

of hide-and-seek by characters struggling with the decisions that may destroy an entire race. In the past month, I've read several really excellent SF novels (F_i_r_e_o_n_t_h_e_D_e_e_p [Vinge], A_n_v_i_l_o_f_S_t_a_r_s, A_r_i_s_t_o_i [Williams], and S_t_e_e_l_B_e_a_c_h [Varley]), any of which is better than any of last year's Hugo nominees. A_n_v_i_l_o_f_S_t_a_r_s is

THE MT VOID

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not the best, but it is a worthy contender. [-dls]

3. I do a lot of traveling so you'd think I would be used to flying by now. No way! I know as a kid I loved flying. Like most kids I collected pictures of planes; I fooled around with paper airplanes and balsawood planes; I built models of planes. We were born into a world of three-dimensions; biology gave us a means to get around pretty well in two of them and frustratingly gave us almost nothing to make use of the third. So being a contrary kid, I was fascinated in moving in all three dimensions. I suppose if I was told I could go in any direction but north I might have collected pictures of igloos.

But I have to say that now that flying is an industry, the airlines have done a great job of making it about as pleasant as going to the dentist. I can tell you I didn't collect pictures of molars and dental picks.

The first thing wrong with flying is the fare structure. The reason it is so screwed up is that the fares are not even determined by full-time professionals. Most of the people setting up the fares are only moonlighting from their real careers, which is dealing Three-Card Monte on the streets of Manhattan. Wherever you fly you have paid too much. You could have flown cheaper if you had gone by way of someplace like Grand Banks, Alaska. But take my word for it, you do n_o_t want to make a connecting flight. A connecting flight is always a race to see if the next flight will be delayed enough. As a rule of thumb, "connecting flights don't." However, if you want to find connecting flights, you can thumb through the handy-dandy airline guide you probably have at your local library. It's a great way to learn all the official abbreviations describing your flight. Incidentally, if you read one of these things "CLW" is preferable to "CLL." Crash landing on water is safer.

I am sitting here writing this on an hour-long flight that is already more than an hour long, so I strongly suspect I will have more to say on this subject in an upcoming issue.

4. My MagiCon convention report starts in this issue and continues for the next three issues as well. [-ecl]

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...mtgzy!leeper

The direct use of physical force is so poor a solution to the problem of limited resources that it is commonly employed only by small children and great nations.
-- David Friedman

THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS
A film review by Mark R. Leeper
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Capsule review: Michael Mann's L_a_s_t_o_f_t_h_e
M_o_h_i_c_a_n_s is finally available and while James Fenimore Cooper might cavil, this is still a film that teaches a lot about a little-dramatized chapter of history. In some ways it is more intriguing in concept than the source novel. Technical credits are good across the board including remarkable stylistic restraint coming from Mann. Rating: high +2 (-4 to +4).

I would say that I am fairly interested in history in general and in military history in particular. But not so much the War of the Roses. That war just does not strike my imagination. Why not? I think I cannot picture the time. I cannot picture how the war was fought or how people lived. Mostly, I cannot remember off-hand seeing a good historical film set in the War of the Roses. So it is

all just history. This morning the same was true of the French and Indian War. I have even recently read James Fenimore Cooper's L_a_s_t_o_f_t_h_e_M_o_h_i_c_a_n_s, but I just could not picture exactly what the weapons looked like or the style of fighting. But right now I have strong visual images of the French and Indian War. I can picture the cannons and how they were aimed. I am amazed at how remarkably quiet skirmishes in the forests were. Most of my impressions of the French and Indian War I got today. So T_h_e_L_a_s_t_o_f_t_h_e_M_o_h_i_c_a_n_s could be a terrible adaptation of the Cooper novel--and in some senses it really is--and I would still highly recommend the film. And I do.

Cooper's novel makes strange reading today. It has the action and adventure of a Republic serial told in the style of prose fit for an Oxford economic treatise. You want to read fast to find out what happens next, but if you do not struggle you will miss what does happen. Mark Twain wrote a famous essay on how unreadable Cooper is. And there is many times too much plot in the novel to tell the story accurately in a film. Michael Mann (who also directed) and Christopher Crowe wrote a screenplay too close to say it was only inspired by the novel, but not close enough to call an adaptation.

The year is 1757 in what is now upper New York state. The British and the French are fighting for the continent and each is making alliances with local Indians tribes. The British send a small party, led by Major Duncan Heyward (played by Steven Waddington) to take Cora and Alice Munro (played by Madeleine Stowe and Jodhi May) to the fort commanded by their father. As a guide,

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they send the Mohawk Magua (played by Wes Studi). But Magua is not a Mohawk; he is a hostile Huron who is acting as a French agent. He leads the party into an ambush only to have his plot dashed when the Major, Cora, and Alice are rescued by Hawkeye, Chingachgook, and Uncas (played by Daniel Day-Lewis, Russell Means, and Eric Schweig, respectively). In spite of himself, Hawkeye is attracted to Cora. So is the Major and so starts a conflict totally absent from the novel. A lot of the rest of this film is about people rushing someplace or other through dangerous territory, but under the protection of the valiant Hawkeye and his adoptive father and

brother, Chingachgook and Uncas. The action is good; the love triangle is not.

One of my complaints about the often-shown trailer is that we do not see the title character. In fact, in the film the action pulls away from Chingachgook and we do not see much of the character. It is a combination of a casting coup and an endorsement of the script to have Russell Means in the role. This is Means's first film, but it is far from the first time that Means has been before the American public. Means has been a creative activist for Indian rights who has had a consistent policy of attacking symbols rather than people in demonstrations. In 1970 he captured the Mayflower II on Thanksgiving. The following year he occupied Mount Rushmore. In 1973 he occupied the site of the Wounded Knee massacre of Indians by United States soldiers. He is the co-founder of the American Indian Movement (AIM). Means castigated recent films such as D_a_n_c_e_s_w_i_t_h_W_o_l_v_e_s, which he found full of cliches and which had all the Indians speaking the feminine language that only women spoke. He has nicknamed T_h_u_n_d_e_r_h_e_a_r_t "South Dakota Burning" for making good guys out of the FBI. To have Means consent to appear in the film and to endorse the script is quite impressive.

When I think of films that Michael Mann has directed I think of flashy but not very intelligent style. I think of T_h_e_K_e_e_p and M_a_n_h_u_n_t_e_r. (I have never seen an episode of his popular television series M_i_a_m_i_V_i_c_e.) Perhaps his fans will be disappointed but there are no strange camera angles and no unnatural use of color. Many of his scenes come off surprisingly undramatic but also very credible. In one scene there is an ambush of a party of British trooping through a clearing. It could have been played for great dramatic impact. Instead it appears as a sudden commotion that could well have just been confusing for some of the victims, at least at first. The scene is very believable and realistic, if less dramatic than it could be. And that shows a real improvement in Mann's style. This film is amazingly better than anything else I remember seeing from Mann. While these are not the most beautiful landscapes in the world, cinematographer Dante Spinotti plays the natural beauty for as much as is possible. Trevor Jones and Randy Edelman have composed a remarkably good score.

For those familiar with the novel, there are a large number of variations, some very obviously improvements. Cooper had Hawkeye totally loyal to unquestionably good British. In this version, the British appear as bad or worse than the French. They are ready to betray the colonists for their own ends. Hawkeye, very reasonably, does not trust the British in the film and will have more reason not to like them in the course of the story. Heyward and Hawkeye are good friends in the book. But the film has Heyward attracted to Cora instead of to Alice and Hawkeye also loves Cora. In the book you have to read between the lines to see a relationship between Hawkeye and Cora. Certainly Cooper never had the close personal conversations between Hawkeye and Cora. They never talk in the book about how they feel about anything, much less about each other. Also, Magua is very much a one-dimensional character to Cooper and is much more interesting in the film.

So in spite of the fact that Michael Mann's film does not work well as an adaptation of the novel, it is a very good film to watch and from which to learn a little history. It lacks some of the dramatic and historic sweep of this summer's F_a_r_a_n_d_A_w_a_y, but it may be the better historical film. I would rate T_h_e_L_a_s_t_o_f_t_h_e_M_o_h_i_c_a_n_s a high +2 on the -4 to +4 scale.

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MagiCon 1992
(Part 1 of 4)
Con report by Evelyn C. Leeper
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[What you hold in your hands--or on your screen--is an example of manic con report writing. I foolishly took a vacation for a few days after the con, and will be leaving on another in three and a half weeks, so I will do my best to get this done in between. Please pardon any mistakes that slip through.]

MagiCon, the 1992 World Science Fiction Convention, and the 50th World Science Fiction Convention, was held September 3 through September 7 in Orlando, Florida. The attendance was quoted as 5903, as of 2 PM Sunday. There were a fair number of Europeans (Orlando is more accessible than Chicago was last year), including the now usual contingent of CIS fans selling Soviet memorabilia to help finance their trip. I think their prices have gone up though. :-)

We arrived in Orlando Thursday afternoon after a somewhat hectic flight (we left Newark Airport seventy-five minutes late and made our Raleigh connection only because American Airlines held the connecting flights, bless them. So I've now been in North Carolina for about five minutes). We checked into the Peabody only to discover that Dave and Kate were unable to check in because their names were not listed for the room. I blame the Orange County Convention Bureau--I had listed all the names, and I suspect they're

the ones who dropped the names. But we got this straightened out, and they had a car to leave their luggage in until we arrived.

Facilities

The convention facilities were very good. The convention center had patio seating in the center, with a concession stand for those who wanted food or drink. The exhibit hall, message board, etc. were right next to this, and the dealers room and art show were at the back of this hall. The meeting rooms were also close by. The only inconvenient items were those scheduled in the Clarion, which was about a block away. The distance was not great, but there was no good path between the two, and the rooms in the Clarion were not well marked (and there was no map of the Clarion in the Pocket Program). The Con Suite was in the Peabody and reportedly not much used.

The restaurant situation, on the other hand, left a lot to be desired. Without a car, there were only about eight choices, most fast-food-type places. There was a Denny's for breakfast, and the hotel coffee shop in the Peabody was not really too over-priced. If you had a car, there were several more possibilities.

As with last year, I would complain that a ballroom was used for the masquerade and the Hugo ceremony rather than a theater-type room (which provides much better visibility). There was no closed-circuit broadcast, and the line for the masquerade was quite long. (I didn't see the Hugo line, and we eventually left the masquerade line and used our press ribbons to get forward seating. Writing these con reports is good for something, after all. :-))

Registration and All That Stuff

Registration was fast, although I had to go to three different places (four if you count getting press ribbons): the main registration, program participants' registration right next to it, and the Green Room for Hugo nominees' registration. (Note that I'm not complaining about the latter, so don't feel obliged to stop nominating me to save me from all that.)

There were reportedly nineteen different ribbons for the various types of "special" people (including one that said "This Completes The Set!"), all in different colors (unlike last year, when staff and program participants both had red ribbons, for example). The Hugo nominee rocket pins were back to the high quality of two years ago; last year's were bigger but not as well-executed. Badges were available with either clips or pins. As is universal, the newsletters were late, but not as late as last year's (though if anyone has number 8 or the hoax newsletter, I would love a copy--we had to leave before those arrived). There were several convenient drop-off points.

There were lots of flyers on the freebie tables, and free issues of A_n_a_l_o_g and A_s_i_m_o_v'_s were being handed out. The usual movie buttons were also there, with enough S_n_e_a_k_e_r_s buttons for everyone to get two or three (it seemed), but not as many D_r_a_c_u_l_a buttons as there were takers. C_a_n_d_y_m_a_n buttons were mirrored, but thankfully these were plastic rather than glass, or there could have been problems with broken buttons and sharp edges. MagiCon handled the button handouts themselves, putting out portions of them in lavender buckets every free hours. This was good for two reasons: it helped eliminate the mess when people just dump the buttons on the tables, and it gave everyone a chance to get some (because they weren't all gone after the first day or so).

Program Books

The Pocket Program once again had an index by participant. However, since I had pulled a copy off the Net before the convention (and in fact had printed up a customized program for me of what I wanted to see, and gave a copy to Mark so he could find me), I didn't really use the Pocket Program, or even carry it around. For the third year in a row, the descriptions of the various panels were not in the Pocket Program, though the trend to descriptive rather

than cutesy titles continues--for which I am thankful. There was also a time grid for the program items and the schedule closely resembled the Pocket Program's schedule, with only minor panelist changes after it went to press.

As I noted before, the maps could have been more complete.

The Souvenir Book was truly great! In addition to all the usual stuff (Hugo nominee list, WSFS Constitution, etc.), there were biographies of all the guests of honor, eight articles, six short stories, and a novelette. In his editorial Jon Gustafson talked about how he rarely found anything in the Souvenir Book (a.k.a. the Program book, though the program is never printed in there any more) worth reading or keeping and wanted to do something different. Well, he did. Chicon V came close, in having an anthology F_a_n_t_a_s_t_i_c C_h_i_c_a_g_o published in conjunction with the Souvenir Book, but it cost extra and this did not. I just hope people actually looked at the thing instead of having given up long ago. (I must admit I didn't open it till I got home.) Again, an excellent job, and a tradition to keep up for future Souvenir Books!

Green Room

The Green Room was well laid out, with coffee available most of the day and sodas in the afternoon after the coffee ran out. It was well-staffed, with schedules posted, and on the whole better organized than last year's. There was some confusion about whether name cards would be in the Green Room or Program Ops (next door), but this was truly minor. My major complaint would be with the participants, who showed a distressing tendency n_o_t to show up before the panels in the Green Room as requested, making any pre-planning of introductions, topics, etc., impossible.

The Green Room also gave me an opportunity to get travel advice on the Southwest from Fred Lerner, and to have Jerry Pournelle look at me two or three times, finally peer at my badge, and say, "You're not Connie Willis. I thought you were, and that you were cutting me for some reason." I suppose I look a little bit like her; we have the same style glasses and similar haircuts. (I told Willis this story; she found it amusing, and signed the book I was having her autograph as "Your clone, Connie Willis.")

Dealers Room

As last year, the Dealers Room (a.k.a., the Hucksters Room) was very large, with a lot of books, but also a lot of non-books. I actually found a couple of books I had almost given up hope on. There may have been an index--I didn't notice. The need for wheelchair accessibility seems to indicate that the cramped aisles of Worldcons gone by are indeed a thing of the past.

Art Show

The amount of humorous amateur art seemed to be lower this year, and there was some very high-quality stuff in the regular show and in the Vincent DiFate 50-year speculative art retrospective, which consisted of the works of dozens of artists from DiFate's collection. The spaciousness of the Dealers Room was also evident here. I have no idea how the economics worked out, since everything I like has long since moved out of my price range. I did buy three Tom Kidd prints in the dealers room though. (A friend did say that the purchase procedure was the most efficient she had seen.)

Programming

The Pocket Program lists 420 program items, while Chicon V had 520 program items, ConFiction 337, and Noreascon 3 833 (all not counting films or autograph sessions). There were also 73 videos, 36 films, 37 autograph sessions, and 42 readings. Since the electronic schedule did not break the panels down by type, I will not give a percentage breakdown as I did last year. In spite of the lower total number of items, there were more panels and other events at this convention of interest to me than at the previous conventions. In fact, I went with almost all my time scheduled between 10 AM and 6 PM every day except for six hours over the whole weekend! Congratulations to Priscilla Olson and staff for a job well done!

Given that it's impossible to see everything at a Worldcon, I will cover just the programming I attended. I would note, however, that one friend of mine highly commended the science track (in particular, the NASA track, and another thought the art track was excellent).

Panel: W W W We e e el l l ll l l l R R R Re e e ea a a ad d d d
F F F Fa a a an n n n: : : B B B Bo o o oo o o ok k k ks s s s

Thursday, 3 PM

Gregory Bennett, Janice M. Eisen (moderator), Tim Illingworth

This started with some people thinking that the idea was to name books that would help the reader understand fans, so F_a_l_l_e_n
A_n_g_e_l_s by Larry Niven, Jerry Pournelle, and Michael Flynn was mentioned. (Why no one listed Sharyn McCrumb's B_i_m_b_o_s_o_f_t_h_e
D_e_a_t_h
S_u_n and Z_o_m_b_i_e_s_o_f_t_h_e_G_e_n_e_P_o_o_l I don't know.) But it rapidly got into a listing of what a fan should read to be considered well-read

and knowledgeable in the field.

This consisted of just about every author you can name.

Seriously, a panel that gives people _ h _ u _ n _ d _ r _ e _ d _ s of books to read is too intimidating. There were some useful comments. The panelists recommended _ L _ o _ c _ u _ s for current events and admitted that the field was getting too broad for anyone to cover completely. Eisen

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said that the well-read fan should never admit to having read anything media-related, with the possible exception of John

M. Ford's _ H _ o _ w _ M _ u _ c _ h _ f _ o _ r _ J _ u _ s _ t _ t _ h _ e _
_ P _ l _ a _ n _ e _ t?

In anthologies, panelists recommended the Dozois "Year's Best"

anthologies for staying current, and the _ O _ r _ b _ i _ t, _ U _ n _ i _ v _ e _ r _ s _ e, and

_ D _ a _ n _ g _ e _ r _ o _ u _ s _ V _ i _ s _ i _ o _ n _ s anthologies for what the field was like in
the

1960s and 1970s (though they agreed that _ D _ a _ n _ g _ e _ r _ o _ u _ s _ V _ i _ s _ i _ o _ n _ s
was not

so dangerous any more). Also suggested were the _ S _ c _ i _ e _ n _ c _ e _ F _ i _ c _ t _ i _ o _ n
_ H _ a _ l _ l _ o _ f _ F _ a _ m _ e anthologies, and the various anthologies of Hugo and
Nebula award winners. For that matter, reading the list of Hugo-
and Nebula-award-winning novels and short fiction would not be a bad
basis to start your project on.

It was pointed out that many of the older works are coming back into print in a variety of "rediscovery" series. I suggested the Terry Carr Ace Science Fiction Special series (the first one), and the Groff Conklin and Judith Merrill anthologies, as other resources.

Someone in the audience asked for recommendations on current "hard s-f space opera"; the panelists suggested C. J. Cherryh, Charles Sheffield, and Lois McMaster Bujold. Someone else noted that it was interesting that two of the three leaders in this field were women.

Ironically, H. G. Wells and Jules Verne were not mentioned until the very end, and even then the panelists seemed to think that today's readers would find them unreadable. (Then again, this was

the same convention that had a panel on Edgar Rice Burroughs as a "neglected author," so maybe the readership is going downhill.)

Panel: B B B Bo o o oo o o ok k k ks s s st t t to o o or r r re e e e
a a a as s s s
S S S Su u u up p p pe e e er r r rm m m ma a a ar r r rk k k ke e e et t t t -
- - - -G G G Gr r r ro o o ow w w wt t t th h h ho o o of f f f
M M M Me e e eg g g ga a a - - -
B B B Bo o o oo o o ok k k ks s s st t t to o o or r r re e e es s s s

Thursday, 5 PM

Glen Cook, Scott Edelman (moderator), Michelle M. Sagara, Brian Thomsen

First, the definitions: a mega-bookstore (a.k.a. "superstore") is one that has more than 10,000 square feet of floor space. As a comparison, the specialty book store Sagara owned had about 1200 square feet. And the history: at some point, the chains realized that they had to expand their selection or lose business. First they expanded into non-books (videotapes, computer software, etc.), but recently they have discovered that people come into book stores to buy books (what a concept!) and have sharply cut back on the other items. (It should be noted that some stores, such as Barnes & Noble, have always realized they needed a broad selection. The Barnes & Noble store in downtown Manhattan would have qualified as a mega-bookstore before the term was even invented.) Some companies tried different focuses for different subsidiaries (e.g., Coles and the Book Store in Canada are owned by the same company, but aimed at different markets). Thomsen thought that while this was true, even a superstore can't offer everything--they are constrained by what is

in print, available from distributors, etc.

The issue is also compounded by the customer base. A specialty store (such as the Science Fiction Shop in New York) needs a certain population density to survive. A mega-bookstore, by appealing to readers in all categories, can be successful in less densely populated areas. I could see a mega-bookstore surviving in Rapid City ND where a specialty science fiction shop might have problems.

Unfortunately, the panel rapidly drifted off-topic onto general issues in the publishing and book-selling industry. The returns

policy, beaten to death for years now, was given a few more whacks. Scott compared the practice of having stores return just the covers of unsold books for credit ("stripping") to the auto manufacturers telling the dealers, "If you don't sell that car, send us the ashtray and a note saying you destroyed the rest." Thomsen said that one reason he felt that TSR has a sell-through rate of 80% (compared with an industry average of 50%) is that it doesn't allow stripping--dealers must return the entire book. This gives them an extra incentive to gauge better how many to order, or to keep the books on the shelf longer before returning them. The "downward spiral" phenomenon that comes out of this was also cited: if a chain orders 60,000 of author A's first book and sells 40,000, then they will probably order only 40,000 of A's second book and maybe sell 30,000 of those, and so on.

The discount policy also came under fire. While Random House offers better discounts to customers with lower return rates, many companies offer better discounts to chains than to independent booksellers.

Piers Anthony came under fire (through some long train of discussion I can't reproduce). Someone claimed that Anthony's problem was that he was writing what sells this month (i.e., writing to follow trends). Sagara said that Anthony was not writing what sells this month, to which Cook added, "His [Anthony's] problem is he's writing too much of what he sold last month."

There was some further discussion of remaindered books, but nothing I noted down, and clearly the panel had drifted well off topic. As to the question raised by the topic, Sagara (who owned a specialty shop) seemed to think the megastores were not a threat to its existence, and Glen currently sells only at conventions, so until Barnes & Noble buys a booth in the dealers room, he's not worried.

(Though the superstores are thought of as run by chains, the United States's largest bookstore is an independent bookstore, the Tattered Cover in Denver, which has 42,000 square feet.)

V V V VI I I IP P P Ps s s s
M M M Me e e ee e e et t t t t t th h h he e e e

Thursday, 8:30 PM

Mike Resnick (Master of Ceremonies)

As is often the case with these parties, it was too noisy actually to meet anyone successfully. The party was supposed to be held around the pool, which would have let the noise drift up and away, but was instead moved to the ballroom in the Clarion, where the noise could bounce off the walls and make the place even louder. Resnick did his best to read off the names of the VIPs as they were handed to him, but I suspect most people couldn't hear him and weren't paying attention. Plus the people being introduced weren't up there; they were wandering around the room. Resnick is a very good speaker and this was a real waste of his talent.

(Oh, as the VIPs came in, they were given a plastic lei. Somehow one of my friends got in without the greeters seeing him, and was complaining that everyone was getting "lei-ed" but him. So I dragged him back to the entrance and got him "lei-ed.")

W W W Wi i i il l l ll l l li i i is s s s
Autographing: C C C Co o o on n n nn n n ni i i ie e e e

Friday, 10 AM

_ _ A_ s_ i_ m_ o_ v' s_ S_ c_ i_ e_ n_ c_ e_ F_ i_ c_ t_ i_ o_ n
_ M_ a_ g_ a_ z_ i_ n_ e had various authors autographing at their booth as well as the authors doing regular autograph sessions, so I used this opportunity to get Connie Willis's autograph. I hadn't brought any books with me to be autographed (because of the fact we would be traveling around after the convention), but a friend had offered to bring back stuff in his van, so I picked up a couple of Willis's books that I didn't have yet: _ L_ i_ g_ h_ t_ R_ a_ i_ d (which she co-authored with Cynthia Felice) and a Pulphouse Short Story Paperback, "Daisy, in the Sun." Pulphouse Short Story Paperbacks are great for just this purpose--they are small, lightweight, inexpensive, and entirely suitable to ask to have autographed. I told her about Jerry Pournelle in the Green Room (see above) and we talked about her story "Even the Queen," which I predict will make the Hugo ballot next year (along with her novel _ D_ o_ o_ m_ s_ d_ a_ y_ B_ o_ o_ k).

Panel: H H H Ha a a av v v ve e e e W W W We e e e
E E E Ev v v ve e e er r r r
L L L Li i i is s s st t t te e e en n n ne e e ed d d d? ? ? ?
D D D Do o o oe e e es s s s

A A A Ad d d dm m m mo o o on n n ni i i it t t to o o or r r ry y y y
S S S SF F F FE E E Ev v v ve e e er r r rP P P Pa a a ay y y y
O O O Of f f ff f f f? ? ? ?

Friday, 11 AM

Roger MacBride Allen (moderator), Michael Kandel,
James Morrow, Richard Paul Russo

Allen (and, yes, it is "Allen" rather than "MacBride Allen") opened the panel by saying, "Let's talk admonitions." Russo said that in his writing he isn't so much trying to push a particular point of view as just to get people to think. Morrow, on the other hand, said that he does try to affect people's opinions, but doesn't think he reached enough people with W_ o_ r_ l_ d_ E_ n_ d_ s T_ h_ i_ s_ I_ s_ t_ h_ e_ W_ a_ y_ t_ h_ e to take credit for ending the Cold War. "However," he said, "sales

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have dropped off, so maybe we need to start another arms race, maybe with China."

Allen contended that "admonitory s-f has indeed saved the world, and nobody noticed," in that he believes the Cold War stayed cold because of all the post-holocaust fiction which was written. It is certainly true that such works as O_ n_ t_ h_ e_ B_ e_ a_ c_ h reached a wide enough audience that there is undoubtedly some truth in what he says. Kandel observed that the use of parables to get a message across was not exactly new. As for how closely fiction and reality match up, Allen observed, "One of the differences between fiction and life is that fiction makes sense."

The question of whether all this (the end of the Cold War, an interest in saving the environment, etc.) would have happened w_ i_ t_ h_ o_ u_ t admonitory science fiction was touched on, but of course there is no real way to tell.

At this point Allen asked the audience to list some books that changed their lives ("Testify!"). Everyone agreed that everything they read shaped their thoughts somehow, but books listed as effecting a major change included the Bible (of course), James Blish's T_ o_ r_ r_ e_ n_ t_ o_ f_ F_ a_ c_ e, Harry Harrison's M_ a_ k_ e R_ o_ o_ m! M_ a_ k_ e_ R_ o_ o_ m!, Robert Heinlein's P_ o_ d_ k_ a_ y_ n_ e_ o_ f_ M_ a_ r_ s, Joseph Heller's C_ a_ t_ c_ h_ 2_ 2, George Orwell's A_ n_ i_ m_ a_ l_ F_ a_ r_ m and 1_ 9_ 8_ 4, Ayn Rand's A_ t_ l_ a_ s S_ h_ r_ u_ g_ g_ e_ d, Philip Wylie's E_ n_ d_ o_ f_ t_ h_ e_ D_ r_ e_ a_ m, and Dr. Seuss's L_ o_ r_ a_ x.

Morrow cautioned the audience that a lot of these books are

negative (dystopias) and "it's too easy to be a nihilist." That's a terrible message to send the next generation, he said. A lot of things enter our folklore from books, and sometimes we aren't even aware of them. Fans have a folklore that says we are smart and mundanes are stupid, and believing this can cause a lot of problems.

(At the beginning of the panel, when everyone was introducing him or herself and talking about his or her latest books, someone on the panel--I don't think it was Morrow himself--described Morrow's book O_n_l_y_B_e_g_o_t_t_e_n_D_a_u_g_h_t_e_r as "the sequel to the New Testament, completing the trilogy." I guess he wasn't counting the Apocrypha. Oh, and by the way, in connection with a previous Usenet discussion, Morrow describes C_i_t_y_o_f_T_r_u_t_h as a dystopia and a nightmare city, so to whomever it was who said they thought he was saying in that book that the unvarnished truth was a positive thing, I offer this as fairly strong opposing evidence.)

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Panel: M M M Me e e ed d d di i i ia a a a S S S SF F F F
f f f fo o o or r r rt t t th h h he e e e
L L L Li i i it t t te e e er r r ra a a ar r r ry y y y F F F Fa a a an n n n
Friday, 12 noon

Gail Bennett, Evelyn C. Leeper (moderator), Jim Mann

We started by defining media science fiction to include film, television, radio, and the theater, and then proceeded to ignore totally the last two. Oh, well.

We also defined the "literary fan" as someone who is primarily a reader; a more precise definition than that could not be achieved. We also agreed that we did not want to have this turn into "media-fan bashing"--all too often this sort of discussion becomes the media fans versus the literary fans. One reason that media science

fiction is criticized by "literary fans" is that there is much less produced in the way of movies and television shows each year than in books, so when it comes time to list good works of the previous year (e.g., for the Hugo nominations), it is much easier to come up with five worthy books than five worthy movies, and any list of recommended works for a particular year will be book-heavy and movie-light.

I asked the panel to start with some general statements about what type of media science fiction the literary fan looks for, since I knew that soon enough it would devolve to a listing of movies and television shows. While I suggested that to be appealing to the literary fan, a piece had to have more than just special effects, someone pointed out that authors use visual effects also: for example, Homer's description of Achilles's shield. Still, a film such as D_e_a_t_h_B_e_c_o_m_e_s_H_e_r, which has nothing going for it e_x_c_e_p_t its visual effects, is unlikely to appeal to a fan looking for more literary qualities.

Eventually, of course, we ended up with a list of recommendations, including B_l_a_d_e_r_u_n_n_e_r, C_a_r_r_i_e, the HBO version of

C_a_s_t_a_D_e_a_d_l_y_S_p_e_l_l, the BBC version of D_a_y_o_f_t_h_e_T_r_i_f_f_i_d_s, T_h_e_D_u_n_w_i_c_h_H_o_r_r_o_r, the PBS version of F_o_o'l's_F_i_r_e, the BBC version of T_h_e_I_n_v_i_s_i_b_l_e_M_a_n, K_a_f_k_a, the PBS version of T_h_e_L_a_t_h_e_o_f_H_e_a_v_e_n, N_a_k_e_d_L_u_n_c_h, Peter Greenaway's P_r_o_s_p_e_r_o's_B_o_o_k_s, S_o_y_l_e_n_t_G_r_e_e_n, V_i_l_l_a_g_e_o_f_t_h_e_D_a_m_n_e_d, and various episodes of D_r._W_h_o, T_h_e_O_u_t_e_r_L_i_m_i_t_s, R_a_y_B_r_a_d_b_u_r_y, T_h_e_a_t_t_e_r, S_t_a_r_T_r_e_k, and T_w_i_l_i_g_h_t_Z_o_n_e. It

should be noted that most of what was mentioned were adaptations of written science fiction or fantasy, with the exception of many of the television shows. Someone suggested that one reason so many television shows and made-for-television movies showed up on this list was that television can have a more leisurely pace than films. I'm not sure I agree with this. If someone pays their \$7.50 in a theater, s/he are likely to stay for the whole film, but on television, if a show doesn't grab them in the first fifteen minutes or so, s/he will often just change the channel.

Autographing: P P P Pa a a at t t t
 C C C Ca a a ad d d di i i ig g g ga a a an n n n
 Friday, 1:30 PM

The autographing table was in one corner of the exhibit area, and conveniently located near the dealers room. Again, I hadn't brought any books with me to be autographed, but I picked up a couple of her books in the dealers room that I didn't have yet:

Mark L_e_t_t_e_r_s_f_r_o_m_H_o_m_e and a Pulphouse Short Story Paperback, "My Brother's Keeper." Cadigan found it a bit odd that I asked her to inscribe L_e_t_t_e_r_s_f_r_o_m_H_o_m_e, a book of feminist stories, to both and myself, but that's how we do things.

Panel: A A A Al l l lt t t te e e er r r m n n na a a at t t te e e e
 H H H Hi i i is s s st t t to o o or r r ry y y y
 S S S St t t to o o or r r ri i i ie e e es s s s
 Friday, 3 PM
 George Alec Effinger, Michael F. Flynn, Bruce Sterling,
 S. M. Stirling, Harry Turtledove (moderator)

Alternate histories are popular these days--this was a large room and it was packed. Then again, the title of this panel was so broad that it probably attracted anyone who had any interest in any alternate history.

In order to narrow down the topic a bit, the panel addressed in particular the characteristics of a good alternate history. H. G. Wells's principle was cited: you're allowed to make o_n_e fantastic assumption, and then everything has to follow from that. (No, I don't have a source to cite for that.) In other words, a good alternate history should be disciplined extrapolation, with everything proceeding from the one change. As someone said, there shouldn't be any "oh, by the way, I forgot to mention" (I think that Turtledove's "sim" stories violate this principle; they assume that Ramapithecus survived in the Americas and also that the Asians never crossed the land bridge across the Bering Strait.)

Writers should also keep in mind all the consequences of their change. Turtledove cited a particularly egregious example in this regard (he didn't name it, but it was Kirk Mitchell's P_r_o_c_u_r_a_t_o_r series in which Rome defeated the Germans a_n_d Jesus was not crucified): in spite of the German defeat, Constantine is still born and becomes emperor. Of course, Mitchell also violated Wells's principle by having two changes, though when Jesus not being crucified was mentioned, Effinger and Turtledove both said, "Jesus who?" reminding us that one man's alternate history change point is

another's reality. (Has anyone ever commented on the peculiarity of Turtledove, a Jew, writing about an alternate history in which Mohammed, the founder of Islam, instead becomes a Christian priest?)

It's also important for authors to realize that, as Heinlein said, "When it's time to railroad, you railroad." In other words, even those who subscribe to the "Great Man" theory of history need to accept that some trends or discoveries are inevitable. If James

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Watt hadn't perfected the steam engine when he did, someone else would have very soon after. If Columbus hadn't discovered America for the Europeans, any one of dozens of explorers sailing around at the time would have done so soon after. Now it's true that if a different country got to America first, things would have been different, but to write a story in which no one gets here misses the point. On the flip side, you can't have a technological innovation until the underlying technology is there, so having steam engines in ancient Rome, before the metallurgy was developed for them, won't work. (Of course, every rule has an exception: Gregory Benford's "Manassas, Again" seems to work as a story in spite of doing just this.)

Along these lines, writers should also avoid having over-long survival of ancient ideas. (Mitchell's books suffer in this regard as well; the form of the Roman Empire hasn't changed in 2000 years. This is highly unlikely, as it was undergoing change even in the era of Mitchell's change-point.) As Turtledove said later, "People screw up so that no states are permanently successful."

And a warning that I frequently ignore: don't dump all your research into the book. Long descriptions of every detail of life in some time period are more likely to bore than enthrall the reader. (My review of A l t e r n a t e K e n n e d y s is a prime example of this; I had all the family tree information, so I included it. But in my defense, at least I stuck it in an appendix.) Connected to this is the idea that your change-point should not be overly obscure. If it is, you have to find some way to explain it to the reader g r a c e f u l l y--and this is not easy.

The issue of utopian versus dystopian alternate histories was raised. I think this boils down to whether we are saying things could be better or things could be worse, and I suppose the relative percentages would tell us something about our state of mind. (Anyone out there want to do the research?)

But why write alternate histories at all? Well, for one thing, they let the author write about our world safely by letting him or her set it elsewhere. Authors can now write about Germany winning World War II and having fascism fall fifty years later, and readers can construct the parallel to our own world.

Mention of the fall of fascism (communism) led Effinger to ask idly, "Why is all this strange stuff happening?" Stirling and Turtledove explained that it was because in 1860, Lincoln was elected and later died in office; in 1880, Lincoln was elected and later died in office; in 1900, McKinley was elected and later died in office; in 1920, Harding was elected and later died in office; in 1940, Roosevelt was elected and later died in office; in 1960, Kennedy was elected and later died in office; but in 1980, Reagan was elected and shot, but did _ n _ o _ t die in office. Therefore, we are

now in a low probability track. Flynn also mentioned Renfrew's model which says that power drops off by distance, and therefore nothing as big as the Soviet bloc could hold together much longer than it did. Flynn also talked about Edward R. Dewey and Edwin F. Dakin's _ C _ y _ c _ l _ e _ s _ : _ t _ h _ e _ S _ c _ i _ e _ n _ c _ e _ o _ f _ P _ r _ e _ d _ i _ c _ t _ i _ o _ n, which in 1947 predicted the economic cycles that in fact occurred between 1947 and now. (By the way, Dewey and Dakin predict the current downturn will end in 2006; hang in there. The book is still in print, if you're interested.)

Each talked briefly about his own forays into alternate history. Stirling mentioned that he had always wanted to write about slave-driven computers in Rome. (I wonder if he's read Sean McMullen's "Souls in the Great Machine" in _ U _ n _ i _ v _ e _ r _ s _ e _ 2.) Turtledove said that his "Ready for the Fatherland" rapidly became more topical than he had expected. He emphasized that Europeans have longer historical memories than us, and said that the only reason the Serbs

are the villains now is that they have more guns--if the Croats had more guns, they'd be just as bad.

The panel closed by recommending their favorite alternate history stories: Kingsley Amis's T_h_e_A_l_t_e_r_a_t_i_o_n, L. Sprague DeCamp's L_e_s_t_D_a_r_k_n_e_s_s_F_a_l_l, Jack Finney's T_h_e_W_o_o_d_r_o_w_W_i_l_s_o_n_D_i_m_e, Murray Leinster's "Sideways in Time," Ward Moore's B_r_i_n_g_t_h_e_J_u_b_i_l_e_e, Keith Roberts's P_a_v_a_n_e, and Bob Shaw's T_h_e_T_w-o-T_i_m_e_r_s.

(Someone said something about Turtledove's story in which the Persians defeat the Greeks, and Turtledove said that appealed only to crackpots. The limited groans from the audience told who had read the story--"Counting Potsherds"--and got the pun, and who had not.)

Panel: M M M My y y y P P P Pe e e et t t t
H H H Ha a a at t t te e e e- - - -- - - -W W W Wh h h ha a a at t t t
R R R Re e e ea a a al l l ll l l ly y y y
B B B Bo o o ot t t th h h he e e er r r rs s s s M M M Me e e e
A A A Ab b b bo o o ou u u ut t t t S S S So o o om m m me e e e
B B B Bo o o oo o o ok k k ks s s s

Friday, 4 PM

Lisa Barnett, Algis Budrys, Jim Frenkel (moderator), Nancy Kress

As might be expected from the title, this panel ranged all over the map, from the minor to the major. First, I'll give the list that each panelist provided as their "opening statement," then I'll go on to the discussion that followed.

Barnett hates the use of gay characters as symbolic of decadence or a decadent society, the implication (or statement) that fantasy is inferior to science fiction, and the use of internally inconsistent magical systems. Kress hates science fiction or fantasy that is too easy and the same old stuff; in particular, she hates finishing a book and feeling, "I haven't been made to think or feel I haven't been challenged" She also hates child characters who conveniently nap or otherwise disappear when it is necessary for the plot ("When you wake up on the hillside and become queen, this is the day your fourteen-year-old daughter will want to

know about contraception"), and intelligent cats (she has two and claims they are the stupidest animals she has ever seen). Budrys hates most fantasy because it _ i_ s too easy, made-up words for things that already exist on Earth, and stories that start with someone waking up in white room with no memory (Kress observed she had in fact written one of these, "Martin, on a Wednesday"), and (in response to Kress's comments on convenient child characters) any stories with children ("they're always unreadable"). He also said that he hates science fiction being considered a genre because it is a broader field than non-science-fiction since it can talk about anything. Frenkel hates little furry aliens for cuteness's sake alone, generic stories ("all bare plotlines sound stupid"), science and technology that doesn't make sense (i.e., there are no rules, or the rules are broken), and multiple suns or moons for no reason.

Sexual sins rated high on everyone's list. Kress hates sex scenes in which the woman reaches a climax after being touched exactly twice, and stories with Amazon warriors who behave with men like breasts, never worrying about pregnancy or periods or any of that stuff. Barnett hates stories in which women were sexless except in relation to men. Frenkel hates stories (usually by women, I suspect) in which all men are alike.

Kress said that overexplaining can be a real annoyance and cited the following from a manuscript she saw: "Grief hung on Dave like an albatross, which is a large bird from a poem." Frenkel said an extension of this was the explanatory lump (hundreds of words explaining how the society's current political system arose--imagine a novel set in the present which took time to explain the entire electoral college system as part of talking about an election).

From the audience, Janice Eisen said that a couple of her pet hates were libertarian science fiction and science fiction that talks about how wonderful science fiction readers are (she gave Spider Robinson as an example of the latter). Another audience member said he hates when an author assumes taste is universal, and gave as an example an author who wanted to portray a character as unattractive. But when the author actually described the character, she turned out to be exactly the type this reader was attracted to! Another audience member said, "I hate people who expand novellas into novels," to which Kress responded that was precisely what she was doing with "Beggars in Spain." I would like to point out, however, that she is expanding it by writing what happened after the end of the novella (i.e., the novella forms an initial segment of the novel), while what people usually object to is the padding out of the novella story with more description and extra characters to reach novel length.

General peeves included running lights on spaceships, far futures in which men still come home from an office to a housewife, obligatory sex scenes, continuity errors, pointless series (I guess

this is a meta-hate), share-cropping, paperbacks that fall apart in your hands (I haven't seen this very much since Lancer went out of business),

A mention of misleading covers led Nancy Kress to tell of her first collection. For some reason when it arrived, it had a cover with a very militaristic scene on it: spaceship, guns, etc. The blurb, however, talked about how Kress wrote "humanistic science fiction" (and was more accurate than the picture). When Kress asked her agent about this, the agent claimed that she (the agent) had seen only a 2"x2" slide of the picture and it looked different. "How could it have looked different? All it could have looked was smaller!" But it was too late, and Kress feels that people who wanted humanistic science fiction were turned off by the cover and people who wanted militaristic stuff were either turned off by the blurb or bought it, disliked it, and never bought more of her stuff. Panelists pointed out that collections usually do not get covers made to order, but get assigned one from the stock on hand. Budrys mentioned in this context the myth that collections don't sell, and pointed to his "Writers of the Future" books, which Kress and others immediately pointed out were _ a _ n _ t _ h _ o _ l _ o _ g _ i _ e _ s, not collections.

One of the major things I learned from this panel is that Nancy Kress is a delight to listen to, and I will certainly try to get to any panel she's on (and recommend you do so also). I would also point out that her first novel, _ P _ r _ i _ n _ c _ e _ o _ f _ M _ o _ r _ n _ i _ n _ g _ B _ e _ l _ l _ s, seems at first a generic fantasy, but isn't. To paraphrase Kress, it's not too easy and it's not the same old stuff.

Panel: H H H Hu u u ug g g go o o os s s sf f f fo o o or r r r
E E E El l l le e e ec c c ct t t tr r r ro o o on n n ni i i ic c c c
F F F Fa a a an n n na a a ac c c c? ? ?

Friday, 5 PM

Richard Gilliam, Saul Jaffe, Evelyn C. Leeper,
Patrick Nielsen Hayden, Brad Templeton (moderator)

Well, this panel in some regards was a rehash of many previous panels and discussions. We did all agree from the outset, though, that writing was writing, whether done on paper or on phosphors, and

so writing in electronic media should qualify one as a fan writer as much as writing on paper. (An amendment to this effect was passed at the business meeting.) In particular, I observed that I wrote 100,000 words last year, of which only 2,000 appeared in traditional paper fanzines, and I somehow doubted that my Hugo nomination was for those 2,000 words alone.

Then there was the usual business of explaining to various panel members (and the audience) how S F L o v e r s D i g e s t was n o t a bulletin board--it is composed of articles that are collected by topic, edited for spelling and grammar, and formatted for output, whereas a bulletin board is untreated data. Other electronic fanzines are even more obviously not just "cocktail party chat"--magazines such as Q u a n t a are complete with artwork and fiction, and

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the only difference is that the editors send the subscribers the page layout electronically in Postscript format, and the subscribers print their own copies. This was dubbed a "U-Print-It" fanzine.

It was again pointed out that a reader can get access to Usenet or other electronic media for less than \$100, which is less than the cost of many foreign fanzines which a r e considered generally available. (I would also report that Nick Simicich volunteered to print up and mail out S F L o v e r s D i g e s t to anyone who pays for the printing and postage, thereby making it generally available. We even recorded this offer on videotape. Now all the committee has to do is decide what the circulation of it is!)

I noted out that if some electronic fanzine was not generally available, then it wouldn't get nominated. If an electronic fanzine got enough votes to get nominated, then it was certainly as available as the paper fanzines that got nominated as well. I have always found it amusing that the two arguments given against allowing electronic fanzines to be eligible are 1) they aren't generally available, and 2) they would get so many nominations they would squeeze out the paper fanzines. Excuse me?

Nielsen Hayden said that changing the WSFS Constitution was hard, because there was a lot of inertia built in, but on the whole

this was probably a good thing.

I suggested the somewhat radical (though not original with me) idea that fan Hugos weren't quite "real" Hugos anyway, and maybe should be broken off, at which point the number of categories could be expanded. (No one really wants to increase the number of Hugos and lengthen the ceremony to longer than it is now. On the other hand, I said that eventually all of First Fandom will be dead--as will we all eventually--and so the Hugo Awards ceremony will be shorter by the amount of time those awards take now.) I can't help but feel that my Hugo nomination is not as important as one of the professional fiction category nominations, and wonder how those authors feel about having people like me having the same status as they (in some sense).

I also noted that the current attitude on the part of many fans against electronic fanzines would also rule out allowing fanzines on audio tape ("Fred's Fanzine for the Blind"), although Nielsen Hayden thought that any such entry would be immediately ruled eligible by the committee.

In short, progress seems to be being made. I think Nielsen Hayden started out by being somewhat opposed to Hugos for electronic fanzines but changed his mind when Saul and I explained what exactly we meant by electronic fanzines. This seems to be the major misunderstanding and perhaps I should start carrying around a copy of Q u a n t a as an example for these discussions.

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Dinner

Normally, dinner doesn't rate a paragraph in a con report, but this was unusual. There were nine of us who got together and decided to try the Ming Court, since it was 1) near and 2) recommended. As we started to leave the hotel room, I suggested that calling ahead to see how long the wait would be might be a good idea. Good thing we did. It was now 6:15 PM and they said they could seat us about 8:30 PM. Oh, well, thanks, but I don't think so. Well, they countered, when did you want to eat? Right now, I said, about 6:45 PM (allowing for walking time). "Let me check." After about a minute, she returned. We can seat you now, but only

if you promise to be out by 8 PM, because we've promised that table for 8 PM. No problem! So we rushed off, arrived there, and were seated in a private banquet room at one of the tables. They obviously had a large party coming in at 8 PM, and the maitre d' reiterated that we _ m _ u _ s _ t be out by 8 PM. We assured him that if he served us fast, we'd eat fast. So we had three waiters just for us, and in fact ordered and ate so quickly that we were done with the main course by 7:15 PM and had more time for dessert than we had taken for dinner. We were out by 7:40 PM, leaving them plenty of time to clear our table and re-set it. Strange, but definitely efficient!

(End of Part 1)