

## ConFiction 1990

A convention report by [Evelyn C. Leeper](#)

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ConFiction, the 1990 World Science Fiction Convention, was held August 24 through August 28 in The Hague, The Netherlands. The attendance was approximately 3000 (including day members). More notable than the total attendance was the national distribution--this was as close to a true Worldcon as we've gotten. As far as I could tell, every European country the size of Luxembourg or larger was represented except for Greece, Turkey, Albania, and Portugal. This includes all the "Eastern Bloc" countries, who had dozens of representatives--a busload arrived from Czechoslovakia, for example. There were also members from Israel and Malaysia. The newsletter cited the following statistics as of Sunday: 709 Britons, 556 United Statesians, 360 Dutch, 160 West Germans and 40 East Germans (this is the last con making this distinction!), 92 Finns, 42 Poles, 10 Czechs, 8 Yugoslavs, 5 Russians, 3 Bulgarians, 2 Tasmanians, 2 Hungarians, 2 Israelis, 2 Malays, 1 Rumanian, and an unspecified number of other nationalities (Australia, Japan, and European countries not named above all had sizable contingents). This made the convention more interesting as one could get many perspectives on science fiction (and life) from the multi-national membership.

## Facilities

The convention was in the Congressgebouw (Congress Centre) in The Hague. The closest hotel, the Bel Air, was about a ten-minute walk away and was used for some of the parties. The attendees were spread over many hotels. Ours (the Flora Beach) was about a mile away; a tram ran from a stop about ten-minutes' walk from the Congress Centre to its front door, but you had to allow at least 45 minutes for a round-trip, making it tough to drop back to your room to pick stuff up.

There were few restaurants within walking distance of the Congress Centre, and none that were open for dinner. Near our hotel were dozens, but they weren't serving dinner past about 9 PM, making the scheduling tricky. Luckily the Centre restaurant was not unreasonably priced (as these places go) and there was a cafeteria-style food service as well that was open throughout the day, including a "Fan Special" for 9.95 Dfl. (that's 9.95 guilders, or about \$6).

Because of the layout of the Centre, the Dealers' Room and the Art Show had to keep the same hours, making the Art Show less accessible than at other conventions. The auditorium used for the major events was very comfortable and afforded everyone a clear, if occasionally somewhat distant, view.

## Registration

Registration opened the day we arrived, but we spent our time doing tourist things (a separate log of our vacation is available on request). We registered on Thursday at about noon. This was *after* we had discovered (by looking at Kate's program) that Mark was now a program participant, so we went to the Program Participants' Registration Desk. Our badges were not there, so they sent someone to get them from regular registration. Our schedules, etc., were also not there; we had to go to the Green Room for those. They did have the Program Participant ribbons, but not the Hugo Nominee ribbons.

The Green Room had the schedules (the stick-on labels with them arrived later), but it took a lot of checking around to find the Hugo Nominee ribbons and pins. I discovered that I was on, not the one panel I had been told about, but *four* panels, and scheduled to do a reading! I got the latter canceled, however. (I did find in my mailbox when I got back home a complete schedule, but obviously the schedule for mailing them failed to take into account that many United States fans would be leaving a week or two before the convention to do some touring in Europe first.)

The Pocket Program was extremely confusing--there were *no* program item descriptions. So, for example, I found myself on a panel called "Anthropomorphics: From Bogeyman to Puppetmaster" with no idea what it was about. But that was okay--the moderator was in the dark as well! The Pocket Program was also divided into two sections, one for primary track and one for secondary track items, but within the sections there had been no attempt to have the items at the same time line up horizontally (the rooms formed the columns). So to figure out what was happening at any given time was extremely difficult. By Saturday, they realized this and started issuing one-sheet block schedules for each day, and these helped a lot. (Of course, for these they listed participants by last name only--luckily Mark and I had it sorted out ahead of time who was doing what.) There was a map of the Centre, with one or two rooms labeled with different names than in the program guide, but in general reasonably well done. There was no index by participants. (At the gripe session, the committee said that they had lost their programming database two weeks before the convention and that was the cause of many of the problems. I'm not sure I see how.) And there were no name cards for the participants to set on the table in front of themselves, leaving the audience to peer myopically at name tags instead.

The convention souvenir book was a soft-cover 152-page book, which managed to misspell one of the Guests of Honour's names on the first page. It had all the usual bibliographies, stories, lists, and articles (including one on the Gaylactic Network, which given the Netherlands' history of tolerance is not at all surprising).

The usual supply of freebies (there is usually a book or two available) was not there, but that is probably due to transportation costs. Later on we did see copies of some European magazines being given away. The badges were not as readable as those from recent Worldcons--they were done with an old ribbon or something.

### **Dealers' Room**

The Dealers' Room (a.k.a., the Hucksters' Room) was small, not surprising given the location--most dealers would have had to pay a large transportation cost. Some dealers did a lot of mail-order business--we bought a couple of T-shirts from a United States dealer who had some there but gave a discount if you ordered them to be shipped direct to you. There were a few British dealers, a German dealer with an enormous stock, and an assortment of Dutch, French, and others. As usual, books probably represented less than half of the room and there were used book dealers, but no antiquarian-type book dealers that I recall, and of course, new book dealers. I expected to find nothing on my want list, but I did find one Sturgeon that Kate was looking for and saw another British edition of a new book I wanted, but given its size, decided to hold off until I saw it in the United States.

The one unusual aspect this year was the number of currencies making the rounds in the Dealers' Room--Dutch guilders, British pounds, German marks, United States dollars, and who knows what else. There was much discussion in the daily newsletter about the conversion rates charged by the dealers for British merchandise--the general rate seemed to be 4 Dfl to the pound, though the bank rate was 3.37, and this generated some ill-feeling. Actually, the fact was the dealers didn't want people to pay in guilders, because then they would have to convert them to pounds and that would cost them. The newsletter suggested that Dutch fans buy pounds from British fans who wanted to buy guilders and both parties would benefit.

The VAT (value-added tax--something like sales tax) also drove people crazy. The VAT on most things was 6%, but on music-related items, it was 18.5%. Since the prices quoted always included the VAT, all that happened was people couldn't figure out why filksong cassettes were so expensive....

### **Art Show**

I got to the Art Show twice (once in advance of its real opening as a program participant, and once during the convention). It was small, not surprisingly, but it did have a nice assortment of artwork--not the same stuff one sees over and over at conventions in the United States. For example, Juraj Maxon from Czechoslovakia displayed some extremely elaborate pen-and-ink works ("Eskulap" was particularly notable) and Lies Jonkers from the Netherlands had some beautiful alien landscapes (including "Kakuheiki," my favorite). The three-dimensional category suffered somewhat, with a much smaller percentage of the art show than usual. Prices were high and many items not for sale, but others were affordable. Of course transporting them was impossible, so I guess you can't win. The room was big enough that it was not at all crowded and viewing the pieces was not the major effort it sometimes is in fuller shows.

### **Con Suite**

There was no traditional con suite, but the fast food area had tables where people could gather, and throughout the Centre were other gathering places. There was a fan lounge, but it was

relatively inaccessible and sometimes used for programming. The exhibits (History of World Bidding, SF Around the World) were in half of the Art Show Hall. The limited space and lack of display cases resulted in the omission of the "History of Worldcon" exhibit which had been scheduled to travel to every Worldcon for the next few years. The Message Board was conveniently located near the main staircase and food areas.

### **Programming**

Given that it's impossible to see everything at a Worldcon, I will cover just the programming I attended. (For a comparison, the program book lists 337 program items as compared to 833 at Noreascon 3, not counting films or autograph sessions.)

### **Opening Ceremonies**

Thursday, 2 PM

These were well-attended, more than at other conventions. Classical music was played as a platform rose from below the stage revealing the Guests of Honour (Joe Haldeman, Wolfgang Jeschke, Harry Harrison, Andrew Porter, and Chelsea Quinn Yarbro). The Dutch Minister of Cultural Affairs gave a speech which was a bit patronizing--she told us that even though science fiction was reading material, there was some good literature in it--and the Guests were introduced.

#### **Panel: Guest of Honour--Honour or Harassment?**

Thursday, 4 PM

Norman Spinrad (USA) (mod), Poul Anderson (USA),

Algis Budrys (USA), Robert Silverberg (USA)

The room for this was packed--not surprising if one considers that the panelists are all distinguished enough to have been Guests of Honour at conventions. We arrived late and Spinrad was in the middle of describing traveling to the Metz Science Fiction Film Festival, which involved a fourteen-hour flight through Keflavik, Iceland. At one point he had to do a television interview in French, which they subtitled--in French!

The panelists drifted into SCA (Society of Creative Anachronism) stories of people fighting in jousts, including making sure everyone knew that Harlan Ellison was defeated in a joust by Paul Zimmer, who was then defeated by Fritz Leiber. They reminisced about the Stardust Hotel, used for one Westercon, in which the entire staff had just been told they were being let go, and which was the hooker headquarters besides.

Silverberg related how when he was one of the Guests of Honour at Heicon, he arrived at the banquet late with one of the other Guests of Honour, only to discover that no one had reserved any seats for them and they had to sit on chairs back in one corner. Another story related how at one convention the Guest of Honour was accidentally presented with the hotel bill for the entire convention.

At this point, one of the audience members, deciding that the harassment part of the panel title was being overlooked, asked Budrys, "Is the function of a writer to communicate?" Upon being answered in the affirmative, he then asked, "Why are the articles in *F&SF* so hard to read?" Budrys responded, "Maybe the problem lies with you." Silverberg followed this by a long and very refined description of a "Budrys review," which he says frequently starts as

praise and gradually drifts into a total hatchet job on the work in question. Eventually the audience harasser was hooted down and left.

When I asked if anyone cared to comment on the Ellison article in *Asimov's* (about fans mistreating pros), Silverberg did relate that one time a fan asked him to autograph *Dying Inside* (a book about telepathy) and that as he was doing so the fan said, "I didn't realize you were one of us too." Silverberg said he should have replied, "Well, if you were you'd realize I'm not." Spinrad added his stories about being approached by neo-Nazi fans of his *Iron Dream*, which he mentioned the American Nazi Party has on its recommended reading list "because of the happy ending." Spinrad also said that he once had two fans volunteer to be his slaves. That was the good part, he said; the bad part was that they were totally unsuitable for the position.

Silverberg says that he occasionally gets requests to be Guest of Honour at a convention which he does not want to attend, and replies, "My schedule won't permit it." This works most of the time, but sometimes the convention persists year after year and even asks what year he would be available, at which point he must reply something like, "I'm sorry, but I will never attend another convention in Upper Moosejaw as long as I live."

Budrys once took a Greyhound bus to a convention and ended up having to change the tire on it because the driver didn't know how.

On the whole, the panelists said they had extremely positive reactions to being Guests of Honour and had no funny stories about happy incidents. When I asked what the *best* thing that ever happened to them as Guests of Honour was, Budrys said he was once given the original cover art for his novel *Who?*, Anderson said he was given a case of Heineken, Spinrad said he was given a bottle of Scotch for Harlan Ellison which he didn't deliver, and Silverberg said he met his wife.

### Panel: **BNFs Have Their Say**

Thursday, 7 PM

Leo Kindt (The Netherlands) (mod), Justin Ackroyd (Australia),

Waldemar Kumping (West Germany), Mark Leeper (USA), Bruce Pelz (USA)

This room was considerably less crowded than the last, perhaps because there was no explanation in the program book of what "BNF" stood for (big-name fan). The panel mostly discussed what constituted a BNF; Mark claimed he was not one, but it seems to me if other people say you are a BNF, their vote outweighs yours. Though initially BNF-dom was geographic in nature (a BNF in California might be totally unknown in Texas), I claimed there were now localities other than geographic and cited Usenet as an example: there are people known worldwide, but only to other people with Usenet access. Bruce seemed to like this idea.

About the only other thing the panel established they had in common was that they liked to travel--but since this panel was held in the Netherlands, it is clear this was not a random sample of fans, or even of BNFs. However, someone suggested that fans like to travel to "see things through different eyes" and that this *was* connected with science fiction, to which I think everyone agreed.

### Panel: **Anthropomorphics: From Bogeyman to Puppetmaster**

Thursday, 8 PM

Jack Chalker (USA) (mod), Judith Hanna (USA),

F. Gwynplaine MacIntyre (USA), Evelyn Leeper (USA)

This panel was suggested by someone who then didn't come to the convention, so the topic was ill-defined to say the least. We talked mostly about anthropomorphizing non-human life-forms (and inanimate objects) and whether one could write a really alien alien. Someone (Hanna?) claimed that everyone who uses computers a lot anthropomorphizes them--I disputed that and still do. I mentioned that in the United States, though, we do have Mr. Coffee, and that a friend of ours has extended this to Mr. WordProcessor and Mr. Microwave. (Why always Mr.?) We also name hurricanes and tropical storms. And, of course, we anthropomorphize our pets mercilessly (is there anything sillier than the little sweaters we make them wear?). Hanna pointed out that most animal rights activists are childless, though audience members said this may be as much a function of childless people having more time to be activists in anything as of childless people anthropomorphizing animals.

Jack Chalker talked about seeing a Betty Boop cartoon in which she puts on a pair of stockings with a hole in the toe, and her big toe grows a face and hands and points to the hole. This, he feels, could really traumatize young children that *their* toes might do this. There was also the mention of commercials and advertisements which put faces on food and have them talk to you (e.g., McDonald's ads). There is a fine line between humor and horror--I keep remembering the bit from *Through the Looking Glass* when Alice is introduced to the plum pudding and the leg of mutton.

As far as alien aliens go, one problem seems to be that even when an author does try to write one, the reader is likely to put his or her own (mis)understanding of the aliens' motivations on them. (I confess to doing this in Greg Benford's "Alphas," for example.) One person suggested using plants as characters, but even these are anthropomorphized. The ultimate anthropomorphism might be Arthur Conan Doyle's "When the Earth Screamed," though Olaf Stapledon does quite a bit of it in *Star Maker*, *Nebula Maker*, and *The Flames* as well.

Alien aliens also make it difficult for the reader to "connect" with the story, so a human main character for them to empathize with is almost a necessity. MacIntyre referred to the "Post-Campbell Shift" to a universe no longer human-dominated (John Campbell was known for his insistence on human domination of the universe in *Astounding* stories), and cited "The Persistence of Vision" by John Varley as a particularly violent reaction to this.

This led as to a bit of discussion of "human aliens"--for example, the Kikiyu of Resnick's "Kirinyaga" stories, whose outlook is in many ways alien to the average American or British reader. Chalker talked about how Resnick got started writing supermarket tabloids and how when he (Resnick) first went to Africa, he fell in love with it, though I got the impression that Chalker felt Resnick was more in love with an idealized sort of Africa and perhaps not entirely in touch with the realities there. (Then again, I could be confused.)

For some reason I can't recall, someone related the story of Ray Bradbury working on the script for *Moby Dick* for John Huston. Part way through the filming, Huston came to Bradbury and said that he had a telegram from Jack Warner saying that they needed something in the film that viewers could relate to, so could Bradbury please write in a sexy stowaway? Bradbury got practically violent over this and after much argument with Huston, Huston revealed it was all a joke. MacIntyre pointed out that if that had been filming Melville's *Redburn* there would have been plenty of sex in it--all gay sex, though, which means there was even less likelihood that they would have filmed it in the 1950s. (It wouldn't surprise me if this paragraph causes a great revival of interest in Melville's writings--or at least in *Redburn*.)

## Panel: SF Films after the Death of SF Films

Thursday, 9:30 PM

Johan-Martjin Flaton (The Netherlands) (mod), Cees Groenewegen (The Netherlands)

The two panelists were, I believe, responsible for the ConFiction film program, which was somewhat limited but did include a few hard-to-find items (more on this later). They bemoaned current films' lack of story, characters, and general development that one sees in literature. Cinema uses science fiction, they said, for the whizzes and bangs. Of course, there are some exceptions (*Brother from Another Planet*, *Man Facing Southeast*, *The Navigator*), but the mere fact that one can list them indicates they are noticeable by their rarity. The panelists also missed black and white films, which they felt were better in the sense that black and white doesn't hide things as well as color.

Unfortunately, this panel could have used either more content or more panelists to fill it out; as it was, it seemed a bit thin and stretched.

## Panel: MTV & CNN & Hamburgers

Friday, 12 noon

Karlheinz Steinmuller (East Germany) (mod), Alejo Cuervo (Spain),

Ellen Datlow (USA), Takumi Shibano (Japan)

Steinmuller began by pointing out that, in *Last and First Men*, Olaf Stapledon wrote about an Americanized world--had we in fact reached that point? Rather off the point, it was observed that American science fiction was certainly ethnocentric (Stapledon was British, so can't be included in this statement). Datlow asked why, if this was the case, people in other countries read American science fiction. The example was given that *Prentice Alvin*, nominated for a Hugo this year, was about *United States* history, and it was almost expected that fans all over the world would be able to read and understand the references. Yet, as one audience member pointed out, this didn't work in reverse: there is a Spanish story entitled "The Last Lesson of Cisneros" by Gabriel Bermudez and he would be very surprised if any Americans understood any of the references. (I observed that, given the state of education in the United States, most Americans probably wouldn't understand *Prentice Alvin* either.) This led to some comments about cultural illiteracy, including one by someone whose initials were E. G. (sorry, my notes seem to have failed me here) that "instead of real information we have facts about things that did not happen."

Other panelists noted that Americans are finally picking up other cultures to write about. Japanese science fiction was characterized as a black hole, importing a lot, but exporting very little science fiction. (One suspects that translators of Japanese can make far more money translating technical and business-related works.) Interestingly, Shibano pointed out that in Japanimation, cars drive on the right side of the road, even though in Japan they drive on the left! A Swiss audience member pointed out later that a French economist said that the French try to sell what's French, while the Japanese try to sell what's wanted. And culture tends to follow economy, with a delay.

The issue of translation in general generated some discussion. With more people reading English than any other language, more American and British science fiction will be exported than that of other countries because it doesn't need translation. (This, of course, creates a feedback loop--since more English-language books are available, learning English as a second

language gives you the greatest advantage, so yet more people learn it, and so on.) In fact, Cuervo said that in Spain two Japanese stories appeared recently in Spanish, but they were translated from English translations rather than directly from the Japanese! Of course, in some countries, the copyright conventions are not upheld, so Fred Pohl found himself as the "co-author" of "The Wizard Masters of Peng-Shi Angle" ("The Wizards of Pung's Corners") with a Chinese translator he had never heard of, and when he had someone translate a bit of the story back to English, he discovered he didn't recognize that either. The French do comics rather than novels, thereby getting around much of the problem--pictures need no translation. (It has been said that silent movies were universal, and the advent of the talkies was a bad thing in that regard.)

From the audience, F. Gwynplaine MacIntyre expressed the opinion that the multitude of words English has to express similar ideas meant that English lends itself more to literature than other languages. This was, of course, hotly disputed by many people.

In addition to the language barrier, there seem to be geographic barriers. Though Spain shares a common language with most of Latin America (and Puerto Rico), little science fiction is imported from that area. Even the magical realism for which Latin America is known comes into Spain mostly through the mainstream publishing lines. In general, in fact, science fiction is imported far more than fantasy or horror.

As far as content, there is still a problem. People ask for stories with more Japanese flavor, for example, but then they don't understand them because they haven't the background. An example of this phenomenon that I noted is in the film *A Great Wall*. An American couple goes back to visit the husband's sister and brother-in-law in China. There is a scene by their father's grave in which the American couple put their arms around each other's waists, and the Chinese couple looks embarrassed by this. Unless you know that public displays of affection are frowned upon in China, this scene will go right by you. And for the Japanese, it is pointless to ask authors to write with a more American flavor--that's what they get in English all the time! Even William Gibson's much praised use of Japanese culture is only landscape; Shibano finds it interesting, but not at all accurate. On the other hand, Shibano thought that these Japanese influences in cyberpunk were how Japan *would* export its culture.

Shibano talked at length about Japanese culture, which he admits was imported from China but changed to suit the Japanese. And this selectivity is still going on: Japan has adopted Western toilets, but not Western bathtubs, because the latter is far more culturally ingrained. Japanese science fiction, he says, developed from 1950s United States science fiction. In 1989, there were 700 science fiction/horror/fantasy books published in Japan, 280 of which were original science fiction, and 180 of which were translations. It is unusual to hear a Japanese credit another country's culture. But Shibano indicates this ethnocentrism is new; up to 100 years ago, Japan imported culture from elsewhere and didn't feel particularly ethnocentric. Shibano said in fact that he was bothered by the new Japanese imperialism. (Whether this was merely for the benefit of the audience, or really true I cannot judge, of course. Still, it is easy to believe that there are Japanese, especially science fiction fans, who take a more global view.)

There was mention made of the "quota quickies" of the British film industry--films produced to satisfy a requirement that for every N films imported, M films had to be produced in Britain (I don't know the exact numbers). Steinmuller compared this to an East German law (recently junked, no doubt) that allowed only 40% of the pop music played on the radio to be Western. As he put it, "Our impression as ex-socialists is that this doesn't work."

(Note: This panel reinforced my feeling that multi-national panels are more interesting, but that they also proceed at a slower pace, as people search for the right words.)



## Panel: SF in the Third World

Friday, 4:30 PM

Brian Aldiss (Great Britain) (mod), Elizabeth Ann Hull (USA),

Jaroslav Olsa (Czechoslovakia), Frederik Pohl (USA)

Aldiss started this off by showing a copy of his collection *Foreign Bodies*, published in Singapore and available only there. (I'll have to look for a copy--if it's still in print.) Pohl said that when he had gone to South America, "We found no vestige of science fiction in Peru," but was corrected by Hull (his wife) and changed that to "We found *a* vestige of science fiction in Peru." However, there was more in Argentina and Brazil (two vestiges, perhaps?), though the problems of hyperinflation there (2% per *day*) tend to make book buying difficult. In Brazil, short stories are published in book form for subway riders. (Here, Waldenbooks and others have expressed interest in novellas published in book form as a way to beat the rising cost of books.)

Someone observed that there was certainly a "First/Second-World-Centrism" in science fiction, when even as careful an author as Arthur C. Clarke, who lives in Sri Lanka, sets *Rama II* there and talks about the summer of 1998 and the winter of 1998-1999 (the years may be off, but you get the idea). (Actually, Sri Lanka is above the equator, but just barely, and the whole concept of winter and summer seems inappropriate.)

Olsa was an expert on Arabian science fiction and talked a bit about that. An Egyptian author, Hakkim, wrote a couple of science fiction stories, one about a time machine and one about returning cosmonauts (Olsa's term, though whether the returnees were Soviet cosmonauts or just space travelers was not clear). Another author's story, "The Spider," has been translated into English, but isn't any good. There is Libyan science fiction (*Diary of a Man Who Hasn't Been Born Yet*) and Syrian science fiction commentary (Imram Tali's *On Science Fiction*, published in Beirut). In Tunisia, *Revolution of the Animals*, a re-write of *Animal Farm*, has been published. A magazine(?) called *Singapore Science Fiction* exists, as well as a book by Singaporean Hanna Mei (*Stars of Fire*).

Olsa also talked about a company in Zaria, Nigeria, which published *The Comet* (about UFOs) in the Hausa language in an edition of 500 copies. There was also an edition of 1984 re-written from Nigeria (see my comments about Pohl's Chinese translation, above). The multiplicity of tribal languages means that editions of books in these languages will have very small print runs.

(As an aside, Olsa said that Czechoslovakia was still training the Iraqis in chemical warfare, and that he didn't think this was bad. This did not make him very popular with the audience.)

One obstacle to science fiction in the Third World is that folk tales are more popular than science fiction in areas trying to maintain their own culture. Hull also thought that there were other cultural forces at work, and postulated that Islam is not a culture that opens up to new ideas easily. (I think I would tend to disagree and would claim she is looking more at a part of Middle Eastern Islam than Islam world-wide.) Aldiss followed this up by saying that it was Western nations which opened up the world, rather than vice versa, and that science fiction reflects this.

Again, the problems of translating a book for an audience that doesn't understand the culture were mentioned (see previous panel). Pohl, in describing a translation of one of his works in Chinese (the same one as above?) said, "He had taken out idioms that were hard to understand

and replaced them with idioms that weren't worth understanding." One example he gave from a translation from Chinese into English was the change of a chapter heading from "Two Gourds on the Same Bitter Vine" to "Two Alike." The audience agreed that the former was *not* too difficult to understand and much preferable to the latter.

**Panel: The Detective in the SF Field**

Friday, 6 PM

David Kyle (USA) (mod), Evelyn Leeper (USA)

We had planned on attending the Rijstaffel, but this panel conflicted with it, so we canceled our seats at the dinner. It turned out that two of the three original panelists (including the original moderator) failed to show up, so David Kyle volunteered to step in and moderate. Thank goodness! I do not think I could have run this panel on my own.

Most of what we talked about, at least at first, was more the overlap between the mystery and science fiction fields in terms of authors who wrote in both genres: Anthony Boucher, Robert Bloch, Arthur Conan Doyle, Fredric Brown, Edgar Allan Poe. I suggested that the reason for this "cross-fertilization" is that both science fiction and mysteries require logical thinking, the former to extrapolate from an assumption, the latter to construct a convincing mystery whose solution satisfies the reader. Kyle also observed that the mystery field has its equivalent awards: the Tony (named for Anthony Boucher) is similar to the Hugo and the Edgar (named for Edgar Allan Poe) is similar to the Nebula. Coincidentally, both mystery awards are named for writers who also wrote science fiction.

Eventually we drifted more into the topic, and discussed authors who had written mystery stories set in the science fiction genre. John D. MacDonald was one. Others included Randall Garrett (for his Lord D'Arcy stories), and of course, Isaac Asimov. I offered H. Beam Piper's "Omnilingual" as another example, but several audience members felt it was *not* a good mystery and didn't like the solution at all. A related sub-genre is mysteries set in fantasy genres (one could argue Garrett belongs here, I suppose), of which the best-known is probably the Jules de Grandin series by Seabury Quinn. A current author working in this field is Glen Cook.

I also suggested an in-between stage: mysteries set in the world of science fiction writing and fandom. Examples of this would be Boucher's *Rocket to the Morgue*, Peter Isaac's *I'll Cry When I Kill You*, Sharyn McCrumb's *Bimbos of the Death Sun*, and several other more forgettable works.

There is also the concept of the "scientific detective," of which the best known is Sherlock Holmes. Dover Books publishes many other works of this sort, mostly from the Victorian era.

**Panel: US Books on the Common Market After 1992**

Friday, 7:30 PM

Ashley Grayson (Great Britain) (mod), Kathy Gale (United States),

Toni Weisskopf (Great Britain)

There was much confusion about this topic, in part because the audience was not well-informed about the ins and outs of international publishing. For example, are rights for books sold by country, or are they sold by region (e.g., Europe)? The answer is, sort of.

One audience member kept complaining (rather vehemently) that the markup on British books in Germany was well above the exchange rate, and why were they so expensive? Other fans said that in their countries, the same was true of books imported from other countries, but the first fan was extremely persistent in trying to find out who was ripping him off. (He never got an answer--I suspect the answer is everyone.)

No one discussed the possibility that with trade barriers down, publishers in Turkey (for example) could produce books cheaper than publishers in Britain and still pay authors the same royalties. Of course, authors may feel that British publishers will have better distribution channels for their books, but I am curious to see what does happen.

Other odds and ends: Britons are prohibited by law from discounting books. Britons don't like seeing "X writing in the universe of Y" (who does?). Grayson said that V. C. Andrews's last four books were completely ghost-written after her death. Gale said she had to take official exception to this, but unofficially she would shut up.

### **@ Party**

Friday, 10 PM

The @ party was held in a function room of the Bel Air Hotel. We arrived late, because we had gone back to Scheveningen to eat dinner and see the first set of fireworks at 10 PM. Because the room was much larger than the usual hotel room, the party was much less crowded and less noisy than in previous years. Also, because the room was reserved only until midnight, the party broke up much earlier than normal. We got to meet quite a few fans we had only met electronically before, and a different set than had shown up at previous Worldcons (in the United States). Leo did a good job of organizing the party (thanks, Leo), but on the whole I think the room parties may be better--the cramped quarters force you to meet everyone instead of breaking into little groups!

### **Panel: How I Stopped Worrying About the Rocket**

Saturday, 10 AM

Andrew Porter (USA) (mod), Pat Cadigan (USA)

As was typical of ConFiction, this panel was moved from its original room. Even the Hugo Awards Ceremony was been listed with three different starting times! (And no one had the slightest idea of what the nominees were supposed to do or where they were supposed to be.) So the audience went one place and the panel went somewhere else. Eventually the two joined.

The panel being as small as it was, the conclusions were of necessity idiosyncratic. They also expressed a certain cynicism about awards. For example, Porter said, "To win a Nebula you have to be nominated and then die," to which Cadigan replied, "Yes, but you can only do it once."

Even winning, they concluded, was not always great. Larry Niven broke the base on one of the Hugos which he won. When he tried to crash the Losers' Party later, claiming that anyone who broke his own Hugo *must* be a loser, he was still refused.

The panelists talked about other awards as well. And each award has its drawbacks. Hugos are subject to altitude (lower air pressure brings out bubbles on the surface). Nebulas are subject to cold (if you bring them into a hot room from a cold outside, they can crack). And even the Skylark Award, designed as a lens, has one major drawback: it can set your coat on fire (ask

Jane Yolen, to whom this actually happened!).

Porter revealed some of the deep, dark secrets about the Hugos. For example, when they arrive, sans engraving, the committee finds the least pitted and scratched one and uses that for the Best Novel award. The second-best is used for Best Novella, and so on down the line--the Best Fan Writer and Best Fan Artist gets the most pitted and scratched ones. That settles it, I'm going to write a novel next time! (Actually, the word count on many of my trip logs and convention reports is within the word count--they're just not fiction. I'll have to lie more....)

There are other drawbacks to winning a Hugo, of course. (This is the sound of one fan rationalizing that the grapes are probably sour anyway.) If you fly to the convention, you have to bring it back through airport security (you would never trust the airline enough to check it). And if you win one overseas, you have to figure out its monetary value to declare on the Customs Declaration. So not only will I write a novel next time, but I will not do it in a year right before the convention is outside the United States.

The University of Kansas has a Theodore Sturgeon Award, but the winners can't keep it--there is only one and it stays at the University of Kansas. (I hope they at least get a letter.) Cadigan said the Balrog (given by Johnson County Community College) was the ugliest award she had ever seen, 85 pounds of plaster, though the World Fantasy Awards are also ugly. Either she or her significant other has won a Balrog and people who come to their house constantly comment on how good their taste is but why ever did they buy *that* thing?! (I probably should know who the other was, but I'm not up to date on all this sort of stuff.)

Cadigan also said she won't spend time jockeying for position in the Nebulas. She recognizes that self-promotion is important and valuable, but it can be carried to extremes.

Porter observed that one way *Locus* wins year after year is by staying in the semi-prozine category, and that it does this by limiting its print runs to under 10,000--as its subscription base goes up, its bookstore distribution is cut. What happens when more than 10,000 people want to buy paid subscriptions should be interesting.

Somehow the panelists got off topic (maybe talking about *Locus*), and ending up discussing hyphenation. The "rules" are no more than two or three hyphenations in a paragraph, and no two consecutive lines should be hyphenated.

Porter also mentioned that he has Ed Ferman's 1970 Hugo, which Ed gave him because of the work Porter had put in while working for him. Among Porter's discoveries were Vonda McIntyre and Suzette Haden Elgin.

**Panel: What's an APA? A Fannish Lifeline!**

Saturday, 10:30 AM

David Schlosser (USA) (mod), George "Lan" Laskowski (USA),

Pascal Thomas (France), Amy Thompson (USA)

I came to this mostly to see Lan (who only arrived this morning, and was leaving Monday morning), but I did discover that there is a film APA called *Capra*. (If anyone knows a contact name or address, I'd appreciate it.)

I then did some odds and ends, including buying a T-shirt parody of Van Gogh's "Starry Night" with a rocket in it, and escorting Geoff Ryman to his autograph session, since he had

no idea where the Dealers' Room was.

**Panel: A Hugo for a Non-English Novel**

Saturday, 12:00 noon

Rick Katze (mod) (USA), Wolfgang Jeschke (West Germany),

Sam Lundwall (Sweden), Peter Schaap (The Netherlands),

Pascal Thomas (France)

This year an attempt was made to award a Hugo for a novel in a language other than English. The category never made it to the final ballot, though, and this panel discussed why.

On the easy level, it didn't make the ballot because it didn't have enough nominations. Nominations in general were very sparse (it's embarrassing to admit how few nominations it took me to get on the ballot--so I won't), and European nominations even sparser. Only 14% of the eligible voters sent in nomination ballots at all, compared to 16% last year, and the membership figures were much smaller, making the absolute numbers about half what they were last year. Of the 3400 people eligible to vote, 50% were from North America--read that "monolingual" (except for the Canadians)--33% were from the United Kingdom, and 11% were from the Netherlands. Of the 480 ballots received, only 120 (25%) were from Europe and that includes the United Kingdom.

And when people did nominate in this category, they nominated only one book, not several as is common in other categories. The only books with multiple nominations were the Dutch novel *De wolver* by Schaap and the German novel *Midas* by Jeschke. (Note that both authors were on this panel.) The languages one would expect to see nominations from were strangely absent; where were the Italian, French, and Spanish novels? For that matter, where were the Japanese novels? If they have enough activity to warrant awarding the Seiuns, it seems inconceivable that nothing was nominated in this category.

On the more difficult level, one must ask *why* there weren't enough nominations. Well, for one thing, the ballot itself is in English. Obvious, perhaps, but I suspect until it was pointed out by the panelists, no committee had really considered the issue. While I don't expect to see a fifty-language ballot in the near future, printing ballots in Spanish (perhaps with the English as well) for South America and Spain, in Japanese for Japan, in German for Germany, and so on, is not unreasonable.

Another problem was that many voters felt that they had to fill in the entire ballot, and knew nothing about many of the other categories. It was suggested that future ballots start out by saying "You do not have to vote in every category" or words to that effect.

And even if you get nominations, how do you deal with the problem of books in different languages competing with each other? If you have one French book, one German book, two Japanese books, and a Spanish book, how can you ever expect to find a large enough voting constituency that can read all of them, or even more than one of them? You could have a juried award, but how do you select the jury? And if you have a situation, as in the Netherlands, where only two science fiction novels in Dutch were published in 1989, where is your base to choose from?

It was observed that the Nobel Prize for Literature *seems* to work, though Lundwall said that the Swedish Academy is composed of eighteen old, stupid people. Harry Martinson basically

gave himself the Nobel Prize, and he remains the only science fiction author ever to win one, though if you look at fantasists in general, you also have Isaac Bashevis Singer, William Golding, and Gabriel García Márquez. (Many other winners have at least dabbled in the field--even Winston Churchill wrote an alternate history story once!) Still, a "Lifetime Achievement Award" for a body of work in a language other than English is "less unworkable," as Thomas put it.

Thomas told an anecdote, the point of which escapes me now, but it was somewhat interesting. He went from France to Germany by train in the middle of a heat wave. The air conditioning was broken in the train, but in France, the conductor insisted on having the windows closed. In Belgium, the conductor opened the windows. In Germany, they repaired the air conditioning.

The panel itself was rather sparsely attended. It seemed appropriate.

## Non-Hugo Awards

Saturday, 4 PM

Last year I commented on the ratio of Hugo awards to non-Hugo awards at the "Hugo" ceremony (just about even), and suggested (along with many other people) that the time had perhaps come to have a separate awards ceremony for the non-Hugo awards. So this year they did, in part because they announced many more European awards than normal for a Worldcon. Unfortunately, the ceremonies were very poorly attended, even by the European fans, and rumor has it that some of the Japanese contingent left in a huff because the Seiuns ("the Japanese Hugos," though of course they are not associated with the Hugos, nor are they officially allowed to use the name "Hugo") had been relegated to a separate and largely ignored program item. The convention, on the other hand, arranged for Robert Silverberg to be Master of Ceremonies, so they at least were not totally writing it off.

Anyway, for your edification, here are the various awards announced:

- i **Gigamesh Awards (Barcelona)**
  - n **SF Novel:** *The Shadow of the Torturer* by Gene Wolfe
  - n **SF Collection/Anthology:** *Beyond the Wub, Volume 1* by Philip K. Dick
  - n **SF Short Story:** no award
  - n **Fantasy Novel:** *Mythago Wood* by Robert Holdstock and *The Colour of Magic* by Terry Pratchett (tie)
  - n **Fantasy Collection/Anthology:** *Swords Against Magic* by Fritz Leiber
  - n **Fantasy Short Story:** "The Lord of Quarmall" by Fritz Leiber and "Old Ghosties" by Richard Matheson (tie)
  - n **Horror Novel:** *Conjure Wife* by Fritz Leiber
  - n **Horror Collection/Anthology:** *Dark Descent* by David Hartwell
  - n **Horror Short Story:** "The Hospice" by Robert Aickman, "The Ancient Mind at Work" by Suzy McKee Charnas, "The Unicorn Tapestry" by Suzy McKee Charnas, "Night-Side" by Joyce Carol Oates, and "Quiet Voices in Passenham" by T. H. White (tie)
  - n **Best Magazine:** (none in Spain)
  - n **Best Series:** Gran Fantasy
  - n **Special Mention:** Destino/Alvaro Conquiereo Library; Olañeta/Tale of Wonder Library, and Cristina Macia (translator) for *The Colour of Magic*
- i **Seiun Awards (Japan)**
  - n **Foreign Novel in Translation:** *Collision Course/Collision with Chronos* by Barrington J. Bayley
  - n **Short Story in Translation:** "Think Blue, Count Two" by Cordwainer Smith
  - n **Non-Fiction in Translation:** *Future Magic* by Robert L. Forward

- i **King Kong Awards (The Netherlands)**
  - n "The Winter Garden" by Paul Harland
  - n "The Mound" by Jan Ber Landman
  - n "The Desirable Lot of the Slender Ones" by Thomas Wintner
  - n "Knowfather" by Gerben Helinga, Jr.
  - n "Their Descriptive God, Softly Weeping" by Jan J. B. Kuipers
- i **King Kong Service Medal: Jan Vedhoen**
- i **ASFA Chesley Awards**
  - n **Best Cover Illustration (Hardback Book):** Keith Parkinson for *Rusalka*
  - n **Best Cover Illustration (Paperback Book):** Stephen Hickman for *Gryphon*
  - n **Best Cover Illustration (Magazine):** Frank and Laura-Kelly-Freas for *Marion Zimmer Bradley's Fantasy Magazine, Autumn 1989*
  - n **Best Interior Illustration:** Todd Cameron Hamilton for *The Dragonlover's Guide to Pern*
  - n **Best Color Work (unpublished):** Tom Kidd for "Winsor McKay City"
  - n **Best Monochrome Work (unpublished):** Ruth Thompson for "The Guardian"
  - n **Best Three-Dimensional:** Arlin Rubins for "Wave Born"
  - n **Award for Artistic Achievement:** Don Maitz, body of work
  - n **Award for Contribution to ASFA:** David Cherry for his work in establishing ASFA as a recognized and respected organization
  - n **Best Art Director:** Betsy Wollheim and Sheila Gilbert, DAW Books

Silverberg commented that the presenters of the Baghdad Science Fiction league's Golden Camel Awards were unable to make the convention. (It's a joke, son.)

It was noted that "Seiun" means nebula, but that the awards were named for the first Japanese science fiction magazine, whose first (and only) issue was in December 1954. The King Kong Award is a juried award that carries a cash prize as well, and is being ended after this year. There was no announcement of the Prometheus (Libertarian) Awards.

Silverberg closed by saying that all this proves "there is much more to science fiction than I read about in *Locus*."

I immediately went out and bought the anthology of the King Kong Award winners. Then Mark, Kate, and I returned to Scheveningen for dinner on the boardwalk (I had Biefstuk Peppersaus), and I changed into my tuxedo for the Hugo Awards. (I am definitely more the tuxedo type than the fancy dress type--trust me!) Oddly enough, people stared at me on the tram going back to the Congress Centre--you'd think they had never seen a woman in a tuxedo riding the tram before.

**Hugo Awards**

**Saturday, 8 PM**

**First the awards:**

- i **Novel:** *Hyperion* by Dan Simmons
- i **Novella:** "The Mountains of Mourning" by Lois McMaster Bujold
- i **Novelette:** "Enter a Soldier. Later: Enter Another" by Robert Silverberg
- i **Short Story:** "Boobs" by Suzy McKee Charnas
- i **Non-Fiction:** *The World Beyond the Hill* by Alexei and Cory Panshin
- i **Dramatic Pres.:** *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*
- i **Pro Editor:** Gardner Dozois, IASFM

- | Pro Artist: Don Maitz
- | Semi-Prozine: *Locus* (ed. Charles N. Brown)
- | The Mad 3 Party (ed. Leslie Turek)
- | Fan Writer: Dave Langford
- | Fan Artist: Stu Shiffman
- | John W. Campbell Award: Kristine Kathryn Rusch
- | Original artwork: *Rimrunners*, cover by Don Maitz
- | First Fandom Award: Robert A. Madle, Edd Cartier, Alex Schomburg
- | Big Heart Award: Jay Kay Klein

(The last four are not Hugos.)

Now the comments: C. Howard Wilkins, the American ambassador, opened the ceremonies and presented the Best Novel Hugo. His speech was entertaining without being patronizing. He talked about the search for intelligent life in outer space, commenting that there didn't seem to be much evidence for it on earth--present company excepted, of course. He also talked about "science fiction" instead of "sci-fi." (Later Saul Jaffe said that Wilkins really was a fan, and when he was being shown around earlier, they had a hard time getting him out of some of the panels--he wanted to stay and listen!) At the end of his opening remarks, he looked upward and said, "Scotty?" which got a big round of applause. The only negative note was the strict (and rather brusque) security his staff insisted on.

I am now convinced that First Fandom has embarked on a "let's award everyone before they die" campaign--they gave out four awards two years ago, three this year, and three this year. Jay Kay Klein looked at a loss without his camera--and the big question was, who would take *his* picture receiving the award? (Someone did.)

The lack of rehearsal showed--Chelsea Quinn Yarbrow was reading the list of nominees much faster than they were changing the slides, meaning the names never matched the pictures. Of course, they put Lan's name on slide with the picture of the fanzine *Pirate Jenny* and the editor of that was matched with *Lan's Lantern*! Still, it was a thrill to see my picture up there, even if it was only about two seconds before Yarbrow announced that Dave Langford was the winner.

After the ceremonies, I found a phone booth and tried to call a friend back in the United States. We had made an arrangement whereby I would call his answering machine at work and read the winners off into it. Then he could call up his messages and transcribe them, backing up as necessary, thereby making it keeping the call as short (and cheap) as possible, and then send them electronically to everyone in the Science Fiction Club at AT&T. The one thing we hadn't allowed for was that the computer running his answering machine might be down. It was. Twenty-seven rings later, I gave up.

I then went to the Hugo Losers' Party, sponsored by the Chicon V committee, who gave us all flowers and coasters with rockets needlepointed onto them. (Hey, they're easier to carry through security and Customs!) I volunteered to be on the Chicon V program and indicated that Mark would probably not be adverse either, but they should check with him. David Brin congratulated me on being nominated (he saw my lapel rocket pin, I guess) and pointed out that just making the ballot is honor enough. But this party, and all the others, were very hot and eventually I left and went back to the room, meeting Mark and Kate, who had gone to a panel. I tried the answering machine again, and it answered this time, so I left my message and went to sleep. Ah, technology!

WSFS Business Meeting



Sunday, 10 AM

Bruce Pelz (chair)

The first order of business here was the announcement of the winner of the 1993 bid: San Francisco. This was a tight race between them and Hawaii; Phoenix and Zagreb were distant contenders (Zagreb placed ahead of Phoenix, though). There was much dispute over Hawaii's use of pre-printed ballots with their bid written in and marked first--nothing prohibits this, but Phoenix felt it was a bad thing and should be prevented in the future. I suspect what kept Phoenix from formally protesting was that since Hawaii lost anyway and Phoenix placed fourth, it was pointless. (If you care, the vote counts I heard were 193 votes for Zagreb, 324 for Hawaii, and 520 for San Francisco. 329 ballots were cast by mail and 759 were cast at the convention.)

The rest of the business meeting swung between the extremely boring to the wryly amusing ("This actually appears to be a simple and elegant wording." "Mr. Sacks, are you speaking for or against?"). When Magicon was asked if they had arranged for a simultaneous shuttle launch, Pelz interjected, "It's up in the air." On the whole, it was at least as entertaining as many "humorous" program items.

Film: *Malevil*

Sunday, 12 noon

This was a post-holocaust film none of us had seen, so Mark, Dale, Kate, Kate's friend, and I all went to see it. Unluckily, it was in French. Luckily, it was subtitled. Unluckily, it was subtitled in Dutch. Luckily, it had very little dialogue. Only Dale and I stayed for the whole film. He could pick up some of the Dutch because it was like German, which he knew, and I could recognize some of the French and some of the Dutch, and he remembered the story from the book fairly well, so between us I think we pieced together what was going on. But we did agree that we didn't remember a train in a tunnel from the book and suspect that was added for dramatic effect.

The photography was also odd--almost black-and-white in its use of filters to provide a washed-out look to the film after the bomb.

The film room was one of the best at a convention--it was actually a movie theater layout, with banked seating and all.

Panel: Alternative History

Sunday, 2:30 PM

Robert Silverberg (mod) (USA), Evelyn Leeper (USA),

Stanley Schmidt (USA), Thijs van Ebbenhorst Tengbergen (The Netherlands)

Silverberg began by introducing everyone, including Tengbergen, whose full name he managed to pronounce. Tengbergen was on the panel because he had written an alternate history in which the Spanish conquistadores bring back a much more virulent strain of syphilis than they actually did and southern Europe is decimated. The Aztecs end up in India (he couldn't remember whether they sailed around Africa or across the Pacific to get there) and the Netherlands has a much more important place in the world.

Other changes include much more advanced biological sciences, though technology in general lags behind our own world.

Since I was on the panel, and a bit awed to be on the same panel with Silverberg, my notes are spotty. One question we discussed was whether alternate histories really take *all* the consequences of a change into effect. The classic example given of this is Ray Bradbury's "The Sound of Thunder" in which the killing of a butterfly in the Jurassic changes our world, but only to the extent of a different candidate winning an election and a different spelling for a few words. We agreed it was far more likely that any change the killing caused either would be so minor as to have disappeared by the present, or would have caused far more major changes. This problem I listed as one of my pet peeves about alternate histories. The example I gave was a story in which World War II never happens, but John Kennedy is elected President in 1960 anyway. Why John and not his older brother who had been killed in the war is one problem; another is recognizing that Kennedy's war record was a large part of what got him elected.

One problem with working out the effect of a change back in prehistoric times is that things rapidly become unrecognizable. Consider William Tenn's "The Brooklyn Project" in which human scientists working on time travel send back a capsule to the primordial soup. It kills a few incipient life forms, changes a few others, and bounces back to the present, where the scientists declare that no change has happened. After doing this a few times (with subtle changes each time), they are purple tentacled monsters in tanks, still adamantly declaring that "Nothing has changed!"

Good alternate histories, on the other hand, work out the ramifications, and also probably don't try to project more than a few hundred years beyond the split point. Examples I gave are John Ford's *A Dragon Waiting* and Robert Sobel's *For Want of a Nail*. I also mentioned to Silverberg afterward that I found his alternate histories which looked at the effect that changing religion has on the world to be among the most interesting ones written these days and said I hoped he'd write more.

After this panel, a Yugoslavian fan approached Silverberg to talk to him about the fact that publishers in Yugoslavia were publishing Silverberg's works without getting his permission or paying him royalties. Silverberg knew about this already and obviously was not happy about this, but the fan seems to want Silverberg to do something about it. What, was not clear, and Silverberg countered by saying that fans in Yugoslavia should write their government to say that the lack of Yugoslavian agreement to international copyright laws made Yugoslavia look bad in the eyes of other people. Somehow I doubt a quick resolution to this problem.

Panel: TV Series

Sunday, 5:30 PM

Katharina Loock (mod) (West Germany), David Lally (Great Britain),

Mark Leeper (USA), Melinda Snodgrass (USA),

Having Melinda Snodgrass on a panel on television science fiction is a mixed blessing: she's very interesting to listen to and knowledgeable, but her presence means that 90% of the questions will be about *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (of which she is the story editor).

The panel began by talking about some of the basics of television science fiction. Series in the United States must be unordered--showable in any order--since a large part of the revenue is from syndication, when they can't worry about what order the shows are running in. (*Hill Street Blues* was an exception in this regard, but it also isn't syndicated much.) The result of this is that American series rarely have a closing episode (though there are exceptions), they just end. In case you're wondering, the two-parter in *Star Trek: The Next Generation* was, as everyone suspected, because some of the actors were making contract negotiations difficult, and Paramount wanted to have the option to write them out if necessary.

Anthology series are not very popular; *Twilight Zone*, the most successful, was simplistic and audiences were willing to accept that in the 1950s and 1960s, but they want more now. Mark said he would be happy if the level of writing in television matched the level of writing in the stories of the 1950s and 1960s.

Hollywood is not big on adapting novels or stories--Hollywood writers are young and don't read, according to Snodgrass, and besides, if they adapted a story, they'd have to pay the author. (With *Star Trek* episodes now costing \$1.4 million--of which the screenwriter gets \$20,000--this is considered important.) And if the writers don't read, the studio heads are even worse: "Studio heads are as dumb as a box of roaches," according to Snodgrass. And of course they have to steer clear of anything controversial: sex, religion, drugs--in fact, much of the sort of inquiry that makes science fiction interesting. Their idea of a topical show is *The Green Machine* (now called *Earthwatch*, I believe) starring Gil Gerard as the leader of a team of gung-ho environmentalists (described by Snodgrass as "the A-Team meets Greenpeace"). Given all this, Snodgrass is "stunned that [*Star Trek*] is doing as well as it is," and she describes it as feeble writing under great special effects.

Unfortunately, says Snodgrass, in Hollywood television shows are considered the filler between toilet paper commercials. Or, as Rod Serling once said, "The mass media is supported and sustained by commercial entities. And corn flakes and Shakespeare are simply not kissing cousins. Leonard Bernstein and living bras are incompatible. And you cannot sustain adult, probing, meaningful drama when the proceedings are interrupted every twelve minutes by a dozen dancing rabbits with toilet paper."

What about made-for-television movies and mini-series? Snodgrass says made-for-television movies are dying off, and ever since *War and Remembrance* mini-series are in even worse shape. Still, some of the best television science fiction are the British "limited series": *AN Englishman's Castle*, *The Day of the Triffids* (not to be confused with the Howard Keel movie). (I found myself wondering what German fans think of alternate histories in which Germany won World War II, but couldn't think of a good way to ask.)

Television series from other countries mentioned or discussed included *Star Cops* (Great Britain) and *Jupiter Moon* (a sort of soap opera in space from West Germany, I think). There was also a seven-part series from West Germany called *Orion* which Loock says was run in the United States, a black-and-white series which was made before *Star Trek* (the original series). It spawned many books and there is a film based on it in pre-production. But most of the discussion seemed to go back to the United States, and seemed perhaps more on the state of United States television series than on science fiction series internationally. There was one fan who wanted to get the name of an old Norwegian television series from a plot description; he was unsuccessful. Someone else mentioned a Czechoslovakian series with time travel. And there was also mention of the series *Timeline* co-produced by four different countries (Great Britain, Spain, Turkey, and somewhere else) which runs about four times a year on PBS and consists of telling

about historical events using modern television reporting techniques, but as if it were when the events were happening ("So tell me, Mr. Khan, when did you decide to invade Europe?"), and including commercials for new inventions of the time.

The questions about *Star Trek* brought forth the information that *Star Trek: The Next Generation* will be available only on video in Europe for three years before it is released to European television.

The new "Sci-Fi Channel" on cable in the United States was discussed. However, lack of audience and general problems in the cable industry may kill it off. Other cable networks occasionally make forays into science fiction. Arts & Entertainment showed *The Day of the Triffids*. USA Network does an occasional movie. The Fox Network shows *Alien Nation* and *Werewolf*.

The absence of any Japanese panel members seemed incomprehensible.

Masquerade

Sunday, 8 PM

The only word for this is "pathetic." (Well, in a pinch "pitiful" will do.) They had only thirty entries, of which twenty were cobbled together since 9 AM (when they discovered they had only eleven *real* entries). There were no Masters Class entries, and only one or two Journeyman Class. And the Novice Class really were.

How bad was it? Well, no one clapped for most of the costumes, which is extremely unusual. It was also true that the less costume, the more clapping, but this is normal. (There was also a belly dancer. I thought these went out in the early 1980s.) There was a heavy use of classical music. Many of the "costumes" were skits more than costumes, and overly long. (One, based on Moorcock, seemed to go on forever, but was probably only(!) ten minutes.) Mark, in his cynicism, described this heavy use of skits, dialogue, narration, and music as "costuming for the visually impaired." One hopes future Worldcons will return to the concept of a time limit.

There was also a heavy reliance on dry ice for special effects.

There were a couple of reasonable entries: The Headless Mage, The Queen of Air and Darkness, and Fire & Water.

The "half-time" entertainment while the judges voted was pretty lame also, consisting of people in clear plastic suits with lots of tubing doing modern dance and posing. This was promoted as being very racy and exciting, with warnings to those with pacemakers--clearly a case of false advertising. (At the Gripe Session someone asked what the cost of this show was; it was 2500 Dfl., or about \$1500--not as outrageous as many people feared.) When this was done, the judges still hadn't decided (given the dearth of candidates even worthy of consideration, they should have been done much faster), so we left for the parties.

The parties started late and were over-heated. However, we saw someone at one of them wearing a T-shirt of a woman in high heels spanking another woman in high heels which we all agreed was far more interesting than anything in the masquerade or the half-time show.

Panel: Will There Ever Be Another Golden Age?

Monday, 10 AM

Charles N. Brown (mod) (USA), Kathryn Cramer (USA), ? Donovan (Great Britain),

Malcolm Edwards (Great Britain), David Hartwell (USA)

This panel was scheduled to be in the large auditorium, but was moved. When we finally found the room, Brown and Donovan had already established that "the Golden Age is 12" and proceeded to more serious questions. For one thing, there is no longer a sense of continuity. Even fans starting in the 1960s had to read the good stuff from the 1940s and 1950s to be able to talk about science fiction to other fans; now that link is lost, with teenagers now reading schlock fantasy instead of Heinlein or Clarke. (Interestingly, Brown made use of the phrase "Fans are slans" at one point, and the audience understood, indicating that there remains *some* continuity, although the audience was by no means representative of the latest generation of science fiction and fantasy readers.) Brown and Donovan see the current upswing in comics ("graphic novels") as a temporary phenomenon.

As was pointed out from the audience (me?), there was plenty of schlock in the "Golden Age," but it gets forgotten and the good stuff elevated in people's memories.

What is a "Golden Age"? Brown described it as a large group with shared viewpoints, and gives the classic example of 1939 through 1945. He also claims that today publishers get 24% of their income from science fiction--you'd think they would have a "shared viewpoint" and I suppose they do, but it tends to be "Let's make money!"

Just as Brown and Donovan had decided that there would not be another Golden Age, Cramer, Edwards, and Hartwell arrived, with another large audience segment. They had arrived late, gone to the auditorium, acquired another late arrivals, and started the panel there. When someone finally told them where the official room was, they all moved. But their panel had decided that every decade is a Golden Age!

How to resolve these two very disparate views? Well, one clue was that Edwards would periodically chime in with, "Yes, but what about the rest of the world?" (Interesting that in the Netherlands, the phrase "the rest of the world" was still meaning "everything but the United States and maybe Canada.") Looking at the rest of the world, the panelists concluded that while the 1940s and early 1950s was the United States's "Golden Age," the "New Wave" period in Great Britain was its Golden Age. The 1950s and the early 1960s was the French Golden Age ("Époque d'Or"?). The 1960s and early 1970s (with the Strugatskys et al) were the Soviet Golden Age. And there was the prediction that the 1990s would be the Eastern European Golden Age. How can English-speaking fans find out about these "Golden Ages"? Well, maybe some publisher could come out with a magazine of translations of science fiction from the rest of the world. Surely there is enough interest to support a small press publication.

Brown claimed what made a Golden Age was ideas that excite the reader, not great writing, which puts him a bit at odds with the selection of the "New Wave" era in Great Britain as the Golden Age there. Hartwell, on the other hand, wants good writing, but finds the average science fiction novel is better than the average mainstream novel in any case. He does, however, want more science fiction and less fantasy.

Given that most other countries have no science fiction magazines to "practice in," the panelists (at least the United States panelists) felt that the United States had an edge in this regard, and observed that Golden Ages are often defined by the magazines as much

as by the books. Gardner Dozois (from the audience) offered the thought that "magazines are the place to be bad--or at least half-baked." Even in the United States, though, horror is found only in small press magazines (with an occasional entry in *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*, I should note).

Echoing the earlier sentiments regarding young fans, Hartwell claimed this was the Golden Age of gaming.

In spite of all this, the panelists listed some works that they thought would be remembered from this age:

- | Baxter, Stephen--*Raft*
- | Bear, Greg--"Heads"
- | Bear, Greg--*Blood Music*
- | Bear, Greg--*Queen of Angels*
- | Bisson, Terry--*Voyage to the Red Planet*
- | Brin, David--*Earth*
- | Haldeman, Joe--*Buying Time* (Brown)
- | Simmons, Dan--*Hyperion* (Donovan)
- | Sladek, John--"Stop Evolution in Its Tracks" (Cramer)
- | Sterling, Bruce--*Schismatrix* (Hartwell)
- | Tepper, Sheri S.--*Raising the Stones* (Edwards)
- | Womack, Jack--*Terraplane* (Hartwell)

#### Panel: This Book Should Have Been Nominated

Monday, 11:30 AM

Charles N. Brown (mod) (USA), Evelyn Leeper (USA), Pascal Thomas (France)

Brown started out by saying that he was recently asked to list the "Ten Most Influential Novels of the Past Fifty Years" and three science fiction books that he included were George Orwell's *1984*, Olaf Stapledon's *Star Maker*, and Joe Haldeman's *Buying Time*, the last published in 1989 and completely overlooked for the Hugos.

The usual problems of distribution and publicity were discussed. This is especially a problem in the shorter fiction categories. For example, Thom Nichols's novella "Walking Water" was published with another novella in a single volume by a small press, and was not at all publicized in the general science fiction community. New programs to publish novellas as books may help, though the primary reason for these programs is the ever-increasing cost of books. As people balk at paying \$25 for the latest novel by author X, they may be willing to pay \$10 (or am I being optimistic in this pricing?) for a novella, especially if the book *looks* as thick as a novel.

As far as the Hugo nominees goes, one problem is that even after they're nominated people can't find them. Some enterprising book dealer ought to take an ad in the Progress Report which includes the Hugo ballot offering the novels, collections, anthologies, and even magazines that contain the nominees via mail-order. This would be especially useful for overseas fans.

Generally from these panels, however, what develops is a list, so here it is (including who recommended it, if I remembered): .DL

- | Benford, Gregory--*Tides of Light* (Brown)
- | Bova, Ben--*Cyberbooks*
- | Butler, Octavia E.--*Imago* (Brown)

- | Brussard, Jacques--*Les Eaux de Feu*
- | Cherryh, C. J.--*Rimrunners* (Brown)
- | Clarke, Arthur C. and Lee, Gentry--*Rama II* (Brown)
- | Goldstein, Lisa--*Tourists* (Thomas)
- | Haldeman, Joe--*Buying Time* (Brown)
- | Kandel, Michael--*Strange Invasion* (Leeper)
- | Murphy, Pat--*The City, Not Long After* (Leeper)
- | Nichols, Thom--"Walking Water" (Leeper)
- | Powers, Tim--*The Stress of Her Regard* (Thomas)
- | Simmons, Dan--*Carrion Comfort*
- | Simmons, Dan--*Phases of Gravity* (Leeper)
- | Williams, Walter Jon--*Angel Station*
- | Wilson, Robert Charles--*Gypsies* (Leeper) .LE

In the area of Dramatic Presentation, the following were mentioned:

- | *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure*
- | "The Measure of a Man"
- | *Miracle Mile*

### Gripe Session

Monday, 12:30 PM

Some of the gripes brought up have been mentioned already. Other complaints included the lack of a restaurant map, no vegetarian food available in the Congress Centre, not enough signs (or signs that weren't visible enough) directing people to hard-to-find rooms, poor ventilation, and too much cigarette smoke (smoking by panelists is a problem that is especially difficult to control).

The badges generated lots of complaints. Some people wanted the city as well as the country listed. Others complained that some of the Dutch badges said "Holland" and some said "The Netherlands." One woman complained because her legal last name was on the badge and she didn't want to reveal it (for professional reasons). The latter seems somewhat trivial--just stick something over the last name. Boskone and other conventions, in fact, insist on members' real names appearing on the badges because they found that many people took advantage of the anonymity of fannish names to act obnoxiously (not to say that was what this woman wanted to do, certainly). One fan from Northern Ireland complained that her badge said "United Kingdom" but the United Kingdom didn't include Northern Ireland. Another fan who was listed as "Ireland" said she lived in Ireland but was a United States citizen and the badges should reflect citizenship, not place of residence. (This, in my opinion, is getting into the truly picky, and people who are overly concerned about this sort of thing should be willing to stick a label over the offending part of the badge or ask if they can have a new badge prepared--which they could have done.)

Compliments went to the Committee for having a multilingual Operations staff and making an effort to ensure that there was always someone who spoke each of the major languages on duty at any time. Regarding the language issue, Bill Ritch said that he heard more English spoken at this convention than in his home town of Miami. (On the minus side, several fans complained that the name "Gripe Session" was an Americanism and should have been described better in the schedule. Of course, these people were here, so they must have figured it out somehow!) People also liked the staggered schedule (though I found it annoying, trying to decide whether to catch only half of an interesting panel or not).

**I notice they had this in a fairly large hall!**

## **Closing Ceremonies**

**Monday, 2 PM**

The Closing Ceremonies were the usual sort of thing, with the Chicon V committee putting on a little skit to represent their taking over the Worldcon baton. Everything really did shut down at 3 PM as announced, leaving us with lots of time to go back to the boardwalk in Scheveningen, after a last quick rush through the "Fan Market" to pick up some badges from Eastern European conventions that fans from that area were selling to raise money to attend this convention, and to give an extra copy of *Locus* that I had somehow acquired to a Soviet fan who probably has less chance to get one. We also got some Hungarian science fiction that was being given out by a Hungarian fan, and I got the editor of the Roumanian science fiction anthology I had bought to autograph it. There may have been "Dead Dog" parties, but not as many as would have been as a North American Worldcon. Then again, the whole party situation was different, with the hotel and Congress Centre lock on corkage limiting the parties to well-to-do groups.

## **Miscellaneous**

The elevators were not a major issue, as the convention was limited to three floors of the Congress Centre. However, right before the convention, one elevator was taken out of service, rendering an entire set of rooms inaccessible to people in wheelchairs. Luckily, only one panel had been scheduled for these rooms; unluckily, that was the panel on handicapped access at conventions!

As usual, I'll list the Worldcons I've attended and rank them, best to worst (the middle cluster 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
- | ConFiction (though it's getting hard to rank them all)
- | 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 (extremely disorganized)
- | Constellation (they over-extended themselves)

As I said before, San Francisco won the bid for 1993. Larry Niven and Alicia Austin are the Pro Guests of Honor, Tom Digby and Wombat (jan howard finder) are the Fan Guests of Honor, and Guy Gavriel Kay is the Toastmaster. Mark Twain is the Dead Guest of Honor. I note that Progress Report 0 lists the dates as Friday, September 3, 1993 through Monday, September 6, 1993; if this is true, it will be the shortest Worldcon in recent history--most start on Thursday. Next year's contest is a two-way race for 1993: Winnipeag and Louisville (originally Nashville).



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