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Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society  
Club Notice - 1/20/89 -- Vol. 7, No. 30

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

Unless otherwise stated, all meetings are on Wednesdays at noon.  
LZ meetings are in LZ 2R-158.

\_D\_A\_T\_E                    \_T\_O\_P\_I\_C

- 02/01 LZ: BETWEEN THE STROKES OF NIGHT by Charles Sheffield  
(parallel universes)
- 02/08 MT: Cyberpunk and John Brunner's SHOCKWAVE RIDER (MT 4A-223)
- 02/22 LZ: SPHERE by Michael Crichton

\_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.

- 01/21 New Jersey Science Fiction Society: TBA  
(phone 201-432-5965 or 201-438-3990 for details) (Saturday)
- 01/23 Dr. Charles Sheffield, "Interstellar Travel" (Rider College, 8PM)  
(phone 609-587-0921 for details or see below) (Monday)
- 01/24 Bell Labs Star Trek in the 20th Century Club: Love, Sex, Marriage,  
and Parenthood (Part 2) (Discussion) 12 noon, LZ 1A-205 (Tuesday)
- 02/11 Science Fiction Association of Bergen County: Matt Costello  
(game reviewer for Davis Publications and horror author)  
(phone 201-933-2724 for details) (Saturday)
- 03/04/89 APRICON X. NYC. GoH: ?; Info: Bernard-Columbia SFS, 313 FBH,  
-03/05/89 Columbia University, New York NY 10027. (212) 853-7530.
- 03/10/89 LUNACON. Tarrytown NY. GoH: Roger Zelazny; AGoH: Ron Walotsky;  
-03/12/89 EGoh: David Hartwell; FGoH: David Kyle. Info: Lunacon, Box 338,  
New York NY 10150; (609) 261-8316.
- 05/05/89 CONTRAPTION. MI. GoH: Mike Resnick; FGoHs: Mark & Evelyn Leeper.  
-05/07/89 Info: Diana Harlan Stein, 1325 Key West, Troy MI 48083.
- 08/31/89 NOREASCON III (47th World SF Con). MA. GoHs: Andre Norton, Ian & Betty  
-09/04/89 Ballantine; FGoH: The Stranger Club. Info: Noreascon Three,  
Box 46, MIT Branch P.O., Cambridge, MA 02139.

HO Chair: John Jetzt HO 1E-525 834-1563 mtuxo!jetzt  
LZ Chair: Rob Mitchell LZ 1B-306 576-6106 mtuxo!jrtr

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: Will Harmon MT 3C-406 957-5128 mtgzz!wch  
Factotum: Evelyn Leeper MT 1F-329 957-2070 mtgzy!ecl

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1. Charles Sheffield, author of the upcoming discussion book B\_e\_t\_w\_e\_e\_n\_t\_h\_e\_S\_t\_r\_o\_k\_e\_s\_o\_f\_N\_i\_g\_h\_t, will speak at Rider College on January 23 at 8 PM on "Interstellar Travel." This talk will be held in the Student Center Theater and is free. The talk is sponsored by the Central Jersey Space Society and Rider College. Dr. Sheffield is currently Chief Scientist of the Earth Satellite Corporation and has held various posts in scientific organizations. He is known for both his scientific work and for his fiction. For further details, contact Elizabeth Lewis (HO 3K-401, 949-1668).

2. S\_p\_h\_e\_r\_e, an upcoming discussion book, is now available in the Lincroft Science Fiction Club Library.

3. The videotape of "Space Colonies in Fact and Fiction" at the last Middletown meeting was followed by a brief discussion of the books mentioned. These books included C.J. Cherryh's D\_o\_w\_n\_b\_e\_l\_o\_w S\_t\_a\_t\_i\_o\_n (a Hugo winner), Lee Correy's S\_p\_a\_c\_e\_D\_o\_c\_t\_o\_r (Lee Correy is a pen-name for G. Harry Stine), Alexis A. Gilliland's "Rosinante" trilogy, Mack Reynold's "Lagrange" trilogy (finished after his death by Dean Ing), Bruce Sterling's S\_c\_h\_i\_s\_m\_a\_t\_r\_i\_x (probably the best of the lot, certainly the most literary), George Zebrowski's M\_a\_c\_r\_o-L\_i\_f\_e, W. R. Yates' D\_i\_a\_s\_p\_o\_r\_a\_h (the author may understand space colonies, but s/he doesn't understand Judaism), Melinda M. Snodgrass's C\_i\_r\_c\_u\_i\_t, John E. Stith's M\_e\_m\_o\_r\_y\_B\_l\_a\_n\_k, William J. Watkins' T\_h\_e\_C\_e\_n\_t\_r\_i\_f\_u\_g\_a\_l\_R\_i\_c\_k\_s\_h\_a\_w\_D\_a\_n\_c\_e\_r and G\_o\_i\_n\_g\_t\_o\_S\_e\_e\_t\_h\_e\_E\_n\_d\_o\_f\_t\_h\_e\_S\_k\_y, and a few others I can't remember right now. (Actually, I went back and checked and there are technical as well as religious errors in D\_i\_a\_s\_p\_o\_r\_a\_h.) Unfortunately, the speaker chose to dwell mostly on whether the technical aspects of the colonies in question matched those that his group (Space Studies Institute) feel are the best and often rated highly books of lesser

literary value because they were "accurate" and down-rated better-written books which proposed a different colony than he envisioned. Still, attendees got some ideas of what books to read in the field. [-ecl]

4. The following is the description of the next Bell Labs Star Trek in the 20th Century Club meeting:

Following the exciting film and discussion meeting on January 10, 1989, we will continue our discussion based on the following questions:

- On love, sex, marriage, and parenthood:
  - What do you think of dual-career marriages and equal sharing of housekeeping and child rearing responsibilities? How does it affect the images and definitions of a good husband/father and a good

THE MT VOID

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wife/mother?

- How do you view homosexuality?
- Should there be a mandatory aptitude test in parenting for the parents-to-be?
- What do you think of the Brave New World's treatment of love, sex, marriage, and parenthood?

For further information, e-mail to mtund!newton or call 576-3541.

[Note that these are the second half of the questions listed for the first meeting. They must have gotten only half-way through. -ecl]

5. The quote at the end of the last MT VOID was by Lord Acton, whose name got dropped somehow. [-ecl]

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

The attempt to understand the universe is one of the  
only things that elevates the human condition from farce  
to the elegance of tragedy.

--Stephen Weinberg

Book Reviews by Nigel

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Copyright 1989 Nigel R. Haslock  
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D\_r\_a\_g\_o\_n\_P\_r\_i\_n\_c\_e by Melanie Rawn

Before Christmas I realized that there would be a dearth of

acceptable gifts for me under our Christmas tree. I was in the bookstore at the time so I bought this book, wrapped it and put a "to Daddy" label on it. Since I have been busy, I didn't finish it until now.

A few things jarred. I'm not sure if it was actually there or if I was mistaken about the names but it seemed there there was a couple of spots where minor characters' gender changed momentarily. The names are all non-names in the sense that they are not currently used for real people, which may add to the confusion.

If you look at the book you will find a map, with no scale. Internal evidence suggests that the continent is either the size of Australia or the size of France. Each of the labeled areas on the map is a Princedom. There is a high prince but no king or emperor. The high prince is a hereditary position unless it is elective by a council of princes.

Each prince appears to be able to raise a fighting force of 300 although our hero has to arm his peasants to raise this number. If you think that this is reasonable, let me throw numbers at you. Medieval practise set taxes at 10%. Since fighters are expensive, we can assume that it takes 20 peasants to support a lord's retainer. Thus a tail of 300 fighters implies a population of 6000 peasants. Add wives and double the number to add children and we have a total population of 24,000 per princedom. Given 8 princedoms, we have a national population of 200,000 in a land mass at least the size of France. In Medieval times, before the Black Plague, France had a population of millions.

All people numbers should get an extra zero.

The cover clearly states BOOK 1, however, there are no indications within that there is a second book. That is, there is no "to be continued" at the end, there is no list of forthcoming titles or possible publication dates and there are no more loose ends at the end of the book than is normal for novel.

Apart for those quibbles, the book was an interesting read. Clearly there are dragons, which even breathe fire. Fortunately, nobody gets to ride one. They are also not central to the story, at least at this point.

There three main threads to the story and only once was a thread dropped for longer than I felt that it should have been. The threads make for a fair degree of complexity and manage to maintain interest throughout the novel.

There is little historical depth to the book, i.e. none of the stuff that made L\_o\_r\_d\_o\_f\_t\_h\_e\_R\_i\_n\_g\_s so successful.

Applying the Leeper scale [-4 to +4] to a book, I rate this one at +1.

### C\_h\_i\_l\_d\_r\_e\_n\_o\_f\_t\_h\_e\_T\_h\_u\_n\_d\_e\_r by John Brunner

Brunner seems to have decided that the future will be a miserable time to live in. Some people will be able to live well or happily or even both, but always despite the environment. This is not a statement so much about this book, rather it is a generalization about all of his writing for the last ten years or more.

This book is certainly typical in this respect. The thread of gloom is very evident and the plot is in no way upbeat.

Added to this is the detail that the story is a retelling of an earlier English author's work. As a result, I was disappointed. Brunner spent enough years being a hack writer and enough more years being innovative that this book has the feel of "I need to write a book but I can't think of a plot so I'll take a classic and redo it."

I'll rate it a +1 because it has an absorbing story and it is well written. The disappointment is because I expected more. Afterwards, I went and reread T\_h\_e\_I\_n\_f\_i\_n\_i\_t\_i\_v\_e\_o\_f\_G\_o to reassure myself that he could write innovative SF in a gloomy world and still make it upbeat.

### F\_a\_n\_g\_t\_h\_e\_G\_n\_o\_m\_e by Michael Greatrex Coney

There is a lot of novelty in this book. An interesting universe view is combined with a long history. Sadly, the book is fragmentary and unfocussed. The story seems to be more about Merlin and Nyneve than about Fang. A lot happens off stage and is poorly presented.

Obviously, there is a lot to interest a collector of Arthurian tales and a little to interest a collector of tales of cute gnomes and fairies and such like. It all goes to show that a collection of ideas does not make an excellent novel.

A low +2 for the readers of fantasy, a 0 for those in search of science. Note that there is some science and the universe view is worth the effort of reading.

\_C\_o\_l\_d\_C\_o\_p\_p\_e\_r\_T\_e\_a\_r\_s by Glen Cook

This review is unfair. I want you to know that first. Someday I'll reread and properly review my collection of Glen Cook books but in the meantime you'll have to make do with this.

I wanted to finish with at least one book that deserved better than a +2 and this was the best that I could remember reading recently. Sadly that means that I've read 40 or more books since this one so some of the details are kind of fuzzy (which is what makes the review unfair).

This is a lighthearted fantasy about a detective. Our hero is neither a swordsman nor a sorcerer. Instead he is a borderline private eye. He has lots of friends on both sides of the line and a reputation for solving kidnappings.

The story is absorbing and full of interesting characters that make you want to read more of the series. It is even a whodunnit. It is a diverting piece of escapist entertainment which is what I expect of a fantasy novel.

Therefore it gets a +2.5

DREAMS OF FLESH AND SAND by W. T. Quick  
New American Library, 1988, \$?.  
A book review by Frank Leisti & Patricia Huff  
Copyright 1989 Frank Leisti & Patricia Huff

(Frank Leisti, attmail!leisti)

Are you involved with computers? a hacker, or admire hackers you've met? Have you ever wondered what reality inside a computer or computer network might be like? This novel tells the story of two expert hackers and their adventures inside a computer network reality, comprising hardware, software, and cloned tissue used to create bioelectronic switches or computers, called "meatmatrices" in the book. The author goes far beyond the movie T\_r\_o\_n in carrying out the implications of such a reality, and portraying them vividly enough that I couldn't put the book down. The main characters, a computer security expert, nicknamed "Iceberg", and his ex-wife and ex-partner, "Icebreaker," get involved in highest-level corporate intrigues and have to fight for their lives. Also, Iceberg has a nifty Japanese sidekick Toshi as bodyguard -- there's plenty of gory action in this one, plus some intriguing philosophy; how do you recognize reality as real, how much is it (or might it be) determined by your thoughts (or someones)? The "sand" in the title is the silicon in computer chips, and the book does give you glimpses of what a computer (at least one variety) might dream....



(Pat Huff, attmail!jimmy!mag)

The book Dreams of Flesh and Sand, involve both people and silicon circuitry. In this book by W. T. Quick, both elements of human interaction and silicon efficiency are brought together in a melting pot of interplays. There are counter-points with counter-points, each showing examples of the opposites that we involve ourselves with in life. There is the major battle between man himself as Norton (a genius who has invented a method of utilizing flesh as a computer network) duels it out with himself in the neural network of this new computer made from flesh. It appears that when he attempted to connect his mind to the neural network, his unconscious mind beat him to it. To this end, his body is clinically dead, yet his business partner wants him removed without affecting the data or system of their combined business enterprise. It is a time of companies controlling information in control rather than any particular form of government. On the moon, another organization - of well meaning scientists work on enhancements and additions to another neural network. As in our time, all of these networks have a common transport network so that information can be sent/received. Yet security has become quite the problem. To this end, certain individual specialists hold out for pay on enormous scale. Two individuals of opposite nature are the Iceberg and the Icebreaker. Of course, the Iceberg creates security systems and the Icebreaker attempts to snatch at information. They used to be husband and wife, each

Dreams of Flesh and Sand January 13, 1988

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enhancing each other's abilities. Unfortunately, they are thrown together after having separated and now must work together to survive. It appears that the Iceberg is a hunted man, with many of his contacts (more like sub-contractors) being terminated. To this puzzle, he applies himself yet in the end finds the enormity of all the events even too much for him.

I found this very pleasant reading, bringing new aspects of computer "innards" to science fiction.

MISSISSIPPI BURNING  
A film review by Mark R. Leeper  
Copyright 1989 Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: Alan Parker (director of Midnight  
Express, TheWall, and Angel  
Heart) creates a well-detailed, though allegedly very fictionalized, account of the FBI investigation into the disappearance of three civil rights workers from Jessup, Mississippi in 1964. Gene Hackman's performance is complex in a film that is violent but rewarding. Rating: +3.

Two waterfountains, side-by-side. One has a sign saying it is for whites; one says it is for colored. "Separate but equal." Except the whites' fountain is a big, electrically cooled fountain; the blacks' fountain is a little white porcelain one like you would see in a grade school. With the very first shot of MississippiBurning  
Alan Parker sets the tone for what is to come and creates a feel for the South in 1964. And what is to come is the story of an FBI investigation into the deaths of three civil rights workers that turned into an all-out war between the FBI and the Ku Klux Klan.

Into Jessup, Mississippi come two FBI agents: Anderson (played by Gene Hackman) and Ward (played by Willem Dafoe). Ward is in command. Anderson knows the territory and how to get things done. As such they are roughly similar to the Sean Connery and Kevin Costner characters in TheUntouchables, but in this case neither is really fully right in his approach. The result is a (usually) quiet conflict between Anderson and Ward as they both fight the Klan and its sympathizers.

The script gives the greater acting opportunity to Hackman. His character seems at first to be jovial and friendly, almost a "good old boy," where Dafoe's character is flat and officious. Hackman's character and his performance operate at several levels at once. He has plans within plans and can be reckless and bloodthirsty in his attempts to get a job done. Brad Dourif, whose early career had him play mostly innocents in films like OneFlewOverthe  
Cucko'sNest and Ragtime,  
these days usually plays vicious heavies in films like Child'sPlay and  
MississippiBurning.

Stylistically MississippiBurning may well have been inspired by John Sayles' 1987 film Matewan. Like Sayles, Parker has created the feel of an epic inexpensively by careful choice of locale in which to shoot. As in Matewan, the story is a little too neat to be believed. Both stories have the feel of an anecdotal style for mood rather than that of a docu-drama--a style that undermines the realism. Even then the mood itself is damaged at the end by a small speech by Dafoe followed by the singing of a spiritual.

The photography, while at times atmospheric, in general is realistic and includes liberal (if that is the word) doses of violence realistic enough to bother some viewers. Parker (or screenwriter Chris Gerolmo) seems intentionally to put in disorienting scenes that do not immediately make sense, but which will fit into the puzzle in a few minutes.

In general \_ M \_ i \_ s \_ s \_ i \_ s \_ s \_ i \_ p \_ p \_ i \_ B \_ u \_ r \_ n \_ i \_ n \_ g is a skillfully crafted piece of historical fiction just a little stronger in style than in credibility. Rate it a +3 on the -4 to +4 scale.

MY 10 FAVORITE FILMS OF 1988  
A film article by Mark R. Leeper  
Copyright 1989 Mark R. Leeper

I think I should preface this list by explaining that I am not listing what I think are likely to be the top ten films of the year, but only the ten best films that have been made available to me. Living where I do I have some (inconvenient) access to films playing in New York and for the rest I am limited to what plays locally and what gets on cassette very quickly, and over the last year I have noticed a definite trend among the local distributors of films and videocassettes to show fewer of the "good" films and more moneymakers. Our local eightplex is, as of this writing (January 2, 1989) running T\_h\_e\_N\_a\_k\_e\_d\_G\_u\_n in two of its theaters, W\_o\_r\_k\_i\_n\_g\_G\_i\_r\_l in two more, three fly-weight comedies, and an action film. I asked the manager if they would be getting M\_i\_s\_s\_i\_s\_s\_i\_p\_p\_i\_B\_u\_r\_n\_i\_n\_g: definitely not.

If it seems odd that a TV-movie makes the top of my list, do not interpret this as strong praise. I suspect that L\_i\_t\_t\_l\_e\_D\_o\_r\_r\_i\_t and perhaps T\_h\_e\_L\_a\_s\_t\_T\_e\_m\_p\_t\_a\_t\_i\_o\_n\_o\_f\_C\_h\_r\_i\_s\_t might be better films, but these are the best ten I have actually seen.

1. A DANGEROUS LIFE -- Six-hour HBO made-for-TV movie of the fall of Ferdinand Marcos combines strong doses of THE PRESIDENT'S MEN, YEAR OF LIVING DANGEROUSLY, and EXODUS in one film. A little slow

in the middle, but it pays off by the end. This should be a model for future docu-dramas. Rating: +3.

2. DANGEROUS LIAISONS -- Beautifully filmed and acted adaptation of a scandalous French novel of 1782 and the play based on it by Christopher Hampton (who also wrote the screenplay). The film proceeds like a sexual chess game with two master players and a board full of pawns. One of the year's best. Rating: +3.
3. MISSISSIPPI BURNING -- Alan Parker (director of MIDNIGHT EXPRESS, THE WALL, and ANGEL HEART) creates a well-detailed, though allegedly very fictionalized, account of the FBI investigation into the disappearance of three civil rights workers from Jessup, Mississippi in 1964. Gene Hackman's performance is complex in a film that is violent but rewarding. Rating: +3.
4. LADY IN WHITE -- Twenty years from now LADY IN WHITE will be considered one of the best ghost stories ever put on film. Frank LaLoggia has made a beautiful film that raises more than a little gooseflesh. Rating: +3.
5. THE DECEIVERS -- Fun swashbuckler about a fascinating historical incident. Pierce Brosnan goes undercover in India in 1825 to investigate the Cult of Kali that murdered millions of people in

ritual killings. Merchant/Ivory (A ROOM WITH A VIEW) effectively remake the good STRANGLERS OF BOMBAY and do it better. Rating: +3.

6. TUCKER -- Francis Ford Coppola and Lucasfilm in top form bring to the screen the story of automotive legend Preston Tucker. The film is a tribute to American creativity and a lament about a system that wastes genius. Jeff Bridges refreshingly plays that increasingly rare hero of the screen, a man of genius. Rating: +3.
7. THE UNBEARABLE LIGHTNESS OF BEING -- THE UNBEARABLE LIGHTNESS OF BEING is not a light film, but it is by no means unbearable either. Philip Kaufman, who makes very entertaining films, makes one that only sounds like an exception. 171 minutes of solid

entertainment with a title you can use to impress your friends.

Rating: +3.

8. GORILLAS IN THE MIST -- A substantial and provocative film, GORILLAS IN THE MIST tells us the story of Dian Fossey, who made herself one of the leading experts on mountain gorillas and who fought for their preservation. Rating: +2.
9. CROSSING DELANCY -- Well-above-average comedy/drama reminiscent of MOONSTRUCK but set in the Jewish community of Manhattan. Some nice characterizations in this story of a 33-year-old career woman's relationships with two men. Rating: +2.
10. STAND AND DELIVER -- What kind of a film would appeal both to the Hispanic community and to mathematicians? The true story of a math teacher who fights to make mathematicians out of barrio kids. This plot has been done dozens of times as a fictional sports story. but rarely this well and rarely with a subject that has the immediate appeal that calculus does. Rating: +2.