

Lincroft-Holmdel Science Fiction Club  
Club Notice - 9/12/84 -- Vol. 3, No. 9

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

Unless otherwise stated, all Lincroft meetings are on Wednesdays  
in LZ 3A-206 (HO meetings temporarily suspended) at noon.

\_D\_A\_T\_E                    \_T\_O\_P\_I\_C

10/03 CIRCUS WORLD by Barry Longyear  
11/14 THE TOMBS OF ATUAN by Ursula K. LeGuin  
01/02 THE CIRCUS OF DR. LAO by Charles G. Finney  
02/13 SLAN by A. E. Van Vogt

LZ's library and librarian Lance Larsen (576-2668) are in LZ 3C-219.  
Mark Leeper (576-2571, LZ 3E-215) and Evelyn Leeper (834-????, HO  
1B-437A) are co-chairpeople. HO's library and librarian Tim Schroeder  
(949-5866) are in HO 2G-432. John Jetzt (577-5316) is HO-chairperson.

1. On Thursday, September 20, 7:30pm, the semi-beautiful, almost-  
spacious, perhaps-conveniently-located Loew's Leeper will be  
showing the following two films:

Recent Excursions Into Animated Film:

WATERSHIP DOWN (1978) dir by Martin Rosen  
SECRET OF NIMH (1982) dir by Don Bluth

WATERSHIP DOWN is a film adaptation of Richard Adam's excellent  
fantasy novel that has been a best seller in Britian for quite a  
while. The film is quite good and even better if you have read the  
novel. (Funny how that works; THE SHINING was a lot worse if you  
had read the novel.) The basic plot involves the odyssey of a  
warren of rabbits looking for a safe home. However, a real rabbit's  
life is actually pretty dangerous and violent and in WATERSHIP DOWN  
the dangers are realistically portrayed. The story has a lot of  
serious allegorical interpretations, but it stands pretty well on  
its own as just a piece of good storytelling.

NIMH is the project of Don Bluth, best known now for his Drago's  
Lair" video game. Bluth used to work for Disney and got tired of  
that studio not doing the kind of animation they were capable of.  
He took a bunch of Disney's animators with him and formed his own  
production company. SECRET works like and about as well as a good

Disney animated feature film. It is very much of the same formula. Curiously enough, incidently, the Rats of NIMH who play very prominently in the film are based l\_o\_o\_s\_e\_l\_y on fact. I will try to get out the SCIENCE NEWS article that discusses them in time for people to read at the festival.

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2. Evelyn Leeper is now located in HO 1B-437A (temporary telephone 834-4674). She may be reached electronically at hocsj!ecl.

Items to be included in a given week's Notice must currently reach Evelyn by Wednesday 10AM. Mercury Capsules still go to lznv!psc.

Mark Leeper  
LZ 3E-215 x2571  
...{houxn,hogpd,hocse}!lznv!mrl

## Mercury Capsules - September 12, 1984

"Mercury Capsules": SF review column, edited by Paul S R Chisholm. Appears in the "Lincroft-Holmdel SF Club Notice".

A medium for quick reviews of anything of interest in the world of science fiction. I'll pass along anything (not slanderous or scatological) without nasty comments. I prefer to get reviews by electronic mail: send to wi!psc from the AT&T-IS ENS systems in Lincroft; hocse!lznv!psc, houxn!lznv!psc, or hogpd!lznv!psc from everywhere else. If that's impossible, I'm at LZ 1D-212, 576-2374.

Since Evelyn has moved to Holmdel, the notice's deadlines have been changed. Please submit Mercury Capsules by close of business Tuesday. (It would be even better if you could get them by me by 4:00.)

o+ L\_e\_n\_s\_m\_a\_n: Japanese animated film, 1984

A film adaptaion of "Doc" Smith's series? Listen to the plot, and you tell me: the good guys make a raid on the bad guys, and get away with the plans to their secret base/weapon. The good guys limp to an isolated

planet, where one of them gives a young nobody farmboy the secret plans. Then the bad guys catch up to the good guys, and blow up their ship and the planet they're on. The kid escapes (with a hot-shot pilot friend of his father's.) He meets a girl on the good side, and they somehow all end up trying to escape from a factory planet.

If this sounds like S\_t\_a\_r\_W\_a\_r\_s to you, that makes at least two of us. The characters are familiar from the classic space opera, but not the story. For instance, the nobody farmboy (Kimball Kinnison) is given somebody else's Lens. "But that's impossible," says one of the officers of the Galactic Patrol when they find them. "A Lens can't be transferred, and it explodes when its wearer dies. This must be some kind of miracle!" Must be.

Paul S R Chisholm

o+ R\_a\_p\_h\_a\_e\_l: novel, R. A. MacAvoy, 1984.

An excellent end to an excellent trilogy (D\_a\_m\_i\_a\_n\_o, D\_a\_m\_i\_a\_n\_o's\_L\_u\_t\_e, R\_a\_p\_h\_a\_e\_l). In her previous books (including T\_e\_a\_w\_i\_t\_h\_t\_h\_e\_B\_l\_a\_c\_k\_D\_r\_a\_g\_o\_n) MacAvoy has always done the unexpected and this book is no exception. She may not revolutionize the fantasy field with her techniques the way Christie did with the mystery field, but she's doing her darnedest. I won't ruin any of the marvelous twists and surprises; read it (them).

Evelyn C Leeper

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

Contributed by Rob Mitchell & Dale Skran

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Subject: Re: Job: A Comedy of Justice  
Path: ihnp4!decwrl!decvax!mcnc!duke!nnd  
Date: Thu, 30-Aug-84 09:22:07 EDT

Yes, Job is another of Heinlein's books where pontificating to the reader seems to be the main purpose. It's quite a bit like The Number of the Beast in that respect. Somewhat disappointing; probably not worth the hard-cover price (\$16.95, I believe) unless you enjoy being preached at, or want to hear about Heinlein's trip to the South Pacific. I suspect that the first part of the book is an attempt to write off that trip as a business expense, but then the whole thing seems forced.

Ned Danieleley

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Subject: Pynchon  
Path: ihnp4!ucla-cs!reiher  
Date: Thu, 30-Aug-84 02:38:35 EDT

Needless to say, I do not agree with Mr. Duntemann's and Mr. Mclure's appraisal of "Gravity's Rainbow". I should have mentioned earlier that "Gravity's Rainbow" is not the sort of book everyone will like. But, if you do like it, you'll probably \*really\* like it. Thus, for those with any interest, I suggest borrowing a copy and reading the first fifty or one hundred pages. If you don't like it by this point, quit, as the beginning of the book is representative of the rest. (On one important point Duntemann is definitely right. "Gravity's Rainbow" is very long, over 800 pages of small type in my edition. If you dislike long books, probably you shouldn't bother with it.) Might further discussion of the literary merits of this book be better carried out in private mail or net.books?

Peter Reiher

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Subject: Conservation of Momentum (and MT)  
Path: ihnp4!zehntel!varian!vaxwaller!cw  
Date: Wed, 29-Aug-84 16:19:19 EDT

This item was inspired partly by the talk on matter transmission, but is not really about matter transmission. I'll mention a tie in between the two at the end.

One problem with interstellar travel that I've hardly ever seen addressed (maybe because sf-writers aren't LOOKING for problems, just trying to explain away the ones people are already likely to know) is that of conservation of momentum. Isaac Asimov did make some use of the concept in 'The Gods Themselves', but otherwise it has been ignored, even by people like John Campbell, who generally seems very conscientious about scientific accuracy. In one of his novels, I think it was called 'The Mightiest Machine', his characters have a device that makes the random motion of molecules in an object become un-random; it can be used to make an object shoot off in a given direction, the energy being provided by the heat energy of the object, which becomes extremely cold. Nothing shoots off in the opposite direction however, so momentum is not conserved.

A SF writer doesn't need to go around destroying planets to provide energy to move a space ship around all the time, he or she only needs to be able to borrow some for the voyage, then put it back.

If a rocket takes off for Alpha Centauri, it gets momentum by providing momentum to exhaust gases in the opposite direction. When the ship gets where it is going it loses this momentum by giving it to more exhaust gases. Now the rocket ship is in a different place, but you have two clouds of gas hurtling away from each other. Physics majors can check me on this but I do not believe that the center of mass of the universe ever changes during all of this.

Suppose somebody invents an anti-gravity device, and his space ship "pushes" against a planet to get going for Centauri, then pushes against another planet to stop. Now these two planets are moving apart ever so slightly, or not so slightly if the ship got up to extremely high speeds. So far no energy is recovered or put back, but maybe the ship could use its anti-grav in a reverse direction and pull back on the same planet that it started from, which is what normal gravity does, the kinetic energy of the two objects has to go somewhere, maybe it can be recovered and stored. Now the ship is at point B, nothing is hurtling away from anything else anymore than it was before, and presumably the center of mass of the universe is still the same because the planet has moved over a little bit to balance the greater displacement of the ship. How soon the ship can arrive at a certain place is determined by how much energy it can beg borrow or steal for the duration. If the ship put a lot of energy into the motion, and got there in a short period of time, would the distribution of mass be the same as if the

voyage had been more leisurely?

A similar situation would be a car with batteries and electric motors/generators that could brake by recharging its battery. Except for friction losses it could start and stop and travel all around the planet, momentum being transferred back and forth between planet and car. Thinking about this I can't help but wonder if momentum isn't the most primitive concept in physics.

What is the tie-in with matter transmission? Well, one or maybe two people pointed out that one way around the problems brought up about matter

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transmission was that two places in the universe could be juxtaposed by bending the universe through another dimension and having the person or whatever just step across the now short space. Momentum could also be conserved by this method, but would the center of mass of the universe still be the same? What other implications would there be?

Carl Weidling

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Subject: Re: Why pick on Pynchon?

Path: hocs!hogpc!houti!ariel!vax135!cornell!uw-beaver!tektronix!orca!brucec

Date: Tue, 4-Sep-84 16:20:22 EDT

It amazes me that a comparatively skilled writer such as Pynchon can be slammed on this list while such crude authors as Piers Anthony, whom I find unreadable, pass unscathed.

Agreed, Pynchon is a \*skilled\* writer, it's just that not all of us are willing to bull through all the extraneous stuff he throws in to prove it. I generally liked "V" (even the South African garden party sequence, which did little to further anything else in the book), and I often wish that I had been able to get past page 100 in "Gravity's Rainbow." My tolerance for self-indulgent writing is just too low.

We do agree about Piers Anthony. I have actually read several of his novels, and after each one I have asked myself why I bothered. The last straw was the "Planet of Tarot" series, which I read in a fit of boredom



while on a long business trip. I actually emulated that old cliché of throwing the book across the room, shouting "Never again!" What irritates me is that he couldn't even get his research on the Tarot right. I could excuse his miserable writing and blatant sexism (he does know that women are human, doesn't he?) if he could just get \*something\* right.

Bruce Cohen

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Subject: Still another m.t. story . . .

Path: ihnp4!zehntel!tektronix!hplabs!sri-unix!RG.JMTURN%MIT-OZ@MIT-MC.ARPA

Date: Thu, 23-Aug-84 23:58:00 EDT

Basically, the issue of "what happens if you get temporarily stuck in a processor because of reason x" has had many manifestations, most notably (to me) "Overdrawn at the Memory Bank" by...run to bookshelf... John Varley, reprinted in the 1977 World's Best SF.

%RMS-PERSON-OVERFL Personality Overflows Virtual Address Space

James Turner

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Subject: Re: Conservation of Momentum (and MT)

Path: hocsl!hogpc!houxm!vax135!cornell!uw-beaver!tektronix!orca!shark!hutch

Date: Thu, 6-Sep-84 14:35:15 EDT

One problem with interstellar travel that I've hardly ever seen addressed (maybe because sf-writers aren't LOOKING for problems, just trying to explain away the ones people are already likely to know) is that of conservation of momentum. Isaac Asimov did make some use of the concept in 'The Gods Themselves', but otherwise it has been ignored, even by people like John Campbell, who generally seems very conscientious about scientific accuracy.

Carl Weidlin

Well, actually, Larry Niven dealt with the conservation of momentum in all

the Known Space series.

Matter transmission is defined as impractical outside a gravity well, so interplanetary is out. Then he has the transmitters take all the momentum relative to the receiver and transmit it instead to a large set of heavy barges set in the middle of Lake Michigan. If momentum has to be added, it jerks the barge one way, if it has to be removed then it jerks it another way. Simple.

Another series dealing with conservation of momentum is the series "The Journeys of McGill Feighan" whose author I forget the name of. Matter transmission is psionic (read magic for you materialists) and limited by several physical factors. First, a person with the knack for sending matter has a 914 kg limitation on the mass that can be moved. Second, kinetic energy has to be equalized and this is done by drawing or dumping momentum from a "hyperspace" which the transport apparently deals with. Third, the power MUST be trained. If you aren't trained and you have the power, it eventually kills you when you flip to someplace without equalizing kinetic energy. Fourth, you cannot "transmit" to anyplace you haven't been to. So, there is a fleet of ships travelling sublight, reaching various planets VERY SLOWLY. I don't know if you can transmit to a ship or not, the author didn't say.

Anyway, most authors I've read who deal with matter transmission toss off conservation of momentum as something that's already been worked out.

Hutch

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Subject: Fun with Borges' 'The Library of Babel'

Path: hocsl!hogpc!houxm!vax135!cornell!uw-beaver!tektronix!hplabs!utah-cs!donn

Date: Thu, 6-Sep-84 06:00:20 EDT

This discussion is a bit of a spoiler, so if you hate spoilers and enjoy

fantasy, rush out right now and buy Jorge Luis Borges' FICCIONES (which contains some really remarkable stories besides "The Library of Babel", including "The Circular Ruins" and "Pierre Menard, Author of DON QUIXOTE"), read it, then come back and read this...

"The Library of Babel" is really a fun story, and it's a fun story on several levels, as a fantasy, as a mathematical game, as philosophical speculation and as satire (Borges was once a librarian and was (is?) director of the National Library of Argentina). The story has been anthologized in numerous places, and has inspired a number of SF stories; for example Gene Wolfe has admitted in PLAN[E]T ENGINEERING that the Library was an inspiration for the peculiar library of the Citadel (and perhaps the House Absolute and who knows how many other places) in his BOOK OF THE NEW SUN.

One of the more straightforward puzzles is the construction of the Library. Here is how Borges describes it:

The universe (which others call the Library) is composed of an indefinite, perhaps an infinite, number of hexagonal galleries, with enormous ventilation shafts in the middle, encircled by very low railings. From any hexagon the upper or lower stories are visible, interminably. The distribution of the galleries is invariable. Twenty shelves -- five long shelves per side -- cover all sides except two; their height, which is that of each floor, scarcely exceeds that of an average librarian. One of the free sides gives upon a narrow entrance way, which leads to another gallery, identical to the first and to all the others. To the left and right of the entrance way are two miniature rooms. One allows standing room for sleeping; the other, the satisfaction of fecal necessities. Through this section passes the spiral staircase, which plunges down into the abyss and rises up to the heights....

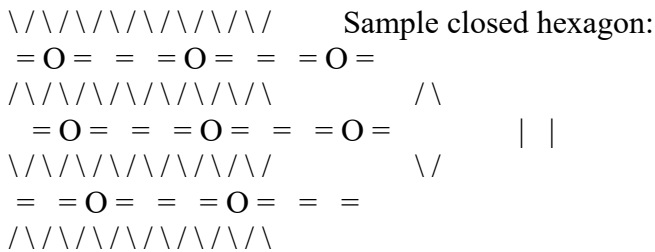
This description is somewhat ambiguous and incomplete; the only other information we have is the following cryptic Dictum which is passed down among librarians through the generations:

The Library is a sphere whose consummate center is any hexagon, and whose circumference is inaccessible.

Let's make some assumptions. From the Dictum, let us assume that the Library fills space; it extends to an arbitrarily large distance in all directions in three dimensions (or more?). Let's assume that the second 'free side' of a hexagon opens onto another gallery directly, without passing through a hall with a staircase. Without this assumption it would be difficult to establish an arrangement compatible with the first assumption. Next, let's assume that given sufficient time, it is possible to travel from any hexagon to any other; this is implied but not stated in the course of the story. Finally, to make tiling convenient, let's assume that the halls which contain stairwells are hexagonal in shape and the same size as the book hexagons. We can explain the narrowness of the corridor by

the fact that the bedrooms and bathrooms and stairs take up most of the floor space. We can even put the stairs in the same position as the central ventilation shaft of the book hexagons (they were pre-fabricated!).

Then the fun question to ask is: How are the hexagons laid out? Several possibilities come to mind, depending on what aesthetic restrictions one chooses to impose on the structure. One really simple possibility is to lay the rooms out in rows; here is a crude picture (O's mark stairwell hexagons, ='s and X's mark doors):



In this batik-like pattern the paths through the Library run from left to right, with a stairwell every third hexagon. This arrangement has a difficulty -- it's impossible to move from one row of hexagons to another on the same level. If the same pattern occurs on lower levels, then the Library ends up being partitioned into planes of hexagons. This runs against our assumption that every hexagon is accessible from every other.

Perhaps we can salvage this tiling and preserve its symmetry by assuming that alternate levels of the Library alternate reflections of the tiling. Reflecting the tiling across an axis passing through a column of stairwell rooms preserves the positions of stairwells and ventilation shafts (which are mutually exclusive by virtue of the statement that they continue 'interminably') but changes the orientations of the rows of rooms. This allows you to go down a level, traipse through a few rooms, then come up a level into a different row. Does this solve the problem?

It seems that this isn't quite enough. Instead of arbitrarily many sets of rooms, we now have three sets of rooms. The difficulty is that stairwells are spaced three rooms apart, so when you go down a level and skip along to another stairwell, you will always come up a multiple of 3 rows away from your starting point. Rows that are 1 mod 3 or 2 mod 3 distant are in disjoint sets. Is there any tiling in which all the rooms are laid out this way and every room is accessible from every other room? By 'this way', I mean an arrangement where all the stated assumptions are true, with the additional hypotheses that every hexagon has an infinite linear path going through it, and various levels may be rotations or reflections of the basic pattern.

What happens if the paths through the Library need not be straight? An example of a crooked tiling might be the following (X's and '='s denote doors):

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\\ \\ X \\ \\ X \\ \\
= O = | = O = | = O =
/ \\ \\ X / \\ \\ X / \\ \\
= O = | = O = | = O =
X / \\ \\ X / \\ \\ X / \\ \\
| = O = | = O = | =
/ X / \\ \\ X / \\ \\ X /

```

Sample closed hexagon:

As with the previous pattern, if this pattern were to continue up and down for indefinite distances, then the Library would be partitioned into an infinite number of sets. Unlike the previous pattern, if the levels of the Library alternate with appropriate reflections of the tiling, any hexagon of the Library can be reached from any other. (Try to visualize the method.)

While this arrangement satisfies all the assumptions, it is clumsy. If you want to reach a hexagon that is on the same level as the one you are standing in, chances are that you can't get there without changing levels. Is it possible to have a layout of hexagons that will get you to any other hexagon on the current level without needing to cross levels?

This is an easy question, so I'll make it somewhat harder: is it possible to create a layout such that the time it takes to travel between two hexagons on the same level, without changing levels, is independent of their location in the Library? Is it possible to design a layout that has a minimal average path between two hexagons on the same level? I don't have answers for these...

A liberal interpretation of Borges' description might permit stairwell hexagons to have more than two entrances. Does this change the problem? (This is fairly easy.)

That's all I have to say on this at the moment. Corrections and suggestions are welcome... The next posting I want to make on this will examine the size of the Library.

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Subject: conservation of momentum

Path: ihnp4!zehntel!hplabs!sri-unix!STEINBERG@RUTGERS.ARPA

Date: Thu, 6-Sep-84 12:38:27 EDT

Carl Weidling note that matter transmission does not necessarily imply violating consevation of momentum, but notes that classical conservation of momentum implies that the center of mass of the the universe is not altered while matter transmission does seem to alter it. I have two comments:

If momentum is conserved, then you come out of the matter transmitter with the same momentum you went into it with. Since your mass doesn't change (we hope!), your velocity doesn't change. The problem is that the place you

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transmit to may be moving with a quite different velocity. E.g. if you transmit from one point on the equator to another point on the equator exactly on the other side of the earth, you will come out moving about 2000 mph relative to the ground. Interplanetary MT is even worse. I vaguely remember one of the series of short stories on MT used this device to limit the range of MT for the first few stories. Eventually a method was developed that allowed the momentum to be transfered to some large mass somewhere in the process of transmitting you. (This was the series including the story Flash Crowd.)

While conservation of momentum is a well established law, the question about center of mass of the universe is not a real issue. In fact, the term "center of mass of the universe" does not even make much sense in a relativistic universe. Presumably one defines this by taking the position and mass of every particle at some instant. The problem is that there is no consistent way to define "the same instant in time" for two particles that are moving relative to each other at some noticable fraction of the speed of light.

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Subject: Review: The End of the World News

Path: ihnp4!zehntel!hplabs!sri-unix!jsweet@uci-750a  
Date: Fri, 7-Sep-84 05:04:43 EDT

Micro-review: read it--especially the Foreword--a howl.

Macro-review:

According to the introduction (a rather strange one, implying that the author is dead, when he probably isn't--well, is he?), the title of this book by Anthony Burgess is inspired by the BBC news signoff "That's the end of the World News". TEotWN is three almost completely separate stories mixed in alternating chapters into one book.

One story is a historical dramatization of Freud's invention of psychoanalysis and his trials and tribulations from then until the beginning of World War Two, when he was rescued from the clutches of the Austrian Gestapo (Freud was a Jew, you see). The story is told in flashback, mostly from Freud's point of view.

The second story is a quasi-musical, complete with song cues and lyrics, but no actual music, that describes a visit (fictional or not--I'm not sure) by Trotsky to New York just prior to the 1917 Communist revolution in Russia.

The third story is really about the end of the world. A rogue planet named Lynx is due to make a destructive flyby of Earth, round the sun, and return to collide with Earth one year later. The story is a half-parody of "When Worlds Collide", with a dash of "A Clockwork Orange" (another book by Burgess, which was made into an equally depraved movie by Kubrick) thrown in for good measure.

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The story about Freud is interesting, the Trotsky musical is awful, and the end of the world story is somewhat banal, but not too bad. The mixture is enough to keep your interest up; it's sort of like switching channels between three network shows without losing the thread of any one show. I'm probably dense, but I can't find any but the most superficial relationships among the three stories.

Publication information:

The End Of The World News  
by Anthony Burgess

softcover from Penguin Books, New York; 1983  
(the copyright is by Lianna Burgess; maybe AB actually  
croaked!)

-jns

>From ihnp4!zehntel!hplabs!sri-unix!berch%lll-tis.arpa@lll-tis

Wed Sep 12 01:25:36 1984

Subject: Review: ON A PALE HORSE by Piers Anthony

Anthony, Piers. ON A PALE HORSE. (Ballantine/Del Rey, August 1984, pb, 325  
pp., \$2.95. ISBN 0-345-30518-3.) ``Book One of Incarnations of Immortality''

Summary: Below average for Anthony, but inoffensive reading.

Review:

Each of Piers Anthony's series has taken up a new set of elaborate symbols  
and social institutions. In the CLUSTER novels it was alien cultures and  
their symbolic `themes.' In the APPRENTICE ADEPT (Split Infinity etc.) it  
was the ritual games of Proton and the adepts of Phaze. In the XANTH novels  
Anthony has built a detailed system of personal and collective magic.

ON A PALE HORSE introduces a new system where science and magic coexist  
(rather unconvincingly, I think: the APPRENTICE ADEPT books showed exactly  
why science and magic don't mix well; however, Anthony has chosen not to  
take his own advice).

The kicker here is that the archetypical figures of Death, Fate, Nature,  
War, and Time are literal, and are incarnate; their offices are filled by  
humans who carry out their traditional duties (and have the benefit of  
certain powers and perquisites).

The book's hero, Zane, becomes Death (as revealed on the back cover). Yes,  
there is a love interest. Yes, our hero must find a way to outfox the  
baddies while just beginning to learn the ropes of his new job. Yes, there  
are a number of unforgiveable puns. Yes, there are fights and chases in  
which our hero must defeat his enemies by quick thinking and intuition  
rather than brawn. Yes, there is a faithful steed that reveals useful  
information to our hero at crucial moments. Is this beginning to sound  
familiar?



Yes. Unfortunately, after exploring numerous mature themes in books like CHTHON, the CLUSTER novels, and particularly the BATTLE CIRCLE series (Sos the Rope, etc.) Anthony has turned out a large number of inoffensive books with no real substance or flavor. I finished ON A PALE HORSE with a shrug rather than a moist eye or a smile.

Oh, yes, there's supposed to be a message in here about "death with dignity" and death as a natural process, and I think that this is admirable. Unfortunately, the points are rather heavy-handed.

Readers who follow Anthony's career will also enjoy the author's lengthy note at the end of the book, similar to that following VISCOUS CIRCLE. I somehow get the idea that Anthony knows he is not living up to the promise of his early writing, but is either a) unable to return to his forte, or b) enjoying life on the best-seller lists too much. Curiously, the BIO OF A SPACE TYRANT series, also unfinished, does not suffer from the same flaws as ON A PALE HORSE.

I wish I could recommend ON A PALE HORSE more highly, having spent many happy hours with the CLUSTER and BATTLE CIRCLE books. Perhaps "Book Two of Incarnations of Immortality", BEARING AN HOURGLASS, now in hardcover, will provide that opportunity.

Michael Berch

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Path: ihnp4!zehntel!hplabs!hpda!fortune!amd!decwrl!decvax!scorplx!frank  
Subject: The Stand by Stephen King  
Date: Tue, 28-Aug-84 17:38:01 EDT

There probably aren't many out there that haven't read this one but since I've just finished reading "The Stand" I'll give a my commentary.

First, I would recommend it to anyone who is a King fan. It is by far his best piece. It is rather lengthy however, roughly 800 pages.

The story tells about what might happen if a geneticly (sp?) engineered "bug" gets out of the labortory. This bug is a shifting antigen flu virus. This means that it mutates and becomes resistent to vaccines as fast as they can be developed. The virus is also 99.9 percent communicable (sp?) and since there is no cure, it's 99.9 percent fatal.

As you might anticipate, the consequences are devastating.

Among the surviors arise two omnipotent powers, those of good and evil, Mother Abigail and Randall Flagg respectively. These survivors group the remainder of the american population on either side of the rocky mountains, to prepare for the final conflict. Their methods of contacting their followers are paranormal, implementing dreams and visions. The people take sides, the anti-christ or the new found messanger of God.

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As both sides prepare to destroy each other, tensions mount, and what little social structure that remains begins to break down.

"The Stand" is a masterpiece of suspense and foreshadowing. It makes one reconsider the "great potential" of genetic engineering and realize that judgement day might not come riding in on the nose of an ICBM, but rather float out of some careless technician's test tube.

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Subject: Re: Sentient Silicon (Germanium? Superconducting Lead?...)

Path: ihnp4!decwrl!decvax!ncoast!bsa

Date: Mon, 3-Sep-84 15:04:59 EDT

From: trainoff.pasa@XEROX.ARPA

human. The machine will have "grown" up with the whole idea of backups. For all it knows it will be loaded back in again. I can't see how this would be any worse than running the NULL job for a while (or is that a lobotomy. Oh my English just can't handle this (reminds me of time travel variants on language (See HHGttG))).

Hmmm... seems to me you just legitimized Genesis. Did Spock know he would be re-booted? :-)

Time travel variants on language? How about Deety and Lib in Number of the Beast? (now there's weird for you :-)

--bsa

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Subject: Dennis McKiernan

Path: hocsl!hogpc!houxe!drutx!ihnp4!ihuxx!dpa

Date: Tue, 11-Sep-84 10:10:06 EDT

There was a spot in this weeks Bell Labs News stating that an employee, Dennis McKiernan was the author of three SF books. The publisher was Doubleday and the titles are:

Shadows of Doom  
Darkest Day  
The Dark Tide

Does anyone Know anything about these books and are any of them still in print?

Dave Allen

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Subject: Re: NATIVE TONGUE by S. H. Elgin  
Path: ihnp4!decwrl!decvax!dartvax!betsy  
Date: Fri, 7-Sep-84 15:38:35 EDT

Suzette Hadley Elgin is the author of a fine trilogy about a planet called Mizzurah; the only title I can remember is the last volume, called "And Then There'll Be Fireworks". Mizzurah is a planet settled by a number of disgusted Appalachians; needless to say, magic works. I thought it was funny, and the heroine's marvelous. Her name is Responsible of Brightwater; need I say more?

Ms. Elgin also has written several stories/novellas about the Communipath worlds, so called because telepaths are used for interstellar communication. Unfortunately, they tend to burn out and die before they're twenty. Again, I like the characters very much. (Trivia note: Joanna Russ' "The Two of Us" is based on the setting of one of Ms. Elgin's Communipath novels.)

Betsy Perry

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Subject: Jhereg: review, no spoilers  
Path: ihnp4!decwrl!decvax!dartvax!betsy  
Date: Fri, 7-Sep-84 16:31:56 EDT

Jhereg, by Steven Brust, Ace Fantasy, \$2.50

Mini-review: Buy it! Saint the author! If you like assassins, you'll love

this one.

Normal review: \*Jhereg\* is a devious tale concerning an assassin named Vlad Taltos, who lives in a town called Adrilankha which makes Lankhmar look normal. (Maybe it's the 'kh' which does it.) It's about devious maneuvers, life-death battles, Death, Loyalty, Honour, Subtlety, and several other good words. Let me give a brief sample (non-spoiler) of the text:

... At the other extreme from simply killing someone and leaving his body to be found and, possibly, revived, is a special kind of murder which is almost never done. To take an example, let us say that an assassin whom you have hired is caught by the Empire and tells them who hired him, in exchange for his worthless soul.

What do you do? You've already marked him as dead -- no way the Empire can protect him enough to keep a top-notch assassin out. But that isn't enough; not for someone low enough to talk to the Empire about you. So what do you do? You scrape together, oh, at least six thousand gold, and you arrange to meet with the best assassin you can find -- an absolute top-notch professional -- and give him the name of the target, and you say "Morganti."

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Jhereg is as twisted as your favorite DNA; half-way through the book the hero is in a position in which he has the choice of:

1. Dishonoring his closest friend and touching off the equivalent of a jihad.
2. Sparing the friend's honor, losing his own honor (and subsequently his life), and having the same blood-feud happen anyway.

It's set in a world where everybody is dangerous (those who aren't, die), and most are cruel. There are several conversations between angry friends which sent shivers up my spine.

Furthermore, there's a prequel, Yendi. But read Jhereg first.

"No matter how subtle the wizard, a knife between the shoulder-blades will seriously cramp his style."

Betsy Perry

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Subject: Piers Anthony  
Path: ihnp4!zehntel!hplabs!sri-unix!BLARSON@ECLD.#ECLnet  
Date: Sat, 8-Sep-84 23:19:50 EDT

Unlike some other people on this net, I do enjoy most of what Piers Anthony writes. Much of it is not worth contemplation or re-reading, but it does suit my primary purpose of reading SF: entertainment. My point in writing this is to recommend two of his books to those of you who have not read them because of the author.

Bio of a space Tyrant: Vol 1: Refugee 0-380-84194-0 Avon Oct 83 \$2.95  
Bio of a space Tyrant: Vol 2: Mercenary 0-380-87221-8 Avon Jun 84 \$2.95

Not the light entertainment of Piers Anthony's other writings. A serious story of how circumstances turned someone into a "tyrant", from the tyrant's point of view. Two of the best books in my collection. Warning: those of you who want to be offended will be by descriptions of both violence and sex. Vol 3: Politician will be out eventually. ("Soon")

Bob Larson <Blarson@Usc-Ecl>  
Path: ihnp4!ucbvax!fishkin  
Subject: Metropolis (non-spoiler)  
Date: Mon, 27-Aug-84 17:57:58 EDT

The new version of "Metropolis" is a must-see, even if you've seen the original.

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When you go, remember that this movies was made in the middle 1920's, and watch sets, special effects, cinematography, and camera angles decades ahead of their time. (There is a little of the 1920's hysterical over-reaction to events, though).

If you've seen some version of the original, this is still worth seeing; the U.S. version was heavily chopped, and this remake is quite complete.

The additions of Giorgio Moroder are mediocre:

- 1) The limited coloring seems an awkward waste
- 2) the background music is fine,
- 3) the songs-with-lyrics are forgettable and inadequate.

One last note: if you are thinking of seeing the movie, **\*DO NOT\*** see the video for the Bonnie Tyler song, "here she comes". The video is a **\*massive\*** spoiler, giving away virtually the entire plot of the movie.

Simply a magnificent film. Still **\*\*\*\***, despite a generally inadequate job of modernization.

Ken Fishkin            Berkeley Computer Graphics Lab

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Path: ihnp4!zehntel!hplabs!hp-pcd!hpfcnml!robert

Subject: Red Dawn and Formula Films

Date: Mon, 13-Aug-84 16:40:00 EDT

I think the age of the formula film is here. It seems that the point of a movie is to get P% of the target audience to go see the movie by studying the audience first then writing up a movie for it. I guess Disney has been doing that for a long time. If I choose the people that follow that good old all american red neck philosophy as my target audience what will we want in the film? Let's look in at the film company board room meeting.

"Let's have some ideas boys."

"Right J.R."

"I think we could play off of the distrust for foreigners."

"We need some hunting sences."

"What does a red neck hate most? We'll need an enemy, boys."

"I got it J.R.! Commies."

"Sounds good. Any more ideas?"

"How 'bout this J.R., we'll go hunting commies in the woods."

"Yeah, and we could have comments against gun control."

"Right, and we could tell stories about how them commie dogs treat our women and children!"

"And J.R. we can have them mexicans that have been coming over the border be spies!"

"We can have lots of good fighting and killing."

"This sounds like it will make a great movie. We can play off of xenophobia and machoism. I'm sure that flag waving will fit right in! Get some scriptwriters on it right away. Okay boys, what is the next target market on the agenda?"

This movie was so thick with cliches I spent more time watching for the next one than following the empty plot. This movie came off as a shot'm up in the old western since. Our guys kill the bad guys with out loss of life until it gets dull and then we lose people with a few clean bullet holes. But no loss, our guys characters weren't very well developed anyway.

Summary: red neck shoot'm up. I give this one, one bunny.

Robert (animal) Heckendorn

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Path: ihnp4!decwrl!decvax!cca!ima!ism780!bin

Subject: Re: Red Dawn and Formula Films

Date: Wed, 5-Sep-84 00:06:03 EDT

\*\*\*\*\* ism780:net.movies / hpfcnml!robert / 4:40 pm Aug 13, 1984

I think the age of the formula film is here. ... board room meeting.

You are correct about the importance of demographics in determining what kinds of films get made. This is unfortunate because it means that a great many good stories simply do not get told. But consider the investor's point of view. A film like "Red Dawn" costs \$10 - \$15 million to produce and market. If you had \$10 million, how would you decide what kind of film to invest in? Would you ignore the demographics that say "Red Dawn" will sell, and instead invest \$10 million in a story that people might not want to see? Keep in mind that film making is a very risky business. Most films do not make a profit.

So be honest; where are you going to put your money?

"Let's have some ideas boys."

...

This is a pretty pessimistic view of things. I agree that in today's world patriotism and nationalism are more of a hindrance than a help to world peace, but, alas, judging from the reactions of the people in the theatre when I saw the film, you and I are in the minority. But, in

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spite of its preying on what you and I see as being negative ideas, I enjoyed the film a great deal. I am not a redneck, nor am I a commie. I am against war, as is everyone with any sense, and yet there are conditions under which I would fight in one.

Whether this movie presented such a situation is problematic. As I watched it I was aware of a conscious attempt to balance both right and left wing views. I was aware of the attempt. And that was enough. Whether or not the attempt failed is irrelevant. If you are going to experience this film from a political point of view, then the responsibility of seeing the other side is yours. Obviously you have chosen to ignore it.

This is understandable. I, too, prefer to immerse myself in the story when I go to the movies, and not have to worry about the importance of it. But I am not so naive to think that I can see a movie about World War III, an event which might actually happen, without being forced to examine my beliefs and the reality of the world around me.

This movie was so thick with cliches ... very well developed anyway.

There is a lot more to this story than that. I suggest for you a course in screenwriting. "Red Dawn" certainly isn't the best movie ever made, but it's far from the worst.

martin smith, INTERACTIVE Systems

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Path: hocsj!hocsl!hogpc!houti!ariel!vax135!cornell!lasspvax!gtaylor  
Newsgroups: net.movies  
Date: Fri, 31-Aug-84 10:15:15 EDT



It's true that Moroder has done the film-going public a pretty great favour by working so hard to restore a semi-full version of the original (it will be interesting to see what I \*haven't\* seen in the film), but the attempt to make an "upbeat" score (you call Bonnie Tyler upbeat? Jon Anderson? Pat Benatar?) is a pretty ridiculous move. The original score-the first electronic score for a film, incidentally-since the director's notion was to make as revolutionary (literally, I guess....) \*sounding\* film as the one you see-is interesting in its own right. I would have gone so far as to say that the original soundtrack was a "part" of the film.

I can only hope that the hopped-up MTV version brings a few people into the theatre to see it than might otherwise come. It is (given the filmic conventions of the modern day) a bit heavy-handed to the modern eye, but a pretty brilliant bit of work.

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See it.

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Path: ihnp4!mgnetp!burl!clyde!watmath!watcgl!dmmartindale  
Subject: Re: Red Dawn and Formula Films - (nf)  
Date: Sat, 1-Sep-84 15:34:20 EDT

I can see why, if you're going to spend \$10 million or \$30 million on a film, you want something that is likely to attract a large audience. But why aren't there more \$1 million films made? You can still do a lot on a low budget (if you don't need lots of expensive special effects, or expensive stars).

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Path: hogpc!houth!ariel!vax135!cornell!uw-beaver!ssc-vax!wanttaja  
Subject: RED DAWN hardware  
Date: Tue, 4-Sep-84 15:51:21 EDT

Saw "Red Dawn" again the other night, political/realism/left\*right wing flames aside, I feel it is a pretty good shoot-em-up. Did everybody

catch the Joe Bob review of this movie? Classic!

Anyway, I digress. One thing I really liked about this movie was the accurate Sovblok hardware. The buddy I went with had the same opinion, and he's a Ranger at Fort Lewis. I could see how the producers got most of the gear, or mocked it up like the fighters at the airbase.  
But:

WHERE DID THEY GET THOSE (operating) HELICOPTERS???

They appear to be Hind-A models, but close inspection with Jane's shows some differences. Does anyone have any information about the helos used in this movie? Do the Soviets have a export civil version of the Hind? Were they modified Westlands? The aircraft credits listed "Wright Aviation International"... anyone know anything about this company?

Ron Wanttaja

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Subject: Kamikaze '89  
Path: ihnp4!zehntel!hplabs!hpda!fortune!strook  
Date: Thu, 6-Sep-84 12:58:16 EDT

Has anyone seen the movie Kamikaze '89? It stars the late R.W. Fassbinder and is directed by Wolf Gremm. Its been described as "Blade Runner meets Alphaville" taking place in a "pop futurist world". Music is by Tangerine Dream founder Edgar Froese. I liked it.

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Greg S.

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Subject: cheap movies  
Path: ihnp4!ucla-cs!reiher  
Date: Wed, 5-Sep-84 17:07:09 EDT

It's the next thing to impossible to make a Hollywood feature film for much under three or four million dollars, nowadays. A great deal of

this has to do with the fact that all of the studios have heavy duty contracts with the unions which require a lot of people to be around the set, whether you need them or not. If you intend to do any location work, you've got to hire Teamsters to drive the trucks, and they don't come cheap. Union contracts prevent the same makeup person from making up both faces and bodies. There are a lot of other examples. A standard comment of directors from other countries watching Hollywood filming is "What are all these people here for?" The studio is hardly blameless, as their creative accounting methods will pass off as much of the overhead of running the studio onto the production budgets of films as they can get away with. Add it all up, throw in the stuff you really need, and you just can't get away cheap.

The really low-budget films are all made by independents. Most of them don't deal with unions, or only with the unions for actors, directors, cinematographers, editors, etc., and not with the unions which handle key grips, cameramen, etc. They also have little overhead outside the actual costs of the film. Even so, if you want your film to have a moderately professional look, you'll either have to go with unknowns as actors or defer everyone's salaries to stay below the million dollar mark, and it's a crisis if you haven't got a scene by the third take. Even back in the thirties, it cost a major studio \$100,000-\$200,000 to roll out a one hour long formula western. Movies just aren't cheap.

Peter Reiher