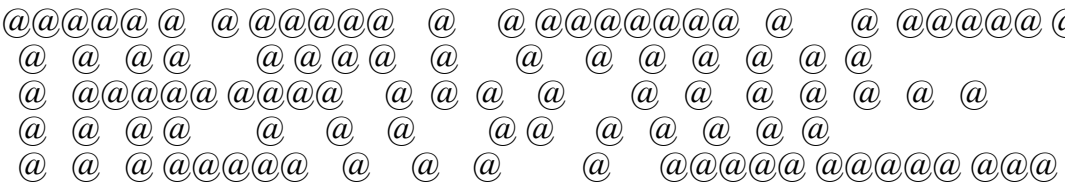

Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society
Club Notice - 10/14/94 -- Vol. 13, No. 16

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

Unless otherwise stated, all meetings are in Middletown 1R-400C
Wednesdays at noon.

_D_A_T_E _T_O_P_I_C

10/26 Book: FRANKENSTEIN (Classics *and* movies tie-ins)
11/16 Book: INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE by Anne Rice (movie tie-ins)

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.

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1. Continuing on about the missionaries from last week:

So a week rolls around and the missionaries are back and wanting to talk to me. They have sent their arguer. This is the person whom they send around when one of their targets really wants to argue substance rather than fluff. The problem is that even he--and it always seems to be a he--has not really thoroughly thought out his side and he keeps making mistakes that a good lawyer or debater would not. One of his trial balloons will be that in Judaism we

don't really have a name for God like Jehovah. He claims it is more respectful to refer to God by name.

"Oh, well, how do know that 'Jehovah' is His name?"

"The original Bible says that in the Hebrew."

"Really? Where does Hebrew get a 'J' sound?"

"Well, it's really a yud."

"Yud makes a 'Y' sound."

"Well, 'J' and 'Y' are the same sound."

"Ja. Ya. Ja. Ya. Is that really the same sound?"

He stops to think for a delicious moment and then says, "Well, in some languages they are."

"But they aren't in Hebrew which has no 'J' sound, and they aren't in English which has both sounds. Why don't you call him 'Yahovah?'"

"Well, nobody would know what we were talking about."

"What are you telling me? Are you saying you are knowingly mispronouncing what you think is God's name because you think it will SELL BETTER THAT WAY???"

Another one of those delicious pauses. "But surely you don't believe in Evolution, do you?"

Well that was not one of the more substantial arguments, but it gives you the idea. Actually the most serious disagreement we have is over the story of the destruction of Sodom. They say that Sodom was destroyed because of its tolerance of gays. Their entire argument stems from the one line in the story in which in their Bible uses the phrase "have intercourse with." The word that they

are translating really means "to know" in just about any sense of the word, to know God, to know a fact, to know your neighbor. And King James translates the word "to know"; the Bible the missionaries carry says "to have intercourse with" which to my mind is at least a bad translation and is arguably malicious.

Well, when they see that I have serious differences in philosophy, they try a new approach. [I will describe that next week.]

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2. According to the Associated Press, a never-before-published Jules Verne novel, written over 130 years ago, has been discovered and published by Editions Hachette-Le Cherche Midi in a 218-page, illustrated book. _P_a_r_i_s _i_n _t_h_e _2_0_t_h _C_e_n_t_u_r_y (_P_a_r_i_s _a_u _X_X_e _S_i_e_c_l_e) predicts the automobile, the electric chair, the fax machine,

monorails, iron-fiber clothing, and computers that look like giant pianos. According to AP, "For all its technical wonders, Verne's city of the future is a grim, philistine place. Interest in classical culture has vanished, proper French has degenerated into 'horrible slang,' money and technology are the paramount forces in a society run by an all-powerful state." It was rejected by publishers in 1863 not because it was badly written, but because it was too bleak.

In New York, it is carried by Les Belles Lettres, 22 E 60th btwn Madison and Park, 212-838-7365) for $45 when it arrives next week, and Librarie De France (610 5th Avenue, Rockefeller Center, 212-581-8810) in stock now for $47.95. (THESE ARE IN FRENCH. An English translation will no doubt be forthcoming at some point.)

Note that this novel is eligible for the Hugos voted on next year (since this is its first year of publication), and also those voted on the year after its first English publication. If the idea of giving Jules Verne a Hugo appeals to you, make sure to read this novel so you can judge whether to nominate it. (Or is this a shoe-in for the ballot?)

The only other non-English-language work ever even nominated for a Hugo was Vercors's _S_y_l_v_a in 1963. [-ecl]

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3. THE SHAWSHANK REDUX (film comment by Mark R. Leeper):

[The major points will be made without spoilers, this article will conclude with a spoiler section that goes into specifics.] A few weeks ago when I wrote my review of _T_h_e _S_h_a_w_s_h_a_n_k _R_e_d_e_m_p_t_i_o_n I gave Stephen King a backhanded compliment by saying that it is hard to believe that this film is really faithful to his story because it seems better work than I usually see from him. Several people wrote me saying I should read the story and it was one of the best things King has ever written. I dug up my copy of _D_i_f_f_e_r_e_n_t _S_e_a_s_o_n_s and read "Rita Hayworth and the Shawshank Redemption." My conclusion is that they were absolutely right. It certainly stands well above _C_h_r_i_s_t_i_n_e or _P_e_t _S_e_m_e_t_a_r_y. It is a very good story. But I also say that the film is one of those rare examples of an adaptation of a good story that in fact rises above its source material. There are relately few films I can say were really a basic improvement on good stories on which they were based. I am not talking about an example like _H_i_g_h _N_o_o_n or _T_h_e _M_a_n _W_h_o _S_h_o_t _L_i_b_e_r_t_y _V_a_l_a_n_c_e, each of which is based an a pulpish sort of story. They do not even try to be particularly faithful to stories that only marginally or nominally inspired them. But there are good novels that captured the screenwriter's imagination and were improved in adapting them to the screen. Examples might be Murial

Spark's _T_h_e _P_r_i_m_e _o_f _M_i_s_s _J_e_a_n _B_r_o_d_i_e or Bernard Malamud's _T_h_e _N_a_t_u_r_a_l. Now this is a matter of taste, but the films made from these two novels really managed to capture something that the novelist did not. The film based on _T_h_e _P_r_i_m_e _o_f _M_i_s_s _J_e_a_n _B_r_o_d_i_e focus to the novel and was more poignant. The film of _T_h_e _N_a_t_u_r_a_l taps into something mythic while the novel was more a piece of historical fiction. Such preferences are obviously highly subjective. I would contend, however, that Frank Darabont's screenplay for _T_h_e _S_h_a_w_s_h_a_n_k _R_e_d_e_m_p_t_i_o_n shows the signs of a screenwriter who gave a lot of thought to a story and did see

modifications that could be made not for the sake of modification or to shoehorn the story into a short screenplay, but to actually tell a better version of the same story. Specific improvements are listed in the following spoiler section. Admittedly some of these changes might not seem quite so good if King's version were my first exposure to the story, but I certainly think they are improvements.

SPOILER SPOILER

1. The incidents of the first night are based on a comment made in the story, but are never shown to have happened to Andy. They help a great deal to define this prison and what life is like there.

2. In story Andy talks about walking through poster. I cannot judge if this was going to too strongly telegraph what was coming, but I think it really is more safe to remove it.

3. The screenplay spends more time describing Brooks's reaction to freedom than does King's version. At first it seems like an odd digression. It does, however, perfectly set up our expectations for Andy's "last night" and for what is likely to happen to Red on his release.

4. The whole nature of Andy's plot is more cleverly executed in the film version. Andy not only is looking out for what will happen to him, he also is bringing down the people who abused their privileges. In the book he is merely putting a black mark on their record, the film version has him doing a lot more to "even the score." There is more "poetic justice" in the fact that the warden's abuses of the system are exactly what brings him down. The warden in the film actually approves of the creation of Peter Stevens. Peter Stevens not only provides for Andy late in the story, he also is part of the mechanism for Andy to get revenge on the warden.

5. The film version of the story allows Andy to fool the viewer even as he is fooling the warden and prison guards. We see his actions the final night in prison and but completely misinterpret them. The film plays with the possibility of suicide right up until the instant when we see the cell totally empty. King just

tells us in one sentence with no preparation that Andy escaped. That has an impact, but not nearly as much impact as Darabont's version of the story.

There is no question in my mind that Stephen King's story is one of his best. But I think that the story that he and Darabont told together is even better. We have one of the rare cases of a screen adaptation that takes only liberties that strengthen the material and which actually make the story much stronger and more satisfying.

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4. ConAdian 1994 (Con report by Evelyn C. Leeper) (part 3 of 6 parts):

Panel: A New Look at Hard SF
Friday, 11 AM
David G. Hartwell (mod), Kathryn Cramer

Description: What is considered "hard" SF in today's market? How does it compare to what it has been in the past?

Given that this panel consisted entirely of the editors of _T_h_e _A_s_c_e_n_t _o_f _W_o_n_d_e_r: _T_h_e _E_v_o_l_u_t_i_o_n _o_f _H_a_r_d _S_F, you might expect that this would be a discussion of that book as much as of hard science fiction in general, and you would be right.

The book got started, apparently, because Cramer didn't like what she perceived as military science fiction replacing real hard science fiction as what was called "hard science fiction." She wanted to return hard science fiction to its initial definition, which she gave as "science fiction that has science as its defining attribute," not political views, etc. (The term was actually invented by P. Schuyler Miller in the 1950s as away of distinguishing it from the increasing amount of "soft science fiction" and fantasy that were invading the field.) The book took five years to put together and Hartwell was not involved for the first couple or so.

During that time, an argument was raging in the _N_e_w _Y_o_r_k _R_e_v_i_e_w _o_f _S_c_i_e_n_c_e _F_i_c_t_i_o_n about the right way to read hard science fiction, in particular Tom Godwin's "Cold Equations." Most people feel this is a straightforward hard science fiction story which confirms our faith in rationality, our belief that truth is not always beautiful but it is always truth, our faith that truth is sublime, etc. (Or as Hartwell later put it, hard science fiction is "about an emotional response to the sublimity of truth.") But some read it as having a sub-text of "How wonderful it is to get rid of this woman!" with all the political baggage that entails. (In case you

hadn't figured out, I am firmly in the first camp.)

Cramer said all this leads to the question of whether one reads hard science fiction on a literal or a metaphorical level, and that neither approach is wrong. I suspect that most hard science fiction fans would disagree, and that is why they reject Ray Bradbury's Mars from the category of hard science fiction. The "intentional fallacy" (i.e., questioning the author's intent rather than taking the text as is) aside, most readers of hard science fiction believe that when an author talks about Mars, it is (and is supposed to be) the planet fourth from the sun, not some inner warlike region of one's soul, or rural Illinois.

However, Cramer's definition, or at least her application of it, has led to some raised eyebrows. The anthology included two J. G. Ballard stories: "Prima Bella Donna" (relating to Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Rappaccini's Daughter") and "Cage of Sand" (inspired by the Challenger disaster). Ballard, in fact, claims he is one of the few living writers of hard science fiction, leading many to question either his definition of "hard science fiction" or his definition of "few." (Given the number of posthumous books from Asimov and Heinlein, one might discuss his definition of "living" as well.)

In any case, one of the purposes of the book, according to Cramer, was to tell the readers to "look for the science," so they can find it where they didn't find it before. (Hmmm--if you have to look for it where you didn't find it before, can it truly be said to be the defining attribute?)

Cramer and Hartwell see a change in people's attitudes these days, from "techno-pessimism" to "techno-optimism." The result is that authors feel more comfortable writing about technological (hard) science fiction than they did in the 1980s.

The issue of pseudo-science arose here as well, with a question from the audience as to whether time travel is hard science fiction. (The same question is usually asked of faster-than-light travel.) The answer was that it depends how it is treated; it could be hard science fiction or it could be fantasy.

Cramer and Hartwell said that they often hear that "to concentrate on the science is to do it at the expense of plot and characterization." In the discussion at the genre-crossing panel, it was said that hard science fiction takes words to explain it, and that leaves fewer words for establishing other genres. Obviously it also leaves fewer words for building plot and characterization, and that was explicitly noted here as well. This is not to say it can't be done, just that it's not easy. However, Cramer and Hartwell say this is not true, and point to the works of Nancy Kress as a counter-example. They also said that this

objection to concentrating on science and on the outer life of a character has in it the assumption that the presentation of the inner life of a character is "better" that the presentation of the outer life. After all, one rarely hears people say that the problem with characterization is that it does it at the expense of the setting.

Cramer spent some time talking about how her father, John Cramer, wrote the hard science fiction novel _T_ w_ i_ s_ t_ e_ r. Apparently he told her that he was going to take some time off and write a science fiction novel--I forget whether it was six weeks or what, but it was some incredibly short period of time. She avoided telling him how ridiculous that was, which was good, because he went and did it. The novel did need some work after he submitted it, but was still on a level with many works that took a lot longer. Cramer also said when he sent the novel in, he included a huge diagram of where all the characters were at different times throughout the novel, and so on, because he thought the publisher would find this important, or useful. In other words, he wrote it the same way he wrote all the scientific papers he had written. (One result of this was that he had to spend one pass just changing passive constructions to active ones.)

Once again, a lot of time was spent discussing marketing categories: that more fantasy is published than science fiction, and that media-related science fiction (TV, movie, and gaming tie-ins) is now considered a separate category. But according to Cramer and Hartwell, all the major science fiction publishers,

except possibly DAW, are still looking for hard science fiction.

Also again was raised the question of why hard science fiction is a mostly male field. Hartwell replied that was because most of the authors hadn't had a sex change yet. This may seem like a flip answer, but it has a basis in the fact that authors are not re-created anew every year, but last for five, ten, twenty, or (in the case of Jack Williamson and a few others) fifty years. If one counts only authors who have started writing in the last ten years, one suspects one will come up with quite a different proportion than if one looks at the field at large. Someone else claimed that science, for whatever reason, was mostly male, and hard science fiction authors frequently come from science. But Cramer said that while it used to seem that women were not interested in science, now she hears women saying things like, "May I borrow your earring to reboot my Powerbook?" (If it takes an earring to reboot a Powerbook, is that why men are starting to wear earrings?)

Panel: Enhancements to Humanity
Friday, 12 N
Maia Cowan (mod), Glenn Grant, J. D. Maynard,
Gerald D. Nordley, Mary H. Rosenblum

Description: When is the enhanced person no longer human? Where is your privacy when everybody has telepathy? Who would oppose the enhancements?

This panel stated, logically enough, by defining what they meant by "enhancements." Their difficulty merely reflects the complexity of this topic in general.

The first definition given was "that which allows people to do things beyond the norm," not just to correct deficiencies. But the panelists could not decide if eyeglasses constituted an

enhancement, given that the "norm" at this point was not 20/20 vision.

As the panelists said, all this was related to the question "At what point does something become non-human?" and, more practically, "At what point does something become non-human in such a way that someone can claim ownership?"

The panelists agreed that they would like to see some bio-engineering enhancements that would adapt us to our current lifestyle and environment: better eyesight, better metabolism, better memory, better control over our emotions, better immune system, better constructed knees and spine. They agreed that of these, however, the physical enhancements will come first.

But though lots of stuff sounds nice, what are the social consequences, and what if not everyone can get them? We can already see some of the results of really basic instances of bio-engineering: when people can determine the sex of their child, the proportion of males to females increases dramatically. While this may balance out when some parents realize that females are in demand, the cycle takes years to get to that point.

Will people accept bio-enhancements? In general, people fear what they do not understand. Also, one important factor in gaining acceptance will be that of allowing personal choice. The panelists agreed that the ideal future would have bio-enhancements neither forbidden nor required. Even so, some people expressed the concern that allowing people to make unrestricted bio-enhancements might degrade the human genome. The panelists felt that while distinguishing between inheritable changes and non-inheritable changes might avoid some of this concern, as one person put it: "You have a right to be stupid." Someone noted that now we allow diabetics and other with damaging, inheritable conditions to reproduce and pass them on, and that any attempt to change this

policy would result in people shouting "Nazi Germany" faster than you could blink.

It was noted that the domestication of animals was basically bio-

engineering, but people either don't recognize that parallel, or are offended by it because it equates us with "lower" animals.

Is bio-enhancing just an easy out? In particular, if instead of cleaning up pollution we enhance ourselves to survive better in it, where does that leave the rest of the ecosystem? (Read Robert Silverberg's _ H_ o_ t _ S_ k_ y _ a_ t _ M_ i_ d_ n_ i_ g_ h_ t for further elaboration on this idea.) On the other hand, everything we do to survive, from the stone axe on, is a technological fix. Where do we draw the line?

Speaking of lines, what is the dividing line between what is human and what is not? The answer to this determines our responses and actions to many things. (The whole abortion issue centers around this.) Of course, sometimes we ignore this line and apply human standards to non-humans anyway. In the Middle Ages, animals could be tried for crimes in a court of law. Even now, animals can be deemed dangerous and ordered destroyed by a court--certainly a form of trial. What will the future hold? (It's interesting to note that those same Middle Ages courts which would call animals to trial and have them as witnesses did not allow Jews as witnesses in court.)

But the question of who is human is of vital importance. One reason that slavery persisted in the United States, and in as brutal a form as it did, was that the slave-holders insisted that the slaves were not human. If one looks at the rules governing slaves in the Old Testament, for example, it is clear that slaves there are recognized as human, and hence the rules for their treatment were quite different from what one saw in the American form.

The standard biological definition for a species is "that which can interbreed." When discussing what is human in terms of bio-enhancement, this is clearly not sufficient. For example, a woman who has a hysterectomy is unable to interbreed with other human beings; does this mean she is no longer human? Do women cease to be human when they go through menopause? (If you think these are contrived questions, consider the mess the Hawaiian legislature has gotten itself into. In an attempt to circumvent a Hawaiian Supreme Court ruling that forbidding same-sex marriages violates Hawaii's gender equal rights provision to their state constitution, the legislature said that the purpose of marriage was reproduction. The number of senior citizens' groups and disabled citizens' groups who attacked them was pretty impressive. And last I heard, they would still give a marriage license to couples in which the woman was well past child-bearing age, their supposed intention to the contrary.)

John Varley was particularly mentioned as a science fiction author who looked at the consequences of bio-enhancements (in his "Eight Worlds" series).

Panel: Canadian SF
Friday, 1 PM
Robert Runte (mod), Glenn Grant, David G. Hartwell, Andre Lieven, Derryl Murphy, Robert Sawyer, Michael Skeet

Description: A discussion on the differences in SF from various regions of the world.

What an odd description, unless Canada is really large enough to be called "various regions of the world."

This was one of the more interesting panels (at least for the first two-thirds--then I discovered that if I skip lunch, my ability to pay attention drops considerably, so when it veered into the more arcane aspects of local authors, I decided to grab a quick snack). But the first two-thirds had more content than the entire time of many panels.

They began by citing John Robert Colombo, who in _ O_ t_ h_ e_ r _ C_ a_ n_ a_ d_ a_ s (1979) tried to list the characteristics of Canadian science fiction. He concluded that the four trends it seem to follow were:

- a polar world,

- national disaster,

- the alienated outsider, and

- fantasy rather than hard science fiction.

I should note, by the way, that in general the panel discussed what distinguished English-language Canadian science fiction from American or British science fiction. Australian science fiction wasn't mentioned though interestingly enough many of the characteristics of current Canadian science fiction seem to apply there as well. There was some mention of French-language Canadian science fiction, but mostly in response to my question about it, and the panelists seemed all to come from the Anglophone tradition.

Since Colombo wrote fifteen years ago, today's theory is slightly different, though not all that much. Canadian science fiction has more emphasis on setting than its American or British counterparts.

(I find this true of Australian science fiction as well). It frequently has an alienated outsider, and what's more, this outsider often chooses to stay outside by the end of the story. Canadian science fiction tends toward speculative fiction, magical realism, etc., over action fiction. Perhaps because of this, it

also does not have a lot of "alpha-male" heroes. Canadian science fiction goes for ambiguous endings. (American science fiction is seen as going for happy endings, British for unhappy endings, and the Japanese "stop before they get to the ending," according to one panelist.)

In contrast to the American "melting-pot" myth, Canadian science fiction stresses the "mosaic" myth. (This was also expressed as Americans have everyone joining together, whereas Canadians have people seceding from a group.) I suspect the American "melting pot" myth is being replaced by the "mosaic" myth, however, so this distinction may pass away in time.

Much American science fiction is based on the idea (or myth) of the "Wild West," while Canada's science fiction draws on its form of western expansion, which involved the RCMP going first to prevent a lawless frontier from existing at all. And the RCMP was followed by what was termed "settlement by committee."

The panelists pointed out that all this was to some extent self-fulfilling prophecy, however, because when people started to compile anthologies of Canadian science fiction, they looked for stories that had just these features. Other stories that didn't fit were rejected because "they weren't really Canadian." Someone said that the _ T_ e_ s_ s_ e_ r_ a_ c_ t_ s anthologies used them as criteria, but that sometimes stories were selected because they conformed to them, and sometimes precisely because they _ d_ i_ d run counter to them.

Canadian science fiction is searching for its identity. Panelists felt there might be some parallel with regional science fiction in the United States, and I would agree that some of the characteristics of the latter include an emphasis on setting, a trend toward speculative rather than action fiction, and a trend away from "alpha-male" heroes. But then again, maybe these _ a_ r_ e

what defines regional fiction in general. (And the panelists noted that Canadian science fiction had its regional schools as well.)

Hartwell felt that Canadian science fiction was in an "active, conscious search of what its identity can and should be, but doesn't have one yet." It draws on both British and American traditions, but on others as well (for example, magical realism). There is also a much heavier female influence--as Hartwell put it, "Canadian science fiction didn't have any founding fathers, but it had several founding mothers."

To a great extent, of course, one needs to define who Canadian science fiction authors are before one can define Canadian science fiction. What makes the trends listed self-fulfilling in another way is that many people seem to doing the reverse: anyone who isn't writing in that way is dismissed as "not Canadian." This is (naturally) most common with authors who have lived in both Canada

and the United States (or, less frequently, Britain). If I understood him correctly, Grant, for his anthology _ N_ o_ r_ t_ h_ e_ r_ n _ S_ t_ a_ r_ s, defined Canadian science fiction as science fiction which was written in Canada. This sounds to me like a definition a tax lawyer would cook up. I wrote my Montreal film festival entirely in Canada; does that make it Canadian writing? If Robert Charles Wilson (to name an author who is, I believe, unambiguously Canadian) goes to a convention in Detroit and happens to write a story while he's there, does that disqualify it from being Canadian? (It is possible that Grant meant that the bulk of an author's writing should be done in Canada, but even so, I question this definition. Hemingway, in spite of writing most of his works in places like France and Cuba, was still an American author.) Various authors whose categorization was a matter of dispute were mentioned: William Gibson and Spider Robinson (who were born in the United States but now live in Canada), A. E. Van Vogt and Gordon R. Dickson (who were born in Canada but now live in the United States), and even Elizabeth Vonarburg, the best-known of the Francophone science fiction writers in Canada, who was born in France.

Murphy felt that there was a new internationalization of science

fiction, which presumably might wipe out or mute some of the distinguishing characteristics of Canadian (or any other national) science fiction.

Sawyer said that his book _ F_ a_ r-_ S_ e_ e_ r was quintessentially Canadian. Margaret Atwood (perhaps the most famous Canadian author of today) in her latest book has the theme that "you must fight the land or die." _ F_ a_ r-_ S_ e_ e_ r, Sawyer said, also had that theme. (Yes, but so did Kim Stanley Robinson's _ R_ e_ d _ M_ a_ r_ s, or for that matter Tom Godwin's _ S_ p_ a_ c_ e _ P_ r_ i_ s_ o_ n.) Sawyer also mentioned his Aurora-winning story "Just Like Old Times," which appeared in _ D_ i_ n_ o_ s_ a_ u_ r _ F_ a_ n_ t_ a_ s_ t_ i_ c.

He described _ D_ i_ n_ o_ s_ a_ u_ r _ F_ a_ n_ t_ a_ s_ t_ i_ c as "purely commercial" and said that this meant that "Just Like Old Times" was very Canadian _ a_ n_ d very American.

I asked about French-language science fiction, but about all the panelists could offer was that it was technophobic (even more so than the somewhat technophobic English-language science fiction of Canada), featured the biological sciences more, and tended to use extended allegories.

Presentation: That Krazy Kepler
Friday, 2 PM
Dr. Martin Clutton-Brock

Description: Basic Astronomy from the Past. Kepler, as performed by Dr. Martin Clutton-Brock, tells the audience how he made his discoveries, all the while battling nagging wives, drunken roommates and stupid bureaucracy.

Last year I had waxed enthusiastic over Mark Twain as the "Dead Guest of Honor" at Con Francisco, and the wonderful job done by the man impersonating him. Well, ConAdian didn't quite go that far, but they did have an hour-long "guest appearance" by Johannes Kepler.

Dr. Clutton-Brock apparently has several of these forty-minute presentations, but he usually does them for his astronomy classes

rather than for a science fiction convention. I suppose Kepler was chosen because he actually wrote some science fiction (unlike Galileo or Brahe, though I suspect Brahe would be fun to see). For this Clutton-Brock dresses up in full 17th Century costume and relates the story of his life and work in the first person. If you've seen Hal Holbrook doing Mark Twain or James Whitmore doing Harry Truman, you know the sort of thing I'm talking about. It was enthralling, I probably learned a lot about Kepler, and I hope future conventions look for this sort of programming. (Can Intersection get H. G. Wells or even better, Mary Shelley to put in a guest appearance?)

Panel: Bantam Books Presents
Friday, 3 PM
Jennifer Hershey (mod), Tom Dupree, Janna Silverstein, Christian Waters

Description: A slideshow and panel presentation which will preview science fiction and fantasy publications coming from Bantam Spectra Books over the next several months, presented by the staff of Spectra. Color slides will feature artwork from upcoming titles.

(This was scheduled opposite a reading by Connie Willis, one of Bantam's most popular authors. Go figure.)

Coming up in October (meaning in the bookstores in September) are the third Jedi book by Kevin J. Anderson, _ C_ h_ a_ m_ p_ i_ o_ n_ s _ o_ f _ t_ h_ e _ F_ o_ r_ c_ e (not a big thrill for me but your mileage may vary); the fourth book in Vonda McIntyre's "Starfarers" series, _ N_ a_ u_ t_ i_ l_ u_ s (as well as a re-issue of the first three books with new covers, and her earlier novel _ D_ r_ e_ a_ m_ s_ n_ a_ k_ e); Angus Wells's _ L_ o_ r_ d_ s _ o_ f _ t_ h_ e _ S_ k_ y in trade paperback; _ T_ h_ e _ S_ e_ c_ r_ e_ t _ O_ c_ e_ a_ n_ s by Betty Ballantine (described as "Dinotopia goes under the sea") in hardback; and Bruce Sterling's new novel (in hardback) _ H_ e_ a_ v_ y _ W_ e_ a_ t_ h_ e_ r (which looks very promising--in the near future, hackers known as "Storm Troopers" try to break up the violent storms that are raging in the skies over west Texas). Of _ H_ e_ a_ v_ y _ W_ e_ a_ t_ h_ e_ r, Dupree says, "If you read _ W_ i_ r_ e_ d, this is for you."

November must be National Paperback Book Month or something. There will be _ G_ l_ o_ b_ a_ l_ h_ e_ a_ d, a paperback collection of thirteen Bruce Sterling stories; a paperback edition of Arthur C. Clarke's _ H_ a_ m_ m_ e_ r _ o_ f _ G_ o_ d; a paperback edition of Roger Stern's _ D_ e_ a_ t_ h _ a_ n_ d _ L_ i_ f_ e _ o_ f _ S_ u_ p_ e_ r_ m_ a_ n (with a new piece of artwork inside the front cover--this

seems a blatant attempt to get the people who bought the hardback to buy the paperback, but will probably serve only to annoy them, much like reissuing a collection, but adding one new story); a paperback edition of _ T_ h_ e _ M_ u_ l_ t_ i_ p_ l_ e_ x _ M_ a_ n by James P. Hogan; Ian McDonald's _ T_ e_ r_ m_ i_ n_ a_ l _ C_ a_ f_ e in trade paperback (about scientifically resurrecting the dead; I found it a bit difficult to follow the language, though I usually like McDonald); and a hardback edition of Patricia McKillip's _ R_ i_ c_ h _ a_ n_ d _ S_ t_ r_ a_ n_ g_ e (the second in Brian Froud's "Faerielands" series).

In December (just in time for the Christmas gift-giving season) is a hardback edition of Vonda McIntyre's new "Star Wars" book, _ T_ h_ e _ C_ r_ y_ s_ t_ a_ l _ S_ t_ a_ r, and a paperback edition of Kathleen Tyer's "Star Wars" book, _ T_ r_ u_ c_ e _ a_ t _ B_ a_ k_ u_ r_ a. (Bantam seems to be trying for one hardback and one paperback "Star Wars" book every December, as well as others during the year.) Also coming is Sheri Tepper's new novel _ S_ h_ a_ d_ o_ w'_ s _ E_ n_ d (no description given), and a paperback edition of her _ P_ l_ a_ g_ u_ e _ o_ f _ A_ n_ g_ e_ l_ s. Katharine Kerr has revised _ D_ a_ g_ g_ e_ r_ s_ p_ e_ l_ l and it is being reissued in paperback along with its sequel _ D_ a_ r_ k_ s_ p_ e_ l_ l. There is also a trade paperback of Chris Claremont and Beth Fleischer's _ D_ r_ a_ g_ o_ n _ M_ o_ o_ n (illustrated by John Boulton) at US$14.95 with a special edition with autographs "tipped in" at US$50. ("Tipped in" means that the people signed a stack of sheets of paper which are later glued into the books. I assume the special edition is a hardback, though they didn't say.)

There will also be a new novel from Norman Spinrad, not under the "Spectra" imprint nor marketed as science fiction, called _ P_ i_ c_ t_ u_ r_ e_ s _ a_ t _ l_ l about a group of eco-terrorists who take a news show hostage in Los Angeles. And finally, Bantam will be reprinting _ T_ h_ e _ W_ o_ r_ l_ d _ o_ f _ M_ i_ c_ h_ a_ e_ l _ W_ h_ e_ l_ a_ n, but still in the hardback edition at a hardback price (US$60, I believe).

In January 1995 are the paperback releases of Isaac Asimov and Robert Silverberg's _ P_ o_ s_ i_ t_ r_ o_ n_ i_ c _ M_ a_ n, Paula Volsky's _ W_ o_ l_ f _ o_ f _ W_ i_ n_ t_ e_ r, and Gregory Benford's _ M_ a_ t_ t_ e_ r'_ s _ E_ n_ d (a collection of his short fiction). Note that all Bantam's single-author collections seem to be coming out in paperback only; I guess hardback single-author collections don't sell well enough for them (though Tor and many small presses can manage to make something on hard-cover collections). (Actually, if I understood correctly, Tor may not actually make money on the hardbacks, but needs to issue them to get reviews et al from periodicals that don't review paperbacks.

So they may write off some of the hardback cost as publicity for the paperback.) Also coming is Alan Rodgers's _ P_ a_ n_ d_ o_ r_ a (which assumes that a UFO really did crash into the Southwest desert in the late 1940s and an alien child survived).

February 1995 will see paperback editions of Michael Bishop's _ B_ r_ i_ t_ t_ l_ e _ I_ n_ n_ i_ n_ g_ s and Robert Silverberg's _ H_ o_ t _ S_ k_ y _ a_ t _ M_ i_ d_ n_ i_ g_ h_ t. (This is good timing for both of these. I think Bishop's book is already

a Hugo contender, but this might make it even stronger. And it could make a real difference for the Silverberg by getting it into the hands of "the masses" in time for the nominations.) The Bishop has a new cover (the old one tested well with women but not with men, so the new one shows a baseball field instead of a Southern home). _ B_ r_ i_ t_ t_ l_ e _ I_ n_ n_ i_ n_ g_ s is also in development for a movie, possibly with Arnold Schwarzenegger, though I suspect they're waiting to see how a certain one of this fall's movies does first.

Another February highlight (for me anyway) is Connie Willis's new novella, _ R_ e_ m_ a_ k_ e, set in a future Hollywood where you can computerize and digitize remakes so that (for example) you can remake _ C_ a_ s_ a_ b_ l_ a_ n_ c_ a with River Phoenix and Madonna. The bad news (for many people) is that it's coming out as a trade paperback at US$11.95 (even though the editor on the panel said it would be priced "well under ten dollars").

Neal Stephenson (of _ S_ n_ o_ w_ c_ r_ a_ s_ h fame) has a new hardback coming out in February: _ T_ h_ e _ D_ i_ a_ m_ o_ n_ d _ A_ g_ e. It's set a hundred years in the future and has a variety of social "tribes" (for example, there are the neo-Victorians). The plot concerns an interactive education device that gets into the "wrong" hands.

Also in February, Arthur C. Clarke and Gentry Lee's _ R_ a_ m_ a _ R_ e_ v_ e_ a_ l_ e_ d, Isaac Asimov's _ I, _ A_ s_ i_ m_ o_ v, and Maggie Furey's _ H_ a_ r_ p _ o_ f _ W_ i_ n_ d_ s will be released in paperback.

In March we get the first book of yet another "Star Wars" trilogy, this one by Roger MacBride Allen. The first book is titled _ A_ m_ b_ u_ s_ h

_ a_ t _ C_ o_ r_ e_ l_ l_ i_ a, and will be in paperback. The second book should be out in July and the third in November.

Elizabeth Vonarburg will have a novel out in paperback, _ R_ e_ l_ u_ c_ t_ a_ n_ t _ V_ o_ y_ a_ g_ e_ r_ s (translated from the original French). It's about someone in Quebec who wakes up one morning to "find everything a little bit left of reality." (It could be alternate history, so I'll be looking for this one.)

Robert Silverberg will have a new "short novel" out in hardback, _ T_ h_ e _ M_ o_ u_ n_ t_ a_ i_ n_ s _ o_ f _ M_ a_ j_ i_ p_ o_ o_ r. (It's the same number of pages as Willis's novella--206--so I suspect it's really a novella, and it's priced at US$19.95.) James P. Hogan will have a new trade paperback, _ R_ e_ a_ l_ t_ i_ m_ e _ I_ n_ t_ e_ r_ r_ u_ p_ t, about a programmer who finds himself in the virtual-reality town he created.

Also in March will be paperback reprints of Harry Harrison's _ S_ t_ a_ i_ n_ l_ e_ s_ s _ S_ t_ e_ e_ l _ R_ a_ t _ S_ i_ n_ g_ s _ t_ h_ e _ B_ l_ u_ e_ s and Robert Charles Wilson's _ M_ y_ s_ t_ e_ r_ i_ u_ m (too late to remind people to nominate it for a Hugo, but it was originally a trade paperback rather than a hardback so that might help).

In the summer of 1995 there will be a hardback release of Gregory Benford's _ S_ a_ i_ l_ i_ n_ g _ B_ r_ i_ g_ h_ t _ E_ t_ e_ r_ n_ i_ t_ y, the sixth in his series.

Coming up in the future are a trilogy from Mike Resnick, a trilogy from Kristine Kathryn Rusch (I sense a distressing trend here), a novel from George R. R. Martin, an a novel from Connie Willis that is a "loose" sequel to _ D_ o_ o_ m_ s_ d_ a_ y _ B_ o_ o_ k (whatever that means). By the way, _ D_ o_ o_ m_ s_ d_ a_ y _ B_ o_ o_ k is in its second paperback printing, without the perfectly awful "romance novel" cover of the first--it now has a Celtic knot motif.

And last, but certainly not least, Bantam reports that Walter M. Miller is "90% done" on his sequel to _ A _ C_ a_ n_ t_ i_ c_ l_ e _ f_ o_ r

_ L_ e_ i_ b_ o_ w_ i_ t_ z.

Let's see ... the book came out in 1960, so it took 34 years to finish 90%, so it should be done in another four years--plus a year or so for the publishing process.

Panel: Designing Diseases
Friday, 4 PM
Shariann Lewitt (mod), Jeri Freedman, Ian K. Hagemann, Judy Lazar, Perrianne Lurie, J. D. Maynard

Description: A discussion of disease and how it works to help you in your world.

The panelists started by announcing that this panel was about designing diseases for fiction, not for germ warfare, and one of my friends immediately left, quite disappointed.

The first question to ask is, "Why design new diseases in literature at all? Aren't there enough good _ r_ e_ a_ l diseases?" Someone mentioned _ T_ h_ e _ C_ o_ n_ t_ r_ o_ l _ o_ f _ C_ o_ m_ m_ u_ n_ i_ c_ a_ b_ l_ e _ D_ i_ s_ e_ a_ s_ e_ s _ i_ n _ M_ a_ n by the American Public Health Association, which lists and describes (in gory detail) all known real diseases. This led everyone on the panel to list their favorite diseases, apparently based on how disgusting the symptoms were.

This was followed by the panelists talking about the diseases they would design, with several jokes about diseases that would kill only lawyers. While the panelists did get around to saying that authors invent diseases because they need to make a disease do what is necessary for the story, the discussion didn't seem to be going anywhere interesting (to me), so I left early.

Panel: Is Modern SF A Reactionary Literature?
Friday, 5 PM
Peter Nicholls (mod), J. R. Dunn, Daniel Fresnot,
Dr. Elizabeth Anne Hull, Martha Soukup

Description: Is SF currently reactionary against mainstream literary ideas, against "society's" ideas, or against itself?

(Someone on the panel [either Soukup or Hull] mentioned in passing that they weren't in the _ E_ n_ c_ y_ c_ l_ o_ p_ e_ d_ i_ a _ o_ f _ S_ c_ i_ e_ n_ c_ e _ F_ i_ c_ t_ i_ o_ n because they had not written a novel, only short stories. Does this mean Harlan Ellison is not included either?)

The first point of discussion was whether the question of "reactionary" was being applied literarily or politically. Dunn claimed that literarily science fiction "hasn't developed at all since the 19th Century." If this is true, it is reactionary in form, even if not in content. And it does copy mainstream techniques. One panelist suggested that it "needs to be rooted in the past to go into the future": that is, because the _ c_ o_ n_ t_ e_ n_ t is unusual, innovative, or hard to understand, adding unusual literary tricks would make the work incomprehensible. Also, the use of non-realistic forms works against the realism that science fiction (usually) strives for.

At this point Fresnot said, "If reactionary means opposed to progress, then well-done art cannot be reactionary." Since this did not seem to be in response to anything anyone else had said, I suspect Fresnot (who is Brazilian) was working against a language barrier and had to spend some time formulating responses either to earlier comments or perhaps to the questions the panelists were given ahead of time.

In any case, the panelists thought that science fiction did not have to be reactionary and could indeed be subversive. But reactionary themes still abound: manifest destiny, for example. Nicholls claimed that politically reactionary science fiction was dying out even in the 1970s. Dunn said that fantasy is taking over the real reactionary elements of speculative fiction (aristocracy, etc). But it seems to me that Baen Books is still around, publishing lots of stuff that most people would call reactionary. (Each publisher has its own character, in my opinion. Ace publishes fantasies and science fiction which seem to try to follow the latest trend. Baen publishes mostly two kinds of books: fantasies and war stories. Bantam is the literary publisher (their seemingly endless number of "Star Wars" books notwithstanding). DAW publishes lots of theme anthologies as well as books from their established authors, but doesn't seem to be cultivating many new ones. Del Rey publishes a lot of "crank-'em-out" science fiction and fantasy, especially in series. Tor publishes good, solid, high-quality science fiction. I haven't figured out what AvoNova

specializes in yet.)

Now that I have totally digressed....

The panelists (remember them?) said the science fiction _ f_ o_ l_ l_ o_ w_ s social trends, but doesn't lead them, so in this sense it is reactionary. Dunn said that sometimes readers may be too simplistic in their appraisals of reactionary, liberal, etc. For example, he thinks Nancy Kress is both libertarian and leftist, a combination most fans think contradictory. (I would say "oxymoronic" except then someone would surely mis-read this as saying that Kress was moronic, which is certainly _ n_ o_ t my intent.) This led someone else to observe that in North America, there is no left in the same sense that there is in Europe; what we call leftist they call centrist.

Political correctness came in for some discussion. According to Dunn, "PC can be called left-wing McCarthyism." The mention of McCarthyism and political correctness led Nicholls to say that a historian had once calculated that the United States has purges every thirty-five years (in other words, one every generation). Now we have political correctness, thirty-five years ago was McCarthyism, thirty-five years before that were the "Red Scares" of the 1920s, and so on. This recent political correctness trend affects childrens' publishing in particular.

Fresnot said that we remember the artists, not the politician, and as proof, asked who was Czar when Tolstoy was writing, or Prime Minister during Dickens's time. (Czars Alexander II and III and Nicholas II; and a bunch of them, including Lord Palmerston, Benjamin Disraeli, and William Gladstone; why?) Clearly this is not completely true. We remember Queen Elizabeth I, Napoleon, and Hitler, rather than the artists under them (with the exception of Shakespeare). Actually, this points out that a truly reactionary politician may result in _ n_ o artists of note flourishing under him.

One reason that readers may think science fiction is more reactionary than it is that they don't always realize that the message "this is a possible world--learn from it" does not necessarily mean "I want this world." One writer frequently

misread this way (according to many) is Robert Heinlein, whom one panelist described by saying that Heinlein was "politically extremely conservative, but socially a revolutionary." Another writer to suffer this fate is S. M. Stirling.

One other impression I got from all this is that there seems to be a philosophical connection between the left and pre-determinism (or predestination) and between the right and free will.

Film: _ T_ h_ e _ H_ i_ g_ h _ C_ r_ u_ s_ a_ d_ e
Friday, 7:30 PM

This was a German film (made for German television?), though it seemed to be made with Anglophone actors speaking English. There was a bit too much low comedy for my tastes (especially with the aliens), and they left out one of the bits I liked the most, but I suppose people trying to film classic novels should be applauded for that alone unless they make a total hash of it--which this isn't. This will probably show up on cable or videotape rather than in your local theater, so watch for it there.

Panel: What Should Have Made it on the Hugo Ballot, But Didn't
Friday, 9 PM
Joseph T. Mayhew

Description: A moderated group discussion of what (or who) should have, but didn't make it onto this year's Hugo ballot.

[I didn't attend this, but two people who did said that unfortunately it turned into more of a discussion of technical details about nominating (eligibility periods, word counts, what to do about repeat winners, etc.) than a list of stuff people liked. And one of the two people I talked to was Mayhew. I suspect a topic like this needs a panel, not just one person.]

Parties

We dropped by a few parties: Niagara Falls to talk to Bruce Burdick about his trip to twelve European countries (including Albania), the @ party, Boston in 2001 (where Mark picked up the proofs of his golem article for _ P_ r_ o_ p_ e_ r _ B_ o_ s_ k_ o_ n_ i_ a_ n), and Antarctica in '99, a hoax bid by two people, one of whom had been to conventions but never a Worldcon before and one who had never been to a convention before. This was certainly the cleverest party: there were marshmallows for making snow sculptures, a list of films for the film program (all set in the Antarctic or the Arctic), a scale model of the facilities (a quonset hut made of corrugated cardboard), a satellite feed to the site (the television turned to a non-channel and broadcasting snow), and a list of the "Top Ten Reasons to Vote for Antarctica in '99":

10. More down under than Down Under
9. Annoy famous research scientists
8. Cool...Way Cool
7. No mosquitos, no sales tax and no minimum drinking age
6. A lovely island in the South Pacific with fabulous white beaches
5. All those penguins can't be wrong
4. Home of the 3-Minute-Tan
3. Beat Global Warning
2. All the krill you can eat

1. Conveniently close to exciting Tierra de Fuego

[To be continued]

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Few people can be happy unless they hate some other person, nation, or creed.
--Bertrand Russell