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Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society
 Club Notice - 05/05/95 -- Vol. 13, No. 45

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

Unless otherwise stated, all meetings are in Middletown 5T-415
 Wednesdays at noon.

DATE	TOPIC
05/10/95	Book: MORE THAN HUMAN by Theodore Sturgeon
05/31/95	Book: BEGGARS AND CHOOSERS by Nancy Kress (Hugo Nominee)
06/21/95	Book: BRITTLE INNINGS by Michael Bishop (Hugo Nominee)
07/12/95	Book: MIRROR DANCE by Lois McMaster Bujold (Hugo Nominee)
08/02/95	Book: MOTHER OF STORMS by John Barnes (Hugo Nominee)
08/23/95	Book: TOWING JEHOVAH by James Morrow (Hugo Nominee)
09/13/95	Book: BRAIN CHILD by George Turner
10/05/95	Book: MIDSHIPMAN'S HOPE by David Feintuch (**THURSDAY**)

Outside events:
 The Science Fiction Association of Bergen County meets on the second Saturday of every month in Upper Saddle River; call 201-933-2724 for details. The New Jersey Science Fiction Society meets on the third Saturday of every month in Belleville; call 201-432-5965 for details.

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1. Of our May 10 book, Theodore Sturgeon's MORE THAN HUMAN, Charlie Harris writes:

According to Sturgeon's Law, "90% of everything is crud." A remarkably high fraction of Sturgeon's own writing falls into the other 10%, and many readers consider MORE THAN HUMAN his best work. Sturgeon's stories often set up a parallel between an intriguing biological, psychological, or sociological concept--often a

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speculative concept--and very familiar human characteristics and concerns. In MORE THAN HUMAN, the concept is Homo Gestalt: a superbeing composed of several humans, each an outcast with a specialized function and talent.

MORE THAN HUMAN is the saga of these humans' quest, often unwitting, for the others needed for the Gestalt organism. The 1953 novel grew out of the 1952 novelette, "Baby is Three," which forms the middle of the three-section book. An interesting way to read the book is to read the middle section first, and then admire how skillfully it was integrated with the other two sections.

During the course of the book, one comes to know and like (or, in one case, despise) the memorably diverse characters. The perhaps surprising finale, with its analysis of questions of morality, maturity and community, is a fitting close to Sturgeon's tour de force. [-csh]

2. As far as the Hugo nominees go, the Barnes and Noble on Route 35 in Holmdel has the Barnes, the Bishop, and the Bujold, and will probably be getting the Kress and the Morrow. (All but the Morrow are available in mass market paperback; the Morrow should be available in trade paperback.) I do not believe their stock is the result of a particular bias towards authors whose names start with "B". [-ecl]

3. Well, this the event is over and the figures are in. This year's "Bring Your Daughters to Work Day" has been the most

profitable we have ever had. The secret was the invention of "Bring Your Daughters to Work Day" merchandising. You probably saw the ads: a happy daughter sitting on a whole bunch of great "Bring Your Daughters to Work Day" merchandise. We had "Bring Your Daughters to Work Day" T-shirts and "Bring Your Daughters to Work Day" rulers for school. (Hey, you know how hard it is to sell rulers these days? Do you know how many of these babies we sold? We figure with next year's sales, we will finally be able to empty the warehouse. I wonder what people use rulers for these days? Well, what matters is they sold.) Then there were the ever-popular "Bring Your Daughters to Work Day" trading cards. We have not heard yet if people are actually trading these little honeys, we didn't promise you anyone would want to trade anything to get them, but heck, we all know that real success in America means showing up on trading cards. Just whole bunches of good stuff and we can all feel inspired that our sales were just great. We am not sure how many daughters came to work, but we can assure you sales were

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strong enough to encourage us to have the event again next year.

So let us not dwell on victories past. It is time to start planning for next year and how we plan to turn this thing into an even a bigger and more meaningful event. The contracts are not all signed, but I think we can tentatively say this is what we will have for next year. Are you worried whether you will be able to provide for your's daughter's education? What if you aren't around to provide it. The sad fact is that statistics say your daughter could end up barefoot and pregnant without someone to provide for her. Well we have the answer. For just two dollars a week, less than you spend on cosmetics, you can assure your daughter will have the money to get a college education with "Bring Your Daughters to Work Day" Life Insurance. If you have a daughter and work to bring her to you cannot be refused.

How about this: after a hard day of work, you can take your daughter to dinner at any of several fine restaurants in your own area at a substantial savings. Get one meal at full price, get a second meal of lessor cost at a big 25% off. The books will be on sale at better corporations across the country.

Now how about when your daughter has to make those heavy decisions about her career? Who is going to help her. Fear not. For next year we will be starting the "Bring Your Daughters to Work Day" Psychic Hotline. Your daughter just has to call to talk to a genuine quality authentic psychic, for just \$3 for the first minute and \$2 for each additional minute. I am not sure who, but by next year we will have some endorsements by people you will know and respect, probably popular singers from the 60s.

Yes, I am proud to say with genuine "Bring Your Daughters to Work Day" merchandise, the future looks great for our daughters, and perhaps even yours.

4. And here are the 1995 Hugo nominations:

Best Novel

MOTHER OF STORMS by John Barnes (Tor)
BRITTLE INNINGS by Michael Bishop (Bantam)
MIRROR DANCE by Lois McMaster Bujold (Baen)
BEGGARS AND CHOOSERS by Nancy Kress (Tor)
TOWING JEHOVAH by James Morrow (Harcourt Brace)

Best Novella

"Cri de Coeur" by Michael Bishop (Asimov's)
"Melodies of the Heart" by Michael J. Flynn (Analog)
"Forgiveness Day" by Ursula K. Le Guin (Asimov's)

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"Seven Views of Olduvai Gorge" by Mike Resnick (F&SF)
"Les Fleurs Du Mal" by Brian Stableford (Asimov's)

Best Novelette

"Cocoon" by Greg Egan (Asimov's)
"The Martian Child" by David Gerrold (F&SF)
"The Singular Habits of Wasps" by Geoffrey A. Landis (Analog)
"The Matter of Seggri" by Ursula K. Le Guin (Crank!)
"A Little Knowledge" by Mike Resnick (Asimov's)

Best Short Story

"Mrs. Lincoln's China" by M. Shayne Bell (Asimov's)
"Dead Man's Curve" by Terry Bisson (Asimov's)
"None So Blind" by Joe Haldeman (Asimov's)
"Understanding Entropy" by Barry N. Malzberg (SF Age)
"Barnaby in Exile" by Mike Resnick (Asimov's)
"I Know What You're Thinking" by Kate Wilhelm (Asimov's)

Best Non-fiction Book

I. ASIMOV: A MEMOIR by Isaac Asimov (Doubleday)
SPECTRUM: THE BEST IN CONTEMPORARY FANTASTIC ART
by Cathy Burnett & Arnie Fenner (Underwood Books)
SILENT INTERVIEWS: ON LANGUAGE, RACE, SEX, SCIENCE FICTION,
AND SOME COMICS by Samuel R. Delany (Wesleyan University Press)
MAKING BOOK by Teresa Nielsen Hayden (NESFA Press)
THE BOOK ON THE EDGE OF FOREVER by Christopher Priest (Fantagraphics)

Best Dramatic Presentation

"All Good Things" (STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION)
INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE
THE MASK
STARGATE
STAR TREK: GENERATIONS

Best Professional Editor

Ellen Datlow
Gardner Dozois
Mike Resnick
Kristine Kathryn Rusch
Stanley Schmidt

Best Professional Artist

Jim Burns
Thomas Canty
Bob Eggleton
Don Maitz
Michael Whelan

Best Professional Artwork

LADY COTTINGTON'S PRESSED FAIRY BOOK by Brian Froud
& Terry Jones (Pavilion UK)

Cover for GUN, WITH OCCASIONAL MUSIC by Jonathan Lethem,
by Michael Koelsch (Harcourt, Brace/NEL UK)
Cover for FOREIGNER by C. J. Cherryh, by Michael Whelan (DAW/Legend UK)

Best Semiprozine

INTERZONE edited by David Pringle
LOCUS edited by Charles N. Brown
THE NEW YORK REVIEW OF SCIENCE FICTION edited by David G. Hartwell,
Donald G. Keller, Robert K. J. Killheffer & Gordon Van Gelder
SCIENCE FICTION CHRONICLE edited by Andrew I. Porter
TOMORROW SPECULATIVE FICTION edited by Algis Budrys

Best Fanzine

ANSIBLE edited by Dave Langford
FILE 770 edited by Mike Glyer
HABAKKUK edited by Bill Donaho
LAN'S LANTERN edited by George Laskowski
MIMOSA edited by Dick & Nicki Lynch

Best Fan Writer

Sharon Farber
Mike Glyer
Andy Hooper
Dave Langford
Evelyn C. Leeper

Best Fan Artist

Brad W. Foster
Teddy Harvia
Linda Michaels
Peggy Ranson
Bill Rotsler

John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer

Linda Dunn (2nd year of eligibility)
David Feintuch (1st year of eligibility)
Daniel Marcus (2nd year of eligibility)
Jeff Noon (2nd year of eligibility)
Felicity Savage (1st year of eligibility)

[From the press release distributed by Intersection, the 53rd World Science Fiction Convention, dated 1st May 1995:] The nominees were chosen by popular vote by 477 members of Intersection or ConAdian who submitted valid nominating ballots. In some categories more than 5 nominations appear due to tie votes. In the "Original Artwork" category only 3 nominations appear, as no other candidates appeared on more than 5% of the ballots cast in that category, as required by the WSFS constitution. The Hugo Subcommittee of Intersection decided to cancel the Best Music category due to a marked lack of interest that category: only one nominated item received more than 7 nominations. LADY COTTINGTON'S PRESSED FAIRY

BOOK received votes in both the categories of Best Non-Fiction Book and Best Original Artwork; we have decided to assign it to Best Original Artwork. [Mike & Debby Moir, Hugo Awards Administrators]

5. VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED (a film review by Mark R. Leeper):

Capsule: The second adaptation of John Wyndham's MIDWICH CUCKOOS is surprisingly restrained for a John Carpenter film. Fans of Carpenter's usual flashy special effects and gore may be disappointed to find them toned down, but the real enthusiasts of science fiction will welcome a return to a more traditional approaches. Rating: high +1 (-4 to +4)

[Spoiler warning: For those unfamiliar with the story, VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED has many small mysteries for the viewer starting with the very first scene. It is impossible to say anything about the content of the film without giving away some of the mysteries. This review will have only minor spoilers outside of one paragraph. That paragraph will have a separate spoiler warning.]

One of the best British science fiction authors of the 50s and 60s was John Wyndham Parkes Lucas Beynon Harris who wrote under several names, but the best-known were John Beynon Harris and John Wyndham. His most popular two novels, both written as John Wyndham, were THE DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS and THE MIDWICH CUCKOOS. The former has been filmed twice under its own name; the latter has just been filmed for a second time, both times under the title VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED, though the second film version perhaps owes more to the first film than to the novel. Incidentally, the novel THE MIDWICH CUCKOOS itself appears to owe a great deal to Richard Matheson's short story "Trespass" (a.k.a. "Mother by Protest"), Theodore Sturgeon's "More than Human," and Jerome Bixby's "It's a Good Life."

The director this time is John Carpenter. When Carpenter remade THE THING he threw a lot of special effects at the project and made a film respectful neither of the spirit of the original film, nor of the classic science fiction story on which it was based. (Ironically, the original story could be more satisfyingly adapted today with morphing effects than with the model effects he used.) His version of VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED is much less sensationalist in style, probably lower in budget, and at the same time a better representation of its story. The story is not one of screaming horror and dismembered bodies, but one with more a subtle and a cerebral sort of chill.

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[Spoiler warning: do not read unless you already know the plot.] The story takes place in the village of Midwich but no longer Midwich, England. Now it is Midwich, California, as unlikely as that name sounds. It is a nice, isolated coastal town. In the middle of the day a mysterious sleep falls upon everybody in town. Simultaneously, everybody in town simply collapses where he is. Six hours later the sleep ends as mysteriously as it began. But things are not quite back to normal. Ten women come to realize they are pregnant. With one stillbirth, they give birth to what appears to be nine silver-haired children, but it is actually one single organism with a single mind and incredible mental powers.

Carpenter has put in a few touches to please an action-film audience. There are a couple of particularly nasty deaths, there are two fiery truck crashes, and toward the end there is a half-hearted action scene with guns blazing. But most of the violence is compulsion by mental suggestion and mental suggestion is what Carpenter uses to make it seem effective to the viewer.

Carpenter clearly respects Wolf Rilla's 1960 version. He credits the screenplay and lifts whole scenes from the earlier film's script. Visually he imitates the style of the earlier adaptation. Realizing how silly the superchildren would look in modern clothing styles, he dresses them in the same sort of clothing as the earlier film and gives them a similar silver-haired look and similar facial cast. And speaking of familiar casts, we have Christopher Reeve as the lead, an amalgam of two characters in the original, but primarily the George Sanders character. Many may disagree but

Sanders played the role too smugly and confidently. Reeve conveys a wider range of emotions. Personifying the line "I'm from the Government, and I'm here to help you" is Kirstie Alley. There are interesting ironies in her character, but she adds little to them. As the town priest, Mark Hamill underpowers the role and carries too much baggage from previous roles. The Children, like Reeve, may actually do a better job here than in the original.

For the most part, VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED looks like a science fiction film that could have been made in the 60s or 70s that is not half bad. I give it a high +1 on the -4 to +4 scale. [-mrl]

6. PRIEST (a film review by Mark R. Leeper);

Capsule: A young and idealistic priest is forced to choose between two evils, one is immediate and personal, one is more abstract but more fundamental to the beliefs of the Catholic Church. Gad, I love a film that presents a sophisticated moral dilemma, treats

the audience as adults, and gives no pat answers. Rating: low +3 (-4 to +4)

Even the most idealistic laws can be only an approximation of justice. Criminals who hurt other people can hide behind the Fifth Amendment of the Constitution. They are given that right by the law so that the law can be used to prevent larger injustices. In A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS the character Sir Thomas More puts it extremely succinctly by saying, "I give the Devil benefit of law for my own safety's sake." (That is a great scene, by the way. I consider it the best single scene in any film I know.) What is true of the laws of this country is also true of the laws of the Catholic Church. It is a terrible responsibility to have to allow in the name of a law a very bad evil to continue in order to serve a greater good. And that is the responsibility that nearly destroys the young and idealistic Father Greg in Antonia Byrd's PRIEST, a

film from a powerful screenplay by Jimmy McGovern.

Father Greg (played by Linus Roache) is a young and high-minded priest sent to a rough Liverpool parish. He is there to replace an older priest who was fired when he fell from favor with his superiors. "Time to move on, old son," they told him insensitively. His replacement is Father Greg, who has little sympathy for priests or parishioners who do not live by the rules of the Church. This immediately puts him into conflict with Father Matthew (Tom Wilkinson), the other presiding priest of the parish. Matthew is more worldly and more tolerant of failure and sin. The two priests immediately have philosophical differences effectively over whether to follow the letter or the spirit of church law. But any chance Matthew might have in convincing Greg is lost when Greg discovers Matthew is sleeping with the housekeeper, Maria Kerrigan (Cathy Tyson). This is just the sort of decadence that Father Greg abhors, but he cannot completely condemn, knowing that secretly he himself has desires that would make him a sinner in the eyes of the Church. Greg, who came to Liverpool reasonably confident that he has all the answers, finds to his shock that there are questions deeper than his answers go. Like the main character in Nathaniel West's *MISS LONELYHEARTS*, Greg is unprepared for the real-world problems of the people around him. Soon all this is overwhelmed by his learning in the confessional of a terrible evil going on. He cannot take action without breaking his vow to protect the seal of privacy of the confessional. His choice of protecting the Church at the expense of one of his parishioners, combined with his knowledge that he is breaking other Church rules, places him in the jaws of a crushing moral dilemma.

The cast of *PRIEST* is mostly unfamiliar--the exceptions being Cathy Tyson of *MONA LISA* and John Bennett, a veteran of 70's horror films and episodes of "Doctor Who," here playing a priest so straight-laced and old school he insists on speaking in Latin over dinner. Still the acting is magnetic with especially good performances from

Roache and Wilkinson.

It is perhaps ironic that members of the Catholic Church should choose this film to protest. McGovern's script could easily have

made the Church appear entirely wrong. A lesser writer might have done that. Most American films make it obvious which side is correct in any conflict. But the dilemma in this film really is a dilemma and there are good arguments on each side. McGovern leaves it to the viewer to decide whether Greg has done the right thing or not. That is genuinely refreshing. I give PRIEST a low +3 on the -4 to +4 scale. [-mrl]

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The public is a ferocious beast: one must either chain it up or flee from it.

-- Voltaire

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