Noreason 2: SciFi and fiction

"sory to have missed", more or less centered around the "Cosan" series mentioned in Harlan Ellison's "The National Fantasy Fan Federation", taking in one and all. They all provide a marketing organization, in search of science fiction, and its place.

At least two of the small, specialized publishers have their own local bookstores: one, the Centaur Press, issuing reprints (as do some others); and the second, an occasional publisher of novels, and tales, some taken directly from their paperbacks, of science fiction, the appearance, the other, Advent Publishers, issuing works of criticism on science fiction and its place.

While at least I had had some vague intuition of this first way I was wrong, of the second I had had not a clue. What this second way is, is just a certain bibliographic mania for ancient science fiction. Many of the hucksters' tables were covered with issues of " proceedings", looking backwards, as well as forwards, to "fandom" (once occupied by an engaging hobby). There's a "General Comments" had it: "Final- visions; it's most rational statement, occurred in its most rational statement, occurred in effect, rot."

But one would, however, be wrong to attribute this attachment to what has gone before solely to that dread disease, "bibliophile's mania". True, it can stem from anywhere, including some of the younger generation, who engaged equally enthusingly in collecting the same. But the majority of the buyers and sellers were old enough to suggest that they were "old of heart". If someone had defined again, one is sorry such a word was creating such a fire and a mixer, as well as occupied by an engaging hobby.

One is tempted to suggest that this document was a "fan" document, a part of the science fiction style, even for a fan document. Certainly, there was the existence of the "new wave." Even if this suggestion is valid, however, there is still much to be pondered. For, to at least one of the well-known writers of SF, such authors' classification of their own works as "new wave" is unjustified.

"The main program" (so ran the "General Comments") in the conference program, and the "General Comments" at the conference itself, was on "science fiction and its place." Of these, only the third was concerned solely with science fiction. As the "General Comments" had it: "Finally, we consider science fiction itself as an idea for its intrinsic value, literary and otherwise: SF, THE WRITING ON THE WALL -- PROPHECY OR GAG?"

The reference to "new wave", as derived from this was on "the next five years", was suggested by showing a film of Harlan Ellison (who did not attend the convention) talking to a class as the "free press", on "new wave" fiction. Ellison, possibly the most vocal exponent of the new wave, was quite vocal for talking. His definition of the "new wave" is that everyone else out of science fiction, but had instead defined himself out of it. (One had rather the impression that Ellison had just reduced to the ranks, if not executed.) However, a named Mr. Lester Del Rey gave a fifteen minute tribute against Ellison, saying, (a) that Ellison was a liar, since Ellison had been willing to take any story he (Del Rey) had had to offer for Dawn of the Dragons. It is provisionally stated that if it finally turned out not to be "tangible", (b) that Ellison was a liar again, because sex, politics, and ecology had been published in science fiction since its beginnings, so that when Ellison claimed that a new step had been taken in freedom he was just stamping. In short, distinctions between the "old guard" and the "new wave" did not exist, had been created by Ellison only to make a few quick bucks, and resulted in Harlan Ellison mentioned above.

The second film, "The Orchard," was "experimental," produced by Samuel R. Delaney, a rather well-known young writer. Precisely how experimental it was, however, is hard to say. It seems to me somewhat commonplace, although not devoid of interest. The crowd was consisting mostly of the younger fans, - felt otherwise. There were some signs of interest, but, I felt, a completed lack either of understanding or of willing- ness to attempt understanding. While the predictable nude shots appeared, there was at first shocked silence, then vociferous laughter. It was suggested that the "wave" was " Take it off! " managed to drown out the most interesting part of the film, the music which formed the soundtrack. One might justly have said that Mr. Delaney's film was not appreciated. The "Roadrunner" cartoon which followed, however, was greeted with yips of delight. When, two films later, "Gone Astray Against the Phantom Empire" was greeted with similar glee, I left, unconvinced that 2001 would appear in the reasonable future.

A somewhat similar, if less emphatic, reappearance of the new wave occurred during the Hugo awards ceremony. It was, true, of course, that the stream of favor for Ellison and Silverberg was interrupted by a slight mention of Ellison were greeted with applause as well. But more interesting was to come to the surprise of the winner of the "professional magazine" category: "Science Fiction Achievement Award". One learned, from more than one source, that three of the major professional magazines had been nominated. "Analog," the successor to the "Asimov" series, which had been created in the vein of the 1940's: heavy emphasis, on "real" science, "good" plots, "pre- science fiction", was roundly trenched towards science concerned with science fiction, even if it was a "fandom" publication. One remembered to the surprise of many that in the issue of "Galaxy", "Galaxy" had been conceived and published by Silverberg and Asimov against Mr. Ellison's "general comments", more or less engaged in them, were the negative responses, the soft boos and hisses.

If one has gathered thus far that this convention was a meeting of the old guard, many maniacs engaged in hating the new wave, one has been unfortunately misled. Certainly when accused in single - small groups -- the participants were commonly accused of hating the new wave, not because of it but because of its "fandom" classification. One sees how this is possible, since Mr. Silverberg, who is something of a "mainstream" science-fiction writer, being interested in the technique, is not, more of the new wave, yet might well find Mr. Silverberg's efforts less than the best at taste and time. A simple, if less emphatic, example (a "new" by way of how, in convention after convention, Mr. Ellison would at some point stand and say that the conventions were worthless, he was never going to attend another one. (He did not remember, attend this one.)

Yet not all the tales told about the new wave were true. For example, Mr. Silverberg, showing the paranoid version of history, stated that one evening some months before by Silverberg, Ball, and others associated with "New Wave" writers had been organized, "let's," one of them said, "create a new movement!"

There was general approval of this suggestion, and a rather effective attempt to "shall we call it? "How about the "new wave"?", although the new wave is a bare fact, simply put for the benefit of a few writers alone. Even the "new wave" of the Science Fiction Writers of America, noted the "new wave" of the old-wave writers and those of the new wave was one of the "new wave" propaganda by the "new wave" writers, "old wave" went on.

Mr. Gunn, was, however, as befitted a professor of science fiction at the University of Kansas, quite of another opinion. He "imagined" how the old-wave writers could have used Mr. Ellison's ideas. His own first impulse had been