



like a bizarre idea and one limited to what we consider to be primitive cultures. Where would they get such a silly idea? I notice some enterprising person is making spaghetti in a can (Western civilization's biggest mistake) but the pasta is in the shape of the X-men. [-mrl]

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3. I am not sure if it says more about this country or how old I am getting that I was shocked to see a Cliff's Notes for THE WATCHMEN. [-mrl]

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4. True Story: Well, it was announced on the news this morning. "America's Most Wanted" is suing "America's Most Stupid." There is a television program about America's most wanted criminals. Now there is a similar program about the stupid sorts of things that would-be criminals do. You know, like writing robbery notes on their paystubs. Well, the "America's Most Wanted" decided that the name was too similar. Never mind the fact that they got their name from the FBI's "Ten Most Wanted" list. They borrowed the name fair and square and now they are suing over the name being borrowed from them. Now to me the two names do not sound very similar. But I could see if I was a television executive I might see things differently. After all don't they work on the principle that "wanted" and "stupid" are synonyms? [-mrl]

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5. CETAGANDA by Lois McMaster Bujold (Baen, ISBN 0-671-87701-1, 1996, 302pp, US\$21) (a book review by Evelyn C. Leeper)

Some of Bujold's "Miles Vorkosigan" stories are serious examinations of deep issues. CETAGANDA is not. It's a murder mystery.

Miles Vorkosigan and his cousin Ivan go to Cetaganda to attend a

state funeral. When they arrive, they are mysteriously attacked; then there is a murder. The rest of the novel is basically Miles solving the murder, along with unraveling a plot involved genetic engineering banks and a possible coup. As such, CETAGANDA seems to be written for people who are already fans of the series; if you haven't read any of the other stories, you will probably not find this one anything special, and you will undoubtedly wonder what all the fuss is about the series. This is, I believe, the first Vorkosigan novel to be published in hardback, and I find that a bit ironic, since it is a fairly lightweight entry. It's enjoyable enough, but you might as well wait for the paperback unless you're a collector of first editions. (And why did they decide to use a cover so similar to that of MIRROR DANCE? I mean, the two heads facing each other made sense there, but for this book they are meaningless.) [-ecl]

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6. PASTWATCH: THE REDEMPTION OF CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS by Orson Scott Card (Tor, ISBN 0-312-85058-1, 1996, 348pp, US\$23.95) (a book review by Evelyn C. Leeper):

There is a really interesting philosophical question here. Unfortunately, Card manages to side-step it entirely.

In the future (our future), a time machine has been invented, but it's not a chronoporter, it's a chronovisor. That is, you can't travel to the past, just view it. (I found myself asking the same question of this that I asked of Queen Tikka's television in PHANTOM EMPIRE: where were the cameras and microphones that were sending these pictures?) Tagiri, one of the watchers, begins to think they should go back and fix history to be better. (Why does she think this when everyone is sure that time \*travel\* is impossible?) One day Diko, her daughter who is also a watcher, sees a vision appear to Columbus telling him to sail west. Convinced that the vision is really a traveler from another timeline (even though everyone has rejected the idea that there are many parallel worlds), Diko manages to convince the project that 1)

they can build a time machine and 2) they should send her back to change history. What about the fact that changing history will wipe out their world? Card neatly postulates an eco-disaster that will leave everyone dead in a few years anyway, so what the heck. (I guess the lives of all those who lived in the mean time don't count.)

In other words, Card raises the issue of whether changing the past is ethical, given that doing so will cause the annihilation of millions of people. And then he drops it. Oh, his characters spend time talking about how much better the world will be for the (as yet non-existent) people in the new world, without talking very much at all about the fate of the currently existing people in the old.

Card also makes a few other slips, On page 171, for example, he claims that plagues sweeping through Americas wouldn't cause a Tlaxcala empire to fall any more than plagues in Europe caused the fall of empires there, but he overlooks the fact that the plagues in Europe didn't kill 90% and the plagues in America would. (Later, Card gets around this by having Diko spread a milder version of everything to create an immunity.)

Card also has a devout Muslim say, "I spit on your Christ." Devout Muslims consider Jesus a prophet and would never say such a thing. It could be that Kemal is not a true Muslim, but since he is portrayed as one, a little more accuracy and fairness would be nice.

I also thought it ironic that, given that one of Diko's co-travelers thinks the native American cultures superior, he nonetheless makes a speech (on page 183) about how mating without marriage is a repudiation of the community. The Americans he is so eager to save didn't necessarily feel this way. Why does Card insert this? To preach at the reader. Which is why I find the thoughts (on page 187) of a character thinking about the expulsion of the Jews from Spain particularly ironic: "No, the Jews had to be expelled because as long as the weaker Christians could look around them and see unbelievers prospering, see them marrying and having

children and living normal and decent lives, they would not be firm in their faith that only in Christ is there happiness. The Jews had to go." I wonder how many other readers realize that Card has hit on the real reason that many people are against same-sex marriages. I wonder if Card realized it.

Unfortunately, most of what Card is pushing is that the Europeans were almost entirely evil, and that the native Americans were almost entirely good, except for a few minor details like human sacrifice. Card seems to have jumped on the political correctness bandwagon here, overlooking the possibility that the lower technological level in the Americas was what kept the native Americans from being as successfully oppressive as the Europeans. By giving the Americans a technology on a par with the Europeans, it's quite possible that the time travelers could have created a world in which the Americans conquered and enslaved the Europeans. (Of course, Card wrote the book so they didn't. Heinlein was good at this sort of thing also.)

And one final note: Card lists the sources that he used in researching this book. The one source that seems to me the most obvious and necessary he doesn't even mention: the letters of Columbus himself, written to Ferdinand and Isabella and reporting on his four voyages. It is available in a bilingual edition from Dover Books. [-ecl]

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7. Boskone 33 (A convention report by Evelyn C. Leeper with a section by Mark R. Leeper) (Part 1 of 6):

Boskone 33 was held February 16-18, 1996, in Framingham, Massachusetts. While last year we had no traffic problems and it took us only five hours to get there, this year we had a blizzard, and it took us eight and a half! If Boskone is thinking of moving either later, or closer, or both, I'm for that!

Attendance was slightly up from last year, with about 800 attending. Boskone has been growing about 10% a year, apparently, and will soon outgrow the Sheraton Tara. The question of where it will move to remains unanswered.

Arriving as late as we did (we managed to register just as they were closing at 10PM, even though the materials said registration was until 10:30PM), we didn't get to any Friday night panels, though the one on "Literary History and SF" sounded interesting. Instead, we sat around the Con Suite, eating brie and talking to Jim Paradis and some other folks. Around 11PM we went back to the room and Kate showed up about a half hour later. She had arrived earlier, even though the bus ride scheduled for an hour and a half took four hours. (Kate also notes that, contrary to what the con materials say, the hotel will *\*not\** pick one up at the bus stop. Also, the con shuttle is listed as running *\*Thursday\**, Saturday, and Sunday.)

The Dealers Room was a round-up of the usual suspects. I found one book I was looking for (the second novel in an alternate history series), and subscribed to CRANK!, but most of what I was looking for was either unavailable because it was British, unavailable because it was canceled, or unavailable because it was out of print. I used to buy a lot more, but I must either be getting more selective, or just buying less.

Maybe I'm getting "paneled out," or maybe it's that Boskone panels tend to repeat themselves with minor variations, but I went to fewer panels this year than in previous years. (Of course, our late arrival on Friday precluded attending any panels Friday evening.)

#### Alternate Holocausts

Saturday, 12:00N

A. J. Austin, Mark Keller (m), Evelyn C. Leeper, Jane Yolen

The description for this said that what was meant was the Holocaust (with a capital "H," also known as the Shoah), rather than holocausts in general. We did stick to that, but almost completely ignored the "alternate" aspect of the title. In part this may be because although there have been many alternate histories about World War II, few deal with the Holocaust. This avoidance, in fact, was the central issue we discussed during this hour.

Keller included the Romany (gypsies) in his panel definition, and also mentioned that other groups were targeted: Communists, Jehovahs Witnesses, and "sexual perverts" (as defined by the German criminal code). This led one person to suggest a panel next year on alternate sex acts--the last light-hearted comment in this otherwise very serious panel.

Someone from the audience asked about whether revisionists could be considered as writing alternate holocausts. This simple question determined the direction of the panel, which focused more on the Holocaust and the teaching of it than on any alternate history versions.

Yolen observed that revisionism, or perhaps just ignorance, was rife. Her young adult Holocaust novel, *THE DEVIL'S ARITHMETIC* was published in Austria, and even won a major award there, yet the Austrian publisher's salesman asked why they were publishing it, since there was no such thing as Yolen described.

The major (or at least best-known) revisionist is Bradley Smith of the Institute for Historical Revisionism. (In passing, the fact that these people label their groups and work "revisionist" suggests that perhaps they are subconsciously acknowledging that they are trying to revise a history that is real.) Austin said when he had Smith on his talk show, there were two hours of calls from Holocaust survivors, one after the other, telling Smith and the audience that there *\*had\** been a Holocaust, and Smith wondered what would happen when all the survivors are gone. I noted that this was the primary reason behind many of the projects going on now to film and otherwise record the stories of Holocaust survivors.

Yolen said that from her dealings with young people, "anything more than eight years ago is the Bronze Age." In addition, "we re-invent history every half-generation," meaning that we re-evaluate the meaning of history, thereby "re-inventing ourselves" as well.

Even given this, Yolen said she is amazed by the fact that people don't know what is real. (I was reminded of Connie Willis's story of someone asking her in regard to her alternate Civil War story which characters were real--"for example, what about this Grant character?")

And with the Holocaust, it's even more difficult, because young people find the truth difficult to believe. When parents, or teachers, or other adults tell students about what happened, the students' reaction is largely, "I know you wouldn't lie to me, but

I can't believe this would happen."

One difficulty that was discussed at length is that until recently there was very little, if anything, taught about the Holocaust. Even for many students today, their only exposure to World War II other than SCHINDLER'S LIST is HOGAN'S HEROES. (Do people still watch that?) And even watching SCHINDLER'S LIST often doesn't evoke an "appropriate" reaction, but rather laughter. One could be charitable and say it is because people often laugh to cover up stronger emotions, but what some young people say is that it looks like just another slasher film.

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People talked about their first exposure to knowledge about the Holocaust. Most of the Jews said they had heard about the Holocaust all through their youth. Other people mentioned EXODUS (the book and the movie) and THE DIARY OF ANNE FRANK. Yolen mentioned a recent book, Lois Lowry's NUMBER THE STARS, which won a Newberry Award, but which she found offensive in that it was about a very smart Christian girl who saves a fairly unintelligent Jewish girl (Yolen gave the example that the Jewish girl wasn't even smart enough to remove her Star of David necklace when she was trying to hide her Jewishness). I suggested that some of the reticence to teach or talk about the Holocaust was that parents want to protect their children, and that this "protectionism" was even stronger a couple of decades ago.

Austin said that it wasn't just ignorance of the Holocaust, but ignorance about Jews in general that was more common than many might think. He said he was in college before he even met any Jews, though he did say he didn't believe that they had horns. (You may laugh, but a Jewish friend of mine said when she went to work in Texas, a co-worker kept staring at her hair and finally asked where her horns were.)

This led fairly directly to the question of how ones writes about the Holocaust. Yolen said she often encountered the attitude that since she wasn't a Holocaust survivor, she was not entitled to write about the Holocaust. There are a couple of problems with this. One, it implies that after all the Holocaust survivors are dead, no one is allowed to write about the Holocaust. The other is



that if this attitude is extended to other groups (and it has been), then only women can write about women, only blacks can write about blacks, and so on. As someone pointed out at another panel a few years ago (and I think in fact it was Yolen), Shakespeare managed to write about a variety of characters--young, old, men, women, white, black, Christian, Jewish--without actually being any of them.

Another problem Yolen has encountered which is particularly relevant to a panel at a science fiction convention is that fantasy ("non-realism" would perhaps be a better term) is looked down upon. It is looked down upon in general, of course, but it is even more negatively perceived in regard to a topic as serious as the Holocaust.

Rebecca Brown in the audience said that it was important for the children of Holocaust survivors to come forward. While I agreed that this was valuable, I said that this was not the same as first-person accounts, and that the revisionists had an easier time saying, "Well, that's just what you were told; you didn't really see it" to the child of a Holocaust survivor than, "You're lying about what you say you saw" to a Holocaust survivor.

Keller said that the children of Holocaust survivors also had their own stories to tell, since there were multi-generational effects. Yolen said that frequently Holocaust survivors carried a lot of guilt, and avoided telling their children the full story. She quoted Victor Frankel as having said, "The best of us did not survive," meaning that to survive one needed to have been selfish, and those who gave away their food, or took the place of others in the death sweeps, did not survive. And since the mind often shuts down in times of stress, it is also true that the Holocaust survivors may not remember everything that happened, or remember it incompletely, and so avoid its telling.

Yolen said that in writing about the Holocaust, there were issues of believability besides the obvious. She said that when she asked Holocaust survivors who were children in the camps what they did there, they answered, "We played." But if she writes that, people

won't believe it.

Again, we returned to the issue of ignorance. Even physical evidence is questioned: bones are often attributed to other groups, and in many cases we can't tell how the people died. So the revisionists say the bones belong to soldiers killed in battle, or to people who died of disease. I have heard, for that matter, that at Auschwitz the only groups told that Jews were killed there are the American groups; all the other groups are told only that Poles were killed there.

On the other hand, the Nazis were great record-keepers, and it was their records that eventually condemned them. As the panelists noted cynically, the moral is to burn your documents. Of course, the Nazis thought they would win and not have to answer to anyone for what they did. Yolen said that even though there is lots of evidence, writers need to "make the scene live," to be something the reader feels emotionally rather than just knows intellectually.

The discussion about documentation led to the question of who knew what when. Austin suggested that it may be true that many Germans didn't know about the Holocaust since most of the camps were outside of Germany. However, people are skeptical, because even people who lived right outside of some of the most notorious death camps claim they had no knowledge of what was happening. It is often claimed that the answer for this is that people didn't want to know, and so blocked out anything that might tell them.

Towards the end of the hour, the role of the United States was discussed. The United States not only barred Jewish refugees here (Eleanor Roosevelt had to push Franklin Roosevelt hard to get him to set up one refugee camp for Jewish children in Oswego), but it also actively prevented Jews from coming to other countries in the Western Hemisphere such as Cuba and Haiti. Someone in the audience asked if Roosevelt perhaps did the right thing based on the

situation at the time, but my response was that any decision that resulted in millions of people dying who might have been saved was the wrong decision.

In closing, Yolen said that she had done two Holocaust novels, and did not have the energy to do another. [-ecl]

### Movies We'd Like to See

Saturday, 1:00PM

Daniel Kimmel (m), Mark R. Leeper, Steven Sawicki,  
Darrell Schweitzer, Edie Stern

Kimmel broke this into several smaller topics. The first was films that were announced or made but we didn't see. He mentioned Alfred Bester's THE DEMOLISHED MAN from Brian DePalma. In fact, scenes in DRESSED TO KILL were an experiment with showing telepathy, and DePalma decided he couldn't do it well enough. (I thought TWILIGHT ZONE's "Mute" did a reasonable job.)

Kimmel also said that Kathryn Bigelow has announced she was doing "New Rose Hotel" by William Gibson, but this eventually mutated into the recent film STRANGE DAYS. And he said he'd still like to see a director's cut of DUNE. Later he mentioned that H. G. Wells's WHEN THE SLEEPER WAKES was supposedly in production at one point (according to CASTLE OF FRANKENSTEIN, which tells you how long ago \*that\* was), and called it "one of the great movies that never was."

Leeper started by saying, "Over the years I've seen several books I've liked announced as films and then canceled, and all I can say is, 'Thank goodness.'" The main problem, Leeper felt, was that people kept trying to turn novels--and long novels at that--into films, when they should really be looking at forty-page novellas. (A television mini-series could of course do a longer story.) For example, Leeper suggested that Christopher Anvil's "Mind Partner" could make a good film.

As far as announced but not made films, Schweitzer said that he had heard that all of Robert A. Heinlein has been optioned, though he said that a movie of FARNHAM'S FREEHOLD could really hurt Heinlein's reputation. Of all of these, only THE PUPPET MASTERS was made.

The next topic was remakes we would like to see. Schweitzer listed Ray Bradbury's MARTIAN CHRONICLES, J. R. R. Tolkien's LORD OF THE RINGS, Frank Herbert's DUNE, and Bram Stoker's DRACULA. Regarding the latter, Schweitzer described as the scene with Dracula turning Mina into a vampire in Coppola's film as "the single greatest perversion of any scene in literature." (Leeper commented later that since Schweitzer said he liked the Hammer version,

authenticity didn't seem to be his only consideration.) Regarding the question of authenticity, though, Kimmel noted that a best-selling book reaches fewer people than even a mediocre movie.

As far as films which should not have been made (a slightly different question than desired remakes), Stern offered BEASTMASTER (from the Andre Norton novel). A film that Sawicki cited was I, ROBOT, which wasn't actually made, but based on Harlan Ellison's script would have been longer and more complicated than the original story by Isaac Asimov, not to mention less fun (according to Sawicki).

The prime fact to remember, Sawicki said, is that novels and movies are two different forms. And Kimmel also said a movie should stand on its own, and not depend on the viewer having read the book.

Kimmel said that another problem was the Hollywood mindset. For example, he said, Hollywood wanted to take the Nazis out of THE PRODUCERS, and to put in Japanese instead.

Kimmel then asked for movies they made badly (which sounds like a cross between the previous two questions). He started off with SCREAMERS, which he said used the story ("Second Variety" by Philip K. Dick), but with a cold and off-putting style.

Kimmel said that the Philip K. Dick movies made so far leave the public with the impression that Dick writes slam-bang action books. And Schweitzer said that there was the same problem with H. P. Lovecraft. As he said, "'Herbert West--Reanimator' was worst piece of trash Lovecraft wrote and the film did justice to it." This led to his asking if a film can damage the reputation of a writer. Sawicki thought not, because audiences leave films very fast, before the credits roll, so they don't know there was an author involved.

Sawicki also said that the movie DUNE had nothing to do with Frank Herbert. By this he did not mean that it didn't follow the book, but that Herbert was not involved in the production in any way. The real problem with filming our favorite work, he said, is that a film is somebody's vision of a piece and we want to see our own vision.

Various other upcoming projects were discussed, included Robert A. Heinlein's STARSHIP TROOPERS from Paul Verhoeven, and both David Brin's POSTMAN or Heinlein's STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND with Tom Hanks. (Schweitzer described the story of the latter as "New Age

fascism.") Isaac Asimov's NIGHTFALL was mentioned by audience and Kimmel said that the producer of the first version still owns the remake rights for it, and also for Brian Aldiss's FRANKENSTEIN UNBOUND.

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Schweitzer cited CURSE OF THE DEMON as an intelligent expansion of a short story (M. R. James's "Casting the Runes"). Other good adaptations from literature included THE INNOCENTS (from Henry James's TURN OF THE SCREW), THE HAUNTING OF HILL HOUSE (from the Shirley Jackson novel), CHARLY (from Daniel Keyes's FLOWERS FOR ALGERNON), and THE LATHE OF HEAVEN (from the Ursula LeGuin novel).

Someone in the audience said that DOC SAVAGE, MAN OF BRONZE was a "missed opportunity," and Schweitzer thought CONAN THE BARBARIAN was a travesty. He suggested that for a good Conan movie one should combine the Robert E. Howard stories "The Tower of the Elephant" and "Roads in the House."

Kimmel asked the panel for "films we wish they would make." He said he had suggested Greg Bear's "Blood Music" to David Cronenberg, and Cronenberg said he was not the first person to suggest it to him. Kimmel also said he'd like to see Terry Gilliam directing Neal Stephenson's SNOWCRASH or Billy Crystal doing Robert Sheckley's "Language of Love." Leeper thought that Christopher Anvil's "Mind Partner" or many of John Collier's stories would be good, but said he doesn't want really beloved stories brought to the screen.

Schweitzer would like to see Ursula LeGuin's WIZARD OF EARTHSEA, but is afraid that Hollywood would make it either a straight fantasy or a children's film and change the racial makeup as well. (The latter led me to wonder just who will be cast as Johnny Rico in STARSHIP TROOPERS.) Schweitzer also thought that there could be a decent Lovecraft film, and suggested "The Whisperer in Darkness," or "Dreams in the Witch House." Someone said something about David Lynch doing "The Shadow Out of Time," which led back to the observation that Lovecraft is gaining a reputation as a splatter writer. As Kimmel quoted, "They call it show business, not show art."

Stern said she would like to see some of the well-known science fiction juveniles filmed for today's youth. In particular, she would like to see more films that say, "Science is good; thinking is good," while at the same time are shoot-'em-ups that kids will watch.

Sawicki said that Hollywood does big epics best, and suggested John Carpenter doing Roger Zelazny's "Amber." Other possibilities he listed (apparently not concerned about the inability to do a long work justice) were Larry Niven's RINGWORLD, David Drake's HAMMER'S SLAMMERS, C. J. Cherryh's "Faded Sun" trilogy and PALADIN, Alexander Jablokov's DEEPER SEA, Jack Vance's BRAVE FREE MEN, and Samuel Delany's DHALGREN. (The latter, was proof to me, anyway, that I don't want Sawicki picking stories for Hollywood to film.) Sawicki himself has written an as-yet unsold screenplay for Piers Anthony's ON A PALE HORSE.

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Someone in the audience said that Kurt Vonnegut lends himself to movies, but Stephen King does not. This led the panelists to note that there were actually several excellent films based on King's works: CARRIE, STAND BY ME, MISERY, DOLORES CLAIBORNE, THE SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION--in fact, the rule seems to be that the less King does on a movie based on his work, the better it is. Kimmel observed that the King film that King himself directed, MAXIMUM OVERDRIVE, was so bad that when the press kit for STAKE-OUT listed Emelio Estevez's films, it omitted that one.

Sawicki closed by reminding the audience that screenplays read differently from stories, and suggested they compare the novels and screenplays of two works, THE WICKER MAN and HAROLD AND MAUDE, to see the differences.

(A week after Boskone, we saw MARY REILLY, proof that you really don't want Hollywood to make a good book into a movie.)

[to be continued] [-ecl]

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If you get the dirty end of the stick, sharpen it  
and turn it into a useful tool.

-- Colin Powell