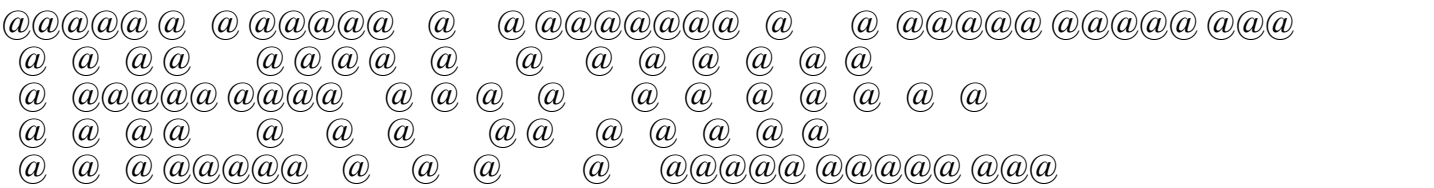

Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society
Club Notice - 03/22/91 -- Vol. 9, No. 38

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
04/03	LZ: Book Swap
04/24	LZ: NIGHT OF DELUSION by Keith Laumer (The Nature of Reality)
05/15	LZ: THE SCREWTAPE LETTERS by C.S. Lewis (Getting to Hell)
06/05	LZ: UBIK by Phillip K. Dick (Death and Hell)
06/26	LZ: ALTERNATE WORLDS by Robert Adams ("What If Things Were Different?")

_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.
04/13	SFABC: Science Fiction Association of Bergen County: TBA (phone 201-933-2724 for details) (Saturday)
04/20	NJSFS: New Jersey Science Fiction Society: TBA (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 mtgzy!leeper
HO Librarian: Tim Schroeder HO 3B-301 949-4488 hotsc!tps
LZ Librarian: Lance Larsen LZ 3L-312 576-3346 mtunq!lfl
MT Librarian: Evelyn Leeper MT 1F-329 957-2070 mtgzy!ecl
Factotum: Evelyn Leeper MT 1F-329 957-2070 mtgzy!ecl

1. Just a few small pieces here to make you aware of. None of them are really connected, but, hey, you think it's easy writing a funny article a week? I think I once heard that everyone is born with a certain number of urges to be funny. Maybe one a week starts rolling around in your head. Now your imagination is shotting ideas into your head all the time. At least it does if it is what you call a "fertile" imagination. If one of these ideas comes

together with a funny urge, you get a conception for a joke. At any rate, something my mother tried to explain to me once worked that way.

Anyway, if you really try to be funny once a week either your sense of humor dries up or you get to the point where you think that a bottle of ketchup is riotously funny. Neither state is a very good idea. So I am not going to try to compose a big article; I will just put a few passing thoughts on paper which, if it flows right, will be stream-of-consciousness and, if not, will just lay here in a puddle.

Uh, let's see. Oh, the news was recently talking about Germany trying to round up and prosecute the members of the Stassi. These guys used to be the East German secret police. The Stassi now have to face their angry victims. I don't know. Does this sound familiar? Is it my imagination or do people who get the reins of power in Germany always end up running for their lives in another few years? Germany must be some weird place. Now here in the U. S. of A. we either hate our ex-Presidents or decide they are too dumb to hate (or both), but most have been sufficiently discreet to cover up what they _r_e_a_l_l_y did or to get pardoned for it. Most of them seem to die shortly after leaving office, but I have my doubts. I think the ones with no shame stick around and the rest stage their death and then go into the Witness and Presidents Relocation Program. Somewhere out there is probably Ted and Lou's Chili Dog Stand where if Ted and Lou think you aren't listening they call each other Harry and Lyndon.

I see the new Nordic Track as shows a guy getting up from a couch and exercising and his dog approves. Let me just tell you that if you are going to lay down a big hunk of money to buy exercise equipment to impress your dog, forget it. Your dog will be more impressed if you just go outside and mark your territory by peeing on a tree. In some ways, I guess, dogs have us beat when it comes to logic.

Oh, that reminds me. One of you out there had to ruin it for all of us. One of you couldn't keep his mouth shut. Now I am not

going you ask you which of you it was. The guilty party knows who he is and will have to face his conscience. One of you had to go and ask my brother if it was true that his dog was afraid of his [the dog's] water dish. You should know that if you read it here, of course it is true. But what you read here is confidential and not to be repeated. Now my brother subscribes to the MT VOID and I have to be really careful about what I say about Seamus, the Wonder Schnauzer.

2. NASA announced today that the shuttle would be launched on schedule. NASA considered canceling the flight after learning of several small cracks, including two from Dan Quayle.

3. Well, I suppose it's only ironic justice that in the same issue in which I flame a publisher for saying the Gettysburg Address was in 1883, I say that the Battle of Little Big Horn was in 1890. It wasn't; it was in 1876. Mea culpa. [-ecl]

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

"The Gandalara Cycle"
by Randall Garrett and Vicki Ann Heydron
(comprising the three books, _T_h_e _G_a_n_d_a_l_a_r_a _C_y_c_l_e _I, _T_h_e _G_a_n_d_a_l_a_r_a _C_y_c_l_e _I_I, and _T_h_e _R_i_v_e_r _W_a_l_l)
A book review by Frank R. Leisti

This saga, written by a husband-and-wife team, leads the reader down an enchanting path of wonder and mystery. These three books, which actually consists of seven novels, encompass both the known and the unknown. The author and authoress have spun their web in carefully staged steps to bring about understanding of the final event. The entire story is carefully planned and unfolded as we discover the main characters. Each major character is well developed throughout the story and the reader feels the impact of each interaction with the players.

The story starts innocently enough, Ricardo Carillo, an old professor awakens in what he believes is hell. A hot, sandy and salty area with mountains in the far distance and a dead body beside him. After a quick search of the unknown body, Ricardo moves out on a

direction towards home -- yet not a home that he recognizes. So starts the Steel of Raithskar story, where we find that Ricardo last remembered being on a cruise ship in the Mediterranean, talking to a lovely young lady and seeing a meteor come striking from the sky to hit the ship.

From this humble beginning, we are introduced to the characters slowly, allowing the reader time to fit into Ricardo's situation, to understand as much as he does and to discover the mysteries of his appearance and presence in this world. The world that he has come into is quite unique in itself, with huge salty deserts, high mountains, where trees and grasses grow well and water accumulates only to run down to the depths of this world and end in salty marshes. We discover that Ricardo is now in the body of a young Gandalaran. From this beginning, Ricardo in a logical manner checks the various assumptions and facts that he has. To his amazement, he finds himself as a recipient of a mind-link with a sha'um. A sha'um is a type of tiger cat -- similar to the saber-tooth tiger, however, the mind link allows Ricardo to talk mentally to this sha'um -- the one named Keeshah. Ricardo also finds out that he no longer is old or Ricardo, but a young swordsman named Markasset.

With each step homeward, Ricardo discovers more about his time as Markasset. Yet once home, he runs into trouble -- both from a girlfriend of Markasset, a rival -- in the form of the Security chief, a long-term gambling debt owed to a distasteful villain, and his father implicated in the disappearance of the Ra'ira, a blue stone of untold wealth and power. As a chief suspect, Ricardo has to vanish from the city and he goes on the quest to find out what happened to this stone. The quest for truth, justice, life, liberty and love fill the other five

novels, _T_h_e _G_l_a_s_s _o_f _D_y_s_k_o_r_n_i_s, _T_h_e _B_r_o_n_z_e _o_f _E_d_d_a_r_t_a, _T_h_e _W_e_l_l _o_f _D_a_r_k_n_e_s_s, _T_h_e _S_e_a_r_c_h _f_o_r _K_a, and _R_e_t_u_r_n _t_o _E_d_d_a_r_t_a.

With a rich mixture of characters and groups of people, the reader feels for the Raithskarians as they fall under the assault of the vlek, the lower Eddartians as they have enslavement under the Lords -- powerful mind controllers, and the search in the All-Mind for the answers to what has happened. The All-Mind is a growing existence in some dimension, that certain Gandalarians are able to visit, read,

experience and record upon. It contains the experiences of all the past people of Gandalara, from the times of prosperity when water was plentiful, to the time of the first King of Gandalara, to the time of the split and reduction of power of the Kings. The other Gandalarians are not surprised by Ricardo's presence in their world, as they believe him to be a visitor, from the All-Mind -- as has been recorded occasionally. Yet, Ricardo, in his search of the All-Mind can find no trace of the human civilization of which he was a part.

The final chapter, The River Wall, brings to a successful close the nagging questions about the area -- when another Visitor has come and has attempted to do something to prevent the sudden expansion of the All-Mind with its stop in growth. The answer to this and other questions remain for other readers to discover and enjoy as I have done.

This is now the third time that I have read this story, each time gaining further insight into the various side issues and character portrayals that enrich this story. I would love the chance to journey to the land of the Gandalarians, however, it is only possible in my dreams.

I would rate this a strong +2 on the Leeper scale. Well-done, enjoyable, each part holds well on its own, and the story winds together well for a majestic tapestry of adventure.

Lunacon '91
An abbreviated con report by Evelyn C. Leeper

This is an abbreviated con report, since we attended Lunacon only on Saturday.

Registration for Lunacon was about 1500; I gather from the program book this has been fairly constant over the past few years. This made it 50% larger than Boskone, yet some of the function space was much smaller. The dealers room, for example, was spread between two (connected) rooms and was still smaller than the space Boskone had. To compensate for this, Lunacon also had a "Dealers Row," a row of rooms on the same floor as the function space which were used as overflow dealer space.

Hotel

The hotel this year was the Stamford Sheraton. It seem that Lunacon moves every few years or so. This "New York" convention hasn't been in New York City for quite a while, and now has left the state as well. The space was adequate; the lounge (bar) was converted into the Con Suite, which meant there was plenty of room.

Dealers' Rooms

As I said, the space was small. And as usual, I found more non-book stuff than _I was interested in, especially since Lunacon tries to cover all aspects of fandom. Having just done some buying at Boskone, I had problems finding a whole lot here I was interested in.

Art Show

The art show, on the other hand, was larger than Boskone's--or so it seemed to me. There was a wide assortment of three-dimensional pieces. I suppose for artists from New York, it's easier to transport artwork to Stamford than further north. The prices were in keeping with most conventions these days, though since I wasn't going to be able to pick anything up Sunday, I couldn't buy anything and so didn't pay that much attention to the prices.

Film Program

The first program hearkens back to those good old days of yesteryear when films were chosen because they were good, not because they were blockbusters and/or unavailable on videotape. Lunacon seems to have decided to sow good films even if they _a_r_e available on videotape, on the quite reasonable assumptions that not all fans have VCRs and not all video stores carry such films as _F_i_v_e _M_i_l_l_i_o_n _M_i_l_e_s _t_o _E_a_r_t_h. So they showed _T_h_i_n_g_s _t_o _C_o_m_e; _T_h_e _G_h_o_u_l (with Boris Karloff);

_T_h_e _M_a_n _W_h_o _L_i_v_e_d _A_g_a_i_n; _M_a_r_o_o_n_e_d; _B_l_a_c_k _S_u_n_d_a_y (the 1960 film with
Barbara Steele, _n_o_t the one about the terrorist at the Super Bowl); _T_h_e
_C_r_a_w_l_i_n_g _E_y_e; and _T_h_e _C_r_e_e_p_i_n_g _U_n_k_n_o_w_n, _E_n_e_m_y _f_r_o_m _S_p_a_c_e, and _F_i_v_e
_M_i_l_l_i_o_n _M_i_l_e_s _t_o _E_a_r_t_h (which they listed under their British titles of
_T_h_e _Q_u_a_t_e_r_m_a_s_s _E_x_p_e_r_i_m_e_n_t, _Q_u_a_t_e_r_m_a_s_s _I_I, and _Q_u_a_t_e_r_m_a_s_s _a_n_d _t_h_e _P_i_t,
leading us to believe at first they were showing the British television serials instead). They also showed quite a bit of Japanese anime and some short subjects. Now since we _o_w_n copies of everything they showed, we didn't go out of our way to see them, but had we the time to spare we probably would have dropped in for the nostalgia.

Programming

Though there were lots of program items, there were not very many that I was interested in. In part this is because Lunacon had a heavy Artists Track and a heavy Costumers Track, and in part because many of the rest of the panels were "humorous" panels. In my experience, such panels rarely turn out to be funny, and I tend to avoid them. Still, I did find some items to go to.

Science Fiction & the Theatre
Saturday, 11 AM
Marvin Kaye (mod), N. Taylor Blanchard, Jeri Freedman, C. S. Friedman, S. Lewitt, David Nighbert, Madeline E. Robins

The panelists started by giving their qualifications for being on this panel. Nighbert had written a dramatic adaptation of _ F_ r_ a_ n_ k_ e_ n_ s_ t_ e_ i_ n (not the recent Broadway flop), Friedman is a costume designer, Blanchard is an ex-stage designer with a Master of Arts of New York University, Robins is an ex-choreographer who used to work with a Shakespearean troupe, Lewitt has a Master of Fine Arts from the Yale School of Drama and is an ex-director, Freedman is a playwright who wrote a science fiction play, _ U_ n_ c_ l_ e _ D_ u_ n_ c_ a_ n'_ s _ D_ e_ l_ u_ s_ i_ o_ n, and Kaye uses the theatre in much of his fiction as well as running the Open Book Theater Company. Kaye is also a member of Equity and has edited an anthology

entitled _ 1_ 3 _ P_ l_ a_ y_ s _ o_ f _ G_ h_ o_ s_ t_ s & _ t_ h_ e _ S_ u_ p_ e_ r_ n_ a_ t_ u_ r_ a_ l for the various Doubleday book clubs. His theatrical background is demonstrated by his reluctance to name "that Scottish play" in general conversation. (Commenting on why so many of them had left the theatre, Kaye said that people in the theatre "make Trekkies look good," to which Friedman responded that people in the theatre "make Trekkies look _ m_ a_ t_ u_ r_ e!" If one were being nasty, one might say that at least Trekkies don't encourage odd superstitions.)

After a brief excoriation of the "Yale Mafia" of the theatre world, the panelists got down to the first obvious step: listing all science fiction plays produced. The panelists came up with:

- George Bernard Shaw's _ B_ a_ c_ k _ t_ o _ M_ e_ t_ h_ u_ s_ e_ l_ a_ h
- [somebody]'s _ C_ a_ r_ r_ i_ e (based on the Stephen King novel)
- Paul Shyre's _ T_ h_ e _ C_ h_ i_ l_ d _ B_ u_ y_ e_ r (based on the John Hersey novel)

- Samuel Beckett's _ E_ n_ d _ G_ a_ m_ e
- [somebody]'s _ T_ h_ e _ H_ o_ b_ b_ i_ t (based on the J. R. R. Tolkien novel)
- Tom Stoppard's _ J_ u_ m_ p_ e_ r_ s
- Howard Ashman and Alan Menken's _ L_ i_ t_ t_ l_ e _ S_ h_ o_ p _ o_ f _ H_ o_ r_ r_ o_ r_ s
- Arch Oboler's _ N_ i_ g_ h_ t _ o_ f _ t_ h_ e _ A_ u_ k
- J. Weisman's _ 1_ 9_ 8_ 4 (based on the George Orwell novel)
- Alan Jay Lerner and Burton Lane's _ O_ n _ a _ C_ l_ e_ a_ r _ D_ a_ y _ Y_ o_ u _ C_ a_ n _ S_ e_ e _ F_ o_ r_ e_ v_ e_ r
- Friedrich Durrenmatt's _ T_ h_ e _ P_ h_ y_ s_ i_ c_ i_ s_ t
- Karel Capek's _ R._ U._ R.
- Maxwell Anderson's _ T_ h_ e _ S_ t_ a_ r _ W_ a_ g_ o_ n
- Barry Keating and Stuart Ross's _ S_ t_ a_ r_ m_ i_ t_ e_ s
- Gail McDermott and Christopher Gore's _ V_ i_ a _ G_ a_ l_ a_ c_ t_ i_ c_ a
- Gore Vidal's _ V_ i_ s_ i_ t _ t_ o _ a _ S_ m_ a_ l_ l _ P_ l_ a_ n_ e_ t
- Ray Bradbury's _ T_ h_ e _ W_ o_ n_ d_ e_ r_ f_ u_ l _ I_ c_ e _ C_ r_ e_ a_ m _ S_ u_ i_ t
- Ray Bradbury's _ T_ h_ e _ W_ o_ r_ l_ d _ o_ f _ R_ a_ y _ B_ r_ a_ d_ b_ u_ r_ y (three one-act plays: "The Pedestrian," "The Veldt," and "To the Chicago Abyss")
- much of Eugene Ionesco's work

Mark and I were able to add:

- David Rogers's _ C_ h_ a_ r_ l_ i_ e _ a_ n_ d _ A_ l_ g_ e_ r_ n_ o_ n (a 1980 Broadway flop musical
based on the Daniel Keyes novel)
- _ D_ r. _ J_ e_ k_ y_ l_ l _ a_ n_ d _ M_ r. _ H_ y_ d_ e (undoubtedly many versions)
- _ F_ r_ a_ n_ k_ e_ n_ s_ t_ e_ i_ n (the recent Broadway flop, and lots of other versions)
- Joseph Brooks's _ M_ e_ t_ r_ o_ p_ o_ l_ i_ s (the recent London flop musical)

In the horror field, the various versions of Bram Stoker's _ D_ r_ a_ c_ u_ l_ a were mentioned. Opera, of course, has many fantasy productions, but there were science fiction operas: Karl-Birger Blomdahl's _ A_ n_ i_ a_ r_ a, Todd Machover's _ V_ a_ l_ i_ s (based on the Philip K. Dick novel), David Henry Hwang and Philip Glass's _ 1_ 0_ 0_ 0 _ A_ i_ r_ p_ l_ a_ n_ e_ s _ o_ n _ t_ h_ e _ R_ o_ o_ f, and [somebody]'s _ R_ e_ p_ o_ r_ t _ f_ r_ o_ m _ P_ l_ a_ n_ e_ t _ 3 (based the Doris Lessing novel). One panelists noted that many opera aficionados feel that opera is well-suited for the wide scope of ideas in science fiction. If that's the case, maybe we'll start seeing more. [The panelists didn't always give composers' or authors' names, and the few "somebody"s above are where I could find no listing in the Samuel French catalog or the play indices at my library.]

One drawback that producers see to putting science fiction on the stage is that movies can do special effects better (and these days science fiction, to producers' minds, is equivalent to special effects). Lewitt also pointed out that science fiction depends a lot on background--descriptions of a society or a culture--that are hard to communicate on a stage. Kaye felt that his and Parke Godwin's "soft" science fiction works would adapt better, because there is more emphasis on character, which is what the theatre is known for. (It wouldn't have to be their soft science fiction--any science fiction based less in technology and more in character interaction would do as well.)

And all the complaints about Hollywood and science fiction seem repeated for Broadway and science fiction. Producers ask, "What is making money? Let's remake it." They want lots of special effects-- _ F_ r_ a_ n_ k_ e_ n_ s_ t_ e_ i_ n needed twenty-five special winches, where previously only

five had been constructed total, and those had been rented out because they were so expensive.

Nighbert told another _ F_ r_ a_ n_ k_ e_ n_ s_ t_ e_ i_ n story, this time about his own production. There was a scene in which the monster throws Elizabeth down onto a bed and rips her head off. Well, one night the actor did this (pulling the fake head out of a whole in the bed of course) and swung it around so that the audience could see it. Unfortunately he lost his grip on it and it flew through a window pane separating two parts of the stage, rolled down a stairway towards the audience and stopped on the bottom step, neck down, staring at the audience. (Of course the director asked, "Can you do that every night?") This led to a discussion of the "Voneck decapitation" (pardon my spelling if it's wrong) in which the "victim's" head is pushed through a hole in the bed or whatever and the fake head pulled up. Either Nighbert or Kaye said that you can get a really good sound effect for the head being ripped off by crushing a plastic cup at the right instant. According to Kaye, the "Voneck decapitation" was used in George Dibney Pitts's _ S_ w_ e_ e_ n_ e_ y _ T_ o_ d_ d, a much darker version than the Sondheim musical. Someone said that the Romans had very realistic decapitations. However, they accomplished this by actually decapitating people (slaves, usually), and the panelists agreed that the unions probably wouldn't go for this these days.

This led to more discussion of special effects. Producers (and directors, presumably) want to get their money's worth, so if there is an expensive effect they want it on stage and visible for a long time. So if the costuming and makeup for an alien is expensive, they want the alien on stage a lot, even though that may allow the audience to see all the flaws in the design. George Lucas, the panel agreed, had a better approach with his cantina scene--you got brief glimpses of aliens and that was the perfect length of time. Of course, rumor has it that he did it this way because his make-up man was sick and couldn't spend the time and effort that was originally planned. So consider it serendipitous. The same thing was true for _ J_ a_ w_ s; it was shot from the shark's point of view for much of the film because they couldn't get the shark to look right (according to Nighbert).

After all this complaining about theatrical producers, the panelists did say that just as there is a distinction between film and Hollywood, there is also a distinction between theatre and Broadway. They all seemed to feel that the best work these days was being done in regional theatre, which I assume includes such places as the Paper Mill Playhouse and the George Street Theatre in New Jersey. Even Off-Broadway was too "Broadway" for them. (Now, Off-Off-Broadway might be another story. The terms, by the way, have nothing to do with the locations of the theatre. I believe they are based on theatre size,

though there may be other considerations as well.) Broadway (and Off-Broadway) rely on the tourist trade for much of their sales. And the tourists want spectacle ("I want to see _ C_ a_ t_ s, Homer." "Yes, Betty Lou, not one of these funny plays with no scenery and five people talking to each other.") But regional theatre audiences are more interested in theatre as theatre.

As for why authors prefer writing prose to drama--and many of the panelists had made this cross-over--Lewitt said that prose communicates directly to the reader, while drama has to do through the actors, the set designer, the director, and so on. Of course, once stated this seems obvious, but when I first heard the question I saw myself _ r_ e_ a_ d_ i_ n_ g a play rather than seeing one--no doubt because that is how most of us start on drama: we read Shakespeare in school. Even though I know that seeing a play is different than reading it, and that seeing it is more than likely what the author intended (though some plays _ a_ r_ e written to be read), old habits die hard. And I still read more plays than I see.

One upcoming production that was recommended was _ R_ e_ t_ u_ r_ n _ t_ o _ t_ h_ e _ F_ o_ r_ b_ i_ d_ d_ e_ n _ P_ l_ a_ n_ e_ t.

(The room this was in had one small table, not nearly enough for the whole panel to gather around, let alone sit behind. So they sat in a row on the stage holding their name cards instead.)

_ D_ r_ a_ m_ a_ t_ i_ c _ P_ r_ e_ s_ e_ n_ t_ a_ t_ i_ o_ n: "_ A _ C_ o_ l_ d _ J_ o_ u_ r_ n_ e_ y _ i_ n_ t_ o _ t_ h_ e _ D_ a_ r_ k"
Saturday, noon
Marvin Kaye and G. Vlachos

Kaye introduced this play by Parke Godwin by saying it was in his book _ 1_ 3 _ P_ l_ a_ y_ s _ o_ f _ G_ h_ o_ s_ t_ s & _ t_ h_ e _ S_ u_ p_ e_ r_ n_ a_ t_ u_ r_ a_ l, which also contained Kaye's own play, "A Cold Blue Light." Kaye explained his inclusion of his own play by talking about a composer named Gottschalk who played his own works at recitals, saying, "If Gottschalk doesn't play Gottschalk, who will do so?"

The play itself is a dialogue between the ghosts of Jesus and Judas. (Can Jesus have a ghost? This seems to be a bit more complicated theologically than it first appears.) The "action" takes place in a current-day church, though the worshippers can neither see nor hear the characters. Kaye staged it in the fashion of his Open Book Theatre Company, with he and Vlachos reading from the script and using no props (Kaye played Judas; Vlachos, Jesus). This was one of the more interesting events I attended and I would recommend it for future

conventions. The play itself took about thirty-five minutes, and because the Open Book Theatre Company _ n_ e_ v_ e_ r uses props, it would not be a financial or logistical strain on a convention to have one of these (or even two, especially at a Worldcon). I'm sure Kaye could recommend good choices for plays, and good people to read them.

Disabilities in Science Fiction & Fandom
Saturday, noon
Geary Gravel (mod), A. J. Austin, F. Alexander Brejcha,
Steven Gould, Ed Meskys, Sam Moskowitz

Since the play finished early and I wanted to see Jim Freund before his 1 PM panel (since I had another 1 PM panel to attend), I went to the room where Freund's panel was scheduled to be held and heard the end of the panel on disabilities in science fiction. Sam Moskowitz was talking (via voice-box) about how technology (i.e., the voice-box) made it possible for him to start attending conventions again. Before he could only speak to people under very quiet circumstances, but now he was able to communicate again. And Ed Meskys said that word processors made typing much easier for him. With typewriters he was always worried about making mistakes so he had to type slowly, but with a word processor, it's much easier to detect and correct mistakes.

But why, oh why, did the convention schedule the panel on disabilities in a room down a long narrow hallway with doors that _ m_ a_ y have been wheelchair-accessible, but certainly didn't look it? There were several rooms, closer in, with double doors that would have made wheelchair access a breeze.

And I did meet Jim Freund, New York radio personality and host of "Hour of the Wolf," a science fiction radio show on WBAI. (And I got James Morrow to autograph a copy of his "Author's Choice" collection from Pulphouse.)

Discussion: Electronic Fandom
Saturday, 1 PM
Mark R. Leeper (mod), Connie Hirsch, Eric Jablow, Saul Jaffe, Evelyn C. Leeper

This was originally scheduled to be held at the base of the escalators, but the hotel set up their snack bar there. So Phil DeParto said to move it to the general seating area in the lobby, but we opted to move it into the Con Suite instead (free soda and snacks--I love a Con Suite that has Raisinets!). Most of the discussion was of various personalities on the Net, and whether they were in person at all like what they were on the Net. Since I have no desire to be attacked by hordes of people complaining about being gossiped about (or complaining about _ n_ o_ t being gossiped about), I didn't take any notes. We did talk about the eternal topic--is SF-LOVERS DIGEST a fanzine, or a semi-prozine, or a whatever? We said it was definitely a whatever, but the other two still generate debate. More will undoubtedly be said about this in the future.

Reviews & Criticism in Science Fiction
Saturday, 2 PM
Gregory Feeley (mod), Katherine Cramer, Don D'Ammassa,
Evelyn C. Leeper, J. J. Pierce, ? Rangl-Hazel

Barry Malzberg was supposed to moderate this panel, but didn't show up. (Maybe he was offended by the fact the committee misspelled his name in the program book? Just kidding, though misspellings were all too common.)

We all introduced ourselves and gave our credentials for being on this panel. I said I wrote book reviews for fanzines and also for Usenet, which is great--it's like a vanity press that you don't have to pay for.

Don D'Ammassa distinguished between reviews and criticism the same way I did at Boskone: "A review is for someone who hasn't read the book; criticism is for someone who has." Feeley quoted Spider Robinson (not the panel's favorite reviewer by any means) as saying, "Critics tell you what you should like; reviewers tell you what you will like." All of

this, of course, is very binary; there is actually a spectrum that runs from market reviewers to academic criticism. Some would have phrased that "from market reviewers on the low end to academic criticism at the top," but I will not. In fact, academic criticism was not kindly treated by the panelists most familiar with it. Cramer (I believe) said that _ T_ h_ e _ J_ o_ u_ r_ n_ a_ l _ o_ f _ t_ h_ e _ F_ a_ n_ t_ a_ s_ t_ i_ c _ i_ n _ t_ h_ e _ A_ r_ t_ s had been forced to send out a letter asking the authors of papers to read other works by the author of whom they were discussing a particular work. I mentioned that this was true even at the convention level--the panel on Stapledon at Conspiracy had read only Stapledon's major works--and at the fanzine level--a recent _ O_ t_ h_ e_ r_ R_ e_ a_ l_ m_ s article on Stapledon was by someone who had read only the four main novels. (This is an improvement on having read only one, I suppose.)

Cramer said that she had a degree in math and was a closet consumer researcher, and this had led her to the conclusion that much of what is printed 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 points the wrong way: it says how the book in question is _ s_ i_ m_ i_ l_ a_ r _ t_ o other works, rather than how it is _ d_ i_ f_ f_ e_ r_ e_ n_ t _ f_ r_ o_ m other works. While the former is of interest to historians of the field, the reader at whom the magazine is supposedly targeted is more interested in finding out why this book is different from all other books.

There was also a lot of discussion of books in series. Feeley said that he found that Tor usually had books in one series or another for all but one of their releases each month, so he waited until _ a_ l_ l one month's books were in series (plural, that is) and then wrote about this phenomenon--none too favorably, one assumes. Someone talked about getting a book labeled "The First Book of the First Trilogy of [something-or-other]" and just heaving it against the wall in disgust. I returned home after the convention, took out the latest issue of

_ L_ o_ c_ u_ s, and counted; of eighty new releases (either first publication or first United States publication), forty-three were in series and thirty-seven were original, stand-alone novels. Of the latter, the vast majority were horror novels.

Cramer talked about an editor whom she said she would not name who

went around telling everyone that he published books he didn't like that he knew would sell so that he could publish books he did like that he knew wouldn't sell. No, this wasn't Donald Wollheim, who said rather than it was John Norman's "Gor" books that pulled the DAW train, because Wollheim didn't say the other books wouldn't sell, just that he was able to take more chances on new authors because he wasn't running so close to the edge. I said that some books don't sell because you can't find them. "For example," I said, "I just can't find Bantam Spectra Special Editions for sale anywhere near me; I have to go into New York to the Science Fiction Shop to find them." At this, Cramer started laughing, and at first I thought she was commenting on my taste (or lack thereof), but it turned out that this was the editor she meant. At any rate, the problem is that now everyone in the business, including the distributors and stores, knows that the editor has said these books won't sell, so they don't order them. So of course they don't sell. And so on. I suspect this is why the publisher removed the distinctive logo they used to have and replaced it with a much more subdued one; he hoped to be able to place the books without their having the stigma attached so obviously.

Somehow we got on to the difference between genre and category. Genre is a "contract" between the author and the reader; category is a "contract" between publisher and distributor. (I wish someone had come up with examples to make this clearer.) Part of what was discussed was the use of "signals" on the cover to tell the distributor (or the reader) what category (or genre) the book falls into. A novel with a cover of woman in a low-cut dress being ripped by a handsome muscular highwayman promises a different content that one with a woman in a long white dress running away from an old house with a full moon in the sky. Similarly, a book with a picture of elves drinking in a bar on the cover should not contain spaceflights to distant planets inside. Someone in the audience asked if this meant that authors should never write outside their usual fields. I said that isn't what we meant. Lloyd Biggle was the example I gave; he writes mysteries as well as science fiction. But his mysteries don't have science fiction covers and his science fiction doesn't have mystery covers.

Of course, none of this explains why my local Waldenbooks files James Michener's non-fiction work _ I_ b_ e_ r_ i_ a with all his fiction--except that's where they know their customers will look for it.

D'Ammassa talked about how hard it is to write 250-word reviews; as soon as you've given the title and a brief plot summary, most of you wordage is used up. Cramer asked why he gave a plot summary, but they seemed (to me) to be talking about different things when they said "plot

summary." I think D'Ammassa meant something like, "This is a novel about a trip to Mars by three teenagers, and the alien life-forms they meet there," while Cramer was probably thinking of something more elaborate. In any case, everyone seemed to agree that a plot summary--of whatever length--was not a substitute for a review. Neither was a heavy use of quotes--quotes could be used to good purpose, but were occasionally used as filler when someone wanted to produce a 2000-word review but had only 200 words to say. I admitted that I had on occasion relied on quotes more than I should have, especially as a way to demonstrate an author's style, but tried to avoid it whenever possible.

Hollywood Alchemy: Turning Horror Books in Horrible Movies
Saturday, 7 PM
Rick Hautala (mod), Evelyn C. Leeper, Mark R. Leeper, Richard Meyers

We had hurried back from dinner for the 6:30 PM panel on televised science fiction in the United Kingdom, only to discover it was canceled. (Well, it did say it on one of the sheets we got when we registered but here were so many different sheets we must have missed reading it.) However, this panel had been added and it sounded worth attending. So as we were sitting waiting for it to start Phil DeParto comes in and points to both of us and says, "You're on the panel."

We pretty much ignored the topic and talked about horror films in general. Mark told the story of the interview with Clive Barker where the interviewer had said there wasn't much plot in _ H_ e_ l_ l_ r_ a_ i_ s_ e_ r _ I_ I and Barker said that was true, and that himself was really a "plot person," but that he didn't think this was a criticism that the director would mind. Mark's response was that he was also a plot person, and he also likes the sprocket holes well-punched, but both should go without saying--it never used to be questioned whether a film had a plot.

Hautala and Meyers both said that the problem with many horror films today is that they believe the statement that you don't go to see Van Helsing, you go to see Dracula, without realizing that without the conflict between the two, you have a pretty dull film. (Mark points out that Hammer's _ B_ r_ i_ d_ e_ s _ o_ f _ D_ r_ a_ c_ u_ l_ a had Van Helsing, but not Dracula, and still was successful. Picky, picky!) When someone in the audience said something about a conflict between good and bad, they said no, it was between good and evil, which led to a discussion trying to distinguish between the two. Is one chosen and the other innate? And which is which? In life we consider someone evil because they choose consciously to do bad things, but in films we see as evil those who were made that way by fate, usually by being possessed by some demon or something. Lately, of course, the villain is likely to be the hero of the film. People complain about all the little kids dressing up as Freddy, but a generation ago they were all Dracula and no one minded that. More along

the lines of the villain as hero is _ T_ h_ e _ S_ i_ l_ e_ n_ c_ e _ o_ f _ t_ h_ e _ L_ a_ m_ b_ s, where you have the "good psycho" and the "bad psycho," or at least that's how some people see it.

In talking about the graphicness in films today, I said that one reason _ T_ h_ e _ S_ i_ l_ e_ n_ c_ e _ o_ f _ t_ h_ e _ L_ a_ m_ b_ s worked so well was that it left things to the viewer's imagination. Meyers and Hautala (who have experience in Hollywood) said that the reason the films are generally so explicit is that the producers and directors have no imagination and figure the watchers don't either. I said that it used to be that people got their start as directors by doing second unit direction, or acting, but now they start by doing special effects, so naturally the films end up more graphic when they get to direct--that's what they know.

Someone asked about the new _ T_ w_ i_ l_ i_ g_ h_ t _ Z_ o_ n_ e and one of the panelists said that "cocaine destroyed the show." He described a scene where one of the people in charge of a show was ranting at the crew and the crew couldn't even figure out what he was ranting about.

Road Runner vs. Wiley Coyote: Decoding the Myth
Sunday, 11 AM
Robert Sacks (mod), C. Curry, Esther Friesner, Nick Pollotta, David Stephens, Gordon Van Gelder

This panel was inspired by something Mark had said at dinner with Phil DeParto, Sacks, and others a few months ago, but the scheduling was such that he couldn't actually be on it. This is unfortunate, as the room was supposedly packed. (Then again, maybe it's not unfortunate. Who knows?) Sacks defined what he saw as the relationships of the characters; then the other panelists got a chance to dispute him. (If there's anything Sacks generates, it's dispute.) Friesner was quite vocal about the relationships. One person said that it was a religious allegory (with the Coyote as Jesus), one said it was everyday-man struggling to reach the unattainable goal, one said it was big business (coyote and Acme) versus the little guy, and so on. As Saul Jaffe said in describing the panel, "There was much silliness."

Freisner also read part of "Chuck Amuck" where Chuck Jones talks about the characters and Sacks, never shy, said, "He's authoritative but wrong." (This could lead to a whole argument about whether the author's intentions count for anything, or whether the author has any special knowledge.) (The preceding is based on information provided by Saul Jaffe.)

Miscellaneous

The Green Room was centrally located and had coffee--which I appreciated, having gotten up early to drive to Connecticut and having to go on after the last panel for another three hours to my parents' house in Massachusetts (where we helped my father celebrate his 78th birthday). While sitting there we got to talk to quite a few people: David Kyle, Laurie Mann, Darrell Schweitzer (who had several good suggestions about traveling in Italy), and others. We also had a chance to see the restaurant guide. S. Lewitt was reading it and said, "Oh, look, here's a restaurant serving Siam cuisine!" to which her friend

replied, "Yes, you like Thai food." "Oh, is that Thai?" (I gather the Yale School of Drama doesn't stress geography or even Eastern drama very much.) We of course immediately decided on the Thai/Siam restaurant for dinner. When we arrived at 5:30 it was empty. "Do you have reservations?" "No." So they seated us, we ordered, we ate, we paid, and we left. In all that time we were the only patrons--obviously most of the clientele eats later, but why ask if we had reservations? Did _ t_ h_ e_ y have any record of reservations that early? Stamford is also quite confusing to drive around, with one-way and dead-ending streets just where they are the least convenient.

GUILTY BY SUSPICION
A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: Perhaps this is the wrong film on the right subject. Irwin Winkler could not go too far wrong having DeNiro play a top director whose career is ruined by blacklisting, but the film does not go too far right either, not having sufficient rage to be engaging.

Rating: +1 (-4 to +4).

An artist painting a picture has the option of reproducing exactly what the eye sees or of distorting reality to reach a deeper truth. The artist who just reproduces reality may be little more than a human camera; the artists whom we consider to be great have known how to distort reality to show a greater truth. It is possible to make a film about a subject that is realistic and at the same time does a disservice by being so realistic. Irwin Winkler's _ G_ u_ i_ l_ t_ y _ b_ y _ S_ u_ s_ p_ i_ c_ i_ o_ n, based on his own script, is a very realistic and at the same time subdued portrait of a blacklisted film director. But what is called for is a howl of rage against the government subversion of the Bill of Rights. Martin Ritt's _ T_ h_ e _ F_ r_ o_ n_ t, which starred Woody Allen, does have that release at its climax. _ G_ u_ i_ l_ t_ y _ b_ y _ S_ u_ s_ p_ i_ c_ i_ o_ n whimpers its way up to a modified version of an exchange that actually took place during the Army-McCarthy Hearings, but it is not nearly as effective as Allen telling the government to go fuck itself.

_ G_ u_ i_ l_ t_ y _ b_ y _ S_ u_ s_ p_ i_ c_ i_ o_ n mixes real Hollywood figures such as Darryl Zanuck with purely fictional ones and ones who are thinly disguised versions of real actors like cowboy star Jerry Cooper. The story begins as one of Zanuck's best directors, David Merrill (played by Robert DeNiro) returns to Hollywood in 1951 after having been in Paris for a while. However, Hollywood is not the town he remembers. The House Un-American Activities Committee and the FBI are conducting a witch-hunt to find Communist sympathizers in the film industry. Careers are being destroyed and marriages broken up by the paranoia and the government pressure. David sees the family of a friend destroyed and soon he too is called upon to explain his attendance at a few meetings of what is now accused of being a Communist front organization. He is willing to cooperate until he is required to start by giving names of involved associates. For refusing to draw others into the net, he finds himself blacklisted. The project he is working on is canceled and the studio nearly bankrupts him by insisting he return a $50,000 advance. What follows is a long and not entirely interesting siege of unemployment seasoned with FBI harassment. The film builds to his eventual hearing with HUAC.

Winkler spent a fair amount of the budget recreating the early 1950s, much more than Martin Ritt did, or needed to do, for _ T_ h_ e _ F_ r_ o_ n_ t. I thought while watching the film that some of the women's hair styles were anachronistic, but I could easily be wrong. The period feel was somehow just missing, as was the dramatic edge of the film. DeNiro's character is weak and indecisive and spending so much time showing him not finding work just does not grab the audience the way it could. I give the film a flat +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.