

Holmdel Science Fiction Discussion Group
Club Notice - 8/27/79

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

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

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>
8/29/79	THE DISPOSSESSED by Ursula K. Le Guin, rm 1B-506
9/4/79 (Tues.)	"War of the Worlds - Pt. 1", rm 4A-227
9/5/79	"War of the Worlds - Pt. 2", rm 3A-216
9/19/79	CHILDHOOD'S END by Arthur C. Clarke, rm 3A-216
10/10/79	A FAR SUNSET by Edmund Cooper, rm 4A-215
10/31/79	[to be announced], rm 4A-215

Our library is in HO 2D-634A. Rich Ditch (x3432) is librarian.
Evelyn Leeper (HO 4E-507B x6334) is Club book-buyer.

1. Be reminded that we have a meeting this week to discuss THE DISPOSSESSED by Ursula K. Le Guin.

2. PLEASE NOTE THAT WE HAVE HAD SOME ROOM CHANGES SO ALL MEMBERS AT A DISCUSSION CAN SIT AT A TABLE AND NOT BE TREATED AS OUTCASTS.

3. I don't know what all is going to go into this notice since it is being made up about three weeks in advance. I believe Mr. Ditch will be putting in a number of reviews and I have a review of DRACULA, the Langella version. Mr. Ditch is collating his material in and any such material has not had editorial approval, so read it at your own risk.

4. At our last meeting we discussed three alternate possibilities to take advantage of the improved attendance at meetings. The following seems to be the choice set:

- Split into two different discussion groups, each making its own choice of books.
- Schedule meetings closer together so that an individual can skip a discussion of a book that does not interest him/her and still have a discussion of a book that does coming up relatively soon.
- Simply schedule meetings for a larger room.

There will probably be a member preference poll in an upcoming notice for members to vote on an operating procedure.

Mark R. Leeper
HO 1B-512 x7093

DRACULA

A Review by Mark R. Leeper

A perennial favorite of the films is DRACULA. I count eight different film versions of the original Bram Stoker novel and I have probably missed a few. Of these only the BEC production COUNT DRACULA can be said to be a reasonably accurate representation of the novel. Certainly the best known, if not the best loved, is the 1931 Bela Lugosi DRACULA which was actually based, for the most part, on the then very successful stage play by Deane and Balderston which also starred Lugosi. The decision to film the stage play in 1931 was probably the most lucrative decision Universal Pictures ever made. When the stage play was revived and proved to be a success with Frank Langella in the title role, what could be more natural than for Universal to once again make a film version of the play, retaining Langella as the thirsty nobleman?

If the title and the names of all the characters were changed so as not to reflect the original novel, this would be a fairly impressive vampire film. The photography is excellent. It is done almost entirely in muted tones and with a hazy lens. There is not one cheerful color in the entire film to work against the mood of inescapable evil. There are many special effects and all but the very last in the film are excellent. It is a pity that the very last special effect is bad enough to break the mood of the rest of the film. The acting is usually excellent and convincing. While there are only three actors in the film who are likely to be familiar to American audiences, the entire cast pulls off the film as melodramatic but engrossing. If one ignores the fact that this film is based on Bram Stoker's novel, it is one of the best films of the vampire sub-genre ever made.

Now a suggestion for the purist who knows the original story from the book: "Stay away." But for the mood created by the film and Lawrence Olivier's performance as Abraham Van Helsing, the film is a washout. Langella makes a fairly good Dracula on the stage from over thirty feet away, and as long as the camera stays that far from him, he still makes a good Dracula in the film. But let's face it, one might as well cast Burt Reynolds as Rasputin. Langella has none of the craggy features and aquiline face of Dracula. The drooping moustache, as usual, is missing. Like Rasputin, Dracula's magnetism should work in spite of, not because of, his looks.

The characters are comically shuffled from the book. Lucy (Westenra) is now Dr. Seward's daughter and is engaged to Jonathan Harker. Mina (Murray) is not in this version engaged to Harker but is, by an odd coincidence, the daughter of vampire-expert Van Helsing. It is also Mina and not Lucy who first falls under the spell of the Count and later becomes a vampire. As was a necessity in the stage play, but should not be with a film, the new DRACULA is rather limited in locale and timespan. Seven

months of story in the book are reduced to a week or so in the film. All Eastern European locales, which make up a major part of the book, are eliminated in the film, which apparently takes place entirely in an area no larger than one mile square. The use of ghoulish green makeup for the vampiric Mina is neither faithful to the book nor logical. This, admittedly, is a well-made film and an entertaining experience for almost anyone but a purist, but it is a bit hypocritical to do such violence to the plot and still call the film DRACULA.

Dracula Comes In Pairs

Having trouble counting up eight film versions of DRACULA? There are four disjoint pairs. Two were called NOSFERATU, two were based on the stage play, two starred Christopher Lee, and two were made for television.