

Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society
Club Notice - 08/02/91 -- Vol. 10, No. 5

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

08/07 LZ: EARTH by David Brin (Hugo nominee)
08/28 LZ: QUEEN OF ANGELS by Greg Bear (Hugo nominee)
09/18 LZ: THE FALL OF HYPERION by Dan Simmons (Hugo nominee)
10/09 LZ: THE QUIET POOLS by Michael Kube-McDowell (Hugo nominee)
10/30 LZ: MINDBRIDGE by Joe Haldeman
11/20 LZ: EON by Greg Bear
12/11 LZ: MIRKHEIM by Poul Anderson

D_A_I_E E_X_I_E_R_N_A_L_M_E_E_T_I_N_G_S/_C_O_N_V_E_N_I_T_O_N_S/_E_I_C.

08/10 SFABC: Science Fiction Association of Bergen County: TBA
(phone 201-933-2724 for details) (Saturday)

08/10 **Hugo Ballots due**

08/10 "Hugo Ballots due"

08/17 NJSFS: New Jersey Science Fiction Society: TBA
(phone 201-432-5965 for details) (Saturday)

HO Chair: John Jetzi HO 1E-523 834-1563 nocpa!jetzi
LZ Chair: Rob Mitchell LZ 1B-306 576-6106 mtuxo!jrrt
MT Chair: Mark Leeper MT 3D-441 957-5619 mtgzy!leepер
HO Librarian: Rebecca Schoenfeld HO 2K-430 949-6122 homxb!btfsd
LZ Librarian: Lance Larsen LZ 3L-312 576-3346 mtunq!lfl
MT Librarian: Mark Leeper MT 3D-441 957-5619 mtgzy!leepер
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1. This week's Lincraft discussion book is L_a_T_t_h by David Brin, of which Dale Skran says:

One of the greatest challenges in SF is the creation of believable

novel of the next 50 years. David Brin does this in E_a_r_t_h.

[Of all the contenders I have read,] Brin's E_a_r_t_h has the best shot at the Hugo. Although a vast tome, it becomes increasingly engaging as the reader gets toward the end, and builds toward one

THE MT VOID

Page 2

of Brin's patented "comic-book" style conclusions. By "comic-book" I mean that it features the clash of mighty forces using E. E. Smith style weapons that would not seem out of place in a Stan Lee comic. Another Brin novel with a "comic-book" ending is P_o_s_t_m_a_n which has two super-strong cyborgs duking it out like pagan gods in the final pages. As always with Brin, the science is well thought out and the society carefully considered. He has clearly been thinking about E_a_r_t_h for a long time. Recommended. Strong Hugo contender.

2. I see we are undergoing another attack by the Cheese People. I don't know exactly who the Cheese People really are. They might be a part of the Dairy Council or they might be just some terrorists trying to prove to themselves how decadent and stupid Americans have become. They probably have a name like Cheddar December commemorating some event having to do with cheese that they rest of us were never aware happened. Anyway Cheddar December (I guess I'll call them that) was a group of terrorists who a few years back put the legend "Approved for the Cheese Lifestyle" on labels of cheese. Personally I have never been rich enough to be able to afford a lifestyle for myself. I think people in California have lifestyles anyway. I could be wrong, however. I will know I actually have a lifestyle when I see a book that has a label saying, "Approved for the lifestyle where you have 16,000 books in cardboard boxes and after 12 years still no window treatments for the living room." Once they make that an official lifestyle, I will believe I have a lifestyle and will consider switching to the cheese lifestyle, but I'm not holding my breath.

I think Cheddar December are the same people who came up with the concept of "Real," or at least the first to make it pay. You see all kinds of dairy products with the word "real" on them these days. And only dairy products have this, as if it were impossible to have r_e_a_l tomatoes or r_e_a_l eggs or r_e_a_l anything else. As long

as it can be dairy, it's r_e_a_l. Like r_e_a_l imitation ice milk. None of that phony imitation ice milk. We are talking about what is really r_e_a_l. Kraft in one of their ads talks about "and you know how good r_e_a_l cheese is." Never mind the fact that before they got into the act all cheese was real. It was they who invented machine-stamped, vacu-formed, roller-rolled, plastic process cheese. They call them Kraft Singles because nobody can eat more than one.

Anyway, what Cheddar December is up to these days is a bunch of ads saying you should put two kinds of cheese on a cheeseburger: a bunch of cowpokes sitting around the camp fire and eating cheeseburgers and talking about how wild it is having two kinds of cheese on the cheeseburgers. How do I find this stupid? Let me count the ways.

1. As someone who used to make brie-burgers at Club Med, I can tell you that one cheese tastes a lot like another on a cheeseburger. A bleu-burger has a slightly different taste. A Limburger-burger might have an interesting bouquet, but there is no point in mixing Muenster and cheddar as the Cheddar Decemberists suggest.
2. We all know that cowpokes chew tobacco and eat beans and bad chili. I am hardly going to take their opinion on haute cuisine.
3. If they had cheese at the camp fire it must have come with them. I recently carried a piece of cheese around for a day under similar hot conditions. It turns into a greasy paste.
3. Reminder: Hugo ballots must be postmarked by August 10.

Mark Leeper
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...mtgzy!leeper

Intellect annuls fate. So far as a man thinks he is free.

-- Ralph Waldo Emerson

THE FANTASTIC ADVENTURES OF ROBIN HOOD edited by Martin H. Greenberg
Signet, 1991, ISBN 0-451-17053-9, \$3.99.

A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper
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With all the fuss about Robin Hood generated now by the release of
R_o_b_i_n_H_o_o_d, P_r_i_n_c_e_o_f_T_h_i_e_v_e_s, it's not surprising that an anthology of
Robin Hood stories would be released. And just as the movie failed to

live up to its expectations, so does the book.

Part of the problem may be the cover blurb, which bills this as "Thirteen Fantastic Writers Offer Glimpses into Alternate Worlds." I guess alternate histories must be popular if that's what the blurb writers think will sell the book, but these are n_o_t (with one exception) alternate history stories and shouldn't be billed as such. (Not to mention the misleading cover of Robin Hood dressed in Sherwood green against the New York City skyline--only two stories even come close to matching that cover--and they don't.) Mostly the stories are old ideas: Robin Hood's Jewish mother complaining to her mah-jongg group about her son (frankly, I thought the complaining Jewish mother stereotype had been laid to rest a while ago, but no, it's trotted out here in a totally inappropriate context), Robin Hood comes back to teach a boy how to fight off the bullies, what appears to be a Robin Hood role-playing game as a security system on a computer (I swear I'm n_o_t making this up), and so on. And while the first "Muffy Birnbaum" story may have been cute, if I never see another one again it will be too soon (a shopping duel?!).

There are some acceptable stories. "One-Eyed King" by Nancy A. Collins features the sex and gore that have come to be associated with her name (let's hope the parents of the teenagers who buy this don't read this one!) and is well-done, but too graphic for my taste. (I also found the ending unbelievable, but I could be wrong.) Laura Resnick's "Avant Vanguard" was a lot of fun, even if something similar was done a hundred years ago by S. C. (M. T.). (I'm trying to avoid spoilers here; if you read the story this will make sense.) On the other hand, two good stories do not an anthology make, and like the movie that inspired this, T_h_e_F_a_n_t_a_s_t_i_c_A_d_v_e_n_t_u_r_e_s_o_f_R_o_b_i_n_H_o_o_d is a big disappointment.

AUTHOR'S CHOICE MONTHLY 14: Nina Kiriki Hoffman

Pulphouse, 1990, \$4.95.

A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper

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A while ago I reviewed James Morrow's A_u_t_h_o_r'_s_C_h_o_i_c_e_M_o_n_t_h_l_y from Pulphouse; now it's Nina Kiriki Hoffman's. This is number fourteen in the series, titled L_e_g_a_c_y_o_f_F_i_r_e (though since this appears only on the title page, not on the cover, you're better off looking by number). As with all the "Author's Choice" books, the physical book itself is wonderful to hold: parchment-like covers, cream-colored pages that are easy on the eyes, and a cover by George Barr.

Hoffman writes in a literary style, with a lot of use of first-person narratives. This gives the reader a feeling of being right in the story, and the introductory comments on how the stories came to be written underscore a very personal involvement on Hoffman's part as well.

The title story is about wishes, and dreams, and being an outsider, and choices. There is only minimal fantasy content (if any--whether it derives from the T_w_i_l_i_g_h_t_Z_o_n_e episode "What You Need" is left for you to decide). "Drawing on the Kitchen Table" has no fantasy aspect, but is about art and using art to communicate.

"Savage Breasts," on the other hand, i_s fantasy, and wickedly funny fantasy at that. Ever on the quest for thematic pairings, I suggest this and Suzy McKee Charnas's "Boobs" as well-matched. (This topic provides enormous opportunity for jokes and puns. I will forbear.)

After the light-heartedness of "Savage Breasts," the depression of "Tremors" is almost too jarring. I also found "Tremors" too similar in theme and execution to many other stories to stand out in this collection. And while the following story, "Universal Donor," is original, it didn't do anything for me. "The Black Knitting Needle" had power; however, it derives more from the underlying (true) story much more than from the telling.

"Measuring Up to Shadows" is similar to "Legacy of Fire" in its look at how we are affected by other people's perceptions and expectations of us, but has a much higher fantasy content. Is that the shade of Robert Burns chanting, "Oh wad some power the giftie gie us / To see oursels as others see us!"

"Coming Home" is a classic horror story, with an ending you won't see coming. You think you will, but trust me, you won't.

The final story, "Work of Art," is related to "Drawing on the Kitchen Table" in that it examines art and its place in our lives.

However, it tries to elevate art to a higher level than the average person perceives it. If you don't agree with this view, you will probably find the story annoying rather than moving, but you will find yourself thinking about it either way. These two stories emphasize what all her stories demonstrate: that Hoffman considers writing art rather than just a way to make a living.

Nina Kiriki Hoffman's work is hard to find. I discovered her in W_e_i_r_d _T_a_1_e_s, and the stories in this book appeared in such magazines as S_n_a_p_d_r_a_g_o_n, P_u_l_p_h_o_u_s_e, and A_r_g_o_n_a_u_t. I find her choice of stories--for this is "Author's Choice"--interesting in that I enjoyed other stories of hers more (e.g., "Rumors of Greatness," "Courting Disasters," "Little Once," and "Exact Change"), but I would still recommend this volume as the easiest way to get acquainted with a promising author.

(Your local bookstore almost definitely won't carry this, and there is no ISBN, so you can order direct from Pulphouse Publishing, P. O. Box 1227, Eugene OR 97440.)

GOOD NIGHT, MR. HOLMES by Carole Nelson Douglas
Tor, 1991 (1990c), ISBN 0-812-51430-0, \$4.99.

A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper
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Once again we have a Holmes pastiche with Irene Adler. She seems to fascinate Sherlockians, and the number of books continuing her story after "A Scandal in Bohemia" is remarkable. But Douglas doesn't do that; she r_e_t_e_l_l_s "A Scandal in Bohemia" from Irene's point of view.

By itself, of course, the story would be insufficient for a novel. So Douglas adds some additional plot by making Irene an amateur sleuth as well, and then by providing her with a Watson-like companion (Penelope Huxleigh) who serves as the narrator for most of the novel. There are a few chapters scattered through the book devoted to Holmes and Watson, but on the whole it is Irene's book.

Douglas has a definite feminist agenda here. Irene is not the "adventuress" Doyle describes, but a liberated woman. She also solves a murder mystery, finds lost jewels, etc., etc. While I can't object to showing a liberated female detective in a story, I can ask, "Why make her Irene Adler?" Amelia Peabody or even the heroine of T_h_e_P_u_n_j_a_t'_s_R_u_b_y would do as well.

One major problem is that Douglas has by retelling "A Scandal in Bohemia" is that the reader knows the ending. Only in the secondary

plots is there any mystery, and even there not much. The lack of suspense, coupled with the political agenda the book seems to promote, detracts from the reader's total enjoyment.

And by choosing "A Scandal in Bohemia" Douglas has inherited a minor problem as well. Much has been written about the many inconsistencies and impossibilities in the story as told by Watson, especially in regard to Irene's marriage to Geoffrey Norton. Surely any author attempting to retell the story must deal with these and try to explain them--especially if propounding a revisionist version in other aspects--yet Douglas merely repeats the same impossible or unlikely events. (Her level of research in other aspects seems equally superficial: she goes out of her way to describe the Old Jewish Cemetery in Prague and what Irene takes to be Rabbi Loew's crypt. There are, however, no crypts in the cemetery and Rabbi Loew's grave is marked by a very large and identifiable tombstone. _ A_ n_ d the typesetter misspelled "cemetery"!!)

On the positive side, Douglas has a good style and is enjoyable to read. A sequel to _ G_ o_ o_ d_ N_ i_ g_ h_ t, _ M_ r. _ H_ o_ l_ m_ e_ s has already been written and

is titled _ G_ o_ o_ d_ M_ o_ r_ n_ i_ n_ g_, _ I_ r_ e_ n_ e. (I personally think Douglas should have

gone for either _ G_ o_ o_ d_ N_ i_ g_ h_ t, _ I_ r_ e_ n_ e or _ I_ r_ e_ n_ e,
_ G_ o_ o_ d_ N_ i_ g_ h_ t, but _ G_ o_ o_ d_ N_ i_ g_ h_ t,
_ M_ r. _ H_ o_ l_ m_ e_ s is after all a direct quote from the Canon, so I suppose that settled that.) I am very interested to see what Douglas does with what I assume is a new story rather than a reworking of an old. _ G_ o_ o_ d_ N_ i_ g_ h_ t,
_ M_ r. _ H_ o_ l_ m_ e_ s is recommended with reservations.

V. I. WARSHAWSKI
A film review by Mark R. Leeper
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Capsule review: A female Mike Hammer solves a very unoriginal and unsurprising mystery. There are a few laughs in the script, but Jeff Kanew never manages to get this film going or even make the audience curious who the killer is.

Imagine, if you will, a hard-boiled detective. You know the kind:

wise-cracking, knows all the angles, good in a fight, heavy drinking, and hard as nails. Our private eye may be a slob, but in a tight spot nobody thinks faster. Nothing exciting, right? So far I could be describing hundreds of different characters from Sam Spade to Mike Hammer to Mannix to Peter Gunn. But ... but suppose this private eye is different. Suppose on top of everything else our shamus is a sexy woman. Boy, what an original idea for a character, huh? Aren't you utterly intrigued? If you answered this question "yes," fine. You're welcome to V I W a r s h a w s k i, a pedestrian made-for-television-grade mystery that was instead made for a theatrical release. It would not at all surprise me to see this turned into an equally pedestrian television series that will last one season and die.

The film opens with a helicopter view of a bit city (Chicago) under the credits and that is just about how original the plot gets. V. I. Warshawski (played by Kathleen Turner) is on the outs with her reporter boyfriend when she meets and is attracted to a famous hockey star. Next thing she knows, the hockey player has left his daughter on V. I.'s doorstep while he goes out for an evening on family business. By the end of the evening he is dead, and Warshawski has a pesky young teenager on her hands as well as a murder to solve.

The V. I. Warshawski novels of Sara Paretsky form the basis of this story by Edward Taylor and adapted to the screen by Taylor, David Aaron Cohen, and Nick Thiel. The screenplay is occasionally witty, milking the novelty of a sexy woman with very masculine traits for all the humor it can get from it. Even more comes from Warshawski's low opinion of the opposite sex. And when they are tired of that they play with the novelty of her name. Nobody, they suggest, can pronounce a three-syllable name. Then they play the T. S. Garp initial game ("What does the V. I. stand for?" "Very Inquisitive"). The story and the action are strictly television level. Had there been a series of films about this character, this might have made an acceptable fifth film in the series. But if this is the first film there is not likely to be a second one. I rate V I W a r s h a w s k i a 0 on the -4 to +4 scale.