

Lincroft-Holmdel Science Fiction Club
Club Notice - 3/12/86 -- Vol. 4, No. 34

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

Unless otherwise stated, all meetings are on Wednesdays at noon.

LZ meetings are in LZ 3A-206; HO meetings are in HO 2N-523.

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_T_O_P_I_C

- 03/19 HO: "Chronicles of Narnia" by C. S. Lewis
04/02 LZ: THE STARS MY DESTINATION by Alfred Bester (Psionics)
04/09 HO: AT THE MOUNTAINS OF MADNESS by H. P. Lovecraft
04/23 LZ: ORION SHALL RISE by Poul Anderson (Societal Reconstruction)
04/30 HO: ?
05/14 LZ: THE WEREWOLF PRINCIPLE by Clifford Simak (Biological Constructs)
05/21 HO: ?
06/04 LZ: THIS PERFECT DAY by Ira Levin ("Utopias")
06/11 HO: ?
06/25 LZ: STAR GUARD by Andre Norton (Humans as underdogs)
07/16 LZ: SHADRACH IN THE FURNACE by Robert Silverberg (Ethics)
08/06 LZ: TUNNEL IN THE SKY by Robert Heinlein (Faster-Than-Light Travel)

HO Chair is John Jetzt, HO 4F-528A (834-1563). LZ Chair is Rob Mitchell, LZ 1B-306 (576-6106). MT Chair is Mark Leeper, MT 3G-434 (957-5619). HO Librarian is Tim Schroeder, HO 2G-427A (949-5866). LZ Librarian is Lance Larsen, LZ 3C-219 (576-2668). Jill-of-all-trades is Evelyn Leeper, MT 1F-329 (957-2070).

1. Our next Holmdel discussion will be of the C. S. Lewis fantasy series "The Chronicles of Narnia." This is the series of books that starts with THE LION, THE WITCH, AND THE WARDROBE. It is easy to keep this series straight from the Oz books because the lion in this series is anything but cowardly. The books are simply drenched in Christian symbolism with the lion Aslan being a rather obvious Christ symbol. There, now I've gone and ruined the surprise. Well, go to the meeting anyway.

Mark Leeper
MT 3G-434 957-5619
...mtgzz!leeper

HANNAH AND HER SISTERS
A film review by Mark R. Leeper

I probably should say something about H_a_n_n_a_h_a_n_d_H_e_r_S_i_s_t_e_r_s. I saw this film about a week ago and haven't really had enough to say about it to make a readable review out of. I guess the reason for my ambivalence is that I am not sure I really see it as a story with a beginning, a middle, and an end. It is more a two-year chronicle of the life of a family. I do not think anything is really resolved at the climax of the film, though some of the characters are moderately more comfortable at the end than they were in the middle of the film.

It goes without saying it is a well-acted film with a number of very well-developed characters. As a story it is vaguely unsatisfying. On a -4 to +4 scale, I'd give it a +1 for enjoyability. This is somewhat enhanced by a subplot involving Allen's character that is sort of plastered on and has little to do with the rest of the film. I would give it a +3 for artistic value, except for the structure problems I have noted. So give it a +2 for artistic merit.

Mercury Capsules - March 12, 1986

"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 pa!psc from the AT&T-IS ENS systems in Lincroft, {pegasus,mtgzz,ihnp4}!lznv!psc from everywhere else. If that's impossible, I'm at 113A LZ 1D-212, 576-2374.

o+ The hard part about writing fiction is starting and ending the story. In between the two, you just go scooting along from scene to scene. The easiest fiction to write is a big jumbo novel.

Robert A. Heinlein, interview in the Dec/Jan 86 X_i_g_n_a_l_s

o+ T_h_e_C_a_t_W_h_o_W_a_l_k_s_T_h_r_o_u_g_h_W_a_l_l_s: _A_C_o_m_e_d_y_o_f_M_a_n_n_e_r_s: novel, Robert

A. Heinlein, 1985. Eligible for the 1986 Hugo award, but don't bother.

If you hate Heinlein, you might want to use this book as an example of how he can go wrong. If you like him, you'll like the first two hundred and fifty pages or so. If you're a reviewer for the New York Times, you'll be amused by some of the ideas, like shooting a person for bad manners, or an assistant Scoutmaster seducing a tenderfoot (not in *my* troop you don't, buddy!), and miss the point that the story stops abruptly, a hundred and fifty pages before the book does.

Don't get me wrong. I couldn't put it down, the writing is delightful, and the only minor flaw is that Heinlein's again writing scenes where everyone kisses everyone else. It's the major flaw that bothers me.

The story starts with a murder. After a typically short Heinlein romance, a competent man and woman are off on a chase through the Earth-Moon System, without a chance to stop and figure what's happening. So far, so good: how's he going to resolve *this*, I asked myself.

It turns out he doesn't resolve it. Instead, he takes a hard right turn off into left field. For about a hundred pages, no one does much of anything but talk. Remember I_W_i_l_l_F_e_e_l_N_o_E_v_i_l and the worst parts of T_i_m_e_E_n_o_u_g_h_F_o_r_L_o_v_e? This'll give you a feeling of deja vu. Not recommended.

Paul S. R. Chisholm

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o+ J_o_b: _A_C_o_m_e_d_y_o_f_J_u_s_t_i_c_e: novel, Robert A. Heinlein, 1984.

I picked J_o_b after finishing T_h_e_C_a_t_W_h_o_W_a_l_k_s_T_h_r_o_u_g_h_W_a_l_l_s, because I'd heard J_o_b was pretty good. I liked it: fun, a little disjointed, but under control.

Alexander Hergensheimer is on a cruise ship stopover, and gets talked into walking through a fire pit. He faints most of the way through. When he recovers, he's unburned, and still on a cruise ship

stopover . . . but the name of the cruise ship has changed, and so has the name in his wallet. And so has just about everything else in the world.

In fact, Alex is in a different world. And, with a beautiful woman named Margrethe, he ends up bounced in and out of several worlds. (Note: I know Heinlein always writes men as being the weaker sex, but I wish he could write a believable male character who can survive adversity without a beautiful, wiser woman telling him what to do.)

It's important to the story that in Alex's original world, Jerry Falwell would be sent to the stocks for not being fundamentalist enough. Alex is a product of that world, and his growing tolerance of other points of view is well done, *without* having him renounce his beliefs. A devout atheist might find it boring; any but the most narrow-minded Christian should enjoy it.

Then, three-quarters through the book, the story veers off the road and starts off in a completely different direction. This turns out fine! The book was definitely going somewhere (somewhere *completely* surprising!), and this is the best way to get there.

An iota heavier than a good light read, J_o_b was fun. If you like Heinlein at all, you'll enjoy this book. If you hate him, you'll hate this, too. Your loss.

Paul S. R. Chisholm

o+ A_n_o_t_h_e_r_F_i_n_e_M_y_t_h and M_y_t_h_C_o_n_c_e_p_t_i_o_n_s: novels, Robert Asprin, 1978 and 1980.

The potato chips of fantasy; I read them both the night I got them. But *lots* of fun! Highly recommended, even if you don't much like fantasy.

Paul S. R. Chisholm

o+ T_u_f_V_o_y_a_g_i_n_g: fix-up novel (collection of successive stories), 1986. Portions eligible for the 1986 Hugo awards for best stories of various lengths.

The best Baen Book I've seen yet, which (alas) isn't saying much. I greatly enjoyed "Call Him Moses", the first Haviland Tuf story. The following ones ("Guardians" and "The Plague Star", the latter a 1985 novella or novelette) seemed disappointing. The (new to me) "A Beast for Norn" seemed forced, against Tuf's character, and the S'uthlam sequence ("Loaves and Fishes", "Second Helping", and "Manna from Heaven") started interesting, but quickly got amazingly predictable.

Recommended when it comes out in paperback, but not highly even then. If you can only read one story from this book, you won't be missing much (if it's "Call Him Moses".)

Paul S. R. Chisholm

o+ A_T_r_a_v_e_l_l_e_r_i_n_T_i_m_e: novel, Alison Uttley, 1986.

In order to regain her strength after an illness, an adolescent girl is sent to her aunt's ancient farmhouse in the English countryside. She falls under the spell of the house, at first only seeing people from Elizabethan times, but later traveling back in time herself. She falls in love and becomes involved in a plot to save Mary, Queen of Scots.

Uttley's writing style reminds one of the beauty of the English countryside but the book, though not labeled as such, appears to be aimed at a juvenile audience, since none of the character's show the development an adult reader might hope for. As such, however, it is recommended for younger audiences, particularly those who have just studied the era in school.

Two other notes--the book was originally written in 1939, which may explain the style. The spelling of the title is as it is on the book (perhaps the British preference is "traveller" instead of "traveler"?).

Evelyn C Leeper

o+ A_f_t_e_r_w_a_r: anthology, Janet Morris, 1985.

This collection of 11 stories of life after a nuclear war is less interesting than its introduction, in which Morris explains that her first request for such stories netted a large number of "elf stories." Although the list of contributors is impressive--Gregory Benford, C. J. Cherryh, Ian Watson, and others--the stories are uniformly dull. There's not one (except perhaps Watson's "When Idaho Dived") that sticks in my mind even now. Skip it.

Evelyn C Leeper

o+ A_f_t_e_r_t_h_e_F_l_a_m_e_s: anthology, Elizabeth Mitchell, 1985.

This book consists of three novellas. "The Election" by Robert Silverberg has nothing particularly new to offer, and is quite predictable--a disappointment from a talent like Silverberg's. "World War Last" by Norman Spinrad fits in well with the new wave of "cyber-punk, hackers-save-the-world" stories that have come along recently. "When Winter Ends" by Michael Kube-McDowell is a more traditional post-holocaust story tied in with the "what-would-you-put-in-a-shelter?" question. Not a great collection, but the Spinrad and Kube-McDowell are worth reading.

Evelyn C Leeper

o+ T_h_e_C_a_s_e_o_f_t_h_e_B_a_k_e_r_S_t_r_e_e_t_I_r_r_e_g_u_l_a_r_s: novel, Anthony Boucher, 1986.

Originally written in 1940, this mystery revolves around the filming of a Sherlock Holmes film. The scriptwriter detests Sherlock Holmes and the Baker Street Irregulars and, not surprisingly, he ends up the victim. The story that follows is a bit unlikely, and there are some basic unlikelihoods, but all in all, it's good fun.

Evelyn C Leeper

o+ T_h_e_S_u_p_r_e_m_e_A_d_v_e_n_t_u_r_e_o_f_I_n_s_p_e_c_t_o_r_L_e_s_t_r_a_d_e: novel, M. J. Trow, 1985.

Yet another Sherlock-Holmes-related novel, this attempts to link Inspector Lestrade and Jack the Ripper. As a mystery, it not bad, but the author's insistence on inserting bad puns in the character's mouths, and his tendency (admittedly common) to have his characters meet up with many of the notables of the day, detract from the enjoyability. I've read better, but this is at least in the top 50% of Holmesian novels.

Evelyn C Leeper

HIGHLANDER

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: A new action film from Twentieth Century Fox tells the story of a group of immortals heading toward an apocalyptic confrontation. The feel of the film is like that of an 80's Marvel Comic.

Hollywood has discovered that the most profitable audience to aim films at is the teenage crowd (as well as people up through about age 25). To make a profitable film one strategy is to look at this audience, find out what it likes, and make films to appeal to those tastes. Very popular among this crowd are comic books, and films-- notably the "Superman" series--have been made to exploit this interest. Most of these attempts, however, have imitated comic books not as they are, but as they were three decades ago. H_i_g_h_l_a_n_d_e_r is a big comic book on the screen, but for once it is an 80's comic book instead of a 50's one.

Connor MacLeod is a Manhattan antiques dealer with a secret. The secret is that he was born in early 16th Century Scotland and is one of a handful of immortals who are biding their time and waiting to take part in an apocalyptic battle between the forces of good and evil.

MacLeod leads the forces of good, and the forces of evil are led by the sadistic Kurgan. Preparing for the final battle, MacLeod fights the minions of the Kurgan in small sword fights that somehow release enough energy to devastate city blocks and keep special effects departments hopping. The film flashes back and forth between the present-day battles and the story of MacLeod's origin in Scotland. MacLeod is mortally wounded in a battle between the Clan MacLeod and the Kurgan, yet he does not die. Later he gets his own personal Obi-Wan in the form of Ramirez, a Spaniard who was actually born in ancient Egypt.

The real problem with H_i_g_h_l_a_n_d_e_r is that the story is really pretty thin. Whenever the writers had trouble deciding what to do next they threw in another fantastically destructive sword fight.

Christopher Lambert, who played Tarzan in G_r_e_y_s_t_o_k_e, plays the immortal Scotsman who stopped aging and who has an equally immortal beard that stopped aging at three days' growth. Clancy Brown, the Frankenstein monster from T_h_e_B_r_i_d_e, plays the evil Kurgan, and Sean Connery is Ramirez. H_i_g_h_l_a_n_d_e_r is big on flashy action scenes and has some very atmospheric scenes of old Scotland, but it is thin on plot or plot logic. Give it a disappointing -1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

Post script: The day after I saw H_i_g_h_l_a_n_d_e_r I went to a science fiction convention in which a representative of Fox had a presentation of the film, based on a rough cut he had seen a month or so earlier. He enthusiastically talked about the fantasy elements, saying among other

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things that you will see what the immortal was doing over the many years of his immortality and why this particular person was immortal. Sitting in the first row we told him that it was not in the film we saw and he seemed a little irritated that these elements were cut out. The film is made up of fantasy, martial arts, and music by Queen and when they decided what to leave on the cutting room floor, it appears to have been mostly the fantasy. This is how a good film can go bad.

F/X

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: A film special effects technician is pulled into service by the Justice Department to fake a murder. As the plot twists he finds that his bag of film tricks is surprisingly effective in the real world too. This is the best police action film we have seen in a while.

Every season seems to bring us at least one or two police action thrillers. The basic plots are pretty interchangeable and the way you tell them apart is by the trimming. Of course the best-known trimming is Dirty Harry with his oversized guns, but there are also the films with super-helicopters or super-cars or with the policeman being black and having to overcome racial prejudice. In a lighter vein the cop can be just Eddie Murphy having a good time. This winter Orion Films has a reasonably good police action thriller with a slightly different trimming. The cop isn't a cop at all, but a civilian pressed into service by the Justice Department for his particular skills. Rollie Tyler is a film special effects man. As such he has a bag of tricks and gimmicks that put James Bond to shame.

Tyler (played by Australian Bryan Brown--perhaps best known for A T o w n L i k e A l i c e) is asked by agents of the Justice Department (Cliff DeYoung and Mason Adams) to fake the murder of an important organized crime figure, Jerry Orbach, whom the Justice Department wants to use as a witness. Then the plot starts twisting.

F/ X (short for special effects) has a witty script and something that has been missing from suspense films for a while: it has genuine surprises. It does not have many, but it has some. F/ X is not intended to be a deep piece of social commentary. It is an unambitious action film with no intention but to entertain and that it does well. Rate it a +1 on the -4 to +4 scale. Not a bad evening's viewing.

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

Subject: review, Frederik Pohl's "The Merchants' War"

Path: mtuxo!houxm!mhuxt!mhuxr!ulysses!gamma!epsilon!mb2c!umich!msudoc!ctj

Date: Tue, 4-Mar-86 00:41:31 EST

Score: Begining: 7, Middle: 5, End: 7, Overall: 7

Blurb: Great advertising agencies still dominate the world and control all governments and every aspect of human behavior. When a handful of renegades on Venus zealously opposes the so-called "benefits" of the hucksters' paradise, it seems inevitable that the all-powerfull account executives of Earth will stop at nothing, not even war, to force the rebels to submit.

But the Veenies have a plan...

Opinion: Frederik Pohl has written a book which I feel ranks with Golivers Travel's. The satire is very strong but presented in a manor calculated to entertain. The story flows well without ever becoming bogged down. Even though you KNOW, that the author is preaching at you, it never seems to become overbaring.

The hero of this little war is quite believable as he makes his way from an "starclass copysmith" to human. The path is not easy but the trials Tarb encounters never quite destroy him. Some of the wonderful things in this world of tommorrow (today?: _) which Tarb must deal with include: Being adicted to Mokie (aka Coke) via a new advertising methods; Joining the army to help "civilize" the aborigine tribes; And dealing with "Veenies" patriats who have a hard time understanding advertisments at all.

Everything considered, I would recomend "The Merchants' War" to anyone who has ever had to watch thirty min. of commercials for twenty min. of a good movie on the reruns.

/eom ctj ..!ihnp4!msudoc!ctj (Chris Johnson)

Subject: MIRROR IMAGE by Michael G. Coney (mild spoiler)

Path: houxm!whuxl!whuxlm!akgua!gatech!seismo!hao!noao!terak!anasazi!duane

Date: Tue, 4-Mar-86 18:08:44 EST

The jacket reads:

"If an alien life form can adapt to human shape and emotions and actually believes itself to be human, does that make it a man? That

was one of the problems confronting the colonists on Marilyn when they discovered the shape-changing amorpha. At first the creatures were used simply as a labour force, then an experiment produced a super-amorph--and a rebellion. And out of that came something else, something with galaxy-shaking implications: an amorph female gave birth to a baby that would think no evil... to a new messiah?"

The jacket description is very misleading in that it covers events from the beginning to the end of the novel, leading the reader to think that the birth mentioned occurs early enough to figure into the plot. It doesn't.

All of the action takes place on the newly-colonized planet Marilyn. The conditions there and the behavior of the colonists seem quite believable.

The main characters portrayed are somewhat stereotyped: dedicated supervisor, greedy and egotistical tycoon, long-suffering girl friend, eccentric scientist, and so on.

The investigation into the nature of the amorpha is very interesting, mainly from the psychological and sociological standpoints. The story kept me well entertained until around the last quarter, and that last part isn't bad; it just doesn't measure up to what precedes it.

I give this book 3.0 stars (very good). I don't hesitate to recommend it to others to read, but it's not a book I'd keep permanently.

By the way, this was Mr. Coney's first book (copyright 1972).

Duane Morse ...!noao!terak!anasazi!duane

Subject: House no spoiler
Path: harvard!seismo!umcp-cs!nbs-amrf!sauder
Date: Mon, 3-Mar-86 12:40:24 EST

I saw House last Saturday and it was worth the \$2.50 I paid. I don't think it would be worth the \$4.50 that non-matinee cost. The basic problem with the film is that it can't decide whether to be a comedy or a horror flick. As a comedy, it is frequently funny. As a horror, it works occasionally. The Hitcher is a much better film in most respects

and I would rather pay to see The Hitcher a second time than to see House for the first time.

Jeff Sauder {seismo,umcp-cs}!nbs-amrf!sauder