

there was only Coke and Pepsi in the world to drink. There is nothing else at all. What can you determine about someone who prefers Pepsi? Not very much at all! A choice between two items is at best almost no choice at all. You could tell much more about that person's preferences if there were hundreds of beverages to

THE MT VOID

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choose from. All the time you hear complaints that the Democratic and Republican platforms are too similar. True, there are other parties, but they are tiny. So what can you really tell about a person's politics if you know he is a Republican? There are Republicans who are liberals and ones who are conservative. There are ones who are libertarian and others who are for strict government controls. Same is true for the Democrats. If there were a whole bunch more parties, you might really know about someone's politics from their party, but someone's preference from a choice of two is meaningless.

Now people raise a whole whoop and holler about somebody's sexual preference. Darn it, there ARE only two to choose from! Neither of those are any bargain, from what I can tell. You got only two sexes monopolizing nearly everybody's sexual preferences. You have a situation ripe to have a third sex, one half-way decent for a change, coming along and knocking everyone in the first two out of the running. Everyone will just want the third sex, if for no other reason that they are sick of having had the choice of just two for so long. Then what happens to all this bruhaha about people's preferences?

Now if you really want to find out about people, wait until there isn't just a choice of two, but technology makes it possible for everyone to customize a partner to their preferences. There would be a choice of hundreds, maybe thousands of different sexes. Then someone's preference would really tell you something about that person.

2. Recent acquisitions by the LZ branch of the Science Fiction Club Library are:

Bear, Greg	EON
Brin, David	THE POSTMAN
Lem, Stanislaw	MORTAL ENGINES

Martin, George R. R. WILD CARDS I
Verne, Jules 20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA

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THE PRINCESS BRIDE
A film review by Mark R. Leeper
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Capsule review: William Goldman expertly wrote a twisted fairy-tale novel and Rob reiner did a great job of bringing it to the screen. Fun and unpretentious.

One of the advantages of being a proficient and successful writer is that you can write what you like and do not have to worry that this idea is too silly and readers will laugh at it. One of the advantages of being a proficient and successful director is that you can make the kind of films you like and do not have to worry that the idea is too silly for audiences. William Goldman has written such successful books

as N_o_W_a_y_t_o_T_r_e_a_t_a_L_a_d_y, M_a_g_i_c, M_a_r_a_t_h_o_n_M_a_n, and S_o_l_d_i_e_r
i_n_t_h_e_R_a_i_n.

So when he decides to write a book-length fairy tale, his publisher knows he can pull it off. And when Rob Reiner, who was not much of an actor but as a director of three films--the worst of which was as good as T_h_e_S_u_r_e_T_h_i_n_g--wants to direct it, he isn't going to have too much

trouble getting up the mazuma to make a fairy-tale movie.

Princess--are you ready for this?--Buttercup (played by Robin Wright) is to be the unfortunate bride of Prince Humperdinck (played by F_r_i_g_h_t_N_i_g_h_t's Chris Sarandon). But the only man she has ever loved was the callow youth Westley (played by Cary Elwes of L_a_d_y_J_a_n_e) who was killed off-screen by a notorious pirate. Buttercup would like revenge on the pirate and she isn't too fond of her fiance either. And speaking of revenge, Inigo Montoya (played by Mandy Patinkin) would like some against the six-fingered man who killed his father. They could get revenge together but unfortunately Inigo's current job involves him and two friends, including Fezzik the giant (played by Andre the also Giant) kidnapping and murdering Buttercup. Then there's the little boy who would rather play videogames than listen to his grandfather's story. Yeah, well, he's in there too.

It is hard to find fault with as well-meaning and enjoyable a film as this offbeat fairy tale. The real problem is that the characters are flat so that one is never really drawn into the story. Reiner can create characters we like and believe, and had he done it here the film would have been just about perfect. As it is, the story feels a little thin and too short for its material. Something is wrong when the only one likable character is played by a quarter-ton of professional wrestler.

Beyond that all I can say is this is the most fun you will have in a film for quite a while. I could tell you why this fractured fairy tale is fun, but most of what is fun catches you off-guard. I couldn't convey the fun and I'd probably ruin the gags. Rate the movie a +2 on the -4 to +4 scale.

THE WHISTLE BLOWER
A film review by Mark R. Leeper
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Capsule review: Not quite a spy thriller and not exactly a mystery, but somewhere in between. It asks, among other things, how much of what we are told about

the Cold War is true? There are better espionage stories on the BBC, but this British import has its moments.

Rating: +1.

There's a dark world and a light world. They co-exist side by side. Most of us live in the light world and think we have some idea of what is going on. Sometimes we do and sometimes we don't. Sometimes what we think we know has been a play put on for our benefit by the people who live in the dark world. It's the dark world that's real. That is the theme of a new film, a murder mystery with espionage overtones, T_h_e_W_h_i_s_t_l_e_B_l_o_w_e_r, directed by Simon Langton, and based on a novel written by John Hale. That's an old idea, but it gets a few new wrinkles in this mystery that is not so much a who-done-it as a what-are-they-doing-and-why.

Bob Jones (played by Nigel Havers) is a Russian-language translator for British intelligence. That is still living in the light world, but he gets occasional glimpses of what is going on in the dark world. He is disturbed by what the Soviets are doing, what the Americans are doing, and what his own government is doing, all under the cover of state security. At the very least, he wants to quit his job. His father (played by Michael Caine) thinks he would be foolish to give up a good job in a world that doesn't seem to be crying for linguists. But Bob wants to do more. He wants to tell the world what sort of thing happens in the intelligence game, to lift the veil on one small corner of the dark world. And that could get people killed.

T_h_e_W_h_i_s_t_l_e_B_l_o_w_e_r isn't a great mystery, nor does it seem much of a spy thriller, nor does it really have a strong social comment. But it does do a nice job of integrating all three with a sense of irony at times. It meshes M_i_s_s_i_n_g with M_i_s_s_i_o_n: I_m_p_o_s_s_i_b_l_e. If you think about it, these shouldn't go so well together; perhaps there is more to this film than meets the eye. This is one of those films where what each person tries to do makes sense, but the sum total is a knot of complexity.

Other familiar faces include John Gielgud, James Fox, and Gordon Jackson. (There is also a minor, and perhaps unintentional, in-joke in the casting of Jackson's superior, a face that will be familiar to people at all familiar with Jackson's career.)

T_h_e_W_h_i_s_t_l_e_B_l_o_w_e_r is not a great film, it's not a spell-binding thriller, and there is little in it you haven't seen before someplace, but it does skillfully play off of Cold War paranoia. Give it a +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

MAURICE

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

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(***SPOILERS***)

Capsule review: Disappointing E. M. Forster entry by much of the same team that made A_R_o_o_m_w_i_t_h_a_V_i_e_w. A plea for acceptance of homosexuality flounders in melodrama, florid production values, and even a mild dash of sexism. There is enough quality present to make the film worth seeing, but not as much as you'd think. Rating: +1. (The following review contains spoilers and opinions that are going to draw flak.)

Over the last few years there has been a discovery of the works of E. M. Forster by filmmakers. Until A_P_a_s_s_a_g_e_t_o_I_n_d_i_a, I don't think anyone had ever filmed a Forster novel. Since then, we have seen A_R_o_o_m_w_i_t_h_a_V_i_e_w and now M_a_u_r_i_c_e. The new entry is the story of a homosexual, Maurice (pronounced "Morris") Hall, who discovered his own homosexuality at Cambridge and a bunch of other people's as he went along. M_a_u_r_i_c_e tells the story of his discomfort in a country that is "disinclined to accept human nature."

Maurice becomes aware of his homosexuality at Cambridge, where we are shown that he runs into no women who are attractive or interesting. There are darn few women in the whole film who are not portrayed as superficial and vacuous. But there are lots of pretty men running around. In class, they read classics with references to homosexuality (the professors tell the boys just to skip over the explicit parts and interpret the rest as platonic love). One thing sort of leads to another and Maurice meets Clive Durham, who is close and pretty and soon they are pretty close. The film follows their affair for a few years until Clive decides to buckle under to public pressure and marry someone of the opposite sex instead. It isn't long before he is telling Maurice how he was surprised to find that women are nice too. (It is the only scene in the film that has much nice to say about women.) Maurice tries to have an American hypnotist (played by Ben Kingsley doing his best to sound like a Texan) cure him, but it doesn't work and soon Maurice decides that if he cannot have Clive, he will have Clive's assistant gamekeeper.

There are always two parts to an E. M. Forster story. There is the story itself and there is the social comment. A_P_a_s_s_a_g_e_t_o_I_n_d_i_a, in addition to having a good story, argued cogently for home rule for India. I became firmly convinced that Britain did the right thing almost forty years ago. A_R_o_o_m_w_i_t_h_a_V_i_e_w argued that Edwardian social custom really screwed up people's lives and I left the theater shouting "Down with Edwardian social custom!" It too told a good story. M_a_u_r_i_c_e is perhaps the most relevant to our society and even in that it is more

than seventy years out of date, but the story itself is not very good this time around. It is overly long in the telling--about 140 minutes--and is much more melodramatic than director Ivory's previous R_o_o_m_w_i_t_h_a_V_i_e_w. I think Ivory wanted to repeat that film's success, so he put in many of the same faces, forced Ben Kingsley into the wrong role, chose a not-very-good novel, and then gave it a long and florid treatment. With the talents involved, the film could not go wrong, but one would expect a much better rating than a low +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

The Theory and Origins of Hot Food
Comments by Mark R. Leeper
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I have had a couple of occasions in this past week to eat hot foods. One of the more harmless of my reputations among friends is that if no other part of me is really in M_a_c_h_i_s_m_o, my tongue is super-macho. I grew up with a pallid cuisine that was an amalgam of Eastern European and American. (Why did somebody with an English-Irish name like Leeper grow up with Eastern European food? Well, that's another story for another time.) In any case, as I have grown older and did not become athletic or otherwise sports-minded, I have noticed a lot of otherwise macho-seeming men cringe at the taste of a little hot pepper in their food. Like me, they probably grew up with bland food, but I grew a little more tired of it than they did. So I have come to like food that sent others screaming from the room. My dog decided for himself to stop begging for table scraps. The most sadistic Indian, the cruelest Szechuan, the vilest Mexican chefs had no horrors for me.

In the shelves of my refrigerator jalapeno mustard nestles against jars of Tabasco peppers. Oh, and don't let anyone tell you jalapenos are as hot as they come. Tabascos, the stuff they dilute with vinegar to make the famous sauce, are hotter. And the people who bottle them have to dress up like they're handling plutonium--I've seen them. I've never had Tabascos in their native state, however. They come packed in

vinegar. I can only guess whether they would match the dreaded green peppers you get dry in Indian restaurants. The most potent I have ever had our guide picked off a tree in the Amazon. Little orange peppers the size of blueberries. The fact that they are so small is the best argument I know for a merciful God.

Then there is another whole breed of hot. This is the mustard and horseradish sort of hot. These don't burn your tongue. The good ones just give you three hours of cluster headaches in about five seconds. A really good, freshly ground horseradish is quite nice. Then there is Japanese wasabi. That is a sort of green horseradish that you get with sushi. Less than the amount to cover the tip of a chopstick is a wasab. (I have defined a wasab as a unit of strength equivalent to dropping one volume of the E _ n _ c _ y _ c _ l _ o _ p _ e _ d _ i _ a _ B _ r _ i _ t _ a _ n _ n _ i _ c _ a on your nose from one foot up.)

As a way of estimating, one standard slice of Grossinger's rye bread, generously spread with Frank's Mr. Mustard--the best mustard in the world--and diluted with one-eighth in thick slices of a good kosher salami will total about four or five wasabs. Divide that by the number of bites you'd get out of it and you get an estimate of the effect of each bite.

But in any case, what started me thinking is that I started looking at a jar of peppers in my refrigerator and I concluded that in a world of perversity there is no such thing as a reliable defense. Huh? Well,

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you see, way back somewhere there was a family of peppers with a problem. What was eating them? I don't know--insects or something. Anyway, a couple of the kids were different. They had developed some sort of irritant. Insects that tried to take a bite out of them would fly off doing whatever the insect equivalent of cussing was. So these peppers had a good thing going and lived to reproduce with each other. First thing you know, they have established themselves and have big families. An insect bites one of them and starts singing, "Mama Said There'd Be Days Like This."

So the peppers start feeling really smug. They build their own country clubs, that sort of thing. Then, whammo! Along comes humans. The first few see the peppers. "Hmmm, pretty colors. Like nice fruit. Me bite.... Hmmm! Mama said there'd be days like this." And

eventually little humans come along and say to littler humans still, "Here, have something nice to eat from the tree." The next ten seconds gave man the idea for the air-raid siren.

But eventually that little human got tricked so many times that he got used to the taste. Then started putting the peppers in stews and things. Invited the older brothers and sisters and their families over for dinner. The Borgias used to use the same principle. Now things have gotten to the state that the pepper would be left alone by the humans if it didn't have the defense mechanism. After all, it isn't very big. Humans only eat the little peppers so they can enjoy having the pepper fight back. The worse a pepper defends itself against me, the more I like it. Rotten defense if you have so many masochists who look forward to the counter-attack. So go figure!

Conspiracy '87
Con report by Mark R. Leeper

(Part 2)

The first panel I went to was at 11 AM and was "Gothic SF--Where Horror meets Science Fiction." This discussed things like science fiction novels with vampires. Someone talked about how horror intersects with science fiction. In the 18th Century the concept was that the universe worked like a well-oiled clock. In the 19th there was the same concept but occasionally there was a mouse in the gears. Things can go wrong with the orderly progress of the universe (I would have to say, as the speakers did not, that this concept is mostly late 1800s with authors like Wells.) Even Verne seemed to believe in the orderly progress of the universe. There is a vast spectrum in writers. John Campbell believed all things were knowable In "Who Goes There?" we have the humans confronting the alien and defeating it. by analysis of the alien's blood and our analysis works. The other extreme is H. P. Lovecraft, where you may not see some of the true lands of the earth. People who see as little of them as their shadows on the wall go mad. One says that the universe is all-knowable; the other says that we are incapable of handling any knowledge at all about the universe. All science fiction novels fall somewhere on this axis.

Following that, I met with Evelyn and we went back to our hotel to see an episode of an old British television show called C_o_l_M_a_r_c_h I_n_v_e_s_t_i_g_a_t_e_s. Its claim to fame and the reason it is being shown at the convention is that it stars Boris Karloff. The story involved a skull, supposedly of a missing link, stolen from a museum. The solution to the mystery involved the jawbone being from a very old species and the cranium being from a murdered member of the scientific expedition that found the supposed fossil. For many years of intense scientific study, nobody noticed that the two didn't really go together. I suppose this was inspired by the Piltdown forgery, but that was many years earlier. The idea that the forgery would go so long undiscovered is absurd. Someone was asking this weekend why filmmakers didn't hire scientific experts to clean up technical problems in story plots. The answer is simple: in a story like this, to clean up the inaccuracies would be to throw out the entire story.

After that it was back to the room for "writers' workshop."
Actually, writers' workshops are officially a convention activity to help people improve their writing style, but we have come to use the expression for working on the logs.

After about an hour we went to see another half-hour television show from the 1950s, T_h_e A_d_v_e_n_t_u_r_e_s o_f F_u M_a_n_c_h_u, with Glen Gordon playing the Chinese arch-criminal with a really absurd accent. This episode was about a plot to ruin the United States economy by

counterfeiting billions of dollars with perfect copies and then dropping them on major cities, hence making real money worthless. Curiously, the stories are set in the United States with a Denis Nayland Smith on loan from England and an American Dr. Petrie.

Next we went to the Guest of Honor film show and interview with Ray Harryhausen. Growing up, I had two real heroes connected with film. One was Peter Cushing. He is an actor who was vastly underrated because he was known mostly for horror film roles. He claimed never to do his roles tongue-in-cheek. I might disagree about one or two films, but on the whole there were many films that were vastly better for his performance. The other hero was Ray Harryhausen, who for 20 years did the most creative and imaginative special effects of anyone alive. His

films include B_e_a_s_t_f_r_o_m_2_0_0_0_F_a_t_h_o_m_s,
I_t_C_a_m_e_f_r_o_m_b_e_n_e_a_t_h_t_h_e_S_e_a,
S_e_v_e_n_t_h_V_o_y_a_g_e_o_f_S_i_n_b_a_d,
J_a_s_o_n_a_n_d_t_h_e_A_r_g_o_n_a_u_t_s_V_a_l_l_e_y
o_f_G_w_a_n_g_i,
G_o_l_d_e_n_V_o_y_a_g_e_o_f_S_i_n_b_a_d, and most recently
C_l_a_s_h_o_f_t_h_e_T_i_t_a_n_s. He talked about his experiences filmmaking, particularly in making S_e_v_e_n_t_h_V_o_y_a_g_e_o_f_S_i_n_b_a_d. It was a project that he had sketches for and wanted

to do for years, but nobody thought there was much money to be made with an Arabian Nights film. He had worked up sketches of what he could do

with the concept in 1948. In 1951 he'd made B_e_a_s_t_f_r_o_m_2_0_0_0_F_a_t_h_o_m_s, which brought him to longtime partner Charles Schneer's attention.

Schneer wanted to do a film in which a monster destroyed the Golden Gate Bridge (I wonder if the term "low concept" might apply).

He'd seen B_e_a_s_t_f_r_o_m_2_0_0_0_F_a_t_h_o_m_s and got Harryhausen for I_t_C_a_m_e_f_r_o_m_B_e_n_e_a_t_h_t_h_e_S_e_a. Harryhausen had done the octopus--actually a hexapus to save animation work. The two worked together, making many science fiction films with good special effects but otherwise mediocre production values. The films included 2_0_M_i_l_l_i_o_n_M_i_l_e_s_t_o_E_a_r_t_h and E_a_r_t_h_V_s._t_h_e_F_l_y_i_n_g_S_a_u_c_e_r_s. They were looking for new projects and

Harryhausen pulled out the Sinbad sketches to show Schneer. Schneer liked the idea. Columbia Pictures was less than keen, but was eventually convinced. They were given a budget way too low, particularly because the material called for Harryhausen to use color

for the first time. His main technique was stop-motion, with which you build a metal skeleton with ball-and-socket joints, put a rubberized hide on it, sculpt features, and then film it a frame at a time.

They wanted a better score than the usual cheap Columbia stuff, so they took the film to Bernard Herrmann. It really wasn't Herrmann's sort of film since it was basically a children's film. I could be wrong, but the only previous fantastical film Herrmann had scored was _ D_ a_ y_ t_ h_ e_ E_ a_ r_ t_ h_ S_ t_ o_ o_ d_ S_ t_ i_ l_ l_. Herrmann's usual reaction to overtures that he should do this sort of film was "Why are you showing me this garbage?" To the filmmakers' surprise, he responded to _ S_ e_ v_ e_ n_ t_ h_ V_ o_ y_ a_ g_ e_ _ o_ f_ S_ i_ n_ b_ a_ d with excitement and in the years that followed he scored several Harryhausen films and became associated with them as he became associated with Hitchcock films.

It occurred to me watching his clips of _ C_ l_ a_ s_ h_ o_ f_ t_ h_ e_ T_ i_ t_ a_ n_ s that artists have been drawing the winged horse Pegasus for 3000 or 3500

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years. In all that time Harryhausen may have been the first artist ever to give serious thought to how a winged horse would land. The film shows it in a very smooth and believable motion of the horse landing back legs first and then lowering the forelegs. I might almost say the motion is natural, but it occurs to me that no normal horse would have anything like an analogous motion. When jumping they land forelegs first and if they do that from too great a height they break their front legs.

During the question-and-answer, I asked how he made a motion no horse could duplicate seem so natural. He first gave some credit to _ F_ a_ n_ t_ a_ s_ i_ a for doing winged horses in motion but added that three-dimensional animation forces realism constraints that are not present with flat animation. Why rear legs first? The wings would be over the shoulders giving less support at lower speeds to the rear portions.

Harryhausen also mentioned that he had done sketches and test footage for a _ W_ a_ r_ o_ f_ t_ h_ e_ W_ o_ r_ l_ d_ s set in Victorian times. I was curious to find out how the tripod war machines would walk, but I never got a

chance to ask.

For reasons I wasn't clear on, Caroline Munro was at Harryhausen's talk. Rarely do female stars get attached to the science fiction/fantasy genre. Caroline Munro is fairly attractive and was in several fantasy films back in the 1970s, including Harryhausen's G_o_l_d_e_n V_o_y_a_g_e_o_f_S_i_n_b_a_d and S_t_a_r_c_r_a_s_h. I got a picture of her. Now, I saw Elke Sommer when I lived in Detroit and the first quarter-inch of her was solid make-up. I expected that was pretty standard. Caroline Munro is no raving beauty, but she looks pretty much the same close up as she looks on the screen. And oddly, I had the feeling she could go back and shoot scenes for G_o_l_d_e_n_V_o_y_a_g_e_o_f_S_i_n_b_a_d at least 12 years later and they would be indistinguishable from the originals.

We were at that presentation for about 90 minutes, then I went back to the room to write and at 5:15 PM we met with Dale, Jo, Kate, Dave, and Pete and went to eat at a Greek steak house. I had lamb.

We then went e_n_m_a_s_s_e to the Hugo awards. This is really one of the big events of the convention. The Hugo Awards are given in an event much like the Academy Awards. This is the big fan-awarded prize. Well, we started to line up for the award ceremony. Evelyn had asked at the information desk where to line up and they told her where to go. We were lined up with a fair number of people lined up behind us. A little German woman came over to talk with us and join us in line. She is the same woman who pushed to the front of the line before the Hugo ceremonies last year in Atlanta. Dave also remembers her. If she pushes to the head of the line in New Orleans next year it may be to her disadvantage. As it turns out, where they told us to line up was the wrong place. So getting in was a hassle. Earlier in this log I recorded who won the various Hugos. Greg Bear's story "Tangents" was the only winner I really wanted to win.

Following the awards there was a very nice fireworks display on the beach. It lasted about 20 minutes but had enough for 60 minutes of display the way they would be done in the United States. Then it was back to the room to talk a little while and I slipped out to see S_t_a_t_i_c, the last of the Odeon films. This was an odd film about a man with an

odd invention. It is a tough film to describe without giving too much away, but it is about a rock musician who goes to visit her boyfriend who is working on some sort of strange invention. On the way back to the hotel, Dave and I ran into Kate and Cynthia. Kate had seen S t a t i c, so we could discuss it with her. After a little while it was back inside and to bed.

Monday is kind of a wind-down day. Evelyn was late getting up. Breakfast as usual. The first panel was "Science Fiction is History's Dustbin." Nobody had any idea what that was supposed to be about, including the panelists. It was a less than enthralling panel and I spent most of it listening with one ear but writing my log.

The next panel, "The Unnatural History of the Vampire," had four writers of vampire novels talking about traditional monsters. To begin with, each of the authors (George R. R. Martin, Tanith Lee, Suzy McKee Charnas, and Chelsea Quinn Yarbro) talked about the traditional vampire rules that he/she broke in his/her writing. I later asked the curmudgeonly question: "Where do you draw the line between writing stories about vampires who do reflect in mirrors and about giants who don't happen to be tall?"

"Well," they fabled, "it is intrinsic to a giant that he is tall. The only thing intrinsic about a vampire is that he drinks blood." Someone else corrected them and said, "No, some vampires drink life force," then they went off on a tangent about Japanese vampires who drink spinal fluid. But the audience reaction to my question had been pretty good.

Martin puts vampires on riverboats, so clearly they are not afraid of running water. Tanith Lee says that her vampires are very modern and can walk around in the daytime on cloudy days. Charnas said, "I discarded all the old rubbish."

There was some discussion of why vampires and werewolves were so popular. Someone suggested that it is because ordinary people like us become them. Ordinary people do not become mummies. Mummies are an ineffective monster because they move so slowly. Someone quoted Bill Cosby as saying, "Anyone caught by the Mummy deserved it." They talked about how it is pretty tough to show a dragon on film and so much cheaper to do a vampire or a werewolf. Also, we seem to know the mythos of vampires and werewolves.

Tanith Lee told an interesting anecdote about a kindergarden class in the United States who was asked to draw pictures of wolves. They drew pictures that were mostly mouths and teeth. Then a semi-

domesticated wolf was brought into the classroom and the children were allowed to pet it. The only moment of trouble they had was when it came time to take the wolf away and the children started crying when they didn't want to see it go. After that the class was told again to draw pictures of wolves. This time they drew bright eyes and sleek coats and giant feet since wolves do seem to have very big feet. This is the kind of lesson meant more for parents and is more lost on the kids.

There was some discussion of zombies and their basis in reality. It has been only relatively recently that we have been able to determine with some certainty that a person is dead. That is part of the reason for laying a person out for a few days before burial--to give the person a chance to change his mind and get up. A headstone is for the opposite reason; it marks the grave but it is also to hold the departed down.

In a previous panel it had been noted that vampires were upper-class, werewolves were middle-class, and zombies were lower-class.

Once again someone noted that vampires were upper-class, and Evelyn asked how many of the panelists had read V_a_r_n_e_y_t_h_e_V_a_m_p_i_r_e. The is the famous pre-D_r_a_c_u_la vampire novel. DoverBooks reprinted it. Tanith Lee claimed to have read some parts. Nobody else had.

After that panel, Ev and I and Jo and Dale went for lunch. We ate at a French restaurant and had the worst meal of the trip so far. Neither the selection nor the quality was particularly good.

After that the panel was "Lysenko Lives--Scientific Myths That Serve the Cause." Again, it was half an ear listening and half an ear log-writing. One interesting comment I did glean is that the United States government does know plague containment techniques and might use them against AIDS, but doesn't dare because the far right and far left don't want to see it done. The far right wants to see AIDS run its course against homosexuals and minorities. The far left doesn't want to see minorities restricted by quarantines.

Next I went to a discussion of science fiction in the 1980s, but soon decided they were going to talk only about conventions and fandom in the 1980s. So instead I decided to walk out on Brighton Pier.

This was Banque Holiday and the beach and pier were thronged with people. The feel was very much like British must have felt after World War II. The town had put out striped beach lounges. There was a sort of makeshift bandstand where someone in a white suit and flat straw hat was singing "I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles." A lot of older people were sunning themselves and listening. Perhaps beach is the wrong word to

what was there. It was more a bank of pebbles going into the water. People seem to walk on it barefoot which may mean that the British still have what it takes to be an empire.

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One amusement pier has corroded away already and the one that is used is showing some signs that it may follow in another few years. A pier does not offer a whole lot of space, but it is enough to put up some rides and have a couple of pavilions for gambling. It has shooting galleries, sellers hawking plastic swords, pre-fabbed practical jokes and the like, bouncing chambers, candy-floss sellers, lots of stuff like that. I guess one of the stranger things there is a bookstore. I don't think you'd find much of a bookstore at most of our amusement parks. Mostly it was for the older people who were reading on the pier, but a lot of the books for sale were for teenaged readers. They were things like Mack Bolan novels. On the pier they broadcast popular music hosted by a disk jockey who advertised a place to buy sunglasses. I am pretty sure he was broadcasting only for the pier and the places he advertised were certainly on the pier.

I walked through one of the casinos and saw people playing slot machines--not the one-armed bandits of Nevada, but ones that looked more like you'd expect in an amusement park.

As you walked along, you heard all sorts of British accents, particularly Cockney and what I think might be called toffee-nosed. One little girl talking to her father called him DAH-dee. I tend to think of that as an upper-class accent, but one look at the family killed that theory right away.

If you continue on out toward the end of the pier, past the guy selling used records, you suddenly find all the noise dying down. At the end of the pier things are pretty quiet. People sit there looking out over the water. The railings of rusting metal frame the peaceful scene of the water.

Well, I headed back to the hotel to see a movie. I ran into Dale and Jo doing their last sightseeing along the beach. Said goodbye and continued on to our hotel to see the film T h e W h i p H a n d. It has to do

with a reporter who stumbles onto a Soviet plan to loose germ warfare on the United States. The film was made in the early 1950s. They don't make films like this any more. Today the hero would be teenaged, the music would be rock, and it would be in color. Otherwise, it could be almost identical.

At the film I met up with Chuck, Evelyn, Kate, Dave, and Cynthia. We went out for fish and chips. I had haddock and "chocolate" ice cream (as the menu misspelled it). Afterward, Cynthia, Kate, Dave, and I walked out on the pier so that they could see what I saw earlier. We also rode the ghost train (Dave didn't). Cynthia got candy floss (a.k.a. cotton candy).

After that we went to our last con activity, a play made up of four short stories by Alfred Bester. One of the stories, "They Don't Make Life Like They Used To," I recently spent a half-hour trying to find because I did not remember the title or the author. I only vaguely

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remembered where I had read the story. That didn't work. Well, now I can find it when I get home. As this finishes the England part of our trip, let me make a few short random observations:

POTATO CHIPS: Here called potato crisps. For some reason, most of the chips you get in the United States taste burnt. Lays also has some coating that seems to coat the teeth and make them feel like I've been sucking lemons. British potato crisps are much better.

DRINKING: There is a lot more beer drinking in England than I remember from the last trip. Most British males seem to drink gallons a week. In the cities everyone seems to pub-crawl. I hope this isn't a sign of things to come.

CARNIVAL: In England, held Banque Holiday weekend. It seems to attract people from all over the world. Not as big as Brazil's yet, but getting bigger. It was in London while we were in Brighton. Each year there is a crime wave with it. This year it was also the occasion for a riot and drinking (q.v.).

WALKMAN RADIOS: Jeez. They're everywhere over here. Perhaps more than you see in the United States. And the batteries cost about a

dollar apiece.

CHOCOLATE BARS: Everyone knows the Brits cannot make hamburgers and the United States can't make chocolate. No point in repeating that. Instead, what I am commenting on is the odd agreement between Cadbury and Nestle. Every Underground tunnel has a Cadbury machine. Every train station has a Nestle machine. And they each stay off the other's turf.

JAPAN SF: The Japanese are becoming a major presence at international science fiction conventions. Dave asked one when they would be having their own World Science Fiction Convention. They said they hoped they wouldn't. There would be too many rules "like this convention." The Americans don't have so many rules and they (the Japanese) feel they can cut loose at an American con. That is just the sort of thing American cons are trying to avoid. I think this guy will discover the Americans will have more rules in times to come. A book I was reading said the Japanese like to lead double lives, being tame and respectable at home, but when the family cannot them they can be pretty wild. Supposedly this principle explains how such a civilized people did some pretty uncivilized things in World War II.

SURFACE CURRENT: Cynthia knows what I am talking about and has the same odd talent. So does her mother. What is this all about? It seems I have a very rare power, or perhaps the correct word is "sensitivity," though that seems to make it sound occult. I can feel if some appliances are plugged in or not by running my hand on them and feeling some kind of surface current. I can't really explain it. At one time I thought everybody could do this. Take our electric fan at home. Leave

it turned off but plug it in. If I run my hand down the side, I can feel something that almost feels like it is vibrating. Unplug it and the vibrating stops. I have tried to explain it to other people, assuming that they could feel it too. Nobody has ever known what I was talking about. I slowly began to realize that almost nobody could feel this surface current. At the L5 Society I could even feel the current in a metal table that had a plugged-in television on it. I had Chuck Divine plug and unplug the television and without looking, only by feeling, I could tell him when he had the television plugged in. Evelyn still assumed I was playing some sort of clever trick. Admittedly that

is a very reasonable suspicion but, in fact, she was wrong. I shortly thereafter discovered the electric fan in our den also gets a surface current. I had Ev plug it in and unplug it and that fairly quickly convinced her I really could feel something different when there was power to the fan. I mentioned to Cynthia that I have this ability and she at least claimed to know what I was talking about and that she could feel it too. It may be that the appliance has a small short in it and you get very small shocks when you rub your hand over it. Perhaps some people feel these shocks and some do not.

T H E E N D