



more the second time.

So this novel can be enjoyed on two levels--one for just its fantasy content, the other for its alternate history content. It is, all in all, well worth reading. Ford has recently written a

THE MT VOID

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very successful "Star Trek" novel, H\_o\_w\_M\_u\_c\_h\_f\_o\_r\_J\_u\_s\_t\_t\_h\_e\_P\_l\_a\_n\_e\_t?" which is very funny even if you're not a Trekkie/Trekker. Another Ford book (which I haven't read) is W\_e\_b\_o\_f\_A\_n\_g\_e\_l\_s. [-ecl]

2. National Public radio recently ran a piece on the President's falling ratings. No, not that people consider that he is not as good as they once considered him (though that is perhaps true also), but his falling television ratings. It seems that Presidential television appearances are suffering the same fate as other broadcast television: people are being given more media choices and more people are tuning out the President for more stimulating fare like Michael Jackson's latest video on MTV. Independent stations have this tendency to put their best movies opposite Reagan, though none as yet have counter-programmed with H\_e\_l\_l\_c\_a\_t\_s\_o\_f\_t\_h\_e\_N\_a\_v\_y or worse, B\_e\_d\_t\_i\_m\_e\_f\_o\_r\_B\_o\_n\_z\_o. It is clear, however, that the "Ronald Reagan Show" is suffering in the ratings and is going to have to pick up some pizzazz if it wants to compete or even if it wants the networks to continue to carry it. I am told also that in an effort to cadge more ratings, the show will change its lead actor sometime early next year. Later this year there will be public opinion polls to see who the public would like to see in the starring role.

Mark Leeper  
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SCARLET IN GASLIGHT  
Written by Martin Powell  
Artwork by Seppo Makinen  
Eternity Comics, November 1987, \$1.95.  
A comics review by Evelyn C. Leeper  
Copyright 1988 Evelyn C. Leeper

I know I don't usually review comic books, but this is about Sherlock Holmes a\_n\_d Dracula, so I could I resist? But understand that these are the opinions of a non-comics-reader and may reveal some ignorance of the state of the art in the field today. For the novice (like myself), there are more aspects of a comic book than of a regular novel, so I'll discuss them one by one.

Layout: I find this very confusing. The dialogue is not printed within the frames, but overlapping the frames. So you can't tell if a certain line belongs with the frame above it or the frame below it without a lot of back-tracking. In addition, you get only 22 pages of story, which seems pretty slim for \$1.95. (This may be standard, for all I know, but to the non-expert, it seems steep.)

Characters: Sherlock Holmes is introduced and by the end of this installment has gone insane at the thought of vampires--or at any rate, of the type of supernatural creature that Dracula shows himself to be--really existing. Dracula is...Dracula. I'm not going to enjoy this series very much if Holmes spends the whole time staring glassy-eyed at the walls. But, more importantly, I think that having Holmes go into this state is acceptable only if he snaps back fairly quickly--it doesn't ring true otherwise.

Artwork: The artwork is competent enough, though in particularly "active" frames is sometimes confusing. The cover says "Recommended for Mature Readers" and the artwork (and story) are more graphic--both in sexuality and in violence--than one tends to think of comics as being. But then, that is the current trend, spurred on by the success of Japanese m\_a\_n\_g\_a, which are much more violent than American comics.

Story: It's too soon to judge on this. Basically, it seems to be a retelling of the novel D\_r\_a\_c\_u\_l\_a, with the same characters, except that Holmes and Watson are added. Whether they do anything with this new combination remains to be seen. If Holmes spends the whole series out of commission, thereby neutralizing the only new element, the story can't help but suffer as well.

#### CASES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES

Artwork by Dan Day

Renegade Comics, May 1987--?, \$2.00 each.

A comics review by Evelyn C. Leeper

Copyright 1988 Evelyn C. Leeper

Having started reviewing Sherlockian comics, I might as well talk about this series. There have been ten issues to date, all but one

based on a Canonical story. The issues so far are:

- 1 The Adventure of the Beryl Coronet
- 2 The Adventure of the Dancing Men
- 3 The Strange Adventure of the Vourdalak (story by Gordon Derry)
- 4 The Adventure of the Six Napoleons
- 5 The Adventure of the Engineer's Thumb
- 6 The Adventure of the Resident Patient
- 7 The Adventure of the Musgrave Ritual
- 8 A Scandal in Bohemia
- 9 The Adventure of the Copper Beeches
- 10 The Adventure of the Greek Interpreter
- 11 The Adventure of the Black Peter (announced)

Layout: These are done with illustrations surrounding the text, rather than in frames. It is sometimes difficult to tell which block of text follows which, as they are sometimes scattered over the page, but one of the many problems in the earlier issues has been solved by going to ordinary text instead of all capital letters, as the first 6 issues had. Each issue contains 28-30 pages of story (the full text) as well as a letter column.

Characters and Story: With the exception of Issue #3, all stories are from the original Canon. Issue #3 is a reasonable enough pastiche. I would not object to more non-Doyle stories on an infrequent basis, but I suspect that was a one-time aberration.

Artwork: The artwork is good, at times excellent, particularly the larger illustrations. "The Adventure of the Musgrave Ritual," for example, is done entirely in three-quarter-page illustrations--marvelous! The covers are wonderful also, though not really illustrative of the stories contained within the issue they are on. Some are portraits of Holmes and/or Watson and others illustrate events that I don't recall from any story. The cover for Issue #10 is recognizable, but it's not from "The Adventure of the Greek Interpreter"; it's from the story announced for Issue #11, "The Adventure of the Black Peter"!

On the whole, this is much better than S\_c\_a\_r\_l\_e\_t\_i\_n\_G\_a\_s\_l\_i\_g\_h\_t, even if I have read the stories dozens of times before.

Boskone 25  
Con report by Evelyn C. Leeper and Mark R. Leeper  
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(Part I)

[Most of this is written by Evelyn. The parts of this that are written by Mark will be labeled as such as they occur.]

In keeping with the new stripped-down Boskone we didn't take Friday or Monday off. Rather, we packed ourselves in the car noon Friday and tooted on up to scenic South Hadley, Mass., where we stayed with a friend instead of in the hotel. It was just as well; the hotels were full and people were in the overflow hotel, so room space for people who had no local place to stay was at a premium. (Of course, someone who stayed with us had his shoes pissed on my our friend's cat, so he may have a different opinion!)

Much has been said about the "new Boskone" (actually the Classic Boskone, thought new mostly by those who had started attending Boskone in the last four years or so). I will therefore be brief. Boskone 24 was a zoo. There were 4200 members and who knows how many non-members, all of the latter and many of the former roaming the halls 24 hours a day looking for free booze. There were a lot of program items, a lot of costumes, a lot of planning, and a lot of problems. In an attempt to avoid the last, many of the others were cut back. Having been basically thrown out of Boston, Boskone was held in Springfield, and not advertised heavily. In addition, there was a membership cap and membership restrictions, less programming, hardly any films, no costume programming, etc. So how was it? I will describe individual aspects first, and then summarize my opinion.

### Hotels

The hotel was spread between two hotels, the Marriott and the Sheraton Tara. The two are across the street from each other, and are also connected by a walkway from the Tara to Baystate West, a mall connected to the Marriott. However, Friday night the guards locked the walkway at 6 PM (when the mall closed), meaning people had a cold dash between hotels until the Con Committee got it open again. (It was below freezing outside.) The hotels were friendly and co-operative. The Tara staff dress in Beefeater costumes, so the scaled-back costumes that the convention members had couldn't even compete. Each hotel had a snack bar set up near the programming areas--coffee was only 50 cents in the Marriott, a delightful change from Boston prices! The hotels also had a lot of sofa space near the programming areas, so it was possible to sit down between items and talk to people.

The mall had a couple of bookstores, a comics store, and a video store. Unfortunately, it closed 6 PM Friday and 5:30 PM Saturday and didn't open at all on Sunday. Welcome to downtown Springfield, folks!

Mark and I managed to get out for lunch Saturday and go to Johnson's

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Bookstore, a Springfield tradition and where we did a lot of our book-buying during our Western Massachusetts years.

I think being ninety miles away from their clubhouse forced NESFA to consider what was really necessary to bring and what wasn't. The harder it is to transport something, the more you think about whether you really need it. The result was that there was not a lot of "stuff" piled up all over the place in registration or other areas, yet everything ran as smoothly as it ever did (even before the Boskone population explosion). The badges were particularly nice--laminated plastic clip-on badges with the names lettered large enough to read from across the room.

#### Hucksters' Rooms

There were two hucksters' rooms, one in each hotel. This had its advantages and its disadvantages. (Talk about waffling!) The advantages were that wherever you were, you were near a hucksters' room and could browse and that people had additional incentive to go to both hotels and check out what was going on. The disadvantages were that it was difficult to shop for a particular book, since you had two widely separated areas to search, and that if you were attending a lot of panels in the Marriott (the primary programming hotel), you might not have much time to get to the Tara hucksters' room. I suspect the advantages outweighed the disadvantages and this mode of operation will continue.

The hucksters' rooms dealt mostly in books. I thought this was good, even though some people felt that you could buy books anywhere, but media items, jewelry, etc., were harder to find. I have several chain bookstores near me but I still need to travel into New York's Science Fiction Shop or Forbidden Planet to do any serious science fiction book shopping, and I found the wide assortment of books (especially older paperbacks) very useful. There were only two or three dealers who duplicated even the specialty stores near here.

I asked one book dealer how this year's business compared to last year's. He admitted it was down slightly, but also said there were about 2000 people last year he could have done without. I got the feeling he was willing to take the slight decrease in sales for an

easier time of it.

## Art Show

The Art Show was one of the things they \_ d \_ i \_ d \_ n' \_ t plan on cutting back, and while it was smaller than last year's, the overall quality was higher. This is probably due to the smaller attendance, and the cutback was primarily in the area of amateur art. I think the professional artists recognized that the cutbacks in Boskone wouldn't affect their sales all that much. There were a lot of panels on art; I would suggest that perhaps they should even schedule a formal artistic programming

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track next year.

## Film Program

The film program consisted of \_ E \_ x \_ c \_ a \_ l \_ i \_ b \_ u \_ r, \_ R \_ a \_ d \_ i \_ o  
\_ R \_ a \_ n \_ c \_ h, \_ T \_ r \_ i \_ p \_ t \_ o \_ t \_ h \_ e  
\_ M \_ o \_ o \_ n, \_ T \_ h \_ e \_ F \_ i \_ r \_ s \_ t \_ M \_ e \_ n \_ i \_ n \_ t \_ h \_ e \_ M \_ o \_ o \_ n, and  
\_ T \_ h \_ e \_ F \_ a \_ b \_ u \_ l \_ o \_ u \_ s \_ W \_ o \_ r \_ l \_ d \_ o \_ f \_ J \_ u \_ l \_ e \_ s  
\_ V \_ e \_ r \_ n \_ e.

(However, \_ R \_ a \_ d \_ i \_ o \_ R \_ a \_ n \_ c \_ h was canceled.) These were all based on literature, which is probably why they were chosen. I saw only \_ T \_ h \_ e  
\_ F \_ a \_ b \_ u \_ l \_ o \_ u \_ s \_ W \_ o \_ r \_ l \_ d \_ o \_ f \_ J \_ u \_ l \_ e \_ s \_ V \_ e \_ r \_ n \_ e, having seen the others before. It could have been a larger film program, but it is difficult to find films that people can't see on cable or video easily enough. I would like to see them try to find more obscure films--Lem's \_ S \_ o \_ l \_ a \_ r \_ i \_ s, for example, or other foreign films that can't be seen elsewhere. (After I wrote this, I discovered that they had tried to get \_ S \_ o \_ l \_ a \_ r \_ i \_ s, but couldn't find a distributor.)

## Programming

The panels were varied. There were many that seemed to be forming an art track, and there were some hard science panels (see below), many of them about the space program or lack thereof. I couldn't attend all of them, but I will describe what I did attend.

And Now for Something Completely Different...



Friday, 6 PM  
Jim Mann, Laurie Mann

This was a description of the plans for this year's Boskone. The theme was "Smaller is better," but the plan was focused cutbacks, not just across-the-board cuts. One interesting sidenote is that the dual-hotel situation, while being forced on them, led them to try to make it truly a "two-hotel" convention, rather than one main hotel and one overflow hotel. This was why, for example, there was a hucksters' room in each hotel.

Dinner: The Student Prince

We wanted to get a quick dinner between 7 and 9 so that we could make 9 o'clock panels, but we also wanted real food (not Burger King). We got the real food (at The Student Prince, also known as The Fort) but didn't quite make it back in time. The Student Prince serves good German food and I think we agreed it was worth the slight loss in panel time.

Sherlock Holmes and SF

Friday, 9 PM  
Tony Lewis, Ann Broomhead, Esther Friesner,  
Mark Keller, Priscilla Olson, Joe Siclari

I got to this about fifteen minutes into it. The panel had enlarged from what was announced--apparently anyone in the audience who

contributed in the first five minutes was drafted onto the panel.

Several science fictional Holmes stories were mentioned, including the

\_ D\_ r\_ \_ W\_ h\_ o episode, "The Talons of Wen-Chiang." Other, more literary, references included John J. McGuire and H. Beam Piper's "The Return"

(anthologized in the generally unavailable \_ S\_ c\_ i\_ e\_ n\_ c\_ e\_ \_ F\_ i\_ c\_ t\_ i\_ o\_ n

\_ S\_ h\_ e\_ r\_ l\_ o\_ c\_ k

\_ H\_ o\_ l\_ m\_ e\_ s edited by Norman Metcalf), Anthony Boucher's "The Greatest

Tertian" (anthologized in Groff Conklin's \_ I\_ n\_ v\_ a\_ d\_ e\_ r\_ s\_ \_ f\_ r\_ o\_ m

\_ E\_ a\_ r\_ t\_ h), and Mack

Reynolds's "Case of the Extraterrestrial." Worth especial note is the

anthology edited by Isaac Asimov and Martin Greenberg, \_ S\_ h\_ e\_ r\_ l\_ o\_ c\_ k

\_ H\_ o\_ l\_ m\_ e\_ s

T\_h\_r\_o\_u\_g\_h T\_i\_m\_e & S\_p\_a\_c\_e, but a complete list would be extremely long.

There are many sub-categories of science fiction Holmes stories.

There are straight science fiction/horror stories with Holmes as a character, such as Richard L. Boyer's T\_h\_e\_G\_i\_a\_n\_t\_R\_a\_t\_o\_f\_S\_u\_m\_a\_t\_r\_a and Austin Mitchelson's E\_a\_r\_t\_h\_q\_u\_a\_k\_e\_M\_a\_c\_h\_i\_n\_e. There is even a story in the

Canon of this type: "The Adventure of the Creeping Man." There are stories in which Holmes meets various science fiction authors or science fictional characters, such as P. H. Cannon's P\_u\_l\_p\_t\_i\_m\_e (where he meets Lovecraft) and Philip Jose Farmer's A\_d\_v\_e\_n\_t\_u\_r\_e\_o\_f\_t\_h\_e\_P\_e\_e\_r\_l\_e\_s\_s\_P\_e\_e\_r (where he meets Tarzan). There are at least two in which he meets Dracula (Loren D. Estleman's S\_h\_e\_r\_l\_o\_c\_k\_H\_o\_l\_m\_e\_s\_V\_s\_D\_r\_a\_c\_u\_l\_a and Fred Saberhagen's H\_o\_l\_m\_e\_s-D\_r\_a\_c\_u\_l\_a\_F\_i\_l\_e) and another two in which he meets Jack the Ripper (horror rather than science fiction). There is also a new comic book, S\_c\_a\_r\_l\_e\_t\_i\_n\_G\_a\_s\_l\_i\_g\_h\_t, in which Holmes meet Dracula.

There are science fiction stories in which there are Holmes-like characters, such as Poul Anderson and Gordon Dickson's Hokus in "The Martian Crown Jewels" and the main characters in William Kotzwinkle's T\_r\_o\_u\_b\_l\_e\_i\_n\_B\_u\_g\_l\_a\_n\_d and L. Neil Smith's T\_h\_e\_i\_r\_M\_a\_j\_e\_s\_t\_i\_e\_s'\_B\_u\_c\_k\_e\_t\_e\_e\_r\_s. (The children's fantasy field is represented here by the "Basil of Baker Street" books, Basil being a mouse who lives in the walls of 221-B Baker Street and solves mouse mysteries.) One final mention: T\_h\_e\_H\_o\_l\_m\_e\_s\_i\_a\_n\_F\_e\_d\_e\_r\_a\_t\_i\_o\_n, a journal of Sherlock Holmes Star Trek stories.

One of the difficulties with writing Sherlock Holmes science fiction is that Holmes operates best in Victorian London. Arthur Bryon Cover's attempt to move him millennia into the future was not successful and few others have tried to move him even into the present. One reason for this anchoring is that Holmes's deductive methods would not work as well today. As one panelist pointed out, Holmes's talent for identifying people's professions would be lost--he could say that someone worked at a computer keyboard, for example, but that still wouldn't say whether they were an insurance salesman or an author.

Holmes is the deductive reasoner versus the man of action. He needs someone like Watson to play off of. (Mycroft is even less active than Holmes, of course.) In fact, most archetypes need a contrasting personality. It is well-known in detective fiction, but even in other genres it is hard to find counter-examples.

As for science fictional copies of Holmes ("Sherlock's Clones," as Joe Siclari named them), there are some which are less obvious than the Hokas and such named above. Mr. Spock and Data (from \_ S\_ t\_ a\_ r\_ T\_ r\_ e\_ k) were named, of course. Esther Friesner said she would love to see Data in a deerstalker cap, and was immediately told by everyone else that it's been done already (but I can't remember the name of the episode). Someone else pointed out that there is another very famous character who is tall, thin, has grey eyes, and was supposedly (but not really) killed by a fall from a cliff--Gandalf.

Much more could be written on the connections between Sherlock Holmes and science fiction, but it wasn't said in this panel, so I will save that for another day.

Sex and Death

Friday, 10 PM

Ginger Buchanan, Esther Friesner, Ellen Kushner

[This section was written by Mark R. Leeper.]

It used to be there was a midnight horror that seriously discussed horror and/or vampires at a late hour. At later conventions it was still called the Midnight Horror Panel but it had really degenerated into the Midnight Drunk Panel, with more laughing (especially at things that are only funny if you are drunk) than serious discussion. Well, this year Boskone had mostly serious panels. This was the drunk panel even though it was at 10 PM. Ginger Buchanan, Esther Friesner, Ellen Kushner, and a fourth forgotten woman wasted about twenty minutes of my time admitting that none of them knew what the panel was really supposed to be about, but had a great time laughing at the fact that they liked sex. At 10:15 I told myself that they would say something of interest by 10:20 or I would leave. At 10:20 I made good my threat. [--Mark R. Leeper]

Hobokon Party

Friday, 10 PM

In keeping with the new Boskone policy, this was a closed party because they were serving alcohol. It was less crowded than in previous years, but just as enjoyable. The foodstuffs served ranged from chocolate truffles to kielbasa (after all, Springfield is right next to Chicopee, home of the World Kielbasa Festival!). One of the problems seemed to be ice, as the team they sent out to find some took an

extraordinary amount of time to return.

I Just Read the Stuff!  
Friday/Saturday, 12 Midnight  
Robert Colby, Mark Keller, Jim Mann

We left the party to go to the midnight panel on what people enjoy reading. The title seems to indicate a fairly unstructured panel, and

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that was accurate. Mark Keller pointed out that many historical novels are like science fiction in that they must make an alien society seem real, and perhaps this was why so many science fiction fans were also interested in historical fiction (as witness the continuance of the Regency Dance at Boskone). Keller teaches at a junior college, which he describes as "high school with ashtrays."

A lot of this panel consisted of listing recommended books and authors. Colby (chairperson of Readercon) recommended Michael Bishop's

W\_h\_o\_M\_a\_d\_e\_S\_t\_e\_v\_i\_e\_C\_r\_y? and J. G. Ballard's E\_m\_p\_i\_r\_e\_o\_f\_t\_h\_e\_S\_u\_n. Jim Mann recommended the two Gregs, Bear and Benford. Greg Bear writes both science fiction and fantasy (T\_h\_e\_I\_n\_f\_i\_n\_i\_t\_y\_C\_o\_n\_c\_e\_r\_t\_o). Benford, on the

other hand, could be described as a "science fiction fundamentalist" in that he refuses to allow even the most common "impossible" plot devices like faster-than-light travel to creep into his works. Someone recommended Ellen Kushner's S\_w\_o\_r\_d\_s\_p\_o\_i\_n\_t (this book was recommended several times over the weekend).

Some off-the-beaten-track books that were mentioned were John C. McLoughlin's T\_h\_e\_H\_e\_l\_i\_x\_a\_n\_d\_t\_h\_e\_S\_w\_o\_r\_d (a novel based in bio-technology) and Bjorn Kurtin's D\_a\_n\_c\_e\_o\_f\_t\_h\_e\_T\_i\_g\_e\_r (anthropological fiction about the meeting of the Neanderthal and Cro-Magnon races, and described as being better than Jean Auel's "Earth's Children" series). Both of these were not marketed as science fiction, so they may be more difficult to find. McLoughlin also wrote T\_o\_o\_l\_m\_a\_k\_e\_r\_K\_o\_a\_n, currently available only in hardback.

Harry Harrison's W\_i\_n\_t\_e\_r\_i\_n\_E\_d\_e\_n was recommended for all the

dinosaur fans in the audience--and there were many--though the panel admitted they did find it ultimately disappointing. Another "dinosaur" book mentioned was Damon Broderick's D\_r\_e\_a\_m\_i\_n\_g\_D\_r\_a\_g\_o\_n\_s. The panel then

briefly digressed to dinosaurs in general, and mentioned that Christian fundamentalists find dinosaurs bothersome. As someone mentioned, the entire concept of "prehistoric" life, when the Bible claims to present history from the Creation on, is oxymoronic to Christian fundamentalists.

In general, the panelists agreed that they liked stories with good ideas, good characterizations, no glaring errors, etc., etc. This is hardly an amazing revelation. However, while a detailed background is good, a too-detailed background can sink a novel. Piers Anthony's "Bio of a Space Tyrant" series, for example, is an allegory of a Cambodian refugee that has so much background that the reader is swamped.

It was also agreed that re-readability was a valuable test of a good novel. Some classic novels mentioned that could be read and re-read were Edgar Pangborn's D\_a\_v\_y and J. R. R. Tolkien's L\_o\_r\_d\_o\_f\_t\_h\_e\_R\_i\_n\_g\_s. Of course, wanting to re-read something may lead to wanting to read more like something, which in turn leads to what someone referred to as "Piers Anthonyism." (His name seems to crop up a lot in these panels.) Harlequin Romances and their offshoot, Laser Books used this

formulaic approach. The writers' guide for Harlequin, for example, says in which chapter the heroine meets the hero, in which chapter they quarrel and break up, in which chapter they are re-united, and in which chapter they do or don't do whatever actions the line allows. (I've never read a Harlequin romance, but my understanding is that at least up until recently the heroine used to remain not only virginal but un-kissed as well until the final chapter.)

Back in science fiction, though, this phenomenon appears as multiple-book series. Orson Scott Card's S\_e\_v\_e\_n\_t\_h\_S\_o\_n is good, but it's the first book in a septology. And then we have the shared-world anthologies and the franchise novels...but more on these later.

Panelists liked to read books on new topics. Arthurian legends, for example, may have been mined out by now. Barry Hughart's B\_r\_i\_d\_g\_e\_o\_f

\_ B \_ i \_ r \_ d \_ s, on the other hand, delighted many because it was based in a different background.

Various sub-genres were recommended. All the panelists liked alternate histories, and were often willing to forgive bad writing for interesting concepts (though I would contend that an author who can't be bothered to learn to write well probably won't get the historical aspects right either). Two particular alternate history books mentioned were Steven R. Boyett's \_ A \_ r \_ c \_ h \_ i \_ t \_ e \_ c \_ t \_ o \_ f \_ S \_ l \_ e \_ e \_ p and Harry Turtledove's collection \_ A \_ g \_ e \_ n \_ t \_ o \_ f \_ B \_ y \_ z \_ a \_ n \_ t \_ i \_ u \_ m (which no one I talked to has actually seen yet). Jim Mann recommended Hal Clement's novels.

The cyberpunk movement (the infamous "C-word") was of course brought up. For those few in the audience who had just returned from the planet Pluto (or is it a planet anymore? I think it got demoted.), cyberpunk was described as science fiction relating to near-future technology and in particular set in a non-white, non-Western future. The panelists found the common thread of illiterate computer jocks unlikely in reality, in spite of its pervasiveness in the literature. The two classics, Vernor Vinge's "True Names" and William Gibson's \_ N \_ e \_ u \_ r \_ o \_ m \_ a \_ n \_ c \_ e \_ r, were given as must-reads for the field. A recent recommended cyberpunk novel was George Alec Effinger's \_ W \_ h \_ e \_ n \_ G \_ r \_ a \_ v \_ i \_ t \_ y \_ F \_ a \_ i \_ l \_ s.

Most people agreed that they didn't force themselves to finish a book they weren't enjoying or, as I said, "Life is too short to read bad books."

Eastern Influences in Fantasy  
Saturday, 10 AM

Susan Schwartz, Brenda Clough, Judith Tarr, Brian Thomsen

[This section was written by Mark R. Leeper.]

I arrived about ten minutes late to the "Eastern Influences in Fantasy" panel and not all the participants had name cards. There was

somebody who arrived late whose name I did not catch either, but he

seemed to be writing an historical novel about the Mongols.

The material covered was far more applicable to writing historical novels than to writing fantasy. Much of this discussion was on what is the best strategy for writing historical fiction. It is quite possible to fall into the trap of getting involved in doing the research and never finishing it or getting the novel written. Either that or the start becomes a thesis in novel form.

Brian Thomsen suggested that a good ratio was two pages of research for every page of novel. I am not sure if he meant two pages read or doing enough research that you could write two pages. A statistic was mentioned that Clavell did fifteen years of research before writing S\_h\_o\_g\_u\_n. He also recommended the book A\_z\_t\_e\_c by Gary Jennings. One of his favorite ways of researching an historical period is to find someone over 70 who has lived in the area and have the person tell you stories. He says you will get twenty stories of which maybe five will be in research books.

Clough recommends that if you are writing about a country, go there. Writing a story set in Africa you have a distinct advantage over someone writing a story set on Mars. You can buy a ticket and actually go there.

The panel kept returning to the question of whether it is better to do the research and then write the novel or to write the novel, do the research, then correct the novel. The former strategy may lead to never getting the novel written. The latter may lead to a novel you can never get fully accurate, but at least you will have something written down.

The claim was made that I\_n\_T\_h\_i\_s\_H\_o\_u\_s\_e\_o\_f\_B\_r\_e\_d was written using the write-first-and-research-later strategy. It was countered that Rumor Godden actually knew a fair amount about nuns before she wrote the novel. (All I remember is that it was made into a TV movie with Diana Rigg becoming a nun. The film was made while Rigg was still every boy's heart-throb as Emma Peel. I can remember a friend lamenting what a waste it was for her to become a nun!)

Other random comments: At one point the conversation got around to Alexander the Great. His popularity was very much heightened, it was claimed, by the traveling art exhibit "The Treasures of Alexander." It was suggested that part of the reason is that he is sort of a yuppie ideal. He was young, lived fast, and had a great eye for art collecting.

As a final thought, Susan Shwartz suggested that reading the classic books of the country that is the setting for your story is a good idea. For China, she recommended D\_r\_e\_a\_m\_o\_f\_t\_h\_e\_R\_e\_d\_C\_h\_a\_m\_b\_e\_r and P\_i\_l\_g\_r\_i\_m\_a\_g\_e\_t\_o\_t\_h\_e\_W\_e\_s\_t (the novel about the Monkey King, Sun Wu-Kong, who is like China's Mickey Mouse). I would add to her list W\_a\_t\_e\_r\_M\_a\_r\_g\_i\_n and R\_o\_m\_a\_n\_c\_e\_o\_f\_T\_h\_r\_e\_e\_K\_i\_n\_g\_d\_o\_m\_s. These four works are considered the

great timeless classics of China. Shwartz suggested reading for Japan

\_ T\_ h\_ e\_ T\_ a\_ l\_ e\_ o\_ f\_ t\_ h\_ e\_ G\_ e\_ n\_ j\_ i. [--Mark R. Leeper]

(End of Part I)