Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society
Club Notice - 03/16/90 -- Vol. 8, No. 37

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

Unless otherwise stated, all meetings are on Wednesdays at noon.
LZ meetings are in LZ 2R-158. MT meetings are in the cafeteria.

_D_A_T_E _T_O_P_I_C

03/28 LZ: Book Swap
04/18 LZ: L. RON HUBBARD PRESENTS WRITERS OF THE FUTURE #5 (New authors)
05/09 LZ: Incarnations of Immortality Series, by Piers Anthony
(Mythology as Science)
05/30 LZ: HOWLING MAD, by Peter David (The Lighter Side of Werewolves)

_D_A_T_E _E_X_T_E_R_N_A_L _M_E_E_T_I_N_G_S/_C_O_N_V_E_N_T_I_O_N_S/_E_T_C.

04/08 Science Fiction Association of Bergen County: TBA
(phone 201-933-2724 for details) (Saturday)
04/21 NJSFS New Jersey Science Fiction Society: Josepha Sherman
(phone 201-432-5965 for details) (Saturday)

HO Chair: John Jetzt HO 1E-525 834-1563 hocpa!jetzt
LZ Chair: Rob Mitchell LZ 1B-306 576-6106 mtuxo!jrrt
MT Chair: Mark Leeper MT 3D-441 957-5619 mtgzx!leeper
HO Librarian: Tim Schroeder HO 3D-225A 949-5866 homxa!tps
LZ Librarian: Lance Larsen LZ 3L-312 576-3346 lzfme!lfl
MT Librarian: Evelyn Leeper MT 1F-329 957-2070 mtgzy!ecl
Factotum: Evelyn Leeper MT 1F-329 957-2070 mtgzy!ecl

1. The legal community has been particularly interested in electronic communications of late. After all, where money is involved you will find lawyers who want a piece of the pie or, more accurately, want the whole pie. There are signs that too many are feasting on the medical profession. How many of us remember a couple of decades ago when nobody knew if doctors or lawyers were the bigger scumbags? Eventually it turned out that unfortunately

lawyers didn't get sick as often as doctors got sued. And the Hippocratic Oath prevents doctors from intentionally making lawyers sick while lawyers are free to do everything they can to get doctors sued. I don't know if lawyers take any sort of oath, but with a lawyer, what does it matter? Because the lawyers have been

feasting on the medical community--bleeding it white--doctors are making do with domestic wines, 280-Zs rather than Ferraris, that sort of thing. And with all the lawyers feasting there, some have had to move on to the telecommunications industry.

The issue now seems to be copyright over electronic media. In the days of the printing press or even the photocopy machine , it was pretty clear when you were making a copy of something someone else had written. The author wrote it, the publisher typeset it, and each time the presses came together, a copy was made or a printer got his hand crushed. On a photocopy machine, you press the button and you get either a sheet out or more often a paper jam with a message to call the operator. Those instances when you don't get a jam you do get a copy.

With electronic media, it is much less clear where the original leaves off and the copy begins. As a message is relayed, at every step it is copied in one form or another after it has been digitized, and the original is destroyed. For the benefit of the uninitiated: People first thought the world was made up of four elements: earth, air, fire, and water. Then it was discovered water was made up of hydrogen, oxygen, and toxic waste and things got more complex. Then with the computer age things got simple again as we discovered everything was really made up of ones and zeroes. But you can't move ones and zeroes; you can only copy them down and recreate them elsewhere. It is like the old "Star Trek" episode when Captain Kirk stepped into the transporter and two Kirks stepped out. Which is the original? Well, there cannot be two originals. Obviously the original was destroyed and two copies were made. Every time Kirk steps into the transporter, he is destroyed and in effect dies. That thing that comes out the other end is a copy--perfectly made right down to the memories. For most of the Enterprise crew, perfect imitations are close enough for what is after all government work. The transporter must be very

careful to disintegrate Kirk at the near end or you'd end up with hundreds of Captain Kirks running around and falling in love with alien women.

There was for a while a practice of electronically mailing to a mailing list some popular newspaper columns. Now some bozo claims he ahs bought the rights to be the exclusive person who can electronically mail these columns and you must pay a fee to him to receive them.

Now the question: If I buy a book, I can lend it to a friend. How else can my friend tell me that he didn't like it and I have no taste? Fine and dandy. If I buy a newspaper carrying the column there is nobody who says I cannot paste the column on my wall for whoever wants to read it. If the bozo who bought the rights can tell me a reasonable way I can pass my own copy on to someone else, that is one thing, but he is saying I cannot send the copy to

someone else. I would be perfectly happy to lend a friend just my copy on disk, but how can I do that? If we are going to an electronic world, is some legalistic bozo going to come along and tell me I cannot share with anyone else anything that us copyrighted? Are we headed for a pay-per-view world?

2. In response to Mark Leeper's article last week about the Great Attractor, Bruce Szablak wrote, "_S_c_i_e_n_c_e _N_e_w_s (or _S_c_i_e_n_t_i_f_i_c _A_m_e_r_i_c_a_n) in a recent issue reported that the Great Attractor does not account for the perceived motion of the galaxy. It is postulated that there is an Even Greater Attractor even farther away in the universe. No kidding...."

To which Mark replies:

Do bigger masses have bigger masses
in hyperspace attracting?
And bigger masses still bigger masses
the universe compacting?

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

Perhaps my dynamite plants will put an end to war sooner than your [peace] congresses. On the day two army corps can annihilate each other in one second all civilized nations will recoil from war in horror.

-- Alfred Nobel

THE HUNT FOR RED OCTOBER

Comments by Robert L. Mitchell

When most people judge a movie, they do so based on their own balance of plot, characterization, and theme -- and so do I. Once in a while, though, you see a movie that tries to depict something you're quite knowledgeable about, and your enjoyment depends mightily on how accurately Hollywood presents your area of expertise. For example, many

computer-literate folks find _W_a_r_G_a_m_e_s great as a comedy, but not as serious drama about plausible technology.

As an ex-submariner officer, I know subs. I know ours very well, and theirs somewhat well. I know what they look like, how they move, how the people in them look, sound, and act -- as I said, I know subs. Apparently, so do the people who made _T_h_e _H_u_n_t _f_o_r _R_e_d _O_c_t_o_b_e_r.

I won't comment on the movie as a movie; I leave that for better wordsmiths than me. As a reasonably accurate portrayal of submarines and submariners, though, _T_h_e _H_u_n_t _f_o_r _R_e_d _O_c_t_o_b_e_r is the second most realistic sub film I know (_D_a_s _B_o_o_t being the best). Thanks, no doubt, to substantial assistance from the US Navy, the sets for the American vessels (particularly the USS Dallas) were spot-on accurate (with one exception). The layout of the Operations Room and its displays and consoles was almost exact. The crews looked and sounded like real bluejackets. Bart Mancuso (played by Scott Glenn) was the quintessential sub skipper -- cool, somewhat aloof, knowing when to listen and when to take action -- I felt I'd served under that man. Even the tactics were realistic. The Soviets really do conduct "Crazy Ivans," and our tactical manuals use that name.

Obviously, Hollywood had room to be a little more creative in the design of the Soviet subs. Missile Compartments, for instance, do not have so much open space, nor catwalks (they have solid decks). Even in one case for the Dallas, reality took an appropriate backseat to imagination. The Sonar Room on a boat is so highly classified that they better _n_o_t have accurately portrayed one in the film....

I'm glad I saw the film, in part because the realism brought back a lot of memories. On the other hand, the verisimilitude of the book was even better, so maybe I ought to go back and reread it.

MOUNTAINS OF THE MOON
A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: The story of one of the great expeditions of history--and of the controversy that surrounded it--is brought to the screen spectacularly and intelligently. While the film takes a few liberties with the facts, I found it a better adventure tale than _T_h_e _H_u_n_t _f_o_r _R_e_d _O_c_t_o_b_e_r and give or take a fact or two, it is all a true story. Rating: +3.

The Nile River came like a miracle out of the desert, the last place you would expect a great river, to bring life to the great Egyptian civilization. That civilization was a major world power--often _t_h_e major world power--for 3500 years, and it was totally dependent on the enigmatic Nile, the only major river that flows south to north. Even today the Nile means life or death to countries in its path. Not surprisingly, when Europeans came to Africa they were fascinated by this strange river and in particular, where the waters originated. But it was time when tracing the river to its origins meant an expedition on foot under nearly impossible conditions. And the only reward would be to go down in the history books as being the one who answered the great question: "Where did the waters of the Nile come from?" When the question finally was answered, it was only at very great cost and it was an answer that would remain shrouded in controversy for almost two decades. _M_o_u_n_t_a_i_n_s _o_f _t_h_e _M_o_o_n is an intelligent yet visually spectacular adventure film about the expedition to find the source of the Nile. It is about Sir Richard Francis Burton and John Hanning Speke, two very different men who made that expedition, and the controversy that came out of that expedition.

The film covers much of the same territory that the excellent BBC mini-series "The Search for the Nile" covered in 1971 (and wouldn't this be a good time for someone to rebroadcast that series?). It is the story of how Burton and Speke came to go on such a perilous expedition, of the experiences on the trek, and of the bitter controversy that arose from their different conclusions about the sources of the Nile.

Sir Richard Burton was perhaps the most colorful explorer and anthropologist of all times and the film hardly does justice to the man's history. Burton had fluency in dozens of languages and was sufficiently good at the art of disguise that he could make himself appear to be a native through much of the world. Disguised as an Afghani, he was the first European to enter Mecca and Medina. He had an unquenchable thirst to learn about other cultures first-hand, especially their sexual practices--in which he both observed and participated--and their erotic literature. He was an eloquent writer and translator, but because of his fixation on the sexual, many of his writings and

translations were considered unsuitable in British society. His was the definitive translation of the "Arabian Nights" and it accurately has far more sex and violence than the expurgated versions generally available. Burton was a giant man with giant vices.

On the other hand, John Speke was a petty man with petty vices. His greatest passion was for hunting and he looked upon Africa in large part as one big game park populated with animals he could shoot and populated with savages best avoided. Where Burton had a thirst for knowledge about other cultures, Speke had an attitude of inflexible superiority that more than once put his life in danger.

William Harrison's 1983 novel _B_u_r_t_o_n _a_n_d _S_p_e_k_e (recently re-issued as _M_o_u_n_t_a_i_n_s _o_f _t_h_e _M_o_o_n) shows much more the personality conflict between these two men and only vaguely hints that they may have had a grudging respect and even an affection for each other. Curiously, this film written by Harrison together with director Bob Rafelson--based on the novel and on the logs the two men kept of the expedition--reverses that viewpoint. It says the two were actually close friends and the post-expedition conflict about the interpretation of their findings was due more to English society wishing to take the opinions of an Englishman, Speke, over those of Burton. Burton was, after all, an Irishman, a free thinker, and a writer of what English society considered pornography. Harrison seems to have changed his mind between writing the book and the screenplay--or had it changed by Rafelson--about what were Burton's and Speke's attitudes toward each other. The irony of the conflict, of course, is that while reading the book and probably while seeing the film you want to believe Burton, it was Speke's interpretation that this "Lake Victoria" was the actual source that was vindicated. Speke's measurements were eventually found to be essentially accurate and his conclusions were correct.

The film's two main characters are powerfully played by Patrick Bergin as Burton and Iain Glen as Speke, both relatively new to American audiences. The film also has a good cast of supporting characters. In a film with two such interesting main characters, it would be quite easy for Fiona Lewis to go unnoticed as Burton's stay-at-home lover and later wife Isabel. Not so, however. Shaw's Isabel is a major character fiercely loyal to an idealized image of her husband, an image of which even the great Richard Burton fell short. Shaw's expression when seeing

Burton seems to convey an emotion combining joy and astonishment, the same expression she used as Christy Brown's teacher in _ M_ y _ L_ e_ f_ t _ F_ o_ o_ t. The original Isabel Burton was by all accounts a remarkable woman totally willing to turn a blind eye to her husband's philandering just to be married to Burton. Eventually her unquestioning loyalty shamed her husband into monogamy. On the night he died, she burned a priceless collection of his unpublished notes and forty-one unpublished manuscripts in a misguided effort to preserve her dead husband's reputation.

Somewhat understated in the film as well as all European accounts of the expeditions is the presence of Sidi Bombay, at this point an inexperienced African hired by Burton and Speke as a guide and treated very poorly by Speke, but who went on to become one of Africa's great explorers.

The film's account of the great expedition, much abridged from the novel and logs, remains harrowing and gives a feel for the courage it must have required to venture into Africa on foot in 1857. The most horrifying sequence, for me all the more so since I had previously read the account in both Harrison's novel and in Burton's account of the expedition, was the incident that resulted in Speke losing his hearing in one ear. Nearly as disturbing is the account of why Burton had to be carried and of the primitive first aid. (I will withhold the details of these incidents for the benefit of readers who do not yet know the story.) All along the way, there are contacts with the local tribes, each with its own culture, and many of whom were not happy to see strangers. The stories of the three expeditions, naturally, had to be greatly abbreviated for the film--in fact, we are only told that the third expedition took place--but what we do see is sufficient for good storytelling.

Harrison and Rafelson's screenplay, while based on the novel and the expedition logs seem to have invented details not in either. At one point in a speech, Burton says that no white man can claim to have discovered a body of water well-known to the local tribes. Even for Burton with his enlightened views, this would seem an anachronistic viewpoint. In actual point of fact it is not the discovery of the body

of water that was important so much as its association with the river that is the lifeblood of Egypt, and Speke really was the first person to make the association that the two really were the same body of water. He also gathered reasonable evidence for that point of view. As much as we would like to credit both the local tribesmen and Burton over the priggish Anglo-chauvinist Speke, it really is Speke to whom the credit belongs. As a side note, Burton's views toward Africa were less enlightened than his attitudes toward Arab peoples. As Robert Collins observes in his 1967 introduction to Burton's _ T_ h_ e _ N_ i_ l_ e _ B_ a_ s_ i_ n:

> Burton's insatiable appetite for travel soon brought him to Africa. He observed Africa and the Africans at best with the assumptions of a Victorian Englishman, at worst with the attitudes of an Arab slave trader. Not surprisingly, he judged African culture, which he made no attempt to understand, as hopelessly inferior to the Asian and European civilizations he knew so well. African customs, manners, and morals repulsed him, perhaps because they did not fit his preconceived notions of civilization. Moreover, he never sought to separate race and culture. Thus African cultural inferiority became obvious proof of African racial inferiority.

> This "Afrophobia" led Burton, as well as other Englishmen, to place Africans at the bottom of the evolutionary scale of national and racial development. True, Burton was sufficiently condescending to consider Africans human beings, but humans of the lowest kind. He argued that only through emigration, or, perhaps, by the adoption of Islam, could they hope for salvation. Burton's bigoted ideas of African inferiority colored all of his writings about Africa, and the more he saw and learned, or rather mislearned, the more vicious became his contempt for the continent. One should not read Richard Burton without keeping in mind this deep-seated prejudice.

It is perhaps a pity that _ M_ o_ u_ n_ t_ a_ i_ n_ s _ o_ f _ t_ h_ e _ M_ o_ o_ n should be released

withing days of another adventure film, _ T_ h_ e _ H_ u_ n_ t _ f_ o_ r _ R_ e_ d _ O_ c_ t_ o_ b_ e_ r. Since I had read both novels, it was _ M_ o_ u_ n_ t_ a_ i_ n_ s _ o_ f _ t_ h_ e _ M_ o_ o_ n that I was more looking forward to. My reasons were at least two-fold. First, however realistically Tom Clancy writes and however well-researched his facts were, _ T_ h_ e _ H_ u_ n_ t _ f_ o_ r _ R_ e_ d _ O_ c_ t_ o_ b_ e_ r is fiction and the Burton-Speke expedition is authentic history. It really happened. Harrison had some latitude with the interpretation of events but most of what we are seeing is true. The second, and perhaps more important, reason was that Clancy's heroes sit in large and relatively comfortable machines and play out their game. True, if they lose they die, but if they win the only price they have paid is that they are exhausted. Arguably most of the impressive feats are done by the machinery. But to set off on foot across mid-19th Century Africa with no more defense than a few rifles requires a different character of courage. Burton and Speke set out knowing that even if they found the source of the Nile, by the time they returned Africa would have eaten a big piece of each of them. Speke could not predict that he would have to mutilate horribly his own ear and leave himself deaf; Burton could not predict the diseases he would be stricken with, but that or something just as bad was nearly inevitable. And Burton and Speke went anyway because a question had to be answered. To that degree they were greater heroes than Tom Clancy's fictional imaginings. And yet they were real people. And to find not one but two different books by Burton describing his expeditions in his own words I needed to go no further than my public library.

Because I had greater expectations for _ M_ o_ u_ n_ t_ a_ i_ n_ s _ o_ f _ t_ h_ e _ M_ o_ o_ n than for _ T_ h_ e _ H_ u_ n_ t _ f_ o_ r _ R_ e_ d _ O_ c_ t_ o_ b_ e_ r, I knew it was much more likely that I would be disappointed by Rafelson's film. Surprisingly, _ M_ o_ u_ n_ t_ a_ i_ n_ s _ o_ f _ t_ h_ e _ M_ o_ o_ n came much closer to meeting my high expectations that _ T_ h_ e _ H_ u_ n_ t _ f_ o_ r _ R_ e_ d _ O_ c_ t_ o_ b_ e_ r came to meeting lower ones. Rafelson, whose earlier films were very different low-budget films (_ F_ i_ v_ e _ E_ a_ s_ y _ P_ i_ e_ c_ e_ s and _ S_ t_ a_ y _ H_ u_ n_ g_ r_ y), has made an intelligent adventure film to be savored for years to come. I rate it a +3 on the -4 to +4 scale.

PHASES OF GRAVITY by Dan Simmons
Bantam Spectra, 1989, ISBN 0-553-27764-2, $4.50.
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper

Is this book science fiction? Hard to say. Is James Michener's _ S_ p_ a_ c_ e science fiction?

Richard Baedecker is an Apollo astronaut who must now deal with his earth-bound existence. Once a hero who walked on the moon, he must live in a world where his "home town" (that he lived in for only a couple of years) cannot even spell his name right when they name a day in his honor. His son has gone off to an ashram in India, his wife has left him, and in general, he is discovering that once you achieve the ultimate goal--whatever your ultimate goal is--there is nowhere to go but down.

In another sense, this book is about our coming to terms with the modern age. When the extraordinary becomes ordinary, what happens? When one man walks on the moon, it's amazing. When a dozen do it, it becomes mundane. Modern science (or technology) can take us half-way around the world in a few hours, but it can't help us adjust to the cultural changes we experience when we get there. Technology makes everything so easy that we find ourselves looking for ways to make things difficult; you can take a helicopter to the top of a mountain, but people still do mountain climbing.

Baedecker tries to find the answers to his dilemma through other astronauts. But they have their own problems and their own solutions. One has "found religion": he needed something beyond all that he had experienced and all that he had seen, and only God could give him that. Another continued to challenge himself (on a smaller scale)--he did not need a higher goal, but rather needed to strive toward _ s_ o_ m_ e goal.

This book doesn't have pulse-pounding action. But that's part of the point: when the pulse-pounding action has passed, what then? Simmons deals with this, and does it well.

QUEST FOR APOLLO by Michael Lahey
DAW, 1989, ISBN 0-88677-364-4, $3.95.
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper

Dante's _ I_ n_ f_ e_ r_ n_ o has fascinated fantasy authors. Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle did a science fictional version of it, Salman Rushdie based his first novel on a variation of it, and now Michael Lahey takes a different approach to the meeting of Dante and Virgil. Unfortunately, Lahey hasn't managed to deliver either as interesting a world as Niven or Pournelle or as introspective a book as Rushdie.

In _ Q_ u_ e_ s_ t _ f_ o_ r _ A_ p_ o_ l_ l_ o we find that Virgil has been meeting poets with the initials "D. A." ever since he died. Now he meets the main character, Delbert Alderini, but this time is different. They are told by the goddess Diana that Apollo has been put under a curse, which causes him to be reborn as mortal over and over, dying a tragic death each time. They are given six nights to go back in time (through their dreams), find Apollo, and make him aware of his divine nature. If they fail, the world will be destroyed. So the first night they go back and find Apollo in ancient Rome, but just as they are about to make him aware of his identity, circumstances prevent them, and they wake up.

So as you the reader sit there, about one-quarter through the book, how difficult is it to figure out what the rest of the book will be like? Or, for that matter, how it will end?

Lahey has a talent for writing comedy that does show through, but the book is a disappointment in that it seems to be aiming for a much higher level than just light reading. In particular, the scenes of battlefield hospitals and Nazi concentration camps seem out of place in a book intended only as humor, and lead me to believe that Lahey was trying for more, but couldn't quite reach it. "[La] diritta via era smarrita," or in other words, he has lost the straight path to his goal.

Boskone 27
(Part 2)
Con report by Evelyn C. Leeper and Mark R. Leeper

_ S_ h_ e_ r_ l_ o_ c_ k _ H_ o_ l_ m_ e_ s?
Saturday, 1 PM
Tony Lewis (mod), Ann Broomhead, Esther Friesner, Evelyn C. Leeper,
Priscilla Olson, Joe Siclari, Stu Shiffman

This started somewhat obscurely by panelists saying things like "Holmes is a Jungian archetype" and "Holmes is Faust moderated through King Arthur." This got everyone sufficiently off topic that the entire hour drifted more or less aimlessly.

Esther Friesner claimed that Brihtric Donne (in her novel _ D_ r_ u_ i_ d'_ s _ B_ l_ o_ o_ d) is not Sherlock Holmes, and hence the novel should not be on Tony Lewis's list of "science fictional Sherlock Holmes." No one else was convinced; by her reasoning Poul Anderson's "Martian Crown Jewels" would not be included either, and no one was willing to throw that out.

The Holmes panel at Noreascon (or was it last year's Boskone?) had discussed Gandalf as Holmes: tall, thin, with grey eyes, supposedly killed in a fall from a cliff, but not really dead. So someone here claimed this made the Balrog the Moriarty figure. This led to a discussion (listing) of various books in which Moriarty is the main

character, rather than Holmes.

Someone in the audience asked about the movie portrayals of Holmes and Watson, in particular about Rathbone. Someone (Friesner?) said that the problem was that the movies want the main character/hero to be Everyman. In the Holmes stories, Holmes is something above Everyman; Watson is Everyman. When Holmes is dropped to the Everyman level, Watson--who can't be his equal--must also be dropped, which results in Watson being a buffoon in most cases, and the Rathbone-Bruce films are the prime example of this. Some films avoid this: _ T_ h_ e _ S_ e_ v_ e_ n _ P_ e_ r _ C_ e_ n_ t _ S_ o_ l_ u_ t_ i_ o_ n, and the Jeremy Brett television series (both Watsons).

Lewis pointed out that even such an esteemed authors as T. S. Eliot used Holmes. Moriarty showed up as Macavity in _ O_ l_ d _ P_ o_ s_ s_ u_ m'_ s _ B_ o_ o_ k _ o_ f _ P_ r_ a_ c_ t_ i_ c_ a_ l _ C_ a_ t_ s (and Gus the Theater Cat supposedly had Sherlockian references as well), and the Musgrave Ritual was used in _ M_ u_ r_ d_ e_ r _ i_ n _ t_ h_ e _ C_ a_ t_ h_ e_ d_ r_ a_ l. John Lennon also did a Holmes pastiche in _ A _ S_ p_ a_ n_ i_ a_ r_ d _ i_ n _ t_ h_ e _ W_ o_ r_ k_ s ("The Singularge Experience of Miss Anne Duffield").

Lewis quoted his daughter that Holmes was popular with adolescents because Holmes gets to eat when he wants, sleep when he wants, do what he wants, and be rude to grown-ups, and someone else added that he also has someone (Mrs. Hudson) pick up after him as well.

After this, the panel degenerated into a list of "who would you like to see Holmes meet?" The list included Frankenstein, Richard Burton (the explorer, not the actor), Fu Manchu (though this has been done once, and Solar Pons met him as well), and Captain Nemo (apparently also done by Philip Jose ' Farmer).

Since I was on this panel, my reporting of it is less thorough than of the other panels (it's hard to take notes and talk at the same time). My list of Sherlock Holmes related works is available on request.

_ E_ l_ e_ c_ t_ r_ o_ n_ i_ c _ F_ a_ n_ d_ o_ m--_ T_ h_ e

First Wire-Heads

Saturday, 2 PM

Jim Turner (mod), Linda E. Bushyager, Bill Davidsen, Saul Jaffe, Myrrh Mist

Once upon a time, everyone on an electronic fandom panel was talking the same language. This is no longer the case.

Jim Turner, for example, is familiar with GEnie, Usenet, and the *Silverdisk. Saul Jaffe works with the *Silverdisk and Usenet. Myrrh Mist knows BIX. The issues raised by these various forms are all over the map.

I would divide electronic fandom into five major categories:

1. Single-site bulletin boards
2. Multi-site bulletin boards
3. Moderated bulletin boards
4. Electronic fanzines
5. Electronically distributed fanzines

Single-site bulletin boards are those in which the contributor throws his or her message up on a single machine that everyone reading the bulletin board accesses. This makes it extremely interactive (there is no propagation delay). Also, a user can easily retract a message. An example of this would be (I believe) GEnie, BIX, or CompuServe.

Multi-site bulletin boards are those in which a message is sent to many different machines, but still resides in a single location on each one of them. It is much less interactive; one can have propagation delays of hours or even days. A user may theoretically be able to

---

* GEnie is a trademark of General Electric.

retract a message, but will probably not be able to "catch" all the copies that have gone out. Usenet news groups are a prime example of this form.

Moderated bulletin boards can be single- or multi-site, but only sys-ops (system administrators, moderators, what have you) can post or delete messages. This increases the signal-to-noise ratio considerably.

Electronic fanzines are those which are designed to be read on-line, but are delivered as mail to each individual subscriber, rather than stored in a common area. They are similar to moderated bulletin boards in that there is an editor, but they are different in that it is impossible to retract a message once it is sent out. ("The Moving Finger writes and, having writ,/Moves on: nor all your Piety nor Wit/Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,/Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it.") _ S_ F-_ L_ o_ v_ e_ r_ s _ D_ i_ g_ e_ s_ t is a good example of this category.

Electronically distributed fanzines are those which are designed to be read on paper, but are distributed to some or all subscribers electronically. The individual recipients can then print them out locally. They differs from electronic fanzines in that the layout, page breaks, etc., assume a hard-cover product eventually (though recipients can read it on-line if they prefer). I publish one of these (the _ M_ T _ V_ O_ I_ D) and the reason for doing it this way is that I'd rather each person print and staple their own issue than I have to do 150.

So it seems to me that this panel, in discussing the issues, was often working from different assumptions. For example, one question was whether the faster turnaround time cut down on "flame wars." Those who worked mainly with single-site bulletin boards thought it did, but those who worked with multi-site boards or electronical(ly distributed) fanzines said quite the opposite. (On Usenet, "flame wars" are legendary!)

In terms of volume, Jaffe was the only one able to cite figures: about 300 messages a day are submitted to _ S_ F-_ L_ o_ v_ e_ r_ s _ D_ i_ g_ e_ s_ t (mostly through Usenet) and about 80 messages a day are included in the _ D_ i_ g_ e_ s_ t.

Many people seemed to "object" to electronic fandom because it is limited to the technologically literate. Perhaps there is truth in this claim, but books at one time were available only to the reading literate, and they were as rare as (or rarer than) the technologically literate today. And just as there were live readings for the illiterate (and even today, professional letter writers and readers in less literate cultures), electronic fandom has its equivalent in commercial and public-access systems which enable the fan to access sf-related bulletin boards with a bare minimum of expertise on the part of the fan. (In fact, many claim that the fan doesn't even need to know how to spell, punctuate, or be polite!)

I had to leave before the end of the panel, since I was appearing on another panel at 3 PM, but I am sure the last word has not been said on this subject. One panel worth considering for future conventions might be "Producing a Dual-Media Fanzine: The Worst of Both Worlds." Chuq Von Rospach (_ O_ t_ h_ e_ r_ R_ e_ a_ l_ m_ s) and I could certainly provide some insight.

_ F_ a_ n_ z_ i_ n_ e _ W_ r_ i_ t_ i_ n_ g: _ M_ i_ m_ e_ o? _ W_ h_ a_ t _ t_ h_ e _ H_ e_ c_ t_ o _ I_ s T T T Th h h ha a a at t t t?

Saturday, 1 PM
Mark Keller (mod), Janice Eisen, Evelyn C. Leeper, Laurie Mann, Ed Meskys, Teresa Neilsen-Hayden

In spite of Mark Keller's attempt to stir things up by claiming electronic fandom was ruining fanzine writing, this was a fairly low-key panel. There was some argument about whether something like _ S_ F-_ L_ o_ v_ e_ r_ s _ D_ i_ g_ e_ s_ t was a fanzine (more on this later). At one point, Mann claimed it was not eligible for the fanzine Hugo because of the general low quality of the submissions. I pointed out that nowhere in the rules did it say the nominees had to be good--that was supposedly what the voting process was for.

Once again, people said that fandom was getting too large. ("Ah, yes, I remember the good old days....") Someone quoted a hallway conversation in which a fan complained that "the bookworms have taken over Boskone." (To which I can only reply, "Thank Ghod!")

Ed Meskys seemed to have the largest supply of fannish anecdotes, though I must confess that many of them were about people I had never heard of. I suspect I am one of this new generation of fans, or at least fan writers, who came in through the electronic door and doesn't spend a lot of time discussing fannish rumors and doings, but rather concentrates on reviewing and discussing science fiction itself (and conventions, of course). The claim was made that the newszines (of the gossip variety) seemed to be dying out. In part, this is due to their place being taken by such professional magazines as _ L_ o_ c_ u_ s and _ S_ c_ i_ e_ n_ c_ e _ F_ i_ c_ t_ i_ o_ n _ C_ h_ r_ o_ n_ i_ c_ l_ e. (Don't tell me these are technically "semi-prozines"--I already know that, but they sure seem to waddle to me.) And what they don't cover is disseminated rapidly via electronic

bulletin boards; authors' deaths are now known to almost all of fandom within a day or so. And I don't mean authors such as Heinlein, whose obituaries appear in daily newspapers, but also authors such as Tiptree whose deaths are less widely reported in the mundane press. _ F_ i_ l_ e _ 7_ 7_ 0 is the only major newszine left in the fanzine area.

Parties

For dinner, we went to our traditional Saturday night place, the Peking Duck House across the street from the hotels. Since we went at 5 PM instead of after 6 PM, and since Boskone was much smaller this year, the restaurant was practically empty when we arrived--a nice change from the usual half-hour wait for a table. We had planned to eat with Jerry

Boyajian, but he was detained in Boston, so it was just Mark, Dave, and me--and of course, great Chinese food.

After dinner, we returned to the hotels. I walked through the Art Show, where I bought a print of an unpublished painting inspired by _ W_ a_ n_ d_ e_ r_ i_ n_ g _ S_ t_ a_ r_ s (an anthology of Jewish science fiction). Then we mostly sat around talking until the banquet was over and events resumed. One problem with this was that there was a couple with not one, but two, crying babies who seemed to think that remaining in the common area while their babies squalled was acceptable behavior. (I discovered later that one of the babies was Glen Cook's son, being watched while the banquet went on.) Future Boskones and other conventions may want to consider setting aside a small room as a crying room, although in this case I would think the make-up room in the women's room would have been sufficient. (Yes, I know that means a woman has to take the baby in. I'm not the person who decreed women's rooms have extra space, and for that matter, I don't know that the men's room didn't have comparable space.)

Kate and I went in at 9 PM to hear the Guest of Honor speech. At 9:30 PM, when they were still going through the raffle winners, the Skylark winner, the this and the that, I decided to head on out to the parties. I presume eventually a speech was delivered. Were it prefaced only by "real" awards, I might have waited, but to make the attendees sit through the raffle drawing seemed a bit unfair.

So I headed up to the Readercon party, which was in full swing when I arrived. I picked up a copy of Progress Report 2, which I hadn't seen yet (mine had arrived in New Jersey after I left, it turned out). I'll have to pick out some books to bring for autographing--I wonder what Thomas Disch will say about autographing _ M_ a_ n_ k_ i_ n_ d _ U_ n_ d_ e_ r _ t_ h_ e _ L_ e_ a_ s_ h, or John Morressey of seeing a copy of _ S_ t_ a_ r_ b_ r_ a_ t.

One attendee there was reading through the list of authors and we started talking about which authors we had read and which we had liked. She mentioned she found Gene Wolfe boring, and I tried to convince her to tell Eric Van that, but couldn't.

At 10 PM, I decided to move to the _ P_ r_ o_ p_ e_ r _ B_ o_ s_ k_ o_ n_ i_ a_ n party. _ T_ h_ e _ P_ r_ o_ p_ e_ r _ B_ o_ s_ k_ o_ n_ i_ a_ n is a quarterly fanzine put out by NESFA which last appeared about four years ago. (Think about it.) This party was to kick off the next issue, which should be issued some time this year. There was a cake-cutting, but if the attendance at the party is any indication, this will be a small issue. (The party was in the Tara, while all the other parties seemed to be in the Marriott, so that might explain it.)

I got into a further discussion with Saul Jaffe about whether _ S_ F-_ L_ o_ v_ e_ r_ s _ D_ i_ g_ e_ s_ t was a fanzine. The definition of fanzine used for the Hugos is that they are "generally available non-professional publications (press run under 10,000) devoted to science fiction,

fantasy or (for fanzines) related subjects, which have published 4 or more issues, at least one of which appeared in [the year for which the awards are being made]." There are further tests for whether a publication is a semi-prozine; for now, trust me that _ S_ F-_ L_ o_ v_ e_ r_ s _ D_ i_ g_ e_ s_ t does not meet these.

I contend that _ S_ F-_ L_ o_ v_ e_ r_ s _ D_ i_ g_ e_ s_ t is indubitably non-professional, certainly has a press run of under 10,000 (in fact, it has nothing that could be defined as a press run unless it is the issue Saul prints up for himself), and is devoted to the appropriate topics. But is it "generally available," is it a "publication," and has it "published

issues"? (If it has, it has certainly done "4 or more, etc.")

My dictionary (_ W_ e_ b_ s_ t_ e_ r_ s _ N_ e_ w _ C_ o_ l_ l_ e_ g_ i_ a_ t_ e _ D_ i_ c_ t_ i_ o_ n_ a_ r_ y) defines "publish" as "to make generally known, to make public announcement, to place before the public, to disseminate." Printing is recognized in a subsidiary definition, but is not necessary for publishing to have deemed to taken place.

Now, Saul contends that _ S_ F-_ L_ o_ v_ e_ r_ s _ D_ i_ g_ e_ s_ t is not generally available and has not "published issues." I would say that going by my dictionary, it has indeed published issues ("issue" defined as "the thing or whole quantity of things given out at one time"). But is it generally available?

Saul says (rightly) that one needs a modem and computer (or access to one) to get _ S_ F-_ L_ o_ v_ e_ r_ s _ D_ i_ g_ e_ s_ t. He also says anyone can get a "hard-copy" fanzine if they pay the subscription price, since all it requires is a physical address to send it to. True or false?

Well, I suspect that fans in Albania, for example, cannot get copies of _ L_ a_ n'_ s _ L_ a_ n_ t_ e_ r_ n because the government won't allow them to be imported. Does that mean _ L_ a_ n'_ s _ L_ a_ n_ t_ e_ r_ n is not generally available? No, so I think we agree that "generally" does not have to mean that _ e_ v_ e_ r_ y_ o_ n_ e can get it. So what proportion need to be able to get something before it is generally available? If a fanzine is available only to women, is it generally available? That _ i_ s more than 50% of the population. What about only to men? Now we're talking about less than 50%. What about only to fans born after 1950? Over the age of 21?

Most fanzines cost a couple of dollars an issue. What about one that costs $10? $100? $1000? If the cost of a fanzine doesn't make it ineligible, then the fact that a fan has to purchase a modem and computer access shouldn't make a fanzine ineligible either.

If I look at the circulation figures for _ S_ F-_ L_ o_ v_ e_ r_ s _ D_ i_ g_ e_ s_ t as compared with other fanzines, I see that upwards of 100,000 people get _ S_ F-_ L_ o_ v_ e_ r_ s _ D_ i_ g_ e_ s_ t where only a few hundred get _ L_ a_ n'_ s _ L_ a_ n_ t_ e_ r_ n. One may claim that _ L_ a_ n'_ s _ L_ a_ n_ t_ e_ r_ n is generally available and _ S_ F-_ L_ o_ v_ e_ r_ s _ D_ i_ g_ e_ s_ t is not, but the facts don't seem to support that contention.

Then again, I also think the San Diego Yacht Club's catamaran won the America's Cup.

_D_i_f_f_e_r_e_n_c_e_ B_e_t_w_i_x_t_ D_a_r_k _F_a_n_t_a_s_y_ a_n_d_ H_o_r_r_o_r

Saturday, 10 PM

Rick Hautala (mod), Aline B. Kaplan, Charles Lang

[written by Mark R. Leeper]

Rick Hautala opened the panel saying that he himself was not sure what the term "dark fantasy" meant. Both horror and dark fantasy attempt to scare and the term "dark fantasy" seems designed only to hide that goal. Hautala considers dark fantasy to be a "yuppie-ization" of horror. He quoted Craig Spector in saying that he tries to scare the reader to the point that he gets every gland secreting at once.

Just before the panel, Aline Kaplan had been talking to her son about the film _C_h_i_l_d_r_e_n_ o_f_ t_h_e_ C_o_r_n. (Kaplan's son looked nine and talked like someone twice that age.) He, however, enjoyed a scene in the film in which a child puts a man's hand in a bologna slicer. Kaplan said that slice-and-dice is not really horror. It is graphic, but not horror. Hautala said that he does not have "lunchmeat" characters. When he kills a character, he has put enough into that character so that the reader has "an investment" in that character. Apparently Hautala does have graphic horror but better done. Charles Lang took a crack at the difference, saying, "Horror is a serial killer; dark fantasy is the demon." As an example, he gave Thomas Harris's _R_e_d_ D_r_a_g_o_n and _T_h_e_ _S_i_l_e_n_c_e_ o_f_ L_a_m_b_s, both of which were horror enough to make his skin crawl, but were not dark fantasy. Dark fantasy is an effort to take supernatural fantasy and break out to a larger market.

Kaplan asked why the Stephen King sort of novel was so popular and, while Lang thought that it was just because King tells a good story that a broad market wants to read, Hautala quoted another panel as saying that science fiction is weird fiction for weird people, while horror fiction is weird fiction for normal people.

The discussion then turned, as it often seems to in these panel discussions, from the actual subject matter to the business of publishing. Lang said that the popularity of horror goes in cycles and currently it is falling. Also of falling popularity are Westerns and, surprisingly, romance novels. That all three fields are falling at the same time is surprising, but perhaps the popularity of reading in general is falling. Kaplan responded that horror brings the reader's attention to "other realities" and helps to explain them. While it is informational, it is popular; when it starts to scare, it loses popularity.

Hautala said horror is declining because there is too little of the

_ H_ a_ u_ n_ t_ i_ n_ g _ o_ f _ H_ i_ l_ l _ H_ o_ u_ s_ e sort of thing being written. While horror
"connects" with ordinary sorts of people it does well. Writing about heavy-metal satanists brings horror's popularity down. Lang thought

King writes too much about ordinary people. How many times can he write about the same people who are really just his neighbors in Maine?

Hautala shifted the conversation to what books really are horror. Much that is written in the mainstream could really be considered horror. Particular examples were Kafka's _ M_ e_ t_ a_ m_ o_ r_ p_ h_ o_ s_ i_ s and Tolstoy's _ D_ e_ a_ t_ h _ o_ f _ I_ v_ a_ n _ I_ l_ y_ c_ h. Once you specifically separate out horror it can
be found or ignored as a whole. He feels that the "kiss of death" for the horror genre was the policy of putting horror on a separate shelf of its own.

Hautala claims that publishers make decisions of what they want to buy based on popular trends, on what length fiction pieces are, on all sorts of criteria that they can judge without ever reading the books they are buying. As with horror films, the commercial interests say to deliver something safe. Do not experiment. "Art," Hautala said, "does not succeed by appealing to the lowest common denominator, but commerce does." (I found it somewhat ironic that with the panelists' high regard for the art of horror writing and their low regard for the commerce of horror selling, they returned so often to talk about the latter.) The panel concluded with how backward the publishing industry is. Soap companies put most of their publicity funds behind their new products and less behind their established products. Publishers put their promotion funds behind their established authors and very little behind their new authors. (I happen to feel that analogy is imperfect. Most soap companies feel relatively safe that they can make a soap popular and it will not quit and go to another soap company.)

_ T_ h_ e _ H_ o_ r_ r_ o_ r _ P_ a_ n_ e_ l

Saturday, 11 PM
Rick Hautala (mod), Ginjer Buchanan, John R. Douglas, Christopher Fahy
[written by Mark R. Leeper]

If the midnight horror panel is supposed to in some sense frighten, this one succeeded. All night long I had nightmares of balance sheets, best-seller lists, and of not making the income I thought I deserved. Imagine going to a doctor and he says he has something to tell you and he takes you aside in his office. Then for an hour he tells you how bad his business is, how the prices of his equipment are up and the clinics are taking away business, and how his insurance rates are terrible. If this happened time and time again, you might find yourself another doctor. But time and time again these days you find panels at conventions filled with authors who seem incapable of getting their minds off of their financial state for an hour. At this point I know more about the business and financial problems of being an author than I ever imagined I ever wanted to know and I have lost a lot of respect for authors who can talk about little else.

The hour started innocently enough with Rick Hautala asking the other panelists what the future of horror would be and suggesting,

rather unprofoundly, that it would be different from the past. Ginjer Buchanan, with equally few examples, said the future would be like the present. "The more things change, the more they remain the same." John Douglas said, "I have seen the future of horror and its name is Clive Barker," repeating the Stephen King quote that often appears on Barker's less and less popular books. There was general consent that Barker is no longer what people want. What they want is more _ F_ r_ i_ d_ a_ y _ t_ h_ e _ 1_ 3_ t_ h and more Stephen King. Now because King is as popular as he is, he can write just about anything. Buchanan suggested he could even write a romance novel. (She gave an example of a romance novel King wrote; I did not write it down but I think it was _ M_ i_ s_ e_ r_ y.)

Hautala said that he himself writes pretty much what he wants, though his publisher tries to get him to write the sort of thing he has written successfully before. The real danger in writing horror, he said, is that there is one writer who dominates the field and eclipses all the others. In science fiction there is no equivalent dominant writer. It influences new horror writers, who all want to be the next Stephen King.

Buchanan talked about best-selling authors and best-seller lists which she does not trust. She asked if anyone thinks P. D. James really

is currently the best selling author. James is currently at the top of the New York Times best-seller list.

Still without mentioning the content of a single book, the conversation returned to Stephen King and the quote about Barker. As powerful a force as King is to reckon with, he could not name Barker as his own successor. Buchanan points to Dean R. Koontz as an author who did it the right way with twenty-five years of "busting his ass" before he really caught on as an author.

At this point a recently-arrived fan from the audience, one Evelyn Leeper, attempted to pull the conversation back to something a little more relevant by asking what out-of-print horror novel the panelists would like to see come back in print. Here at last was a chance to get the discussion on books rather than publishing. Hautala said he was going to pass because he is intensely jealous when another author makes it. Buchanan named John Coyne's _ H_ o_ b_ g_ o_ b_ l_ i_ n which she had published. Christopher Fahy suggested that his own _ N_ i_ g_ h_ t_ f_ l_ y_ e_ r should come back into print. Douglas gave the most selfless answer by saying he had no answer.

Hautala seemed to realize that everybody flogging their own books might not have been a response in the spirit the question was asked. He reframed the question, asking the other panelists if they could simply name solid examples of horror. Douglas, an editor at Avon, said he did _ n_ o_ t like Dan Simmons's _ S_ o_ n_ g _ o_ f _ K_ a_ l_ i and turned it down as did three other publishers. Fahy at first said he did not know what to say, but gave examples such as _ M_ i_ s_ e_ r_ y and books by Pat McGraf and Clive Barker. Douglas asked if the point of the question was that they just plug other

people's books, then settled on Katherine Dunn's _ G_ e_ e_ k _ L_ o_ v_ e as a recommendation. Buchanan recommended Robert McCammon's _ B_ e_ t_ h_ a_ n_ y _ S_ i_ n_ s and Tom Tryon's books. Tryon is a name that has been recently forgotten, but who she says has been very influential on other writers, in specific Stephen King. Hautala added to the list McCammon's _ T_ h_ e_ y _ T_ h_ i_ r_ s_ t. Describing it, he repeated his quote from Craig Spector, saying that the horror writer has achieved his goal if he can make every gland in the reader's body secrete at once. He also liked Elizabeth Massey's _ S_ i_ n _ E_ a_ t_ e_ r. Buchanan added Skipp and Spector's _ L_ i_ g_ h_ t _ a_ t _ t_ h_ e

_ E_ n_ d and any of several books by Shirley Jackson. According to her Jackson was a very good horror writer ... also a loon.

In response to Evelyn's question on what is the most over-rated horror, Buchanan suggested _ T_ h_ e _ D_ a_ r_ k _ T_ o_ w_ e_ r series by Stephen King.

[the following addendum to this panel was written by Evelyn C. Leeper]

I arrived at this towards the end. Someone was talking about Whitley Streiber's latest works, _ C_ o_ m_ m_ u_ n_ i_ o_ n and its sequel, _ T_ r_ a_ n_ s_ f_ o_ r_ m_ a_ t_ i_ o_ n. S/he described a button he had seen with a smiley-face with the elongated eyes of Streiber's aliens, captioned, "They're here and they insist you have a nice day." They had apparently been saying negative things about Streiber, because someone said that not all horror authors had such a bad reputation, and cited Dean R. Koontz as someone who was very friendly and had a wonderful reputation.

As far as recommending horror novels, Ginjer Buchanan mentioned John Coyne's _ H_ o_ b_ g_ o_ b_ l_ i_ n, which she says is a departure from his usual "gerund horror" (_ T_ h_ e _ P_ i_ e_ r_ c_ i_ n_ g and _ T_ h_ e _ S_ e_ a_ r_ i_ n_ g, apparently, although he has also written _ T_ h_ e _ F_ u_ r_ y, _ L_ e_ g_ a_ c_ y,, and _ T_ h_ e _ S_ h_ r_ o_ u_ d, so his non-gerunds outnumber his gerunds two-to-one). There were also several other recommendations that Mark has already related.

When I asked the panelists what out-of-print horror they would most like to see brought back into print, some panelists named other people's books, but Christopher Fahy named one of his own books. I will have to remember to disallow this the next time I ask the question. (Mark said most of the first part of the panel consisted in people promoting their own books.)

[to be concluded]