J. Cherryh's *Heavy Time*. I mentioned George Alec Effinger's *The Exile Kiss*, Robert Charles Wilson's *A Bridge of Years*, George Turner's *Brain Child*, and (my personal choice for the Hugo) Martin Amis's *Time's Arrow*.

Other books named by panelists or audience members included Norman Spinrad's *Russian Spring*, Lois McMaster Bujold's *Barrayar*, Michael Swanwick's *Stations of the Tide*, Stephen Baxter's *Raft* (which was also recommended independently by Mark's old college roommate, a co-worker in new Jersey, and Chuq von Rospach).

As far as short fiction went, we decided to lump all lengths together rather than try to figure out exactly how many words each piece had. Mann liked two stories by Nancy Kress, "Beggars in Spain" and "And Wild for to Hold." D'Amassa seconded the recommendation for "Beggars in Spain" (and I "thirded" it, if that matters), but admitted that he had read very little short fiction (which is how he managed to read five hundred novels, I guess). Eisen liked Karen Fowler's "Black Glass" and Connie Willis's "Jack." I liked Willis's "Miracle" better, but I pretty much like anything Connie Willis writes. (I think her latest--"Even the Queen"--is a scream!) Other mentions included George R. R. Martin's "Doors" and J. Michael Straczynski's "Babylon 5."

As far as anthologies went, *Alternate Presidents* was mentioned by a couple of people as being possibly the year's best anthology--though of course it's actually a 1992 book. (And contrary to what some people have said, they *are* looking into marketing it in other countries, at least according to D'Amassa.)

Towards the end of the hour, someone asked how valuable a Hugo was as a way to judge a book, and how it compared to the Nebula. There was some disagreement, but the general feeling was that you wouldn't go far wrong buying a book that had won either of them.

The panel adjourned with a mad dash by everyone to the dealers room (conveniently located next door--intentional or just good luck?) to buy all the recommended books.

Turning Points in History: The Weak Spots Where Fiction Can Slip In

Sunday, 1 PM

Evelyn Leeper (mod), Elisabeth Carey, Michael F. Flynn, Mark Keller

This seems to have been the OAHP (Obligatory Alternate History Panel), the "Meeting of the Society for the Aesthetic Rearrangement of History" notwithstanding. Keller said that Readercon is planning a panel item on "What's My Timeline?" where the panelists are given some information about an alternate world and have twenty questions to figure what the turning point is. I pointed out that they had been planning this event since Readercon I and this year was Readercon V, so I wasn't holding my breath waiting for it.

We agreed that turning points should be as close to *points* as possible: the North losing the Battle of Gettysburg could count as a point, but "the South winning the Civil War" was far too vague and non-specific.

Were there over-used turning points? Certainly. Almost any turning point having to do with the Civil War and World War II could qualify, although here admittedly I am allowing the same vagueness I ruled out earlier. It's possible that someone could come up with a new turning point for World War II, but if the result were an alternate history just like all the others in which the Axis wins, what's the point (you'll pardon the pun)? On the other hand, turning points for the Revolutionary War seemed under-used (though my chronological list shows at least a half dozen).

One suggestion put forward was, "What if the Black Plague were even more virulent?" followed by, "What if it were less virulent?" This naturally resulted in a suggestion for an alternate history volume titled *Alternate Plagues*. (More such suggestions will follow.) There was a lot of discussion on what the differences would have been without the Black Plague, with some people claiming that our higher technology would have arisen anyway, and others claiming it was the decreased labor pool that caused technology to develop. Do social structures make technology, or does technology make social structures? The truth is probably some of both: read James Burke's *Connections*.

The Spanish conquest of Mexico was suggested as a turning point, since Cortez had only four hundred Spaniards against the Aztecs. Ah, but a panelist noted that Cortez also had 15,000 Indians, a fact frequently overlooked by the history books. The Aztecs were *not* popular with the surrounding tribes.

What about a Norse North America? There have been a few such stories: John Maddox Roberts's *King of the Wood*, John Christopher's *New Found Land*, Neal Barrett's *The Leaves of Time*, and Juanita Coulson's "Unscheduled Flight." On the other hand (or coast, at any rate), the Chinese had been great explorers, and had apparently reached the California coast in the 14th Century. What if they had stayed and settled? (These could very well show up in Benford and Greenberg's *What Might Have Been 4: Alternate Americas*, due out in October.) There have been a couple of stories by Joe R. Lansdale which assume Japanese settlement of North America rather than Chinese: "Letter from the South Two Moons West of Nacogdoches" and "Trains Not Taken."

How about a history without a Mongol invasion of Europe? (Is this a "turning point"? It depends how it's written, I suppose.) No one could think of any such stories, but I don't doubt there is at least one somewhere.

Keller said that while several works used the {non-}extinction of dinosaurs as the turning point, none seemed to go back to the dying-off of all the phyla discussed in Stephen Jay Gould's *Wonderful Life* (a book I *highly* recommend).

Martin Luther started the *Protestant* Reformation, but attempts to reform the Church were already under way. What if Luther were more flexible? (Kingsley Amis has Luther elected Pope in *The Alteration*, but doesn't seem to show a lot of Church reform.) Go further back. What if Paul of Tarsus hadn't set out to convert the Greeks, or had otherwise changed his plans? Well, there was one piece on this idea which appeared in *Christian Century* about twenty years ago, but on the whole no one has looked at one of the most pivotal figures in early Christian history. It seems as though people figure if they're going to muck with that era of Christian history, they might as well just use Jesus as the key figure.

Similarly, there would seem to be a wealth of possibilities in the life of Mohammed, though Salman Rushdie would probably advise treading very carefully here. (Then again, science fiction usually doesn't get the publicity Rushdie did, and there have been at least a couple authors who have done "alternate Mohammed" stories, notably Harry Turtledove.)

Someone observed that a lot of alternate histories have the same events happening as in our world, just

sooner or later. That is, something makes the Civil War happen ten years earlier, or delays the fall of the Roman Empire for five hundred years. The result ends up looking a lot like our world, just in a different time period.

Somewhere along the line, someone asked what you get when you cross a deconstructionist with a mafioso. The answer? An offer you can't understand. (This has nothing to do with alternate histories, but I wanted to include it anyway.)

As an aside, why don't more publishers allow/encourage authors to have an afterword to their alternate history stories in which they explain what changed assumptions they used? Robert Silverberg has done this on some of his recent stories and it provides more insight into the story; I'd like to see more of this.

Okay, here's the summary; we're waiting for the following volumes (Benford, Greenberg, Resnick--are you listening?):

- | *Alternate Plagues*
- | *Alternate Pauls*
- | *Alternate Jesuses* (unlikely, but I do love the title!)
- | *Alternate Mohammeds*
- | *Alternate Phyla*

The Star Trek Movies: A Look Back

Sunday, 2 PM

Mark R. Leeper (mod), David E. Bara, Arne Starr

The original panel for this consisted of Leeper and Starr, so Leeper (as moderator) invited our friend Dave Bara to join them on the panel. (Since Dave has been a film fan for as long as Mark, he does have qualifications.) Starr is the ink artist for the DC Comics *Star Trek* comics.

Starr (I believe) started out by saying that the odd-numbered *Star Trek* films were more introspective, hence less liked. But the panel then took a more detailed look at the series, film by film. (The comments below represent their consensus rather than my own opinions.)

The consensus on *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* was that though it had good visuals and a good score, it suffered from flat acting and from being too long.

Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan had in many ways far more wrong with it: scientific blunders including a totally illogical Genesis effect, over-acting, and characters cheating their way out of problems, but is liked because it provided a "good time" and also because of the introduction of Saavik as a new and interesting character.

Star Trek III: The Search for Spock was a sequel with a larger context (according to Leeper), rather than just more of the same. On the other hand, Starr called it *Star Trek Lite*: it was less filling in terms of content. He said that this was the film where the crew gets to swap the Enterprise for Spock because ILM hated the model of the Enterprise and wanted an excuse to destroy it.

Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home (a.k.a. "Save the Whales") was, according to the panelists, not *too* badly done. They compared it to *Time After Time*, the film in which H. G. Wells follows Jack the Ripper through time to modern-day San Francisco (though in this case the time travel is in the reverse direction). Seeing the familiar characters in a modern-day setting provided much of the entertainment value, and it did have halfway decent humor. The score, however, was awful; Leonard Rosenman is apparently a friend of Leonard Nimoy's and had always wanted to do a *Star Trek* score. Letting him do one was a big mistake. This is not to say he's a bad composer, but his style is not *Star Trek's* style.

Star Trek V: The Final Frontier was a film almost universally disliked by most fans, yet Leeper

thought if he could remove about eight scenes (totally less than fifteen minutes), he would have a pretty good movie in what was left. (The scenes included the rock-climbing scenes with the boots, the marshmallow scene, the fan dance scene, and the "bumping into the bulkhead" scene, among others.) Part of the problem was seen by some to be *Star Trek's* tendency to preach: "We agree that good dental hygiene is important, but I'd hate to see a *Star Trek* movie based on it." Leeper, on the other hand, thought that the basic message was worth doing: "Human rationality is more important than religious faith." Of course, *Star Trek V* had others problems: the special effects were bad, and the editing was bad. The directing, oddly enough, was *not* as bad as most people seem to think or say, but the story *was* bad, and no one seems to have picked on that very much. As far as the effects go, the feeling was that Paramount shouldn't cut corners--they owe the fans more than that.

And finally, *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country*, a.k.a. *The Hunt for Red October in Space*: As a swan song, it would be good, but if Paramount makes more films in the series, its standing will fall considerably. For one thing, "the undiscovered country" referred to is *death*, not the future, and for as much as everyone runs around quoting Shakespeare, they should know this. Yet after setting all this up--including that final shoot-out where it seems obvious that *someone* from the Enterprise was supposed to die--they have it contrived so that everyone survives. Gack! (That last comment was mine, not the panelists'.)

The panelists also mentioned the new *Star Trek* spin-off, *Deep Space Nine*, but not enough is known about it yet to make a judgement.

Miscellaneous

Membership seems to have settled in around 900, though this may rise with the return to the Boston area next year.

Panel ideas I suggested last year which remained unused but which I would still like to see or be on include:

- | The Influence of Beowulf on Science Fiction
- | How to Pick a Reference Book (both literature reference and media reference)
- | Fantasy Opera (or Science Fiction Opera) (the former would cover Wagner's "Ring"; the latter would include Blomdahl's *Aniara* and Todd Mackover's *Valis*)

And I would now add to this the suggestion to narrow the focus of the alternate history panel(s); last year's Civil War panel attracted a large enough crowd that this won't hurt the attendance. How about an "alternate Jesuses" panel?

Next year for Boskone 30 (February 19-21, 1993) the Guest of Honor is Joe Haldeman, Artist Guest of Honor is Tom Kidd, and Editor Guest of Honor is Beth Meacham.

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