

Lincroft-Holmdel Science Fiction Club  
Club Notice - 6/27/84 -- Vol. 2, No. 52

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

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

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>
07/11	STARTIDE RISING by David Brin
07/31	Video meeting: AN ENGLISHMAN'S CASTLE, pt. 1
08/01	Video meeting: AN ENGLISHMAN'S CASTLE, pt. 2
08/02	Video meeting: AN ENGLISHMAN'S CASTLE, pt. 3
08/22	TEA WITH THE BLACK DRAGON by R. A. MacAvoy
10/03	CIRCUS WORLD by Barry Longyear
11/14	THE TOMBS OF ATUAN by Ursula K. LeGuin
01/02	THE CIRCUS OF DR. LAO by Charles G. Finney
02/13	SLAN by A. E. Van Vogt

LZ's library and librarian Lance Larsen (576-2668) are in LZ 3C-219.  
Mark Leeper (576-2571, LZ 3E-215) and Evelyn Leeper (576-2378, LZ  
1D-216) are co-chairpeople. HO's library and librarian Tim Schroeder  
(949-5866) are in HO 2G-432. John Jetzt (577-5316) is HO-chairperson.

1. On Thursday, July 5, at 7:30 pm in the evening, the Leeperhouse  
film festival will show its first single feature. The film we are  
showing is the last available Hugo nominee for this year, THE RIGHT  
STUFF. TRS is probably the most enjoyable box-office flop of many  
a year. This irreverant history of the Mercury Program won four  
Acadamy Awards (and should have won for Best Picture). It has a  
great score and a highly entertaining script. See it.

2. LAST ISSUE. The end is near if you have a percent sign after  
your name. That percent says that you have failed to send me  
notification that you want to remain on our mailing list. If that  
is the case, this is your last issue. And it's not even a  
particularly good one to go out on. But it is your own doing.  
I've said all I am going to. So there.  
NNNNNNNNNNYYYYYYYYYYYYAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!

If undeliverable,  
please return to:

Mark Leeper  
LZ 3E-215 x2571  
...{houxn,hogpd,hocse}!lznv!mrl

Gemini Capsules - June 26, 1984

"Gemini Capsules": SF review column, edited by Rob Mitchell. Appears in the "Lincroft-Holmdel SF Club Notice".

A medium for quick reviews of anything of interest in the worlds of science fiction/fantasy, although the gimmick will be to relate pairs of interesting anythings. Unlike other columns, I'll pass along even the slanderous and scatological comments I receive. You can reach out and touch me at 576-6106, at LZ 1B-306, or via hogpd!jrtr.

A pair of light-weight, fun books:

Imagine a bunch of hairy, cute, highly imitative bunch of critters who cause lots of problems for the humans who deal with them. Sound like the plot for Gremlins, right? Perhaps, but it's also the premise for a pair of books written by Poul Anderson and Gordon R. Dickson, only in this case there's a whole planet full of these sentient teddy bears.

In Earthman's Burden and Hoka, Anderson and Dickson present the Hokas -- backward inhabitants of the planet Toka, whose prime characteristics are great strength (for their size) and an astonishing facility for bringing stories to life. These short stories (mostly from the 50's, a few from 1983) center around the efforts of an Ensign Alexander Braithwaite Jones, of the Cultural Development Service, who is responsible for bringing his alien charges along the road to civilization, while not inhibiting their natural characteristics.

Through a series of well-intentioned accidents, the Hokas learn about Earth history and fiction, and enthusiastically adopt the various cultures from the books. Unfortunately, the Hokans have only a blurry conception of the difference between reality and fantasy. Thus, one segment of the Hoka population lives as it thinks the French Foreign Legion did. In another area, a Hokan Sherlock Holmes stalks through "London" fog. In yet other areas, Napoleon, Casey-at-the-Bat, Mowgli, Don Juan, (you get the idea) have their Hokan equivalents. Each of the stories gives Anderson and Dickson a chance to poke gentle fun at various literary genres, historical figures, or modern bureaucratic procedures, and the authors are able to tell their tales without rehashing the same old gimmicks every time. The stories are fresh and unpredictable.

These paperbacks are great summertime fare. A&D maintain a consistent level of tongue-in-cheek humor that never drags or disappoints. They write some very imaginative stories (that was the oddest baseball game I've ever read about); I'm hoping for more.

Rob Mitchell

Mercury Capsules - June 27, 1984

"Mercury Capsules": SF review column, edited by Paul S R Chisholm. Appears in the "Lincroft-Holmdel SF Club Notice".

A medium for quick reviews of anything of interest in the world of science fiction. I'll pass along anything (not slanderous or scatological) without nasty comments. I prefer to get reviews by electronic mail: send to wilpsc from the AT&T-IS ENS systems in Lincroft; hocse!lznv!psc, houxn!lznv!psc, or hogpd!lznv!psc from everywhere else. If that's impossible, I'm at LZ 1D-212, 576-2374.

+ Now You See It/Him/Them . . .: novel, Gene DeWeese and Robert Coulson.

I'd just decided that Katherine Ann Porter was not my idea of a fun read, and I looked around for something to rinse my mind out with. This fit the bill. It's a story of a newspaper reporter who stumbles upon a murder at a science fiction convention. Turns out the victim was investigating people with apparent psychic powers; they include a fan wanted for a murder just like the one at the con.

This is no "Pale Horse, Pale Rider". The characters (including the fans) are straight from the Cliches, Ltd., warehouse. The "mystery" is no great shakes, either. Fun if you like cons, or SF inside jokes.

Paul S R Chisholm

+ "Dragontales": series of "choose-your-own-adventure" books, Rhondi Vilott.

Excerpt from NAL's press release: "the DRAGONTALES series will feature one book each month with a girl as the main character and one with a boy as the hero." Whatever happened to equal opportunity?

Evelyn C Leeper

+ Top Secret: film, 1984. Top Secret is a World War II spy thriller set in the present done in the style of an Elvis Presley/Beach Boys film with pieces of Blue Lagoon and Casablanca mixed in. It is a comedy. (Really?) Top Secret was brought to the screen by the same jolly fellows who brought you Airplane! and Police Squad. Unfortunately, they are now older and they are slowing down. Top Secret never achieves the manic pace and wild insanity that Airplane! sustained throughout. Top Secret gets better as it proceeds and the three author/directors get into the spirit, but Top Secret is just not another Airplane!.

Another disappointing difference is that the earlier film was peopled with popular actors who could well have been cast in a serious version of the same story. Top Secret has in small roles Omar Sharif, Michael Gough, and Peter Cushing, but that is all. Two or three more look vaguely familiar, and that's it. Part of the joke was to see serious actors deliver some of the lines. Not so in Top Secret.

Those reservations aside, Top Secret is funny--occasionally very much so. With a little thought the plot even makes sense. I wouldn't recommend it, but if you were bound, gagged, and forced to watch a film, there are worse films you could choose.

Mark R Leeper

+ Infra-Man: film. This film came to me recommended as a really enjoyable bad film. It's easy to see why. In this Chinese imitation of Japanese sci-fi super-hero films (if you've never seen Ultraman, Johnny Socko, or latter-day Godzilla films, you might be less likely to enjoy it), Princess Dragon-mom from space (who looks suspiciously like a Chinese woman in a bronze brassiere with lizard-like hands) has decided to enslave Earth with the help of a dozen or so man-in-papier-mache-suit monsters. A great Earthling scientist responds by turning a volunteer in Infra-Man, a kung fu monster-fighter in super-science armor equipped with flying apparatus, bombs, and the kitchen sink. The newly-created Infra-Man jumps off the operating table and flies off to meet the foe, and immediately some kid on the ground says, "Look, there's Infra-Man!" Well, people seem to figure out things really quickly in this film. The scientist offers to give Infra-Man "thunderball fists." My response would be "What the flummoxx are 'thunderball fists'?" Infra-Man's response is "You mean I can have thunderball fists?" Maybe they just sounded good to him. Most of the film is unintentionally comic kung fu wrestling scenes between Infra-Man and monsters. The best has a monster grow to giant proportions. Infra-Man does likewise and throws the monster into some electrical equipment which shrinks it again. Infra-Man then stomps the monster. And you thought Batman was camp!

Mark R Leeper

## BOOK REVIEWS by Nigel

In case anyone noticed, I have been reading lots of books; it is just that I have been too busy to write about them. Perhaps, I will take time to simply list and rate the more notable books that have passed under my eyes in the last few months. On the other hand, don't hold your breath.

In the last two weeks I have reread most of my collection of early C. J. Cherryh books. They included the following titles:

The Faded Sun: Kesrith  
The Faded Sun: Shon'jir  
The Faded Sun: Kutath  
Hunter of Worlds  
The Gate of Ivrel  
Brothers of Earth

What was most noticeable about the collection was the total lack of romantic interest and the degree to which the situations were contrived to make romantic interest impossible, except as a perversion.

The next most noticeable feature was the degree of gloom in all of the books. The tales are always about the lone survivor of a race whose mission is to survive as an individual, since race survival is impossible. If race survival for a protagonist becomes possible, the importance of that protagonist is rapidly diminished.

The final common characteristic is that no matter how alien the people are represented to be, their behaviour is always totally humane with a strong cultural bias. In the 'Faded Sun' trilogy the mri behave much like Japanese and the regul much like gypsies.

On the other hand her stories are very well written and do present many interesting concepts and are worth the effort of reading. Also the gloominess of the stories seems to match the gloominess pervading this building.

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### Yendi by Stephen Brust

This is a sequel to his book Jherag that I reviewed here some time ago. The subject is some of the events preceding the action in Jherag but you must read this book second because much of the background is assumed.

It is another action story in a strange land where sorcery and witchcraft work but is otherwise the tale of a gang war. You could also treat it as a who-dun-it but I don't think that that is fair for a number of reasons that I will argue with anyone who has read the book.

Overall a good but light book but not as good as Jhereg which you must read first.

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The Crucible of Time by John Brunner

This is the latest great work by Brunner but it does not meet my expectations. I have come to expect either light entertainment or masses of innovation from Brunner, and this book is neither.

This book reads like James Michener describing the development of an alien race except that science is handled better, more like Arthur Koestler.

So we have direction a la Michener, production a la Koestler, hacking a la Brunner. Unless you are a fan of one of the major elements, borrow the book rather than buying it.

LAMMAS NIGHT by Katherine Kurtz  
Ballantine, 1983, \$3.50.  
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper

Most of the reviews of this book I've seen have been negative, but for all the wrong reasons. One claimed that it was a bad book because novels about witches were supposed to be horror novels and this wasn't. What about Bell, Book, and Candle or the Oz books, for that matter? Several have said it was a bad book because it was impossible to classify--it wasn't horror (exactly), it wasn't fantasy (exactly), it wasn't a historical novel (exactly), it wasn't ... Well the list goes on. They're right in that it's very difficult, perhaps even impossible, to classify this novel, but that doesn't make it bad. Was Richardson's Pamela bad because nothing like it had been done before? What about Joyce's Ulysses? I'm not claiming Kurtz is in the same class as Richardson and Joyce, but she's entitled to try something new. (That's a lot of what SF--speculative fiction--is about.)

The premise of the novel is that Sir John Graham is trying to convince the witches (occultists, whatever term you wish) of England band together after Dunkirk to use their powers to forestall a German invasion of England. Hitler, for his part, has a coven working for him to help defeat the Allies, and the English grand coven (it's all explained in the book) would also try to counteract them. In the process a member of the Royal Family (William, a.k.a. Prince William Victor Charles Arthur, Duke of Clarence, K.G., K.C.M.G., fifth (and youngest) living son of King George V) gets involved in the effort to convince the various sects of occultists to risk public exposure and work together to defeat the Axis. After all, England still has all her anti-witchcraft statutes on the books, and many occultists fear they would be prosecuted under them if the truth about them were known. If I were to try to classify this novel, it would have to be as an alternate history. It's not the witchcraft aspect that makes it thus. Prince William is described in great detail--his childhood, his twin epileptic brother who died while they were both very young, etc. But there never was such a historical personage as this Prince William. George V had five children: John (who pre-deceased him), Albert (who later became King George VI), Mary, Henry, and George. Now most historical novels create fictional characters--I wouldn't quibble about whether there was a real Graham, for example. But when authors change the Royal Family (and the change is crucial), they leave the realm of historical fiction and enter alternate reality.

But if you're willing to grant Kurtz that one variation from our reality, she doesn't ask you to believe anything else outre'. The occultists are believable characters, and their actions reasonable under the circumstances. Some of her occult interpretations of historical incidents are shaky. She has Graham explain how sacrifices must occur at seven-year cycles. Fine, except that the cycle can start with the birth of the present king, the coronation of the present king, the birth of the heir to the throne, or any previous sacrifice (hence the birth or coronation of any previous king)--in effect, an argument can be made for any year being a

seventh year in some form or other. (On the other hand, though, many non-occult interpretations of history are equally suspect.) Kurtz is an expert on the occult, so I presume her descriptions of it's practice are accurate. (They seem accurate.) I found the book enjoyable, on the whole, and would recommend it (with reservations) to anyone interested in a well-written occult novel. Suspend your disbelief and read it.