

Lincroft-Holmdel Science Fiction Club  
Club Notice - 11/16/83 -- Vol. 2, No. 19

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

Unless otherwise stated, all Lincroft meetings are on Wednesdays  
in LZ 3A-206 (HO meetings in HO 3N-418) at noon.

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>
11/23	Video meeting: WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE
12/14	WARLOCK IN SPITE OF HIMSELF by Christopher Stasheff
12/14	HO: TAU ZERO by Poul Anderson
01/04/84	Audio/visual meeting
01/25	COURTSIP RITE by Donald Kingsbury
02/15	Audio/visual meeting
03/07	NOR CRYSTAL TEARS by Alan Dean Foster
03/28	Audio/visual meeting
04/18	DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS by John Wyndham

LZ's library and librarian Lance Larsen (576-2668) are in LZ 3C-219.  
Mark Leeper (576-2571) is chairperson. HO's library and librarian  
Mike Lukacs (949-4043) are in HO 4B-510. John Jetzt (834-3332) is  
HO-chairperson.

1. Important note:

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I M P O R T A N T   N O T E                      I M P O R T A N T   N O T E  
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Starting with the December 7 issue, we will be sending Netnews  
(a.k.a. SF-Lovers) only to those people who request it (via the  
questionnaire in the last issue, phone call, carrier pigeon, or  
whatever). It will either be a separate mailing or sent on the end  
of the regular notice. If you wish to receive Netnews, let us  
know. (This will be net.sf-lovers, NOT net.trek or net.sw. No one  
has expressed great interest in those two groups, and several have  
expressed great non-interest.) The Club libraries at LZ and HO will  
get Netnews by default. We hope this satisfies everyone's  
preferences regarding Netnews.

2. The following books have been added to the library at HO:

\*\*\*\*\*Presorted\*\*\*\*\*  
\*    Leeper, Evelyn C.                      \*  
\*    LZ 1D-216                                \*  
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Adams, Douglas	HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO GALAXY
	RESTAURANT AT END OF UNIVERSE
Anthony, Piers	LIFE, THE UNIVERSE AND EVERYTHING
	A SPELL FOR CHAMELEON
	THE SOURCE OF MAGIC
	CASTLE ROOGNA
Asimov, Isaac	FOUNDATION'S EDGE
Brin, David	STARTIDE RISING
Foster, Alan Dean	MISSION TO MOULOKIN
Herbert, Frank	GOD EMPEROR OF DUNE
Hogan, James P.	INHERIT THE STARS
	THE GENTLE GIANTS OF GANYMEDE
	GIANTS' STAR
McCaffrey, Anne	DECISION AT DOONA
Preiss, B., et al.	DRAGONWORLD

Mark Leeper  
LZ 3E-215 x2571  
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houxa!mhtsa!lznv!mr1  
hogpd!lznv!mr1

TESTAMENT: The Luckiest 5%  
A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Nuclear war has been a subject of terror and fascination for over a third of a century now. In 1951, Arch Oboler made Five, the first film to deal with the aftermath. In all those years only Peter Watkins's 1966 semi-documentary The War Game has dealt with life during and after nuclear war with any sort of integrity and realism. This autumn will see the release of at least two new films purporting to portray the aftermath of nuclear war. One is ABC-TV's The Day After; the other is Testament. The former has yet to be seen; the latter is in release already.

Testament is the story of the Wetherlys, a family of five, and what happens to them and their small town of Hamlin, California, after the U.S. is devastated by a nuclear attack. Director Lynne Littman creates a believable set of people. These are not the beautiful people that usually inhabit Hollywood films; they look and act like a real pre-holocaust family. Littman has concentrated all the credibility she could muster on the characters and has none left for the circumstances. The story (based on the novel The Last Testament by Carol Amen) is downbeat, of course, but we are left to assume that Hamlin was absurdly lucky. Compared to the most likely aftermath of nuclear war, the melancholy wait for death by radiation poisoning does not ring anywhere near true. We see a whole community running low on food, but only one person is shown to turn to crime. Other than perhaps more cloudiness than usual, there are no particular climatic changes. Most experts now agree that the effects of nuclear war on climate would be devastating. There is an implication that water service has stopped, yet one of the characters appears to use a toilet much later. In fact, there is no explanation at all of what the sanitary facilities are without running water. Hamlin is near enough to nuclear blasts to see the flash blindingly bright, yet there is no local damage and radiation is not greatly increased in Hamlin at first. We never see anyone who was injured in the attack at all.

Jane Alexander plays Carol Wetherly, who finds she must run her family alone after her husband is apparently killed in the atomic attack. The pain of her fear and frustration builds steadily through the whole film until the film's emotional climax when it boils over into hatred for "the people who brought this on." A little less effective is the story of Brad Wetherly (Ross Harris), the thirteen-year-old son who becomes a man in time of crisis in typical TV-movie fashion. Familiar faces include Mako as the town's gas station attendant and Leon Ames as the town's crusty old ham radio operator and staunchest citizen. Rebecca DeMornay, best known for her role in Risky Business, plays a young mother in a small part.

Testament's camerawork and direction are really quite good. After the bomb, the film seems done in dark and muted colors that create the somber effects that other filmmakers have gotten only by filming in black and white. The only bright scenes after the bomb are scenes from Alexander's pre-war memories, which take the form of flickering home movies. All in



all, the technical credits, the acting, and the direction of this film are excellent. The film is well-mounted and well-intentioned, but suffers the same problems as all after-the-bomb films (with the exception of The War Game): it concentrates on the luckiest 5% of the population and even then is rife with technical inaccuracy. See it, but mentally translate the disaster into some form of plague or even germ warfare rather than nuclear war. For virtually every scene in the film, that explanation makes as much or more sense than nuclear war.

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A Brief List of Post-Nuclear War Films, Books, and Stories  
Compiled by Evelyn C. Leeper

1. Films

- Beginning or the End
- Damnation Alley
- Five
- Hiroshima, Mon Amour
- Ladybug, Ladybug
- On the Beach
- Panic in the Year Zero
- The War Game
- The World, the Flesh, and the Devil

2. Books and Stories

- Aldiss, Brian W.--NON-STOP (STARSHIP)
- Anderson, Poul--"Tomorrow's Children"
- Brackett, Leigh--THE LONG TOMORROW
- Carter, Paul--"The Last Objective"
- Coppel, Alfred--DARK DECEMBER
- del Rey, Lester--THE ELEVENTH COMMANDMENT
- Fearn, Russell--"After the Atom"
- Frank, Pat--ALAS, BABYLON
- Galouye, Daniel--DARK UNIVERSE
- Jenkins, Will F.--THE MURDER OF THE USA
- Jones, Raymond F.--"The Children's Room"
- Kuttner, Henry--MUTANT
- Kuttner, Henry--"Way of the Gods", "Atomic"
- Leiber, Fritz--"Night of the Long Knives" ("The Wolf Pair")
- Merle, Robert--MALEVIL
- Merril, Judith--SHADOW ON THE HEARTH
- Merrill, Judith--"That Only a Mother"
- Miller, Walter M.--A CANTICLE FOR LEIBOWITZ
- Moore, Ward--"Lot", "Lot's Daughter"
- Pangborn, Edgar--DAVY, THE JUDGEMENT OF EVE, THE COMPANY OF GLORY
- Roshwald, Mordecai--LEVEL 7
- Sturgeon, Theodore--PRODIGY
- Sturgeon, Theodore--"Thunder and Roses"
- Tucker, Wilson--THE LONG LOUD SILENCE
- Wyndham, John--THE CHRYSALIDS (RE-BIRTH)
- Zelazny, Roger--DAMNATION ALLEY

DRAGONWORLD  
by Byron Preiss and Michael Reaves  
illustrated by Joseph Zucker

Book Review by John Jetzt

At first glance DRAGONWORLD looks like just another fantasy-with-dragon book. The cover shows a prodigious dragon. The back cover gives the mandatory comparison to Tolkien (and in this case, also to McCaffrey!). The opening pages show a map of part of the land area and adjacent seas of the wondrous planet where the action is to take place. The next thing to catch your eye, however, makes DRAGONWORLD different, for a mass-market publication. The book is copiously illustrated, and Zucker justly deserves to have his name printed with the other authors' names.

In brief, I enjoyed it. I will not go so far as to say whether the Dragonworld may (or should) be compared to Middle Earth or Pern. I will say that the reader of this type of fantasy will probably not be disappointed.

The world of DRAGONWORLD consists of two very different pre-technological countries separated by a strait. The strait is narrow enough to see the other side, but too treacherous to have permitted commerce. The countries mutually distrust each other, and they are drawn tragically into an armed confrontation. The stories of the countries are developed in parallel, and gradually the dragon-element is introduced. The book is fast-paced, and the scene shifts rapidly.

The imagery of the two countries is nicely developed. For want of a better word, they would have to be called "medieval," but there is not the usual castle milieu. There are several new interesting concepts developed during the rapidly unfolding narrative. The differences in culture, government, and technology between the counties provide good counterpoint as the scene shifts.

The illustrations deserve a discussion. On the whole they complement the reading of the story. I thought some of them hit the mark of the "correct" image I had in my mind quite well, and others not so well; but this is more my fault than the illustrator's. Each reader will appreciate the illustrations differently. It is also quite difficult to refrain from taking a sneak preview of the illustrations in the remainder of the book, but this is also my problem.

As you might expect, the authors set you up for a sequel. This appears almost to be an afterthought on their part, but it is easy to forgive them for it. I urge them to go ahead and write it, if they have not already begun to do so.

PET SEMATARY by Stephen King  
Doubleday, 1983, \$15.95.

Book review by Evelyn C. Leeper

I have recently reviewed Christine (the novel) and The Dead Zone (the movie), I am now reviewing Pet Sematary (the novel), and I expect to be reviewing Christine (the movie) before long. Add to this Cujo (the movie) which I did not review, and it becomes apparent that Stephen King's children must be having a lot of expensive orthodontia if he has to earn money at this pace.

Pet Sematary is purported to be the book that Stephen King said he couldn't finish because it scared even him. If this is true, he must have done some major re-writing, because this book is no scarier than any of his others. In fact, it is probably less so, simply because it is so predictable. The story is predictable, and King makes it worse by telling you ahead of time what is going to happen: "Little did he know that in six months Jim would be dead" sort of thing. Don't worry; I made that one up. It's not in the book but similar ones are. There's also far too much of the "and then he woke up" school of writing. All in all, the tricks in the book make it very frustrating reading.

On the positive side, there are King's characters, his descriptions (both of surroundings and emotions), and the desire he puts in the reader to see exactly what he's going to do with the story. For the most part these outweigh the faults I have already listed, but I find it distressing that King's novels of late have been going downhill. His first, Carrie was a sort of practice novel. His next three (Salem's Lot, The Shining, and The Stand) were by far his best. After that it's been a steady decline. While still better than the average horror novel, Pet Sematary is further indication that King may have burned himself out early. Recommended with reservations.



PET SEMATARY by Stephen King  
Doubleday, 1983, \$15.95.

Book review by Mark R. Leeper

Every time I finish a Stephen King novel I have basically the same thought--that it would have made a great short story. King is reasonably good at creating and describing characters and in every one of his novels I've read he seems to use this to take an idea that a Richard Matheson or a Robert Bloch would have done adequately in a short story (without much emphasis on the characters, admittedly) and pumped it up to a novel of ten times the length by adding irrelevant character detail. Pet Sematary is an exception. In his new novel he is taking a well-known 10-page horror story by another author entirely and expanding it to almost 400 pages. (You'll know the story since he does make reference to it in the novel.) He simply retells the story in modern terms and then slows the action with a flood of character detail or "action" detail. By action detail I mean that he would take twenty pages to describe how, for example, one character kills another, another five pages on how he chooses a knife, five on how he drives to the other's house and what he sees on the way, and so forth. Suspense is one thing, but suspense dragged out ad nauseum in order to make a few small ideas fill a book becomes tedious to read. Perhaps his books are better skimmed than read.

Besides being based heavily on a well-known horror story (he makes reference to it two or three times in the novel), King also works in the plot of a little-known but enjoyable little horror film called variously Deathdream (on TV) or Dead of Night (theatrical title). It may be coincidence, but one whole chapter seems to be a tip of the hat to Christopher Anvil's fine short story "Mind Partner." So much for the ideas King may have cribbed from others. From his own writings we once again have a psychic child and someone racing by plane and car to avert a disaster--old friends to Stephen King fans.

One thing you can depend on King for: he has the most unintentionally hilarious death and funeral scenes of any author I know. He does restrain himself from having mothers shovel chocolate pudding into dead babies' mouths (only to have it fall back out) or having fathers jump on their sons' coffins yelling for them to stop fooling around. Still, the funeral brawl in Pet Sematary is there to remind us that last rites in Maine are a lot of fun.

One question I would have for Mr. King: what is the significance of his unusual spelling of the title? It is never really made clear in the novel. The spelling does suggest a pun on 'sematic', but if it is, the idea is never really developed in the novel. It's a pity really. That might have been the only interesting new idea in the book.

WE SEVEN by "The Astronauts Themselves"  
Simon & Schuster, 1962.

Book review by Evelyn C. Leeper

This book is probably out of print now, but since it provides a nice counterpoint to The Right Stuff (recently discussed here) and is probably available in your local library, I'm going to review it anyway.

This book consists of articles written by Malcom Scott Carpenter (5 articles), Leroy Gordon Cooper, Jr. (2 articles), John H. Glenn, Jr. (5 articles), Virgil I. Grissom (3 articles), Walter M. Schirra, Jr. (3 articles), Alan B. Shepard, Jr. (4 articles), and Donald K. Slayton (3 articles). (One suspects that there were some ghost writers involved here, but the book doesn't admit to it.) At the time the book was written, Shepard, Grissom, Glenn, and Carpenter had made their flights.

I read We Seven when it came out (twenty years ago now). I was twelve and wanted to be an astronaut. (I still do, but that's another story.) My impressions of the book have faded, but I suspect at the time I was impressed by the high ideals and noble motives of the men involved. Each of them writes about how proud he was to be able to help his country, etc., etc. Upon re-reading, I am struck by the undercurrent of competitiveness of the men, more than the patriotism, which today seems as if it were part of a set speech that each astronaut had to give.

Surprisingly, this book doesn't contradict Wolfe's book all that much. It's just that facts or episodes that would put the astronauts in a bad light that Wolfe relates, We Seven ignores. John Dille (of Life magazine) in his introduction, describes John Glenn as "sternly self-disciplined and almost ascetic in his pursuit of perfection," which certainly squares with Tom Wolfe's depiction of Glenn as a "Dudley Do-right" or "clean Marine." The pictures of family life are probably somewhat idealized, and there are no suggestions of immorality. (One interesting sentence: "Only Carpenter, Shepard, Slayton, and Schirra were smokers when they entered Project Mercury." The "only" makes it sound like the smokers were a small minority; actually they were 4 out of 7, or a majority! But smoking is unhealthy, so the "only" makes the group as a whole look better.)

The book goes into a lot of detail about the spacecraft (I believe that 'spacecraft' is the plural as well as the singular), the suits, the boosters, and the first four missions in general. I had expected it to be simplistic and outdated, but was pleasantly surprised to find it still interesting and informative.



PARADOXICON by Nicholas Falletta (pub. by Doubleday)  
a review by Mark R. Leeper

"A certain village has among its inhabitants one and only one barber. He is a clean-shaven and well-respected man who shaves all and only the village men who do not shave themselves. These are the facts. The question is, 'Who shaves the barber?'"

Thus if the barber shaves himself, then he is not one of the men who is shaved by the barber so he does not shave himself. If he does not shave himself then he is shaved by the barber, so he does shave himself. How can we resolve this paradox? Actually, this one is easy to resolve without reading PARADOXICON. One simply need point out that the assumptions contradict each other. The situation, precisely as described, is impossible. As a more transparent example of the same sort of paradox, let's say that a certain number is equal to two and equal to three. But if it is equal to two, it cannot be equal to three and if it is equal to three it cannot be equal to two. So does the number equal two or three? The only sane response to the paradox is to say there is no number equal to both two and three. This is not an evasion of the paradox, but simply a statement that the two premises cannot be reconciled. Similarly, the original paradox contradicts itself and then asks the reader to reconcile the contradiction.

How does Falletta resolve the paradoxes? He gives a history of the paradox going back to Russell's paradox and a sort of set theoretical solution involving sets that contain themselves and set that do not. I like set theory, and it does give some interesting information about the nature of the paradox, but nowhere does Falletta give any simple language explanation of the resolution of the paradox.

Don't be fooled by the packaging of PARADOXICON. The book is intended to look like a light treatment of familiar paradoxes like optical illusions, the puzzles of Sam Loyd, the art of M. C. Escher, the list is long and reasonably complete. But Falletta, an editor of English and Math books at Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, seems to be neither very good at expressing himself with the English or the Math of this book. He is not universally so poorly worded, but the fact that he is in places that it really is not necessary is a serious problem with the book.

Another problem is that he chooses so broad a definition for "paradox" that a broad range of items that one usually does not consider as paradoxes per se. Optical illusions and pictures that show something else when turned upside-down are not my idea of paradoxes. Curiosities, certainly, but not paradoxes.

In spite of Falletta's occasional lapses into set theory mathematical curiosities are always interesting and in spite the fact that too many of them are old hat to most people familiar with mathematical curiosities it is a good collection and the chapter-end cross-references to related paradoxes and the complete bibliography are professional and much appreciated. Overall a good book to have on a mathematician's shelf.