

@@@@@ @ @@@@@ @ @@@@@@@@@@ @ @@@@@ @@@@@ @@@
@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @
@ @@@@@ @@@@@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @
@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @
@ @

Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society
Club Notice - 03/24/89 -- Vol. 7, No. 39

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

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

 D A T E T O P I C

- 04/05 LZ: The "Giants" Trilogy by James Hogan (Characterization in Hard SF)
- 04/12 MT: "Decorative Horror" and Clark Ashton Smith
- 04/26 LZ: MIRRORSHADES edited by Bruce Sterling (Anthologies)
- 05/10 MT: European Science Fiction (especially Stanislaw Lem)

 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.

- 04/08 Science Fiction Association of Bergen County: TBA
(phone 201-933-2724 for details) (Saturday)
- 04/15 NJSFS New Jersey Science Fiction Society: TBA
(phone 201-432-5965 for details) (Saturday)
- 05/05 CONTRAPTION. MI. GoH: Mike Resnick; FGoHs: Mark & Evelyn Leeper.
-05/07 Info: Diana Harlan Stein, 1325 Key West, Troy MI 48083.

HO Chair: John Jetzt HO 1E-525 834-1563 hocpa!jetzt
LZ Chair: Rob Mitchell LZ 1B-306 576-6106 mtuxo!jrrt
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-312 576-3346 lzfme!lfl
MT Librarian: Evelyn Leeper MT 1F-329 957-2070 mtgzy!ecl
Factotum: Evelyn Leeper MT 1F-329 957-2070 mtgzy!ecl
All material copyright by author unless otherwise noted.

1. There are a lot of perversions our sick society should really be
ashamed of itself about, and some of the sickest nobody even thinks
of as being at all bad. They have just come to be accepted.
National news recently carried a story of what they considered a
perfectly reasonable event. In it hundreds of people got together
to see if they could outdo each other in what sort of unnatural

acts they could get animals to commit on cue, and they called it a dog show.

Now I have to tell you that I like all animals, including all household pets (well, just about), but as far as respecting an

THE MT VOID

Page 2

animal, dogs stand head and shoulders above just about any other species that is commonly a pet. Now I know that there are a lot of cat fans out there and a cat is certainly okay as a pet, but as I see it, you've got to be a real sucker to have a pet cat when you could have a dog.

Why do I say that? Well, dogs evolved as pack animals. They are social. That means that they have an innate need to feel they are getting along in society, that they are valued members of the community. They put their faith in a leader and generally remain loyal. In packs the leader is a well-chosen lead dog, but as pets dogs transfer that loyalty to humans.

Cats, on the other hand, evolved as solitary animals. They hunt alone. They never learned social responsibility. While a dog wants to feel he is fitting in, a cat likes to feel he is getting away with something. How much more often do you hear about dogs doing something heroic rather than of cats doing anything at all to benefit others.

And it is not that dogs really think that they are humans, as some ninnies are wont to say. Anybody who has been around dogs for a while can tell that dogs are acutely aware that they are not the same species as us. A dog looking out a window will usually watch with faint interest if a strange human walks on the street, but will get excited if he sees a strange dog go by. Clearly, the dog recognizes an important difference between dogs and humans. And his natural interest is in dogs. Not that they don't make an occasional mistake. My dachshund once got the same sort of excitement seeing a horse. I guess he thought it was a long-legged dog. But then to him, most dogs were long-legged.

Anyway, at this dog show there were a bunch of dogs showing their loyalty and obedience to their human pack leaders. Ad what did

that loyalty demand? They were being combed; they had their ears bound. In fact, many had parts of their ears or tails cut off so they could be closer to their masters' idea of style. Then they had been trained to stand in weird unnatural poses, to perform senseless tasks, and to behave in ways no self-respecting dog would ever act.

The commentator dubbed the winner of the show "the leader of the pack." That was the capper. First of all, these dogs had enough respect for another species that they had chosen to follow pack leaders from that species so strange and incomprehensible to them. Do you know many humans who are willing to accept another race, much less another species, as superiors? You are lucky if you find humans accepting other races and cultures as equals. And not one person in a thousand has any sort of respect that crosses species lines.

But the second reason the commentator was wrong was that the winning dog was chosen for just the opposite of leadership qualities. he was chosen because he was willing to endure indignities. And he was chosen because he remained loyal and obedient to purposes he did not understand. And, you know, I am not sure I understand them either.

2. The following books have been donated to the Middletown branch of the Science Fiction Club library by Binayak Banerjee:

Anthony, Piers	Bio of a Space Tyrant 1: Refugee
Anthony, Piers	Bio of a Space Tyrant 2: Mercenary
Anthony, Piers	Bio of a Space Tyrant 3: Politician
Anthony, Piers	Bio of a Space Tyrant 4: Executive
Anthony, Piers	Heaven Cent
Asimov, Isaac	Robots of Dawn, The
Asimov, Isaac	Robots and Empire
Brunner, John	Children of the Thunder
Friedman, C. S.	In Conquest Born
Harrison, Harry et al	Lifeship, The
Hubbard, L. Ron	Battlefield Earth
MacAvoy, R. A.	Twisting the Rope
McCaffrey, Anne	Dinosaur Planet

Niven, Larry et al	Legacy of Heorot, The
Norton, Andre	Star Rangers
Norton, Andre	Three Against the Witch World
Norton, Andre	Victory on Janus
Norton, Andre	Year of the Unicorn
Pournelle, Jerry	Janissaries
Pournelle, Jerry	Janissaries: Clan and Crown
Slater, Philip	How I Saved the World
Zelazny, Roger	Courts of Chaos, The

[He also donated one of his consolidator drawers for storing the library, which is only fair, considering how many books he's donated! -ecl]

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

Everything secret degenerates; nothing is safe that does
not bear discussion and publicity.
-- Lord Acton

TIMEPIVOT by Brian N. Ball
A book review by Frank R. Leisti
Copyright 1989 Frank R. Leisti

The book Timepivot by Brian N. Ball is a story of O'Flynn, an engineer who with his team works on worlds smoothing down mountains, filling valleys to leave behind a perfect sphere. During this latest job, he discovers an instrument embedded in the rock and upon reporting it he is ordered to disconnect his communication system. His intuition takes charge and he fakes turning off his radio. He hears the base informing his team to kill him. He defends himself, survives even when the base kills all of the base personnel. A choice is given him to save

himself and he comes face to whatever with the multiple creature Mr. Charisman, who happens to be the ruler of the galaxy. O'Flynn gets his first name when he swears Jesus a few times on meeting Mr. Charisman. He discovers that his job was the opposite of others who build up worlds that are spherical in shape.

Mr. O'Flynn is one of those few people who's intuition assists them in moments of crisis. So far, it had spared his life when the robots and his co-workers attempted to kill him. Mr. Charisman puts his ability to the test in the quest of the Timepivot. It appears that there is a legend of ships passing out of the galaxy getting lost or becoming trapped in the area where time does not exist. It is decided that Mr. Jesus O'Flynn will get some information, training, and be allowed to view the spectacle in which he can view the Timepivot. For enjoyment, he is allowed to view the dance that certain women have been practicing for all of their lives. From the dance, he views the mandala to which the Hunters (criminals who crashed on the planet where the Timepivot exists) search endlessly for the Timepivot. These criminals have learned to move where time does not exist and they look to stop all time with the Timepivot.

O'Flynn has a quick trip to the planet and is sent down with a few sacrificial robots who draw away the Hunters so that O'Flynn can examine the ship. Despite odds stacked against him, he adjusts the reality so that the Hunters can find the Timepivot. Shortly thereafter he is thrown through dimensions of time to another space-time continuum where he discovers the ability to move without time (known as a succession of equilibrium states moving in a given direction). After obtaining the Timepivot, Jesus still faces the fact of facing up to Mr. Charisman who is planning something totally nasty. The resolution of the story is left to readers to discover.

Despite the fact that O'Flynn is whisked through the universe in short order -- with insufficient information, something about him is able to adapt to the chaos of strange events around him. This quality of survival without knowledge is often referred to as luck. If this is the case, then O'Flynn must be the luckiest person around (he is quite sexually prolific as well). The story is a pleasant one to re-read to go over the understanding that is obviously lacking the first time through. The author has split up his chapters in order to present a sense of what is happening at the Timepivot as well as what is happening with Jesus O'Flynn. One thing is for certain. Mr Charisman is a great satire of our political structure -- a committee body which rules (or at least believes that it rules) towards the downfall of the galaxy. In such a satire, I really enjoyed the story.

TO THE RESURRECTION STATION by Eleanor Arnason

Avon, 1986, ISBN 0-380-75110-0, \$3.50.

A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper

Copyright 1989 Evelyn C. Leeper

I was at Boskone in the Dealers' Room and one of the dealers recognized me (well, recognized my name on my badge, actually) and started talking to me. One thing led to another and she said I really should read T_o_t_h_e_R_e_s_u_r_r_e_c_t_i_o_n_S_t_a_t_i_o_n and review it. I farbled a bit--recommendations from perfect strangers are iffy things--but I figured she knew something of what I like from my reviews, so I gave it a try.

I'm not sure why she recommended it.

Arnason has an interesting premise--Belinda Smith returns to her old home (which sounds like a direct descendent of the House of Usher or any of the castles found in old Hammer or Corman films) to discover that she isn't a human after all, but half-human, half-native. Because she is half-native she must marry another native (Claud), which she doesn't want to do, so she, Claud, and a robot who may or may not be her great-great-great-grandfather (give or take a great) flee the planet in a lifeboat and head for Earth. Belinda seems to generate an improbability field around her. Well, yes, many characters in bad novels seem to do that, but here it's explicitly stated (sort of like Niven's Teela Brown, who really is luckier than most people because she was bred for luck). Earth has been devastated, but some people survive, as well as giant intelligent rats, etc., etc. You get the idea.

Unfortunately Arnason doesn't d_o anything with all this. The characters wander through the various situations without ever being affected by them or affecting them. Eventually they drift off without ever achieving any resolution, but since there didn't seem to be much conflict to begin with, this probably shouldn't surprise me. In many ways this seemed like a "young adult" novel--the age of the character, the writing level--but given one or two (relatively) explicit sex scenes, it seems unlikely that that was the market either. In short, this could have been a good book, but it fizzled out.

CHANCES ARE

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Copyright 1989 Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: Lightweight but enjoyable fantasy of a young man who discovers that in a previous life he was married to his girlfriend's mother. You've seen most of this before, but it is an enjoyable, if not always well-acted, story. Rating: +1.

The light supernatural comedy-fantasy has been around for a long time, having its greatest flourish in the late 1930s and early 1940s with the film versions of Thorne Smith's books, particularly the "Topper" series and T_u_r_n_a_b_o_u_t. I doubt that there has been a year since the 1940s that has not had one and probably several, from O_n_e_T_o_u_c_h_o_f_V_e_n_u_s to B_i_g. But lately, perhaps in part due to the so-called "New Age" thinking, there has been an upswing in the number of whimsical comedies on supernatural themes such as soul transference and reincarnation. The "turnabout" films in which the protagonists trade bodies have almost become their own sub-genre. The latest entry in the supernatural derby (last time I checked) is C_h_a_n_c_e_s_A_r_e.

The prologue introduces us to newlyweds Louie and Corinne Jeffries (played by Christopher McDonald and Cybill Shepherd). They are passionately in love. Louie's best friend, Philip Train (played by Ryan O'Neal), also loves Corinne, but from a proper distance. Louie loves Corinne so much he cannot worry about minor things like crossing streets safely, which is how he comes to be in Heaven asking to be reincarnated as close as possible to Corinne. Flash forward twenty-four years and Louie is now in his next life as Yale journalism graduate Alex Finch (played by Robert Downey, Jr.). Through an odd, not to say absurd, set of coincidences, Alex finds himself in the house he used to own, looking at the woman who used to be his wife, and it all comes back to him.

C_h_a_n_c_e_s_A_r_e is unpretentious and whimsical. When he first realizes the joke that fate has played on him, Alex completely loses all his self-control in a way that seems totally out of character. Previously having shown himself to be a quick thinker, it is unlikely that he would

so totally go incoherent without ever asking himself, "How must this behavior look to other people?" One curious novelty of this film is that Cybill Shepherd comes off as doing a reasonable acting job. I think this works by contrast to Robert Downey, Jr., who is not yet an accomplished actor by anybody's definition. Then there's Ryan O'Neal, who can display the whole range of emotions from "A" to "A.5." Like Downey, O'Neal started his career playing good-looking youths, but already Downey has more dramatic range than O'Neal.

C_h_a_n_c_e_s_A_r_e is a pleasant but unoriginal television-quality film. I rate it a +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

SAMURAI

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

Capsule review: Three films make up one long story, a fictionalized account of a historical samurai and what is perhaps the most famous samurai duel ever. Rating: +2.

Perhaps the most fabled samurai duel ever was the duel between Miyamoto Musashi and Sasaki Kojiro. Musashi had been a ronin from an early age. After the great battle of Sekigahara, he became a notorious bandit until virtually forced by a Buddhist priest to learn zen. After that he became a samurai in service to a lord and traveled the country, winning more than sixty duels. Musashi is famous for, among other things, writing G_o_r_i_n_N_o_S_h_o (a.k.a. T_h_e_B_o_o_k_o_f_t_h_e_F_i_v_e_R_i_n_g_s). Sasaki Kojiro was a brilliant young swordsman using unorthodox technique. Each man had an impressive list of victories when they faced each other on the shores of Ganryu Island.

In 1953 and 1954, Hiroshi Inagaki made three films based on the life of Miyamoto Musashi. The first one--known variously as T_h_e_L_e_g_e_n_d_o_f_M_u_s_a_s_h_i, T_h_e_M_a_s_t_e_r_S_w_o_r_d_s_m_a_n, and M_i_y_a_m_o_t_o_M_u_s_a_s_h_i--tells how

Musashi fought in the battle of Sekigahara, how he became a bandit, and finally how he became a full-fledged samurai.

DelatOchijojiTemple (the continuation) finds Musashi's past catching up with him, forcing him into a great battle against tremendous odds, as well as a battle with himself in order to follow the way of the samurai code. We also meet the enigmatic young swordsman Sasaki Kojiro, whose name would be ever linked with Musashi's.

The conclusion, DelonGanryuIsland or MusashiandKojiro, tells how Musashi turns his hand from samurai to farmer. Part of the story seems to have been the inspiration for Kurosawa's SevenSamurai. Finally Musashi must meet his young opponent on the beach of Ganryu.

These are not so much three films as one film in three parts and have been called SamuraiI, SamuraiII, and SamuraiIII. They total more than five hours in length and tell a nearly seamless story with complex characters and situations. Director Inagaki returned to the story of the famous duel, incidentally, in 1967. His Kojiro also told the story of the duel, but gave Kojiro's history instead of Musashi's. One minor problem, at least for me, is that after the battle of Sekigahara comes the peaceful early years of the Tokugawa Shogunate. (Readers of Shogun should realize that Sekigahara was the real name of the great battle in Shogun. Toranaga's real name was Ieyasu Tokugawa.) But my point is that these were times of peace and the duels were not fought over politics but were more like sports events. They do not have

Samurai

March 19, 1989

Page 2

great historical significance.

The production was from Toho and fans of 1950s Toho films will recognize familiar faces such as that of Takashi Shimura, who played the wise old scientist from the first two Godzilla films, the dying man from Ikiru, and the lead samurai in SevenSamurai (the part played by Yul Brynner in TheMagnificentSeven). Also present is Akihiko Hirata, whose oxygen destroyer was the only weapon ever to kill permanently a

godzilla and whose report foretold the coming of the Mysterians.

This clearly was an expensive production and Inagaki not only used color at a time when most Japanese films were in black and white, he also made full and unorthodox use of color with (for example) surrealistically vivid skies. Just as Masaki Kobayashi did with the 1964 K_w_a_i_d_a_n and Kenji Sawara did with 1957's R_o_d_a_n, Inagaki gets the full effect he can from the color photography.

S_a_m_u_r_a_i is probably not classic film in the same way as Kurosawa's samurai films are, but it is a sort of light classic in the way a film such as H_i_g_h_N_o_o_n is. If it shows up at your video store it is certainly worth seeing. I rate S_a_m_u_r_a_i a +2 on the -4 to +4 scale.