

Lincroft-Holmdel Science Fiction Club  
Club Notice - 1/29/86 -- Vol. 4, No. 28

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

- 02/05 HO: THE EYE IN THE PYRAMID by Shea and Wilson (11PM)
- 02/12 MT: (no meeting unless someone comes forward with an idea)
- 02/19 LZ: WORLDS by Joe Haldeman (Politics)
- 02/26 HO: DUNE by Frank Herbert
- 03/19 HO: "Chronicles of Narnia" by C. S. Lewis

HO Chair is John Jetzt, HO 4F-528A (834-1563). LZ Chair is Rob Mitchell, LZ 1B-306 (576-6106). MT Chair is Mark Leeper, MT 3G-434 (957-5619). HO Librarian is Tim Schroeder, HO 2G-427A (949-5866). LZ Librarian is Lance Larsen, LZ 3C-219 (576-2668). Jill-of-all-trades is Evelyn Leeper, MT 1F-329 (957-2070).

1. The Holmdel sub-club will be discussing Shea and Wilson's "Illuminatus" trilogy, in particular THE EYE IN THE PYRAMID. How illuminating!

Note that this meeting starts at 11AM instead of noon. [-ecl]

2. Don't blame the mailroom; this Notice was a day late getting out. Tuesday was not an ordinary day. [-ecl]

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

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NOMINATE MARK R. LEEPER FOR HUGO FOR BEST FAN WRITER

THE ADVENTURES OF MARK TWAIN  
A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: Some of the possibilities of claymation are demonstrated, but this tribute to Mark Twain--timed to correspond with the return of Halley's Comet--is really only children's fare and introduces youngsters only to less important works by Twain.

Claymation is an animation technique like stop-motion animation except that the models are made out of clay and are re-molded for each shot. This combines the texture of shooting three-dimensional models with a versatility in presenting images almost equal to that of cartooning. You can see a human transform into a globe of the Earth in about one second. Unfortunately, the feel of claymation is cartoonish and just not real. Otherwise it would be a perfect medium for doing a story like John Campbell's "Who Goes There?" Thus far, claymation has been used mostly for shorts like "Closed Mondays" and "Sundae in New York." The first full-length film in claymation is T\_h\_e\_A\_d\_v\_e\_n\_t\_u\_r\_e\_s\_o\_f\_M\_a\_r\_k\_T\_w\_a\_i\_n\_b\_y\_H\_u\_c\_k\_l\_e\_b\_e\_r\_r\_y\_F\_i\_n\_n.

Twain claimed that he came in with Halley's Comet and would go out with Halley's Comet. This story takes the prophecy a step further. Twain plans to go out \_o\_n the comet. He is taking a flying machine that looks like a riverboat that swallowed a hot air balloon. Stowed away on board are Tom Sawyer, Huck Finn, and Becky Thatcher (who has a heart-shaped head--gag!). Through a device on board called an "indexevator," the young characters can get a glimpse into some of Twain's shorter and less interesting works. Far too much of the film is taken up with Twain's "Diary of Adam and Eve." It is a delightful piece of humor in print but it is far from worthy of the proportion of screen time it is given. The short story adaptations are the best part of the film, but the story of the trip to Halley is not even Twain-like. It is more \_e\_r\_s\_a\_t\_z Verne.

In the final analysis the film's few good moments--and some of them are quite good uses of claymation--are insufficient to justify the overall production effort. Though some of the humor is on an adult's level of subtlety, we were the only group in the theater that didn't have children, and young children at that. This film is not going to find its proper audience and future full-length claymation films will probably set their sights a little lower. Rate the film 0 on the -4 to +4 scale.

Comments Sparked by Seeing THE COLOR PURPLE  
An article by Mark R. Leeper

\_T\_h\_e\_C\_o\_l\_o\_r\_P\_u\_r\_p\_l\_e is a film about pride and dignity and all the misery they can cause as well as some of the good they can do. The film is a compendium of examples of people who feel pride from things they had no control over. It is an old adage that everybody has to feel superior to somebody and, for the most part, the people in \_T\_h\_e\_C\_o\_l\_o\_r\_P\_u\_r\_p\_l\_e show incredible callousness toward the people they consider their inferiors. Celie is someone who suffers from this system many times

over. She is black, a woman, and--at least she has allowed herself to be convinced--ugly. In the course of the film we see her persecuted because she is a woman, because she is not as attractive as others and indirectly--she herself has little contact with whites--because she is black (and friends of hers are more directly persecuted). This places her so far down on the pecking order that she is as much a slave for most of the film as any black in this country has ever been. But her persecutors are not whites; they are just people higher up in the pecking order. Most are blacks who are themselves victims of the pecking order system, who should sympathize with Celie, but who have too much pride and dignity to give up a callous superiority to her.

The most direct persecutor is Albert, Celie's husband. He is black like Celie and poor like Celie but he is a man and he believes himself to be good-looking, and his pride in these differences and his need for dignity, to feel he is the master of his house with rights and privileges, allows him to enslave Celie and literally to steal her family from her. His patrimonial rights--and anyone denied part of their rights will cling fervently to those that remain--include the right to rape any woman on h\_i\_s\_l\_a\_n\_d and later the right to have openly a mistress (Shug) and bring her home in front of Celie. Like Celie, Shug is black and a woman. And what are Shug's first words on seeing Celie? "She shore is ug-LY!" As if to say, "In this house, she will be a step below me in the pecking order. I could have been below her--she is the legitimate wife--but not while I have some say."

There have been protests against this film. It has been claimed to be unfair to black men. The implication is that blacks are all in it together. They feel they are the victims of whites. It would be unthinkable that one black might victimize another. They think that Steven Spielberg--a white Jew--is taking what they see as dissension in the black ranks and is blowing it out of proportion. The real struggle is blacks against whites. The people who think that are wrong. There are many real struggles. It is struggles of groups against groups, but each group has only one or two people in it. In any group of three people, I am told, either one will take dominance or one will be an outsider. Any other solidarity among people will just be alliances among groups with similar aims. Most higher species seem to have a pecking order system. It has the genetic advantage of matching up the best genes with the best genes. But it is also a very painful system.

As for the film itself, most people reading this will have seen it before I did, which is the reason I have not given it my usual review. I liked it and would give it a +2 on the -4 to +4 scale.

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

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Subject: NIGHTWORLD by David Bischoff (mild spoiler)  
Path: ihnp4!seismo!lll-crg!qantel!hplabs!hao!noao!terak!mot!anasazi!duane  
Date: Tue, 14-Jan-86 11:01:21 EST

The jacket reads:

"By day it was paradise. By night it was a seething hell.

Nightworld. Where for centuries werewolves, dragons, griffins, and vampires served a computerized Prince of Darkness...

Nightworld. Where every sunset brought forth a call for the most heinous acts imaginable by the most frightening creature of all...

Nightworld. Where a courageous young lord and a determined outworlder set forth on a journey of innumerable terrors to destroy the computer creature known as Satan in its own technologically horrifying haven of hell!"

A comment by Roger Zelazny also appears on the jacket:

"A journey in the company of good travelers through a landscape of old menaces newly twisted--a cleanly written adventure story."

Zelazny's succinct review is most apropos. As usual, the jacket description is rather overblown and misleading.

This is an excellent book if you're looking for a quick, fun read. The story takes place only over a few days, and there's lots of action. The characters are interesting, the technology is believable, the "hero" has his head screwed on right, and there's just the right amount of discussion about the nature of God and Satan to keep the gray matter active.

I give this one 3.5 stars (very, very good).

Duane Morse ...!noao!terak|anasazi!duane

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Subject: More about description (or is this getting boring?)  
Path: mtuxo!drutx!druri!dht  
Date: Sat, 18-Jan-86 16:02:44 EST

When a woman is described in a screen play as "beautiful", you ask Casting for a lot of beautiful women and the author looks over all

of them, until he finds the one who is "perfect". But when you say "beautiful" in a book without any other description, the author has one picture in mind, the reader cannot help but form another picture, and communication is lost. The author loses control over his story. Instead of telling us stories about giants and armies marching across blood-stained fields or of gleaming spaceships racing across a starry sky, the storyteller is doing nothing except putting words on paper for money.

What intrigues me very much is the "screenplay" approach to novel writing that has become very common these days. How many novels have you read in recent years that screamed out at the world "Soon To Be A Major Motion Picture"? The characters, even, are sometimes described in screenplay terms, very broad brushstrokes, not fine detail. This seems to be the case in modern art, versus classical, too. It is not that I find it so hard to accept, for all that I dislike it, but it is fascinating, the synergy that occurs between print and visual media, and increasingly now, audio media. If I thought that American television and film were assuming more of the traits of print, I would feel better about it, but it seems to be a one-way process (although the impact of the music video on film is very obvious). However, I think of such fine British television productions as "The Jewel In The Crown" from Scott's "Raj Quartet", "Reilly: Ace Of Spies", "Bleak House" from Dickens. So there is much encouragement, and even some bright spots in American television (vis a vis this print-like quality), such as "Moonlighting", "Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer", "Murder She Wrote", and some other shows (all mostly detective type, and mimicking that genre of writing).

I notice that there is very little control or restraint in American fiction lately, or American science fiction. This isn't a value judgement, as some uncontrolled fiction such as Thompson's and Burroughs' is very good, and in some ways a welcome change. Unfortunately, it's not a style that is suited to many writers - i.e., most authors need to control their stories and characters, and avoid this horrible tendency to let their characters get away from them. I find this especially salient in the growing numbers of series, in which an author, in essence, has allowed his audience and the economic pressure generated by such an audience to dictate the continuation of a series (something Doyle had to deal with, with Holmes). Readers in many cases of this type do not read for a given author, as in many cases

(such as the Edgar Rice Burroughs novels) it is unimportant who writes it, as long as the characters and plots remain familiar. They read for a "world", or a story, or for characters that are sometimes more real to them than they are to the person who came up with the characters in the first place. And this may be because the audience has a more vivid imagination and more concern for such characters than the author. Which is a sad comment on the state of authorship in America, that while you may be destined to pumping gas, your character gains fame and fortune (there might be a good series in that somewhere, eh?).

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Ideas are very easy. Plots are almost as easy, too. But true story writing, putting words on paper which describes to aching detail the action of the men in this world trying to achieve their goals; turning a "beautiful woman" into a five foot two, red haired beauty with soft green eyes, full lips, and a passion for abstract geometry; these acts take the talent of a professional.

I agree, but I doubt that many who read or write science fiction would acknowledge such a basic necessity. Detail is not what they want, or I imagine they would be reading and writing classics. Ideas, shorn of ornamentation, are what science fiction has, rightly or wrongly, built its foundation upon. Plots are often secondary, and characterization runs a distant third, by and large. Some would say that certain characters appeal to them immensely; and I do not disagree that a Lazarus Long or Paul Atreides or Thomas Covenant is appealing to many people. But this is not truly great characterization, the art and craft of making imaginary people come to life. Lazarus Long is at best Robert Heinlein shorn of his imperfections; a shame, because it would be nice to have such a character, the real RAH, flaws and all. But his only real "flaw" is boredom, hardly a flaw, especially in an immortal man. Thomas Covenant, at least, started out very interestingly, but became little more than a cipher for guilt, remorse, pained inaction, a symbol of the religious man in a quandary of faith. He stopped breathing after about a hundred pages, something I can't recall seeing in a book in a long time - a character becoming less and less interesting the more he is described. Atreides held the most promise, but then he became a god and it's a little difficult to construct a god with whom humans can empathize (unless they're Napoleon or Hitler).



Science fiction generally presents archetypes, not characters. Perhaps that is why so little attention is paid to detail, because by definition, an archetype is understood by most people, even if subconsciously. The Warrior, the King, the Queen, the Jester, the Hero, the Coward, the Wizard... it seems that science fiction characterization (and to a greater extent, also fantasy) is a flipping-through of cards in a deck. For every complex, real, and most importantly, \*science fiction-esque\* character like Bester's Gully Foyle, there are thousands of Janissaries. Gene Wolfe's Severian was much more than a torturer, much more complex and strange and inscrutable than we have come to encounter in science fiction in a long time. Science fiction has the tools to create memorable characters, and to develop them in different ways than mainstream fiction can. Lucius Shephard, Bruce Sterling, William Gibson, K. W. Jeter and others are doing these things, basing their stories on the \*people\* in them. Shephard's Frank January is one of the best characters that has come alive in a short story in a long time. I link his appeal to critics and readers with his paramount ability to create characters that are real, flawed, and human. Screwups, thieves, losers, men filled with hatred, women who claw and children who kill - these are people, not some aphorism-spouting pontiff such as Muad'Dib or Lazarus Long. I hope that writers of this type do not get co-opted by the science fiction establishment in the manner of the

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promising writers of the '70s such as George R. R. Martin and John Varley, conned into generating hackwork with promises of greater pay, more convention appearances in front of adoring fans, winning Nebulas and Hugos which, in the end, mean nothing if the writing isn't any good by their own standards. It can happen. I hope it doesn't.

Davis Tucker

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Subject: on writing  
Path: mtuxo!drutx!ihnp4!qantel!lll-crg!caip!LYNN  
Date: Sat, 18-Jan-86 19:38:05 EST

Rather than tell you why you \*should\* use less adjectives and more verbs, let me show you an example:

1. With adjectives:

As he ran through the wet brown mud in the dark of night, his only source of light was the whitish moonlight coming from the dark sky above as he continued to run away from the red car that was running after him.

2. With \*descriptive\* nouns and verbs:

As he trudged through the mud in the moonlight, the Corvette roared after him, gleaming like a fire engine.

Note that unless you count "fire engine" as an adjective followed by a noun, rather than a compound word, there are no adjectives in the second example. Note that they both convey approximately the same amount of information, yet the second example is only half as long as the first example.

--Lynn

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Subject: THE PROPHET OF LAMATH by Robert Don Hughes (mild spoiler)  
Path: decvax!decwrl!pyramid!pesnta!hplabs!hao!noao!terak!mot!anasazi!duane  
Date: Mon, 20-Jan-86 12:06:22 EST

The jacket reads:

"Beware the dragon! The dragon was divided! Its two heads, Vicia and Heinox, were fighting for control of its massive body. For centuries, it had sat quietly at Dragonsgate, content with its tribute of slaves for food. Now it took to the air, burning villages at random throughout the Three Lands to vent its rage and confusion. With Dragonsgate open for the passage of armies, war and chaos beset all the lands.

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It was all the fault of Pelmen the player, who had confused the heads to gain escape for himself and the Princess Bronwynn. Pelmen the player, Pelmen the powershaper -- now Pelmen the Prophet of the Power! And only Pelmen could end the evils that threatened to

destroy everything.

But Pelmen was helpless, locked in the King's dungeon, waiting to be executed on the drawing blocks. Should he escape, the prophecy of the Priestess foretold an even more terrifying fate at the mouths of the dragon!"

The jacket is accurate enough, but most of what it describes occurs at the end of the book. There are a lot of characters in the story, and the author does a decent enough job with each to make them seem real to the reader.

The world is one of fantasy, but each Land has its own interesting attributes: in one, magical powers are evident; in another, prophecy and religious blessings often work.

Characters from each of the Three Lands are represented, and there are numerous subplots going on at the same time as the main plot. With a less talented writer the result would be a total mess, but Mr. Hughes carries it off (though I must admit that I had to pause occasionally to recall with whom the current character was allied).

The story is perfectly paced, and it is an excellent blend of adventure, character studies, philosophy, sociology, and intrigue. I give this book my highest rating, 4.0 stars. And by the way, there are two others featuring Pelmen: THE WIZARD IN WAITING and THE POWER AND THE PROPHET.

Duane Morse ...!noao!terak|anasazi!duane

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Subject: "The Postman" by David Brin, Bantam Books '85  
Path: cbosgd!clyde!watmath!utzoo!decvax!bellcore!ulysses!allegra!rayssd!jps  
Date: Tue, 21-Jan-86 17:18:00 EST

"The Postman" is Mr. Brin's latest novel. The theme may have its origins in the postman character that appears in the Niven/Pournelle novel, "Lucifers Hammer," yet the idea is different (even if the post-holocaust background is getting a little tired as a background for science fiction).

In post-holocaust America a wandering minstrel is making his way out of the mid-west toward the coast when he gets hold of a pre-holocaust mailman's uniform. Using the uniform as a key into the few surviving communities, he creates a story about a "Restored U.S."; the first manifestation of this is the mail service. The survivors grasp at this straw and everything he represents. "The Postman" is full of the type

of scenes that were in the movie "Deliverance", --man's inhumanity to man in the absence of society. Eventually, the con-man finds a greater purpose in what he's doing and begins to work for the restoration of America and the founding of the Oregon Commonwealth.

I liked the novel, but then I like the author -- I even read his space operas. The type of writing in this book hasn't appeared (at least in book form) from the author, before now. In a few places I think Brin needlessly made the story more science fiction-ey and, in the process, added inadequately terminated sub-plots. Yet, in all I think it is a good effort and worth reading.

One of the things that I really liked about the story is how the "survivalists" came out as the bad guys. Recently, many post-holocaust stories have appeared with survivalists coming out on top, at the expense of civilization. Authors like Niven, Pournelle, Bear, and Gerrold have been extolling the virtues (in their stories) of having a bunker up in the mountains filled with ammunition and canned peaches. A recent extreme example of this sort of mentality (and not far from "The Postman" story line) was the case of the two men in California who kidnaped people, took them to their bunker and then murdered their victims after filming them performing sexual acts. The author writes about the survivalists contributing to the breakdown of the central government and presents a view of the phenomena that I have not previously seen in science fiction.

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Subject: Review of HEAD OFFICE

Path: ulysses!bellcore!decvax!tektronix!uw-beaver!fluke!moriarty

Date: Sat, 18-Jan-86 03:08:08 EST

Look in the paper. Gosh, THE COLOR PURPLE and RAN are both playing in Seattle! Films with great reviews! I think I'll go see -- HEAD OFFICE!

What differentiates, say, an ANIMAL HOUSE (which I found very funny) from a SPRING BREAK? Well, for one, good jokes. Also, characters who are not deep (if they had any development AND were funny, they'd be in a Rob Reiner film) but who are likeable. Pinto is likeable (though he eventually goes back in time and becomes an obnoxious composer). Otter is likeable. Bluto is likeable (though perhaps not in your living room). What's-his-face from the Porky's film is not likeable; he's gross.

HEAD OFFICE is in the vein of ANIMAL HOUSE humor; madcap, but not crazy enough to qualify for Monty Python or AIRPLANE. The question is, does

it work? The answer is yes and no. The first half hour works immensely well -- corporate satire mixes with very funny character acting and everyone is kept just inside the thin line of utter lunacy, which makes it even funnier as a satire. The rest of the film goes slower, and the satire weakens (there's not a great deal you can do to top the chaos of

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the first half hour). But we get back to the ANIMAL HOUSE syndrome. We got likeable characters here. We have Judge Reinhold, an MBA vagabond who is smarter than he looks; Richard Masur, a child of the 60's who survives power struggles by making no decision; an a very attractive woman whose name I can't remember. Make no mistake, this is not up to ANIMAL HOUSE's level (It lacks the amazing range of characters, the constant level of humor and an ending which reminds you of a good Warner Bros. cartoon); however, with this film you can at least \*see\* where the comparisons can be made.

Maybe worth it for \$4.50, if you find corporate satire. Definatly worth \$2.50, especially the first half hour.

Moriarty, aka Jeff Meyer

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Subject: Review: Runaway Train (possible slight spoilers)  
Path: ulysses!bellcore!decvax!tektronix!uw-beaver!fluke!moriarty  
Date: Sat, 18-Jan-86 03:31:20 EST

It's been a long time since I've seen a film that I can't come to a decision about. Sure, plenty of them have confusing \*stories\*, confusing \*plots\* -- but a film that inspires a confused reaction? I saw it for free at a sneak preview, so again, I'm not sure how I'd react to it if I'd paid; probably favorably at economy prices.

This is a film of contradictions. It has two good-but-variable actors, Eric Roberts and Rebecca DeMorney, and one great actor, John Voight. On the other hand, it'sput out by the Canon Film group, a company almost completely taken up by producing Chuck Norris films and Dead Teenager movies. On the other hand, it has a script by Akira Kurisowa. On the other hand, there is a tendancy on everyone's part to overact in this film, as if they were trying to imitate the broader Japanese style of

film acting. On the other hand, it has great cinematography that grips you and keeps you riveted to the screen. On the other hand, they music sounds as if it was the leftovers from GODZILLA MEETS THE TERMINATOR. There are powerful scenes in this film (mostly by Voight). There are also some things which go right over the edge.

I think you get the point. The film is the story of two escaped convicts (Voight and Roberts) who hide in a train engine. As the train is starting, the engineer suffers a fatal heart attack, and before they realize it, they find themselves on a runaway train. The story continues from then on, switching between the two men and the group of people trying to keep the train from colliding with anything. The tension that is created is excellent, due greatly to the cinematography and the stunts performed on the train. Voight and Roberts struck me as what men who had lived in prison would be like; Voight is a very complex character, capable of seeing sympathetic and being extremely cruel at the same time. Eric Roberts plays a rather simple character, the kind

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of guy who never seems to change much since school. Voight manages to keep your attention on him easily, and his final decisions seem logical.

But...

It has some problems. One, you have to wait until the men board the train before you really get interested. Secondly, Eric Roberts is in full-blown overacting mode here; I almost broke up during the last five minutes when I pictured a TV commercial that announces (in a quiet, restrained voice) "Eric Roberts for Coca Cola", followed by Eric Roberts pounding a table and screaming "Buy this D\*mn stuff, willya! Just GO OUT and BUY IT, D\*MN IT! \*\*\*JUST GO OUT AND \*BUY\* THE \*GOD-D\*MNED STUFF, WILL YOU!!!" And the last scene is so weird that I found myself giggling in spite of myself.

As I said, I'm not sure WHO'D like it. Sorry, but I'm taking the day off on voting for this one.

Moriarty, aka Jeff Meyer

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Subject: "Revolution"

Path: bellcore!decvax!ittatc!dcdwest!sdcsvax!sdcrcf!ucla-cs!reiher

Date: Wed, 22-Jan-86 17:58:13 EST

"Revolution" cannot be spoken of, in truth, as a success as an entertainment, and it is only a limited artistic success. It is, however, an ambitious film with some good features and a few points of interest to students of film. Beyond its uncommon subject material (the American Revolution), good cinematography, some good performances, and a few exciting scenes, "Revolution" offers the chance to study a film with a clear, formal structure which has obviously been thought out and which has relevance to the material being treated. Structure in film is often visible only on real study, not casual viewing, but "Revolution's" structure is so clear that it practically jumps out from the screen.

"Revolution" is billed as An American Epic, and, to an extent, lives up to that billing. There are crowd scenes, battle scenes, extensive period details, beautiful scenic wonders, and so on. The story follows Tom, a typical American farmer, as he becomes more and more involved with the revolution. Originally, he has little interest, and even hostility, as the revolutionary government seizes his boat and entices his son into the army. But, as the revolution progresses and Tom gets a clearer picture of what the revolt means, he becomes an ardent patriot, not because of any love for the revolutionary government, but from a pure love of liberty. One of the merits of "Revolution" is that it shows a real quest for liberty, rather than just paying lip service to the value of freedom.

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Director Hugh Hudson, who previously gave us "Chariots of Fire" and "Greystoke", had a definite plan for presenting this story. He gives us a movement from chaos to order, from darkness to light, from ignorance to involvement, from backwardness to civilization. The early scenes are, intentionally, a muddle, with chaotic crowds confusing everything, many shadows obscuring details, mist and fog everywhere. The script matches this by presenting characters in situations which are beyond their control and which they do not understand. Tom and his son find themselves dragooned for a battle with no training, no explanation, and not even much idea of what they are fighting for. Gradually, the scenes

become lighter and cleaner, the actions clearer and crisper, the characters more in control of their destinies.

This structure is suitable from an artistic and intellectual point of view, as it mirrors the actual confusion of the characters and the nation. Unfortunately, it is not a suitable structure from the point of view of entertainment. It may be over an hour before a viewer has any confidence that he knows what's happening, or any connection with the characters, or even feels that he really hears what the characters are saying. (I haven't heard such a difficult soundtrack since "The Godfather". Everyone mumbles, background noise is constant, and the dialog is often sparse.) When it takes this long to get a viewer into a film, usually most viewers will give up, physically or mentally.

"Revolution" further suffers from what appear to be heavy cuts. Running slightly over two hours, it looks like it was meant to run three. People who seem to be major characters are slighted or even totally ignored. Hudson seems to have cut much of the explanatory footage, leaving in the actual events. I would be hard pressed to say how he could do otherwise, given that something had to go, but the lack of reevaluation in the face of complex scenes and themes does further muddle matters.

The major flaw evident in the script is that "Revolution" seeks to include everything (or almost everything) that was of importance in the war. The script does avoid the usual Hollywood approach of having its characters present at every famous event, running into every famous person. ("Here, Tom, take this message to General Washington." "Yes, sir, Mr. Jefferson. Is it all right if I stop at Mrs. Ross' house to pick up the new flag?" "Alright, Tom, but don't waste your time hobnobbing with Ben Franklin this time.") But the script does try to pack in every theme it can. We see the Indians' role in the war, and that of blacks, and that of Jews, and that of foreigners, and that of Tories, and that of the common British soldier, and far too much more. Not surprisingly, a lot of this stuff is crammed into corners and clutters up the central story and theme.

Al Pacino has to be an unlikely choice for an early American patriot, but, aside from an uncertain accent, apparently meant to be lightly Scottish, he does well in the role. Pacino nicely portrays the character's internal growth, as Tom moves from indifference to passion.



Nastassja Kinski is equally oddly cast as Pacino's love interest, and her accent is even more uncertain. Best of the principals is Donald Sutherland, as a British sergeant. Sutherland depicts a nicely rounded character, a man who is as good as he can be while still being a good soldier, a term which had even more limitations built into it in the 18th century than it does now. The supporting cast is made up of unfamiliar faces (except Joan Plowright, good as Kinski's Tory mother), most of whom are fine, but not outstanding.

The cinematography on "Revolution" is very good, if a bit too devoted to light diffusion. It shows that America during the Revolution really wasn't like America nowadays, which is certainly worthwhile. The film's production design doesn't need any caveats, as it is uniformly excellent.

"Revolution" is intermittently entertaining. Its main attraction is for those especially interested in the period and those with concern with structure in film. More casual moviegoers are unlikely to be outraged by "Revolution", but are equally unlikely to be fascinated.

Peter Reiher

