

Lincroft-Holmdel Science Fiction Club  
Club Notice - 5/21/86 -- Vol. 4, No. 44

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.

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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 3E-433 (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). All material copyright by author unless otherwise noted.

1. Recently we had a review and a counter-review of the film OUT OF AFRICA in the notice and our last Leeper-house film festival was two adaptations of novels about African adventure. In keeping with the African theme, the next film festival, May 29, at 7 PM, will depart from fantasy (as we do very occasionally) to tell the story of the 1879 Zulu War. We will be showing two films that I have seen once each and many years ago and I would just like to see back to back. Together the films form a continuity, telling the story of the revolt of the great Zulu king Cetewayo. Both are respected historical films in their own right. The films are:

The Zulu War of 1879

ZULU DAWN (1979) Dir. by Douglas Hickox

ZULU (1964) Dir. by Cy Enfield

ZULU DAWN covers the first part of the war, the British reasons for marching into Zululand and, in particular, the film shows battle at Isandhlwana. ZULU (the earlier film) continues the story with the British reaction to Isandhlwana and the British stand at Rorkesdrift.

Both films feature all-star casts. ZULU DAWN stars Burt Lancaster, Peter O'Toole, Simon Ward, John Mills, Nigel Davenport, Denholm Elliott, Freddie Jones, and Bob Hoskins. ZULU stars Stanley Baker, Michael Caine, and Nigel Green.

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Due to the length of both films, a total of 259 minutes, Flash Gordon, who as we left last time was poised on the brink of certain death or tragic dismemberment, will have to hold on by his fingernails for a\_n\_o\_t\_h\_e\_r three weeks before he is given a chance to save himself. Sorry, Flash.

2. Actually, Flash may have to hold on even longer than that. It is a long story. Some of you may have seen a book come out recently called THE JASON VOYAGE that is about some clown who made himself a full-size working replica of Jason's Argo. He followed the same course that he thinks that the mythological Jason did. His book follows in the footsteps of KON-TIKI in which some idiot tried to prove that ancient sailing ships could have made the trim from Peru to Tahiti. Then there was THE RA EXPEDITION, in which someone tries to show that the ancient Egyptians could have sailed to the New World. It goes without saying that substantiating old myths can be highly lucrative. I intend to cash in on this market. I have had a special padded suit and helmet made for myself and I have the first two chapters written on my forthcoming book THE DOROTHY ODYSSEY (watch for it at your local bookstore). I intend to get the material for the remaining chapters next month on my trip to Kansas. Incidentally, if someone out there is going on vacation and would like me to take care of their small dog while they are going, I am looking for a small dog that I can use in my researches.

Mark Leeper  
MT 3E-433 957-5619  
...mtgzz!leeper

\_N\_O\_T\_E\_S\_F\_R\_O\_M\_T\_H\_E\_N\_E\_T

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Subject: "The Cybernetic Samurai" by Victor Milan

Path: mtuxo!houxm!ihnp4!rayssd!jps

Date: Tue, 13-May-86 09:35:34 EST

This is the first book I've read by this author, and I liked it. This is an action story with intrigue and a dash of the oriental. I think that the story is based on a Japanese folktale. The book is clearly written, and has some vivid scenes, although I thought that the now obligatory sex scenes were needlessly graphic. Set in future Japan, the story is reminiscent of Gibsons novel "Neuromaster".

The story takes place after WWII. Japan survives the war, although the U.S. and Europe are destroyed and become politically fragmented. The world still retains a high technologic culture, although global power is shifted to the Southern hemisphere and the Pacific. Japan is evolving back into a feudal culture with the big trading combines (zaibatsu) as the sources of political power. One of these firms

decides to create an artificial sentient (a.k.a. HAL 9000) with the help of American scientists (the brain drain in reverse) to achieve supremacy over its competitors. They create TORUGAWA and program (condition ?) him with the chivalric code of the samurai (bushido). The zaibatsu's CEO and the computer scientist are eventually killed in a coup sponsored by the firms rivals, and TORUGAWA commits himself to revenge and restoration of the firms honor by using the nations computer net.

Nothing new in the way of science fiction is presented in this story, artificial intelligence, 5th generation computers, WWII, net-hacking have all been written about before. What makes this story different is the Japanese setting and the feudal emphasis of the plot. This provides the enough difference to avoid being just another super computer runs amok story and something worth reading.

|| J. P. Schroeder {allegra,linus,raybed2,ccice5,brunix}!rayssd!jps ||

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Subject: Parke Godwin's The Last Rainbow  
Path: mtuxo!mtune!mtunh!akguc!akgua!gatech!seismo!lll-crg!caip!daemon  
Date: Mon, 12-May-86 11:52:11 EST

The Last Rainbow by Parke Godwin is listed as being the final book in his Arthurian trilogy, the first two being Firelord and Beloved Exile. Actually, it shares only a common world, and concerns the adventures of Saint Patrick among the Prydn, Godwin's Faerie. The attractive thing about the previous books was that they presented the Arthurian legends in a grittily realistic manner and removed a lot of

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the "standard" magical gimmicry. The Prydn served to illuminate the Arthurian story in the previous books, and their magic was presented in a way that one could find an explanation for it if one worked at it.

The magic was too much of a plot device in The Last Rainbow, and it interfered with Godwin's attempts to "humanize" St. Patrick. The flights of fancy delivered by the Prydn magic become harder and harder to accept, and the story suffers substantially. Godwin also spends the last third of the book trying to set up the Prydn for their role in Firelord, and comes up with a ridiculous device to incorporate the

legends of travels to islands in the west (ie. America).

The Last Rainbow is about how Father Patricius ends up among the Prydn. While he attempts to teach them Christianity, they attempt to teach him their own traditions and tolerance. Of course, he learns to love them and ends up in bed with the heroine, after interminable haggling. He then leads his Christianized Prydn off to war for Ambrosius, taking desparate losses, and losing his faith. Subsequently, he regains his faith through Prydn magic, the clan he has been living with head off to America, and he returns to Ireland to become St. Patrick. Much of this silliness is documented with "actual" letters from his mentor, Bishop Meganius, to Rome; whether these missives actually exist or not, they are obvious attempts to "prove" Godwin's version of the story.

On the whole, I do not recommend this book. It moralizes, plods interminably, telegraphs turning points for pages beforehand, and lastly, reaches further and further into the hat for contrivances to tie together the dangling plot lines. The first two books are excellent; reread them instead. On the -4 to +4 scale, I'd give this one a -1.

Lynne C. Moore <moorel@eglin-vax.arpa>

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Subject: "Dark of The Moon"

Path: mtuxo!houxm!ihnp4!ucbvax!decvax!dartvax!betsy

Date: Wed, 14-May-86 09:45:40 EST

"Dark of the Moon", P.C. Hodgell, Argo Press (Atheneum), 1985, ISBN 0-689-31171-0

\*Dark Of The Moon\* ("DOTM" from here on out), is a classical second-work-in-a-series, with the classical second-work problems. It's a sequel to Hodgell's \*Godstalk\*, one of the better fantasies I've read recently. Unfortunately, the most compelling character in \*Godstalk\* (for me, anyway) was the city of Tai-Tastigon. DOTM opens with Jamethiel \*outside\* Tai-Tastigon, beginning her journey to find her brother Torisen. So the citizens and mores of Tai-Tastigon play no part in DOTM; as a substitute, the reader finds out more about Jame's own culture. Candidly, I find Jame's culture considerably less interesting -- it doesn't help that most of the glimpses are of fairly-standard

power struggles.

This book uses a fairly standard fantasy plot device, and one which drives me up a wall: the split story. DOTM tells two separate stories which converge only at book's end, and it tells them a chapter or so at a time. So, just as you're getting caught up in Jamethiel's journey west, the focus shifts to Torisen's problems with the recalcitrant Kendar lords. Just as Torisen becomes compelling, it's back to Jamethiel. This device is generally used to heighten suspense, which it certainly does. However, if one story is more interesting than the other, the reader can wind up skimming half the book in order to reach the subplot which interests her. This is my own personal vice; many readers probably won't be as bothered.

Finally, DOTM has the standard second-book problem: an inconclusive ending. Readers of appendices will remember that the last book ended with Torisen wondering where the hell his twin sister Jame had gotten to, anyway. DOTM ends THREE PAGES after Torisen and Jamethiel have finally met. They have time to raise several fascinating issues, none of which are actually addressed. After going to great lengths to build up emotional tension (how will Torisen react to a twin who's now several years younger and a Darkling to boot? How will Jame fit into a culture which keeps women strictly in their place?) Hodgell drops her readers off a cliff.

Readers will have to wait till Book Three to find out how the Kendar react to Jamethiel, and vice versa. (Actually, we have a hint that they don't react all that well; in a short story published in "Different Worlds", Jamethiel is six years older, and again traveling alone.) Alas, Hodgell's "Author's Note" says that the next Jamethiel novel will have to wait until Hodgell finishes her dissertation. Arrgh!

Yes, this is still a remarkably enjoyable book. Hodgell writes well and draws interesting characters. I couldn't put DOTM down until the last page. For all its faults, the middle book in Hodgell's series is still far more compelling than many authors' standalone novels. If you were passionately fond of "Godstalk", you probably won't be able to wait to buy DOTM in paperback; otherwise, you might as well wait, especially since the book ends with a thumping "To Be Continued".

(I may add, three months after I wrote this review, that the book has weathered well; I've reread it several times with pleasure. I do wish that the book had a less frustrating ending, though.)

Elizabeth Hanes Perry

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Subject: "The Iron Tower" trilogy

Path: mhuxr!ulysses!allegra!princeton!orsvax!pyrnj!caip!daemon

Date: Fri, 16-May-86 04:24:59 EST

I haven't commented on these books in this forum, but, since some discussion has arisen about them, I felt I had to add my piece. (Particularly considering the presence of the author on the net, and the good principle that one shouldn't say something behind someone's back that one is unwilling to say to their face.)

I bought all three books before reading a word of any of them, having heard of their existence on the net and being impressed with their cover art. Moreover, I hadn't heard anything bad about them, so I figured they'd be OK. I took the first of them on a long plane trip as my only reading material. After about twenty pages, I gave up on it and searched the airline magazine for half-interesting articles. An hour or two later, having exhausted the magazine and the leaflet describing the plane's safety features, I tried "The Dark Tide" again, but could only last another ten pages. It was a long plane trip, but no reading material at all struck me as better than "The Dark Tide".

My reaction to the first thirty pages of this book, all of it I am able to comment on, is that it is shamelessly derivative and badly written. The best comparison I can come up with is "Bored of the Rings", but not done for laughs. I am sure that Mr. McKiernan worked long and hard on the book, but the results are dreadful, in my opinion. Only the most devoted fantasy addict would find anything of value in it, if the remainder of the trilogy is much like the beginning. Considering that a glut of fantasy exists, much of it at least mediocre, wasting one's time on "The Iron Tower" is hard to justify. The next time I get to a second hand paperback store, I intend to turn in these books for whatever I can get.

I wrote a detailed critique of what I dislike about what I read of "The Dark Tide", but, on rereading it, posting it seemed unnecessary. Let me merely state that this book is one of the few I have read that engendered in me a desire to throw it across the room, a desire I satisfied as soon as I got home from my plane trip. Flinging it against a wall gave me the most pleasure I got from "The Dark Tide".

Peter Reiher

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Subject: THE KING'S JUSTICE by Katherine Kurtz (mild spoiler)  
Path: mtuxo!houxm!whuxl!whuxlm!akgua!gatech!seismo!hao!noao!terak!anasazi!duane  
Date: Tue, 13-May-86 11:48:06 EST

The description in the inside jacket cover is rather long, so I'll break from my tradition and provide a summary myself.

This is volume II of the "Histories of King Kelson", a series which started with THE BISHOP'S HEIR. It deals with King Kelson's campaign against the province of Meara and his old enemies Archbishop Loris and Queen Cairtin. Other interesting highlights include Kelson's mother,

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Queen Jehana, returning to court, the introduction of Haldane powers to Kelson's uncle Nigel, and the further adventures of Alaric Morgan, Duncan McLain, and Dhugal MacArdry, and some more glimpses of the Camberian Council.

If you're not familiar with the "Deryni" series of Katherine Kurtz, let me provide a brief overview. The world is very similar to earth during the medieval period, even to the point of there being a Christian church, Moors, etc. However, humanity is divided into two groups, Deryni (the minority), who have various "magical" powers, and untalented humans. Most of the Deryni powers are mental ones - various amounts of telepathy and the ability to plant "suggestions" or control a person's actions, though there are a few Deryni healers. The Deryni have been feared and persecuted by the Church for over two hundred years, but they are tolerated to some degree at the time of the Kelson stories. Kelson himself is part Deryni, and Alaric and Duncan are Deryni who haven't had any formal training. As you might expect from this scenario, the stories are high fantasy, full of adventure and excitement.

I've yet to rate a Deryni book less than 3.5 stars (very, very good), and this one is no exception. In fact, I give it my highest rating, 4.0 stars. This rating comes automatically when, late at night, I decide to read a chapter before going to bed, and then I decide to read another, and I want to see what happens next so I read another, and finally I give up any thought of a full night's sleep and read the entire book.

One word of caution. Many of the characters in this book have appeared in other Deryni stories, Alaric and Duncan in particular, and there are

so many interesting characters that the author thoughtfully put an index of characters at the back of the book. If you haven't read any of the Deryni books, you might do well to start with one of the earlier ones, such as DERYNI RISING. You certainly should read THE BISHOP'S HEIR before THE KING'S JUSTICE to get an understanding of what's gone on before, though you'd probably enjoy the book even without having read the other one first.

Duane Morse ...!noao!{mot|terak}!anasazi!duane

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Subject: Humf! (Wizenbeak II)

Path: mtuxo!houxm!whuxl!whuxlm!akgua!gatech!seismo!caip!daemon

Date: Sun, 18-May-86 12:47:24 EST

Well, having finished the book, I am somewhat disappointed. The writing quality falls off, and there is too much summarization, the sort of thing that would be fixed by a good editor. The overall feeling I got was that the book was rushed into print without sufficient editing (surely even a cursory look at the galleys would have revealed the typo I mentioned in my last message).

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Also, there are some tongue-in-cheek episodes which don't just describe a humorous incident, they are the author's way of having a joke, and as such don't belong in a serious novel where people are dying all over the place. Furthermore, there are a number of minor plot elements and/or minor loose ends that I got the impression might pertain to parts of the story that were cut almost as if there was a dotted line in a few places....like there is a dragon seen in the middle of the book that doesn't appear again or affect the plot in any way at all....

Still, even with the faults I mention, WIZENBEAK is still worthwhile; some of the characters are refreshingly evil, and even the "good guys" are not so pristine.... If you look at the book one way, it is a thinly disguised criticism of certain events of modern history.

Oh yeah, one more thing, Bluejay is charging \$9 for a trade paperback -- not so long ago you could get hardcovers for that price, particularly sf

hardcovers....

-Laurence

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Subject: Short Circuit

Path: mtuxo!houxm!whuxl!whuxlm!akgua!mcnc!ncsu!uvacs!mer

Date: Tue, 13-May-86 14:08:39 EST

Short Circuit is not deeply arousing emotionally, intellectually challenging, or particularly original. It IS funny. I laughed throughout this movie, and I heartily recommend Short Circuit to anyone who gets a charge out of clever wordplay and sight gags.

Basic idea: Defense contractor's killer robot gets struck by lightning and becomes "alive," whatever that means. Decides that peace is better than war and that it's wrong to kill, blah, blah, blah. Escapes and meets Ally Sheedy who meets genius inventor Steve Guttenberg. They flee the fascist militarists from the defense contracting company.

None of the human characters are particularly endearing, but they manage not to get in the way of the humor generated constantly by a modern Malaprop sidekick of Guttenberg's and the child robot's attempts to assimilate American pop culture.

See this delectable piece of fluff sometime when you're looking for a sure-fire good time without any but the most banal "meaningful overtones." +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.