

Lincroft-Holmdel Science Fiction Club
Club Notice - 11/27/85 -- Vol. 4, No. 22

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>
12/03(Tu)	MT: Film: THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL (part 1) (MT 3K-402)
12/04	MT: Film: THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL (conc.) and book selection for future meetings (MT 3K-402)
12/11	LZ: BRING THE JUBILEE by Ward Moore (Alternate Histories)
01/08	LZ: PHOENIX WITHOUT ASHES by Edward Bryant (Generation Ships)
01/29	LZ: STAR SMASHERS OF THE GALAXY RANGERS by Harry Harrison (Humor)
02/19	LZ: WORLDS by Joe Haldeman (Politics)

HO Chair is John Jetzt, HO 4F-528A (834-1563). LZ Chair is Rob Mitchell, LZ 1B-306 (576-6106). MT Chair is Mark Leeper, MT 3G-434 (957-5619). HO Librarian is Tim Schroeder, HO 2G-427A (949-5866). LZ Librarian is Lance Larsen, LZ 3C-219 (576-2668). Jill-of-all-trades is Evelyn Leeper, MT 1A-121 (957-2288).

1. As I said (a little prematurely) last week, our next Middletown meeting will have two purposes and will extend over two lunch hours (Tuesday and Wednesday). The primary purpose will be to show one of the great science fiction films of all time, THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL, starring Michael Rennie as the irrepressible Klaatu and featuring the incredible Gort, the super-robot, and, of course, Thelma, the wonder pony.

At the same meeting we will choose titles for future book discussions and film showings for the Middletown chapter of the club.

That meeting is for the Wednesday after Thanksgiving.

Mark Leeper
MT 3G-434 957-5619
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*****Presorted*****
* Leeper, Evelyn C. *
* 127A MT 1A-121 *

KING SOLOMON'S MINES
A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: Weak comedy-action imitation of Raiders of the Lost Ark. H. Rider Haggard's great adventure novel was completely ignored in the making of this non-adaptation.

H. Rider Haggard's novels of African adventure, often tinged with fantasy, have every now and again been the bases for films. His novel She had been adapted to the screen five times even before sound films came along, and there have been three more adaptations since then. His novels King Solomon's Mines and Allan Quartermain, both about the adventures of his great hunter Quartermain, have also given rise to films. Perhaps the best known is the 1950 King Solomon's Mines, starring Stewart Granger and Deborah Kerr, though there was a 1937 version starring Cedric Hardwick and Paul Robeson. Allan Quartermain was adapted into the rather low-grade film King Solomon's Treasure in 1977. Now Golan-Globus has made back-to-back King Solomon's Mines and Allan Quartermain. I had been looking forward to these films. They star Richard Chamberlain as the intrepid hunter. King Solomon's Mines has just been released.

I suppose that had I seen the film without expecting much I might have enjoyed it more. The 1950 film was sort of a travesty on the novel. It was mostly about how Quartermain is at first skeptical of, and then learns to respect, a woman who hires him for a safari. The novel had no such woman so right there the film was a bad adaptation. I was hoping since the new film had some substantial actors and since it had to be popular enough to justify the concurrently shot Allan Quartermain, that it would be a faithful adaptation. Instead, we got a low-grade imitation of Raiders of the Lost Ark with little relation to the original story. This film not only throws in the female character, it throws out the whole safari of the book. Instead it is about a race with German soldiers to find the treasure (the film takes place just prior to the first World War, though the woman's hairdo is right out of 1985). There is in this film almost no adventure at all. There is only action, and that is done in complete self-parody. The first priority of the script is humor and the second is stunts. Story takes a distant third place. That is okay in an occasional film, and had this film been called Congo Bill and the Lost Treasure it might have gotten a flat 0 on the -4 to +4 scale. Because of the hypocrisy of calling this film King Solomon's Mines purely for title value, without any of the original story present, rate this one -1.

THE LIFE AND DEATH OF YUKIO MISHIMA by Henry Scott Stokes

Ballantine, 1985, \$3.95.

A book review by Mark R. Leeper

As with a number of non-Western cultures, I have been interested for some time in the Japanese feudal period and the age of the samurai. For a while I have been aware of Japan's great novelist who wished Japan to return to the virtues and greatness of the feudal period. His name was Yukio Mishima and he is best known in the West for his 1970 suicide after a vain (in both senses) attempt to convince the Japanese army to revolt and to return to the virtues of old, including returning Japan to its former greatness. I suspected that Mishima was a classical tragic figure and I wanted to know more about his philosophy.

What brought matters to a head was the release of Paul Schroeder's film Mishima and its very positive reviews. I saw the film in some ways as a very beautiful film, but what I got out of it was that Mishima was acting out a role not unlike a character in one of his novels. If you understand his novels, you probably understand his life. Many of Mishima's novels are about men who faced emotional turmoil taking violent action, though rarely does the action seem to be connected with the cause of the turmoil in any obvious way. There is just a feel that a violent act cleanses all.

Because I wanted to understand Mishima's philosophy, I read The Life and Death of Yukio Mishima by Henry Scott Stokes. I still do not feel I understand Mishima, but at the same time I am developing a profound dislike for the man. That is probably not the author's intention, but I found myself distrusting the man's beliefs more and more as I read the book. Consider Stokes's summary of Mishima's story "The Room with the Locked Door":

An Okurasho official has a love affair with a married woman, who dies in bed; he leaves the room, locking the door behind him, and outside in the passage meets the nine-year-old daughter of the woman. The two play together for a while, and the man dreams of ripping the frail body of the little girl to shreds, to make himself a "free inhabitant of this disorderly world."

Now I realize I am reading only one author's precis of another's story and that some of the meaning was lost. On the other hand, I really cannot imagine how even by reading the original of this story could it be considered fine literature. Another story that comes to mind is Temple of the Golden Pavilion, in which a stuttering monk, obsessed with his own physical imperfection, burns down a temple. Until recently Mishima's best-known story in the West (because it was the subject of an English language film) was The Sailor Who Fell from Grace with the Sea. As I remember, this is the story of a group of young

children who kill a cat and, emboldened by this, kill their leader's mother and her lover.

Much of what we get of Mishima's writing is like the following:

Kashiwagi then introduces the Zen koan (riddle), "One day a beautiful kitten is found in the neighborhood of two temples. The monks of the two temples dispute among themselves as to who should look after it. Nansen ends the dispute by asking them to him him why he should not kill the kitten, and when they cannot reply, he kills it. When his chief disciple, Joshu, who has been out, returns to the temple, Nansen tells him what has happened. Thereupon Joshu takes off his muddy shoes and places them on his head. 'If only you had been here,'" Nansen says, 'then the kitten could have been saved!'" "You see," continued Kasiwagi, "that's what beauty is like. To have killed the kitten seemed just like having extracted a painful tooth, like having gouged out beauty. Yet it was uncertain whether or not this had really been a final solution. The root of beauty had not been severed, and even though the kitten was dead, the kitten's beauty might very well still be alive. At so, you see, it was in order to satirize the glibness of the solution that Joshu put those shoes on his head. He knew, so to speak, that there was no possible solution other than enduring the pain of the decayed tooth."

Initially, it is easy to sympathize with Mishima's wish to see Japan return to being a great military power. After all, it seems that he feels his country has lost its honor. As the book continues, I start asking myself do I really want to put a sword in the hands of a man who thinks that it is a great symbolic act to rip a little girl to shreds?

Mishima's military views also smack just a bit of hypocrisy. Until he formed his own small private army, the Shield Society, he never served in the military. During World War II, he was deferred from military service for medical conditions that he exaggerated to avoid the draft. Never having paid the dues of serving in the military, he presumed to tell the military that it was not bold enough, not mean enough--it should have revolted against the government and set the emperor up again as the supreme leader.

Mishima, after some reading strikes me as nothing so much as a little boy in a man's intellect. He wants to be big and powerful and mean, and he shows it by stomping caterpillars and using magnifying glasses to burn ants. He goes around trying to ape a romantic role he saw in a movie once and tells himself, "That's what I'm like." I won't say this completely explains Mishima's character; it is just the best explanation I know of. I should probably be more careful of whom I am impressed with.