

Lincroft-Holmdel Science Fiction Club
Club Notice - 11/26/86 -- Vol. 5, No. 20

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

- 12/02 MT: Film: John Wyndham's QUEST FOR LOVE (==Tuesday!==)
12/03 MT: Film: John Wyndham's QUEST FOR LOVE (conc.)
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: John Jetzt HO 1E-525 834-1563
LZ Chair: Rob Mitchell LZ 1B-306 576-6106
MT Chair: Mark Leeper MT 3E-433 957-5619
HO Librarian: Tim Schroeder HO 2G-427A 949-5866
LZ Librarian: Lance Larsen LZ 1C-117 576-2068
MT Librarian: Bruce Szablak MT 4C-418 957-5868
Jill-of-all-trades: Evelyn Leeper MT 1F-329 957-2070
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1. One of the most undeservedly obscure science fiction film I know of is the British QUEST FOR LOVE. QUEST is a rather good film based on John Wyndham's short story "Random Quest" about a man who finds himself thrust into a parallel track of history in which WWII was never fought. Colin Trafford finds that he has changed places with the the totally unscrupulous version of himself in this world who has been a real cad. Trafford (Tom Bell), a lifelong bachelor, finds himself suddenly married to Ottily (Joan Collins) whom his alternate history self has been treating mercilessly. The story revolves around his efforts to re-win her in one universe and find her in the other. The film was probably doomed to failure by its smarmy title, but it is actually the best handling of the concept of parallel universes I know of in film. The club will be showing QUEST FOR LOVE next week at a Middletown video meeting. Details above.

Mark Leeper
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...mtgzz!leeper

CLOUDS OVER EUROPE
A film review by Mark R. Leeper

One of the most interesting finds for me in film-watching is what I call a "precursor" film. I don't know if anyone else looks for precursor films under that name or under their own. The idea is that a precursor is very much like a lot of other films made, but it was made well before most of the others. For example, in the 1970's we had a flood of disaster films: T_h_e_P_o_s_e_i_d_o_n_A_d_v_e_n_t_u_r_e, T_h_e_T_o_w_e_r_i_n_g_I_n_f_e_r_n_o, E_a_r_t_h_q_u_a_k_e, T_i_d_a_l_W_a_v_e, A_v_a_l_a_n_c_h_e, F_l_o_o_d, F_i_r_e, T_h_e_S_a_v_a_g_e_B_e_e_s, T_e_r_r_o_r_o_u_t_o_f_t_h_e_S_k_y, T_h_e_S_w_a_r_m, etc. Each of these films showed ordinary people and officials and how they react in the face of a disaster. Two obvious precursors to this sub-genre are the films A_N_i_g_h_t_t_o_R_e_m_e_m_b_e_r (1942), a very fine docudrama about the sinking of the Titanic, and T_h_e_L_a_s_t_V_o_y_a_g_e (1960). T_h_e_L_a_s_t_V_o_y_a_g_e could very well be the prototype of every Irwin Allen disaster film ever made.

Cable's Arts & Entertainment Network recently ran a precursor to several high-tech James Bond films. Across Europe and the United States, several experimental planes have been crashing. A dapper, wise-cracking government agent (well, a Scotland Yard agent really) is investigating, not entirely with his government's approval. [Spoiler warning: plot spoilers coming up.] What he discovers is that the Viking, an innocent-looking salvage ship, really hides super-scientific equipment that can knock planes right out of the air. It then pulls them out of the water and wrings their secrets out of them and sells these secrets to a foreign power. Once the agent gets the goods on the baddies--including traitors in high places--there is a spectacular sea battle to capture the Viking.

It sounds like a number of James Bond films, notably T_h_e_S_p_y_W_h_o_L_o_v_e_d_M_e. Actually the film C_l_o_u_d_s_o_v_e_r_E_u_r_o_p_e (a.k.a. Q_P_l_a_n_e_s) was made in 1939. The prototype Commander Bond is Major Hammond, played by Sir Ralph Richardson. The film also stars a promising young actor name Laurence Olivier and a very attractive Valerie Hobson. Hobson was familiar for being menaced by the W_e_r_e_w_o_l_f_o_f_L_o_n_d_o_n as well as having the title role in B_r_i_d_e_o_f_F_r_a_n_k_e_n_s_t_e_i_n (oh yes she did!).

One would not confuse the style of C_l_o_u_d_s_o_v_e_r_E_u_r_o_p_e with a James Bond film. It has much more whimsical comedy and romantic flirtation (as opposed to eroticism). But other scenes, like the confusion on the plane as it starts obeying someone else's control, and the views of the strange ray room on the Viking, are very strikingly similar to scenes from Bond films. Watch for this one. Rate it a +2 on the -4 to +4 scale.

TTTTRRRRUUUEEEEE SSSSTTTTOOOORRRRIIIIEEEESSSS
Jo Paltin, November 24, 1986

Directed and co-written by David Byrne, of the Talking Heads.

This is a little review, befitting a little movie: If you are looking for a light and unusual movie, TRUE STORIES is for you. If you are somewhat fond of making fun of Texas and Texans, you will like it. If you pride yourself on being cosmopolitan, and debonair, you will like following David Byrne along in his visit to tacky (oh, so tacky!) Virgil, Texas.

Byrne, sporting a sweet and clear countenance, and a Texan outfit complete with hat and red convertible, narrates the TRUE STORIES of Virgil, TX. He talks about the local computer industry, a man desperately seeking matrimony, a woman too comfortably rich to get out of bed, a bunch of kids doing the Texas Rap, all on the backdrop of the state's sesquicentennial celebration. The acting is convincing, and the movie is innovative, though no technological feat.

If you like Talking Heads music and David Byrne in particular, you will find the movie entertaining. Despite expectations, it does not contain a continuous onslaught of Talking Heads videos or music. The Talking Heads play most of the songs, it's true, but except for Wild Life (complete with video and lip-synching), they are not recognizable hits, nor do they interfere with the story.

I enjoyed the movie, laughed a lot, and was generally amused. I hope Byrne stays in the film business and brings us more pleasing movies like this one. I give TRUE STORIES a +1 on the -4/+4 scale.

Jo Paltin, November 24, 1986

TROUBLE IN BUGLAND by William Kotzwinkle
David R. Godine, 1986 (1983c), \$9.95.
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper

Inspector Mantis and his sidekick Doctor Hopper live in Bugland, a country not unlike England, in a city not unlike London. And Inspector

Mantis is not unlike Sherlock Holmes. But this book is not just another Sherlock Holmes pastiche. Such works as S_h_e_r_l_o_c_k_o_t_h_e_M_o_n_k or M_e_m_o_i_r_s_o_f_S_c_h_l_o_c_k_H_o_l_m_e_s (and the "Basil of Baker Street" books) may throw in the occasional reference to the alternate milieu (Basil may be searching for the Lost Cheese or something), but don't really rely on it. T_r_o_u_b_l_e_i_n_B_u_g_l_a_n_d uses the premise (in this case, that all the characters are insects) throughout the work. In fact, the premise is essential to the work.

In "The Case of the Missing Butterfly", for example, the motive for the kidnapping of the butterflies has to do with the chemicals that the butterflies produce in their bodies. And in other stories also, a knowledge of entymology is probably necessary in order to fully enjoy the plots, and certainly in order to solve them. With this proviso, I would recommend this book, though it may be difficult to find, being available only in trade paperback.

The full-color illustrations of Joe Servello are much more detailed than those that one finds in other books of this type and add even further to the enjoyment.

_N_O_T_E_S _F_R_O_M _T_H_E _N_E_T

Subject: LeGuin wins Kafka Prize

Path: mtuxo!houxm!ihnp4!cuae2!clyde!rutgers!seismo!rochester!ciaraldi

Date: 17 Nov 86 19:20:21 GMT

From _University of Rochester Currents_, November 14, 1986:

KAFKA PRIZE AWARDED TO NOVELIST LeGUIN

The 1986 Janet Heidinger Kafka Prize for Fiction by an American Woman has been awarded to Ursula K. LeGuin for her novel, _Always Coming Home_ (Harper & Row, 1985), by the University's Department of English and the annual Writers Workshop.

"In a decade of Kafka winners and contenders, we've not had a work quite like _Always Coming Home_," said Robert G. Koch, member of the Kafka Prize Committee. "In it, LeGuin creates a whole new world."

Always Coming Home is indeed an unusual novel about a people called The Kesh, who live in the distant future. Artist Margaret Chados has illustrated the book with a hundred drawings of plants, animals, artifacts, and scenes. There are maps by the author. And composer Todd Barton has created on a tape cassette included with the book original music, Kesh love songs, rituals, and poetry.

"Across the abyss of time from this possible future," comments Kafka Prize chairman Koch, "LeGuin brings to life our`cendants, often still riddled by our careless violence against nature and ourselves, in a book that is fascinatng, demanding, and finally satisfying."

And now for a little editorializing by the poster of this article:

Well, it's high time that a science fiction novel, from an acknowledged science fiction author, has received a major "literary" award.

Sure, we've had some SF be accepted as "literature", e.g. _1984_, but for the most part it has been ignored by "serious" reviewers and critics. (all quoted words as used by the above self-described reviewers and critics).

Presumably the Kafka Prize committee hasn't seen books by Joan Vinge, Anne McCaffrey, and other American women who have tried to "create whole new worlds" as backdrops of their stories.

Still, it's a step forward, and I salute the Kafka committee. Does this mean LeGuin can now describe her work as "kafkaesque"?

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Mike Ciaraldi

Subject: WALKING ON GLASS by Iain Banks
Path: mtuxo!mtune!codas!burl!clyde!rutgers!daemon
Date: 23 Nov 86 09:47:57 GMT

I'd never read anything by Iain Banks before, so it was a bit of a lark for me to order his novel WALKING ON GLASS (Futura (UK), c1985; 239pp) sight unseen, but I did and now I'm glad I did. Of course I've always had a weakness for those inevitably British science fiction novels which delight in absurdity, showing how people keep the traditionally rigid upper lip when the world around them is going insane. I suppose Douglas Adams' HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE books are in this category. At the same time I love to indulge in those equally British science fiction novels which put an emphasis on the psychological stresses of the characters; this class of fiction is written by authors like J G Ballard or Christopher Priest. Imagine my surprise to find a novel which uses both styles at the same time: WALKING ON GLASS.

The novel is structured in an odd way. Each chapter is split into three sections, each of which deals with a completely different mental environment (it's up to the reader to decide whether they represent different physical environments). The central section is the world of Steven Grout, a man who is a potentially violent paranoid schizophrenic, who believes that motor vehicles are equipped with invisible lasers which shoot out of their axles and are designed to cut him down while he staggers down the sidewalk. Grout's world overlaps subtly with his two neighboring worlds -- on the one hand we have Graham Park, a country boy who has come to London for art school and has fallen desperately in love with a mysterious lady in black. Park's struggle to learn his lady's secret provides the psychological suspense. On the other hand we have Quiss, a veteran of the Therapeutic Wars who has been exiled to a peculiar castle on a frozen planet in an obscure part of the galaxy, where he is forced to play a series of bizarre games in order to earn his freedom. Quiss's contest provides the comic relief. Eventually these three orthogonal worlds manage to collide, and it some ingenuity

on the part of the reader to calculate their respective changes in momentum...

Banks' juxtaposition of Hitchcock-like suspense with slapstick from a Warner Bros. cartoon may seem grating to some, but I loved it. The universes of GLASS are absurd and contrary both superficially and deeply -- they are consistently inconsistent, like an Escher painting. I also enjoyed the book for the quality of its writing, which hits just the right note of seriousness or silliness when the story calls for it, and has some wonderfully witty dialogue and descriptions. I think I probably was lucky to happen onto this book -- if Banks hasn't been lucky enough to sell an American edition of this book, you may have to order it just as I did.

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"Earth got blown up in that one too... ah..." Graham kept snapping his fingers. Slater was silent for a second, gazing disdainfully at Graham's snapping fingers, then he said tiredly,

"Graham, either concentrate on searching for the title of the book you're talking about or devote your full energies to practising calling for a waiter; I'm not convinced you possess the RAM for doing both at the same time."

Slightly suspicious that 'Iain Banks' is a pseudonym for Douglas Adams,

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