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Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society
Club Notice - 7/10/87 -- Vol. 6, No. 2

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

Unless otherwise stated, all meetings are on Wednesdays at noon.
LZ meetings are in LZ 3A-206; MT meetings are in MT 4A-235.

 D A T E T O P I C

- 07/15 LZ: TITAN by John Varley (Megalomania) (in 1B-205)
- 07/29 MT: "Down in Flames" by Larry Niven (in the cafeteria)
- 08/05 LZ: The BERSERKER books by Fred Saberhagen (A/I)
- 08/26 LZ: COUNT ZERO by William Gibson (Hugo Nominees)
- 09/16 LZ: THE UPLIFT WAR by David Brin (Future Histories)

HO Chair: John Jetzt HO 1E-525 834-1563 mtuxo!jetzt
 LZ Chair: Rob Mitchell LZ 1B-306 576-6106 mtuxo!jrnt
 MT Chair: Mark Leeper MT 3E-433 957-5619 mtgzz!leeper
 HO Librarian: Tim Schroeder HO 3M-420 949-5866 homxb!tps
 LZ Librarian: Lance Larsen LZ 3L-312 576-6142 lzfme!lfl
 MT Librarian: Bruce Szablak MT 4C-418 957-5868 mtgzz!bds
 Factotum: Evelyn Leeper MT 1F-329 957-2070 mtgzy!ecl
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1. Due to a minor screwup, the removal of percent signs we made last week did not make it to last week's address labels. As a result I am getting a small flood of people registering for a second time and/or telling me that they had already registered. I will not point any accusing fingers, but I will try to make sure she gets it right this week.

2. Stanley Kubrick's FULL METAL JACKET has been out a few weeks and a number of other reviewers are following my lead and comparing it to Kubrick's two best films, PATHS OF GLORY and DR. STRANGELOVE. The review programs have shown clips of them and I feel like seeing them again. Now the problem is that I don't have time to set aside an evening to watch them. Most of you people wouldn't have a way of watching a double feature without setting aside time. I do. I'll just slip it into the Leeperhouse film festival and push

everything else back a few weeks. Hey, wanna see a couple of really good films? Come on over to my place at 7 PM on Thursday, July 16:

THE MT VOID

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Kubrick's Early War Films

DINOSAURS

PATHS OF GLORY (1957) dir. by Stanley Kubrick

DR. STRANGELOVE (1964) dir. by Stanley Kubrick

Great films, both of them. I won't insult them by giving you descriptions. You probably know about them already. You have probably seen DR. STRANGELOVE, but may not have seen PATHS OF GLORY. I generally consider PATHS is the better of the two, though most people seem to think you can't improve on STRANGELOVE. Well, you decide. Maybe we will vote at the end of the evening. DINOSAURS is a great short for people who are tired of CAPT. MARVEL.

3. A few random comments: The GOR movie is out; at least it's been reviewed by VARIETY. You can probably see it at your local video store soon if you don't duck fast.

Pocket Books young adult line, Archway, is advertising "The First Survivalist Series for Young Adults: Firebrats. ... In the tradition of THE SURVIVALIST, RED DAWN, and the blockbuster "Mad Max" films..." Whoopee!

As a protest against the "no-weapons" policies at most science fiction conventions these days, Weaponscon will be held July 31 through August 2 in Atlanta. All attendees must wear a weapon at all times (even in the shower?). Wonder if they've heard about "Firebrats"?

The nominating totals for the Hugos were announced; they are for the various major categories as follows:

1987 1986 1985

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Novel

475 129 41

Novella	208	73	50
Novelette	242	49	23
Short Story	281	40	17
Dramatic Presentation	344	238	75
Fanzine	269	21	28

The number of people who actually nominate has increased dramatically. There were even more people nominating in the novel category than in dramatic presentations. And the brou-ha-ha over Best Fanzine last year seems to have had an effect. [-ecl]

Mark Leeper
MT 3E-433 957-5619
...mtgzz!leeper

THE LONG VOYAGE BACK
Written by Luke Rhinehart
A Mini-book Review by Dale Skran

T_h_e L_o_n_g_V_o_y_a_g_e_B_a_c_k is one of the best post-nuclear war novels I've read, comparable in quality and tone to Pat Frank's classic A_l_a_s, B_a_b_y_l_o_n. It breaks new ground by telling the story of a mixed bag of people who escape the North American continent on a large trimaran, the "Vagabond." Some make it to Cape Horn. Others don't. Along the way they encounter fallout, the Brazilian Navy, the Black revolution, pirates, starvation, a new plague, heavy seas, and internal dissension. Rhinehart admits in a postscript that he pulls some punches, and he does, but he has a plausible explanation for why the war isn't quite as bad as expected, namely that America attacked the Soviets first, destroying many weapons in silos and bunkers. Still, the initial escape from Chesapeake Bay is too prolonged to be believable, and I'd expect more bizarre weather than Rhinehart provides. Although not a literary masterpiece, T_h_e L_o_n_g_V_o_y_a_g_e_B_a_c_k will give you your money's worth and keep the pages turning.

KNIGHT LIFE by Peter David
Ace, 1987, \$2.95.
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper
Copyright 1987 Evelyn C. Leeper

Arthur's been sleeping for 1500 years and now he returns--to New York City?! Why he's in New York rather than Britain is not entirely explained, though it probably has something to do with Morgan Le Fey being there. How he manages to cope with modern city life is more the point of the story anyway.

This book presumes that Arthur is under some stricture never to lie, even a "little white lie," so a lot of the suspense is supposedly based on how he answers people's questions without lying or getting thrown into Bellevue. The battle between the forces of good and evil becomes a side-plot to whether Arthur will be elected mayor of New York. It's a fun frivolous read, but on closer examination the picture of benevolent dictatorship that Arthur seems to be building up toward may worry the more literal-minded of the audience. Though I enjoyed it while I was reading it, I can't recommend it as anything more than a time-filler.

THE NET by Loren J. MacGregor
Ace, 1987, \$2.95.
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper
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This is the eighth of the new "Ace Science Fiction Specials," and I hope it isn't the last, because this would be a weak epitaph indeed to Terry Carr's selection judgement. The other entries in this series

were:

- T_h_e_W_i_l_d_S_h_o_r_e by Kim Stanley Robinson
- G_r_e_e_n_E_y_e_s by Lucius Shepard
- N_e_u_r_o_m_a_n_c_e_r by William Gibson
- P_a_l_i_m_p_s_e_s_t_s by Carter Scholz and Glenn Harcourt
- T_h_e_m_B_o_n_e_s by Howard Waldrop
- I_n_t_h_e_D_r_i_f_t by Michael Swanwick
- T_h_e_H_e_r_c_u_l_e_s_T_e_x_t by Jack McDevitt

and all of them were strong novels, quirky and not to everyone's taste perhaps, but worthy of being called "special."

T_h_e_N_e_t, on the other hand, is basically a heist novel. There's some hi-tech shenanigans used to pull off the heist, and "the Net," people linked in telepathic contact. Ships are piloted with a member of the crew for each sense: a Sight to navigate, a Sound to communicate, a Taste to check the fuel mixture, and so forth. Carr describes it in the introduction as space opera and it is. There's nothing overwhelmingly wrong with it; it just seems to crank out the rather mundane story without much flash or style. Had it been marketed as a straight science fiction novel, it would have received luke-warm reviews. As an "Ace Science Fiction Special," it may get more negative reviews than it should simply because of the raised expectations people have of that series. Perhaps I'm being too hard on it myself. But it said "special" on the cover--and it wasn't.

THE CENTAUR IN THE GARDEN by Moacyr Scliar

Translated by Margaret A. Neves

Available Press, 1984, (price unknown).

A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper

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There are several things that will get me interested in a book. Jewish fantasy is one. A Latin American author is another. A remaindered fantasy is a third. (Okay, so I'm cheap!) So a remaindered novel by a Latin American author about a Jewish centaur is a sure bet to be picked up by me.

Unlike most of the Latin American authors I have read, Scliar is Brazilian; hence his works first appeared in Portuguese and his literary roots are not planted in quite the same soil as the great Spanish-speaking South American fantasists (Borges, Garcia Marquez, etc.) Perhaps because of this, or perhaps for some other reason, T_h_e_C_e_n_t_a_u_r_i_n_t_h_e_G_a_r_d_e_n is more realistic than the works of most of the other well-known fantasists of that continent.

Told in a combination of first person and first person speaking in third person, T_h_e_C_e_n_t_a_u_r_i_n_t_h_e_G_a_r_d_e_n tells of the life of Guedali, born of Jewish parents who immigrated to South America from Russia. Guedali is doubly an outcast--in addition to his Jewishness, he is a centaur. This presents some problems from the very beginning (most m_o_h_e_l_s are not experienced in dealing with centaurs), and he spends much of his childhood hidden from the outside world. Eventually he must make his own way in the world, seek love, try for acceptance.

The story is told quite straightforwardly. There is no explanation of why Guedali is a centaur; he just is. Much of what is magical in this book is not explained, and in that regard it i_s similar to the other authors I have mentioned. It may be a Hispanic trait to accept the mystical more readily than other cultures do. Certainly the Catholicism of Iberia and Latin America tends more toward the mystical than that of other regions, and though Scliar is Jewish, he was educated in part in a Catholic school. For those who want a literate view of the outsider from a different perspective than one usually sees, this book is definitely recommended.

THE UNCOLLECTED SHERLOCK HOLMES by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
compiled by Richard Lancelyn Green
Penguin, 1983, \$4.95(?).
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper
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For those who usually skip the Introduction to any book, be warned: this introduction is over a third of the book. It would perhaps be better titled "A History of Sherlock Holmes," since that is, in effect, what it is. The rest of the book is, like Gaul, divided into three parts.

The first part consists of what might be considered "The Apocrypha" of the Canon: two Holmes stories not included in the Canon ("The Field Bazaar" and "How Watson Learned the Trick," the latter being considerably better known than the former), Doyle's response in poetry to a critical review (also in poetry and also included), and two Holmes scripts by Doyle ("The Stonor Case" and "The Crown Diamond"). In fact, all except the response were included in S_h_e_r_l_o_c_k_H_o_l_m_e_s:_T_h_e_P_u_b_l_i_s_h_e_d_A_p_o_c_r_y_p_h_a edited by Jack Tracy (Houghton Mifflin, 1980), making one question the word "Uncollected" in this title. ("The Stonor Case" was entitled "The Speckled Band" in Tracy's volume.) The two stories are probably not included in the official Canon because they are parodies.

The second part contains the prefaces to the various Sherlock Holmes books, as well as several other articles written by Doyle on Holmes. The third section is a miscellany of fact and fiction, plots for unwritten Holmes stories, and Holmes parodies by J. M. Barrie (one of which was also included in Tracy's book).

By the way, Tracy's book also includes two non-Holmes tales of deduction by Doyle, the play "Sherlock Holmes," "The Painful Predicament of Sherlock Holmes," and a pastiche of Holmes by Arthur Whitaker. So the completists among us will have to buy both. To further complicate matters, there is also T_h_e_F_i_n_a_l_A_d_v_e_n_t_u_r_e_s_o_f_S_h_e_r_l_o_c_k_H_o_l_m_e_s edited by Peter Haining, containing two commentaries by Doyle included in Green's volume, the two Doyle parodies also included in Green, the Whitaker story (the authorship is actually uncertain), "The Adventure of the Tall

Man" (collected nowhere else that I can discern), two stories by Doyle featuring--probably--Holmes as a peripheral character ("The Man with the Watches" and "The Story of the Lost Special"), "The Crown Diamond," "The Painful Predicament of Sherlock Holmes," and "The Mystery of Uncle Jeremy's Household" (a prototype Holmes story by Doyle).

Needless to say, though not all of these stories and articles are first-rate, they are required reading for Sherlockians. Green's volume contains far more of Doyle's own commentary than any of the other collections, and in general is more thorough than them. Given that the others may well be out-of-print or otherwise unavailable, Green's book makes a welcome and inexpensive addition to the body of Holmesian literature.

DOWN TOWN by Viido Polikarpus and Tappan King
Tor, 1987, \$2.95.
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper
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I suppose the cover quote ("...a book that today's readers will pass along to their children in 20 years time.") should have alerted me to expect what used to be called a "juvenile" novel and is now called a "young adult" novel. Cary Newman's parents are getting a divorce. So he and his mother move back to the city. (His father very conveniently also moves back to the city.) Cary runs off one afternoon and finds himself "Down Town"--not the downtown towards the Battery, but the "Down Town" underneath New York. Well, not really underneath, though Cary gets there through a subway station.

"Down Town" is a parallel city, though not an alternate universe in the usual sense. Apparently all that is lost or abandoned in "Up Town" ends up in Down Town, including people. The places in Down Town have "clever" names: Time Square, Broad Way, the Antiquarium. It's all a fairly average rite-of-passage novel which won't mean as much to people who are unfamiliar with New York. The ending is far too pat; in fact, the whole interconnection of the plotlines is contrived. The illustrations would be interesting if they could be appreciated; unfortunately, they seem to have been drawn with a larger format in mind and a mass-market paperback does not do them justice. Perhaps the adolescents of today do need more modern fables than they can find in

the pastoral writings of years ago. But this is too grounded in one city to have appeal to the rest of the country, let alone the world. I can't see a twelve-year-old in Peoria getting much out of all the references; the setting of (say) _ T _ h _ e _ H _ o _ b _ b _ i _ t would serve the purpose as well. A curiosity, but recommended only for New Yorkers and then only as a curiosity piece.

DRAGNET

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

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Capsule review: Parody of successful summertime action movies with Dan Aykroyd doing impressions of Jack Webb. It is unclear how Aykroyd found out how Webb talks as he has apparently never seen an episode of _ D _ r _ a _ g _ n _ e _ t.

Dan Aykroyd grew up in the 50s and 60s; later in improvisational comedy he often drew on television personalities he saw during that time. He is equally good doing Rod Serling from _ T _ h _ e _ T _ w _ i _ l _ i _ g _ h _ t _ Z _ o _ n _ e and Jack Webb from _ D _ r _ a _ g _ n _ e _ t. Usually his parodies lasted just a few minutes

on _ S _ a _ t _ u _ r _ d _ a _ y _ N _ i _ g _ h _ t _ L _ i _ v _ e, but his latest film allows him to do his

impression of Jack Webb for an entire film. The story--c-authored by Aykroyd--is an extended parody of the _ D _ r _ a _ g _ n _ e _ t TV series.

Aykroyd plays Joe Friday--not _ t _ h _ e Joe Friday but the nephew of _ t _ h _ e Joe Friday. Aykroyd's Friday, for some unexplained reason, has been able to inherit the famous Badge 714 from his uncle as well as the same clipped speech pattern and the same self-righteous attitude. While Aykroyd's impression of Jack Webb is pretty much on the money, overall the imitation of _ D _ r _ a _ g _ n _ e _ t is miles wide of the mark. Aykroyd can talk like Webb but is a total failure at writing like Webb. In the old TV shows, sentences of more than four words spoken by anyone were only slightly more common than scenes of Friday shooting up heroin. Stan Freeberg had a better ear for the way people talked in _ D _ r _ a _ g _ n _ e _ t when he wrote for his parody the exchange:

"Joe?"

"Yeah, Frank?"

"I checked out that 38."

"Yeah?"

"You were right."

"How so?"

"It was a gun."

The story of _ D _ r _ a _ g _ n _ e _ t has pagan rituals, gun battles, armored tanks, car chases, female flesh, a super-villain, airplane chases, and cops in funny costumes, all of which suggests that Aykroyd had a voice coach who actually had seen episodes of _ D _ r _ a _ g _ n _ e _ t but that Aykroyd himself had never seen one and had spent his time watching successful but empty summertime films. Take out Aykroyd's character and the only similarity to the object of the parody is that both involve police. One wonders how someone can do so many parodies as Aykroyd has and still not have the slightest idea of how to do a parody.

_ D _ r _ a _ g _ n _ e _ t is first a summertime throwaway film, second an extended _ S _ a _ t _ u _ r _ d _ a _ y _ N _ i _ g _ h _ t _ L _ i _ v _ e sketch, and is the parody it is purported to be

third--or perhaps tenth. Give this one a -1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

ROXANNE

Capsule review: Funny, intelligent updating of
_ C_ y_ r_ a_ n_ o_ d_ e_ B_ e_ r_ g_ e_ r_ a_ c has something to say about the nature
of beauty without ever failing to entertain.

Unfortunately, Martin's script cops out at the end,
denying the audience the power of the end of _ C_ y_ r_ a_ n_ o_.

Steve Martin's new film has the best plot of anything he has done
to date. But the credit, of course, does not go entirely to Martin's
screenplay. In fact, _ R_ o_ x_ a_ n_ n_ e is an updating of one of the great plays
of French theater, _ C_ y_ r_ a_ n_ o_ d_ e_ B_ e_ r_ g_ e_ r_ a_ c. It is a good enough play
that

Martin could have coasted through his version and still have had a
marvelous film. Instead, he broadens the humor and makes Cyrano de
Bergerac--renamed C. D. Bales--perfectly at home as the ever-perfect
chief of the world's most incompetent fire department.

Bales has an old problem and a new problem. His old problem is
that he has an absurd-looking four-inch-long nose. That problem he
pretty much under control. That is because he is unmatched as both a
wit and a fighter. Nobody makes fun of that nose for very long. His
other problem is that he loves the new-in-town astronomer Roxanne
(played by Daryl Hannah). Unfortunately, Roxanne wants Bales only for a
friend. She really has eyes only for Christopher, a handsome but vapid
new recruit to the fire department.

Christopher is low-brow and crude, but is physically attracted to
Roxanne. Knowing he is too clumsy to woo her by himself, he asks for
help from Bales. Bales coaches Christopher to say the things that Bales
wishes he could tell her himself. To be able to say to Roxanne
everything that he feels, Bales is willing to let Christopher reap the
advantages.

_ R_ o_ x_ a_ n_ n_ e represents one more step for Martin away from his off-the-
wall origins and into making comedy of some lasting value. Updating
_ C_ y_ r_ a_ n_ o_ d_ e_ B_ e_ r_ g_ e_ r_ a_ c was a clever idea and is one that works.

One
complaint, however--when _ R_ o_ m_ e_ o_ a_ n_ d_ J_ u_ l_ i_ e_ t was updated for
_ W_ e_ s_ t_ S_ i_ d_ e
_ S_ t_ o_ r_ y it was the _ w_ h_ o_ l_ e_ s_ t_ o_ r_ y that was updated. They did not soften
the

ending. Martin insults his audience by denying them the powerful and
tragic end to the story. Probably at the beginning he was planning to
include it because he made Bales a firefighter rather than, say, a
stockbroker. But at some point he changed his mind, apparently to make
the film more commercial. The film remains a light throwaway summer
comedy instead of a powerful adaptation of Rostand that the final scene
of _ C_ y_ r_ a_ n_ o could have made it. Rate it a +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.
Good, but watch the Jose Ferrer version of the original if it comes up
on PBS.

Roxanne

July 4, 1987

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POST SCRIPT: It may be of some interest that Cyrano de Bergerac really existed. He was at once one of the greatest swordsmen and one of the greatest wits in France. He did have a nose of prodigious size, about which he was extremely sensitive. He is also credited as being the first major science fiction novelist. His V_o_y_a_g_e_t_o_t_h_e_M_o_o_n was the first real science fiction novel to use its concepts not for allegory, but for sense of wonder. He thought of, on his own, several means of getting humans to the moon, most of which were absurd by modern standards, but the one he invented for his book (and which nobody is recorded as having thought of before) was to use rockets. Science fiction historian Sam Moskowitz devotes the first chapter of his E_x_p_l_o_r_e_r_s_o_f_t_h_e_I_n_f_i_n_i_t_e to Cyrano de Bergerac.

