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Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society
Club Notice - 9/18/87 -- Vol. 6, No. 12

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

Unless otherwise stated, all meetings are on Wednesdays at noon.
LZ meetings are in LZ 3A-206; MT meetings are in the cafeteria.

_D_A_T_E _T_O_P_I_C

09/23 MT: The Vampire in SF (Lee, Matheson, Rice, Saberhagen, Van Vogt, and Wilson)
10/14 MT: Humor in SF (Anvil, Biggle, Harrison, Laumer, and Russell)
11/04 MT: Bookswap (*not* in the cafeteria; room TBA)
12/02 MT: Military SF 2 (Anderson, Dickson, and Laumer) (tentative)

HO Chair: John Jetzt HO 1E-525 834-1563 mtuxo!jetzt
LZ Chair: Rob Mitchell LZ 1B-306 576-6106 mtuxo!jrrt
MT Chair: Mark Leeper MT 3E-433 957-5619 mtgzz!leeper
HO Librarian: Tim Schroeder HO 3M-420 949-5866 homxb!tps
LZ Librarian: Lance Larsen LZ 3L-312 576-6142 lzfme!lfl
MT Librarian: (Beth Eades) MT 4B-436 957-5606 mtgzz!eme
Factotum: Evelyn Leeper MT 1F-329 957-2070 mtgzy!ecl

1. Our next Leeperhouse film festival will feature two fun horror films from Empire Pictures. On Thursday, September 24, at 7 PM, we will show:

EMPIRE HORROR NIGHT
"The Best Part of a Bond Film"
HOUSE (1986) dir. by Steve Miner
TROLL (1986) dir. by John Carl Buechler

"The Best Part of a Bond Film" is a compilation of Maurice Binder's credit sequences from 14 James Bond films. Amazing what you can do with a VCR.

HOUSE and TROLL are two low-budget films from Charles Band's Empire Pictures producing company. Both are surprisingly creative. HOUSE

is just a good horror story. TROLL was a hackneyed idea given to a director with no experience. Buechler is actually the man who makes rubber masks for Empire. Reportedly Band asked Buechler to shoot the script so it would get a PG rating. Buechler stripped out the gore and replaced it with wit and high fantasy. It is

probably the best Empire has done.

2. Come, join us in the Middletown cafeteria, suck sustenance with us and discuss the perennial theme of the vampire in science fiction. Our September 23 discussion will be of the vampire in science fiction. Under discussion will be Colin Wilson's SPACE VAMPIRES (basis of the film LIFEFORCE), Richard Matheson's I AM LEGEND (basis of the films LAST MAN ON EARTH and OMEGA MAN), Anne Rice's INTERVIEW WITH A VAMPIRE (thank God it was never made into a film; it was optioned as a vehicle for John Travolta) and THE VAMPIRE LESTAT, ELECTRIC FOREST by Tanith Lee, and the story "Asylum" by A. E. Van Vogt (which may be found in ADVENTURES IN SPACE AND TIME by Healy and McComas).

Why are there so many vampire stories in science fiction? Why are there so many vampire stories in general? Was P. T. Barnum right? What do these stories have in common?

3. Speaking of things that are dead and may or may not come back, we no longer have Bruce Szablak as the Middletown SF Librarian. Uh, I guess that didn't come out right. Bruce is still alive. At least I think he is. (Hey, somebody check Bruce and get back to me.) But without him the Middletown SF Library is demised. Is anyone out there willing to take on the job? Most of the job is just having a drawer. When new books are donated, you catalog them. People come in, you point to the drawer, people return books, you put the card back into the back of the book, and put it back in alphabetical order. You also get to see a lot of science fiction books and have them in reach. Any takers?

4. I would like to thank Bruce for all he did as librarian. I am sure the people who used the library would also like to thank Bruce for making the library available to members.

Mark Leeper
MT 3E-433 957-5619
...mtgzz!leeper

PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
A theatre review by Mark R. Leeper

I review a lot of things and see or read a lot more. It is not all that unusual that I come away from some and consciously say that it is the best of a certain class I have ever seen, read, or whatever. I thought that the remake of _C_a_t _P_e_o_p_l_e was the best shape-changer horror film I had ever seen. But of course that is the best of a small class. It is far rarer that I would say something is the best play. But I will say that for me _P_h_a_n_t_o_m _o_f _t_h_e _O_p_e_r_a was the best play. By artistic merits alone _A_m_a_d_e_u_s was a better play, I suppose, but _P_h_a_n_t_o_m _o_f _t_h_e _O_p_e_r_a was the most enjoyable and even the most meaningful play. It is a pot-boiler melodrama based on a pot-boiler melodramatic novel and I loved it. Sometimes even a pot-boiler can hit you squarely on target and you are absolutely floored. I hope Margaret Thatcher, who attended the same performance as I did, enjoyed it as much.

Contradicting a review I wrote earlier of the record, I now concede that the play may be more faithful to the novel than the Lon Chaney

film. It certainly reveals more of the Phantom's background and tragedy. The Phantom is shown to be the genius he was in the Gaston Leroux novel and the victim of an unfeeling world. The Chaney film undercuts its own tragedy by making the Phantom a mad escapee from Devil's Island. That robs him of his power and gives the power instead to the madness. In fact, the Phantom is a polymath, a genius of whatever he does who is robbed of the fruits of his genius and at times was actually caged as an animal because of his extreme ugliness. After decades of being denied by humanity, the Phantom finds and partially creates for himself a world where he is all-powerful. That was what gave the novel its power, but none of the films built him up as the tragic polymath. The play does. On lilstening to the record I did not catch how much of the novel really was translated to the stage for the play. To fit as much of the plot into a musical of all play forms is incredible. They did eliminate the Persian, who is a major character of the novel, and many chapters from near the end of the novel, particularly those involving the torture chamber scenes which are telescoped to a few seconds on the stage, but I don't think the impact has really been lost.

Most of this could be told from the record. What I could not have expected is the brilliance of the set design. When youo are first sitting in the theatre, the stage seems small. What they do with that tiny stage is hard to believe. Many effects are impressive but none so impressive as the descent to the lake below the opera house (it really exists under the Paris Opera House, by the way, and is used to buoy up the stage), which has to be seen to be appreciated. Less impressive is the falling chandelier, which is much less convincing. But the moment when you first see the Phantom is a cold chill like nothing I remember

seeing in any film or play. _P_h_a_n_t_o_m _o_f _t_h_e _O_p_e_r_a is really a superb adaption of a story I have loved for years.

Now for a few minor quibbles. Andrew Lloyd Webber's music is spectacular as long as he is simply having his characters sing, but he does some funny things when he is representing other composers' music. Presumably his song "Evergreen" is an aria from the opera _H_a_n_n_i_b_a_l by Chalumeu. From the style of opera of the period, and from what we do hear of the opera, it is clear that the song simply would not fit in. It is not of an operatic style and Webber did not want to take a chance

on his audiences not appreciating the beauty of the operatic style. Further it seems absurd that a musical genius like the Phantom would write an opera in which the music is just unappealing scales and with phrases like "Those who tangle with Don Juan...." That sounds like it came from a poverty-row Western rather than an opera written by a musical genius.

But I think the measure of how much the play was enjoyed by its audience can be taken by the group I was with. They paid 18 pounds (about $30). The scalpers were selling the same tickets for 75 pounds (about $125) and were selling out. The group I saw the play with were clammering for us to get tickets for them at New York City prices so that they could see it a second time.

I'm looking forward to it.

[Mark Leeper's review of the cast record of _P_h_a_n_t_o_m _o_f _t_h_e _O_p_e_r_a appeared in the 06/05/87 issue of THE MT VOID. _P_h_a_n_t_o_m _o_f _t_h_e _O_p_e_r_a starts previews on Broadway 01/09/88 and opens on 01/26/88 in the Majestic Theater.]

THE FORGE OF GOD
by Greg Bear
Reviewed by Dale L. Skran, Jr.

WARNING: This review contains spoilers.

Greg Bear has produced another high-grade work of hard SF that happens in the near future. It starts with the disappearance of Europa. It ends with a frightening vision of our place in the universe. Indeed, a vision so frightful I feel that Bear recoiled from all its implications in the end.

Basically, Bear seeks to answer the Fermi Paradox -- where is everybody? If it is possible to colonize the galaxy in a few million years using sublight arks, why hasn't it been done? There are various answers, including:

- We are the only race in the galaxy.

- We are a protected species (they're already here, and have been for many millions of years).

- We've been lucky.

Bear explores the third possibility. In his universe, the galaxy is riddled with swarms of Von Neumann machines, some programmed by their makers to eliminate possible rival races by consuming planets, and others programmed by more ethical races to prevent this from happening. Activated by Earth's high-powered radars from WW II, the "planet eaters" have just arrived. A little bit late come the "ethicals." Cosmic war ensues, and as you might guess, very few characters, human or otherwise, survive this novel.

Bear turns this idea into a good novel, although not quite up to the standard of his previous work, _E_o_n. The real problem I have with this novel is that I don't believe the premise. It's almost right -- a big step toward realistically considering what might be happening in our galaxy right now, but there are a couple of questions that bother me -- both in the novel and in reality: Why didn't the "planet eaters" make a pre-emptive strike? Why wait until you see the radar and "I Love Lucy"?

Answers might include:

1. There are no "planet eaters" in this galaxy.

2. There were "planet eaters" but the "ethicals" got going first, occupied the galaxy long ago, and wiped out whatever small pockets of "eaters" that did exist. They've since pulled back into a "watchdog" role.

3. The "planet eaters" need us for some reason. Perhaps they are interested in us as long was we don't pose a threat, but will smash us flat once we start to move into space. Perhaps they like a challenge, and will wait until we can give them a fight. Perhaps they want us to be advanced enough to understand and hence suffer more when they destroy us. Perhaps there is some military/strategic reason not to transform every solar system into a single immense fortress. Perhaps the makers of the "planet eaters" feared that large concentrations of their creations were dangerous, and insured that they would only act as necessary, with cosmic economy, to destroy new rivals. Perhaps ...

Bear's "planet eaters" have no reasons to preserve us. They just got going fairly recently, and the only reason we're still here is sheer luck. This makes Bear's story a fairly unlikely one.

My money is on that theory that they are already here. To suppose otherwise is to suppose that the human race is alone, which may be true, but goes against our long history of slowly realizing our non-specialness. Either they are "ethicals," in which case we are in good shape, or they are "waiting planet eaters," in which case we have a very serious problem. Kinda sounds like heaven or hell, just around the corner. Bear shows us a some of both, quite enough to make you think a lot.

THE WORLD, THE FLESH, AND THE DEVIL
by J. D. Bernal
Reviewed by Dale L. Skran, Jr.

Few writers saw so far, and with such bright insight as J. D. Bernal. Although this tiny volume was written in 1929, it scarcely seems dated in 1987, almost 60 years later. In it, Bernal attempts to discuss final solutions to the problems of material want, physical decay, and human friction.

His solution to material want -- the habitation of space in solar powered colonies -- seems still on the mark. The bionic approach to preventing physical decay he proposed may be superseded by one based on genetic engineering, but Bernal recognized that "the Flesh" was little more than a fable. Whatever the method, Bernal understood that the modification of human capabilities would transform the meaning of the word "human." In the last chapter on "the Devil" -- basically the devil of irrationality -- he becomes more confused and less cogent. His hope that rational psychology would cure human ills now seems more naive than otherwise.

Bernal synthesizes his three basic thrusts into a vision of humanity split between the Earth- and the space-born, the normal and the modified, the irrational and the rational, a vision that may yet come to pass. If it does, and I suspect it will, we may live to see a period of tribulation and upset that makes the Hundred-Years War look like a schoolyard brawl by comparison.

This tiny book (74 pages) is a little-known classic of this century, deserving far more attention than it has received. Nothing has really changed in Bernal's formulation. We are still bound by the world, the flesh, and the devil. Alas, however, the devil has mastered our worldly powers rather than being mastered by rationality. Still, perhaps the last, best hope of humanity is that our collective naked fear of nuclear devastation will induce rationality at long last, something Bernal did not anticipate.

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Conspiracy '87
Con report by Evelyn C. Leeper

Part 1

Conspiracy, the 1987 World Science Fiction Convention was held August 27 through August 31 in Brighton, England. The attendance was approximately 5000.

Hotels

The convention was very spread-out. The main track was in the Brighton Centre, the secondary tracks, the Dealers' Room, and the Art Show in the Metropole Complex, and the film program in the Bedford (our hotel). The film room was nicely refrigerated so all the fans from Antarctica felt right at home. The rest of us risked pneumonia.

Hucksters' Room

Actually, there it's called the Dealers' Room--more refined, you know--and was almost entirely books. The media materials were heavily _D_r. _W_h_o and _S_t_a_r _T_r_e_k, with very little movie material per se. Interestingly, one British fan commented that there seemed to be a lot of stuff that didn't belong in a dealers' room at a science fiction convention--why, there was a whole table of Celtic and medieval jewelry! He would be appalled at what passes for a dealers' room at most American science fiction conventions.

In addition to their numbers, the books were reasonably priced. There were, of course, the usual collectors' items, but there were also thousands of books for a pound (about $1.67) or less. We didn't buy as much as we have at past conventions, but we did pick up two issues of _L_i_t_t_l_e _S_h_o_p_p_e _o_f _H_o_r_r_o_r_s and an old British edition of Dennis Wheatley's _D_e_v_i_l _R_i_d_e_s _O_u_t (for 15 pence!), as well as about a half dozen other books.

The size of the Dealers' Room (or rooms, actually, since it was really three connected halls) was surprisingly large--23,000 square feet. Of course, with over 5000 attending members, Conspiracy was the size of a North American Worldcon, rather than the smaller, "regional" size associated with "overseas" worldcons.

A note on "foreign," "overseas," and other such designations: there were several program items dealing with these concepts. I suspect that the era of the United States stranglehold on worldcons is over, particularly as the ones held in the United States seem to be getting too big for all but a small handful of cities.

Programming

It's impossible to see everything at a worldcon, so I will just cover the programming I attended. It's by no means complete, but it should give you some idea of what went on.

Panel: British Made (or What Is British SF?)
Thursday, 3pm
Norman Spinrad, John Clute, Toby Roxbaugh

Spinrad started by giving a brief history of transatlantic science fiction--indicating a certain bias in that he seemed to want to define British science fiction in terms of American science fiction. Roxbaugh contrasted the two by saying British science fiction was "cozy," dealing with more limited ideas and settings, while American science fiction went for wider scope and more ranging ideas. He attributed this to the fact that, despite earlier authors, British science fiction got its real start during the 1950s when the British spirit was in a decline. Now there is a revival of spirits in Britain and science fiction is benefiting. Clute continued this thought by describing 1920s and 1930s American science fiction as "flapper science fiction" about outward movement toward a frontier. Even now, American science fiction treats disasters as events, rather than as states of being the way British science fiction does. In American science fiction we _ c_ o_ n_ q_ u_ e_ r the aliens; in British science fiction, we _ a_ r_ e the aliens.

There was some discussion of writers not getting published in the other country, more a problem of British authors than of American ones. Ian Watson was cited, though he did have a period of popularity in the United States. After trying to analyze why, the panelists concluded that what people think of as science fiction is really American science fiction and that British science fiction doesn't seem like science fiction at all. British authors who want to sell in the United States have to adopt American language and culture. Furthermore, novels like the Horseclans series or featuring sinewed heroes with submachine guns are less popular in Britain because World War II and the Blitz have made blood more real to the British and less something to be used gratuitously.

With so much discussion on contrasting British and American science fiction, not much was accomplished in defining British science fiction. We heard a lot about what it wasn't but not much about what it was. And this may be the dilemma of British science fiction--it isn't so much an entity in itself but what's "left over" after American science fiction

is delineated.

Talk: Great Figures of Science Fiction: H. G. Wells
Thursday, 6pm
Brian Stableford

This session was actually a paper being read rather than a speech. Stableford began by quoting Wells from a speech "The Discovery of the Future," which Wells gave in 1902. Wells said there were two types of minds: one (the majority) that does not think about the future, and one that thinks mostly about the future. The former is retrospective, legal, submissive, and passive; the latter is constructive, legislative, creative, and active. Wells and others felt that if the past could be inferred (through geology, paleontology, and so forth), one should be able to infer the future as well. His fiction began to emphasize the contrast between the man of the past and the "new men" of the future. I think this shows up most vividly in the film _ T_ h_ i_ n_ g_ s _ t_ o _ C_ o_ m_ e (the William Cameron Menzies version, not the 1979 travesty entitled _ H. _ G. _ W_ e_ l_ l_ s' _ T_ h_ e _ S_ h_ a_ p_ e _ o_ f _ T_ h_ i_ n_ g_ s _ t_ o _ C_ o_ m_ e), where Wells in his screenplay constantly showed the two types in conflict. He denigrated his earlier works, though they remain even to this day more popular than his later ones.

Ironically, in 1905 Anatole France wrote in _ T_ h_ e _ W_ h_ i_ t_ e _ S_ t_ o_ n_ e that almost all visions of the future were merely the present projected forward (the reverse of what Mark has called the "Happy Days Syndrome" where fiction set in the past has the characters mouthing the philosophies of the present). France claimed that Wells was the one exception right about when Wells stopped drawing his visions of the future. Basically, Wells stopped writing about man being changed and switched to writing about man being replaced.

Stableford explained this by observing that faith in religion and an afterlife is in inverse proportion to faith in the future. As

science destroyed the Biblical view of history and hence undermined the hope of an afterlife, political reform and other futurist movements rushed to fill the gap; Stableford observed that many futurist authors were in fact sons of clergymen. But this optimism for the future was overcome by anxiety; the "Age of Frustration" following World War I and resulting from the cynicism engendered by that war exemplify this. World War II increased this, resulting in such works as _ 1_ 9_ 8_ 4. What little hope was left after "the war to end war" was destroyed by World War II, leaving nothing.

On the other hand, American writers who hadn't the intense World War I background that European writers had did not turn to pessimism and cynicism, but continued the extravagant optimism of pre-war Europe. Hence the dichotomy of science fiction versus scientific romance. The United States retained the playfulness without the seriousness; Britain retained the seriousness without the playfulness. Not until the 1980s did the two rejoin.

The question-and-answer period brought out that although other authors wrote about time travel and alien invasion before Wells, he was

the catalyst who gave them respectability. For those who care, the August 1958 issue of _ S_ a_ t_ u_ r_ n magazine carried some chapters of _ T_ h_ e _ T_ i_ m_ e _ M_ a_ c_ h_ i_ n_ e that Wells had cut.

Film: _ 9_ 9-_ a_ n_ d-_ 4_ 4/_ 1_ 0_ 0% _ D_ e_ a_ d
Friday, 10:30am

The start of this was delayed 25 minutes while the projectionist shifted the projectors around to compensate for the Cinemascope print. The film is reminiscent of _ T_ r_ o_ u_ b_ l_ e _ i_ n _ M_ i_ n_ d and _ S_ t_ r_ e_ e_ t_ s _ o_ f _ F_ i_ r_ e, being set in a sort of "future past" where everything seems to be imported from the 1950s, yet is definitely not the 1950s. In _ 9_ 9-_ a_ n_ d-_ 4_ 4/_ 1_ 0_ 0% _ D_ e_ a_ d Seattle (apparently) is controlled by two mobs who are having a war, and Harry Crown (played by Richard Harris) is called in by one boss to wipe out the other. It's an odd tongue-in-cheek (at least I think it's tongue-in-cheek) gangster film. I liked it (+1 on the -4 to +4 scale), but Mark and Dave were less positive; in fact, they were downright

negative. (This film is also known as _ C_ a_ l_ l _ H_ a_ r_ r_ y _ C_ r_ o_ w_ n.)

Talk: The Case for Optimism (or Why We Just Might Be Living in a Renaissance)
Friday, 12 noon
David Brin

Since the movie started late, it ended late, so I didn't get to this until halfway through. Then I saw that Anne McCaffrey was autographing from noon to 1 PM in the Dealers' Room and I dashed down to get her autograph in _ C_ o_ o_ k_ i_ n_ g _ O_ u_ t _ o_ f _ T_ h_ i_ s _ W_ o_ r_ l_ d, a collection of recipes by science fiction authors that she edited 14 years ago. I recently started collecting autographs of all the contributors (or all that I can find). Anyway, I did get back to Brin's talk to catch the end where he said that Europeans should be thankful that Americans were loud, pushy, and obnoxious, because that was the sort of attitude that brought progress. He spoke of the thin veneer of love of otherness versus self that is present in the United States today and how that needs to be nurtured. He also cited what seemed to be a running theme at this convention, namely that the European experience of two world wars as personal rather than distant has resulted in American science fiction being the carrier of the flame. If people are still afraid of starvation, he claimed, they cannot go bravely into the future, but must always proceed with caution.

He also said that after using the British phone system, he would never say a bad word about Pacific Telephone or AT&T again.

Panel: Great Figures of Science Fiction: Olaf Stapledon
Friday, 1pm
Greg Bear, Brian Aldiss

This was a discussion rather than a lecture. Aldiss began by pointing out that Saturday was Mary Shelley's birthday, but the Con Committee didn't see fit to schedule a panel on her. (Actually, her birthday was Sunday--I remember that because it's the same as my brother's.) Bear described _Starmaker_ as being like a piece of the Holy Grail and said that the debt he owes Stapledon is "immeasurable." Aldiss, in an article tracing the connection between Thomas Hardy's _Dynasts_ and Stapledon, said that Stapledon's seeming contradictions (such as having a narrator describe the stars as intelligent and then suddenly say "but of course they're _not_ intelligent") were in fact what gave strength to his work. The oft-times depressing concepts of Stapledon are made exhilarating by his prose; his search for God resulted in his creation of godlike creatures.

For all this idolization, Bear and Aldiss recognized Stapledon's flaws--his belief that the United States was full of gangsters, cowboys, and Indians, for example. And as Aldiss said, Stapledon was "bad at history, good at myth"--his works are best when not attempting near-future extrapolations.

In terms of auxiliary works, they recommended J. D. Bernal's _World, the Flesh, and the Devil_ and Winwood Reade's _Martyrdom of Man_ as having influenced Stapledon. Leslie Fiedler's work on Stapledon was considered extremely inaccurate,especially in its wild speculation about Stapledon's sexuality. Ben Cross and the University of Massachusetts Press are publishing Stapledon's letters to his wife. In fact, more of and about Stapledon has been published in the United States than in Britain, especially such lesser works as _The Flame_ and _Darkness and the Light_.

Aldiss related how he first discovered Stapledon. Posted to Assam in World War II, he was sent to a planter's cottage that had been commandeered as the medical officer's hut. While waiting for his shots, he noticed a wall of books. Going over to it, he saw the title _Last and First Men_, started to read the book, and knew he had to finish it. So he rationalized that the owner was probably dead or never going to return and stuffed the book inside his jacket.

When asked about what authors were inspired by Stapledon, Aldiss responded that while many authors crib ideas from Stapledon, few have actually been influenced by him. Bean felt that he had been influenced, particularly in writing about evolution. One wonders if Vonnegut's _Galapagos_ was not also inspired by Stapledon. Aldiss observed that science fiction could be predictive, but it could also be digestive, helping to put scientific ideas in terms people could understand, and evolution was the example he gave. And although Stapledon's agnosticism led him to create godlike beings, it also led to his animistic portrayal

of the universe.

Stapledon is quite probably my favorite science fiction author, but I seem to be alone in preferring _ L_ a_ s_ t _ a_ n_ d _ F_ i_ r_ s_ t _ M_ e_ n over all his other books. Aldiss and Bear seemed to feel that _ S_ t_ a_ r_ m_ a_ k_ e_ r was his best, with _ S_ i_ r_ i_ u_ s close behind.

Film: _ W_ a_ r _ o_ f _ t_ h_ e _ S_ a_ t_ e_ l_ l_ i_ t_ e_ s
Friday, 2:30pm

After a quick run to the Dealers' Room to pick up Bernal's book (which I found in under 10 minutes amongst several hundred thousand books--I swear I have a sixth sense for this!), I went back to the Bedford for _ W_ a_ r _ o_ f _ t_ h_ e _ S_ a_ t_ e_ l_ l_ i_ t_ e_ s. _ W_ a_ r _ o_ f _ t_ h_ e _ S_ a_ t_ e_ l_ l_ i_ t_ e_ s was released in early 1958 in response to Sputnik. Since Sputnik was launched October 4, 1957, this was a real quickie. (Another date I find easy to remember, since it is my parents' anniversary.) Dick Miller stars (yes, stars) as a rocket pilot on Project Sigma. It seems that the Earth has been surrounded by the Sigma Barrier by beings from the Spiral Nebula Ganna to prevent us from escaping Earth and achieving space travel. There are several inspired speeches about how humanity will not knuckle under to alien rulers and how our destiny is to travel in space. Shot in response to Soviet achievements, the film seems now to represent the Soviet attitude toward space more than our own. Though some of the science is laughable, this is worth seeing.

Presentation: "Superman": The 50-Year Slide Show
Friday, 4pm
Julius Schwartz

Again, I arrived late. Chelsea Quinn Yarbro was signing at 4, supposedly at the Conspiracy table in the Dealers' Room, but after queueing there for about 15 minutes, we discovered she was at the Women's Press table instead. So we went there; luckily the queue was short.

I got to "Superman" about 4:30pm. Schwartz did have some interesting details to recount (Alfred Bester was the first choice for scripting _ S_ u_ p_ e_ r_ m_ a_ n _ I, there had been plans to build "Supermanland" in Metropolis, Illinois, Schwartz managed to tone down Superman from the extremes that had crept in over the years, etc.), but since I was never a great comics fan, much of it was not very meaningful to me.

Film: _ T_ h_ e _ E_ l_ e_ m_ e_ n_ t _ o_ f _ C_ r_ i_ m_ e
Friday, 6:30pm

After a quick Greek dinner with Mark, Kate, and Saul,I returned to the refrigerator to watch this Danish film with Mark, Dave, and Kate. The film hadn't started, so I went up to the room to get our jumpers (sweaters). When I returned Mark said I had missed about an hour. In the next five minutes I saw what he meant--it seemed like another hour.

Described in the Pocket Programme as a "slow but fascinating futuristic thriller about the torpor that has infected the entire world" (or at least the production crew), this film was unwatchable. It was shot in English (which helped) in the dark (which didn't). I wonder how many people actually _ l_ i_ k_ e this film. We all (except for Kate) gave up after 15 minutes.

@ Party
Friday, 8pm

At about 8, Mark and I went to the @ party for people on Usenet, Arpanet, and other electronic networks. I will not attempt an attendance list unless Nicholas Simicich (who so graciously volunteered his room for the second year in a row) posts it before this is done. There were about three dozen people there, including fans from Finland, Britain, and the United States. One hot topic was Boskone 25, including possible questions for a "Boskone SAT": what is Heinlein's middle name?, name one series by Doc Smith, who wrote the "Tarot" series? Unfortunately, I had to leave right about the time that Saul and Nicholas started discussing whether NESFA was being arrogant or not.

I once again heard that I'm not as people pictured me, that no one understands how Mark and I can write so much (wait till they see his log and this report!), etc. I also heard that the Sheraton was close to signing a final contract with MCFI arranging for 1000-2000 hotel rooms/beds but no function space and no parties allowed. This certainly sounds like it will solve the hotel's concerns about a 24-hour-a-day convention, since all that is now in the Hynes, and will solve the convention's problems of where to put 6000+ fans.

The first @ party I went to was two years ago and I didn't

recognize anyone. Now I know a lot of the people there and they know me, even though we've never met. Isn't technology wonderful?!

Art Show

First thing Saturday morning we walked through the Art Show. The quality was much higher than at United States worldcons, perhaps because the lesser amateur artists didn't want to travel or carry art to England. The result was a marked decrease in bad unicorns and cute dragons, making the Art Show more enjoyable. There were a couple of special exhibits: the Dragon's World/Paper Tiger exhibit and the Fearful Symmetries exhibit. The latter was one of modern, for the most part surrealist art and was, I think, of museum caliber.

From 11am to 11:45am I waited with some other fans for E. C. Tubb to appear for his signing session. Apparently the Con Committee failed to inform him as to when it was, and he didn't arrive until later in the afternoon. I did manage to get his autograph as he was walking through the Brighton Centre later and I got a chance to talk to some other fans who were waiting there, as well as people like George "Lan" Laskowski

who wandered by.

Panel: The Horror, the Horror, the Horror
Saturday, 12 noon
Ramsey Campbell, Clive Barker

James Herbert was also supposed to be on this panel (the third "the Horror"), but couldn't make it. Campbell and Barker claimed this was because of Herbert's recent vasectomy, but we couldn't tell if they were serious. Clive Barker smokes cigars. Blecch!

Barker talked about his research trip to a hospital morgue where (he claimed) they had recently sacked the assistant, a hunchback, because patients seeing him carrying large trash sacks through the courtyard tended to freak out.

The theory was then proposed that the mystery surrounding death was what made horror popular. Barker asked how many people in the audience had work that brought them into contact with the dead. There were

three: a nurse, a medical student, and Kate. When Barker asked Kate what she did, she said she worked in a nursing home and provided "post-mortem care." Barker found this an odd phrase and started asking her questions (in front of the whole audience of several hundred people) about exactly what she did, what happened to the teeth, etc. Kate of course _ l_ o_ v_ e_ d being in conversation with her favorite author.

Barker claimed he "went away with stuff [he] could use" from his excursion, which drew a lot of laughs. He also complained about the "tyranny of the real," and complained that the censor who insisted he remove the crucified rat from one of his movies had "no sense of art." He also talked about the quirks in the MPAA code, such as in a sex scene two consecutive buttock thrusts are okay, but three would be deemed obscene.

The panel was more anecdotal than a coherent study of some aspect of horror. It was entertaining, and somewhat of a change from the serious tone of the previous panels I had attended.

Kate went to a later panel where Barker and William Gibson talked about sudden success. Apparently after Gibson sold _ N_ e_ u_ r_ o_ m_ a_ n_ c_ e_ r, he got a small royalties check and figured that was that. Then he went on a trip and got a phone call from his wife saying he had just gotten another check for $100,000!

Panel: Bones Cracked, Blood Spurted As He Edited Out the Violence
Saturday, 3pm
Iain Banks, Mike Resnick, Kim Newman, Ramsay Campbell,
Orson Scott Card, James Morrow

We went to the Brighton Centre for a snack before the 2pm slide presentation on _ T_ h_ e _ N_ e_ w _ A_ t_ l_ a_ n_ t_ i_ s and

_ S_ l_ i_ p_ s_ t_ r_ e_ a_ m, but when we got to the presentation it had been canceled. We stood around talking to people, including Chuq Von Rospach of _ O_ t_ h_ e_ r_ R_ e_ a_ l_ m_ s and Laurie Sefton. At 3pm I popped upstairs for Aldiss's signing session, then back downstairs for this panel, which seemed to have acquired several people in addition to the originally scheduled participants. Card was saying that the sort of thing his children watch on cartoon shows, where the good guys win without ever hurting anyone or being hurt themselves, strikes him as far more dangerous and harmful than portraying violence in a realistic manner. This realism means focusing on individuals, since an individual's pain and suffering are more meaningful to the reader than that of a faceless crowd of thousands or millions. Of course, Card used this in _ E_ n_ d_ e_ r'_ s _ G_ a_ m_ e, where the reader is supposed to empathize more with Ender's predicament than with the genocide of the Bugger race.

The question of censorship (and self-censorship) was raised, with Banks and Newman admitting to some self-censorship. Card said that there were some things he couldn't write, but this was because of his feelings rather than an effort to censor his writing to make it more acceptable.

The uses of violence were, of course, a major issue. Violence or the threat of violence as a means to get and keep power was the first use, but violence as connected with sacrifice was also high on the authors' lists. Someone (Card?) pointed out that the central myth of Christianity relies not only on the death of a messiah, but on his suffering.

The other major uses of violence listed were violence for its own sake (the Shaun Hutson school of writing) and violence as revenge (usually demonstrated by an author killing another author in his books, though Card claims keeping them alive and just making them stupid is better).

Panel: When Were the Golden Years of SF Movies?
Saturday, 4pm
Peter Nicholls, Kim Newman, Bill Warren, John Brosnan

The first claim was that the Golden Age has not yet arrived. Warren presented a chart showing science fiction movies as a percentage of all movies released each year. Not surprisingly, the rate is steadily going up. In terms of box-office, the high point was 1985, with 58% of gross receipts attributable to science fiction.

In terms of a turning point, 1968 with _ 2_ 0_ 0_ 1: _ A _ S_ p_ a_ c_ e _ O_ d_ y_ s_ s_ e_ y, _ B_ a_ r_ b_ a_ r_ e_ l_ l_ a, _ N_ i_ g_ h_ t _ o_ f _ t_ h_ e _ L_ i_ v_ i_ n_ g _ D_ e_ a_ d, and _ P_ l_ a_ n_ e_ t _ o_ f _ t_ h_ e _ A_ p_ e_ s was cited.
Mark would have liked them to include _ F_ i_ v_ e _ M_ i_ l_ l_ i_ o_ n _ Y_ e_ a_ r_ s _ t_ o _ E_ a_ r_ t_ h
(a.k.a. _ Q_ u_ a_ t_ e_ r_ m_ a_ s_ s _ a_ n_ d _ t_ h_ e _ P_ i_ t), but I would claim that is perhaps the
last of the old-style science fiction. 1977 with _ S_ t_ a_ r _ W_ a_ r_ s and _ C_ l_ o_ s_ e _ E_ n_ c_ o_ u_ n_ t_ e_ r_ s _ o_ f _ t_ h_ e _ T_ h_ i_ r_ d _ K_ i_ n_ d was another turning point.

The panel asked (rhetorically) what happened to all the young Turks: Lucas, Spielberg, Dante, Landis, Cohen, Carpenter. This led to a long discussion of the two versions of _ T_ h_ e _ T_ h_ i_ n_ g versus the original story.

Non-English-language films (particularly Eastern European films) were briefly mentioned, but the panel focused almost entirely on United States, British, Canadian, and Australian films. The effect of cable, video, etc., was discussed, particularly the proliferation of different versions of a single film: the United States theatrical version, the British version (less violence), the Japanese version (more violence), the cable version, the cassette version, the "special" TV version (with added footage to fill two 2-hour slots), the regular TV version (cut to fit one 2-hour slot or less),.... Apparently there are now full versions of _ F_ r_ a_ n_ k_ e_ n_ s_ t_ e_ i_ n, _ D_ r_ a_ c_ u_ l_ a, _ D_ r. _ J_ e_ k_ y_ l_ l _ a_ n_ d _ M_ r. _ H_ y_ d_ e (the Fredric March version), and _ B_ r_ i_ d_ e _ o_ f _ F_ r_ a_ n_ k_ e_ n_ s_ t_ e_ i_ n.

One interesting note was that Jack Arnold never thought much of his science fiction films, nor did the studio, until John Baxter in his _ S_ c_ i_ e_ n_ c_ e _ F_ i_ c_ t_ i_ o_ n _ i_ n _ t_ h_ e _ C_ i_ n_ e_ m_ a devoted an entire chapter to Arnold ("The Dark Genius of the Science Fiction Cinema").

(End of Part 1)