

Holmdel Science Fiction Discussion Group
Club Notice - 9/24/80

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

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

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>
10/8/80	Reading list selection and CANTICLE FOR LEIBOWITZ by Walter M. Miller, rm 4H-205 [RAX by Michael G. Coney, at HP]
10/29/80	ICERIGGER by Alan Dean Foster, rm 4H-205
11/19/80	CITY by Clifford Simak, rm 4H-205
12/10/80	<to be announced>, rm 4H-205

Our library is in HO 2C-401. Rich Ditch (x3432) is librarian.
Debi Bennett (HP 1B-368 x2408) is in charge of South Plainfield
activities. Evelyn Leeper (HO 1E-321 x6334) is Club book-buyer.

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1. The time has come to select new books for discussion. We would like to have them selected in time to be scheduled at the October 8th meeting. Each member of the club is free to choose one book. Any book chosen will be the subject of a discussion meeting as long as it has not been discussed before and it is available for no more than three dollars a copy. In addition it has become a point of etiquette that anyone choosing a book should at least show up to either the Holmdel or South Plainfield discussion of that book in case you happen to be the only person in world who knows why it is a great book. Also this should prevent you from pulling an "EYES OF THE OVERWORLD" (i.e. naming a book you know to be a turkey with no intention of showing up to defend it).

Please fill out the attached form and get it to me by the October 8th meeting.

2. Two notices ago I made the mistake of implying that perhaps Rich Ditch may complain a bit too much. I am afraid I will have to print a retraction of that implication, if only to stop him from griping about it.

3. The September and October issues of SF CHRONICLE have arrived and are available in the library. No issues of ANALOG or CINEFANTASTIQUE have arrived yet; we will inform you of their arrival via this newsletter.

4. Since SF CHRONICLE carries an extensive "Upcoming Books" section, information on such books will probably not be repeated in this newsletter.

Mark Leeper
HO 2B-515 x7093

ELECTRIC FOREST, by Tanith Lee. DAW, New York, 1979, 159p, Paper, Novel, \$1.75. ISBN 0-87997-482-6.

Tanith Lee's writing style is unique (as was mentioned in the review of SABELLA). It appears, however, to be better suited to stories of fantasy (or at least those that depend on elements of fantasy), rather than those of science fiction, in particular this novel.

Magdala Cled is a "genetic misfit", deformed and ugly. She is approached one day by Claudio Loro, who offers to transfer her consciousness to a beautiful body. She agrees, and finds herself in the midst of a complicated scientific and political plot that she cannot understand. Neither can the reader, probably because important information is withheld until the explanation is revealed. Even then I feel Lee does not play fair with the reader, but not everyone would agree.

Lee's poetic style simply doesn't fit in with this type of story, and her occasional choice of a word that is almost right is disturbing. (She speaks of Magdala's mother who "dispelled her baby and dumped it...on the State." She means, of course, "expelled" rather than "dispelled".) However, this may be DAW's error rather than Lee's, since the overall level of proof-reading is atrocious. ("The transparent revolving restaurant that was its centerpiece, had started the evening carousel.") The cover art, while well-executed, is totally inaccurate.

ELECTRIC FOREST is an interesting, but ultimately disappointing, novel. Not recommended.

Evelyn C. Leeper

ROADMARKS, by Roger Zelazny. Del Rey, New York, 1980, 185p, Paper, Novel, \$2.25. ISBN 345-25388-4.

Since Zelazny has built up quite a reputation, with past works such as LORD OF LIGHT and the Amber series, his many fans eagerly await each new Zelazny novel. Unfortunately, they will probably be sadly disappointed with this one.

Basic premise: There is a Road, resembling a super-highway, that runs through Time--"Time past, Time to come, Time that could have been and Time that might yet be"--with exits at various points in history. (One could think of the mile-markers on an ordinary super-highway as corresponding to century markers on the Road.) As people wander around changing history, exits become overgrown with weeds and disappear, to be replaced with new exits that lead to the corresponding points in the new version. The old exits are still there, however, and it is possible to reopen them. The Road was apparently built by the Dragons of Bel'kwinith for some unspecified purpose, and they also travel the Road.

Red Dorakeen is one of those who travels the Road. He is engaged in gun-running (to the Battle of Marathon!) when someone decides to try to kill him. Eventually this involves such diverse characters as the Marquis de Sade, Adolph Hitler, a tyrannosaurus rex, a Tibetan monk, and a robot left on Earth by aliens thousands of years ago.

The book is written in a very disjointed manner. (It starts with Chapter Two, which will give you some idea of what's to come!) Zelazny bounces back and forth between Chapter One (dealing with Red) and Chapter Two (dealing with his pursuers). It appears that even these two threads are not linear, in the case that they seem to contain flashbacks, etc. It's hard to tell, though, since the characters apparently travel both forward and backward in subjective, as well as objective, time. (Of course, Zelazny has used this technique of non-linearity before, e.g., in LORD OF LIGHT.)

If this sounds confusing, you now have the feel of the book. Possibly a second or third reading would clear up some of the confusion, but probably the best idea is to avoid it altogether. Not recommended.

Evelyn C. Leeper

THE MIRROR, by Marlys Millhiser. Fawcett-Crest, New York, 1980, 352p, Paper, Novel, \$2.50. ISBN 0-449-24187-4.

At first glance, this book appears to be an historical romance with possible occult overtones. It is, in fact, a fantasy involving personality transfer and time travel (of a sort). The main character, Shay Garrett, is given a mirror as a wedding present. This mirror is something of a family heirloom, although no one seems to know too much about its history. On the eve of her wedding, Shay looks into the mirror at the same time that her grandmother Bran walks into the room and looks into the same mirror. Their eyes meet and everything goes black.

When Shay awakes, she finds herself in a different body, in an unfamiliar room, surrounded by unfamiliar people who all seem to know her. She soon realizes that Shay's mind is now occupying her grandmother's body, but at the time that her grandmother was Shay's age--in other words, around the turn of the century. It is also the eve of Brandy's wedding (Shay's grandmother's real name is Brandy McCabe), and Shay finds herself in an unfamiliar world with which she has to cope.

Millhiser attempts to deal with the problems a modern woman would face if she found herself translated back to frontier times. Poul Anderson did something similar in "The Man Who Came Early," where a modern soldier is translated back to Viking times. Although Anderson often chose to minimize or ignore to problems such a man would face (as in THREE HEARTS AND THREE LIONS), he did realize that they were there. Most other authors ignore them entirely, and have their hero or heroine remake the world with their superior knowledge, as in Twain's A CONNECTICUT YANKEE IN KING ARTHUR'S COURT or De Camp's LEST DARKNESS FALL. There is nothing wrong, mind you, with asking your reader to suspend disbelief on this subject as the authors of the latter books do; it's merely refreshing to see the problems dealt with on occasion. (Dean McLaughlin's "Hawk Among Sparrows" is another work that considers the difficulties of not having "the machines to build the machines to build the machines.") Shay/Brandy doesn't know how to bake bread, light a stove, hoe a garden, or do the laundry. She also encounters more mundane problems such as how to pin up her hair properly, how to behave in a proper ladylike fashion, how to dress, and how to manage without things like tampons and birth control pills when no one around her would even consider talking about such things.

Millhiser deals with these problems, but she does make it easier for herself in a few ways. First, Brandy McCabe was already considered somewhat crazy, so Shay/Brandy's lapses are for the most part attributed to that. Also, Shay/Brandy's new mother-in-law is willing to take Shay/Brandy under her wing and teach her all the things that she needs to know. Finally, she has constructed Shay Garrett's family history in such a way that her grandmother's family and community were English-speaking.

(It would have complicated the story considerably have Shay found herself inhabiting a body in turn-of-the-century Warsaw!) These short-cuts allow Shay/Brandy to get along well enough to make the story interesting. Throughout the book, the mirror keeps coming back to show Shay/Brandy what is happening to Brandy/Shay (since her grandmother's mind now inhabits her 1980 body).

The characters are all interesting and the first two-thirds of the book is paced very well. (In fact, I found it difficult to put it down once I started reading it!) Shay/Brandy seems to "take to" the frontier life a bit faster or easier than one would think likely, but since we don't really know what she was like before the transfer, it's hard to tell. The book appears to be fairly accurate in its portrayal of frontier life (and subsequent times) and is in general enjoyable and interesting to read. The major problem with it is the final third (or so). About 250 pages into the novel, Millhiser has finished her story of Shay/Brandy and neatly wrapped up all the loose ends. She then adds another 100 pages describing Brandy/Shay's reaction to this world. It's intriguing, but it probably should have been saved for another book, since it seems somewhat rushed. Again, Brandy/Shay seems to fit into this world far faster than would appear likely. (For example, Shay/Brandy would find it easier to wear long skirts and long-sleeved blouses than Brandy/Shay would find it to walk around wearing only a T-shirt and shorts.) Comparing the two sections, it appears that Millhiser prefers the frontier life to our modern one, which she attempts to justify with the attitudes of her two main characters: Shay/Brandy gradually accepts and even appears to enjoy frontier life, while Brandy/Shay sees nothing good in modern life. (I found myself comparing this attitude to a similar one expressed in John Norman's TIME SLAVE, although the two books have little, if anything, else in common. Norman, of course, has his own axe to grind in that direction.) This "sermonizing" is only a minor part of the book, and as a whole the book is very enjoyable and highly recommended.

(Note: The book was brought to my attention by Richard Lupoff's column in STARSHIP/ALGOL, and some of the ideas expressed in this review may have been influenced by his column. That's just one of the hazards of reading the review before the book, I guess.)

Evelyn C. Leeper

PURPLE PTERODACTYLS, by L. Sprague De Camp. Ace, New York, 1980, 228p, Paper, Collection, \$2.25. ISBN 0-441-69190-0.

This collection of 15 stories has as its central character W. Wilson Newbury, banker, to whom strange things happen. (The word De Camp uses to describe him is "ensorcelled".) The tone of the book is somewhere between horrific and humorous, as if De Camp were trying to combine Lovecraft and his own TALES FROM GAVAGAN'S BAR. The combination is at first unsettling, but once you adjust to it, the result is moderately enjoyable. However, the inclusion of humor results in a much milder horror story than, say, Lovecraft would have written. Readers used to the "don't read it when you're alone in the house" type of story may find these too tame for their tastes.

De Camp leans heavily on other horror writers (although not really borrowing from them) by having them appear as peripheral characters in his stories. Lovecraft, Robert E. Howard, and Clark Ashton Smith are referred to, if somewhat obliquely, in various stories, and he uses one or two of their undeveloped ideas as a starting point for a couple of stories. For the uninitiated, De Camp points out these references in his introduction. Since there are very few such "in-jokes", the general tone of the book as straight fiction is maintained.

As usual, Ace Books has managed their usual bad job of proof-reading and several typos may be found. In addition, even though I treated the book very gently, I had the feeling that the binding could go at any time. Finally, the cover art, while interesting, is not really true to the feel of the stories, being too "humorous" to convey De Camp's atmosphere. And for those who think that the title and cute cover indicate a good book for the kids, be warned that this book contains some relatively explicit sexual situations. (Or as the Science Fiction Book Club says: "Warning: Content, frank language and/or sexual situations in [this book] may be offensive to some readers.") Recommended (with the above provisos) to those who enjoy horror stories.

Evelyn C. Leeper

NEVER BEFORE PUBLISHED!

(or, when is a duplicate not a duplicate?)

Nothing so attracts the attention of a science fiction collector as the words "Never Before Published!" emblazoned across the cover of a book by an author the collector is collecting. But caveat emptor. "Never Before Published" seems to be publisher-ese for "never before published in book form under this title by this publisher with exactly the same contents as this book, including illustrations (maybe)."

Let us take a case in point. In 1962, Ace Books published Ace Double F-153, which contained two Marion Zimmer Bradley novels (from her Darkover series), THE PLANET SAVERS (at 91 pages) and THE SWORD OF ALDONES (at 164 pages). This volume cost 40 cents, and was soon out of print. In 1976, in answer to repeated requests to bring all the Darkover novels back into print, Ace reissued THE PLANET SAVERS, along with an "all-new" Darkover story, "The Waterfall," in a volume costing \$1.50. Rather than 91 pages of the smaller Ace format, this version of the novel filled (more or less) 101 pages of the current, larger format (6 7/8 inches high versus 6 3/8 inches). (THE SWORD OF ALDONES was not included; in fact, it was not reissued at that time at all.) Now, in 1980, Ace Books has again reissued THE PLANET SAVERS (including "The Waterfall"), this time with THE SWORD OF ALDONES, as well as an "all-new" article by Bradley entitled "A Darkover Retrospective." This volume costs \$2.50. (I didn't notice the page count, but it looks at least 3 times as thick as the 1976 edition of THE PLANET SAVERS.)

Now it should be obvious that any new collector who wishes to own the entire Darkover series can purchase just the latest reincarnation of THE PLANET SAVERS/THE SWORD OF ALDONES and be all set. But a collector of the series from the beginning has been forced to buy all three volumes, since each one includes material not found in the previous version. And someone who started in the middle (with the 1976 version) must buy the current version to get THE SWORD OF ALDONES and the article. Now I like the Darkover series, and I like to collect books, but asking me to spend \$2.50 to obtain a third copy of THE PLANET SAVERS, a second copy of THE SWORD OF ALDONES, a second copy of "The Waterfall," and a copy of "Darkover Retrospective" is expecting a bit much. (Even half-price in a used-book store is a bit steep for a single article.)

If the new edition had some advantage over the old, I might almost forgive them. If, for example, it were printed on higher quality paper, or were bound better, or even were proof-read better, it might be worth it. But let's face it--Ace Books nowadays have very little along those lines to recommend them. The paper, which used to be average quality, has come to resemble

paper towels. The binding is rapidly descending to the level of the old Lancer Books. (Lancer Books, for those who don't remember, were the ones whose pages came out as you first read them.) As for proof-reading, a recent Ace book had eight proof-reading errors on the first page! (DAW Books is getting almost as bad.) And, to paraphrase the editor of this notice, Ace seems to be in the laudable business of bringing science fiction to the partially-sighted, i.e., their print is so large it can be read half-way across the room. This of course means more pages, which Ace thinks will fool all those buyers who buy their books based on cost per page. There are two flaws with this logic: 1) Most buyers don't decide on a cost-per-page basis, and 2) Those who do are smart enough not to be fooled by such an obvious ploy, and generally boycott Ace Books altogether. Considering the number of trees that must die to produce a new Ace book, that might not be such a bad idea.

I will mention another, slightly different, case. THE MAGIC GOES AWAY was published as a trade paperback, again by Ace Books, at \$5.95. For this somewhat inflated price, you got a large-size paperback (with correspondingly large-size print), filled with black-and-white illustrations of debatable quality, in a binding that was certainly no better than their standard paperback binding (and probably worse), and a "novel" that was really an expansion of a novella previously published elsewhere (ODYSSEY, Summer 1976). (There was also Ace Books's claim that this "novel" would not be published in a regular paperback format. Needless to say, it did in fact appear in a regular paperback format, from Ace.)

I haven't even mentioned the most common "deception," that of changing the title. All collectors learn very quickly to check the cover (and the back of the title page) to see if John Q. Author's "new" novel, ATTACK OF THE DENEBIAN SLIME-DEVIL, was really serialized in ANALOG twenty years ago under the title "Slime Devils Forever!," and also issued in book form as BUCK BLASTER STRIKES BACK. And, of course, there is the "Moorcock syndrome." (Many authors are "guilty" of it, but Moorcock seems to be the most prominent.) This is the practice of an author issuing a new, "revised" edition of an earlier work. What's a collector to do? Are the revisions minor (a la Niven's corrections to the first edition of RINGWORLD, which only affected the first chapter), or is the book a total rewrite? Does it pay to own both AGAINST THE FALL OF NIGHT and THE CITY AND THE STARS? Should you buy Saberhagen's EMPIRE OF THE EAST if you already have the three component novels? When books were cheaper, it wasn't so bad. Now a book can cost \$5.95 (and more--Zelazny's THE CHANGELING is priced at \$7.95 in paperback!) in paperback. How complete do you want your collection to be?

Evelyn C. Leeper

Another sinister school 'game' surfaces

By DR. MAX RAFFERTY

WHAT THE DEVIL is going on in our schools? And in Utah, of all God-fearing places.

Some weeks back, I had a few hundred ursh words to say in this column about Murder," a so-called "game" being played several hundred students trying to "kill" each other with plastic darts, the sole survi-

Opinion

vor winning the grand prize. I said it was sick, and by the Eternal, it is.

But now, what have we here? In Heber City, Utah, junior high school kids are fooling around with still another sinister mummery, this one called "Dungeons and Dragons." The thing was introduced last winter as part of an after-school program for

gifted students. Players take an imaginary journey through a vast dungeon to vanquish mythical monsters and recover buried treasure.

Nothing wrong so far. The rub comes with the cast of characters. Each player becomes a human, dwarf, elf and so on, with strengths and weaknesses determined by the throw of the dice. In other words, he plays a part — quite possibly a non-human one.

HERE LET ME recall for you the case of 16-year-old Michigan State University student James Dallas Egbert III, who turned up missing last year after becoming immersed and engrossed in "Dungeons and Dragons." He surfaced a month later in Texas, a long way from Michigan, and to date has steadfastly refused to say where he had been. Police theorized at the time that the game had become more real to him than the world which is actually around him, that he was lost in time and space, moving through a twisted, nightmare dimension like a zombie.

Now this sort of thing — even for college students — is no confounded good. For junior high youngsters, it is unspeakable. I'm joined in my opinion by a group of Heber City parents, who have been leaning — hard — on their local school board to squash this fantastic aberration like a cockroach. Unbelievably, said board refused twice to take action. So the frantic parents went over the board members' heads clear to the state board of education, which has finally ordered a staff evaluation of "Dungeons and Dragons."

Belatedly, that caught someone's attention. Wasatch Middle School Principal Bill

Dudley says the game will be discontinued next year because it isn't worth all the fuss. The parents say it should never have been started in the first place because it's "saturnic." Know something? I agree with them.

IT'S THE POSSIBILITY of the player actually becoming the game character that worries the Heber City moms and pops. Linda Burns, mother of eight, asks the \$64 question: "This is make-believe, but at what point do some children continue to keep that character?"

Could this be what happened to Michigan State's James Egbert? He's not saying. But it's a darned good bet. Maybe he himself doesn't remember what happened or where he was during those four long weeks. Maybe he was — somewhere else.

This is the kind of thing that happens when the human mind is detached from reality for too long. Reality becomes fantasy and vice-versa.

It's also the kind of thing that happens when a school gets into the habit of entertaining instead of instructing. Granted, "Dungeons and Dragons" was played after school. Still and all, the program for the gifted was put on by the school district and presumably conducted by school employees. Its outcomes should have been educationally valuable. But what's valuable about chasing dragons? Or pretending you're an elf?

If the Wasatch pupils need to play mental games, I suggest Monopoly. Or contract bridge.

Rafferty is dean of the school of education at Troy State University in Alabama.

Books previously discussed/scheduled to be discussed:

Anderson	THREE HEARTS AND THREE LIONS
Asimov	END OF ETERNITY
Bester	STARS MY DESTINATION
Blish	CASE OF CONSCIENCE
Brunner	STAND ON ZANZIBAR
Cherryh	GATE OF IVREL
Clarke	CHILDHOOD'S END
Clarke	IMPERIAL EARTH
Clement	NEEDLE
Coney	RAX
Cooper	A FAR SUNSET
Dick	MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE
Dickson	DORSAI!
Farmer	TO YOUR SCATTERED BODIES GO
Foster	ICERIGGER
Haldeman	FOREVER WAR
Harrison	STAINLESS STEEL RAT
Heinlein	MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS
Heinlein	STARSHIP TROOPERS
Herbert	DUNE
Kaye & Goodwin	MASTERS OF SOLITUDE
Laumer	DINOSAUR BEACH
Le Guin	DISPOSSESSED
Le Guin	LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS
McCaffrey	DRAGONFLIGHT
Miller	CANTICLE FOR LEIBOWITZ
Moffitt	JUPITER THEFT
Niven	PROTECTOR
Niven	RINGWORLD
Pohl	GATEWAY
Pohl	JEM
Pohl	SPACE MERCHANTS
Reamy	BLIND VOICES
Saberhagen	BERSERKER
Silverberg	UP THE LINE
Simak	CITY
Stapledon	LAST AND FIRST MEN
Vance	DRAGON MASTERS
Vance	EYES OF THE OVERWORLD
Wilson	MIND PARASITES
Zelazny	LORD OF LIGHT

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Your name

Location and room

(optional if on sticker on other side)

title

author

You can verify that the book is in print and is available (from the F&SF Book Company) for under \$3 by calling Evelyn Leeper, HO 1E-321, x6334

Staple with this side out and drop in interoffice mail or bring to October 8 meeting.