

Lincroft-Holmdel Science Fiction Club
Club Notice - 4/2/86 -- Vol. 4, No. 37

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.

_D_A_T_E

_T_O_P_I_C

- 04/09 HO: AT THE MOUNTAINS OF MADNESS by H. P. Lovecraft
04/23 LZ: ORION SHALL RISE by Poul Anderson (Societal Reconstruction)
04/30 HO: ?
05/14 LZ: THE WEREWOLF PRINCIPLE by Clifford Simak (Biological Constructs)
05/21 HO: ?
06/04 LZ: THIS PERFECT DAY by Ira Levin ("Utopias")
06/11 HO: ?
06/25 LZ: STAR GUARD by Andre Norton (Humans as underdogs)
07/16 LZ: SHADRACH IN THE FURNACE by Robert Silverberg (Ethics)
08/06 LZ: TUNNEL IN THE SKY by Robert Heinlein (Faster-Than-Light Travel)

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 1F-329 (957-2070).

1. The Holmlies are discussing H. P. Lovecraft's AT THE MOUNTAINS OF MADNESS. They never send me blurbies so I have no idea what mischief they're up to with this book.

2. I want it understood that in spite of the fact that the April 1st notice was in my style and stole shamelessly from my material [well, I always say, if you're going to steal, steal from the best -ecl], I had nothing to do with it. I mean look at it closely. Every item in the main part of the notice is milking a joke that I made in a previous notice (possible exception is the Ellison piece). Can you believe the audacity! Anyway, this THING showed up in my mailbox as much of a surprise as the divorce papers will be when they show up in Elevelyn's mailbox. So there!

[Snicker, snicker! -ecl]

[Mars bar, mars bar! -mrl]

[This is what passes for witty repartee in Middletown. -ecl]

3. Alan Gopin (FJ 1F-116, mtuxn!newtech!gopin!alan, 577-5306) is looking for a copy of the 03/29 New Jersey Network broadcast of DR.

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WHO. Send him mail or call him if you have one (on VHS) you can lend him.

4. Attention, Middletown people. You may have noticed that we haven't had a meeting here in quite a while. Why you ask? Well, it's like this. Middletown is still a fledgling building. It is not yet full. There are still too few of ATT's best and brightest to fill the halls. Even among the best and brightest, there will be only a small percentage who will have the time and the interest to read a book every three weeks or so and the gumption to go into a small room and discuss it. Besides, there are all the other great activities that Middletown is already known for. The new Middletown facility offers its denizens ample opportunity to nip over to the nearby railroad tracks during lunch hour and flatten their pennies by putting them on the track and waiting for the train to come along. There is walking to the core of the building and counting the number desks on end waiting to be installed into offices. There is counting the stains that add character to our beautiful new carpeting. Then there is the ever-popular Middletown Moonwalk in which you go out on the roads of Middletown and see how far you can get jumping only from pothole to pothole. Then there is the weekly lunchroom frozen yogurt-piling olympics. (And don't forget the hide-and-seek game--you have a friend blindfold you and lead you to some other part of the building. Then you see how long it takes you to find your office again. Advanced players leave the blindfold on. -ecl) If, however, you find that you are getting worn out from all the excitement and think you would like to unwind every three weeks by having a leisurely lunch discussing a science fiction book you have read, why not let me know? If there are enough people interested we can try to get a discussion group going here at Middletown.

5. Special bulletin: They are now in the process of planting grass at the Middletown facility. This means that they have finally

decided that this area will not be covered with pens that will be used for meeting space. Instead they have decided to let us go out and graze during our lunch hours. Further developments as they happen.

Mark Leeper
MT 3G-434 957-5619
...mtgzz!leeper

_N_O_T_E_S_F_R_O_M_T_H_E_N_E_T

Subject: THE GREEN PEARL by Jack Vance
Path: cbosgd!gatech!seismo!caip!daemon
Date: Mon, 24-Mar-86 04:35:33 EST

This book is the second in Vance's latest series, which started with SULDRUN'S GARDEN, aka LYONESSE (retitled by whim of the publisher, apparently). The setting of the book might seem to put it firmly in an established niche of popular fantasy, that of magical Arthurian romances (MARs for short). MARs typically pit a virtuous king against an assortment of nasty wizards and witches, and they often involve a long quest to rescue the king's love interest and demonstrate his purity. Enchanted swords and beautiful maidens abound, not to mention dark castles and evil jewels. I tend to pass over MARs at the bookstore because they seem to me to be overly conventional, like space operas or gothic romances. It's a rare book with MAR characteristics that grabs me, that forces me to read it and enjoy it, and I'm happy to say that THE GREEN PEARL is one such book.

The world of the Lyonesse books differs but little in outline from the usual MAR pattern. The time is just prior to that of Arthur in Cornwall; a genealogical tree in the first volume conveniently connects Arthur with the characters of the novels. The Elder Isles are a set of islands off the coast of Aquitaine which through some act of magic no longer appear on the modern globe. The Isles are divided into petty kingdoms, each of which struggles to gain mastery over the entire archipelago. The population of the Isles is motley, ranging from red-haired Celts to pre-Vikings, from fairies to trolls and from itinerant magicians to vastly powerful wizards.

Despite this utterly conventional setting, the book succeeds because its characters and their travails are different from those of the run-of-the-mill MAR: they are distinctly Vancian, distinct in a way that is hard to describe if you haven't already become familiar with Vance's other works. The characters eat, excrete and fornicate; they often decide that discretion is the better part of valor; they fall out of love as well as fall into it; they play complex political games; they do any number of things that flout the conventions of the MAR. And the language! Vance's style has always seemed baroque and archaic, and fits into this mode with hardly a change.

I had heard that Vance wanted a bestseller, and had perhaps cynically chosen to write at a longer length and with a less original setting than usual in hopes of attracting a larger audience. (A similar rumor was spread about Silverberg's LORD VALENTINE'S CASTLE, which also seemed targeted as a bestseller; I didn't like it nearly as much as his earlier work.) I think this attitude shows in SULDRUN'S GARDEN, which could have

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been a better book had it been trimmed to the same length as THE GREEN PEARL. The latter book seems much tighter and more fun, with adventure and humor balanced to good effect.

If you like Vance, or if you like MARs, I think you'll enjoy THE GREEN PEARL...

Donn Seeley University of Utah CS Dept donn@utah-cs.arpa

Subject: Heretics of Dune

Path: bellcore!decvax!decwrl!pyramid!pesnta!amd!amdcad!lll-crg!caip!daemon

Date: Mon, 24-Mar-86 16:37:17 EST

Heretics of Dune is indeed the fifth Dune book, and Chapterhouse Dune is the sixth. Both are too long to review conveniently here, and I don't have them at hand. As to whether they're worth reading, it's up to the reader. If you have read the first four Dune books and LIKED them, then by all means the others are worth it. They do not complete the Dune saga; I understand that Herbert was working on a seventh at the time of his death, and I understand further that his son will finish it. I hope so. The later books have a lot more psychological and behavioural study than the first ones, and in general a lot less shoot-em-up action. For me, this aspect made them good, as I find Herbert's insight into motivations fascinating. The plot twists he uses in Heretics and Chapterhouse are to my mind a little more plausible than some he used earlier; note, though, that they do depend very heavily upon your having suspended your disbelief so thoroughly as to have gotten through the earlier books.

My recommendation is to take the hit on your social life.

Dick Binder (The Stainless Steel Rat)

Subject: David Brin

Path: mtuxo!houxm!mhuxt!mhuxr!ulysses!ucbvax!nike!caip!daemon

Date: Tue, 25-Mar-86 22:59:16 EST

I have been confused for some years now by the high praise accorded to David Brin's work. I thought Sundiver was good hard SF, with a lot of original ideas, but not extremely interesting characterization. I looked forward to his next novel. When I read Startide Rising, however, I was extremely disappointed. It, too, had some interesting ideas, but the execution left me unimpressed. Didn't anyone else find it a bit, well, "adolescent?" (Obviously, a lot of people didn't agree with me.) Next I read The Practice Effect, which I found as silly as Piers Anthony at his worst (which to me is a strong condemnation.)

All of which left me unprepared for The Postman. I found it hard to believe that the same author wrote the above books and this one. For the first time, I think Brin has written an adult book, and a serious one. The first half of the book was so good that I was physically excited as I was reading it, thinking I had a classic in my hands. The second half trailed off somewhat into more of a straight adventure story, but the overall effect remained extremely positive. I haven't yet read The Heart of The Comet (or whatever the exact title is), but I hope it and future Brin work continue the trend The Postman started.

Subject: My First SF-Convention

Path: bellcore!decvax!decwrl!pyramid!hplabs!tektronix!tekcr!teklabs!donch

Date: Tue, 25-Mar-86 18:29:39 EST

I spent last weekend in Seattle at NORWESCON 9, a regional and annual (?) sf-con with a large following.

Never having been to a "con" before, I had no idea what to expect. My impressions evolved considerably during my stay.

At first, all I saw were a lot of people dressed up in wild costumes. The median age-group seemed to be late teens, early twenties. In fact, staying in the hotel (the SEA-TAC Red Lion Inn, a very nice and posh place) where the con was held brought back all my awful memories of dormitory life at college. Lots of racket, ALL night long, drunks, beligerants, lots of a sense of people needing attention.

All right. So much for surface stuff. After all, it was a convention and as such had a program which included talks by a variety of Guests. There was a Guest of Honor--Anne McCaffrey; a Science Guest--a fine man who works as a physicist (I think) with NASA; a Guest Artist--Kelly Fries (spelling?); a toast-master--Spider Robinson; and several others I've forgotten. Along with the official Guests, there were featured panel speakers, professionals associated with SF in certain ways, such as editors (Fred Pohl), Robert Silverberg, Gene Wolfe, Jack Williamson, Greg Bear, David Niven, Aldys Budrys (spelling?), James Hogan, Steven Goldin, and others. One panel discussion was titled The Business of Writing. It consisted of Steven Goldin, an editor, and an agent. They pointed out that many sf-cons were business trips for the professionals since it was an excellent place for everyone to do their marketing or shopping or buying and selling. NORWESCON was offered as an example of a rising star for making business connections.

I'm sidetracking myself. Of the programs, one of the major efforts is put into writing sf. There are numerous panel discussions ranging from brainstorm sessions on terraforming or galactic ecology to round-table talks on literary form and image. There was a series of writers workshops in which new writers could submit a short story prior to attending the con, then sit in with a group of pros who had all read the

work and offered their criticism. I talked to several people who attended the writing workshops and were mightily impressed with the effort extended by the pros.

The television cable in the hotel had 24 hour movies (non-repeating) on 3 different channels. There was a series of previews from major studios in Hollywood on upcoming sf-movies (ALIENS, or Alien 2 to name one). There was a huge masquerade ball with a contest, shown live over one of the house tv channels. There was an awards presentation for the L. Ron Hubbard Writers of the Future award.

All in all, it had more depth and content than I had originally thought.

Hot tip: get a copy of MYTHAGO WOOD by _____ Holdstock. Everyone I heard speak about it gave rave reviews, including the editor who stuck her neck out to get her House to Publish it. I'm reading it now and can't put it down. It is excellent....and hard to find.

Don Chitwood

Subject: The Dray Prescott Series

Path: whuxlm!akgua!gatech!seismo!rochester!bullwinkle!batcomputer!cpf

Date: Thu, 27-Mar-86 20:38:14 EST

This article is a plug for the Dray Prescott series.

I, too, have heard the rumor that Kenneth Bulmer's "Dray Prescott" series is the one that got started when the author decided to write a deliberately "bad" series. It is somewhat believable: the style is somewhat different than Bulmer's normal style, and the resulting books are far BETTER than anything else that I have read of his.

What Bulmer did in these books is to take Burroughs' Mars series, and find a reason for all the strange things that happen in them: airboats that always break down (they are made in a foreign country, and that country deliberately sells models with an unpredictable live as a military measure); a prince that is always going around having adventures by himself (there is a superhuman race that uses the hero as

an agent, often teleporting him into a fight stark naked); many sapient races, including humans, on the same world (the superhuman race took them from their home planets some thousands of years ago); ridiculous coincidences (a few of them are, more are caused by the superhuman race); etc., etc.

If you like the Burroughs, you will like this. One of the good things about the series is that the hero does not win 100% of the time. One last second rescue arrives one second too late, and at the start of the series, Dray Prescot is always telling the reader something like "Ignore that stuff about the best swordsman on two planets - I always go into

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battle thinking that this time I might meet a better." At the current point he says somewhat the same thing, but with the addition of "besides so-and-so" (so-and-so was MUCH better than he).

Also, there is a well developed plot. Tasks and villains do not appear out of nowhere; generally, they can be seen coming several books in advance, but the hero can't deal with them at the time because he has other problems to deal with first. It is not like the Dumerest books, for example, where the same things happen over and over; progress is being made, and the hero's character does change somewhat with time.

On the other hand, the publishing and marketing of this series has been abysmal. The books are meant to be read in sequence, but the early ones are out of print and difficult to find. Also, there are many typographical errors. Finally, the blurbs are down to DAW's usual standards: at several times comparison is made to the Gor books; this is not a compliment, and it is also not true! (In the initial books, the treatment of women is very much like Burroughs'; later, Bulmer changed things some, and started to through in some regiments composed of women, etc, etc (that is, the treatment of women started off infinitely better than in the Gor books, and moved up from there).)

To sum up: this is the only series in the Burroughs' tradition that I have found that is better than (or as good as) Burroughs.

Courtenay Footman

Usenet: {decvax,ihnp4,vax135}!cornell!lnsvax!cpf

Subject: A Review of BRIGHTNESS FALLS FROM THE AIR

Path: ihnp4!decvax!ittatc!milford!bill

Date: Thu, 27-Mar-86 08:50:57 EST

Like Frederick Pohl's Heechee books, the primary message of James Tiptree's Brightness Falls From the Air would seem to be the experience of guilt especially related to old age. This should not really be a spoiler to those familiar with her (Tiptree = Alice Sheldon) other writings.

The story is very cleverly crafted like a mystery story a la Agatha Christie. Thirteen varied tourists are thrown together (with three hosts) to experience close-hand an [artificial] nova. We are presented with a map of the hostel, the tourists are described in detail, and their whereabouts carefully followed about the hostel. As with most mysteries there are some red herrings and a few surprises.

What makes this story primarily science-fiction and not a mystery is the setting: the hostel is on a planet inhabited by a remnant of intelligent butterflies all but exterminated by human colonists. The nova the tourists are to view is the result of a meaningless war the human colonists waged against a neighboring star system. The terms

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connected to this setting indicate Tiptree's message: "Star tears" and "The Murdered Star".

The writing itself has almost a cinematic quality almost like it was written after a screenplay, the descriptions of the actual experience of the nova was murky/hallucinagenic rather reminiscent of Farmer's Night of Light.

But I kept getting the impression that significant sections of this novel was really about Tiptree herself. This is difficult because much is left intentionally unclear about Ms Sheldon. We do know that she served U. S. American interests in the foreign affairs arena (CIA is one rumor) and that she reportedly had toyed with suicide in the recent past ("Slow Music"). Also this novel is dedicated to a "former ace battle surgeon."

There is a final twist or irony at the end, a type of victory of exploitation over the noble savage. This also feeds an impression of apology for an unforeseeable result of political manipulation in less developed nations.

Perhaps I am reading a bit too much into the politics of this novel; but in conclusion Brightness is a very rewarding and complex novel with a goodly number of levels of meaning: mystery, science-fiction, psychological, allegorical,

Subject: Moon Flash review (*Mild Spoiler*)
Path: ihnp4!seismo!rochester!bullwinkle!uw-beaver!uw-june!uw-vlsi!li
Date: Fri, 28-Mar-86 18:33:33 EST

Moon Flash is simply the story of two primitive culture people travelling far beyond their previous beliefs in the simplicity of their world under the guidance of off-worlders. The travel is within their abilities and perceptions as well as a physical journey, and McKillip does a good job of making Kyreol and Terje real. It has many of the earmarks of a good adventure, and I enjoyed the characterzation, as I have always enjoyed McKillip's characters; however, the story itself was not nearly as full of the sense of wonder and magic and rich historical, sociological, and mythical background that made The Riddle-Master of Hed series and The Forgotten Beasts of Eld, also by McKillip, particularly memorable.

It was a good midnight read, and I would say that the closest comparison is one of Andre Norton's good "juvenile" books, and if you like them you will like this as much as I did. Sadly, I had been hoping for more fantasy from McKillip, but it is nice to know that she is exploring other ways and means.

Liralen

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Subject: Judy-Lynn del Rey (1943-1986)
Path: ihnp4!seismo!ut-sally!pyramid!decwrl!sun!chuq

Date: Sat, 29-Mar-86 23:22:15 EST

Judy-Lynn (Benjamin) del Rey died on February 20, 1986 at Bellevue Hospital in New York City. She was 43. In October 1985 she suffered a brain hemorrhage and fell into a coma. She never regained consciousness.

She is survived by her husband, Lester; her father, Dr. Zachary Benjamin; a brother, Leonard Benjamin; a sister, Randi Benjamin and two nieces.

Judy-Lynn is not well known outside the inner circles of SF. I've never had the pleasure of meeting her. Now, I never will. Starting with Fred Pohl at Galaxy Magazine and later with Ian and Betty Ballantine at Ballantine Books, Judy-Lynn pretty much single handedly put SF on the map as a big time player in the minds of the public and in the business of publishing. When SF books finally made it to the N.Y. Times Bestseller lists, it was the del Rey books that did it. No single person, including the much lauded John Campbell, has done more for Science Fiction.

The real pity is that all of this went unrewarded until it was too late for her to understand the rewards. Judy-Lynn never won a major award; never was nominated for a Hugo; never was a GOH at a Worldcon. Overshadowed by her better known writer husband Lester (who worked for her as Fantasy editor at Ballantine/del Rey books), it is now too late to show her that we appreciate her endeavors. Without her, SF would still be a backwater ghetto on the shelves of the booksellers.

The legacy she left will long be in our memories. From the major works of A.C. Clarke and Robert Heinlein, from "The Sword of Shannara" by Terry Brooks, the first fantasy to hit the NYT List; from "Star Wars," which she bought a year before the movie came out; from "Mists of Avalon;" and, for me her best work as a publisher, the current reissue of the entire "Wizard of OZ" series -- a labour of love on her part to get the release for all of the books and get them in the hands of new generations after years of neglect.

Now she's gone. And I'm just starting to realize how much we'll miss her. I wish I'd realized it earlier.

:From the lofty realms of Castle Plaid: Chuq Von Rospach

Subject: Short review of "The Quiet Earth" (extremely mild spoiler)
Path: bellcore!decvax!decwrl!pyramid!hplabs!tektronix!uw-beaver!uw-june!louns
Date: Mon, 24-Mar-86 14:50:39 EST

From what I remember of what I saw several months ago, the film was worth seeing. The first half was absolutely one of the most intriguing pices of film I have viewed. The premise was fascinating, and the presentation of what it is like to be the only person left on an otherwise normal Earth was hard-hitting and believable. In short, it was extremely well done.

The second half wasn't nearly as good, and was actually quite silly. Something in the second half just takes itself too seriously, and the plot breaks down to one that could be out of a mediocre sci-fi serial.

If the projector breaks down halfway through your viewing, you'll have seen quite a good film. Another interesting point was the frequent putdowns of American technology, and the hints at the sad effects of peaceful countries like Enzed trusting evil nations like You-ess.

Michael

Subject: A Review: The Quiet Earth
Path: bellcore!decvax!decwrl!pyramid!pesnta!amd!amdcad!lll-crg!caip!daemon
Date: Mon, 24-Mar-86 10:42:45 EST

Some critics have called "The Quiet Earth" the best Sci-Fi movie of the decade. They are wrong. It's pretty awful.

The basic plot is that something has caused all animal life on earth to vanish. Only a select few people who are at the point of death remain when this event occurs. We meet what must be the only three people left "down under", and find out that it might have been caused by a power distribution network set up by the USA for use by air craft, or as is said in the movie, "Maybe God blinked.

The characters are uninteresting, the special effects are dull, and the plot has very little to say. This movie has been getting good reviews for two reasons that have little artistic bearing: 1) It is "politically correct" (Not so mildly anti-American), and 2) It is purposely obtuse. The direction isn't very good either.

I heartily recommend that everyone miss this movie unless they are into being bored. I'll leave you with one thing: The ending seems to imply that it was God Blinking, and not the transmission network that caused the event.

Matthew Saroff

