

2. This issue should contain a review of POWDER assuming that all goes well. Well, not really assuming all goes well since as we all know, ALL never goes well. Frequently SOME goes well. Often SOME is enough. In any case POWDER is about an extremely weird person (who may be an alien) seeing our society out of different eyes. All such films really harken back to THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH. They would harken back to THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL but Michael Rennie really was too much THE MAN IN THE GRAY FLANNEL SUIT even if it was silver lame'.

This seems like a good time to go back and see THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH. Our next Leeperhouse Filmfest is THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH. We are cutting back to one film to allow more discussion time. We have a bunch of voluable (and valuable) people. So on Thursday, November 9, at 8PM (we don't want to allow too much discussion time--fights may break out) we will be prsenting THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH (1976) directed by Nicholas Roeg. This is an odd film in many ways. It is one of the few British films set in the United States. (PHASE IV is another.) The score uses source music, but no two pieces are from the same category. One piece will be country music; the next will be a church hymn. Roeg gives an atmospheric interpretation of the angry novel of the same title by Walter Tevis (who also wrote THE HUSTLER). David Bowie stars as the alien whose nom de terre is Thomas Jerome Newton.

P.S. According to Charlie Harris, David Bowie has just been inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. I am impressed he knew that. I wouldn't have. [-mrl]

3. POWDER (a film review by Mark R. Leeper):

Capsule: POWDER is the kind of story that could have been pretty sappy, and in fact it is sappy, but only in the final minutes of the film. Until then it is actually a fairly riveting story for the right audience. A teenager with superhuman powers is faced with bigotry in his community. But he changes the lives of people who come in contact with him.
Rating: low +2 (-4 to +4)

Sometimes a film just clicks for reasons hard to determine. POWDER should not work well as a film, but it does. This is a story about a self-effacing superman with a pained expression on his face who finds himself in a world that largely does not appreciate him. It initially looks like a self-indulgent film searching for a cult following from a narrow band of sentimentalists. That may even be what it was, but it did just enough that worked for me that I fell

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into that narrow band. In another ten years I may look at this film and wonder what I saw in it, but for right now it had more than one scene that paid off for me. I would like to think I will always find the subplot with the deputy to be powerful.

Jeremy Reid, inexplicably called "Powder" (played by Sean Patrick Flanery), has not had much of a life. His mother died of a lightning bolt before his birth. The albino fetus salvaged from the dead woman was rejected by the father. The child was raised by his grandparents and lived in a dark cellar for almost all of his life. Powder, it seems, was not entirely human, though what else he is is never clear. He may be a mutation or maybe an implanted alien. But he has an I.Q. that goes beyond measurement, a photographic memory, telepathic and empathic abilities, and voluntary and involuntary powers to affect electromagnetic waves. Due to his upbringing he is introverted and maladjusted. Wherever he goes he is hated and feared by most of his Texas community. Sent to a school for disturbed children, he finds friends in the head of the school (Mary Steenburgen) and an energetic science teacher (Jeff Goldblum).

Actor Sean Patrick Flanery is hidden under an overly obvious makeup

job which looks like it was intended to justify the title of the film. Flanery is not a bad actor--some viewers may remember him as TV's teenage Young Indiana Jones. But in POWDER the white make-up lacks contrast and seems to hide all of his facial expression but the most pained looks, which he then uses all too often. Also sprinkled in are some good character actors like Lance Hendriksen as the town sheriff. Hendriksen is one of those familiar actors who never seem to get the appreciation they deserve. Mary Steenburgen is not well-used, but Jeff Goldblum as the enthusiastic science teacher is a treat. Two more actors it is nice to see working are Ray Wise and camp film actress Susan Tyrrell.

The script has some problems. Powder's powers seem to be revealed only as he needs them and we are never sure what powers he has. That is not necessarily bad, though one might question if the writer and director Victor Salva had a clear idea of what he wanted Powder to be. For example, the teenager seems to be involuntarily magnetic in some scenes and not others. Some places the effects are not convincing. Lightning plays a part in the story but never looks realistic. An animal head is also unreal-looking. There are continuity errors with a clock in one scene between Goldblum and Flanery. None of these are really bothersome. What did need more care were the last three or four minutes of the film, which just don't work.

There is a great deal being said about writer/director Victor Salva's background. On this subject I will say just that I can respect and enjoy Wagner's operatic cycle "The Ring of the Nibelungs" without condoning everything that Wagner ever did in his

personal life. Salva has had a bad chapter of his life which is now over. His film POWDER rises above some mediocre acting and make-up to have several touching moments in a 1950s-style superman story. For the people in the right mood it gets a low +2 on the -4 to +4 scale. [-mrl]

Capsule: This interminable, minimalist vampire film borrows its style from films like STRANGER FROM PARADISE. Though it is set in modern day New York City, it takes most of its slight interest value from the fact that it is apparently a remake (uncredited) of the classic (and far superior) DRACULA'S DAUGHTER. Rating: 0 (-4 to +4)

NADJA seems to want to be a serious art film and at the same time a spoof of the vampire film. The result is a film that is occasionally amusing but more often just drags. The story borrows a great deal from Lambert Hillyer's 1936 film DRACULA'S DAUGHTER and NADJA moves only fast enough to be an actual retelling of that story and not one iota faster. It is filmed in black and white with three levels of clarity. There are sharp clear scenes, blurry scenes, and a few Pixelvision scenes. The blurry and Pixel shots initially seem to be subjective from the vampire's point of view, but it is not long before there are shots with gratuitous blur that clearly are not from anybody's point of view. They are just blurry for the sheer joy of using the camera effect. Some of the dialogue is also there for the effect. How else can one explain lines like "Love is voluntary. Love is like rabies"?

Elina Lowensohn plays the the title role of Nadja, the daughter of Dracula unliving in New York City. Dracula is also in town, but there he is staked by a rather Bohemian Van Helsing (Peter Fonda). This vampire hunter wears his hair well below his shoulders and goes everywhere walking a bicycle. The death of her famous father comes as a release to Nadja who has been hoping to be free of his domination in order to lead a more normal life.

The film is not without a sense of some style. Lowensohn is impressive looking in a hood and cape in much the same way that Gloria Holden was in the original. Almereyda used her previously in his ANOTHER GIRL, ANOTHER PLANET and she does have an exotic look. But her delivery of lines is rather disaffected and lifeless, ironically just what this vampire does not need. Suzy Amis, who played the title role in THE BALLAD OF LITTLE JO and THE USUAL SUSPECTS plays a nurse who is caring for Nadja's brother and

who will eventually be caught up in Nadja's predations.

When the film drags, it is of some interest just to see how the original was mapped to the new film. The Irving Pichel role of Sandor is back, but here he is called Renfield, though his function is more that of Sandor in 1936 film than that of Renfield in the 1930 DRACULA. Another victim is called Lucy (played by an actress named Galaxy Craze, believe it or not), again as an allusion to the 1930 film. A policeman in the original is replaced by David Lynch to not nearly so comic an effect. Lynch is also executive producer as well as having the even more ambiguous title of "presenter."

Perhaps the film shows the most style when the setting moves to Transylvania. Almereyda's use of locations in New York to give the impression of Rumania is more clever than convincing, almost as if they were improvisational.

While it is nice to see an occasional horror film making the art house circuit, this story of the undead just needs more life in the long middle section of the film. I give it a 0 on the -4 to +4 scale. [-mrl]

5. ONCE UPON A MORE ENLIGHTENED TIME by James Finn Garner (Macmillan, ISBN 0-02-860419-9, 1995, 84pp, US\$9.95) (a book review by Evelyn C. Leeper):

First there was POLITICALLY CORRECT BEDTIME STORIES, and now there's ONCE UPON A MORE ENLIGHTENED TIME. (There is also a volume POLITICALLY CORRECT HOLIDAY STORIES, described as "for an enlightened Yuletide season." I guess Garner has given up on the idea of inclusiveness.) For those unfamiliar with these books, they retell classic fairy tales (which for political correctness must be called bedtime stories) in politically correct language with politically correct ideas. So all our favorite characters are now leading vegetarian lifestyles, treating both sexes equally, not being speciesist, and so on.

Alas, as with many ideas, what is funny in one book can cease being funny in a sequel. (The first Xanth book was funny. 'Nuff said.) While the first book also rewrote bedtime stories to be politically correct, at least there was an attempt to make sense in the terms and concepts used. People were "differently appeared" or "vertically challenged." But here Garner goes overboard, describing someone who has been in the rain as "moisture-enhanced" and "dryness-challenged." The former sounds like a body lotion, the latter like someone with a drinking problem, and the two together, when applied to the same person in two consecutive paragraphs, like overkill.

I think the problem is that Garner has decided if a little is good, a lot is better. But while I like a piece of chocolate, or even a chocolate sundae, I don't want to drink a quart of Hershey's syrup. At Intersection recently, Connie Willis bemoaned the fact that one problem humorists have now is what Willis called the battle cry of every group: "That's not funny." But the truth is, 90% of the time it's not funny, and that's as true when the target is political correctness as when the target is anything else. It's only when someone with the right talent goes at it that it works. Garner seemed to have it in the first book at times, but when that was such a success he couldn't resist writing a second one, and laying it on even thicker. Too bad.

6. COPYCAT (a film review by Mark R. Leeper):

Capsule: Released too close to SEVEN and suffering heavily by comparison, this is the story of another serial killer with a theme to his killings. In this case the killer is imitating famous serial killers of the past. But here the killer's personal theme is more McGuffin and less the driving force of the plot. Too much of this film falls into the realm of "woman in distress versus stalker" cliché. Over-rated performances by Weaver and Hunter are sufficient, but not memorable. Rating: low +1 (-4 to +4).

As serial killer films go, COPYCAT is above average in gloss and suspense, but it was disastrous to release it just a few weeks after SEVEN. What this film does best, SEVEN did even better. Both were about serial killers whose crimes formed a pattern. In SEVEN that pattern really drove the plot, in this film the theme makes the killings more interesting, but it is much less essential to the plot. While that film had a dark atmosphere of impending evil, this film is slick and wastes the viewer's time with familiar sequences of the killer stalking and terrorizing his victim in traditional fashion.

Popular crime psychologist Helen Hudson (played by Sigourney Weaver) is severely traumatized by an all-too-close encounter with killer Daryll Lee Cullum (Harry Connick, Jr.). She has retreated into her overly-gorgeous apartment and refuses to leave. A little over a year later there is another serial killer and hard-as-nails police detective M. J. Monahan (Holly Hunter) reluctantly enlists Hudson's help to hunt down the killer. Unfortunately the killer has decided that Hudson is the victim he most wants to see as a trophy. While he recreates the crimes of the great serial killers of the past he is also zeroing in on Hudson. Like Rex Stout,

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Hudson tries to solve the crime without ever leaving her apartment but her agoraphobia also makes her a sitting target for the killer.

If it sounds too much like every other serial killer film on cable, the story is a bit more complex, but not a lot. There is some interest value in Hunter's performance as the tough cop. If it were a man in the role it would not merit a second glance, but the casting of Hunter gives this film a bit more attention than it really deserves. This story of a formula killer is written by Ann Biderman and David Madsen, themselves no slouches in following formulae. How do they express that Hudson has a sterile intellect? She listens to opera, of course. How do they turn up the tension? Well, have the killer stalk Hudson while she is vulnerable in the shower. How do we make the killer a formidable opponent? Well give him any talent or ability he needs to carry the plot. This is a man who is a technical expert, an expert housebreaker, a terrific computer hacker, and someone who can arrange convenient coincidences as the occasion requires. He seems clever by mandate of the scriptwriter, not because he impresses us with his thought processes. Director Jon Amiel is not known for suspense work in the past, his best known work being TV's "The Singing Detective" and SOMMERSBY. His first foray into suspense just pushes a lot of familiar buttons.

COPYCAT may not be a copycat film, but much too much has been done before and much too much of the tense climactic sequence is telegraphed. This is a disappointing low +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.
[-mrl]

7. Our trip logs for our trip to Edinburgh for the Festivals, and to Wales, are available for the asking or via the Web at:

<http://www.mt.att.com/~ecl/edinburgh.html>

<http://www.mt.att.com/~ecl/wales.html>

<http://www.mt-gbcs.att.com/~leeper/celtic.html>

8. Shorecon '95 (a convention report by Evelyn C. Leeper):

Shorecon '95 was held September 22-24, 1995, in Asbury Park, New Jersey.

Shorecon is not a science fiction convention, but is rather primarily a gaming convention with comics and media programming as well. So why was I attending it? Well, Shorecon was looking to extend its scope into science-fiction writing as well, and one of the members of the Science Fiction Club at AT&T who was connected

with the convention suggested that I was a possible program addition. As a result, I ended up on a panel about "Surfing the Internet." I was also going to be in a "Meet the Writers" session with Len Kaminski and F. Paul Wilson, but I suppose wiser heads prevailed and decided that I was not a writer in the sense people expected--and of course they're right. Kaminski is a writer for Marvel Comics, known for GHOST RIDER: 2099 and IRON MAN. F. Paul Wilson is a science fiction and horror writer whose best known work is probably his horror novel THE KEEP, but who has also won the Prometheus Award for his science fiction novel WHEELS WITHIN WHEELS. (He is also a practicing physician in the area.)

So my report is not being written from the point of view of the target audience for most of Shorecon. And a lot of what I write will be comparisons of Shorecon with the more "literary" science fiction conventions I have attended up to now. Undoubtedly gamers

and comics fans will find much that I have misinterpreted, misunderstood, and mis-described. Corrections are welcome.

Shorecon has the same basic structure as a science fiction convention: presentations, panels, art show, dealers room, masquerade, anime, and so on. But these are somewhat overshadowed by the gaming sessions, whose descriptions fill three-quarters of the progress report, or as it's called here, the pre-registration book. As Rob Mitchell described it, "It's like a science fiction convention, except you see a lot more people hunched over board games." The art show, for example, was about a hundred pieces--much smaller than art shows at the conventions I go to. I was thinking that it was probably about average for a convention this size, because I thought the attendance was a few hundred. Actually there were well over a thousand people registered (and apparently present, to judge by the parking lot). But even the organizers couldn't figure out where they were: panels were held for audiences of four or five, games with 65 people pre-registered ran with 15, and so on.

One friend said of the gaming aspect: "I was disappointed. Some of the tournaments were not well run. There wasn't enough light to see what we were doing in the card room. Some of the dealers had exclusivity arrangements that restrained my ability to comparison shop." He also noted, "There was no decent food you could walk to (in fact, there was *nothing* you could walk to)."

The Dealers Room had a lot of the same dealers one would find at a science fiction convention--the sword makers, the button people, etc. The difference was the lack of books. Well, there was one table that had a couple of boxes of books, but the concentration was on games and gaming. There wasn't even much media stuff available.

One difference between this and the sort of science fiction convention that I'm used to is that here, they paid many of the speakers, while at science fiction conventions the program participants are all volunteers. (Well, they do pay the expenses

of the Guests of Honor.) And another difference is that the attendees have to buy additional tickets to see some of the guests--they are not included in the registration fee. This fact is *not* mentioned in the pre-registration book. In this case, the guest for which that was the case was Aron Eisenberg (who plays "Nog" on STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE 9), but since he had to cancel due to filming conflicts the point was somewhat moot. Still, I would think that if there will be additional charges for things listed in the advertising, they should be mentioned there.

There were other oddities: signs saying "Do not use tape for hanging signs; use fun-tac" were hung using tape, the parking lot had no lines painted (resulting in people parking so as to block off completely the back half), etc.

Given the different focus, I went to only four programming items, and only three of those actually occurred. The talk by Steve Hicks of Intermix on "Publishing on the Internet" ended up with Hicks, Bob Pinkus, Mark, and I sitting around talking; no one else showed up.

The first item was:

Surfing the Internet
Saturday, 14:00
Steve Hicks, Evelyn C. Leeper

[Thanks to Mark for taking notes for this.]

There were two panelists and six people in the audience. (Of the six, four were from AT&T.) According to Frank Hernandez, this was one of the better-attended items.

Hicks started by saying the first thing you needed to access the Internet was a modem; I suggested a computer was even more basic.

Hicks then gave a ten-minute history of the Internet. What is the Internet? "No more than a collection of computers networked together," according to Andrew Cantor. In 1960 packet-switching was invented and soon the Advanced Research Projects Agency started ARPAnet. The Internet is, according to Hicks, is just a giant packet switch. In 1976 Bell Labs created UUCP (Unix-to-Unix copy). In 1982 TCP/IP was invented, superseding UUCP. In 1986, the National Science Foundation created NSFnet, and soon thereafter General Electric launched GENie. In 1990 ARPAnet ceased to exist. At the same time, the Electronic Frontier Foundation was founded. According to Hicks, its purpose was to serve as "sheriffs of this

Wild West virtual reality," though I would describe it more as a group to keep the existing sheriffs from getting carried away.

In 1991, gopher and WAIS were created. These are two software programs to search the "staggering number of sources" that were sprouting up. In 1992 the "World Wide Web" was created at CERN, followed by Mosaic in 1993. Almost immediately, the White House went on-line, and in 1994 media attention on the Net "exploded." The NSF turned the whole thing over to the private sector, and abolished the ban on commercial use.

Now in 1995, there are 30,000,000 users with email access, and 3,000,000 with WWW access. The claim is that the Net will revolutionize the world are probably extreme, but they will have some effect. Hicks compared this to the late 1800s Western Union memo that said that the telephone would have no value, though I'm not sure what he was saying, since the telephone did revolutionize society in some sense.

Hicks also said that Smith Corona had just filed Chapter 11, and finished his history by saying that today's experts do not know where we are going. (So what else is new?)

A few years ago the Internet was known only to a few people, but now the advent of the powerful personal computer has made it famous. The Web is not the Internet, though it uses the Internet. Rather, the Web unlocks the Internet's multimedia capabilities, and is a potent tool for learning (and entertainment).

I noted that I thought the projected numbers for users were low. After all, people thought that far more primitive tools like gopher were great, but now that they can use a browser like Netscape, they will use the Internet even more.

Someone in the audience said that the basic operating systems must come into focus. This led me to talk about the whole problem of obsolescence. Just as when people started buying VCRs, whatever they bought was out-of-date in a few months, now computers seem to be going through that cycle. So many people are holding off until it all settles down. Hicks agreed, but said that there is a real push for multi-media that will drive people to buy, and that you don't need state of the art equipment.

Of course, people are saying that if your equipment won't support audio and video access to the Web, it's antiquated. Hicks speculated that in a few years they will be saying the same thing

about machines that don't have full virtual reality. But even if one discounts the people who will always say you should have state-of-the-art equipment, there is such a thing as too small.

We talked a bit about the "Bob" operating system, which Hicks described as just another step between the command-line interface and virtual reality, taking icons to another level.

I observed that whenever people try to predict or direct computer growth, they are wrong. When PCs came out, people kept saying, "Oh, you can put your recipes on it and have it automatically calculate the quantity of ingredients if you're making a different amount than normal." But nobody puts a PC in the kitchen. The "promoters" either don't know people or don't do reality testing. Similarly, some Web pages indicate no knowledge of human factors. I once got a hypertext story from a company, and not only was there no indication on the screen of what was clickable, but the instructions that came with it were wrong also.

Hicks said that the Web is barely three years old, and there are "some gawd-awful things there." I agreed, and said that I found WIRED magazine (popular though it is) to exemplify just what is wrong with the Web: garish color combinations and odd fonts which make reading it impossible. Hicks said that is usually the signature of a newcomer, just as when people first get their Mac, they use every font available. (I had an otherwise foresighted friend who provided printed directions to her beach house, intended to be read while driving, in a Gothic font!) Hicks said that the trick is to convince people to decide what is best to use, not what will jump out. "I work with people in love with the tech," he complained.

As far as on-line services, I recommended that people not necessarily go with the cheapest, but to look for service if you will need it. Hicks suggested it was worth doing the homework to find a local provider rather than a commercial provider, because it is cheaper.

Hicks suggested finding a provider who would also give you (or perhaps "allow you" is a better description) a one-page homepage. I said that you should look for a provider who is substantial, not a garage operation. Especially if you are using this for business, you don't want to bet the farm on a hobby provider.

Even with the major providers, there are differences. Some have some areas that are included in your monthly fee, but others may cost you \$5 an hour (or more), and warnings are not always obvious. Some hate using Prodigy because of advertising that fills the screen. Compuserve is popular. America On-Line has a bad reputation because of the higher proportion of "clueless newbies" who show up on it with chain letters or "dying boy wants business cards," and for better or worse, people will form opinions based on if you are AOL.

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There was some talk about how the Web infrastructure will come into place--where will the bandwidth come from? Someone suggested that much better compression is possible, but there are still limits. Even so, I will predict two things: someone will find a solution, and it won't be what anyone predicted.

This filled about an hour and a half; the "Publishing on the Internet" talk by Hicks scheduled for 3 PM never really happened for lack of audience.

Hubble Space Telescope
Saturday, 16:00
Dr. Christian Ready

Dr. Christian Ready works at the Space Telescope Science Institute at Johns Hopkins University. This indicated a high skill level, but no one is skilled enough to do a good slide show in a room which has an entire long wall of French doors letting in the light. Ready did the best he could, though.

He began with some views of Mars and Venus, noting that they

represent two possible ends of Earth' cycle: pollution of the atmosphere gets us Venus, depletion gets us Mars. He then proceeded with pictures of Jupiter's "surface," pointing out this just appears to be the surface--Jupiter has no surface. He pointed out in particular that there are three white spots near Red Spot that have come much closer over the last year, and scientists wonder if they will eventually merge, and if so, what will be the result? Ready also had pictures of the impact of Shoemaker-Levy 9 on July 22, 1994.

From further out, Ready said pictures had come back of twenty moons of Saturn (two of which were just found in July). (I think when I was learning about the solar system there were eight.) The largest, Titan, has an Australian-sized "something" or other--a warmer region than the surrounding area, anyway.

They have confirmed seven moons for Uranus: Puck, Belinda, Miranda, Ariel, Cressida, Portia, Juliet. (Again, I learned about only Ariel and Miranda.) And there were even pictures of Pluto (which had been discovered in 1930) and its moon Charon (which hadn't been discovered until 1978).

If all this sounds a bit basic, it's because Ready's talk seemed to be aimed at a less astronomically sophisticated audience than what I'm used to (at science fiction conventions). Whether it was appropriate here is hard to say, since there wasn't much of any audience.

Ready also talked a bit about astronomical theory. For example, calculations say that we should be seeing a supernova every hundred years, but according to historical records, we're not. Also, the Hubble Telescope has provided further proof of relativity by showing that the light from distant galaxies is bent by gravitational fields in its path.

All in all, Ready did a good job given the somewhat problematic circumstances.

And one of the problematic circumstances was Dr. Lawrence Schoen, a psychologist and head of the Klingon Language Institute (KLI). While it is understandable that he might be a bit put out by having Ready's talk run over into his time, he knew that Ready started late through no fault of his own, and should not have started heckling Ready to wrap up--it's unprofessional.

Anyway, Schoen talked about how his audience (all five of us) was not his usual audience and his usual talk, with a lot of Klingon quotes, was not going to work. Instead he talked about the background of the KLI and its current projects.

Schoen said it all started when he was down-sized out of his previous teaching job. Looking for something to occupy his mind while waiting for responses on resumes, he decided to learn Klingon, based on the dictionary developed by Marc Okrand. Schoen said he had been in the Mythopoeic Society and first thought, "Is Klingon like Elvish? Can we study it as we study a dead language?" At some point he found others on the Net who were interested and so founded the KLI. When "jobs failed to appear," he stayed with it. (He eventually did get a job teaching at a Catholic women's college.)

The first major project undertaken by the KLI was the translation of the Bible in Klingonese because, according to Schoen, there is a linguistic tradition to translate the Bible into all new languages that are discovered. (I noted this was a *Western8 linguistic tradition.)

The translation project began with Kevin Wilson, a divinity student, walking into the Pater Noster Church in Jerusalem. This church is known for having translations of the Lord's Prayer in every known language on its walls. But there was no Klingon translation. (Quel surprise!) So he wrote down a Klingon translation on a slip of paper, rolled it up, and slipped it between two stones in the wall. Now he's working from Greek, Aramaic, and Hebrew originals to do the translation, rather than

from English translations. The KLI is taking a traditional view of translation (an Orthodox Jew is responsible for overseeing much of the Old Testament). This means, in part, not making up new words. (Schoen compares the position of the KLI in this regard to that of the French Academy.) For example, Schoen said that when translating the Book of Jonah they ran into a problem because Klingon has no word for "whale," but then many languages don't have a word for "whale." (I would note that these include Biblical Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek--there were not a whole lot of whales in the Mediterranean Sea, and Jonah talks about a big fish, not a whale.) So they translated it as "great water animal." In this regard, Schoen mentioned the "schism" as reported in the WALL STREET JOURNAL. It's not as big a thing as the media make it out, but Schoen obviously feels the KLI effort is the more serious.

By the way, the KLI is registered as a non-profit organization but *not*, Schoen noted, as a church!

The KLI itself has grown enormously. A letter in TV GUIDE mentioning it brought 500 inquiries. There was an article in the CHICAGO TRIBUNE that was sold to a wire service, where it was picked up by 200 papers, which generated another 2000 letters. It has been mentioned in TIME magazine, and now is the "Klingon Movement." The membership doubles each quarter from its beginnings in January 1992 it has grown to 350 members covering all the continents (yes, even Antarctica). There have been over a thousand people who have been members at some point.

There is also the "Klingon Shakespeare Restoration Project, inspired by a line in the sixth film (regarding how HAMLET must be read in the original Klingon to be appreciated). As Schoen said, HAMLER is about honor and revenge and everyone is dead in the last scene--that's a Klingon play." The KLI translation of Shakespeare is a bit less traditional and conversative with Shakespeare, but they still are aiming for a quality work: hardbound, case-bound, and on acid-free paper. They are currently in the fourth revision of the translation of HAMLET, and the Klingon is in iambic pentameter where the English is and in rhyme where the English rhymes. They will be printing 1000 numbered copies, priced at \$20 each (and undoubtedly scarfed up by dealers who will inflate the price), and twenty-six copies lettered (in the Klingon alphabet) bound in lexohyde reserved for major contributors. Schoen says the goal is to take HAMLET onto the Letterman Show.

After this comes out they hope to publish a play a year. MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING is already done. They will publish the major plays individually, but the minor ones will be bundled in pairs.

There is also a Klingon postal course modeled after the Esperanto postal course: You sent a self-addressed, stamped envelope and they send you Lesson 1. When you complete that, you send back your

answers to the exercises and another self-addressed, stamped envelope. They grade the exercises and send you the results, along with Lesson 2. And so on. There is no charge except for postage-paid return envelopes. As Schoen notes, "You can't learn the language without the dictionary, but you can't learn the language with just the dictionary" either. He would like to use the Internet, but he feels it's important to stretch the course out rather than let the student run through all the exercises at one time and then forget it all in a week. They do have a Web page, though: <http://www.kli.org>.

Schoen describes Klingon as "an artificial language maintained by popular culture." He has taught Klingon on CruiseTrek, and there have been two "qep'a"s ("great meetings"), Klingon language gatherings. The first one had twelve people with two fluent speakers, two middling, and the rest timid. The second one had twenty people, with ten fluent and the other ten really working at becoming fluent. Schoen noted that it has never happened before that someone created an artificial language community. I would think that there is in some sense an Esperanto community, and the revival of Hebrew as an everyday language after centuries of being just an ecclesiastical one counts somewhat. (Between when I attended this talk and when I'm writing this, someone at work told me of his experience of meeting a German in Europe and ending up conversing with him in Latin, the only language they had in common. Apparently if you get five years of Latin in a Catholic school, you **never** forget it.

Schoen also mentioned the Sapir-Worf Hypothesis which in spite of the convenient pun is a real hypothesis in linguistics (that language shapes culture). But I will observe that it's still true that there is no native Klingon culture and there are no native Klingon speakers. One can only hope that no one decides their children should be raised with Klingon as their first language.

The address for the Klingon Language Institute, by the way, is P. O. Box 634, Flourtown PA 19031. The postal course is available from Klingon Postal Course, P. O. Box 37, Eagle ID 83616. The self-addressed stamped envelope should have sufficient postage for two ounces.

Well, that's about it. I suspect I will not be attending future Shorecons, since my guess is that they will decide the response to their expansion into areas other than gaming and comics did not get enough of a response to repeat the experiment. One can hope that they will address some of the concerns of the gamers--assuming they can figure out where to find them, of course. :-) [-ecl]

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