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Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society  
Club Notice - 04/02/93 -- Vol. 11, No. 40

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

Unless otherwise stated, all meetings are in Holmdel 4N-509  
Wednesdays at noon.

   D   A   T   E                T   O   P   I   C

- 04/21 ARISTOI by Walter Jon Williams  
(If This--AI, Virtual Reality, Nanotech--Goes On)
- 05/12 THOMAS THE RHYMER by Ellen Kushner (Fantasy in a Modern Vein)
- 06/02 WORLD AT THE END OF TIME by Frederik Pohl  
(Modern Stapledonian Fiction)
- 06/23 CONSIDER PHLEBAS by Iain Banks  
(Space Opera with a Knife Twist)
- 07/14 SIGHT OF PROTEUS by Charles Sheffield (Human Metamorphosis)

Outside events:  
The Science Fiction Association of Bergen County meets on the second  
Saturday of every month in Upper Saddle River; call 201-933-2724 for  
details. The New Jersey Science Fiction Society meets on the third  
Saturday of every month in Belleville; call 201-432-5965 for details.

- HO Chair: John Jetzt HO 1E-525 908-834-1563 holly!jetzt
  - LZ Chair: Rob Mitchell HO 1C-523 908-834-1267 holly!jrtr
  - MT Chair: Mark Leeper MT 3D-441 908-957-5619 mtgzfs3!leeper
  - HO Librarian: Nick Sauer HO 4F-427 908-949-7076 homxc!11366ns
  - LZ Librarian: Lance Larsen LZ 3L-312 908-576-3346 quartet!lfl
  - MT Librarian: Mark Leeper MT 3D-441 908-957-5619 mtgzfs3!leeper
  - Factotum: Evelyn Leeper MT 1F-329 908-957-2070 mtgpfs1!ecl
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1. I recently wrote about some of the dilemmas being faced because somebody in the local town of Marlboro claims to have seen and continues to see the Virgin Mary appearing in his backyard. There actually is more to write on that story, with billboards springing up all over declaring that you can call an 800-number to find out

what Mary has to say. I may follow up on this in a future issue.

Normally Jews just sort of sit back and half-smile at some of the strange manifestations of other religions around them. By and large Judaism tends to avoid this sort of thing and remain fairly

THE MT VOID

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stable and unaffected by the passage of time. Big events in Judaism tend to be changes in philosophy that can be argued by scholars. One group will suddenly declare that you do not have to believe in God to be Jewish and other branches will go back and look in their books and try to find arguments that you really do have to be a believer to be Jewish. This is all done with relatively little in the way of hard feeling or fanaticism.

1993 is shaping up to be as weird a year in Judaism as it is in some other religions. The smaller of two weirdnesses that have come to my attention is a new service where you f\_a\_x a message to God. There is one group in Jerusalem who will accept messages faxed to them and place them in the Western Wall in Jerusalem. Placing written messages in the Wall has for many years been considered by some to be a special channel. Now for the price of the phone call, you can send your message direct to God. Of course, if you believe in placing messages in the Wall, you probably also believe in prayer which is probably just as effective, cheaper, and does not require special equipment, and nobody has to come along and remove your prayer to make room for others.

The really weird news is that a small subset of Jews in New York, the Lubavitch Jews, have decided that their rabbi is so great, he is at last the Messiah. Rabbi Menachem Schneerson does not appear to have ever made this claim of himself and is now too old and sick to say one way or the other, but his followers are taking ads in newspapers declaring him to be. Outside the Lubavitch Jews this announcement is being met with ... well, extreme skepticism would be putting it mildly. But it will be of some interest to see if somebody is going to write an alternate and Newer Testament about Schneerson. Who would write it? Will they start to celebrate his birthday with a holiday? The whole concept is a little weird. Anyway, that is just my opinion.

2. Congratulations to librarian Nick Sauer on the birth of his daughter Alia (sp?) on March 19. [-ecl]

3. Overheard at the last meeting, in reference to being a popular author but never winning a Hugo: "Vernor Vinge is the Al Pacino of science fiction." [-ecl]

Mark Leeper  
MT 3D-441 908-957-5619  
...mtgzfs3!leeper

Serious sport has nothing to do with fair play. It is bound up with hatred, jealousy, boastfulness, disregard of all rules and sadistic pleasure in witnessing violence: in other words it is war minus the shooting.  
-- George Orwell

Boskone 30  
(Part 3 of 3)  
Con report by Evelyn C. Leeper  
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Comedy in SF and Fantasy  
Sunday, 11 AM  
Connie Willis (mod), Bradley Denton, Esther Friesner,  
Craig Shaw Gardner, Laura Ann Gilman, Jeff Hecht

The first thing I learned from this panel is that it is impossible to convey a humorous panel in print, but this will be my humble attempt.

One of the first questions after everyone on the panel mentioned their latest or funniest books was what people answer when asked, "Why do you write funny fantasy?" Friesner said she does it to aggravate people who ask. Someone once read something of hers and said, "You're not from this planet." She wasn't sure if that was supposed to be a compliment or not. The question, "Why do you write funny fantasy?" seems odd; did people ask P. G. Wodehouse why

he wrote humor? On the other hand, Woody Allen said, "If you write comedy, you are not sitting at the adult table."

Someone asked if the panelists enjoyed writing humor, because most writers seem to say they hate writing in general. Willis responded, "I loathe and despise every moment of my writing career. I hate writing." The panelists felt that writing comedy is t\_e\_c\_h\_n\_i\_c\_a\_l\_l\_y much more difficult than writing a serious book, especially these days with what someone called the "That's not funny" generation. (Political correctness seemed to be a running thread through the convention.) On the other hand, some people felt that political correctness was a boon. Denton announced that his new novel B\_l\_a\_c\_k\_b\_u\_r\_n has been objected to on moral grounds, so he's hoping sales will skyrocket! And Willis said, "I am pleased beyond measure to do irreparable harm to the radical feminist movement."

Denton talked about reading a section of a work of his in which one of the male protagonist's gets shot, first in the crotch and then in the eye. After the first shot, the audience laughed, but after the second there was a shocked silence, after which Denton concluded that "the difference between comedy and tragedy is getting shot in the balls or shot in the eye." As far as v\_e\_r\_b\_o\_t\_e\_n topics for humor, Friesner felt that harm to children was out. Hecht said that he wouldn't write anything that would cause pain to someone he knew.

No panel on comedy in science fiction and fantasy would be complete without recommendations, so here they are: the "Burke Breathed" cartoons, the works of L. Frank Baum, various works by

Frederic Brown, S\_t\_a\_l\_k\_i\_n\_g\_t\_h\_e\_A\_n\_g\_e\_l by Robert Crais (Bantam, 1992, \$4.99), T\_h\_e\_I\_n\_c\_o\_m\_p\_l\_e\_t\_e\_E\_n\_c\_h\_a\_n\_t\_e\_r by L. Sprague deCamp, "The Santa Claus Compromise" by Thomas M. Disch (in Harry Harrison and Brian Aldiss's B\_e\_s\_t\_S\_F: 1\_9\_7\_5), "Melpomene, Calliope ... and Fred" by Nicholas V. Yermakov (someone said this was George Alec Effinger, but I'm not sure that's correct) (available in Arthur Saha's Y\_e\_a\_r'\_s\_B\_e\_s\_t\_F\_a\_n\_t\_a\_s\_y\_S\_t\_o\_r\_i\_e\_s: 7), the "Cathy" cartoons by Cathy Guisewite, "Stable Strategies for Middle Management" by Eileen Gunn, the "Stainless Steel Rat" series by Harry Harrison, E\_x\_p\_e\_c\_t\_i\_n\_g\_S\_o\_m\_e\_o\_n\_e\_T\_a\_l\_l\_e\_r and W\_h\_o's\_A\_f\_r\_a\_i\_d\_o\_f\_B\_e\_o\_w\_u\_l\_f? (Ace, 1990, \$4.50; Ace, 1991,

\$4.50) by Tom Holt, T\_h\_r\_e\_e\_M\_e\_n\_i\_n\_a\_B\_o\_a\_t by Jerome K. Jerome (Penguin, 1978, \$5.95), the "Pogo" strips by Walt Kelly, B\_l\_u\_e\_H\_e\_a\_v\_e\_n and P\_u\_t\_t\_i\_n\_g\_o\_n\_t\_h\_e\_R\_i\_t\_z by Joe Keenan (Penguin, 1988, \$7.95; Penguin, 1992, \$10), A\_p\_p\_a\_r\_e\_n\_t\_W\_i\_n\_d by Dallas Murphy (Pocket Books, 1991, \$4.99), various works of Lewis Padgett, D\_i\_e\_f\_o\_r\_L\_o\_v\_e and N\_a\_k\_e\_d\_O\_n\_c\_e\_M\_o\_r\_e (Tor, 1991, \$3.99; Warner, 1990, \$4.95) by Elizabeth Peters, "Mail Supremacy" by Hayford Peirce (available in Isaac Asimov and Martin Greenberg's 1\_0\_0\_S\_h\_o\_r\_t\_S\_h\_o\_r\_t\_S\_F\_S\_t\_o\_r\_i\_e\_s, G\_o\_o\_d\_O\_m\_e\_n\_s by Neil Gaiman (this was mentioned by someone who recommended all of Terry Pratchett's works and then mentioned this specifically, forgetting this wasn't written by Pratchett) (Berkley, 1992, \$8.95) various works by Richard Rankin, the "Samurai Cat" works by Mark E. Rogers, various works by Thorne Smith, the "Aquilad" series by Somtow Sucharitkul (a.k.a. S. M. Somtow), almost anything by Howard Waldrop, and C\_o\_s\_m\_i\_c\_B\_a\_n\_d\_i\_t\_o\_s by A. C. Weisbecker (Vintage, 1986, \$5.95).

(Making this list makes me wonder if all these recommendations that people make on panels are actually used by anyone. If I hadn't been trying to take notes for a convention report, I wouldn't be able to tell you what was recommended. I suppose it's possible that seeing one of the mentioned books in a store, I might recall that I had heard something about it, but possibly not even whether it was a recommendation or a warning.)

Kaffeeklatsch  
Sunday, noon  
Connie Willis

First off, everyone congratulated Willis on her two Nebula nominations (for D\_o\_o\_m\_s\_d\_a\_y\_B\_o\_o\_k and "Even the Queen").

I asked her about a comment she had made earlier about people telling her she had to get off the fence. This fence was not the fence between humor and serious writing, but the fence between the Left and the Right (for lack of better terms). People kept saying she had to take sides, but Willis says, "No!" Women keep telling her about her "responsibility to her sisters," but Willis says her responsibility is to the truth, and that anyway, she thought women's liberation meant that she could have the freedom to write about what she wanted to write about. She mentioned she had written an

editorial for the October 1992 issue of I\_s\_a\_a\_c\_A\_s\_i\_m\_o\_v's\_S\_c\_i\_e\_n\_c\_e\_F\_i\_c\_t\_i\_o\_n in response to the attitude that there were no women writing science fiction until Ursula LeGuin and Joanna Russ "stormed the barricades." In the editorial, Willis talked about how there have always been women writing science fiction, and how many of them were major influences on her. She also said that the major influence on her was probably Robert Heinlein's juveniles, and that any science fiction writer who claims otherwise is probably trying to be politically correct rather than honest. Most of the authors she mentioned are out of print now (because of the Thor Power Tool tax ruling making keeping backlist books too expensive; one can hope that electronic libraries will help get around this problem).

Two recent works which have influenced her writing are D'Souza's I\_l\_l\_i\_b\_e\_r\_a\_l\_E\_d\_u\_c\_a\_t\_i\_o\_n:\_T\_h\_e\_P\_o\_l\_i\_t\_i\_c\_s\_o\_f\_R\_a\_c\_e&\_S\_e\_x\_o\_n\_C\_a\_m\_p\_u\_s (Random House, 1992, 300pp, \$12) and Wendy Kaminer's I'\_m\_D\_y\_s\_f\_u\_n\_c\_t\_i\_o\_n\_a\_l,\_Y\_o\_u'r\_e\_D\_y\_s\_f\_u\_n\_c\_t\_i\_o\_n\_a\_l:\_T\_h\_e\_R\_e\_c\_o\_v\_e\_r\_y\_M\_o\_v\_e\_m\_e\_n\_t&\_O\_t\_h\_e\_r\_S\_e\_l\_f-H\_e\_l\_p\_F\_a\_s\_h\_i\_o\_n\_s (Addison-Wesley, 1992, 176pp, \$18.22). A work that influenced D\_o\_o\_m\_s\_d\_a\_y\_B\_o\_o\_k in particular was Katherine Anne Porter's "Pale Horse, Pale Rider," a story set in the 1918 influenza plague.

A personal influence on Willis's work was something that happened to her when she was about ten. Her mother dropped off her and her younger sister at the movies before going shopping, saying that when they got out they should wait right in front of the movie until 4 PM, when she would come pick them up. Something happened--her sister fell and hit her head or something--and her sister started crying loudly, and Willis didn't know what to do, so she looked at the clock and saw it was 3:30. Figuring her mother would be along soon, she took her sister outside and waited a while. Then she looked at the clock (through the door) again, and realized she had read the clock wrong before and it was only 2:30 (or maybe even earlier--I didn't write down all the details). She knew they couldn't go back in, but she had a dime, so she went to a phone and tried calling home in case her father was there. But her grandfather, who was somewhat senile, answered the phone and then hung up. Now she had no money and no idea what to do. Just as she was about to panic completely, her father came down the street.

It seems he had been home in the yard and heard the phone ring, but couldn't get to it before her grandfather answered and hung up. Still, he thought that m\_a\_y\_b\_e it was Willis calling because she was in trouble and just in case, he decided to go to the theater and check. Willis said that the feeling of relief she felt when she saw him coming was something she would never forget, and this incident can be seen in many of her works, she says, in the themes of rescue and of decision-making from insufficient information. I also see a parallel in the adolescent girl in D\_o\_o\_m\_s\_d\_a\_y\_B\_o\_o\_k who must act as an adult. (Note: her father asked the ticket-seller if the two girls

could have gone back into the theater. "Of course," she said, but it had never occurred to Willis to ask.)

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Writing about history can be difficult. Willis says it's hard to write about the Civil War because too many people know   e  v  e  r  y  t  h  i  n  g and will catch any mistake you make. (On the other hand, there are also those who will ask, "Who's this Grant character?") Other eras may not be as well known; when the authors were writing   1  7  7  6 (the musical), they discovered that they couldn't use some of the best lines people had said, because everyone would think they were made up. For example, one of the principals said that unless the issue of slavery were decided then, within a hundred years it would tear the country apart. These are documented in an appendix to the published script, in case anyone is interested.

#### Shared Worlds and Share-cropped Worlds

Sunday, 1 PM

Lisa Barnett, Gregory Feeley, Evelyn C. Leeper, Don Sakers

This panel started with everyone on it saying they had no idea why they were on it. But given that we were here, we made the best of it. (My only idea was that I am known as a fan of Sherlock Holmes pastiches and parodies, and what are all the new Holmes novels and stories but a shared world?)

First, what is the difference between "shared worlds" and "share-cropped worlds"? (The latter term was coined by Richard Curtis, by the way.) Shared worlds are those in which the authors all participate equally (more or less). Examples would include the "Liavek" and "Wild Cards" series. Share-cropped worlds, on the other hand, are those which one person controls, for which authors are hired to work within limits and constraints set by the owner, and for which the owner gets a payment even if he or she has not done any of the writing. Examples of this would be the "Isaac Asimov's Robot City" novels or the "Roger Zelazny's Alien Speedway" novels. Share-cropped worlds are also referred to as franchise fiction. (I noted that novelizations of films also fall in this category to some extent; later it was observed that all writing for non-anthology television series would also be franchise fiction.)

The earliest example of "shared worlds" that anyone could name

was the "Twayne Triplets," in which three authors started from the same planetary description to create independent novels. Of them, only James Blish's C a s e o f C o n s c i e n c e remains well-known.

The technique of "world-building" and then handing out the world to a variety of authors continues even now though.

Share-cropped worlds are what I also refer to as "Fred Nobody Writing in the World of Joe Hugo-Winner," usually with Fred Nobody's name in five-point type and Joe Hugo-Winner's in twenty-point type. Someone else suggested that perhaps some of these books needed to have on the cover something like "Isaac Asimov had absolutely nothing to do with this book" in large type. Many people agreed that much franchise fiction was like strip-mining: taking a

profitable setting and churning out works as fast as possible with no concern about whether they were destroying any possibility of creating genuinely original works in that setting later on. Of course, for authors who have salable settings and who are too old or ill to continue writing in them, this does not seem to be as big a concern.

Share-cropping can also include co-authoring, although the obvious drawback here is that all good writing will be attributed to the established author and all bad writing will be blamed on the new author. This assumes an old author/new author pairing, of course. In general, this is the case, but there are exceptions. For example Robert Silverberg collaborated with Isaac Asimov in expanding Asimov's "Ugly Little Boy" into a novel. But in this instance, the line between the two is clearly drawn and relatively well-known--Silverberg wrote everything that didn't appear in the original short story. Another exception was the collection F o u n d a t i o n ' s  
F r i e n d s, in which well-known authors were all asked to write tribute stories for Asimov set in Asimov's universe. But again, this is a special case, and it is obvious what is the author's and what is the "owner's."

Feeley said that sometimes even established authors will go into the franchise fiction field as the "junior partner." Michael



Kube-McDowell, he said, felt that writing one of the "Robot City" novels would help his career, particularly if it were filed next to his other books, because then people who liked the one might buy the others. Someone pointed out this doesn't work nearly as well if all the "Robot City" books are filed together under Asimov, which seemed to be where I saw them. Well-known authors are used in some series, particularly the "Star Trek" and "Star Wars" series, to revive declining interest by providing a novel that is a marked improvement over other recent entries. (I should note here that a recent

S\_c\_i\_e\_n\_c\_e\_F\_i\_c\_t\_i\_o\_n\_C\_h\_r\_o\_n\_i\_c\_l\_e reports that Michael Kube-McDowell would

like to drop the "Kube" and become just Michael P. McDowell, but due to the number of "Michael McDowell"'s writing, he is having some difficulty. For now, one should consider him to be Michael P. McDowell writing under the pseudonym "Michael Kube-McDowell." I consider this is yet further evidence that changing one's name at marriage can lead to complications down the line; the "Kube" in this case refers to a marriage dissolved five years ago.)

Someone compared the whole franchising system to Amway: Mercedes Lackey started by writing in Anne McCaffrey's universe, and now other authors are writing in Mercedes Lackey's universe. This is all reminiscent of Renaissance paintings, where (for example) many paintings attributed to Rembrandt turned out to be merely "from the school of Rembrandt."

Someone brought up the issue of "moral rights to copyright." In the United States, and under the Berne Convention in general,

such a concept is not recognized, but in Britain it is (apparently). As I understand it, this means that if someone produces a work-for-hire, whether a franchise novel or a drawing in their capacity as artist for a company or some other work for which the copyright is owned by someone else, the actual artist still has some control over how that work is used. So someone who wrote a franchise novel could prevent the copyright owner from changing the hero from defeating the villain in a duel to stabbing him in the back, or someone who painted a mother and child to advertise soap flakes could prevent having that illustration used to promote an anti-choice candidate. (Disclaimer: I may have misunderstood what was being described, but

this is what I think I heard.) I also think that this prevents someone from claiming to have produced a work actually produced by someone else.

The discussion of issues of ownership led one audience member to point out that folk music (outside of science fiction fandom) and fan fiction (within it) ignore ownership. The latter has resulted in some unpleasant legal ramifications for some of those who have "appropriated" another author's world, especially if the appropriator has asked first and was refused. It's difficult to

plead ignorance in such a case. The recent T\_e\_x\_t\_u\_a\_l\_P\_o\_a\_c\_h\_e\_r\_s:

T\_e\_l\_e\_v\_i\_s\_i\_o\_n\_F\_a\_n\_s &

P\_a\_r\_t\_i\_c\_i\_p\_a\_t\_o\_r\_y\_C\_u\_l\_t\_u\_r\_e by Henry Jenkins (Routledge,

1992, \$15.95) discusses this at great length in the context of television and film fandoms (e.g., "Star Trek" fandom, "Beauty and the Beast" fandom). The desire to write in someone else's universe is not limited to fans, of course--someone said that even Joanna Russ had written a K/S story, which was available only as samizdat, of course. (No, I have no idea where you can get it. Don't bother to ask.) Someone else claimed that Mark Twain wrote a Sherlock Holmes parody; I don't know what that one is either, but if you do, please let me know.

There are also works that are co-authored without being share-cropped, or shared beyond the co-authors. (A shared world implies more than one work, and different authors involved for different works. Niven and Pournelle have written two "Motie" novels, but this does not make it a shared world.) The problem with co-authoring, or collaboration, someone said, is that each partner does 90% of the work.

To wrap up, I said, "I would like to think that there is some way for an established author to mentor a new author, but I don't think this [share-cropping] is it, because it diminishes both the established author and the new author." Amazingly, the other panelists felt that summed it up quite nicely.

### Leaving

Even leaving was an adventure. Because of our dead battery, we needed to find someone who could give us a jump. Jeff Hecht kindly

did so, and it still took ten minutes of cranking to get our engine to catch. (We replaced the battery when we got home.) On the way home, we stopped for dinner at Traveler Restaurant Book Cellar in Union, Connecticut. The upstairs is a restaurant with a gimmick: "a free book with every meal," though the books are of the sort one would find at the end of the day in a rummage sale and the food is undistinguished. The walls are covered with autographed photographs of famous authors, most of whom probably never ate there but sent autographed pictures when asked. The basement is a regular used bookstore with very reasonable prices. (I found Harlan Ellison's S\_t\_a\_l\_k\_i\_n\_g\_t\_h\_e\_N\_i\_g\_h\_t\_m\_a\_r\_e from Phantasia Press for \$3.50, for example.)

It's out in the middle of nowhere, but probably worth a visit if you're passing by on your way between New York and Boston.

### Miscellaneous

Membership seems to have f\_i\_r\_m\_l\_y settled in around 900, in spite of the return to the Boston area. Framingham is still not convenient enough to public transportation to show a really big increase over Springfield.

Next year for Boskone 31 (February 18-20, 1994) the Guests of Honor are Emma Bull and Will Shetterly, and Special Guests of Honor are Patrick Nielsen Hayden and Theresa Nielsen Hayden.

