

1. The next book discussion is in Lincroft on Wednesday, October 9, and will be on Michael Kube-McDowell's T_h_e_Q_u_i_e_t_P_o_o_l_s. The book is set about a hundred and fifty years in the future (though the chronological clues are to some extent contradictory), and deals with humanity's plan to send off huge starships--starships

THE MT VOID

Page 2

with 10,000 people on each one. Now everyone is happy with this, of course, and the examination of the motivations behind the plan and the opposition to it form the backbone of this novel. Interwoven with this is a study of some major changes in human relationships which have taken place since our time as well, and though the combination may sound unlikely, it does work. This was my choice for the Hugo this year. [-ecl]

2. When I was growing up I was fascinated with golems and dybbuks--two fantasy fixtures of Jewish folklore. A golem is a clay statue brought to life to act as a servant, if it can be controlled. Mary Shelley's F_r_a_n_k_e_n_s_t_e_i_n was inspired by golem stories. A dybbuk is a possessing spirit, the soul of a dead person that obstinately holds on to and controls the living. Both golems and dybbuks have appeared in film. We are showing at the next Leeperhouse fest the best-known films on each of these themes. On Thursday, October 10, at 7 PM we will show THE GOLEM and THE DYBBUK.

THE GOLEM (1920) dir. by Paul Wegener and Carl Boese

THE DYBBUK (1939) dir. by Michal Waszynski

THE GOLEM is a classic and respected fantasy film from the German Expressionist movement--the movement that resulted from THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI and was a strong influence on horror films of the 1930s in the United States. Paul Wegener plays the clay giant created as a defender but who gets out of control. At one point this film was reasonable easy to find and often was shown in film series. As time passes, however, it is becoming harder to find, as are many other European silent films.

And since World War II, THE DYBBUK has been impossible to find. Two years ago it was restored and shown around the country in a limited distribution. I saw it in New York and was very impressed. My review appears elsewhere in this issue.

Mark Leeper
MT 3D-441 957-5619
...mtgzy!leeper

It is proof of a base and low mind for one to wish to think with the masses or majority, merely because the majority is the majority. Truth does not change because it is, or is not, believed by a majority of the people.

-- Guido Bruno

THE DYBBUK

A film review by Mark R. Leeper
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Capsule review: Paydirt! A Yiddish film made in Poland in 1938 turns out to be a little-known gem. The film lacks a lot of what we might consider high production values, but besides being an unintentional artifact of the culture of Eastern European Jewry wiped out in the Holocaust, it also turns out to be a haunting horror film that deserves to be seen by all fans of 1920s and 1930s horror films. At least one sequence, a grotesque dance, ranks this film up with some of the best of German Expressionism. Rating: +3.

Watching the 1938 Polish-made Yiddish film T_h_e_D_y_b_b_u_k, one is only too aware that the film is flawed. Much of the acting is exaggerated as it would be in a silent film. Some of the photography seems poor, as well as some of the editing. At least

once the film cuts from a quiet scene to a loud scene and the sudden sound causes the audience to jump. It is true, however, that in retrospect most of the faults seem hard to remember. The strongest memories of the film are beautiful images, some haunting and horrifying. And while taken individually many of the scenes were less effective for me than they may have been for T_h_e_D_y_b_b_u_k's intended audience, this is a great mystical horror film, perhaps one of the better horror films of the 1930s.

[Spoilers follow, though as with a Shakespeare play, one does not see T_h_e_D_y_b_b_u_k for plot surprises.]

Sender and Nisn have been very close friends since their student days. Now they see each other only on holidays. To cement the bond of their friendship they vow that if their respective first children--each expected soon--are of opposite sexes then they will arrange a marriage of the two children. Sure enough, Sender has a daughter Leyele, though he loses his wife in childbirth. Nisn has a son, Khonnon, though an accident claims Nisn's life before he can even see his new son or conclude his arrangement to marry Khonnon to Leyele.

Years later Khonnon, now a Talmudic scholar, meets Leyele and they fall in love. Neither knows about the vow they would be married and Sender does not know whose son Khonnon is. The intense Khonnon is already considering giving up his study of the Talmud to study Kabbalah, the great book of mystical knowledge and magic. Sender three times tries to arrange a marriage with a rich but rather sheepish young man. Twice the plans fail and Khonnon

Dybbuk

September 17, 1989

Page 2

believes his magic has averted the arrangement. The third time, however, an agreement is reached. Khonnon calls upon dark forces to help him but is consumed by his own spell and found dead. The day of Leyele's marriage--in fact, during the marriage ceremony itself--Khonnon's spirit returns from the grave as a d_y_b_b_u_k, a possessing demon, and takes over the body of the woman he was denied. Leyele is taken to a great and pious Rabbi, now nearing the end of his life and torn with self-doubts, who alone may have the knowledge to remove the demon.

If some of this smacks of William Peter Blatty, it should be remembered that this is a 1938 film based on a pre-World-War-I play.

T_h_e_D_y_b_b_u_k by S. Anski (a pen name for Shloyme Zanvl Rappoport), along with T_h_e_G_o_l_e_m by H. Leivick (a pen name for Leivick Halper), are perhaps the two best remembered (and most commonly translated) plays of the great Yiddish Theater. While Yiddish folklore has many d_y_b_b_u_k and g_o_l_e_m stories, and the play T_h_e_G_o_l_e_m was based on an actual legend ("The Golem of Prague"), T_h_e_D_y_b_b_u_k was an original story involving a legendary type of demon. The film retells the story of the play, but remains very different. Other than plot there is not much of the play carried over into the film.

All too commonly constraints of budget and even what appears now to be inappropriate style rob some scenes of their effect. Much of the acting is exaggerated in ways that might have been more appropriate to silent film or to the stage. In fact, in some ways this feels like an entire film done in a style much like the early, good scenes of the 1930 D_r_a_c_u_l_a. Director Michal Waszynski could well be excused on the grounds that he was making the film for a very different audience. However, just occasionally, a scene will be really supremely well done. The best sequence of the film is when Leyele, just before her marriage, is called upon to dance with the poor of the town, as is traditional. Leyele is reluctant and the dance turns into a grotesquery culminating with Leyele dancing with a figure of death. The film is a showcase for Yiddish songs, cantorial singing, and dancing, both traditional and modern. Much seems out of place, but this one dance creates one of the most eerie and effective horror scenes of its decade.

T_h_e_D_y_b_b_u_k stands as more than a good horror film. It is also an artifact of pre-Holocaust Yiddish film and of Eastern European Jewish village life. Curiously, for a Yiddish film some of the stereotypes that appear could be interpreted as being anti-Semitic. We see a miser with exaggerated Jewish features counting and recounting his coins. We see what is intended to be a great Rabbi looking pompous, fat, sloppy, and apparently lazy. Why a Yiddish film would have such images is open to question. Still, it is a pity that this film is not better known. It deserves to be thought of as a major film of its decade. I rate it +3 on the -4 to +4 scale. Congratulations to the National Center for Jewish Film for restoring this film.

RAMBLING ROSE

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

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Capsule review: Lightweight memoir of a boy growing up in the mid-1930's Georgia and of the commotion caused by hiring a former "loose woman" to do housework. Well filmed and to nobody's surprise Robert Duvall turns in a terrific performance as the father of the household. Rating: +2 (-4 to +4).
[minor spoilers in the review]

"She caused one hell of a damnable commotion," says a middle-aged Buddy (played by John Heard) recalling the young woman who came to live with his family when he was 13. The story of that commotion is told in a golden-toned flashback that makes up all but about five minutes of the film. The "she" he is referring to is Rose (played by Laura Dern). In a small Georgia town in the mid 1930s, a younger Buddy (played by Lucas Haas) has a crush on Rose. His daddy (played by Robert Duvall) has hired Rose to save her from a life of prostitution. But Daddy has no idea how much Rose is going to disrupt his well-ordered existence.

That well-ordered existence includes three precocious children, Buddy being the oldest, and a wife who is working on her Master's degree from Columbia. In talking, Mother tends to go off on philosophical tangents and Daddy calls that "going off into the fourth dimension." Mother takes a maternal interest in this new hired girl. Mother is played, incidentally, by Dern's real-life mother, Diane Ladd. The ruckus is caused by the fact that Rose just exudes and radiates sexuality. Both Daddy and Buddy are attracted to her. At this point one is really expecting the cliché of Southern gentility being a thin veneer over decadence. This film flirts with that cliché, but generally seems to say that underneath that gentility is just more gentility. Or perhaps it is just Mother's good example. Mother seems to have a sensitivity to the feelings of all living things with the possible exception of her own children. Daddy and Buddy are fascinated by Rose's sensuality and in one memorable scene watch from a distance as Rose walks around town attracting men. Later this quality of attraction will cause what may be more trouble than it is worth.

Robert Duvall is in all probability the best American actor alive. This might have been a pleasant enough film without his contribution, but it would have not been nearly as good. His gestures and his very posture are unfailingly perfect. Lines that could have been just straight flat dialogue become witty or very telling when Duvall delivers them. Laura Dern is not a great actress but she has the right look for Rose. She has a feral

sensuality that makes her attractive without being pretty balance that is just about right for Rose. The late Kevin Conway plays a Northern doctor with his accustomed slightly sinister edge. The one bad piece of casting is John Heard as the 1971 Buddy. He must look 49, speak with a Southern accent, and look like Lucas Haas. I usually like John Heard but he fails on all three counts.

_ R_ a_ m_ b_ l_ i_ n_ g_ R_ o_ s_ e is not a great film. Though at times it reminds one of other childhood reminiscences of the South such as _ T_ o_ K_ i_ l_ l_ a
_ M_ o_ c_ k_ i_ n_ g_ b_ i_ r_ d and _ T_ h_ e_ H_ e_ a_ r_ t_ I_ s_ a
_ L_ o_ n_ e_ l_ y_ H_ u_ n_ t_ e_ r, it has little of the power and does not really have a whole lot to say. But it is an enjoyable film and is well above the general run of films of the last few months. I would give it a +2 on the -4 to +4 scale.

Chicon V 1991
Con report by Evelyn C. Leeper
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(Part 3 of 4)

Panel: S S S Se e e el l l lf f f f- - - -
P P P Pu u u ub b b bl l l li i i is s s sh h h hi i i in n n ng g g , , ,
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
P P P Pu u u ub b b bl l l li i i is s s sh h h hi i i in n n ng g g g
a a a an n n nd d d A A A Al l l ll l l l T T T Th h h ha a a at t t t
S S S Sc c c ca a a ar r r ry y y y S S S St t t tu u u uf f f ff f f f

Saturday, 4 PM

C. Jones (mod), Mike Bentley, Brad Foster, Ann Marie O'Connell,
Andrew Porter, Brad Ross, Mike Ward

In the "Science Fiction and the Prophet" panel, someone observed the tendency of assuming everyone in a particular culture was the same-and how this assumption was wrong. Well, this panel proved that assuming all self-publishers are alike is a mistake also. Foster produced art books. Porter produced a semi-prozine. Ward was working on a project to provide public-domain books to libraries on compact disk. Each had different constraints, different budgets, and so on.

Now that public libraries will rent users a Macintosh with a compact disk drive, the question of equipment is at once easier and more complex. On the one hand, you don't have to invest in a lot of

equipment before you get started. On the other, you do need to decide whether to rent or buy, a decision once reserved for houses. In making this decision you might bear in mind what one panelist said: it's cheaper to buy the computer and the drive and transmit the publication electronically than to print up _ o _ r to ship the paper. If you need camera-ready copy, that's easy as well. Even if you produce compact disks, you can save substantially. Of course, the recipient has the choice (dilemma?) of reading from the compact disk on the screen or of printing and binding the output. Still, the compact disk medium has extended possibilities. Consider a compact disk that had text and music. (Ursula K. Le Guin's _ A _ l _ w _ a _ y _ s _ C _ o _ m _ i _ n _ g _ H _ o _ m _ e tried this, but had to do it by boxing a book and a cassette together.)

Networking has its disadvantages and pitfalls to the unwary, of course. For example, Porter says people keep asking him to upload _ S _ c _ i _ e _ n _ c _ e _ F _ i _ c _ t _ i _ o _ n _ C _ h _ r _ o _ n _ i _ c _ l _ e, because then they could "get it for free"--clearly not what Porter has in mind. I merely observed that the next time he wrote that he had to raise the subscription price because the postage rates were going up, he should remember that if he could transmit _ S _ c _ i _ e _ n _ c _ e _ F _ i _ c _ t _ i _ o _ n _ C _ h _ r _ o _ n _ i _ c _ l _ e electronically and get people to pay for it, he could charge less and make the same net profit (no pun intended)--in fact, he could charge less and make _ m _ o _ r _ e profit.

But this "Heroic Age of Information Retrieval" (as Ward termed it, since he sees us as brave trail-blazers inventing from scratch the tools that this new age will need) has some limitations which may not be apparent to anyone still marveling over the recent reconstruction of the unpublished Dead Sea scrolls from the published concordance. For one thing, you could always publish just about anything, even with just a

typewriter and a copier; it's distribution that's the bottleneck. There is some improvement in this area; electronic bulletin boards let you reach a larger, more focused group than ever before. But the major limitation is skill, or as Ross summed it up, "If you can't figure out how to do it with paper and pencil, you can't do it with a Mac either."

Masquerade
Saturday, 8:30 PM

The enormous line snaking through the Hyatt shortly before the initially scheduled starting time convinced us to watch the Masquerade over the closed circuit television in our room--or rather, in a friend's room, as our television reception was not very good. Going up, we discovered that the Con staff already had elevator monitors (a.k.a. "elevator Nazis") in place to make sure that everyone got to use the elevator in their proper turn. (This usually includes making everyone exit on the first floor, so that people can't get into a down elevator on the second floor and then stay in to go up, basically cutting in front of everyone else.) When I mentioned the monitors to Mark, his comment was, "We control the vertical--up! We control the vertical--down!" (_ O_ u_ t_ e_ r_ L_ i_ m_ i_ t_ s fans will get the joke.) Because of this, I decided to walk from our room on the tenth floor up to our friend's room on the nineteenth (stopping briefly at the Readercon party on the 16th on the way) rather than try to fight any crowds.

The Masquerade was initially scheduled to start at 8:30 PM, but this was changed at some point to 9 PM (though I don't recall seeing much advertising of that fact). The Children's Masquerade (the first part of the Masquerade as a whole) actually started at 9:20 PM, followed by a ten-minute intermission at 9:30 PM, followed by the presentation of the certificates for the Children's Masquerade. Mike Resnick as Master of Ceremonies did his best to fill all the blank time, but having the actual Masquerade start so late did not bode well.

Because we were in our room, we didn't get Masquerade programs, so I don't know how many entries there were. We had seen thirty-six by 11:20 PM, when we gave up and headed out for the parties; the first run-through didn't finish until after midnight (Constellation, anyone?). One thing that made it take so long was that everyone felt obliged to do a skit or have some sort of dramatic reading. The entry "Cats," in fact, was closer to a music video than a costume. Mark described this sort of thing last year as "costuming for the visually impaired." I yearn for a Masquerade in which there is no sound system other than the Master of Ceremonies' microphone and dramatic readings consist of the costume name, costume origin, and participants' names.

The costumes were better than last year's (not all that difficult, I admit) and formed a mixed bag. Some were very good, others very bad (large people can look good, but a costume that leaves them half-naked is usually not the best approach--and as someone pointed out, "Nudity is

not a costume"), and some just strange. There was a very well crafted costume which was Egyptian from the neck up, Japanese from the neck down, and titled "Medea." Mark looked at it and spoke the thought uppermost in all our minds: "What the fuck is this?"

After the first run-through, there was the usual intermission for the judges to farble. There was a professional comic for about forty minutes, but then Resnick, who had been told he might have three or four minutes to fill, found himself filling more like forty, while the judges farbled some more. Eventually, the agony was over. However, I can't report the results, because a full list of winners was never published in the newsletter, but "Octopus' Garden" won three awards, including People's Choice and Best of Show. The Judges' Choice was "The Lover of Mirrors."

At the ConFrancisco party someone said, "The Masquerade staff stormed into Program Ops [this morning] and demanded they cancel two sections of ballroom programming so they could do a run-through," to which my immediate response was, "I've seen no evidence of that so far this evening." And indeed, the technical problems were legion: bad sound, bad lighting, bad color transmission, bad timing,

We also went to the @ party, where we spent a couple of hours talking to people. I spent most of my time in the back room talking to Cliff Stoll. This was his first convention and I was curious what he thought of it. He thought it was "interesting" (a word that covers a multitude of sins). In particular, he found it quite a change from technical conferences in that when someone asked a question at a talk or panel, it could be a speech rather than a question, and it didn't always have anything to do with the topic at hand. I got the impression he was not going to become a regular con-goer. T h e C u c k o ' s E g g has been optioned for a movie, but Stoll and the script writer are arguing about how accurate it should be. For a change, the script writer is pushing for more accuracy and Stoll wants to see it changed to liven it up. Don't worry, Cliff, that will come in time.

Kimi Tipton did a great job with the party. Thanks, Kimi! (Except she never did publish the list of attendees, or their comments.)

Panel: B B B Bo o o oo o o ok k k ks s s s- - - -
M M M Mo o o ov v v vi i i ie e e es s s s- - - -
B B B Bo o o oo o o ok k k ks s s s

Sunday, 10 AM

George R. R. Martin (mod), B. Froman, Thorarinn Gunnarsson, Mark Leeper, Craig Miller, Richard Meyers, Melinda Snodgrass

Official Description: (none)

In addition to the scheduled moderator not being present, this

panel was on a table split in the center by a large podium and there was only one microphone. Even with a volunteer to pass the microphone around this obstruction, there were serious logistical problems.

Chicon V

September 1, 1991

Page 4

The proposition put forth at the beginning of this panel was that most movies adapted from books are not very good. This proposition led people to speak more in defense of adaptations than usual. For example, someone pointed out that A C l o c k w o r k O r a n g e was a good movie, even though it was very different from the book. On the other hand, Martin said that while "B l a d e r u n n e r" turned Philip K. Dick over a few times, ... T o t a l R e c a l l made it a blur."

Leeper got his turn at the microphone and, knowing once he relinquished it to the far end of the table he would never see it again, gave a list of films (with comments) that he said were at least as good as the sources that inspired them: T h e D a y t h e E a r t h S t o o d S t i l l, C a r r i e, T h e P r i m e o f M i s s J e a n B r o d i e, H i g h N o o n, T h e M a n W h o S h o t L i b e r t y V a l a n c e, and T h e M a l t e s e F a l c o n (though Meyers disagrees on the last). Other people named a few more: J a w s, P s y c h o, D a n g e r o u s L i a i s o n s.

Of course, there were many more examples of good books gone bad, but it was pointed out that panels such as these often went wrong by slamming the method by which books are made into movies. This may be of some interest, but the real question is whether the r e s u l t (the movie) is good or bad. Gunnarsson also noted that on panels such as these, people praise the writers and criticize the directors because it's the writers who are attending the convention.

Looking at the flip side, I asked why Hollywood so often produces a novelization of a movie that was based on a book to begin with. The primary reason, it seems, is that there have usually been enough changes to the original story that they want to have a book that is close to the movie. Why? Because people want a "paper videocassette," as one

panelist put it. Sometimes this can lead to quite unusual results: when
_ T_ h_ e_ I_ s_ l_ a_ n_ d_ o_ f_ D_ r_ M_ o_ r_ e_ a_ u came out, one company re-
issued the original
novel at the same time it issued the novelization. But this need to
have the book match the film is certainly one of the motivating forces
behind such novelizations as _ B_ l_ a_ d_ e_ r_ u_ n_ n_ e_ r, which was almost totally
unlike _ D_ o_ A_ n_ d_ r_ o_ i_ d_ s_ D_ r_ e_ a_ m_ o_ f
_ E_ l_ e_ c_ t_ r_ i_ c_ S_ h_ e_ e_ p?

Then there are the times that the novelization is actually co-
written with the movie: Orson Scott Card's _ T_ h_ e_ A_ b_ y_ s_ s, Isaac Asimov's
_ F_ a_ n_ t_ a_ s_ t_ i_ c_ V_ o_ y_ a_ g_ e, Fritz Leiber's _ T_ a_ r_ z_ a_ n
_ a_ n_ d_ t_ h_ e_ V_ a_ l_ l_ e_ y_ o_ f_ G_ o_ l_ d, Ellery
Queen's _ A_ S_ t_ u_ d_ y_ i_ n_ T_ e_ r_ r_ o_ r. (Someone accidentally pronounced
_ A_ b_ y_ s_ s as _ A
_ B_ r_ i_ s, leading another panelist to say, "Yes, that was the shorter
version.")

Sometimes the marketing department makes strange demands. Before
the film _ D_ i_ c_ k_ T_ r_ a_ c_ y came out, the makers didn't want anyone to know the
identity of the killer. So the first printing of the novelization had
no ending. Only after the film was released and the second printing
came out was the killer revealed in the book.

Writing a novelization may sound easy--after all, you have all the
dialogue, so you just need to fill in a bit here and there, maybe add

Chicon V

September 1, 1991

Page 5

some descriptions, right? Well, that's what Simon Hawke thought, but
Snodgrass and Martin told the story of how he discovered his error.

Hawke was called to do the novelization for _ F_ r_ i_ d_ a_ y_ t_ h_ e_ 1_ 3_ t_ h:
_ P_ a_ r_ t_ 6. He
had never done one before, but the money was good, so he figured he'd
have an easy time of it. How long did he have? One week. This did
sound a bit tight, but he plunged bravely ahead: "Sure, send the
script." So he got the script and started looking for the dialogue he
would be writing around. And he found:

(Close-up, hockey mask)

(Cut to medium shot of Suzie, running)

(Cut to close-up of axe, gleaming)

(Cut to close-up shot of Suzie, screaming)

(Cut to medium shot of Jason, running)
and so on ... well, you get the idea. Anyway, Hawke realized he was in trouble, so he called back and asked whether he could add some characterization or something. "Characterization? Sure, I guess so."
So Hawke did in fact manage to produce a novelization, but Martin wanted the audience to know that 1) any characterization in it was from Hawke and not from the movie, and 2) it's not as easy as it looks.

By the way, currently there are two versions of T_h_e_P_u_p_p_e_t
M_a_s_t_e_r_s
going forward, one moderately faithful to the book and the other wildly divergent, because the people in charge can't decide which they like better.

After this, I was going to go to another panel, but instead got involved in a conversation with Connie Willis, Martha Soukup, and another fan. I told Willis that after I read "Cibola" I happened to go into New York City at sunset and saw for the first time what she described (though I'm sure I had "seen" it before, if you catch my drift). She said that that was part of science fiction: making people see the same things differently. She also talked about her work a bit-- she enjoys the humor she writes, but that isn't what she works the hardest at. She also said that it's amazing what will offend some people: she had physicists who were offended by "At the Rialto" and a dinosaur story she wrote was rejected because it might offend paleontologists. (At least I think that was she, though in the back of my mind a voice is telling me I might be confusing this with something Robert Silverberg said in one of his panels.)

I mentioned to Soukup that I tried to find her story to read for the Hugo ballot, but given that A_m_a_z_i_n_g was subscription only (at least at that time) there were no copies to be found. She handed me a photocopy and said that a lot of people had said the same thing. I suppose that it got nominated means that among its readership it made a stronger than average impression, since its starting readership was smaller than for most other stories.

Panel: S S S Sm m m ma a a al l l ll l l l
P P P Pr r r re e e es s s ss s s s I I I Is s s ss s s su u u ue e e es s s s

Sunday, 12 noon

Greg Ketter (mod), Chris Edwards, Robert Garcia, Andrew Kyle,
Andrew Porter, J. Simner, Mark Ziesing

Official Description: (none)

The first thing said was that the term "small press" is relative: in England Mark Ziesing would be a major publisher. An attempt to define "small press" met with little success, and even trying to list some characteristics of a small press were unsuccessful. For example, one person claimed that small press books were more expensive. Perhaps sometimes this is true, but Mark Zeising's books at US\$25 are just about the same as hardbacks from large presses, and Pulphouse's "Author's Choice" series of trade paperback collections at US\$4.95 matches standard mass-market prices and is c h e a p e r than other trade paperbacks. And certainly styles differ: the panel felt there was a world of difference between the laid-back style of Zeising and the frenetic approach of Darrell Schweitzer (whose standard greeting is "Can I sell you one of my books?"). One panelist ventured a guess that Schweitzer makes more than 50% of his sales through personal contact.

Discussions of the role of the small press were more productive. Zeising like to publish books for authors he likes and books he believes in. Since he needs to pick and choose and work closely with an author, he sees no need to be a masochist and work with people he doesn't like. Greg Ketter was mentioned as working to bring Lafferty back into print (is this United Mythologies?). Some small presses do specialize in one or two authors: Arkham House with H. P. Lovecraft, Underwood-Miller with Jack Vance. This approach helps build up sales, and other publishers have used limited editions of big-name authors to do likewise.

Desktop publishing has been a big help to small presses, but distribution is still a problem. (Much of this panel runs together in my mind with the panel on "Self-Publishing, Electronic Publishing and All That Scary Stuff," so forgive me if I have mixed some of the ideas. As you can imagine, many of the concerns were similar.) Dick Witter's F&SF Book Company helped a lot in getting small press items out to the specialty stores, and now small presses are using the comic book distribution network as well. Collection problems abound though, and every panelist had some horror story about a distributor that left him or her in the lurch.

In spite of their vested interest in the small press world, the panelists said that beginning authors should set their sights high. (Even those involved in the small press magazine market said this.) "Start at the top," they said, "and don't be afraid of the marketplace." Ted Chiang did. He sold his first story, "Tower of Babylon" to O m n i and it went on to win a Nebula and get nominated for a Hugo, whereas if he had sent it to F r e d' s M i n i z i n e it would never have been seen by most people.

Some small press magazines "graduate" into the larger press. Fred Clarke's Cinefantastique five years ago had newsstand sales of 20,000; now it sells 40,000 on the newsstands. (And when Mark and I started reading it, back with issue #1, it had considerably less!) But he was able to do this by having a considerable cash buffer before he went to a distributor, because it takes several months for the cash to start flowing back. In addition, the average return rate for newsstands is 70% (I suspect for something like Cinefantastique it's lower). The only reason that newsstand distribution pays off is that it generates subscriptions. In fact, only five magazines make a profit on their newsstand distribution: TVGuide, Playboy, Penthouse, TheWeeklyWorld News, and something else. (Initially the panelist just gave the number. I asked which ones and got the response I indicated, but I have this feeling that "five" may not be accurate either. Let's just say few manage to turn a profit on the newsstand.)

Just as Brad Ross had said earlier that technical tools won't help you if you don't have the know-how, Kyle observed that "just because you're wearing a white smock and carrying a knife doesn't make you a surgeon." Just because you're producing something does not make you a small press publisher.

Panel: W W W Wh h h ha a a at t t t ' ' ' s s s st t t th h h he e e e
 D D D Di i i if f f ff f f fe e e er r r re e e en n n nc c c ce e e e
 B B B Be e e et t t tw w w we e e ee e e en n n n
 M M M Ma a a ag g g gi i i ic c c ca a a al l l l
 R R R Re e e ea a a al l l li i i is s s sm m m ma a a an n n nd d d d
 F F F Fa a a an n n nt t t ta a a as s s sy y y y? ? ? ?

Sunday, 2 PM

Eric Van (mod), Michael Kandel, Mary Rosenblum, Mary Zambreno

Official Description: (none)

Any good panel discussing the difference between two terms would start by defining their terms. In this case, it was (as someone once described something) "like trying to nail Jell-o to the wall." (Well, actually, I doubt that he or she spoke the part, but one can't be too

careful these days.) The panelists never tried to define fantasy, assuming that the audience had at least some idea of what it was, and also assuming (correctly, I think) that since many people consider magical realism a subset of fantasy the real question was "What is magical realism?"

Van quoted Darrell Schweitzer as having said, "Magical realism was invented by academicians who don't want to use the 'F' word." Van also quoted David Hartwell as claiming that the academic definition was that magical realism was fiction that was Latin American, that was political in nature, and that had Christian symbolism. I immediately had a problem with this--defining a type of fiction as having to come from a particular area seems like a bad start. And indeed many of the authors cited as magical realists were not Latin American: John Crowley, Italo Calvino, Mark Helprin, Jose Saramago (who is Portuguese, not Latin American), included Thomas Pynchon, Philip K. Dick, and William S. Burroughs. I mentioned Isaac Bashevis Singer, pointing out that he wasn't Latin American and didn't use Christian symbolism, but certainly _ f _ e _ l _ t like a magical realist. And there were individual works from other

Chicon V

September 1, 1991

Page 8

non-Latin-American authors: Michael Kandel's _ I _ n _ B _ e _ t _ w _ e _ e _ n
_ D _ r _ a _ g _ o _ n _ s, Pat
Murphy's _ F _ a _ l _ l _ i _ n _ g _ W _ o _ m _ a _ n (well, it does have a Latin American setting),
James Morrow's _ O _ n _ l _ y _ B _ e _ g _ o _ t _ t _ e _ n _ D _ a _ u _ g _ h _ t _ e _ r, W. P.
Kinsella's _ S _ h _ o _ e _ l _ e _ s _ s _ J _ o _ e,
Jorge Amado's _ D _ o _ n _ a _ F _ l _ o _ r _ a _ n _ d _ H _ e _ r _ T _ w _ o
_ H _ u _ s _ b _ a _ n _ d _ s (Amado is Latin American),
_ John Fowles's _ T _ h _ e _ M _ a _ g _ u _ s, and Orson Scott Card's "Prentice Alvin" books.
Films cited were _ E _ r _ a _ s _ e _ r _ h _ e _ a _ d and _ T _ w _ i _ n _ P _ e _ a _ k _ s.

One suggestion was that magical realists put more stress on the human condition than fantasists do, but this sounds a lot like the old "If it's good it can't be science fiction" argument dressed up in fantasy clothes. Another proposal was that magical realism showed some magic thing coming into the world and it was good rather than evil. A modification of this was that there was something magic that people just accepted; the "magic-ness" wasn't the focus of the novel. (In Kafka's _ M _ e _ t _ a _ m _ o _ r _ p _ h _ o _ s _ i _ s, people don't spend a lot of time marveling about how Samsae changed into a cockroach--they just accept it and go from there. For that matter, is all this dividing up really worthwhile? Where, for

