

Lincroft-Holmdel Science Fiction Club
Club Notice - 11/12/86 -- Vol. 5, No. 18

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

Unless otherwise stated, all meetings are on Wednesdays at noon.

LZ meetings are in LZ 3A-206; MT meetings are in MT 4A-235.

_D_A_T_E _T_O_P_I_C

11/19 LZ: Book Swap
12/02 MT: Film: to be announced (==Tuesday!==)
12/03 MT: Film: to be announced
12/10 LZ: THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS by Ursula K. LeGuin (Sexual Identity)
12/17 MT: ENDER'S GAME by Orson Scott Card (War in Space)
01/7/87 LZ: NEUROMANCER by William Gibson (Consciousness)

HO Chair is John Jetzt, HO 1E-525 (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 1C-117 (576-2068). MT Librarian is Bruce Szablak, MT 4C-418 (957-5868). Jill-of-all-trades is Evelyn Leeper, MT 1F-329 (957-2070). All material copyright by author unless otherwise noted.

1. Evelyn insists on a blurb for the Lincroft book swap that's scheduled for Wednesday, November 19th. I don't see why -- perhaps at MT people don't realize that a book swap is an opportunity to bring in old books to trade or sell, buy or trade for the books everyone else brings in, and in general have a free-wheeling social exchange with some interesting people. I also must assume that everyone realizes they are all invited, regardless of whether they are from Lincroft, Holmdel, or Tau Ceti. Therefore, Evelyn, I'm not going to bother writing a blurb. [-jrtr]

2. Our next Leeperhouse film festival I actually tried to prevent, but enough people wanted to see it that we will have it anyway. I suppose that with Thanksgiving coming up, it is appropriate that we would be showing turkey films. Some would say we have been doing that right along, but in truth we have never shown a film that I have not considered to be of at least decent quality. However, the showing of films so bad that anyone in the audience could have done a better job has become popular. If that is what people want to see, I have two classics from the mind, if such there be, of the

greatest schlockmeister of film making. On Thursday, November 20,
at 7 PM we will be exposing humans to

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The Incomparable Edward D. Wood Jr.
FLASH GORDON CONQUERS THE UNIVERSE, chapters 11 and 12
GLEN OR GLENDA (1953) dir. Ed Wood Jr.
PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE (1959) dir. Ed Wood Jr.

The best feature of Wood's films is that they were short. This gives us an opportunity to finish up FLASH GORDON. It may well be one of the few good things that ever came out of Wood's film career.

We are showing two films from the man who "pushed the bottom of the envelope" doing the absolute minimum necessary to have theatrically releasable films. GLEN OR GLENDA (a.k.a. I CHANGED MY SEX, a.k.a. I LED TWO LIVES, a.k.a. HE OR SHE) was released under four names to catch the unwary. It is a documentary about transsexuals that can best be called a compendium of misinformation. At least that is when you can tell what the film is trying to say at all. Usually you cannot even do that much. There are strange moments when the action of the film stops dead and Wood splits the screen between a scene of cattle in a pen and Bela Lugosi saying something like "Pull the chain!" totally out of context. Hear Bela Lugosi's dramatic reading of "Snips and snails" over-and-over and never be sure what he is trying to say. This is an odd film.

PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE (a.k.a. GRAVE ROBBERS FROM OUTER SPACE) is legendary. It too starred Lugosi for at least a couple of scenes. Then he died so Wood's wife's chiropractor stood in in spite of the fact that he had a very different stature. But of course he keeps his cape over his face so the secret that it is not Lugosi will never be known. The film also has psychic Criswell as the narrator and professional-wrestler-turned-actor-in-cheap-horror-films Tor Johnson.

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

BLUE VELVET
A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: David Lynch's fourth film is mildly entertaining as a thriller carried along by three or four interesting sequences. The film is hampered by Lynch's self-indulgent attempts to make it an art film, but its artistic value is far short of its thriller value.

I cannot claim to be a fan of David Lynch. It could be that deep down I still bear a grudge from E_r_a_s_e_r_h_e_a_d. Lynch's first film may be a cult classic but as far as I am concerned it offered little more than a few pretentious symbols and a great deal of boredom. I enjoyed E_l_e_p_h_a_n_t M_a_n, which remains Lynch's best effort to date, and I even like D_u_n_e. Each of these was a reasonably good story, well-told as long as Lynch wasn't emulating Ken Russell and throwing self-indulgent pseudo-symbolic images onto the screen. B_l_u_e_V_e_l_v_e_t is Lynch's fourth and latest film. It is part David Lynch art film and part thriller. The thriller part is actually not too bad.

Kyle MacLachlan, walking through a field one day, finds a human ear that has been cut off and left on the ground. Investigating, he becomes involved in a web of insanity, corruption, and murder. Like this summer's M_a_n_h_u_n_t_e_r, the story is good, the direction and camera work pretentious. Unlike with M_a_n_h_u_n_t_e_r, it is hard to fault the director for mishandling the story--Lynch wrote the screenplay for this f_i_l_m_n_o_i_r exercise, so he is really mishandling his own material.

And mishandle it he surely does. The viewer is given disjoint images from dreams, mechanical robins (very unconvincing), corpses that for unexplained reasons stand up and move around. One keeps having the feeling that Lynch is desperately trying to tell us something in the images this film creates, but no meaning makes itself apparent.

But at least as a medium to carry his images he has a story that is worth watching. Not that it is a great story either. There is just about enough story to fill out one of the old hour-long episodes of A_l_f_r_e_d_H_i_t_c_h_c_o_c_k_P_r_e_s_e_n_t_s. There are maybe four scenes of well-handled tension. Just about everything of value the film offers is in those four scenes. For the sake of those scenes B_l_u_e_V_e_l_v_e_t get a +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

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_N_O_T_E_S_ _F_R_O_M_ T_H_E_ N_E_T

Subject: "The Postman" by D. Brin
Path: mtuxo!mtune!codas!burl!clyde!rutgers!daemon
Date: Tue, 4-Nov-86 01:45:21 EST

This is one of those few book that you'll want to plan a block of time within which to read it -- in one sitting if at all possible! I unfortunately had to use two due to a cold (cough, sniff).

It is probably the best book that Brin has written so far, and I liked the others. If you didn't care much for Flipper meets Cheetah in space (Startide Rising) or extraterrestrial broccoli (Sundiver), this one is still a must. Anyone interested in a good, fast paced story where the hero tries his darndest not to be one is advised to beg, borrow or "liberate" this book.

SPOILER

The setting is America after the holocaust, both nuclear and manmade. Our hero is the mild mannered (for the times at least) Gordon Krantz. He starts out by telling the lie that he's a real Postman and Federal Inspector as a ruse to gain lodging and food from the various hamlets encountered in a search for "something better"; and through a series of skirmishes with other survivors, his conscience and an innate idealism ends up believing his own lies, all the while knowing that they remain falsehoods.

He's got real faults and good points, as well as being compassionate in an age where compassion isn't considered a valuable trait for survival, and manages to survive anyhow.

About the only characters I found fault with were the augments; they didn't quite seem real, or necessary. But who knows what the genengineers will have come up with by 2000.

END SPOILER

So, read this one and enjoy, it's worth the grumbles given at any interruptions.

Susan Musil

Subject: Child of Fortune
Path: mtuxo!mtune!codas!burl!clyde!rutgers!daemon
Date: 4 Nov 86 14:54:46 GMT

** Warning: this review contains spoiler material and explicit literary criticism. **

Part One

"This too is a histoire of that archetype as it is incarnated in our own era: the Child of Fortune whom we have all been or will become. But herein will the detached observer shed all pretense of objectivity, for this is MY name tale's story, this is MY wanderjahr's song"

And so, in the introduction to this 500 page book, we are placed at once on firm ground. This is to be a novel written in the first person - less usual in SF than in other genres. Moreover, the narrator is the protagonist, which is customary but not essential: recall Melville's Ishmael. Finally, what we have here is an example of the type of novel called, formally, a Bildungsroman: a novel of character development, specifically of the transition from youth to adulthood, told in terms of the events that mediated this development.

The most famous novel of this form is Wilhelm Meister, which established the ground rules and hence may be called canonical. There must be a central character, whom the story is about. It must treat of the evolution of the character in response to external events, or, more specifically, in response to the human content of those events. This is an ambitious task. The reader must sympathise with the character, and must become engaged with that character's adventures and reactions. But, more important, the development of the character must be psychologically plausible, and also a response to events that are logically plausible. The author must run in parallel two threads, governed by two quite different kinds of causality.

When this genre is transferred to SF, a new element appears. The events occur not in our own milieu but in another, and the author must use those events also to describe to us the imaginary world he is constructing. This raises the problem that, borrowing an analogy from another art form, I shall call the relation between 'figure' and 'ground' - the world in which the adventure is set must complement, and not overwhelm, the character who navigates it.

The first major novel to essay this task is Hesse's *Das Glasperlenspiel*, but in my view it is deeply flawed. SF examples that come to mind are Panshin's *Rite of Passage* and (more lightweight) Heinlein's *Podkayne of Mars*. There are many more; the Bildungsroman is a natural mode of writing SF, since the reader cast into the new world is necessarily a neophyte, and can therefore readily identify with a naive character.

Spinrad's universe is the 'Second Starfaring Age', the setting also for *The Void Captain's Tale*. In it, humankind has spread to the stars and colonised many planets, using a stardrive filched from aliens offstage, that nobody understands. There have been social changes, of which the

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most significant is perhaps that, in OUR terms, everyone is immensely rich - just as, in terms of a mediaeval peasant, everyone in this nation is immensely rich. His protagonist, Wendi Shasta Leonardo, is female. She reaches adolescence, leaves home, wanders about, meets people, has adventures, grows up, and tells us about it. This is how most young folk in that society behave; they are called Children of Fortune and their rite of passage is the *Wanderjahr*, and the debt Spinrad owes to Hesse is clear.

Well, if the above makes you eager to read the book, go ahead. The majority opinion is that it's great, and you'll probably enjoy it a lot. Should you care about my own opinion, it is in Part Two of this long review.

Robert Firth

Subject: SOLDIER OF THE MIST by Gene Wolfe
Path: mtuxo!mtune!codas!burl!clyde!rutgers!daemon
Date: 7 Nov 86 06:12:11 GMT

In Patti Perret's *THE FACES OF SCIENCE FICTION*, Gene Wolfe's portrait shows a long row of books in the foreground with names like *GREEK DIVINATION* and *THE GREEKS AND THE PERSIANS*, including a prominent 4-volume edition of Herodotus. *SOLDIER OF THE MIST* (Tor 1986) is a fantasy which builds on all this raw material, taking place in 479 BC in Greece and Asia Minor. The story is interesting and exciting and the

setting is packed with beautiful details and the plot is deeply entangled in delicate puzzles, but it's only the first book in a series and as such leaves you in quite a bit of suspense at the end.

The characters of MIST participate in the events surrounding the disastrous invasion of Greece by the empire of the Persian king Xerxes. The text of the novel is purportedly the record of a soldier of the Persian army who was gravely wounded in a great battle: a projectile of some sort penetrated his skull and injured his brain, leaving him with a form of anterograde amnesia (and more than a little retrograde amnesia as well). By evening his memories of morning are already fading, disappearing into the 'mist' which has swallowed his life. In order to survive, he has taken to writing a diary on a scroll whose title is READ THIS EACH DAY. With his past in tatters, the soldier has lost his ability to distinguish the mundane from the supernatural, and he records the activities of the gods about him just as matter-of-factly as he describes his lunch. The gods, it seems, are once again scheming against each other and the soldier is a pawn in their games. The soldier walks through the lives of the mortals he meets leaving behind consternation and wonder, and by the end of this first book we know that the soldier is being prepared for a crucial role in both planes.

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As usual, Wolfe's prose is a joy to read and his characters are fascinating. I don't think this is as major a book as his SHADOW OF THE TORTURER, however. SHADOW was much more self-contained, using a plot which reached a distinct climax before the end of the volume. MIST is by its very nature a fragmented story, and it's hard to see more than the building blocks for a plot in it. Wolfe has assumed a very difficult task in presenting a protagonist who is incapable of any action which requires long-range planning... A minor problem is that I've forgotten much of my Greek mythology -- I found it difficult to keep track of the many gods who appear on the scene, sometimes employing different guises and different names (many of which are "translated" into English forms which for me bear no hint of the original). The history gave me some trouble too; before the second volume comes out I'll have to dust off my old copy of Herodotus and try to get the historical setting straight. I won't mind the work, though: it's always been a rewarding labor to dig deep into Wolfe's stories.

Dig we must,

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

Subject: Foundation and Earth
Path: mtuxo!houxm!ihnp4!edsel!dxa
Date: 10 Nov 86 03:16:34 GMT

I just finished reading Foundation and Earth, Asimov's latest addition to the Foundation Universe. I do not feel qualified to critique it, because my interest is such that I am too involved to find much wrong with any of the series. You see the original trilogy is what hooked me on SF, and I am therefore not impartial.

I certainly saw flaws in Robots and Dawn, Robots and Empire, Foundation's Edge and Foundation and Earth. However, I enjoyed them all, and felt them up to the standards of the original trilogy and the original Lije Baley stories.

I will say that if you feel as I do about the books mentioned above, that you will enjoy Foundation and Earth.

Minor and major spoilers follow, if you care at all about spoilers, stop here. In particular the Major Spoiler discusses the ending of the book.

** START MINOR SPOILER ** START MINOR SPOILER **

If you have been aware that Asimov has been using his later works to tie together all the Lije Baley stories with the Foundation stories, than I can say that this story, Foundation and Earth, completes that task.

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I won't say how, although it should be easy to guess.

The following major spoiler discusses the ending of the book, you have been warned twice!

** START MAJOR SPOILER ** START MAJOR SPOILER **

Asimov did it to us again. He set up an obvious sequel. The annoying thing is that I was not sure that he had done so at first. And part of me is still not sure.

I am curious if anyone else came to the same conclusion that I did. (Some may say it was obvious) The conclusion? That Fallom may be a representative of non-human invaders in the Milky Way. Since Daneel will merge with Fallom, and Galaxia is far from completed, humanity is now faced with exactly what Trevisse surmised, destruction by being divided and conquered.

There are some very obvious, and some subtle clues that lead to this conclusion. The thing that made it a shock to me, was that the realization of it came only from the last two paragraphs of the book. I was so sure that this time, the story was going to end, without an obvious continuation.

That's why I'm curious what other people felt about this ending. Do let me know.

DROYAN David ROY ANolick

Subject: Wes Craven Movies (LOTS SA SPOILERS)

Path: hplabs!tektronix!reed!psu-cs!janaka

Date: Sun, 26-Oct-86 15:04:29 EST

Trying to figure out the Wes Craven of the Eighties

On reading Victor O'Rear's recent comments on DEADLY FRIEND, I can't help but sympathize. Many of Wes Craven's recent movies have been intelligent, well crafted and generally quite gripping until the last scene. The last scene appears to be meant as a zinger to have the audience gasping as they leave the cinema but it usually results in undoing the rest of the movie. I have often wondered as to exactly what Craven had on his mind as he set up these last scenes.

I have been a Wes Craven fan since the mid seventies after LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT left me shaken long after I had left the theater. It was a razor edged combination of gnawing terror, small bursts of hysterical (unintentional?) humor, and stomach churning violence. Its grim tale of suburban vengeance seemed to make the ordeal worthwhile. Craven had established himself as the director who refused to cut away from the

awful details of death. He did it again with THE HILLS HAVE EYES, pitting the city family against the cannibal desert family. A recent viewing of LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT made it look rather dated and amateurish but I have seen few movies that have matched the ferocity and malevolence of THE HILLS HAVE EYES.

After these two horror masterpieces, Wes Craven seemed to disappear altogether. I caught a made-for-TV movie called STRANGER IN THE HOUSE (with Linda Blair and Lee Purcell) about a relative joining a household and attempting to take over it entirely with demonic powers. It showed that Craven had not lost his touch at making horror movies but it was hardly a vehicle for his talents.

Then, HALLOWEEN seemed to herald the recent horror movie boom and it was fitting to see Wes Craven emerge into the business once more. My chronology is rather hazy (it has been a while since I've seen some of these movies) but he did make a movie version of SWAMP THING. My only real beef with this movie was the creature itself: I would have preferred the slime-oozing blob from the comic book instead of the super-vegie-man character in the movie. It would have made the relationships between the SWAMP THING and its friends more interesting (and difficult to do). On the whole, I enjoyed this movie. Especially, Louis Jourdan's baddie role.

DEADLY BLESSING was an interesting return to familiar Wes Craven territory. The heroine found herself virtually trapped in a closed religious farming society with a series of brutal murders drawing closer to home. Craven played out the even then familiar slasher movie genre with a complex plot that really did keep you guessing. Even though the religious members of the society make allusions to supernatural causes for the murders, good old human staples such as jealousy and sexual repression are revealed to be the causes for all this mayhem. The movie ends with the baddie(s) biting the dust (after getting back up a couple of times as the genre dictated) and the heroine getting set to leave the village. And then, Craven threw in his first (as far as I've seen) zinger ending.

As the heroine is ready to leave the house, the room darkens, demonic creatures burst out of the woodwork, the ground opens up to reveal a hell-like glow and said creatures bear her down into the ground. The ground closes up and the room lights up again and the place looks as though nothing has happened in there. End of movie.

I was thoroughly ticked off as I walked out of the movie theater. The ending seemed to contradict everything that had gone on in the movie. Despite the supernatural implications in many of the murders, the

culprit had turned out to be a young man who had been passing off as a woman (at his mother's insistence). The ending seemed to be a cheap attempt at milking a last thrill from the audience.

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Craven then made two movies that were poles apart. There was the sequel to THE HILLS HAVE EYES. I tried very hard to be enthusiastic about this movie to no avail. It was a lifeless imitation of the original. Despite the familiar faces, I found the characters rather limp and devoid of any sense of menace. There was hardly anything of importance being said, the characters were stock issue from the FRIDAY THE 13TH stall of victims, the killings were tired replays from hundreds of splatter movies past... it almost gave the impression that much of what made THE HILLS HAVE EYES so intense was passe in the world of today's violent horror movies. This really isn't the case. The original still retains its nastiness and power just as well today. It was the sequel that fell down.

If THE HILLS HAVE EYES PART II was a let down, A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET was as brilliant and innovative as the earlier Craven movies. Crispy old Freddie haunted the dreams of his executioners' children, killing them off before they could wake up. The dreams would turn real and the victims would be dispatched in (sometimes) spectacular fashion. But the good guys do get Freddie in the end. And everything seems settled at the end. And then, Craven throws in his zinger again. Freddie returns and goes for the good guys.

Now, in DEADLY FRIEND, Craven is at it again. He shows a lot of care in his treatment of this at times gentle and at times grisly twist on the FRANKENSTEIN story. Emotionally, I'd give him full marks for this movie as he succeeds very well at establishing audience empathy with his principal characters (and total disgust with the nasties). As Victor O'Rear points out in his review, the story plays out just fine all the way to the tragic conclusion. Then, we have another zinger. Our hero sneaks back into the morgue to (possibly) retrieve Sam's body and is attacked by her. The outer shell of her body crumbles to reveal a robot-like set of internals that appears to have grown inside her. It's almost as though a fiendish blend of BB and Sam has been created and wants to (and apparently does) devour our hero.

These endings are downright annoying to most viewers and I have been trying to find some rational explanation (apart from simple shock value) for them. The best excuse that I can formulate is to treat them all (the zinger endings) as dream sequences. Many of Craven's recent movies display a certain tendency towards horrific dream sequences. A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET seemed to consolidate that trend with the dream scenes being the major set pieces for the entire movie's action. If you treat the endings as the principal character's dream/nightmare response to the events that unfolded during the body of the movie, it does seem to make sense. The only rationale I have for this is that the endings (in a sense) defy most of the logical threads that tied the rest of the movie together. However, since they are not strictly defined as dream scenes, (the ending of A NIGHTMARE IN ELM STREET did have dream-type soft focus photography) our strongly narrative driven approach to movies would balk at this being thrown in.

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I would be curious to see what other net moviegoers have to say about these endings. Do you see any other cohesive threads in his recent movies? Have you read any recent interviews with Craven or articles about him? It has been a while since I've had the time to pick up a copy of Fangoria or Cinefantastique.

I am also very curious to know if anyone has any idea as to what Wes Craven did between THE HILLS HAVE EYES and his re-emergence in the eighties. I do know that along with Tobe Hooper (another one of my favorite movie directors), he had a rough time finding financial backing for his projects until the new horror boom.

...janaka....

