



1. I think we all know these are not the easiest of times to make a living. It is pretty tough for some people to earn a living. I think even some successful people may not be entirely happy with the profession they have taken. Really the fellow I feel sorry for is the author who hit upon the fantastically successful "Where's

THE MT VOID

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Waldo?" series. This guy just cranks one book out after another. This is one of those crazy ideas that shouldn't work but does. Waldo is this little string bean in a red-striped stocking cap. He looks like the teenage son of Crackle. (You remember Crackle, don't you? You used to see him hawking cereal a lot. These days he runs the ad agency Crackle, Peabody, Fisher and Snap.)

The artist draws a landscape that looks like a poster for Zero Population Growth--you know, acres of solid people like Times Square on New year's Eve--and you have to find one jerk in a striped stocking cap. If you can do it in under five minutes they offer you a career in aerial reconnaissance. I have little patience for this sort of thing because they never say in anything I have read why I should care where Waldo is. Waldo got himself into the mess; let him get himself out. And I bet when he does he'll find his wallet missing. He can do his own book, W\_h\_e\_r\_e'\_s  
W\_a\_l\_l\_e\_t?

Anyway, what got me thinking about "Where's Waldo?" is that I saw a list of upcoming "Where's Waldo?" books. It is one artist who creates them and he just cranks them out. Now there is a job that would drive me to the bughouse real quick. "What do you do for a living?" "I draw little tiny people. Hour after hour. Tiny little people. Nothing but tiny little people. Painting after painting. Page after page. Book after book. Nothing but tiny little people. Thirty an hour. 240 a day. 1200 tiny people a week. 60,000 little tiny people a year." After three or four years this guy's going to be the richest inmate at the booby hatch.

2. In the last notice I labeled part one of my convention report as part one of three. However, mailer limitations on file size on some systems has meant that I need to make the issues smaller, hence the convention report will be in f\_o\_u\_r parts. Also, the space project I called "Dinosaur" was actually "Dyna Soar." [-ecl]

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

Liberty of speech inviteth and provoketh liberty to be  
used again, and so bringeth much to a man's knowledge.  
-- Francis Bacon

FESTIVAL OF ANIMATION 1991  
A film review by Mark R. Leeper  
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It has now been a full two weeks since I have been to (and reviewed) an animation festival. I guess it is about time I get to another one. The last one, the 2\_3\_r\_d\_I\_n\_t\_e\_r\_n\_a\_t\_i\_o\_n\_a\_l\_T\_o\_u\_r\_n\_e\_e'\_\_o\_f\_A\_n\_i\_m\_a\_t\_i\_o\_n, was something of a disappointment. I am very pleased to say that the F\_e\_s\_t\_i\_v\_a\_l\_o\_f\_A\_n\_i\_m\_a\_t\_i\_o\_n\_1\_9\_9\_1 is in no way a disappointment. The T\_o\_u\_r\_n\_e\_e' had several pieces that I thought were only fair and nothing excellent at all. The F\_e\_s\_t\_i\_v\_a\_l\_o\_f\_A\_n\_i\_m\_a\_t\_i\_o\_n\_1\_9\_9\_1 is of a much higher quality overall, with only two fair pieces and three pieces that were excellent. This somewhat disposes of my idea that too many animation festivals were diluting the quality, but I do think that the I\_n\_t\_e\_r\_n\_a\_t\_i\_o\_n\_a\_l\_T\_o\_u\_r\_n\_e\_e' is no longer getting the best pieces. Or maybe this year is just a statistical anomaly.

As usual for animation fests, I will rate films poor, fair, good, very good, or excellent. There will be mild spoilers.

- "Mother Goose" (David Bishop; U.S.A.; 2:30): This is animation to illustrate a man reading three Mother Goose rhymes to a class of small children. Each is illustrated in black and white with blood drawn in bright red. Each rhyme is bloody, making the point that nursery rhymes do have a strong element of violence. It turns out to be an argument against the MPAA rating system. Rating: good
  
- "All Alone with Nature" (Alexander Fedoulor; U.S.S.R.; Special Jury Prize Annecy; 4:30): This story may well have been inspired by Mikhail Bulgakov's H\_e\_a\_r\_t\_o\_f\_a\_D\_o\_g. In any case, it is on a theme that shows up a lot in Russian satire, the bestial in the smug, sanctimonious, and officious bureaucrat. There is some interesting use of color, but the story lacked originality. Rating: good.
  
- "Winter" (Pete Doctor; U.S.A.; 4:00): Years ago this gag was used in M\_a\_d\_M\_a\_g\_a\_z\_i\_n\_e. It has since shown up in a "Peanuts" cartoon, in the writings of Jean Shepherd, and in Shepherd's film A\_C\_h\_r\_i\_s\_t\_m\_a\_s\_S\_t\_o\_r\_y. I won't give away the gag, but you will probably see coming. Rating: good.
  
- "Grasshoppers" (Bruno Bozzetto & Richard Denti; Italy; 1990 Academy Award Nominee; 8:20): The last couple of new pieces by Italy's Bruno Bozzetto (who did A\_l\_l\_e\_g\_r\_o\_n\_o\_n\_T\_r\_o\_p\_p\_o) have not been very good. His "Big Bang" at the T\_o\_u\_r\_n\_e\_e' was just not very good. It was didactic and lacked finesse. His "Grasshoppers" is not only better than "Big Bang," it is better than any film at the T\_o\_u\_r\_n\_e\_e'. We are given a worm's-eye view

of the entire history of human conflict. Parts are very funny and at the same time very perceptive. Rating: excellent.

- "Denny Goes Air-Surfing" (Lance Kramer; U.S.A.; 2:00): What does a dragon do for fun? It goes air-surfing. How does a dragon go air-surfing? That would be telling. This piece looks like an immature work of someone with potential. And it is not a bad gag. Rating: good.
  
- "Balloon" (Ken Lidster; U.K.; 12:00): This one uses a lot of

different media and touches a lot of different emotions in just twelve minutes. As a fantasy it is okay, as an allegory it is rich with possible interpretations. The story is of a little girl who has made friends with a balloon, but sells it for something prettier. Rating: excellent.

- "How to Kiss" (Bill Plympton; U.S.A.; 6:30): Like Bozzetto, Bill Plympton has a much better entry at the F\_e\_s\_t\_i\_v\_a\_l than he had at the T\_o\_u\_r\_n\_e\_e'. This is a satire on a 1950s instructional film on kissing. (Did such a thing really exist in the 1950s?) Of course, everything gets grotesquely and horribly exaggerated. The mean spirit of his T\_o\_u\_r\_n\_e\_e' piece is here missing but not missed. Rating: very good.
- "Eternity" (Sheryl Sardina; U.S.A.; 2:20): Souls falling into their own private hell is the subject of this short and rather clever gag. This is a fairly original idea also. Rating: good.
- "Grand Day Out" (Nick Park; U.K.; 1990 Academy Award Nominee; 23:00): Nick Park did the excellent "Creature Comforts," also shown in this F\_e\_s\_t\_i\_v\_a\_l. This, I think, is an earlier work and suffers from its length. Brevity is the soul of wit and this piece has a definite lack of brevity. A man and his dog want to go on a vacation some place with cheese. They decide on the moon and build their own spaceship to get there. The story goes on and on with no real point other than an over-estimated cuteness. I rate this good but Park can do better.
- "Deadsey" (David Anderson; U.K.; 6:00): This is a story by Russell Hoban. It is supposed to be a horror story for adults, but the story is poor. Some of the visual imagery is nice, but usually has nothing to do with the story. This one is only fair.
- "The Housekeeper" (Brent Thompson, Ian Gooding, Doug Walker; U.S.A.; 6:00): A scientist develops a time-travel helmet that he tries on his housekeeper. After a few false starts it works and the housekeeper changes history a l T\_i\_m\_e\_T\_u\_n\_n\_e\_l and Q\_u\_a\_n\_t\_u\_m\_L\_e\_a\_p. Visually this one is no great shakes, but it is a good story told with humor. This one gets

a very good from me.

- "Panspermia" (Karl Sims; U.S.A.; 2:00): This is a short science fiction speculation with some good art work. In some ways it is reminiscent of F\_a\_n\_t\_a\_s\_t\_i\_c\_P\_l\_a\_n\_e\_t. It is too short to contain much but the basic idea, but that is handled just fine. Rating: good.
- "Feet of Song" (Erica Russell; U.K.; 6:00): Abstract human figures dance to music. That's all. There is a Latin beat. Rating: good.
- "Western" (Gabor Homolya; Hungary; 2:00): Overdramatic, operatic spaghetti Westerns, particularly those of Sergio Leone, are lampooned in this clever Hungarian sight gag. Not much there, but what is, is choice. Rating: very good.
- "Primiti Too Ta" (Ed Ackerman; Canada; 2:45): Primitive vocal sounds are spoken for rhythm and typed. There is a certain beat, but mostly this is an uninteresting exercise. Rating: fair.
- "Creature Comforts" (Nick Park; U.K.; 1990 Academy Award Winner; 5:00): Once or twice the I\_n\_t\_e\_r\_n\_a\_t\_i\_o\_n\_a\_l\_T\_o\_u\_r\_n\_e\_e' showed the Academy-Award-winning short and the also-rans. Seeing them side-by-side generally gives the audience a fairly good appreciation for just how far the Academy members have their heads up their armpits. This year no such appreciation is forth-coming. Nick Park's C\_r\_e\_a\_t\_u\_r\_e\_C\_o\_m\_f\_o\_r\_t\_s is amusing, original, and thought-provoking. Clay-animated zoo animals discuss the pros and cons of living in zoos rather than in the wild. Oddly enough, some of the smaller animals prefer the security of captivity. A young polar bear shocks his parents by breaking taboo and talking about an animal who died in the zoo. A gorilla complains about the cold climate of England. AN exasperated Brazilian cat explains to the audience that the food they get is like dog food, that England is a cold country while Brazil is a warm country, that Brazil has a lot of space and this zoo just does not. This is really a very nice film-- funny and sad at the same time. I give it an excellent and it rounds off a very good animation festival.

SAN FRANCISCO KILLS by Denny Martin Flinn  
Bantam, 1991, ISBN 0-553-28044-9, \$3.95.  
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper  
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In the immortal words of the Bard (or someone), "Ack, ptui!"

I really wanted to like this book. After all, it was the first of a new S. Holmes series. (The second, K\_i\_l\_l\_e\_r\_F\_i\_n\_i\_s\_h, just came out and the third L\_a\_d\_y\_K\_i\_l\_l\_e\_r is due out around the end of the year.) Well, okay, it was Spencer Holmes, grandson of Sherlock Holmes, rather than the Great detective himself, but what can one expect these days? Needless to say, Spencer's grandmother was Irene Adler (who else?) and why he carries the name Holmes rather than Adler is never adequately addressed. But I could live with that.

And Flinn's style is captivating. For example, right after the groom is shot (on page 4, so I'm hardly giving anything away) Flinn describes the subsequent action thusly: "The bride, kneeling over the body of her fiance ', and presumably in a state of shock, made repeated attempts to rouse him. Since she had never before (surprising though it may be in this new world of premarital freedom) been required to execute this intimate morning-after maneuver, he blandishments were as awkward as they were ineffective. The mother of the bride, easily the most exitable member of the family and the person responsible for the first memorable \_g\_e\_s\_h\_r\_a\_y\_e had followed that active contribution with the simple expedient of passing out." Flinn's talent for understatement is not to be underestimated.

But there is a problem--or rather, four problems. First--Flinn doesn't do his research well. If he did, he would know that the dialect is Hindi, not Hindu (page 57). If he does know it and has Holmes say it wrong anyway in spite of having had an Indian assistant for several years, then Holmes isn't a detective I'd want to hire. Actually, if one wants to be precise--and a Holmes should be nothing if not precise--Hindi is a written form of the spoken language Hindustani (and it was a spoken language Holmes was

referring to), but since apparently the term "Hindi" has come to include spoken dialects, we will let that go. And about that "Indian" assistant--Flinn gives a long history for him, but the fact remains that the name "Sowhat Dihje" is about as Indian as bagels and lox. After all, you would think newer writers would have learned from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's experience: Doyle came in for a lot of criticism for naming his three Indians in "The Sign of Four" with such unlikely names, or as D. Martin Dakin says in

\_ A \_ S \_ h \_ e \_ r \_ l \_ o \_ c \_ k \_ H \_ o \_ l \_ m \_ e \_ s \_ C \_ o \_ m \_ m \_ e \_ n \_ t \_ a \_ r \_ y , "  
[Small] insists they were Sikhs....

But two of the name, Abdullah Khan and Dost Akbar, are Muslim names, and the third, Mahomet Singh, is an incredible combination of the

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\_ S \_ i \_ n \_ g \_ h (=Lion) which every orthodox Sikh bears in his name, and the name of the founder of Islam which would be blasphemy to a Sikh. No one could possibly have such a name." Flinn has avoided this inappropriate juxtaposition by choosing a name that makes \_ n \_ o sense, but is just a collection of syllables that sounded good to him. (I suspected this when I first read it, but I also confirmed it with my Indian co-workers. One thought the name must be Scandinavian!)

Flinn (and Holmes) should also know that one can't detect the presence or absence of a concussion merely by feeling the head (page 102). I found the chemical formula presented on page 131 extremely suspicious, and my friend with a Ph.D. in chemistry said he thought that 1) it was missing some parentheses and a dot, and 2) he "would have serious doubts about a compound with this formula being stable for any of the shortest time periods you can think of." And anyone whose grasp of geography is so weak as to allow them to say "They traveled throughout India, venturing as far as Asia on occasion" (page 35) does not inspire me with confidence.

Second--Flinn is inconsistent. Holmes's assistant, the aforementioned Sowhat Dihje, is described on page 36 as having the "ability to mimic local dialects, customs, and attitudes instantaneously," and well enough to deceive people into accepting him as local, but by page 39 Flinn is saying, "Even after some years in [the United States], Mr. Dihje has a tendency to fracture the English language." These are hardly consistent.



My penultimate objection may at first seem overly political (or politically correct): I find Flinn's attitude toward gays offensive. Now, I am not complaining that none of his characters are gay or lesbian--that is his decision. But when he writes, "Aunt Dorothy, the large, grey-haired woman draped in some homosexual's idea of an Arabian caftan" (page 19), it is hard to excuse. This is not a character speaking, but the omniscient narrator, i.e., the author. This is not the only slur, though it is probably the most blatant. (And I feel obliged to say that his treatment of Dihje verges dangerously close to stereotypical as well.)

And finally, without giving it all away, I should mention that Flinn also breaks two of Father Knox's "Ten Commandments" for mystery writers\*, as well as using another trick that I think Knox

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\* See Josef Skvorecky's S i n s f o r F a t h e r K n o x for details.

An example is #3: "No more than one secret room or passage is allowable. I would add that a secret passage should not be brought in at all unless the action takes place in the kind of house where such devices might be expected."

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would have felt was not cricket either. This alone makes the solution somewhat unsatisfying and, when added to all my other objections, leaves me with no choice but to say that I cannot recommend this book e v e n for Holmes fans.

Chicon V 1991  
Con report by Evelyn C. Leeper

(Part 2 of 4)

Panel: T T T Ta a a al l l lk k k ko o o on n n n  
P P P Ph h h ha a a an n n nt t t to o o om m m mo o o of f f f  
t t t th h h he e e O O O Op p p pe e e er r r ra a a a

Friday, 5 PM

Julie Zetterberg (mod), Elaine Bergstrom, John Flynn,  
Heather Nachman, Bob Tucker

Official Description: "The play-within-a-play philosophy of the show and its SFX, physical (real) and psychological." (This was listed under the "Illusion" track of programming--one wonders who thinks this stuff up.)

Well, as I said before, there was much confusion on what this panel was about. John Flynn was a late addition; he is currently working on a book titled P\_h\_a\_n\_t\_o\_m\_s\_o\_f\_t\_h\_e\_O\_p\_e\_r\_a. He wanted to talk about the Leroux novel and all the various film and theater versions, but had a difficult time of it. As he told us later, one panelist said to him, "Oh, good, now we can have a man's opinion of the sexuality [in the Andrew Lloyd Webber version]!" Bob Tucker was on because he had worked on the stage crew for the Ken Hill version of the story and gave a brief description of how some of the special effects were done for that, but he hadn't seen any other versions that he remembered.

This diversity was reflected in the answers the panelists gave to the question of why they liked the story. Zetterberg fell in love with the Lloyd Webber music rather than the thematic content. Nachman likes the aspect of sexuality, so she is not as pleased with the Claude Rains version (in which the Phantom is more a father figure). The Rains version also suffers (in many people's opinion) by having the Phantom scarred late in life rather than by having him deformed since birth and hence suffering constant rejection all his life. With this change, the story goes from the tale of a man who has never known love or happiness to a tale of simple revenge. Flynn thought the message of not judging what is in a person's soul (or mind) by his or her outward appearance was a very powerful one. He also saw it as an updating of the beauty and the beast story: Eric believes Christine's love would let him lead a normal life, go out riding on Sundays in a coach, etc. Bergstrom was attracted to the idea of the "remaking of the Phantom": how he is changed by his love for Christine.

One problem with the Lloyd Webber production is that the Phantom is made attractive. As someone pointed out, Leroux has him dressed in shabby clothes, looking repulsive, and smelling bad as well. This is a far cry from what is presented by the Lloyd Webber production in any of its venues. Throughout the hour, it was almost impossible to drag the discussion o\_f the Lloyd Webber version, even though Flynn had distributed a survey listing eighteen book, theater, and movie versions.

No one had seen the Hong Kong version, but I was able to provide some information on the Mexican one ( \_ F \_ a \_ n \_ t \_ a \_ s \_ m \_ a \_ d \_ e \_ l \_ a \_ O \_ p \_ e \_ r \_ e \_ t \_ t \_ a, with Tin Tan, not to be confused with the Argentinian version made five years earlier, which Flynn did \_ n \_ o \_ t list). Flynn hadn't seen either one, but I was able to direct him to one of the two Spanish-language stations in New York as where the one I saw was broadcast.

Someone in the audience asked about the filming of the Lloyd Webber version. It is apparently on permanent hold as a result of Lloyd Webber and Brightman's divorce. People were divided on the making of this movie, and many (most?) felt that filming the stage production would be better than making a movie. My feeling is that while this is true, a film of any sort would lack the emotional intensity of the play that comes from being physically in the same room as the actors. People agreed with this, but still wanted it made into a film. Why? Well, one answer was, "I want to own it!" This is certainly evidence that videocassettes have changed our attitudes toward performances, and perhaps not for the better. (Yes, I know I "own" thousands of books, and hundreds of movies, but the feeling that the public is \_ e \_ n \_ t \_ i \_ t \_ l \_ e \_ d to own some artist's work does not sit entirely easy with me.) Someone else said they knew a group of monks in a monastery who had heard the music but would never have a chance to see the play unless it was on videocassette. First of all, I doubt that this would be a major factor in someone's decision of whether or not to film the play. But even disregarding that, it seems to me that if the purpose of isolating oneself in a monastery is to get away from the temptations of the world (such as the theater), then bringing in a videocassette of \_ P \_ h \_ a \_ n \_ t \_ o \_ m \_ o \_ f \_ t \_ h \_ e \_ O \_ p \_ e \_ r \_ a is not actually in keeping with the philosophy.

Play: R R R R. . . .U U U U. . . .R R R R. . . .  
Friday, 8 PM

The Moebius Theatre did a production of Karel Capek's \_ R \_ U \_ R., featuring a complete translation by Claudia Novack-Jones. At three hours (with two intermissions), it was considered overlong by many (me included) and I wonder how big an audience it got Saturday and Sunday, when it was opposite the Masquerade and the Hugo Awards ceremony.

I have no other productions of \_ R \_ U \_ R. to compare this one to, but it seemed as if--at least at the beginning--this production stressed the

humorous elements of the play more than was usual. The play seems somewhat dated, though Gregory Winston, who played Alquist, did a reasonable job. Unfortunately, the others were not as good and Joseph Adlesick, Jr., as Gall, seemed particularly overripe, while Alan Ziebarth as Domin was simply not convincing. On the other hand, it's possible that some of the problems arose because they may have been used to playing in a larger room and had gotten used to projecting the gestures and voices more than was needed or desired in the room they were in. Certainly the make-up looked unnatural (at least on the white actors, who looked positively orange).

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What may have been needed most, however, was an announcement at the beginning telling everyone to turn off the hourly beeps on their watches!

After the play, we dropped in the Louisville and Winnipeg bid parties for a while and chatted with Laura Resnick (at the former) about her travelogue of Tunisia that appeared in L\_a\_n'\_s\_L\_a\_n\_t\_e\_r\_n. Winnipeg had an amazing spread of food: brie, smoked fish, and hot food being cooked by the chef from their Convention Centre. It was clear that all the stops were being pulled out in their attempt to win the bid.

WSFS Main Business Meeting  
Saturday, 10 AM

At this session we actually got to vote on some of the items scheduled at the preliminary meeting Friday. There were the usual preliminaries, including the Sergeant-at-Arms producing her mace (courtesy of McCormick's Spice Company). Winnipeg and Louisville presented their bids. Because of the constant interruptions at the preliminary meeting while the parliamentarian referred to R\_o\_b\_e\_r\_t'\_s\_R\_u\_l\_e\_s\_o\_f\_O\_r\_d\_e\_r, it was requested that the Sergeant-at-Arms peace-bond the book. Elections were held for the vacant positions on the Mark Registration and Protection Committee. (Even for this the Chair had difficulty figuring out how the balloting would work. In general I was unimpressed by the Chair's knowledge of parliamentary procedure--or even by the Parliamentarian's. Where is Bruce Pelz when you need him?)

All five amendments passed on from ConFiction were passed: Best

Original Artwork Hugo, Sunshine Amendment, One Person One Vote (a.k.a. "Teddy Bear Amendment"), MRPC [Mark Registration and Protection] Name Simplification ("Liposuction Amendment"), and Amendment Simplification. The rules require that at least one person speak for a measure and one against before a vote could be taken, so most of these went like:

- Speaker 1: "I think this is a good idea."
- Speaker 2: "But it could be better."
- Speaker 3: "I move to call the question."
- Chorus of Seconds.

All these took effect at the end of the Business Meeting.

The newer amendments had more discussion. The amendment to change the lead time for site selection to four years was voted down after much discussion centering on the trade-off between the advantage of locking in a hotel versus the ability to hold a committee together for a couple of years of bidding plus four years after winning the bid. The modified amendment regarding the counting of "No Award" votes (which basically requires that when a "winner" is decided using the old method, a check is made to verify that the winner placed \_ a \_ h \_ e \_ a \_ d of "No Award" on more ballots than it placed behind it on) passed. The clarification of the tallying of "No Award" was postponed. The amendment to allow the

worldcon to mail the Hugo ballots and rules separately from the WSFS Constitution and pending business was passed, as was the amendment to call the Hugo Award the Hugo Award (it is actually named the "Science Fiction Achievement Award," but this has been ruled ineligible for registration protection, hence the proposed change). The motion to allow a fan writer to be nominated for writing in generally available electronic media as well as in fanzines was passed. (This really only matters if a fan writer has not been published in any fanzines over the year in question. Both Theresa Nielsen-Hayden and I were probably nominated as much for our electronic writing as for our traditional fanzine writing, but because we have been published in traditional fanzines, we qualify even without this proposed amendment. Still, it's best to clear this stuff up early.) The new amendments that passed must be ratified by the WSFS business meeting at MagiCon to take effect.

Panel: S S S SF F F Fa a a an n n nd d d dt t t th h h he e e e

P P P Pr r r ro o o op p p ph h h he e e et t t t  
Saturday, 1 PM

Nancy Kress (mod), George Alec Effinger, Doug Fratz, R. A. Lafferty,  
Harry Turtledove

Official Description: "About Arabic material in current SF."

Well, the first order of business (as usual) was figuring out what the heck the panel was about. The three guesses seemed to be:

1. SF and Mohammed
  2. SF and Kahlil Gibran
  3. SF and Predicting the Future
- (Admittedly the second one was a dark horse candidate.)

When the official description was read from the Program Book, Lafferty was clearly disconcerted, saying he had signed up to be on the panel thinking it was the third one. (This was particularly unfortunate since he kept referring to Mohammedans and Mohammedanism, two terms that went out of favor years ago. As Effinger commented part way through the hour as politely as he could, Muslims were offended by those terms because the terms elevated Mohammed to a level of implied godhood and this was strictly counter to Islam.) Kress also felt somewhat at sea-- though she had written a story set in an Arab culture ( \_ A \_ n \_ A \_ l \_ i \_ e \_ n \_ L \_ i \_ g \_ h \_ t ), she was obviously outclassed by Turtledove and Effinger in terms of quantity (not to mention Turtledove's academic background in Byzantine history).

It's worth pointing out, by the way, that although the "official" topic was Arabic material, the panel expanded it to include all Islamic cultures, while making quite clear the distinction (which seems to have escaped the writers of the Program Book, if you think about it). Islam is spread through most of Africa and much of Asia, while the Arabs are indigenous to the Arabian peninsula and parts of Asia Minor. Even within the Arab peoples there is wide diversity, though. As one panelist pointed out, we have a tendency to think that everyone in

another culture is the same, or worse yet, that everyone in \_ a \_ l \_ l other cultures are the same. While it's true that Muslims have a language that holds them together as a culture, they are \_ n \_ o \_ t all the same. (Jews

also have this cohesive language: when Mark and I were trying to communicate with a woman in a synagogue in Sofia, Bulgaria, the only common language we had was Hebrew.)

Effinger talked about the difficulties he had with When Gravity Failed. Even though he had given the manuscript to a Lebanese friend and an Egyptian friend to make sure he was accurate and did not accidentally offend anyone, Bantam (his publisher) was still nervous. Well, "terrified" is actually the word Effinger used. This was right about the time of the Satanic Verses uproar and Bantam insisted on air-brushing out all the minarets in the cover painting! And after all their fears, Effinger got only two negative letters--and one was only objecting to his wearing an Arab headdress in his photograph on the back cover.

The question was raised about whether non-Muslims could write about Islam effectively, or whether they even had the right to try. I think the consensus was that as long as they tried to be fair, yes. After all, Jews write about Christians and Christians write about Jews. And science fiction traditionally consists of stories about aliens, interstellar travel, and the future written by people who have never met a Russian (let alone an alien), who have never traveled to Mars (let alone another solar system), and who plod along through time at one second per second, just like the rest of us. "Write about what you know" has always been interpreted as "write about what you can learn about" by science fiction authors.

But what was meant by being fair? Lord knows (pun intended) that there is a substantial amount of science fiction today which ridicules fundamentalist Christianity, yet it seems clear that one could not do the same with Islam (or Judaism, for that matter) and expect to get published. (In private conversation, of course, there is much more bashing of minority religions. But it's not considered "politically correct" or "safe"--take your pick--to publish this sort of thing.) Kress pointed out that it is important to show both sides, to have bad characters who are Muslim as well as good, but I think there is still a double standard in how the basic religion is treated. Why this is, why authors and publishers feel one religion is fairer game than another, I leave to more analytical minds. But one answer may lie in an observation I made in my Boskone 26 (1989) convention report, where I asked, "Is it possible that many religions go through a "holy war" phase about 1100 to 1300 years after their inception?" (Interestingly, Turtledove made basically the same observation on this panel, saying that Islam was at the stage Christianity was at about 622 years earlier, that being the difference in starting times of the two. I'm sure the similarity in comments was due to synchronicity rather than influence.) It's probably worth noting that while Christianity went through the Crusades and then the Inquisition during its 11th through 15th



Centuries, and Islam is going through similar stages, Judaism went through them as well, only a couple of thousand years ago, during  i \_ t \_ s same period (shortly before the Babylonian captivity).

In terms of older works with Arabic influences, the obvious one mentioned was Frank Herbert's  D \_ u \_ n \_ e. I asked about the possibility of seeing works dealing more with Arabic/Islamic elements without a totally Islamic setting, and the panelists seemed to agree that the current dispersion patterns throughout the world, which have resulted in large Muslim populations in such unlikely places as France and London, will also produce their share of science fiction set in future cities in which there is a strong Islamic influence without other cultures being totally absent. This dispersion has also led people to have to alter their incorrect "understandings" of Islam. For example, people used to talk about Muslims praying while facing east, because that was correct for Muslims in Egypt and the Middle East (more or less). But now people are coming to realize that this is incorrect: Muslims pray facing Mecca, which means in Malaysia, for example, they face  w \_ e \_ s \_ t. And on other planets, one supposes they would face Earth or Sol. (But in what direction would they pray at the antipodal point on Earth? And how do they determine prayer times at the North Pole et al, since prayer time are defined in terms of sunrise and sunset? Of course, these are all problems that Jews face too, and I have a whole file of opinions on this sort of thing if anyone's interested.)

How can we learn more about Arab or Islamic cultures? Well, Effinger said the best way to learn about a culture was by reading its fiction, which was almost always truer to how people lived than the history or other non-fiction works. In the non-fiction books, for example, you hear that everything stops at prayer times in Muslim countries, but in fiction you learn that there are ways people get around the requirements--for example, by traveling (even on a bicycle) at the appointed time, since travelers are exempt. The Nobel prize-winning Egyptian author Nagib Mahfouz was highly recommended. Also recommended was the non-fiction book  T \_ h \_ e \_ C \_ r \_ u \_ s \_ a \_ d \_ e \_ s  T \_ h \_ r \_ o \_ u \_ g \_ h \_ A \_ r \_ a \_ b \_ E \_ y \_ e \_ s edited by Amin Maalouf (published, interestingly enough, by Schocken Books, a pre-eminent Jewish publishing house--but then the Jews didn't like the Crusaders all that much either).

After this panel we picked up some souvenirs, including the "unofficial" convention T-shirt, which had the Frank Paul "City of the Future" with it labeled as Chicago 1991, etc. We also voted in the site selection, and I even managed to get a "press" ribbon. Why? Because I was reporting on the convention. Where? Why, here, of course!

(To be continued)