

Lincroft-Holmdel Science Fiction Club
Club Notice - 6/4/86 -- Vol. 4, No. 46

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

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).

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1. This notice has a bunch of reviews, but the one to look for is the one by a new-comer, one Jumpin' Jo Paltin is making her notice premiere. The notice will publish reviews by anyone willing to write them. That means that 98% of the reviews are written by someone named Leeper. As it happens I will also be reviewing the same film that Jumpin' Jo reviewed. I guess you could call it some sort of Point Counter-Point, except that we sort of agree on the film.

2. Well... we just got ourselves a big book donation (over thirty) by Mr. Thomas Chu. We will probably use this as the start of a Middletown club library. Any volunteers for librarian? You get to meet club members and discuss science fiction and gradually edge your officemate out of all the storage space.

Anthony, Piers	Hasan
Barker, M. A. R.	Flamesong
Boyer, Elizabeth	The Elves and the Otterskin
Cabell, James Branch	Figures of Earth
Chalker, Jack L.	Soul Rider 1: Spirits of Flux and Anchor
Chalker, Jack L.	Soul Rider 2: Empires of Flux and Anchor
Chalker, Jack L.	Soul Rider 3: Masters of Flux and Anchor
Cooper, Louise	The Initiate

Flint, Kenneth C. A Storm upon Ulster
Ford, John M. The Dragon Waiting
Godwin, Parke Firelord
Gregorian, Joyce Ballou The Broken Citadel
Gygax, Gary Greyhawk Adventures: Saga of Old City

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Hansen, Karl War Games
Hughes, Robert Don The Prophet of Lamath
Hughes, Robert Don The Wizard in Waiting
Kangilaski, Jaan The Seeking Sword
King, Vincent Light a Last Candle
Landis, Arthur Camelot in Orbit
Lanier, Sterling E. Menace under Marswood
Lee, Tanith Dark Castle, White Horse
Powers, Tim Dinner at Deviant's Palace
Robinson, Spider Night of Power
Scarborough, Elizabeth Bronwyn's Bane
Sherrell, Carl The Space Prodigal
Spinrad, Norman A World Between
Stasheff, Christopher The Warlock Unlocked
Sucharitkul, Somtow Mallworld
Vance, Jack The Book of Dreams

3. In order to further cut costs at AT&T this notice will be funded by the following paid ad:

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Mark Leeper
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SPACE CAMP

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: The old Disney formula of teens proving they can take over adult roles is resurrected in S_p_a_c_e_C_a_m_p. There are serious script problems, the worst of which is an absurd, cute little robot, but the film does convey some sense of wonder and idealism about the

space program.

Back when I was growing up the Mickey Mouse Club showed an endless supply of stories in which teenagers did adult-like things like playing detective or learning to be airplane pilots. So they wouldn't lose the younger set they would have somebody's baby brother, Moochie, tagging along. In the end the teenagers and even Moochie would impress the adults and prove that the younger generation was going to be great when it grew up. Disney used the same formula over and over, driving it into the ground. Well, the formula is back for the new teenaged movie-goer. Producers Twentieth Century Fox and ABC-TV might call the film S_p_a_c_e_C_a_m_p, but it is really M_o_o_c_h_i_e_o_f_L_o_w-E_a_r_t_h_O_r_b_i_t.

S_p_a_c_e_C_a_m_p is about the accidental sending of high school kids into space. Now if you are like me you are probably saying that NASA has had its share of problems of late, but they all revolve around just the opposite problem: not sending into space things they intended to. How do you accidentally send someone into space? Well, it involves having this camp with real equipment from the real space program and plopping into the middle of it a sentient robot. The robot is not a big part of the film, but none of the rest of the plot works unless you have a robot whose capabilities are miles beyond the rest of the technology in the film. So the film's credibility cannot get off the ground from the start. The robot, incidentally, was apparently based on a design in an old Chesley Bonestall painting, except that in the painting it was Bonestall's impression of a lunar lander. I am not sure if this was intended as an in-joke or not.

Once our intrepid teens get off the ground and away from Jinx the Robot, the film takes an up-turn. The story turns to engrossing albeit cliched space melodrama with the kids running low on--what else?--oxygen. They solve their problems, of course, thinking just a bit faster and clearer than a whole space agency full of adults down below.

The cast seems to take their parts at least reasonably. Kate Capshaw plays the astronaut/camp-counselor. At one point she sees someone floating into a wall and urgently yells "You'll continue to move until acted upon by an outside force." Laurence Olivier couldn't deliver that line believably under the circumstances; I do hope Ms. Capshaw doesn't blame herself. Lea Thompson of B_a_c_k_t_o_t_h_e_F_u_t_u_r_e plays a dedicated teen and the only one of any real interest.

This isn't a bad film for pre-teens and young teens but I have to give it a neutral 0 on the -4 to +4 scale.

POLTERGEIST II: THE OTHER SIDE
A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: The Freeling family returns in a mixed bag of a film. Riveting performance by Julian Beck is the best thing in this film. The film at least is not an attempt to replay its predecessor but is instead a wider context for that film.

A lot of sequels are being made these days in Hollywood's search for safe bets to fill theater seats. There are really three approaches to making sequels. One is to tell a different story with a continuing character in common. The stories may have similar styles, but the most notable element in common is the main character. This is a successful approach if you can get a character, like James Bond, to whom the public responds.

The most common approach is "more of the same." If the audience liked a story once they will like it again, is the plan. J_a_w_s, R_o_c_k_y, and F_r_i_d_a_y_t_h_e_1_3_t_h are series that have each entry much like the previous entry, just a bit worse.

Then there is the best approach. This is that rare case where the sequel broadens the original idea. Ideally the sequel should bear about the same relation to its predecessor that the second half of a film does to its first half. It should tell you more about why things happened as they did in the first film. My best example of what a sequel should do was [Shields up, Scotty, here come the flames!] E_x_o_r_c_i_s_t_I_I: T_h_e_H_e_r_e_t_i_c. Admittedly it had stylistic and script problems. What E_x_o_r_c_i_s_t_I_I also had was a great concept that made much of what happened in the first film more believable and should have been a set-up for a third sequel that could have pitted the forces of evil against the unknowing champions of peace, the so-called "good locusts." E_x_o_r_c_i_s_t_I_I had some great fantasy ideas as I and the five other people who liked the film can attest.

All of this brings me, at last, to P_o_l_t_e_r_g_e_i_s_t_I_I. It is not a very good film, but it tries to follow the third approach. It tries to explain why all the strange events happened to the Freeling family in the first film and comes up with two different reasons that don't quite gel together. One reason concerns the nature of the family itself; the other concerns the house in the first film. Both contributed and keep on contributing to the Freelings' problems. Unfortunately, neither idea or anything in P_o_l_t_e_r_g_e_i_s_t_I_I is as intriguing as some of the ideas in the first film.

One plus of the new film, however, is a performance by Julian Beck. This is Beck's second performance that I have seen and he was the best thing going in each film. His acting is no intense that it is hard to

take my eyes off his skull-like face whenever he is in a scene. Beck played a bitter, nihilistic killer in T_h_e_C_o_t_t_o_n_C_l_u_b. I will not give away plot by saying much about his part in P_o_l_t_e_r_g_e_i_s_t_I_I, but I will say that his part seems to have grown out of an editing error in the first film. In that film, Carol Ann, talking from "the other side" is frightened to see a man. The first film leaves who that man was as a loose end. In one interpretation the second film is built around that man.

I will not go into detail about the plot but the Freelings, minus their eldest daughter (the actress died; no mention of her character is made in the second film) have fled to the house of JoBeth Williams' mother, played by Geraldine Fitzgerald. Also, there is a mysterious Indian played by Will Samson (somehow not nearly as forceful as he was in O_n_e_F_l_e_w_o_v_e_r_t_h_e_C_u_c_k_o'o's_N_e_s_t). Before long the Freelings' past is catching up with them.

P_o_l_t_e_r_g_e_i_s_t_I_I is a big cut below P_o_l_t_e_r_g_e_i_s_t, but it does have good moments. It gets a 0 on the -4 to +4 scale.

19TH INTERNATIONAL TOURNEE OF ANIMATION
A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: These are the best animated films of the last two years. The majority are very good to excellent.

Periodically, but apparently not yearly, there is a collection of the best animated films since the last tournee. This compilation is then put on a single film and released to art theaters. Why only art theaters I am not sure because it is hard to imagine another film that would appeal to art critics and to second graders. I saw one of these about ten years ago and this one is far better. The selection this year is twenty short animated films of which eighteen were award winners at various festivals. The other two have been declared "special award winners" by the producers. The special award seems to be that they were included with the others. They are the least interesting. Now a quick run-through of what was shown:

- "Anna and Bella": Oscar winner about two very old sisters reminiscing about the friendship and competition with each other. Not bad.
- "Bottom's Dream": Psychedelic (?) look at "A Midsummer Night's Dream". Pretty but needed a stronger point.

- "Skywhales": Very fine fantasy tale. It should have been nominated for a Hugo. Animation is a great medium for science fiction but even the Japanese rarely use it right for SF.
- "Olympiad of Animation": Really four shorts. One which observes the militaristic aspects of the Olympics is pretty good.
- "Sigmund": Old joke but the animation, though imaginative, is unoriginal.
- "Anijam": Round-robin cartoon with 22 artists not seeing what the others were doing. A few nice images.
- ""Luncheon": Clay animation and quite funny, showing a woman making lunch. The animation is quite funny though the punchline is predictable.
- "Tony de Peltrie": Good computer animation but otherwise pointless and worthless.
- "Bitz Butz": This one didn't really win any award and it really is just playing around a little with animation. Not too good.

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- "Romeo and Juliet": Romeo is a two-headed horse; Juliet is a cow. This is the second funniest piece of the Tournee.
- "Conversation Pieces: Early Bird": The morning DJ can get ready for the day and do his show at the same time. So what?
- "Incubus": The story has nothing to do with incubi, but it is a good horror story with comic touches. One of the best.
- "Jumping": An odd idea for a film with social comment. We see the world subjectively from someone or something who is jumping to get around. The character gets off the ground; the cartoon doesn't.
- "Moa Moa": Shortest and least interesting. This is the other non-award winner.

- "Vincent": Disney Studios exercise in light ghoulishness. Enjoyable but nothing special. Narrated by Vincent Price, it is the story of a boy named Vincent who wants to be Price.
- "The Big Snit": Strange and funny short about an arguing couple who don't happen to notice that World War III had been declared. The funniest of the Tournee.
- "Charade": Oscar winner in what might have been a slow year--or perhaps the Academy liked it because it is about movies. To tell what it is about would spoil the gag.

SHORT CIRCUIT
A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: Number 5 is alive. So is this comedy occasionally. This is as close as John Badham should ever get to science fiction. The gags are repetitive but some are actually funny.

I cannot claim to being much of a fan of John Badham. His D_r_a_c_u_l_a left a sour taste in my mouth in spite of being an effectively moody piece of horror. In the last scene Dracula's cape flies off as what is obviously a kite. His W_a_r_G_a_m_e_s left a taste so sour it could have put United Citrus out of business. The last time I watched it I wrote down the technical inaccuracies and stupid ideas. I found they come, on the average, one every two minutes. Out of a misguided human-chauvinism the film presented a dangerously wrong view of the virtues of automated versus manual systems. (Just as filmmakers see Americans feeling militarily powerless and react with films like R_a_m_b_o, directors like Badham see distrust of complex automated systems and make films like W_a_r_G_a_m_e_s.)

While W_a_r_G_a_m_e_s was a compendium of computer misinformation, S_h_o_r_t_C_i_r_c_u_i_t takes one or two bad ideas and stretches them out to a full-length film. Of the two approaches S_h_o_r_t_C_i_r_c_u_i_t is much better. In S_h_o_r_t_C_i_r_c_u_i_t an autonomous military robot called Number 5 is struck by lightning and given the political attitudes, TV preferences, and musical taste of an MTV fan. The concept is apparently that any logical mind will find S_a_t_u_r_d_a_y_N_i_g_h_t_F_e_v_e_r to be superior entertainment. Much of the humor of this comedy revolves around having the robot do non-robot-like things (disco dance, quote TV, imitate John Wayne) or having the robot or an Indian computer scientist mangle English expressions by substituting similar words ("Gag me with a fork!"). Perhaps this film's most interesting statements are about American idiomatic use of language. Our cute robot comes under the protection of Ally Sheedy in whom he brings out the maternal instincts. Together with a renegade scientist (who developed the military version of the robot) they try to hide Number 5 from a military surprisingly uninterested in this leap in artificial intelligence. (You b_e_t_t_e_r_b_e_l_i_e_v_e the U.S. military and the Defense Department has an interest in AI.)

Nominally Steve Guttenberg and Ally Sheedy get billing over Number 5 but the robot is, of course, the real star of the film. The robot is given a full range of emotions almost entirely with two metal flaps that act like eyebrows in conveying facial expression. The film is genuinely funny at times and really misguided at others. I am going to mugwump it and give it a 0 on the -4 to +4 scale.

THE VAMPIRE LESTAT by Anne Rice
Knopf, 1985, \$17.95.
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper

Ten years ago, Anne Rice wrote *Interview with a Vampire*, in which we met Louis the vampire and saw vampire life from the other side, a la Saberhagen's *The Dracula Tape*s. But where *The Dracula Tape*s was just *Dracula* retold from the vampire's point of view, *Interview with a Vampire* created a new mythology for vampires, separate from Stoker's Transylvanian milieu. Rice based her vampires in New Orleans, and of French origin. Her goal was not to horrify, but to show that vampires are people too. And like normal people, they have rivals. Louis's rival was the vampire Lestat.

Now, ten years later, Rice introduces us to Lestat and we learn his side of the story, his background. And eventually we (and he) meet Marius, a yet older vampire who relates the origins of the vampire race. (I can't help but predict that the promised third novel in the series will show us the early days of the vampires firsthand. If it takes another ten years for that novel, no one reading this prediction will even remember it to point out how wrong I was.)

The framing sequence, set in modern San Francisco, is passable. It is the main body of the novel, the story of Lestat's "conversion" and existence in pre-Revolutionary France and Europe, which fascinates the reader. And, of course, Marius's story of *his* early existence and the origin of *his* *homovampirism* is almost a novel in itself. (*The Vampire Lestat* is nearly twice the length of *Interview with a Vampire*.)

I don't want to reveal too much of the plot, since much of the enjoyment (at least for me) comes from the gradual revelations, almost like peeling off the layers of an onion. Rice is able to show us many kinds of vampires, as distinct from each other in nature as human beings are. We do not see the sameness of character that most vampire stories show us. Some of Rice's vampires are full of conscience and get their "kills" only from thieves and murderers; others are amoral and seek the young and healthy victim to gain the greatest strength and sensuality

from their blood. The sensuality of vampirism is a very strong theme in Rice's novels: the seductiveness of the powers vampires have, the ecstasy of feeding, the heightened awareness of one's surroundings that their senses give vampires. This is not a child's vampire story.

I highly recommend this novel. Your appreciation will be heightened if you read I_n_t_e_r_v_i_e_w_w_i_t_h_a_V_a_m_p_i_r_e first, but that isn't necessary. I look forward to the third novel--I just hope it doesn't take another ten years.

ENDER'S GAME by Orson Scott Card
Tor, 1986, \$3.50
A book review by Mark R. Leeper

A while back I got justifiably flamed on the Net. I complained about titles and I used as an example a book I hadn't read, E_n_d_e_r'_s_G_a_m_e. I said that the title implied that the book had something to do with endgame strategy and that it was, in fact, a cheat. The book was instead about someone named Ender. It's true, I should not have said that until I read the book. I have now. A bunch of people who apparently like Orson Scott Card and who don't know what an endgame strategy is were at least right that I should have paid my dues and read the book before making my complaint. My statement was just a lucky guess.

E_n_d_e_r'_s_G_a_m_e is about the training of Ender from age five to twelve, teaching him to be a great military genius. The idea is to combine the kid with the best raw material with the best military training and end up with not just the world's best 12-year-old military commander, but with a commander who cannot lose, period. And that is Card's chief failure--Ender's abilities are just too unbelievable for his age. Even assuming that Ender has the best training possible and that the world has a much expanded population to choose from, it is still extremely unlikely that there would be someone as young as Ender with his abilities. Ender is never convincing as a person of his supposed age.

In addition to this, though I have never seen an analysis, it seems that there are theoretical limits to how good a military commander can possibly be. Of course, superior force is a big advantage, but the commander who wields it is considered to be powerful, not good. The good commander is one who can be counted on to win a higher proportion of the time than would be expected from the size of his forces. The thing is that an army is a sufficiently complex organism that it cannot be perfectly predicted what it will do. This is what is wrong with

E_n_d_e_r'_s_G_a_m_e and Gordon Dickson's "Dorsai" novels like

T_a_c_t_i_c_s_o_f

M_i_s_t_a_k_e. A good strategy will help a lot, and some commanders might have runs of good luck and win many battles, but eventually the law of large numbers takes over. A Dorsai can figure out in advance exactly what his enemy will do, but that is only because Dickson is contriving the situation so that the enemy has only one course of action to take.

In real life, commanders use whims and hunches and weigh alternatives in ways Dorsai or Ender could not psyche out. And armies are not totally obedient monolithic organisms. One can postulate that Card's insect-like Buggers will follow the commands of their queen, but Ender is victorious over humans in battle and humans are not totally predictable.

E_n_d_e_r'_s_G_a_m_e is a good novel, though the reader becomes impatient for something besides training to happen, then it concludes itself very quickly. Saying more than that about the structure of the novel would be giving spoiler clues as to how the novel turns out. It is worth reading but not Hugo material.

LETTERS TO SHERLOCK HOLMES edited by Richard Lancelyn Green
Penguin, 1985, \$6.95.

A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper

If one travels to London and goes to 221B Baker Street, one discovers that it is occupied by the Abbey National Building Society. But if you send a letter to Sherlock Holmes at that address, you will get a reply from "Holmes's secretary." This gentle deception has been going on since 1950 when the Sherlock Holmes exhibition in that building greatly increased his mail. (Even before then, letters were sent to him, but no one person answered them, some going to Doyle, some to Dr.

Joseph Bell--Doyle's basis for Holmes--some to Scotland Yard, etc.)

The book is certainly a tribute to Doyle, though he might not see it that way--one correspondent from Canada asks if Doyle ever wrote any other stories besides his Sherlockian ones. This is reminiscent of the "Star Trek" fan who wrote James Blish to ask if he had ever written anything besides the "Star Trek" books he adapted from the show.

Although at times amusing, all too often the book seems to be laughing at people, rather than with them. Many of the letters are obviously written by children and ask for autographs, pictures, and other souvenirs. Some are by adults who are aware of the deception being practiced and go along with it for a lark. Others--those asking for Holmes's help in real cases--are often the saddest. A child asking Holmes to find his lost cat or a girl asking Holmes to find her missing sister are obviously setting themselves up for yet more disappointment. Perhaps a student of psychology could learn something about why people confuse fantasy with reality. In general, though, I cannot recommend this book.

A ROOM WITH A VIEW

==>A film review by Jo Paltin<==

_ A _ R _ o _ o _ m _ W _ i _ t _ h _ a _ V _ i _ e _ w: in one word *SUPERB*.

The movie, like another story by E. M. Forster named _ A _ P _ a _ s _ s _ a _ g _ e _ t _ o _ I _ n _ d _ i _ a, reflects the superior quality of Forster's writing and represents an excellent period piece. While _ A _ P _ a _ s _ s _ a _ g _ e _ t _ o _ I _ n _ d _ i _ a was an obvious cynical comment on British colonialism and influence in Victorian India, _ A _ R _ o _ o _ m _ W _ i _ t _ h _ A _ V _ i _ e _ w concentrates on the social hang-ups of Victorian Brits with a beautifully romantic flair.

The movie starts out in Florence, Italy (one of the most romantic places on Earth), where a young woman and her chaperone aunt find that the rooms they have reserved in a pensione do not have the "view" they were promised. They end up switching rooms with a father-son pair, also visitors from Britain, and spend a considerable amount of time with them and other guests at the pensione. As you might suspect, the young man likes (lusts after) the young woman, and they end up in a passionate embrace. The chaperone aunt is outraged and takes the young woman back home.

Back in England, the young woman becomes engaged to the most pompous, yet pathetic, character ever seen on the Silver Screen. The complications continue as the father-son pair move in nearby. The rest of the film is spent showing everyone pretending not to be in love, not interested, and generally oblivious to feelings and emotions. The film succeeds in depicting its characters with much humor, romance, and beauty.

The film is superbly acted, and the tension builds up as the repressed Victorians go about their constricted pompous lives. The cinematography can hardly be outdone, especially in Florence. The tremendous contrast between the stuck-up Brits and the lively Italians sets the stage for much of what follows in the film -- with superb understatement.

As you might have gathered, I found no faults with this film. On the -4 to +4 scale, it deserves a solid +4.

Enjoy it -- I hope it comes to all your local movie theatres. And by the way, take along someone you like (a lot).

A ROOM WITH A VIEW
A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: Whimsical comedy about repression by Victorian standards has some great characterizations. One of the best of the year.

Generally I feel there are art films and there are pleasure films. Put me in front of an art film and you have a 50-50 chance of me really liking it. If the director is Kurosawa, your odds are much better; if it's Ingmar Bergman, your chances are much worse. So with some trepidation I went to see A _ R _ o _ o _ m _ w _ i _ t _ h _ a _ V _ i _ e _ w, based on the novel by

E.

M. Forster. I had a great time. People who are looking for action films should skip it entirely. Comedy fans I will tell this to: the loudest and hardest I have heard a film audience laugh over the past year was in watching A _ R _ o _ o _ m _ w _ i _ t _ h _ a _ V _ i _ e _ w. That really is just one sequence in the film, but much of the rest is at least amusing.

The story, like Forster's A _ P _ a _ s _ s _ a _ g _ e _ t _ o _ I _ n _ d _ i _ a, is a social protest about conditions that subsequently changed. That means Forster's message of the ills of society has been modified to one of how silly people used to be in the past. Forster's theme is how Victorian mores shape people's actions and even their destinies in misguided ways. Much of the film is about how actions that seem innocent enough today had a terrible taint of scandal in the Victorian period. People go to what now seem idiotic lengths to avoid a hint of any wrong-doing, particularly regarding sex (gasp!).

The production quality is just excellent, with Maggie Smith playing the most repressed and repressing person in an extremely repressive society. Denholm Elliot--like Smith, always a pleasure to watch--plays a man most indelicate to fine Victorian sensibilities. But the real star is the actress who plays Lucy. Because he once kissed her when he thought nobody else was around to see, she cannot possibly marry the man she loves. The music is just beautiful, particularly a piece of very good Puccini ("O mio babbino caro" from G _ i _ a _ n _ n _ i _ S _ c _ h _ i _ c _ c _ h _ i) that is used

to

bracket the film, being played at the beginning and the end. (For an opera fan, good Puccini is enough to bring tears to your eyes. If you are just a classical music fan, it should bring a lump to your throat.

If you are an MTV fan, it's a nice tune even if it is played without electric instruments and not loud enough.) In any case, _ A _ R _ o _ o _ m _ w _ i _ t _ h _ a _ V _ i _ e _ w is a fine, textured film all around and deserves a +2 on the -4 to +4 scale.

_ N _ O _ T _ E _ S _ F _ R _ O _ M _ T _ H _ E _ N _ E _ T

Subject: "Count Zero" by William Gibson
Path: ihnp4!decwrl!decvax!ittate!dcdwest!sdcsvax!sdcc6!loral!ian
Date: Mon, 26-May-86 18:45:54 EST

"Count Zero" by William Gibson, Arbor House, \$15.95

Science fiction allows an author to project current reality into a future world that does not exist yet. Consider our world today. We are at the start of an information age. Computers are the medium of this age and are, by and large, produced by large companies like IBM and DEC. Year after year these companies grow larger and branch out into new areas. What will happen if companies like IBM, DEC, NEC and Fujitsu keep growing as they have been? Population dynamics should give us some clue.

Computer power increases even faster than the multinational companies grow. A new generation of computers is being born. These systems are parallel processors. In ten years we may see computer systems that are composed of millions of processors.

Coupled with the information revolution has been a quieter revolution in biology. In the last ten years scientist have been able to synthesize complex hormones like insulin that in the past could only be obtained from animal sources. The human genes linked to a number of disorders

have been mapped. There is little doubt that there will come a time when the keys to evolution will be in the hands of the human race.

Imagine a world fifty years or so in the future, when the multinational companies have become more powerful than nations. A time when computer systems of massive power are globally linked. Where some of these computer systems support artificial intelligences. A world where genetic and transplant technology can be used to alter the human form. This is the world that William Gibson first showed us in *Neuromancer*. In this world the computer breakers of today (called hackers by the media) have evolved into "cowboys" who break into the huge computers on the global network. The cowboys "jack in" to the computer network via consoles that provide direct stimulus to the brain. An illusion is generated to help people work on the global network. This illusion is referred to as the "cyberspace matrix" and appears as a vast three dimensional plain. The huge corporate computer systems are visualized as glowing structures on this plane.

With the exception of the military computer systems, most computer systems today have very weak security. In Gibson's world, where information is recognized as both currency and power, computer systems are guarded by complex security systems. These security systems consist

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of both cryptographic measures and active counter measures that can kill the computer breaker by "flat lining" the brain ("flat line" refers to what would be seen on an EEG). The security systems are referred to as Intrusion Countermeasure Electronics, or ICE. The programs the cowboys use to break into these systems are referred to as icebreakers.

Gibson's new novel, *Count Zero*, is set in the same universe as *Neuromancer*, but several years later. *Count Zero* is the "handle" of Bobby Newmark, who lives in a housing project and dreams of escaping to a better life by becoming a "cowboy". A small time black market dealer rents Bobby an icebreaker to use on his first cowboy run through the cyberspace matrix. The black market dealer even suggests a system to try the icebreaker out on. As it turns out the system is heavily guarded and Bobby is almost flat lined. The icebreaker is later stolen and the suppliers of the icebreaker attempt to recover it with Bobby's help.

Gibson interweaves Bobby's story with threads from the lives of a corporate mercenary and a woman who previously owned an art gallery. Some of the other characters overlap from Neuromancer: Finn, the black market dealer in software is back and the three threads of the story are drawn together at the end of the book by remnants of the Tessier-Ashpool empire.

Count Zero is highly recommended to those who liked Neuromancer or the movie Blade Runner.

Ian Kaplan

Subject: Review of Ender's Game and Speaker For The Dead
Path: mtuxo!houxm!whuxl!whuxlm!akgua!gatech!seismo!caip!daemon
Date: Fri, 30-May-86 13:57:44 EST

Ender's Game copyright 1985
Speaker For The Dead copyright 1986
by Orson Scott Card

Ender is a child, from what is essentially a breeding project for empathy. He is the most empathetic person on earth. Through a lack of love and a carefully conditioned environment, he is made into a killer and a survivor, kicking and screaming all the way, since he knows what he is becoming... empathy, don'tchaknow. He kills, and he survives, and then there is nothing for him to do. Such is Ender's Game.

In SFTD, he has been alive for 3000 years, through the relativity of near-light travel. He has seen his name run the gamut from that of Saviour to that of Destroyer, Maniac, Murderer. His empathy creates life and understanding from lies and decades long guilt, and averts a need for another like himself. He finds the atonement he has been seeking.

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I just got finished reading SFTD. The words drained, shellshocked, traumatized have significant meaning to my mental state right now. I am telling you the entire story of each book, and yet I am telling you nothing. Orson Scott Card could bring the walking dead to life, by showing to the insensitive of the world the life and love in all of us,

creating in them the heretofore impossibility of understanding another human as human, another *species* as human.

After the first chapter, the setting of the scene, Speaker For The Dead was predictable to me... the story had a necessity of form and character as a sonnet does, a ritual dance. Card writes simply, no sweeping descriptions, you don't know what the characters look like. But it doesn't matter, for it is their inner life you are looking at, the whole and the holes. The simplest truths are the most powerful.

The talent that reached to the core of being in SongHouse, and showed you it's shape in Ender's Game, molds you to it in Speaker For The Dead. If you have any heart in you at all, read these books. If you don't, read them and hope to gain thereby. This writer deserves to shine, to be remembered. Even if you don't like his style, I don't think it is possible to be untouched.

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