

Lincroft-Holmdel Science Fiction Club
Club Notice - 10/24/84 -- Vol. 3, No. 15

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

Unless otherwise stated, all LZ meetings are on Wednesdays in
LZ 3A-206 at noon; all HO meetings are in HO 2N-523 at noon.

_D_A_T_E _T_O_P_I_C

11/15 THE TOMBS OF ATUAN by Ursula K. LeGuin
12/04 Video meeting: THE FLY (part 1)
12/05 Video meeting: THE FLY (part 2)
01/02 THE CIRCUS OF DR. LAO by Charles G. Finney
02/13 SLAN by A. E. Van Vogt

LZ's library and librarian Lance Larsen (576-2668) are in LZ 3C-219.
Mark Leeper (576-2571, LZ 3E-215) and Evelyn Leeper (834-4723, HO
1B-437A) are co-chairpeople. HO's library and librarian Tim Schroeder
(949-5866) are in HO 2G-432. John Jetzt (577-5316) is HO-chairperson.

1. Thursday night, November 1, I know you will all be exhausted
from your trick-or-treating (or perhaps you will be happy to get
out after standing guard over your houses for the past two
evenings). So why not pick yourself up? Get over to the ultra-
modern, ultra-comfortable, semi-cleaned-up Leeper house for the
7:30 movies. The theme for the evening will be Dan O'Bannon's
aliens. The films we will show are:

ALIEN (1979) dir. by Dan O'Bannon
DARK STAR (1974) dir. by John Carpenter

ALIEN is pretty well known by most of you. It features an
extremely mean and powerful alien creature and made a mint at the
box-office. There are one or two scenes of violence that might
bother some. DARK STAR was a cooperative film made by Carpenter
and O'Bannon in school using all kinds of very inventive techniques
to save money. It is wacky enough that it has become a cult film
at science fiction conventions and remains very popular. The plot
concerns a mission in space that has gone on much too long and the
problems they encounter blowing up unstable planets. There is an
alien life form which by itself is worth the price of admission
(which is nothing in this case.)

2. A lot of you out there only see my gruff exterior and don't know

it, but I am really a softy at heart. I have always been kind of sentimental on some subjects. I just heard something about one of them today. The IRAS satellite has discovered a little baby solar system around another star. It actually has computer-enhanced photography of a little star system forming. This has sort of

- 2 -

changed my whole outlook on life. I had always pretty much thought that when interstellar travel became available I was going to just chuck the job and go off exploring intergalactic space. You know the sort of thing, fight energy monsters, discover weird civilizations, maybe tip the balance of an intergalactic war or two. Now I am not so sure. I guess I am starting to think about more prosaic things. Perhaps I might just stick around and watch the new star system develop, watch it form planets. Who knows, it might even get an intelligent civilization. That would be fun to watch. They might even surpass us. It isn't as exciting as actually going out there and doing things, but I am sure it has its points too. I dunno, maybe I'm maturing a little.

Mark Leeper
LZ 3E-215 x2571
...{houxn,hogpd,hocse}!lzwi!mrl

Mercury Capsules - October 24, 1984

"Mercury Capsules": SF review column, edited by Paul S R Chisholm. Appears in the "Lincroft-Holmdel SF Club Notice".

A medium for quick reviews of anything of interest in the world of science fiction. I'll pass along anything (not slanderous or scatological) without nasty comments. I prefer to get reviews by electronic mail: send to wi!psc from the AT&T-IS ENS systems in Lincroft; hocse!lznv!psc, houxn!lznv!psc, or hogpd!lznv!psc from everywhere else. If that's impossible, I'm at LZ 1D-212, 576-2374.

o+ T_h_e_R_i_v_e_r_o_f_D_a_n_c_i_n_g_G_o_d_s: novel, Jack Chalker.

To be honest, this is just another typical fantasy story in which people from 'our' world suddenly find themselves in a strange alternate world where magic works. The amusing aspect is that Chalker is able to poke fun at the typical fantasy epic.

This was a fun book to read, but certainly no heavyweight. Any fantasy whose main character is a barbarian (a la Conan) named Joe who carries a

magic sword named Irving is worth reading just for the laughs. I highly recommend this one.

Steve Albert

o+ B_a_t_t_l_e_f_i_e_l_d_E_a_r_t_h: novel, L. Ron Hubbard, 1983.

First of all, this is probably one of the longest books you'll ever read, running around 1100 pages. The sheer size of the book may scare off the faint of heart, but this is actually quite an interesting story.

The basic story begins with us on earth somewhere in the vicinity of the year 3000. The story's hero is a hunter with a small and dying tribe. The tribe's people have heard legends of monsters roaming the earth, but they themselves have never left their safe, secluded valley.

The death of his father, combined with a strong urge to wander, lead our hero out into the strange world where he is captured by a 'monster'. The monsters turn out to be an alien race which had conquered the earth some 1000 odd years before. The story then evolves as our hero learns more about his past, the aliens, and his world in general. This knowledge eventually leads him to start a revolt by the surviving humans.

The bulk of the book is fairly slow paced with lots of character development. The history of the conquest of the earth was fascinating and well worth wading through the early part of the book. All in all, if you have several days/weeks to kill reading, B_a_t_t_l_e_f_i_e_l_d_E_a_r_t_h is worth giving a try.

Steve Albert

- 2 -

o+ "An Examination of the Work of Herbert Quain": short story, Jorge Luis Borges, 1956(?). (Appears in F_i_c_c_i_o_n_e_s.)

Those of you who were fascinated by/enthralled by/mildly interested in Hilbert Schenck's "The Geometry of Narrative" should read this short (6-page) story. Those of you who like it should read more Borges.

Evelyn C Leeper

o+ T_h_e_F_l_y_i_n_g_S_o_r_c_e_r_o_r_s: novel, David Gerrold and Larry Niven.

I recently reread one of my favorite humorous SF novels -- T_h_e_F_l_y_i_n_g_S_o_r_c_e_r_o_r_s by Gerrold and Niven. One of the fun aspects of the book is that the pantheon worshipped by the characters consists of deities whose names and spheres of influence suggest people involved in SF or fantasy. I enjoyed spotting these references, and identifying the target writers, but there are a few I don't get. Below is a list of the gods I spotted, their spheres of influence, and the appropriate author. Can anyone help me fill in the blanks in the third column? (Note: I don't think a spoiler warning is needed, since this list doesn't say anything about the plot, etc.)

Diety: Controls: Author:

Musk-Watz	Wind	???
Elcin	Thunder	Ellison
N'veen	Tides	Niven
Leeb	Magic	Leiber
Rotn'bair	Sheep	Roddenberry (why sheep?)
Nils'n's	Mud creatures	??? (The "Nielsen" ratings?)
Filfomar	Rivers	Farmer
Eccar	"The Man"	"Ecce"?
Finelein	Engineers	Heinlein
Brad	The past	Bradbury
Kronk	The future	???
Po	Decay	Pohl (Decay?)
Klarther	Skies and seas	Clarke
Fol	Distortion	???
Pull'nissin	Duels	Anderson
Hitch	Birds	Hitchcock
Blok	Violence	Bloch
Tis'turzhin	Love	Sturgeon
Sp'nee	Slime	Spinrad?
Tucker	Names	Tucker!
Caff	Dragons	Guess who...
Yake	What-if	???
Furman	Fasf	???
Poup	Fertility	???

One last question: One of the main characters is a sorcerer named Shoogar.

Is there a pun involved with that name that I'm too dense to see?

Rob Mitchell {allegra,ihnp4}!hogpd!jrrt

o+ (T_h_e_F_l_y_i_n_g_S_o_r_c_e_r_e_r_s continued)

Thanks for all the responses concerning the gods and such in T_h_e_F_l_y_i_n_g_S_o_r_c_e_r_o_r_s by Gerrold and Niven. I got lots of mail, including some from: Fred Wamsley, Mark J. Norton, Mary Shurtleff, Laurinda Rohn, zinfandel!berry, and inuxa!rmin.

Just about everyone proved to be smarter than me by suggesting "Musk-watz" was Sam Moskowitz, the author/editor/fan/critic/historian.

My lack of familiarity with SF magazines showed itself when lots of people suggested "Furman", the god of fasf, was spotlighting Ed Ferman, a former editor of F_a_n_t_a_s_y_a_n_d_S_c_i_e_n_c_e_F_i_c_t_i_o_n (which can be abbreviated F&SF).

Po, the god of Decay, is most probably Poe, as in Edgar Allen, and not Pohl as I had originally suggested. Instead, Pohl may be identified by Fol, the god of Distortion, but I'm still not sure why.

Other suggestions that I have less confidence in include "Yake" as being Asimov (based on "Ike". I can assure you this is not correct. The Good Doctor is mentioned in the book, but giving the context would be a terrible spoiler), or as John Jakes.

One writer suggests "Eccar" is Forrest J. Ackerman. Another offers Edgar Rice Burroughs, with Tarzan = "The Man".

"Kronk" may well refer to Walter Cronkite, as most people suggested, but I'm sure a more appropriate diety for The Future could be found among all the unused SF authors. One person offered Groff Conklin. (What *does* the K in Ursula K. LeGuin stand for?)

"Poup" *might* be Pournelle, as someone offered, but I don't think he'd published anything at the time TFS was published (1971). Another suggestion was that this god of Fertility should be pronounced "pop" as in "population." Perhaps, but this theory spoils the SF trend of the pantheon.

One person states that at the time they were writing the book, Gerrold and Niven were active in LA fandom, and immortalized some of their fellow fans by using variants of their names to christen the characters in the book. Hence, names like Shoogar and Lant have no intrinsic puns in them. (A major exception exists in the case of Lant's offspring...)

There's lots of subtle word play in the book, such as in the names of the twin suns, some geological features, currency, and so forth. If you've not read T_h_e_F_l_y_i_n_g_S_o_r_c_e_r_o_r_s, I highly recommend it as an excellent and humorous "analysis" of the dramatic effect technology can have on one's life.

Rob Mitchell {allegra,ihnp4}!hogpd!jrrt

- 4 -

o+ (still more on T_h_e_F_l_y_i_n_g_S_o_r_c_e_r_e_r_s)

Diety: Controls: Author:

Eccar "The Man" ("Ecce homo" = "Behold the Man" by Moorcock)

Kronk The future (probably Cronkite, from his show "The
21st Century")

Poup Fertility (the) Pope

Rotn'bair Sheep Roddenberry (because Trekkies follow him
like sheep?)

Evelyn C Leeper

- 30 -

ORLANDO: A BIOGRAPHY by Virginia Woolf
PASSING FOR HUMAN by Jody Scott
I, VAMPIRE by Jody Scott

Three Book Reviews for the Eyestrain of One
by C. E. Jackson

The theme of separateness--how the individual who is an outsider to a society interacts within it--is not peculiar to science fiction. Hemingway and Sartre both created dreary protagonist after dreary protagonist who felt at odds with the world in which he lived. In fact, these protagonists felt at sssuuuucccchhhh odds with their respective societies that they were invariably contemplating suicide (which I always wished they would get on with and thereby end at least mmmmyyyy misery.) Fortunately, the idea of separateness has inspired jollier and more imaginative writers than the men from modern lit. Jonathan Swift used the idea of separateness to comment on his society by thrusting his hero into a series of made-up worlds. Gulliver's earthbound reactions to these worlds created the humor of the work. Both Virginia Woolf and Jody Scott have used Swift's model but reversed it--they have introduced aliens into the earth's world. These characters reactions to our world result in three witty satires.

As Woolf's work serves as the inspiration for Scott's, hers should be considered first, and insofar as she is generally not thought of as a science fiction writer, perhaps a little background information is in order. In the dry language of literary scholarship, Woolf is a "modern" writer

credited with reshaping the novel so that the action is portrayed by the instantaneous perceptions of the characters rather than filtered through a narrator. She was also renowned as a literary critic. None of these insipid labels suggest that she was a woman of great wit whose works would still be inspiring authors 50 or 60 years after they were written, but then, who believes literary labels?

Certainly not Virginia Woolf, who unglued herself from the sticky, constricting things with the publication of *ORLANDO: A BIOGRAPHY*. Set in the sixteenth through twentieth centuries, *ORLANDO* is the story of an Elizabethan noble/poet who ages about as rapidly as women on soap commercials, and who miraculously changes sex (in about the seventeenth century) without the aid of even o o o on n n ne e e Scandinavian doctor. (And as I'm sure all of the historians have already surmised, Orlando also gave up on being Elizabethan somewhere in there, too.) As Orlando slowly matures, she manages to bump into most of the great English male writers of her various ages--Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, Pope, Swift, Johnson, and the rest of the gang from freshman English--and is continually astonished to learn what ordinary sorts of people they are. At first, in fact, they are q q q qu u u ui i i it t t te e e e ordinary--their clothes are dirty and their manners coarse. But as the ages move on, literature becomes more established (and part of the establishment) and the wealth and social stature of the writers increases concomitantly. In the twentieth century, Orlando finally finishes the one great poem she

- 2 -

has been working on for almost 400 years, called "The Oak Tree," which bears an uncanny, word-for-word resemblance to Vita Sackville-West's poem, "The Land."

Who, you may ask, is Vita Sackville-West? (Rest assured, she probably did NOT make even a cameo appearance in *English I*.) Besides being a distinguished poet and card-carrying member of the fabled "Bloomsbury Set," she was also one of Woolf's lovers. The book is dedicated to her, and pictures and photos of Sackville-West (make that, Lady Sackville-West) and her ancestors are used to illustrate the book. More importantly, the book is in some ways her biography--like Orlando, she bore two children, married a man who was rarely at home, grew up on a country estate that once hosted kings and queens, and loved poetry.

In a deeper sense, *ORLANDO* is a biography not just of Sackville-West's life, but of the literary development of all poets. Woolf believed that because

each writer drew from the literature of the past, the story of the development of literature was where the story of any individual writer's development began. (1) Woolf begins her tale of literary development when Shakespeare was at his height. Her poet hero/ine (with touching consideration for the feelings and dissertations of scholars everywhere) obligingly changes sex at about the time that Aphra Behn (1640-80) first began scandalizing London's literary lions by writing and producing plays that were more successful than theirs. (2)

The story of ORLANDO is the story of an outsider looking in and finally joining the crowd, but on her own terms. For much of the book, Orlando is a wry, critical observer of the literary community--wanting to be a writer but unable to wholly fit into the then-masculine world of letters. In eras when women were treated well, Orlando writes more easily. More repressive times, such as the Victorian era, make it practically impossible for Orlando to write. She only joins the literary community and writes freely when the literary community has become so established and well-fed that it can afford to be tolerant and heterogeneous. The movement of the work is from separateness to assimilation and the ending is one of quiet triumph.

-
1. For a lengthier discussion of Woolf's views, see Winifred Holtby's VIRGINIA WOOLF: A CRITICAL MEMOIR (Cassandra Press: Chicago, 1978).

Or you could just read all of Woolf's works, which, in this country, are published by Harvest/HBJ Books.

2. If you wish to know more about t t t th h h hi i i is s s s absentee from English I, try either Virginia Woolf's A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN (Harvest/HBJ Books: New York, 1956) or Dale Spender's WOMEN OF IDEAS (Ark Paperbacks: London, 1982).

Woolf was one of the first women writers to not only command a place for herself as a writer, but also as a critic. More than earlier women authors, she has probably been an inspiration to the women who followed her because her legacy has included a w w w wa a a ay y y y of looking at the creative process. Woolf was

one of the first to articulate what it meant to be a woman writer--how the creative process was necessarily different for the sex that had been systematically excluded from education or serious consideration as writers. Her influence is obvious in Scott's work. Although I generally hesitate to talk about influences in the works of living authors, Scott almost explicitly links *PASSING FOR HUMAN* and *I, VAMPIRE* to Woolf and to *ORLANDO*.

The major difference between Scott's work & Woolf's is that Scott is concerned with society as a whole, not merely with the literary community. In *PASSING FOR HUMAN*, she introduces Benaroya, the anthropologist from outer space (Rymensia, to be exact). Benaroya's introduction to life on earth, and her reactions to it provide a scathing but witty commentary on Western, especially American, society. From Richard Nixon (after whom all robot servants are modeled) to Brenda Starr to the Mafia, Scott mercilessly laughs at our pretensions, affectations and stupidities.

She continues in this vein throughout *I, VAMPIRE* as well, but takes her fiction a bit further. *PASSING FOR HUMAN* ends with only the plot resolved--no solutions are offered for the society that is so thoroughly satirized within it. *I, VAMPIRE* is more the story of how Benaroya attempts to redeem or improve humankind with the help of her friend and lover, Sterling O'Blivion, the vampire of the title. Sterling is both an outsider, like Benaroya, and someone who is of the earth. She acts as a mediator between Benaroya's unworldliness and other people's mundaneness. And when Sterling finally overcomes her earthbound unhappiness, we are probably meant to see her victory as a way that we can overcome the shallowness and unthinking idiocy of our own lives.

The problem is that Benaroya's "teachings" are not all that specific--she basically preaches a kind of warm, fuzzy, let's-hug-everybody psychology. And like the beliefs of Leo Buscaglia, this philosophy just doesn't survive beyond the second it's been articulated. Warmth, buoyancy and optimism may fill the reader at first, but woe to whomever tries to think about what was said. In some ways, reading Scott reminded me of when I first heard of Buscaglia. When I found that he had never been married, I grew angry that he would dare to preach about how easy it was to love when apparently he had never been able to love in a way that survived the demands of a commitment. That lack of willingness to deal with the dreck of life--the grinding little details that make a wholly intellectual or spiritual life impossible--mars Scott's philosophy as well. Perhaps my own biases keep me from understanding her, because I see happiness as an achievement more something I can effortlessly "become." Therefore, I am suspicious of promises that happiness will ever become omnipresent just by some vaguely articulated mental/emotional process.

Another question that Scott avoids is what kind of life would we
r r r e e e a a a l l l l l l y y y y have
if tension, stupidity and unhappiness were wholly eliminated from the earth.

Where would humor be? Is humor merely some kind of compensation for an imperfect world? Or is humor an important part of what it means to be human? Do the world's imperfections provide the only medium in which humor can flourish? If we don't have human foibles to laugh at, at what
s s s sh h h ho o o ou u u ul l l ld d d d we
laugh? Human virtues?

It could be that Scott's work is evolving and if another "Benaroya" book comes out, it will be more specific in its philosophy or will deal more with the problems Benaroya's "solution" would bring. Certainly Scott isn't the first satirist who's failed to offer a sufficiently interesting, credible way for people to live. One could hardly argue, for instance, that the Houyhnhnms section in GULLIVER'S TRAVELS is the basis of the book's enduring fame. Scott's books are funny enough to make them well worth reading at least once (although anti-feminists may not appreciate all of the jokes). Whether they are as worth rereading probably depends on whether you prefer to create your own solutions or to critique others'.

Ace Science Fiction Specials
Five book reviews by Evelyn C. Leeper

Terry Carr and Ace Books have started yet another series of "Ace Science Fiction Specials." The first series gave us such books as LeGuin's

_ L_ e_ f_ t_ H_ a_ n_ d_ o_ f_ D_ a_ r_ k_ n_ e_ s_ s and Panshin's _ R_ i_ t_ e
_ o_ f_ P_ a_ s_ s_ a_ g_ e. Then Ace terminated
the series, only to revive it later with such "classics" as Chapman's _ R_ e_ d
_ T_ i_ d_ e. Now it's back, and the five books scheduled for the first year have
been issued. Here then is my summary of this beginning.

THE WILD SHORE by Kim Stanley Robinson

This was the first Ace Special, and the best so far. A post-holocaust story, it describes the life of one fairly average teenager (though the term "teenager" has connotations which do not apply in a post-holocaust, low-tech society) and his passage into adulthood. (A full review appeared in the 03/07/84 issue of the _ N_ o_ t_ i_ c_ e.) I said at the time that this book could be Hugo material this year, and I still think that's true. It made me expect a lot for the Ace series.

GREEN EYES by Lucius Shepard

This was somewhat of a let-down after _ T_ h_ e_ W_ i_ l_ d_ S_ h_ o_ r_ e. I was really looking forward to this one, both because of _ T_ h_ e_ W_ i_ l_ d_ S_ h_ o_ r_ e and because it was described as doing for zombies what Martin's _ F_ e_ v_ e_ r_ e_ D_ r_ e_ a_ m did for vampires. However the result was neither fish nor fowl and never captured my full interest; I found the point-of-view changes were disconcerting, and the "scientific explanation" not very convincing. On the other hand, many people liked it (see Paul Chisholm's review in the 06/20/84 issue of the _ N_ o_ t_ i_ c_ e).

NEUROMANCER by William Gibson

Again, not my style of book, though the characters were more memorable than those of G_r_e_e_n_E_y_e_s, and the action more interesting. A high-tech story, it goes well with such other stories as Vinge's T_r_u_e_N_a_m_e_s and Gibson's own "Burning Chrome." Though the West Indian dialect of one of the characters was somewhat difficult to follow, the story as a whole moved well. A step up for the Ace series. (This is not a full review because someone has indicated that they would be reviewing this at length later.)

PALIMPSESTS by Carter Scholz and Glenn Harcourt

A palimpsest is a parchment that has been scraped clean and re-written. The idea behind P_a_l_i_m_p_s_e_s_t_s is that history is not straightforward but consists of palimpsests: artifacts that have many different layers of concealed or destroyed truth on them. The main character, Camus (yes, he's related), is an archaeologist who finds an impossibly dense cube in a dig in Germany. The cube, when tested, gives all sorts of conflicting evidence as to its real age. There is a lot of spy thriller action as various interests chase Camus and his girlfriend around to get the cube, and then some

- 2 -

"Andromeda Strain" action at a multi-leveled, underground research establishment. There is a lot of pseudo-science about "What is time?" and "What is causality?" and how souls are being reincarnated backwards in time. I've read a fair amount of time-travel/time-paradox novels and this was s_t_i_l_l incoherent. The writing style shows occasional flashes of insight, but the plot doesn't carry it, and Camus spends too much of his time feeling sorry for himself for the reader to really get involved with him.

THEM BONES by Howard Waldrop

This is the least unusual of the Ace Specials so far. It is a fairly straightforward time travel/alternate history novel with a heavy bent toward adventure. There are three narratives, labeled "Bessie," "Leake," and "The Box." "Bessie" is Bessie Level, an archaeologist working in 1929 Louisiana who discovers horses and rifle cartridges in a burial mound dating between 700 A.D. and 1500 A.D. "Leake" is Madison Yazoo Leake, a post-World War III draftee sent back to pre-World War III to try to prevent its occurrence. Somewhere along the line, however, he jumps the track and lands in the right time (circa 1930), the right place (Louisiana), but the wrong universe (no

Roman Empire, no Christianity, and the Arabs have explored the New World). He discovers the Huastecas (Aztecs) are still going strong, human sacrifices and all. "The Box" is a box full of reports written by the rest of Leake's party, who were supposed to follow him into Louisiana. Somehow they've gotten the right place but they've been sidetracked to the wrong time (1100 A.D. give or take a few hundred years).

The three threads are "alternated" (or whatever the word is when talking about more than two). Not surprisingly, the most interesting is "Leake" and the rest seem to act as commentary on his rather than independent themes. The portrayal of Huasteca civilization is accurate at first glance, but one glaring error makes me question how accurate the rest is. (Waldrop has Leake ride his horse up the steps of a Huasteca pyramid and down again. Huasteca pyramids have an inclination of between 45 and 60 degrees, and steps only six to eight inches front-to-back. I'd like to see a horse ride up a pyramid like that!) On the plus side, none of the characters ever really knows what is going on. Leake never finds out more than a minimum of what his new world is like. He learns bits and pieces from Arab traders, but there is none of the usual "discussion with the historian" that one often finds in novels of this type. His companions never quite figure out where they are or what's happened to them. They know something's gone wrong, they suspect they're in the wrong time, but they're too busy trying to avoid getting picked off by the natives to spend a lot of time intellectualizing about their situation. Bessie has perhaps the best notion of what's going on, but even she is confused and misled by what she sees. As Connie Willis pointed out at L.A.con II, no one ever sees history, they just see their part of it. By using three threads, Waldrop manages to convey this limitation, while allowing the reader to have more idea of what's going on than any one of the characters. Not a great book, but an enjoyable one, and worth the time.

- 3 -

Summary

Ace has a good idea here--promoting unusual science fiction books. They are to be commended for publishing the unusual. Del Rey and DAW publish more science fiction than Ace, but there's a certain sameness to it all. I mean, when DAW publishes the twentieth novel by John Norman or C. J. Cherryh (and I'm _ n_ o_ t claiming they're at all similar to each other!), you know what to expect. With the Ace Specials, you don't. You know you'll get

something with good points and bad points, maybe an innovative style, maybe a new idea, maybe interesting characters. You don't get something stamped out a cookie cutter. They're not all great, but I'll keep buying them. They're...special.

ICEHENGE by Kim Stanley Robinson
Ace, 1984, \$2.95.
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper

This novel is similar to P a l i m p s e s t s, another novel published by Ace. Both speak of the past (history) as being unknowable. That is, we base our knowledge of history on artifacts. But artifacts can be mis-interpreted, faked, lost, or whatever. In addition, no one sees the entirety of a historical event--just their corner of it. As Connie Willis pointed out at L.A.con II, there was no single event called 'Dunkirk,' but a collection of impressions. The 'Dunkirk' of someone on the coast of France was different from the 'Dunkirk' of someone in a boat on the Channel being shelled, and neither is the same as the 'Dunkirk' of a general in London.

I c e h e n g e is Robinson's attempt to show both these ideas, and some others besides. It is told in three parts: "Emma Weil: 2248 A.D.," "Hjalmar Nederland: 2547 A.D.," and "Edmond Doya: 2610 A.D." Weil is caught up in the original Martian mutiny, Nederland is excavating a Martian city destroyed during that mutiny, and Doya is trying to explain Icehenge, a structure of ice slabs resembling Stonehenge but built on Pluto and found while Nederland was excavating on Mars. Much of the latter two sections is concerned with theories and how they rise and fall as new evidence is discovered. (An earlier version of the first section appeared as "To Leave a Mark" in the November 1982 issue of F & S F and was nominated for a Hugo; part also appeared as "On the North Pole of Pluto" in O r b i t 2 1.)

Robinson's main characters are interesting, though his auxiliary characters seem a bit sketchy. The plot is straightforward, interesting, and moves right along. There are a lot of good ideas (not just the

historical ones mentioned). The only quibble I have is that three points of view of history is the wrong number. None of the sections (except perhaps the first) really stands on its own, yet the three together still seem incomplete. Once Robinson has said that there are many interpretations of history, he should show us more than three. One person has complained that this book wraps everything up too neatly--that the reader _ k _ n _ o _ w _ s what happened when it's done. I'd like to see Robinson do a sequel proving how wrong the reader was! (This has great possibilities as an open-ended series, each disproving the conclusions of the preceding volume!) I claimed that Robinson's first novel was Hugo material; while this isn't quite that, it's right up there. Robinson is a new author I'd keep an eye on.

Appropos of this topic of historical/archeological uncertainty, I would recommend James Michener's _ T _ h _ e _ S _ o _ u _ r _ c _ e. The framework of this novel is an archaeological dig in Israel and the various sections have to do with the true history of the items that are found. (I say "true" history because the sections are told from third-person omniscient point of view, rather than third-person non-omniscient as Robinson's are.) For example, the archaeologists find a marble hand at the level of Grecian influence and postulate that it was broken from some statue which has not survived. In fact, there was never any more statue than the hand itself, carved by the artist to _ s _ u _ g _ g _ e _ s _ t the rest of the figure. And there are artifacts described by the third-person omniscient narrator which are never found, that would explain a lot more of what *really* happened. (And for those who haven't read Carter Scholz's and Glenn Harcourt's _ P _ a _ l _ i _ m _ p _ s _ e _ s _ t _ s, it puts forward the idea that artifacts are altered to change history, much as the names of those fallen from favor in ancient Egypt were chiseled out of the obelisks previously erected in their honor.)

_ N _ O _ T _ E _ S _ F _ R _ O _ M _ T _ H _ E _ N _ E _ T

Subject: valentina

Path: ihnp4!zehntel!hplabs!sri-unix!LAURENCE@SU-CSLI.ARPA

This is the first novel I've read which was based on computers, was written by someone who knew something about computers, and actually uses computer jargon with relative accuracy.

Unfortunately, a lot of stuff in the book is just plain WRONG! I won't go into it, or the discussion will be worse than that on "V" which dragged on interminably without any interest-value at all.

What I will criticize is a) the statement that all hackers are criminals who enjoy breaking other people's programs, and b) the portrayal of all hackers in the novel (there are at least 6), as being totally weird and divorced from normal society. The two main characters are stereotyped freaks; the heroine is a shy overweight games-player who knows more than four times as many computer languages fluently than she does human languages, of which she knows seven. The other main character is a slob with an addiction to french-fries and might be portrayed by, say, Walter Matthau severely hung-over on a bad day.

Now, I don't claim that all or even most hackers come anywhere near any kind of societal norm, but most of them you could pass in the street without crossing to the other side, which is more than I can say for most of the people in Valentina (who is, by the way, totally impossible as far as the technology rendered in the book, but that's besides the point).

In other words, too bad guys (I forget who the co-authors are), but the book just doesn't succeed. It would have done well if either the writing and plot had been good (it is almost puerile in its reasoning), or the characters and technology had been reasonable, but the book fails in almost all respects.

-Laurence

Subject: The Hieros Gamos of Sam and An Smith
Path: ihnp4!zehtel!hplabs!sri-unix!J.Dalton%edxa@ucl-cs.arpa
Date: Wed, 10-Oct-84 17:48:18 EDT

A few years ago, I read a something by Josephine Saxon and, wanting more, obtained "The Hieros Gamos of Sam and An Smith" through interlibrary loan from my local library (this was in the US), an excellent method for finding even books as obscure as this one.

- 2 -

It's not for everyone, but I was very impressed.

I too was puzzled by the ending. It would help, or at least I hope it would, to know what "hieros gamos" means, or even to find some reason for the name "An" instead of "Ann", but I'm not sure a logical explanation of the storyline jump is possible. Still, if we all throw in a few bits, perhaps something will emerge.

>>> If you have not read the book, you may want to stop here. <<<

First, it's not quite true that Sam is the only human on earth. Apart from the woman who dies, I think I recall (this means I'm not sure I trust the memory) that the boy had met some other people and was reluctant to meet more. This is why he didn't like to loop back to anywhere he'd already been -- he might meet someone who was following. Then there was the old woman (I'm more sure of this) in the Department store who selected a pile of books for him to read. (If I'm correct here, does anyone remember which books?) Still, Sam and An never actually meet anyone else, so for most of the story they are effectively the only ones.

I also recall that a lot of things-in-need-of-explanation happen on the way to the story discontinuity. I believe that for most of the book, the boy and girl have no names, or at least that something involving names happens near the end. I wish I could remember how old they were and what they did just before the discontinuity as well. Their life changes considerably once

they reach the sea (at the amusement park): she becomes his wife, but other things happen as well, and the girl is the leader in at least some of this. (I seem to recall her suggesting that it was "time".)

Well, you can see that my memory is hazy (at best) on all points, but if I had to make a guess at what it was all about, I'd say that it involved the transformation of children into adults (the transformation in general -- because otherwise I wouldn't be saying much, but also because Sam and An are sort of generic names). I would look for metaphors and associations rather than something like: someone tried an experiment along the lines of Wigner's Friend and this is what happened before someone looked in to make the quantum choice determinate, or: disease (war?) killed most people on earth, but actually the world split at that point and somehow the boy and girl were able to reunite the alternates.

Actually, I'm more inclined not to interpret it at all and just see what else, if anything, connects.

Jeff Dalton, University of Edinburgh

Subject: Hieros Gamos of Sam and An Smith
Path: drutx!ihnp4!zehntel!hplabs!sri-unix!RAOUL@JPL-VLSI.ARPA
Date: Thu, 11-Oct-84 14:23:00 EDT

- 3 -

"Hieros gamos" is greek meaning marriage. I read the book long ago so my memory is hazy too. I was holding back a few of my "clues" to see if anyone else had interpreted them differently. I seem to remember a parrot in one part of the story saying "Time is the prime subjective" or something to that effect. I believe Sam was a 11-15 when he first saw An. An was around that age when she became his wife. This is one book that remains a mystery to me. The reviews for it were good but they all side stepped the issue of explaining the book.

Subject: SF story concerning computers
Path: drutx!ihnp4!zehntel!hplabs!sri-unix!Hodges.pa@XEROX.ARPA

Date: Fri, 12-Oct-84 09:39:05 EDT

Laurence -

A SF book concerning computers you may enjoy is John Brunner's "Shockwave Rider". It is set in the USA in the near future. The nation is wired together by a huge, pervasive computer network. Everyone has access to the net, and everyone's life is highly affected by the information maintained about them by the 'net' (the existence of monstrous databases and machines is hinted about, but never really explained). Brunner's understanding of computers and networks is pretty accurate. He introduces the idea of 'worm' programs. A worm is a distributed program that propogates itself across the network, while accomplishing whatever job it was designed to do. A paper I read (in ACM or IEEE journal) a few years ago, authored at PARC and concerning experimentation with 'worms', was the impetus to read "Shockwave Rider". The authors of the paper indicate (in the paper) Brunner's book was where they got their ideas. They did succeed in writing a 'worm', as I recall.

You may enjoy this book more than 'Valentina' (no promises).

-Jeff-

Subject: The Brother from Another Planet

Path: drutx!ihnp4!zehntel!dual!amd!decwrl!decvax!wivax!rogers

Now, the Brother. I really thought this movie was excellent. It's right up there with Repo Man. It succeeded in capturing the feeling of someone landing someplace *really different* that Moscow on the Hudson and Splash and the Wizard of Oz tried with varying degrees of success to get. It was hilarious, and at the same time captured the vulnerability, wonder, fear, and strangeness felt by the stranger in a strange land.

It is quirky, but it is not a *special effects* movie. You might like it even if you are not the Star Wars type. A lot of *humanness* in this movie.

- 4 -

- Brenda Rogers

Subject: REVIEW: All Of Me

Path: hogpc!houxm!vax135!cornell!uw-beaver!ssc-vax!fluke!moriarty

This movie does not help explain the problems of being a farmer, the anguish of man's injustice to man, or how to get ectoplasm in a box the size of your shin. It does make you laugh and smile quite a bit for two hours, tho', and it seems very satisfied in just being one of the best "comedy" comedies in years (as opposed to social-comment comedy or dramatic comedy). If they gave out Academy awards for skill in acting (not just dramatic acting, which it always rolls around to, but ACTING), Steve Martin would be in the running very strongly this year. Now that he has hit his stride, I hope that he can keep it up. Three stars (out of 4).

Moriarty, aka Jeff Meyer

Subject: tape tracks

Path: hogpc!houxm!ihnp4!nsc!chuqui

More movie reviews of things I should have seen long before they showed up on my television...

Cat People - *+ (nastassia Kinski ****tilt****) What can I say? I knew what I was getting when I rented it. Kinski's shoulder blades can make an entire issue of Playboy slink away in embarrassment. Her acting in this was wooden enough that she could have done better without reading the script, but really, who cares? I think there was a plot, somewhere, but it didn't really bother to intrude on things too much. Warning: rather graphic gore-- especially during the autopsy scene (not recommended for watching over a pepperoni pizza, which I did...)

More later, including the long threatened 'Attack of the Killer tomatoes'

chuq

Subject: Buckaroo Banzai

Path: ihnp4!zehntel!hplabs!sri-unix!NJS.YKTVMV%ibm-sj.csnet@csnet-relay.arpa

I really liked the movie, but let me emphasize that it is really helpful to read the novelization before going. Whereas most movies don't do justice to their books, novelizations, frequently having nothing to do but paraphrase a script and paint pictures, don't have as much of a quality gap. I was the only one of my friends who liked Star Trek, the first of many, because I knew what was going on.

Subject: movie remakes

Path: drutx!ihnp4!zehntel!hplabs!sri-unix!wesm@Mitre-Bedford

I can't believe that they are planning a remake of "The Day the Earth Stood Still". I can't imagine what they will do to it. They made a remake of "The Thing", which did try to follow the short story by John W. Campbell, Jr. as far as the plot was concerned (even if they did go overboard with the horror crap!). The original story that TDTEST was based on was "Farewell to the Master" by Harry Bates, which, though interesting, had nothing to do with the movie version, except for Klaatu and Gort (who was Gnut in the story). Besides this being one of my favorite SF movies (even though I don't like the way they ended it) I can't see how they can improve on it with a remake. They might try to razzle-dazzle us with special effects, but that is not what it's all about! It would probably ruin it. They can't follow the original story, as they did with "The Thing", it doesn't have what it takes to make it. With all the good SF out there, why do they have to do remakes? Look at the super job they did with "Lathe of Heaven"! We need more NEW works, no rehashes. What was so terrific about TDTEST was it was a period film. It played on the sentiments and feeling of the cold war times. The same premise today would be laughed at.

wesm@mitre-bedford

Subject: Re: BUCKEROO BANZAI - (nf)

Path: hogpc!houxm!ihnp4!inxc!pur-ee!uiucdcs!uokvax!lmaher

The Buckaroo Banzai comic book adaptation is already out, both in a magazine-size high quality paper version and as two regular-size comic books. They're not as good as the movie or the book, but then few things are.

From that last line you can tell I liked the movie very much. It's much closer to being a Pulp for the 80's than a comic book. Note that [Mark] Leeper's description of the movie is wrong in places - whether due to confusion or not paying attention I don't know. I'm always suspicious of reviewers that mix up the details in their spoilers - nothing personal, [Mark].

As I said in my first review of this movie when it was released, "If you

like the Pulps, see it. If you're not sure whether you like Pulps, see it and then you'll know. If you don't like the Pulps, buy a ticket for it anyway so it'll make enough money to justify the sequel."

If you liked the Movie, then by all means read the book afterwards!

Carl

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT ALMOST BLANK

