

when you are really just spinning your wheels. Now, when I exercise, staying in one place is just fine by me. If I wanted to see someplace real, I would go out and jog. Then I would see New Jersey and you don't get much realer than New Jersey.

THE MT VOID

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But the idea of Videocycle is that they actually videotape along a place where you might like to bicycle (the piece I saw was in Yellowstone Park) with the camera moving at bicycle speed along the route. Often you get to bicycle in a group, all to the tune of upbeat bicycle music. Sound like a good idea? Well, if you have been brought up on television it might. On the other hand, if you think about it, you can see why this idea is stupid.

First of all, National Parks such as Yellowstone are known for many fascinating sights, but the roads are just not that much of an attraction. The scenery is better than New Jersey, but when you travel at about 25 mph the scenery just doesn't change that fast. Watching the scenery on television is just like being there--if you have tunnel vision and a cold preventing you from smelling. Of course, that assumes you put a fan on yourself. (Fan not included.) Oh, yes: and assuming you are about twelve feet tall or have monster tires on your bike, since you actually look down and see the roofs of passing cars. The videocycle also tagged along with some unsuspecting sweaty bicyclist they found on the road until he got disgusted and let the filming truck pass ... at which point the narrator said, "It looks like Ed's slowing down." How nice. You can see some slob on television and pretend he's your bicycling buddy Ed!

The realism of the road is slightly marred when they cut to commercials, which are almost as dull as the main program. They told me how I could get 101 Golden Oldies on a record. There also was an ad for Videocycle where for \$29.95 you could get a whole uninterrupted tape of this boredom. They have a whole library of the roads of scenic places. About this time I got sick of this and changed the channel and there I was bicycling through the U.S. Senate in debate about the aftermath of the Persian. Another channel click and I was bicycling in Saddam Hussein's underground bunker. Either place was more interesting than the back roads of

Yellowstone.

2. The Film Forum 2 in New York City is having an anime festival:
- | | |
|---|---------------------|
| ROBOT CARNIVAL | 3/15-3/21 (Fri-Thu) |
| AKIRA | 3/22-3/23 (Fri-Sat) |
| LENSMAN | 3/24-3/26 (Sun-Tue) |
| ROBOTECH: THE MOVIE | 3/27-3/28 (Wed-Thu) |
| TWILIGHT OF THE COCKROACHES | 3/29-4/02 (Fri-Tue) |
| CASTLE OF CAGLIOSTRO/WARRIORS OF THE WIND | 4/30-4/04 (Wed-Thu) |

Box office is 212-727-8110; address is 209 West Houston St.
Admission is \$7. [-ecl]

Mark Leeper
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...mtgzy!leeper

If you give me six sentences written by the most innocent of men, I will find something in them with which to hang him.

-- Armand Jean du Pleiss,
Duc de Richelieu

CYRANO DE BERGERAC
A film review by Mark R. Leeper
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Capsule review: For those unafraid of subtitled films, there is a lot to like in the new film production of C_y_r_a_n_o_d_e_B_e_r_g_e_r_a_c. The play is excellent and this is perhaps the best production of the play ever done.
Rating: +3 (-4 to +4).

Over the past twelve months or so we have seen releases of film versions of three classic stage plays: Brannagh's H_e_n_r_y_V, Zeffirilli's H_a_m_l_e_t, and Jean-Paul Rappeneau's C_y_r_a_n_o_d_e_B_e_r_g_e_r_a_c. For production quality and for entertainment value I find it very easy to pick H_a_m_l_e_t for third place. Choosing between first and second place is somewhat harder, but for both production quality and pure entertainment value I give the edge to C_y_r_a_n_o. This is likely to remain the best adaptation of the story to film we will see in our lifetimes and very likely the most entertaining, even if we include Steve Martin's popular modern reframing R_o_x_a_n_n_e.

C_y_r_a_n_o_d_e_B_e_r_g_e_r_a_c is, of course, an adaptation of Edmond Rostand's popular play, first presented in 1897. (Rostand took some poetic liberty, incidentally, but Cyrano was a genuine historic figure who was soldier, expert swordsman, poet, playwright, philosopher, and even a science fiction writer. His best-known literary work today is A_V_o_y_a_g_e_t_o_t_h_e_M_o_o_n, which is why Rostand put so many references to moon travel in the play. Cyrano suggested several means of extra-terrestrial propulsion, mostly absurd, but on one he got lucky. Cyrano de Bergerac was the man who first suggested that space travel might be possible using rocket propulsion.) The story is of the noble swordsman who would like to woo his beautiful cousin but is stigmatized by his own prodigious nose. When it turns out that an inarticulate but handsome soldier under Cyrano's command also loves her, Cyrano agrees to help the soldier. The soldier will provide the good looks and Cyrano will provide the words. The story packs into a surprisingly small space comedy, tragedy, drama, action, and adventure.

This production cost seventeen million dollars and, taking into account modern production costs, that was something of a bargain, considering the number of detailed sets, costumes, and even battle scenes. Presumably shooting in Hungary kept prices down. Director Jean-Paul Rappeneau co-authored the script with Jean-Claude Carriere, editing down the Rostand and occasionally adding some of their own lines. The film is in French with English subtitles by novelist Anthony Burgess, who had previously translated the play. The producers decided that for each foreign language in which the film would be subtitled, they would get where possible the best-known translator of the play into that language to do the subtitles for the film. Gerard Depardieu has a

Cyrano de Bergerac

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very natural style as Cyrano that Jose Ferrer lacked in the previously best-known film version. His nose also looks surprisingly real, thanks to the contributions of Michele Burke, who receives on-screen credit for creating the nose. Special notice should be given to a fine score by Jean-Claude Petit, who produced many very good themes. For action scenes his score sounds not unlike Danny Elfman's score for B_a_t_m_a_n, but Petit also has some very melodic themes for other emotions. C_y_r_a_n_o_d_e_B_e_r_g_e_r_a_c is a top-flight production. I give it a +3 on the -4 to +4 scale.

Boskone 28
Con report by Evelyn C. Leeper
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[Part 2]

Why Doesn't SF Fare Well on the Big Screen?

Saturday, 3 PM

David Kimmel (mod), Chris Claremont, David Harris, Mark R. Leeper

Before starting on why SF doesn't fare well on the big screen (a question not unlike "have you stopped beating your wife?" in that it presupposes a previous question and answer), Kimmel put forward his nominations for best science fiction film of the 1980s: B_l_a_d_e_r_u_n_n_e_r and T_h_e_F_l_y. (I was a bit surprised at the omission of B_r_a_z_i_l, but never got a chance to ask about it.) Claremont's response was that B_l_a_d_e_r_u_n_n_e_r had "a background to die for and a foreground from hunger." Rather than argue this for the entire hour, they agreed to disagree.

The basic consensus of why science fiction films are rarely satisfying (which I think a better way to express the subject of the panel than the actual title) is that everything in Hollywood is done by committee these days, or at least by a lot of people: the producer has his concept; the director has his; the actors have theirs; the set designer, costume designer, and art director all get their chance to influence the film; and the editor gets one last shot at it. A science fiction story, on the other hand, is generally the product of a single author, possibly with some input from an editor. (If you don't buy the idea that e_v_e_r_y_o_n_e has some influence on a film, tell me who put the gay rights button on Meryl Streep's jacket in P_o_s_t_c_a_r_d_s_f_r_o_m_t_h_e_E_d_g_e? Was it Streep, or the costume designer, or the director, or someone else entirely? Whoever it was did something that helped define the character.) This whole argument is, of course, just the auteur theory recycled.

[Spoiler about T_o_t_a_l_R_e_c_a_l_l in this paragraph.] A debate on T_o_t_a_l_R_e_c_a_l_l followed, with Claremont claiming that the whole ending was scientific garbage, and someone else saying it was all part of the dream so of course it didn't have to be accurate. In defense of the latter position, Mark and I pointed out that when the technician removes the dream from the shelf in the early scene, he says, "Blue sky on Mars? That's new." So of course there's a blue sky on Mars at the end. The problem with all this is that you have to see the film several times (or know what to look or listen for) for the film to make sense, and this is as bad an idea on the part of the filmmaker as requiring that you read the book to have the film make sense--unless they issue you a copy of the book when you buy your ticket to the film. Someone (Harris?) said this points out another reason why films are less satisfying than books is that books are read at their own pace while films must be seen at the director's pace. Even if they aren't quite as convoluted, you still don't have a chance to say, "Let me hear that again" (especially

necessary if the person next to you decides to cough at the instant of critical dialogue) or to stop and think about what you're seeing or hearing.

Most science fiction films are action films. As Harris said, though, "It's possible to make a film about ideas--it's called a small film." And Claremont gave D_o_c_t_o_r_W_h_o as an example of "really interesting sci-fi on a budget of, like, five bucks." Someone suggested Masterpiece Theatre as the place to dramatize science fiction books, leading Leeper to suggest "I, Atreides." He also pointed out that the BBC does some very good adaptations as mini-series: T_h_e_I_n_v_i_s_i_b_l_e_M_a_n and T_h_e_D_a_y_o_f_t_h_e_T_r_i_f_f_i_d_s. L_a_t_h_e_o_f_H_e_a_v_e_n was also recommended, but that never really caught the public's imagination. Another reason the title of this panel is inaccurate, by the way, is that it covered television as well as film, and most televisions are not the "big screen."

But action films sell. Kimmel quoted the old adage about how it's called "show business," not "show art" or "show idea." This is also presumably why they have novelizations of films that were made from perfectly good novels (or short stories) to begin with--they need something new (and written at a lower level than the original, one suspects). So we see novelizations of T_h_e_M_a_n_W_h_o_W_o_u_l_d_B_e_K_i_n_g, T_h_e_I_s_l_a_n_d_o_f_D_r._M_o_r_e_a_u, T_o_t_a_l_R_e_c_a_l_l, and M_o_o_n_r_a_k_e_r (well, the last one had no connection between the film and the original book except the title, so I'll forgive them).

And, of course, since Hollywood wants to make money, everyone wants to be the "first to be second." So of course everyone copies whatever picture was the latest big success. This explains the current plethora of sequels, though as Bob Devney volunteered from the audience, "This never happens in literature ... sequels and such." (In case you couldn't tell, folks, this is irony, or as Steve Martin said in R_o_x_a_n_n_e, "Oh, Irony! We don't get that here. No, the last time we had irony was '82, when I was the sole practitioner of it and I got tired of being stared at.")

Only at the end of the panel did people bring up Japanese animated films ("Japanimation"). Unfortunately there was no time to discuss it, and it probably will end up getting a panel of its own at a future

Boskone (though I suspect most of the Japanimation fans go to Arisia instead).

One topic not discussed directly was adapting literature to the screen versus writing original science fiction for the screen and what sorts of results one gets in each case. It could be that what works on paper doesn't work on screen and trying to adapt existing works of literature is not the optimal way to create good screen science fiction.

Kimmel, by the way, is the Boston correspondent for V a r i e t y as well as a science fiction fan, so he brought a new perspective to an

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otherwise over-exposed topic. One thing he mentioned was that whenever he wrote a review and said "SF" or "science fiction," it would get changed to "sci-fi." So don't blame him.

The Best SF and Fantasy of the 1980s
Saturday, 5 PM

John R. Douglas (mod), Ellen Asher, Gregory Feeley, Fred Lerner,
Michael Swanwick, Heather Wood

Swanwick began by listing all the first novels of the 1980s (or rather, authors whose first novels appeared in the 1980s--it was left as an exercise for the reader to figure out the novel). Included were Clive Barker, David Brin, Robert L. Forward, John M. Ford, Barbara Hambly, Kim Stanley Robinson, Rudy Rucker, Lucius Shepard, and several others whose names I didn't write down fast enough.

Douglas asked the panelists to give their choices for best fantasy author of the 1980s and best science fiction author of the 1980s. The nominations were:

<u>P</u> <u>a</u> <u>n</u> <u>e</u> <u>l</u> <u>i</u> <u>s</u> <u>t</u>	<u>F</u> <u>a</u> <u>n</u> <u>t</u> <u>a</u> <u>s</u> <u>y</u>	<u>S</u> <u>F</u>
Asher	Robert Holdstock	Greg Bear
Douglas	Paul Hazel	Gene Wolfe
Feeley	John Crowley	Gene Wolfe
Lerner	John Maddox Roberts	S. M. Stirling & Janet Kagan
Swanwick	Lucius Shepard	Gene Wolfe & William Gibson
Wood	Terry Pratchett	David Brin

It was noted that all but one are male and all but one are American (and Pratchett was chosen by the one British member of the panel). "American" in this context seemed to mean "United States"; at least I don't think any of these authors are Canadian. Other British authors were mentioned in response: Geoff Ryman and Rachel Pollack in particular. But their works are much more available in Britain than in the United States, although Ryman's C_h_i_l_d_G_a_r_d_e_n was just published in a United States edition, and Pollack's U_n_q_u_e_n_c_h_a_b_l_e_F_i_r_e was finally sold to a United States publisher.

The panelists were then asked for what they considered the most neglected works or authors of the 1980s (presumably the most u_n_d_e_s_e_r_v_e_d_l_y neglected):

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P_a_n_e_l_i_s_t R_e_s_p_o_n_s_e

Asher Joan Slonczewski's D_o_o_r_i_n_t_o_O_c_e_a_n

Feeley Avram Davidson, Howard Waldrop,
Carter Scholz's P_a_l_i_m_p_s_e_s_t_s

Lerner Barry Hughart, Viido Polikarpus and
Tappan King's D_o_w_n_t_o_w_n

Swanwick Pat Cadigan, R. A. Lafferty, Paul Park

Wood Emma Bull's W_a_r_f_o_r_t_h_e_O_a_k_s, David Palmer's

E_m_e_r_g_e_n_c_e

Lerner concurred on Lafferty and Palmer as well. Wood said she liked only the first edition of E_m_e_r_g_e_n_c_e; the second had something tacked on to the end that she thought detracted from the book. Hughart has just had the third in his Master Li novels published (E_i_g_h_t_S_k_i_l_l_e_d_G_e_n_t_l_e_m_e_n).

Inexplicable successes was the next topic. Most panelists found themselves uncomfortable with this--they didn't like say negative things about other authors, and also pointed out that they could _ e _ x _ p _ l _ a _ i _ n the success of many of the worst books, at least from a commercial standpoint. When pressed Asher named L. Ron Hubbard's _ M _ i _ s _ s _ i _ o _ n _ E _ a _ r _ t _ h, prompting another panelist to suggest the "Dead Authors Book Club." This is not simply books written by people who are now dead; it is books written by people _ a _ f _ t _ e _ r they are dead. To L. Ron Hubbard's dekology we can add V. C. Andrews's last two books; further suggestions are welcome. One panelist asked, "But can you get signed editions?"

One member of the panel said he thought John M. Ford was not exactly an inexplicable success; he thought that Ford tries hard for failure, but fails at not succeeding. For example, Ford wrote a poem for his Christmas card one year; it somehow got distributed and won the World Fantasy Award ("Winter Solstice, Cameron Station"). He writes "Star Trek" novels, and then they become accepted outside the usual "Star Trek" readership.

Authors considered to have "re-flowered" in 1980s were Isaac Asimov, Robert Silverberg, and Frederik Pohl. Feeley took exception to the latter, saying that Pohl had done twenty books in the 1980s, two each year like clockwork, but none of them achieved the greatness of his earlier works.

Mention was also made of Bradley Denton for _ W _ r _ a _ c _ k _ a _ n _ d _ R _ o _ l _ l (though personally I think he is unlikely to achieve wide popularity). Denton's second book, _ B _ u _ d _ d _ y _ H _ o _ l _ l _ y _ I _ s _ A _ l _ i _ v _ e _ a _ n _ d _ W _ e _ l _ l _ a _ n _ d _ L _ i _ v _ i _ n _ g _ o _ n _ G _ a _ n _ y _ m _ e _ d _ e, is due out soon.

Dave Bara pointed out from the audience that he was surprised that no one had mentioned Dan Simmons. Feeley said that was because Simmons had really emerged in the 90s. This led to a long analysis of when exactly Simmons's novels came out, with the conclusion that since they were being voted on last year (1990), they had come out in the year before that (1989). But the fact that it was so close to the 90s

straightened out, they seemed to agree he was certainly one of the major writers to emerge in the 80s.

A brief stop in the Green Room resulted in my picking up the valuable information that brains should never be eaten with a spoon, only with a fork. If they can't be eaten with a fork, they're not fresh enough. (Also that Post-its are a valuable resource in planning out panels on a wallboard.)

At the Readercon party I found out why the Readercon anthology, M_o_n_o_c_h_r_o_m_e, is so much higher priced than NESFA Press offerings: M_o_n_o_c_h_r_o_m_e is a commercial venture rather than a non-profit one, and the publisher is still \$1000 in the hole. When the few hundred remaining copies sell (and there is a continuing sales level at least), he will eventually break even and maybe even make a little money.

Readercon, in spite of Eric Van's prior assurances to the contrary, is once again having the Kirk Poland contest. They are also planning a twenty-questions game about alternate worlds which Sue Anderson dubbed "What's My Time Line?"

The Turn of the Century: SF and Fantasy
in the Late 19th and Early 20th Century
Saturday, 10 PM

Mark R. Leeper (mod), John Barnes, Hal Clement, Don D'Amassa, Mark Keller

Mark hadn't realized he was the moderator of this panel (to which he was a late addition) until we read the sign outside the room. Luckily the panelists had all done their homework and didn't need a lot of prepared questions to get going. D'Amassa even printed out a list of all his books written before 1925--but then forgot the list at home.

Keller said he got interested in this subject while studying the history of technology. Clement got interested in the subject because, although he was born after the period in question, a lot of what he read while growing up was written then, and some series started in the period were still in progress. (For purposes of the panel, the period was set at 1880 to 1914, the start of World War I.) One he listed in particular was Harry Collingwood's L_o_g_o_f_t_h_e_F_l_y_i_n_g_F_i_s_h.

So who was writing and what was written during this period? Well, the obvious authors to note were Jules Verne and H. G. Wells. Another author, who has not maintained his popularity as well, was John Kendrick

Bangs, whose works (T_h_e_H_o_u_s_e_b_o_a_t_o_n_t_h_e_S_t_y_x, R_e_t_u_r_n_o_f_t_h_e_H_o_u_s_e_b_o_a_t)

* Post-it is a registered trademark of the 3M Corporation.

inspired Philip Jose ' Farmer's "Riverworld" books decades later. George Allan England was cited; one of his books was T_h_e_A_i_r_T_r_u_s_t, a book which supposed that a future government would find a way to put a tax on air. A local author, Edward Bellamy from Chicopee, wrote L_o_o_k_i_n_g_B_a_c_k_w_a_r_d: 2_0_0_0-1_8_8_9. He also wrote a much less well-known sequel, E_q_u_a_l_i_t_y, which someone from the audience volunteered was available at Bryn Mawr Books in Cambridge (?). Lost-race tales began popular when stories of the discovery of the great cities of Zimbabwe and Machu Picchu came back. H. Rider Haggard was very active during this period, with tales of lost races such as S_h_e and K_i_n_g_S_o_l_o_m_o_n's_M_i_n_e_s. Talbot Mundy, also discussed, actually wrote after the period under discussion.

John Jacob Astor wrote A_J_o_u_r_n_e_y_i_n_O_t_h_e_r_W_o_r_l_d_s. Contrary to what was said at the panel, he d_i_d go down on the Titanic. Speaking of the Titanic, someone in the audience mentioned a woman who predicted World War I and the sinking of the Titanic, or at least a ship very similar to the Titanic, in a novel called F_u_t_i_l_i_t_y. Walter Lord in the foreword to A_N_i_g_h_t_t_o_R_e_m_e_m_b_e_r lists the many amazing similarities between Morgan

Robertson's ship T_h_e_T_i_t_a_n and the real T_i_t_a_n_i_c--even the fact that Robertson predicted an April sinking, and the real T_i_t_a_n_i_c sank in April of 1912. (Well, it's probable that Robertson figured April is warm enough to start sailing and cold enough still to have icebergs.)

M. P. Shiel wrote T_h_e_P_u_r_p_l_e_C_l_o_u_d. Robert Chambers's K_i_n_g_i_n_Y_e_l_l_o_w with its futuristic city, Edwin L. Arnold's G_u_l_l_i_v_e_r_o_f_M_a_r_s, William Hope Hodgson's H_o_u_s_e_o_n_t_h_e_B_o_r_d_e_r_l_a_n_d, Rudyard Kipling's "Night Mail" and "Simple as ABC," Erskine Childers's R_i_d_d_l_e_o_f_t_h_e_S_a_n_d_s, and "The Bowman" (by some unnamed author) were all recommended.

Also named was George Griffith. Other authors cited whose works fell slightly after the period included Francis Stevens (a pen name for Gertrude Barrows Bennett) and Edgar Rice Burroughs. (Someone mentioned Russ Rocklynne, but he wrote years later.)

Just as today we have "techno-thrillers," they had them during the turn of the century. Of course, now those "future war" stories are all

alternate histories. (It is actually a matter of debate as to whether books set in a future relative to their authorship become alternate histories when the time of their action arrives and the world doesn't match what is in the book. I will leave it to the reader to make his or her own decision. I suspect Keller will not be including these in his bibliography of alternate histories, however.) Famous techno-thrillers of the period that were mentioned included George Chesney's "Battle of Dorking," P. G. Wodehouse's "The Swoop," and Wells's own W o r l d S e t F r e e.

A discussion of W a r o f t h e W o r l d s revealed that Wells wrote this after hearing about a European assault on an aboriginal community in Australia. The parallel of a people attacked by weapons beyond their understanding is clear.

The claim was made that in general the quality of the plot and ideas in works written during this period was in inverse proportion to

the quality of the writing, although of course there were exceptions.

Keller said that there was a lot of what we would call "New Age" stuff written in the 1890s, by H. P. Blavatsky and others. Of course, they thought of it as science. There were psychic detectives galore, the original ghostbusters! Even then, there were two paths: one school had the menace revealed as fake psychic phenomenon, the other found the menace to be truly supernatural. William Hope Hodgson straddled the fence by writing six stories: three with fake supernaturalism, three in which the supernatural elements are discovered to be real.

This led to mention of the practice of presenting fiction as fact. Leeper said that some of Jules Verne's works were published in newspapers as straight travelogues. It was pointed out that even today authors such as George Adamski and Whitley Strieber seem to be engaging in this practice. Keller recommended a book entitled T r a v e l L i a r s, published by Dover, which consists of fictional travelogues presented as fact by con artists and other liars. (Either he got the title wrong, or it's out of print, as I couldn't find it listed in B o o k s i n P r i n t.)

Barnes said his interest arose because of his interest in the theater of this period. Having discovered how to do great special effects, the theater then made sure they had science fiction or fantasy

works to use them in. The Jacob's Ladder was first used in T_h_e
V_a_m_p_i_r_e'_s_V_i_c_t_i_m (1887), which in spite of the title was a parody of
F_r_a_n_k_e_n_s_t_e_i_n.

Dime novels were also popular. Leeper even brought an example
reprinted in a Dover book (T_h_e_S_t_e_a_m_M_a_n_o_f_t_h_e
P_r_a_i_r_i_e). Other dime
novels were R_o_u_n_d_T_r_i_p_t_o_t_h_e_Y_e_a_r_2_0_0_0 and
M_a_r_o_o_n_e_d_i_n_1_4_9_2.

The Futurist Movement, primarily an artists' political movement,
produced science fiction, or at least futuristic works, in Italy during
the period of 1910 through 1930, but its influence never was very
strongly felt in the United States. Fantasy was also popular in Italy
at the time. In Germany, Carl May was writing; in Russia, Konstantin
Tsiolkovsky.

What still holds up after all these years? Most of H. G. Wells,
especially T_h_e_W_a_r_o_f_t_h_e_W_o_r_l_d_s, Hodgson's
H_o_u_s_e_o_n_t_h_e_B_o_r_d_e_r_l_a_n_d, and
Jules Verne's works--assuming one finds a reasonably good modern
translation and eschews the earlier, wretched translations that led to
so much unwarranted criticism being heaped upon him.

Sexual Symbolism in Fandom Saturday, 11 PM

I arrived late for this (probably no great loss). All of the
clever double-entendres will fall flat on the printed page, so I will
spare you them. To give you some idea of the level of humor, Laurie was
referred to as the "female Mann," and upon seeing someone in the

audience signaling a question, said, "Someone back there is going to
save my life with their hand." This generated much laughter.

Someone said that the foot was a phallic symbol, because it goes
right into the mouth. In talking about buttons, someone else said they
were a phallic symbol: "See, they have a little prick right here"
(pointing to the back). "No, Harlan's in California," said another
person (who paid me one whole cent not to give their name here).

At one recent convention someone was going around with a peace-bonded wand--one with a condom over it. This led to discussion of fan[zine] reproduction, with the observation that corflu was _ n_ o_ t a good contraceptive.

Laurie said that one reason that the good stories were more recent is that many years ago, conventions were almost all men, to which Franklin predictably said, "That's okay."

Then of course there was the questions of why it's called "hard" and "soft" science fiction (or fantasy), what exactly _ i_ s a gopher hole, and why there are no more sleazycons (described by one panelist as a "high-school make-out party with older, smellier fans").

This panel was concluded by a long (probably false) story about a big-name author getting in an argument with a fan. When arguing, this author purportedly has a tendency to lean forward, and some other fan supposedly came up behind him unseen and pretended to be sodomizing him. The story goes on to claim that other fans then got in line to take turns doing this bit of theatre (proof the story must be false--I've never seen fans able to make an orderly queue for anything!). Eventually the author turned around, saw what was happening, and got, not surprisingly, very irate. When the initial offending fan was pointed out to him, said author made a gun of his fingers, pointed it at the fan's crotch, and said, "Bang!" to which a passing fan said, "You killed it, you eat it." (Because I think the entire story belonged in the panel on fannish urban legends, I will not provide further identifying details, so don't ask. If you were actually present at the purported event, I would be curious to know what _ r_ e_ a_ l_ l_ y happened.)

Around the World in 80 (or more) Pages:
How Writers Use Their Real Life Travel
Sunday, 11 AM
Greer Gilman (mod), Delia Sherman, Elyse Guttenberg

For this panel, all three authors were talking more about how they used travel for their current book (Gilman's _ M_ o_ o_ n_ w_ i_ s_ e; Guttenberg's _ S_ u_ n_ d_ e_ r, _ E_ c_ l_ i_ p_ s_ e, _ a_ n_ d_ S_ e_ e_ d; and Sherman's _ T_ h_ r_ o_ u_ g_ h_ a_ B_ r_ a_ z_ e_ n_ M_ i_ r_ r_ o_ r) than about travel and writing in general. All three also used Western cultures. _ M_ o_ o_ n_ w_ i_ s_ e was set in an imaginary landscape based somewhat on Britain. _ T_ h_ r_ o_ u_ g_ h_ a_ B_ r_ a_ z_ e_ n_ M_ i_ r_ r_ o_ r was set in a landscape "translated" from a duchy in the French Alps. _ S_ u_ n_ d_ e_ r, _ E_ c_ l_ i_ p_ s_ e, _ a_ n_ d _ S_ e_ e_ d was set in a

northern landscape which drew on Alaskan and Canadian regions for inspiration. And, of course, there is another approach, that of setting a novel in a historical or real landscape. This is probably more common in science fiction than in fantasy, though it is certainly possible there as well.

Though Sherman described her finding of the Alpine village "serendipity," it was clear that she had set out looking for it. The panelists on the whole did not address which came first, the idea or the landscape. They seemed, however, to travel to do research after the novel was in their minds, not to look at a landscape and say, "What a great setting for a story!" though Guttenberg allowed as how this sometimes happens. In general, it seemed to be thought that doing book research for books got authors interested in traveling rather than the other way around.

Travel was considered useful for getting all the details not available in books: settings, accents, and dialects. Sherman thought that travel would help authors avoid the all-too-common pitfall of writing "novels set in suburban America with funny clothes." One of the panelists quoted Brian Aldiss (from T_h_e_J_o_u_r_n_a_l_o_f_t_h_e_F_a_n_t_a_s_t_i_c_i_n_t_h_e_A_r_t_s) as accusing fantasy writers of not having traveled and of writing generic landscapes. I put in a plug for maps in books, both as an aid to the reader and as a way to make sure the author has a definite landscape in mind. Gilman said the only problem with this was that in her book, part of the plot was that the landscape changed for different people at different times.

As far as book research, cultural anthropology books were considered the mainstay by all three panelists. Guttenberg (I believe) particularly mentioned R_e_i_n_d_e_e_r_M_o_o_n by Elizabeth M. Thomas. Judith Tarr was cited as someone who not only does her research, but also includes a postscript telling where she strayed from history, or where she embellished it.

Guttenberg was asked about the possibility of her writing stories set more definitely in Alaska and less in a vague "northern climate." She answered a slightly different question of why she didn't retell traditional Alaskan stories: because they are "owned" by families, who also believe that the stories must be told correctly or disaster would befall them. Someone else brought up the book T_h_e_B_e_a_n_s_o_f_E_g_y_p_t,_M_a_i_n_e in which Carolyn Chute poked fun at people in the town where she lived, and as a result was now p_e_r_s_o_n_a_n_o_n_g_r_a_t a in the whole state of Maine.

African Cultures in Science Fiction

Sunday, 12 noon

Shariann Lewitt (mod), Esther Friesner, Evelyn C. Leeper, Mike Resnick

Resnick's qualifications for this panel are clear to anyone who has read his recent works. Lewitt and Friesner both have studied and written stories set in the North African and Middle Eastern areas. My

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qualifications, as I told the audience, seemed to consist of the fact that I took a three-week vacation to Egypt, Kenya, and Tanzania. (But I didn't let that lack stop me from having opinions, as you might have guessed.)

Resnick said that much of his Africa-inspired work was based on alien cultures in contact, an old science fiction idea that one can see in reality in Africa. He compared the portrayals of how we would colonize the stars, usually fairly upbeat, with the reality of how we colonized Africa--not nearly as benign.

I talked about the geography of Africa, and how there really were three (perhaps even four) distinct areas one could examine. Northern Africa, with its strong Islamic influence and ages-old contact with Europe and Asia, is a very different setting than sub-Saharan Africa. Sub-Saharan Africa, in turn, can be subdivided into "middle Africa" and South Africa, since South Africa is different enough to warrant separate examination. And even "middle Africa" could be split into East Africa (with a German and British influence) and West Africa (with a French and Belgian influence). In this regard I said I frequently found myself at a loss, since when they were teaching me geography in school, it was right at the time when every week seemed to bring a name change for a country in Africa, so they never taught African geography, and my knowledge was limited to what I culled from my stamp collection. Even today, I do "double-thinks," translating "Zaire" into "Belgian Congo" and "Burkina Faso" into "Upper Volta" (assuming I can even remember the translations).

African settings go back quite a ways in science fiction (and fantasy), of course. Edgar Rice Burroughs with his Tarzan novels and H. Rider Haggard found it an excellent locale--vast areas of unexplored (by Europeans) territory made it the "Dark Continent" and allowed all

sorts of lost-race and adventure stories to be set there. For a long time, though, Africa languished as a background for science fiction. The old stereotypes of Africans had fallen into disfavor (deservedly, one might add), and no one seemed to know what to replace them with. Egypt remained popular with stories dealing with lost secrets of magic, even up through Anne Rice's *Mummy* today. North Africa was used quite successfully by George Alec Effinger in *When Gravities Fail* and *Firien* (The third novel, *The Exile Kiss*, is due out very soon.)

S. M. Stirling's trilogy of Draka stories (*Marching Through Georgia*, *Under the Yoke*, and *Stone Dogs*) fits more into the South Africa

category. The middle Africa category would include Resnick's "Kirinyaga" stories, "alternate Teddy" (Theodore Roosevelt) stories, and *Ivory*; Robert Silverberg's "Lion Time in Timbuctoo"; Howard Waldrop's "The Lions Are Asleep This Night"; and Mary Aldridge's "Indinkra Cloth."

Another category that probably should be at least mentioned is that of works set elsewhere but containing strong influences of African culture. Jorge Amado's works, parts of Umberto Eco's *Foucault's Pendulum*, and some of Octavia Butler's novels would fall into this

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category. (Her *Wild Seed* also takes place partially in Africa.) A good non-fiction background book in this area is *Marron Societies*: *Rebel Slaves Communities in the Americas*, edited by Richard Price.

There was a lot of discussion of African history and politics, centering on the tribalism that is one of the main factors in politics, and one of the most over-looked or under-rated. Tribal languages are still prevalent, with official languages being either artificial creations (Swahili was invented by Arab slave traders) or "official" in name only, and not really used by most people. Resnick recommended the book Mort Rosenblum and Doug Williamson's *Squadring Eden*: *African Atlas* as the best single source for background on Africa. (As luck would have it, this book just went out of print. Still, libraries would

be likely have it.) Resnick pointed out that the most stable economy in Africa today seems to be Zimbabwe's--ironic since this country was under sanctions for years and could trade only with South Africa. As a result they had to become self-sufficient and when the sanctions were lifted, they were in much better economic shape than other countries with no sanctions. I observed that this threw a bit of a monkey-wrench into the arguments of those people who said we needed to give sanctions more time to work against Iraq.

In discussing Stirling's works, I mentioned that I found the first volume unpleasant and so did not read the second and third. (I also had some technical nits to pick, but that was not my primary reason.) The panelists were quick to emphasize that Stirling himself was not saying that a Draka domination of Africa or of the world was a good thing, and that one shouldn't attribute to authors the beliefs of their characters--not that I was doing that, but I had not specifically disavowed that. Resnick responded that he too found it necessary to remind people that just because the mundumugu in the story has certain beliefs does not mean that he (the author) has them as well, and in fact, that he is writing the stories in part to warn of the danger of such a philosophy as the mundumugu espouses.

Homophobia in SF

Sunday, 2 PM

Franklin Hummel (mod), Elisabeth Carey, Gottlieb Edison, Delia Sherman

The first thing I wanted to hear was a clarification as to the subject matter of the panel: was it homophobia as shown by science fiction authors in their writings, or was it homophobia as shown by characters in science fiction, or was it homophobia as a theme in science fiction? It turned out, not unexpectedly, to be the first, though at one point there was some confusion about whether the phrase "a homophobic character" meant a character who is homophobic or a character written in a homophobic manner. The panelists' contention was that science fiction fandom (including authors) prides itself on being more open and accepting than society as a whole, but this is not always the reality. When the subject of lesbian and gay programming came up a few years ago, this panel topic was suggested and shelved as not a good foot

to start off on, but the appearance of Orson Scott Card's article in

S_u_n_s_t_o_n_e was what decided them on actually holding it. (The article is too long to reproduce here, and copyrighted anyway, but one of his contentions was that society should keep anti-gay laws on the books to discourage homosexuality, but that they should only be enforced selectively. No indication of who decided what laws should be enforced against whom was given. As a side note, I would mention that Dennis Prager published an entire issue of U_l_t_i_m_a_t_e_I_s_s_u_e_s on Judaism and homosexuality in which he concluded that Judaism condemned homosexuality, but that he was o_p_p_o_s_e_d to laws outlawing it, and i_n_f_a_v_o_r of laws guaranteeing equal civil rights regardless of sexual orientation. But I digress.)

Books that set the panelists teeth on edge included several that had been otherwise widely praised. For example, Sheri Tepper's G_a_t_e_t_o_W_o_m_e_n's_C_o_u_n_t_r_y has as one of its premises that the tendency toward homosexuality has been bred out of the society. Card's novels were also mentioned, in particular S_o_n_g_m_a_s_t_e_r and A_P_l_a_n_e_t_C_a_l_l_e_d_T_r_e_a_s_o_n. Many other novels show the usual cliches and stereotypes. Unfortunately, the cliches and stereotypes are so strong that even when they are only part of the character (for example, Baron Harkonnen in D_u_n_e), that's all that comes across. On the positive side, Diane Duane's S_o_Y_o_u_W_a_n_t_t_o_B_e_a_W_i_z_a_r_d shows a favorable portrayal of two gay characters, though so subtly that she got them past not only the publishing house, but many readers.

There is a bibliography of science fiction with gay and lesbian characters, U_r_a_n_i_a_n_W_o_r_l_d_s by Eric Garber and Lyn Paleo, now in its second edition. However, it fails to include at least one author whose recent works have had gay characters in a rather definite manner: Hilbert Schenck. His "Steam Bird" has an emphatically homophobic President and assistant (both, by the way, are clearly portrayed as morons). (This may be why I ought the panel could as easily be on homophobia as a theme as on homophobic portrayals.) Schenck's "Hurricane Claude" there are two gay lovers who are the heroes of the story, a plane named "Gay Enola," and a raving homophobe who, it turns out, is really repressing his own homosexual urges and comes around to right-thinking by the end of the story. And "A Down-Easter Storm" has a gay lawyer as one of the heroes.

I had to leave this panel early, so there were undoubtedly other books praised or damned after I left.

By the way, an example of what's wrong with fandom today is that before the panel started a fan was telling me how elitist NESFA was, and how they were putting on a convention no one wanted to go to (so why was he here?), and then when the subject of Card came up, he asked who Orson Scott Card was. Some people, we don't need.

Miscellaneous

As with last year, the membership was under 1000. Attendance was (presumably) even lower. It seems as if the distance from Boston, coupled with the emergence of Arisia, has kept the size from increasing, or even returning to pre-Noreascon III levels.

Next year for Boskone 29 (February 14-16, 1992) the Guest of Honor is Jane Yolen.

Panel ideas for future Boskones (or other conventions):

- The Influence of Beowulf on Science Fiction
- How to Pick a Reference Book (both literature reference and media reference)
- Alternate Histories with Zeppelins
- Words That Have No Rhymes--Or Do They? (humorous panel, as if you couldn't guess)
- Fantasy Opera (or Science Fiction Opera) (the former would cover Wagner's "Ring"; the latter would include Blomdahl's A n i a r a and Todd Mackover's V a l i s)

THE GLENDOWER CONSPIRACY by Lloyd Biggle, Jr.
Council Oak Books, 1990, ISBN 0-933031-25-4, \$14.95.
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper
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This is Biggle's second Holmes pastiche, the first being T_h_e
Q_u_a_l_l_s_f_o_r_d_I_n_h_e_r_i_t_a_n_c_e (1986). That one was
easier to find than this,

since it was published by St. Martin's Press, a major publishing house.
Both are written (Biggle claims) by Edward Porter Jones, a Baker Street
Irregular who eventually rose to become Sherlock Holmes's apprentice.
Both have two strands, one introduced by the Baker Street Irregulars,
one by a client, which eventually join up.

Biggle has, however, dropped the technique of having Jones telling
the reader everything Holmes is doing and why he's doing it. This, as
far as I'm concerned, is a great improvement, letting the theatrical in
Holmes provide the denouement at just the right time instead of giving
everything away beforehand. As for the heavy dose (one might say
overdose) of Welsh background, well, I think Biggle was stuck between a
rock and a hard place. He needed to give all the background so that the
reader could understand the story and the mystery, but it ended up
sounding too much like a travelogue most of the way through. And though
this will seem contradictory, he s_h_o_u_l_d have included phonetic
transcriptions for the Welsh. If he's going to include so much of it,
and talk about how hard it is to pronounce, at least he could give us a
fighting chance.

On the whole, though, I would recommend T_h_e_G_l_e_n_d_o_w_e_r
C_o_n_s_p_i_r_a_c_y--
if you can find it. (Badger your library if nothing else.)