

Lincroft-Holmdel Science Fiction Club
Club Notice - 7/17/85 -- Vol. 4, No. 3

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

Unless otherwise stated, all meetings are on Wednesdays at noon.
LZ meetings are in LZ 3A-206; HO meetings are in HO 2N-523.

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>
07/17	LZ: THIS IMMORTAL by Roger Zelazny (Immortality)
07/24	HO: DAMIANO by R. A. MacAvoy
08/07	LZ: A CASE OF CONSCIENCE by James Blish (Religion)
08/14	HO: THE FLIGHT OF THE DRAGONFLY by Robert Forward (11AM)
08/28	LZ: DINOSAUR BEACH by Keith Laumer (Time Travel)
09/04	HO: CODE OF THE LIFE-MAKER by James G. Hogan (2N-529)
09/11	MT: Organizational Meeting (tentative)
09/18	LZ: THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES by Ray Bradbury (Near Future History)
09/24	HO: ? (*Tuesday*)
10/09	LZ: THE SHEEP LOOK UP by John Brunner (Catastrophes)

HO Chair is Mark Leeper, HO 1E-412 (834-2657). LZ Chair is Rob Mitchell, LZ 1B-306 (576-6106). LZ Librarian is Lance Larsen, LZ 3C-219 (576-2668). HO Librarian is Tim Schroeder, HO 2G-427A (949-5866). Jill-of-all-trades is Evelyn Leeper, HO 1B-500A (834-4723).

1. Our discussion book next week will be DAMIANO, by R. A. MacAvoy. This is the first book of a trilogy, but may be read as a stand-alone.

2. Our fearless leader's comments on Colin Wilson last week drew this response from Chris Jarocha-Ernst:

I suppose I'm one of the "avid fans" of Colin Wilson's works that Mark Leeper mentioned. While I like his work, I don't think he's the greatest thing since indoor plumbing or whatever. He has his flaws: he's opinionated, sexist, elitist (or, at least, he comes across that way in his books). However, he's also very intelligent. "Philosopher" is as good a term as any. [That covers my opinion. -mrl]

So, a few corrections from someone who (thinks he) knows better:

Wilson and August Derleth weren't friends until AFTER Wilson wrote THE MIND PARASITES. Mark was right about the "Outsider"/OUTSIDER connection. Wilson wrote a book (THE STRENGTH TO DREAM: LITERATURE AND THE IMAGINATION), in one chapter of which he took Lovecraft to task for HPL's own literary failings. Derleth read this and then asked Wilson if he thought he could do a better job with the

*****Presorted*****
* Leeper, Evelyn C. *
* 114A HO 1B-500A *

Cthulhu Mythos. Wilson responded with THE MIND PARASITES, which Derleth's Arkham House published.

[That is my bad memory again. You are right. I went back to the intro to MIND PARASITES and discovered I had combined the host and the challenger into a single person. Sorry. -mrl]

Wilson's literary and philosophical concerns have been, ever since THE OUTSIDER, his 1st book, was published in 1955, those aspects of human existence that set apart some people from the mainstream of human society. There's a theme that should be familiar to SF-LOVERS everywhere. Wilson concentrates on topics that the mass of society finds "lurid" or "sensational", most notably, sex, violence, and magic. His non-fiction and fiction alike have been attempts to explain why those topics appeal to some and not to others. His THE OCCULT is generally considered to be an important work about the nature of magic and magicians (i.e., sorcerers). He considers himself "a novelist of ideas".

Of the three works Mark mentioned, I would agree that THE SPACE VAMPIRES is the weakest. If the title (and that of MP) is "lurid", well, that's part of what he's talking about, isn't it? I was very surprised to learn someone had tried to turn this into a film. As Mark said, the book's strong point is its ideas, not its plot.

BTW, when was Kirlian photography discredited? On what grounds?

[Don't quote me. My memory got me into trouble once already this article, but I think that I heard the effect had something to do with moisture or water vapor. In any case, the effects should be easily reproducible and hence could be studied in the laboratory and I think we would have heard if there really was anything to this sort of spirit photography. -mrl]

Mark, I'd be interested to know what 48 books came ahead of MIND PARASITES in your local SF group's discussion, and why. [Well, the list is, I think, lost at this point, but it was many from the list of most popular that showed up recently on the net. -mrl] I consider the book to be one of the most important (and enjoyable) I've ever read; I usually reread it every few years -- doesn't take more than an evening or two of concentrated reading. I originally picked it up because of my interest in Lovecraft. While he plays fast-and-loose with the Cthulhu Mythos, he certainly uses it in interesting ways. And, Mark, if you like stories where magic is revealed to be unexplained science, you should look up "The Return of the Lloigor" in TALES OF THE CTHULHU MYTHOS. Again, it plays fast-and-loose, but Derleth thought it good enough to include in that collection (even if it does "reinterpret" one of his own Mythos additions, Lloigor), and it is in some sense a forerunner of MIND PARASITES. (While I also enjoyed PHILOSOPHER'S STONE, it can't be considered a true Mythos story -- it plays TOO fast-and-

loose.)

[Interesting word. Why "important?" I certainly agree with enjoyable. Though few enough seem to agree with me. -mr1]

I cannot recommend Wilson to many (those "specialized tastes", I guess). Certainly, those readers who prefer outright escapism or books sans self-critical protagonists won't like him. But if you like sex, violence, magic, AND intelligent philosophy, give him a try.

[Well said. -mr1]

Mark Leeper
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MAD MAX: BEYOND THUNDERDOME
A film review by Mark R. Leeper

The world after the nuclear war gets stranger and stranger, particularly in George Miller's Mad Max series. His Mad Max was barely even imaginative. Australia was reduced to being "The Land of Car Chases," as the police and outlaw gangs tried to run each other down on the roads. The Road Warrior (Mad Max II) was an imaginative view of two societies fighting. One was clean-cut survivors; one was nasty punk rockers. Road Warrior's plot was simple, but it was coherent and powerful. It was strong enough to bear the weight of Miller's imaginative visual images. The action and the background were at least as important as the main line of the plot. Now comes Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome.

Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome goes a step beyond The Road Warrior. The background and visual images are nearly the whole film. The plot is a patchwork that seems to meander, showing us a number of odd visual images--far stranger and more imaginative than The Road Warrior--but never really becoming interesting in itself. In the first two films, the viewer becomes emotionally involved with the good guys. You want to see how the bad guys "get it." Somehow, that never happens in Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome. None of the characters ever get real enough that you really want to see them meet the fate that is coming to them. The first two films work by rage in a way that Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome never does. The only emotion it seems to bring out in the viewer in (intentional) laughter.

In the episodic story-line, Max (Mel Gibson) first runs into Bartertown, a sort of future Sodom in which Master-Blaster (a very strange idea for a character, but you won't hear from me how), a sort of city engineer, is in a power struggle with city founder Auntie Entity (Tina Turner). Max stumbles into the city and, of course, upsets the balance. Next, he runs into a society of children living in a sort of oasis in the desert. Finally, the two episodes are tied together in an un-involving action finale.

Miller, together with co-director George Ogilvie and co-scripter Terry Hayes, has created a future world that is endlessly creative and often quite funny. There are also heavy doses of social comment, as we see what aspects of our own society the survivors of a nuclear holocaust will want to preserve and what they will be able to piece together of our society from what we leave behind.

I gave Mad Max a -3 and The Road Warrior a +2 on a -4 to +4 scale. I would give Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome a high +1--a slight step down because of a disappointing lack of real excitement. Still, a high +1 is a pretty good rating and a recommendation.

there. The story concerns two adventurers who want to set themselves up as kings, and how they fare in the attempt. Great stuff! If you can't make it to the film, read the story.

2. The following books have been added to the Holmdel branch of the library. A few were purchased; most were donated by members.
[-tps]

Abbey, Lynn	The Face of Chaos
Abbey, Lynn	Wings of Omen
Anderson, Poul	Trader to the Stars
Anthony, Piers	Crewel Lye
Asimov, Isaac	Great SF Stories 1
Asprin, Robert	The Face of Chaos
Asprin, Robert	Wings of Omen
Asprin, Robert	Shadows of Sanctuary
Asprin, Robert	Storm Season
Bischoff, David	Star Fall
Bixby, E. Rew	Fire Throne Mountain
Blish, James	Fallen Star
Bova, Ben	Voyagers
Bova, Ben	Test of Fire
Brin, David	Sundiver
Brin, David	The Practice Effect
Carr, Terry	Universe 10
Coney, Michael	Neptune's Cauldron
Conklin, Groff	Omnibus of Science Fiction
Correy, Lee	Star Driver
Ford, John	Web of Angels
Forward, Robert	Flight of the Dragonfly
Foster, Alan Dean	Voyage to the City of the Dead
Haldeman, Joe	Mindbridge
Herbert, Frank	The Jesus Incident
Hogan, James P.	Code of the Lifemaker
Lewis, Tony	Best of Astounding
MacAvoy, R. A.	Damiano
Martin, George R. R.	Sandkings
McCaffrey, Anne	Alchemy & Academe
McCaffrey, Anne	Moreta: Dragonlady of Pern
McEnroe, Richard	Proteus: Voices for the 80's
Merrill, Judith	The Best of SF No. 9
Niven, Larry	Integral Trees
Norwood, Warren	The Windover Tapes: Flexing the Warp
Pohl, Frederick	Heechee Rendezvous
Pohl, Frederick	The Early Pohl
Pournelle, Jerry	Janissaries: Clan and Crown
Pratchett, Terry	The Colour of Magic
Ransom, Bill	The Jesus Incident
Saberhagen, Fred	The Water of Thought
Shaara, Michael	Soldier Boy
Silverberg, Robert	The Best of Randall Garrett
Silverberg, Robert	Those Who Watch

Smith, Cordwainer
Varley, John
White, James
White, James

The Best of Cordwainer Smith
Picnic on Nearside
The Escape Orbit
Futures Past

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THE SOUL OF A NEW MACHINE by Tracy Kidder
1982, \$3.95, Avon.
A book review by Mark R. Leeper

This is one of those books that sat on my shelf for years before I actually got around to reading it. I knew it was inevitable that I would read it since it was a best seller about my own industry, but at the same time I was never anxious to read a book that was so much like work. My final impression is that the book contained some very perceptive observations about life in the technical community, yet other parts seemed off base.

The book is, as I am sure most computer people know, an account of the development of a computer--the Eagle--by a team at Data General. Kidder gives mostly a breezy narrative of how such a project runs, but takes frequent detours to explain in layman's terms how a computer works or to give biographical sketches of the dramatis personae. It was probably the former that won it the 1982 Pulitzer Prize. The technical description isn't great, but it probably made the Pulitzer Committee feel that they were reading and understanding something of some complexity. In fact, Kidder tends to shy away from technical details that he cannot render into simple terms. So while we are told that the Eagle is being built to compete with and to beat the VAX, we are never given any real comparison of the two machines. That, presumably, would be tougher to explain than how memory works.

The day-to-day drama of working on such a project does ring fairly true without too much distortion of details for effect. I was bothered by the dialogue, however. It often struck me as being less than credible. Too many of the conversations are terminated by someone getting in a dramatic last word. That makes for good reading, I suppose, but it is a writing convention and not a realistic portrayal of the way people talk. I guess a film that shows how people really behave would be dull and an author deserves similar license to make his book enjoyable.

The Soul of a New Machine is not the sort of weighty book one usually associates with the Pulitzer Prize, but it does bring light to the work of some people who rarely get attention outside of their own circles. There are plenty of books describing what it is like to be a doctor, a policeman, even a reporter. At least The Soul of a New Machine had the originality to show the technical community to readers outside of science fiction.

THE HEAVENLY KID
A film review by Mark R. Leeper

I never planned to see The Heavenly Kid. What little I knew about the film made it sound a little hum-drum and familiar. A teenager gets a guardian angel to help him through life's trying moments. The idea has been done to death (you'll pardon the expression) on made-for-TV copies of films like Here Comes Mr. Jordan, its remake Heaven Can Wait, Topper, episodes of The Twilight Zone, even a Tom and Jerry cartoon. But I was in for one shock. Like Holiday Inns says in its ad: "The only surprise is that there are no surprises." Even Heaven Can Wait had moments when it was unpredictable. From beginning to end there is not an original scene or an original piece of dialogue in The Heavenly Kid. This film could have been written by high school students who pieced it together from made-for-TV films.

In a reprise of the chicken race of Rebel Without a Cause, Bobby is killed. In scenes stolen from Here Comes Mr. Jordan, he deals with angelic bureaucrats who arrange for him to return to Earth for a good deed which will allow him to go to Heaven. He is dispatched to help a young teenager find himself.

The film sets for itself some hard and fast rules, then goes about breaking them with no regard for logic. The invisible angel gets into fights and nobody notices an invisible force is in the fight. One victim does notice, but never seems to mention it. The angel is allowed to reveal himself only to his charge, but when the script-writer wants him to, he reveals himself to other people. In another scene, he sits in a tight backseat with two women, the actresses desperately trying to act as if they can't tell there's a third person in the seat.

The Heavenly Kid (it's not clear if the title refers to the angel or the boy--neither fits) is just a string of familiar scenes and a real yawner. Of minor note is that the stunt co-ordinator was Ricou Browning. Browning was the man inside the monster suit in Creature from the Black Lagoon. The only other familiar name (to me) was Richard Mulligan as the angelic bureaucrat in beatnik poncho on a motorcycle he can't ride--funny, huh? Rate this film an admittedly high -2 on the -4 to +4 scale.

SILVERADO

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

I recently reviewed Clint Eastwood's Pale Rider here. Silverado is this summer's other serious Western. Pale Rider was a grim realistic Western; Silverado is more in the tradition of the sprawling Westerns of the 1950's. In fact, it sprawls over 130 minutes and seemingly dozens of characters and acres of plot. It would be unAmerican not to like a real full-bodied Western like this. And more important, it would be dishonest not to recommend a film with this much fun. Even the name conjures up images of the old Westerns with place names for titles: Tombstone, Dodge City, Santa Fe, El Dorado, El Paso, Rio Bravo, Rio Conchos, Rio Grande, Rio Lobo, all the other Rio's and El's (except of course El Alamein).

Silverado is pure pleasure, chuck full of good outlaws and bad sheriffs. There are frightened settlers and friendly barmaids. There's the town chippy and the slick gambler. There is even a small range war (one farmer against a few cattlemen) and a medium-sized cattle stampede. And of course there's shooting with derringers and rifles and ivory-handled six-guns. In fact, script-writers Lawrence and Mark Kasdan have made every effort to put as much as possible of the genre of the old Westerns into this colorful reprise of the genre. This film's major fault is its excess. There is almost too much story and there certainly are too many characters. It is almost as if the Kasdans went through all the standard character types and ordered one of each. As for too much story, the script really has two stories. One is a sort of extended prologue that tells how the four heroes become friends and team up on the way to Silverado. But once the four get to the title town, it becomes pretty much a standard but enjoyable Western. It tells its story with wit--not enough to make it really a comedy, but enough to keep the audience interested when the pace slows--and style. At least one point of its +2 rating (on a -4 to +4 scale) is for the novelty of making a Western, but even in the 50's, this would have been a fun film.