

Lincroft-Holmdel Science Fiction Club  
Club Notice - 2/5/86 -- Vol. 4, No. 29

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

02/19 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. For reasons of my own, I just saw the end of STAR TREK II: THE WRATH OF KHAN. That is the one that has Spocks's tear-filled eulogy by Capt. Kirk. It should have been one of the great sad slobbery moments of science fiction film, comperable in human terms only to the suicide death of the second monster in RODAN. But the content only confirms for me what I have known all along, that Kirk is and always has been (strike that, STAR TREK takes place in the future, make it "Kirk will be and will always be") the consumate jerk. It is a particularly insensitive thing to say about his friend who is only half human and has always been (will always be?) sensitive about his piebald origins. There is the implication that what the speaker is something that it is good to be. Kirk's eulogy goes with other odious phrases like "Mighty white of you!" and "You have behaved like a Christian." Anyone who knows anything about history knows that behaving like a Christian -- or someone of any persuasion -- covers a multitude of possible actions, some of which are now considered to be less than socially wholesome. Torquemada was a Christian and, at least he thought, a defender of the faith. There has been the prejudice through the whole STAR TREK series that being a human was the ideal and being a Vulcan was less than the ideal. Never mind that Spock was always 3/4 of the brains on the ship (Scotty had another 1/3, and the remaining -1/12 was made up of Kirk.) The script writers always sharpened their

bigotry on the concept of human superiority to Vulcans. The human solution to problems always was made to sound better in the end, even though it probably would have gotten everyone killed if

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it wasn't Spock logically choosing the human solution. Working on a hunch as to the source of this prejudice, I checked the names of the people who worked on the scripts. As I suspected, they were overwhelmingly human names. Not a one had name like Sarak or Kalak or Pavak. The pro-human prejudice was an understandable problem, I suppose. No Vulcan wrote a script for STAR TREK. They were all too busy out exploring the stars.

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

CONTACT by Carl Sagan  
Simon and Schuster, 1985, \$18.95.  
A book review by Mark R. Leeper

Back when C\_o\_s\_m\_o\_s was on TV, I read an article about how Carl Sagan's TV series was being merchandised. There were books, calendars, and more esoteric things like star balls. About this time, as I remember, it was announced that Sagan received some sort of record-breaking monetary advance to write a science fiction novel about mankind's first contact with intelligent aliens. I knew of no previous fiction that Sagan had ever written and frankly I was a little suspicious that it would be handed off to a ghost writer and that it would be sold more on the Sagan name than on the story value.

In the ensuing months Sagan's fortunes went downhill. His series did not have the popularity expected. In fact, his brand of popularizing science, and particularly his repeated use of the words "billions," became a laughing stock. Sales of "Cosmos" goods were poor and I had heard that Sagan was blaming the distributors. In any case it became clear that Sagan as the super-star scientist was just not going

to hack it. I occasionally wondered about Sagan's novel and whether it would ever see the light of day. Last autumn, C\_o\_n\_t\_a\_c\_t was finally published.

Now that I read the book, I find it much more believable that it could have been written by Sagan. To begin with, the basic story reads like a scenario that might have appeared in one of Sagan's books about SETI (the "Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence"). The book is far less about the nature of the aliens than it is about the reaction to the news that a SETI project has been successful.

Clearly the book was written by someone who has given thought to how an extra-terrestrial contact might affect international politics, how factions would oppose responding to the communication, and how other factions would refuse to believe contact had really been made. In fact, the humans are far more believable than the aliens. The aliens come off as being Sagan's ideal of what humans should be. They have intercepted all of our television signals from the beginning of TV broadcasting, a commitment to their own SETI project that Sagan no doubt envies.

Another way you can recognize C\_o\_n\_t\_a\_c\_t as Sagan's book is that the book seems to have a number of axes to grind and they are all on issues about which Sagan has strong feelings. His scientist/main character has to debate fundamentalists and people who have phobias of technology. It gives Sagan a chance to editorialize on some of his favorite topics.

My big complaint about this book is that it gives far too little information about the aliens. The actual contact is described as an almost mystical experience, but one that leaves us little the wiser. It

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seems that Sagan had thought out the earthly implications of a contact and then only put in aliens because the build-up demanded them.

C\_o\_n\_t\_a\_c\_t is not a great piece of science fiction. If it had been written by an unknown, it would not be getting the glossy Simon and Schuster treatment it is getting. It wouldn't have gotten a mammoth cash advance. But it probably would have come out in a nice Del Rey edition. It might even have gotten a better piece of cover art. Not a great book, but easily a +1 on the -4 to +4 scale. I'm glad I finished it. Now I can wake up in the morning and not see first thing the

apparent message "Contact Carl Sagan."

## RAN

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: Kurosawa's final film tells the story of King Lear in 16th century Japan. This is as well as King Lear can be done, but K\_a\_g\_e\_m\_u\_s\_h\_a is still the better film.

Akira Kurosawa is a director with an international reputation for making very fine films. Of these the best known are historical dramas from feudal Japan. His films are memorable enough that the plots or characters are often borrowed for films in the West. His R\_a\_s\_h\_o\_m\_o\_n was made into a Western, T\_h\_e\_O\_u\_t\_r\_a\_g\_e. T\_h\_e\_S\_e\_v\_e\_n\_S\_a\_m\_u\_r\_a\_i was remade as T\_h\_e\_M\_a\_g\_n\_i\_f\_i\_c\_e\_n\_t\_S\_e\_v\_e\_n, B\_a\_t\_t\_l\_e\_B\_e\_y\_o\_n\_d\_t\_h\_e\_S\_t\_a\_r\_s, and S\_e\_v\_e\_n\_M\_a\_g\_n\_i\_f\_i\_c\_e\_n\_t\_G\_l\_a\_d\_i\_a\_t\_o\_r\_s. It is rumored that S\_t\_a\_r\_W\_a\_r\_s borrowed from many films but the basic plot came from Kurosawa's H\_i\_d\_d\_e\_n\_F\_o\_r\_t\_r\_e\_s\_s. Kurosawa's Y\_o\_j\_i\_m\_b\_o with its hero, the grubby but invincible samurai Sanjuro, was remade as A\_F\_i\_s\_t\_f\_u\_l\_o\_f\_D\_o\_l\_l\_a\_r\_s and Sanjuro became "The Man with No Name," on whom Clint Eastwood built a career.

Kurosawa has also been known to borrow from the West, but only from Shakespeare. His T\_h\_r\_o\_n\_e\_o\_f\_B\_l\_o\_o\_d is set in feudal Japan, but the plot is from M\_a\_c\_b\_e\_t\_h. Now Kurosawa has announced his retirement, and his final film and his crowning achievement is to be R\_a\_n. Again feudal Japan is the setting, but the story is very much borrowed from K\_i\_n\_g\_L\_e\_a\_r. At least that was what was said at first. Now I hear that it is based on a traditional Japanese story and only during production were the parallels to K\_i\_n\_g\_L\_e\_a\_r pointed out. I am a little sorry to hear Kurosawa make that claim because the plot is too similar to K\_i\_n\_g\_L\_e\_a\_r, incident for incident and right down to having characters like the wise fool. I respect Kurosawa as a filmmaker, but I simply think he is lying here. In addition, of Shakespeare's best known plays, I like K\_i\_n\_g\_L\_e\_a\_r the least. Lear goes through such histrionics that even the greatest actors are forced to give a performance that has the bouquet of overripe ham.

If you know the story of K\_i\_n\_g\_L\_e\_a\_r, you already know most of the story of R\_a\_n. Lord Ichimonji Hidetora wishes to divide his kingdom among his three sons (not daughters as in L\_e\_a\_r). This leads to tragic chaos ("ran" is Japanese for "chaos"). As Hidetora realizes his mistakes he looks paler and greyer. He sits in a field with a trance-like stare as his fool (played by Peter, a famous Japanese transvestite) tries to coax him into action. Tatsuya Nakadai's histrionics as the Japanese Lear rival those of Albert Finney's Sir in T\_h\_e\_D\_r\_e\_s\_s\_e\_r.

The film has two beautifully staged battles scenes with incredible color. One is a bloody massacre done silently to music in a manner reminiscent of the film R\_o\_y\_a\_l\_H\_u\_n\_t\_o\_f\_t\_h\_e\_S\_u\_n. Each is staged in exquisite detail. Also of interest is a subplot involving a

manipulative woman. The most enjoyable scene of the film involves her and a speech about foxes. (Those who have seen the film will know which scene this is; those who haven't can rest assured I have not just spoiled the scene for you.) The film is a delight as long as Lord Hidetora is not on the screen. I think my natural prejudice for Kurosawa and against K\_i\_n\_g\_L\_e\_a\_r balance out and I would give R\_a\_n a +2 on the -4 to +4 scale.

Now for a little piece of heresy. For me Kurosawa's crowning achievement will not be R\_a\_n but his previous film, K\_a\_g\_e\_m\_u\_s\_h\_a. R\_a\_n lacks the historical scope and the enthralling story of its direct predecessor. It is hard to appreciate a film seen on video as much as one seen on a really wide screen, and in spite of that K\_a\_g\_e\_m\_u\_s\_h\_a still strikes me as the more stunning film. If I am disappointed in R\_a\_n, it may be because I was hoping for another K\_a\_g\_e\_m\_u\_s\_h\_a. If you are given the choice of renting K\_a\_g\_e\_m\_u\_s\_h\_a or seeing R\_a\_n on the wide screen, well, you know what I'd recommend.

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

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Subject: MAIA by Richard Adams

Path: mtgzz!seb

Date: Fri, 24-Jan-86 17:46:58 EST

I just finished it. I did like it, but it was nothing like "The Plague Dogs" or "Watership Down." It takes place in the same place as "Shardik" (who is mentioned in the book), but in another time. Briefly, the book is about a poor but very beautiful girl who is sold into slavery and ends up in the greatest city in the Belkan Empire. Here she gets embroiled in some pretty wild political going-ons. The book is packed with action - it is never slow. There are hundreds of different characters, but luckily Richard Adams includes a list of characters so you can figure out who everyone is. It is not a kids book by any stretch of the imagination. There is sex and violence and all sorts of good stuff. It is a very well written fantasy novel that kept me interested. I read about 1/3 of those 1260 pages on a flight to Denver. You want to know what happens to Maia next. I would recommend it to anyone who enjoys a good historical type fantasy novel. Kinda reminded me of Shogun and Clan of the Cave Bear.

Sharon Badian



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Subject: THE SHATTERED WORLD by Michael Reaves (mild spoiler)

Path: ihnp4!seismo!hao!noao!terak!mot!anasazi!duane

Date: Mon, 27-Jan-86 18:52:28 EST

The jacket reads:

"A millennium ago magicians fought a war, and smashed the world into a thousand pieces.

In partial expiation these same sorcerers cast spells to set the fragments to floating about each other in the Abyss, to inform them with a proper gravity, and to supply them and the space that separates them with an atmosphere that men and beasts may breathe.

But that was long ago; in a thousand years even sorcerers grow old, and so do their spells. Now the doom that was forestalled is at hand. Already pieces of the Shattered World begin to collide. Soon all will meet, and coalesce, and melt into molten Chaos."

The summary on the jacket is perfect for setting the stage for the story; as a matter of fact, without it you'd be rather confused for a fair amount of the book.

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The "world" is an interesting one, and magic is used quite a lot. There are many important characters: a sorcerer and his lover, the lover's husband, a thief, another sorcerer, and a warrior. The author tries to make each of these characters come alive for the reader, but he's only partially successful. The subplots involve only one or two characters at a time, and the action frequently focuses on one subplot for many pages. As a result you never develop much empathy with any of the characters.

The author populates the Land with a number of magical creatures whose names you probably won't recognize. I had met "Chthon" before, but that put me on my guard. It wasn't long before demogorgons and cacodemons appeared. That part of the writing was overdone for my taste.

I give this book 2.5 stars (good). There are enough novel ideas for 3.5 stars, but the lack of focus on a central character or two and the

overuse of archaic terminology seriously reduced my enjoyment.

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

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Subject: ARMAGEDDON 2419 A.D. (original vs. updated edition)

Path: bellcore!decvax!ittatc!dcdwest!sdcsvax!sdcrcdf!ucla-cs!wales

Date: Thu, 30-Jan-86 15:18:41 EST

I recently had the opportunity to read both editions of Philip Francis Nowlan's ARMAGEDDON 2419 A.D. -- the newer edition (revised and updated by Spider Robinson), and Nowlan's original work. ARMAGEDDON 2419 A.D., in case anyone is not aware, is the novel that inspired "Buck Rogers".

Aside from the descriptions of futuristic technology in the original book which Robinson rewrote for a 1970's reading audience, there were three significant differences between the two editions. I feel these can be discussed freely without spoiling the book, so here goes . . .

(1) In Nowlan's original, Anthony Rogers (the main character -- the name "Buck" was created for the subsequent comic strip and is not used in the book at all) is routinely addressed as "Tony".

In Robinson's revision, the people of the 25th Century call him "Rogers" (with an explanation that Wilma Deering -- the first person of the new world to meet him -- had somehow gotten confused, thought "Rogers" was his first name, and the mistake stuck).

Six of one, half a dozen of the other -- though I really didn't see any reason why Robinson felt he had to make this change.

(2) In the last chapter of the book (labelled "Epilogue"), Nowlan's original text has Tony Rogers refer to the "simple, spiritual Blacks of

Africa, today one of the leading races of the world -- although in the Twentieth Century we regarded them as inferior."

Robinson replaced the word "simple" with "wise".

I am not suggesting that Nowlan's original phrasing was intended as racist, but I can see how a reader of our day might be offended by the original wording.

(3) Robinson totally changed the last few lines of the Epilogue. The original ending (after the last double dash) reads as follows:

-- and that I am now a very tired old man, waiting with no regrets for the call which will take me to another existence. There, it is my hope and my conviction that my courageous mate of those bloody days waits for me with loving arms.

Robinson substituted the following in place of the above:

-- perhaps at some future date you will have the opportunity to read of my further and even more incredible adventures both on earth and in the infinite void of space.

My own opinion is that this change was completely uncalled-for. The original, I believe, expresses Tony Rogers's humanity much more than does the revision. Whatever Robinson's personal views might be on the question of a life beyond (I don't know for sure, but I can sure make a good guess), I feel he should have left Nowlan's work stand "as is" at this point.

As for the descriptions of futuristic technology, I suppose Robinson's reworked versions give *\*slightly\** better with our current world than Nowlan's original passages. But I really didn't find the original text to be so bad as to demand a rewrite. I guess I'm used to the idea that technological descriptions in SF often come across as pseudoscientific doubletalk; I try to overlook this where possible and see through to the real story the author is trying to tell.

In summary, if you have a chance to get a copy of the *\*original\** version of ARMAGEDDON 2419 A.D., I would suggest you go for it and bypass the Robinson edition. If all you can find is the newer version, though, it isn't really that bad (except as noted above).

As for the quality of the story itself, it is OK, but not outstanding. The main thing the book has to recommend it is its place in the history of science fiction.

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Subject: L. Ron Hubbard dies  
Path: mtuxo!houxm!whuxl!whuxlm!akgua!gatech!seismo!caip!daemon  
Date: Fri, 31-Jan-86 15:48:47 EST

From the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Tuesday, 26 Jan. '86:

Los Angeles (AP) -- L. Ron Hubbard, the science fiction writer who founded the controversial Church of Scientology three decades ago, has died, the church announced Monday night. He was 74.

Hubbard, who was last seen in public in 1980, died Friday of a stroke at his ranch near San Luis Obispo, 150 miles northwest of downtown Los Angeles, said the Rev. Heber Jentzch, president of the Church of Scientology International.

Hubbard did not control the church and its corporations for the past few years, said Jentzch.

Hubbard's ashes were scattered at sea, said Earle Cooley, the church's chief counsel.

Hubbard left most of his estate to Scientology, Cooley said.

"L. Ron Hubbard, after making very generous provision for his surviving wife and certain of his children, has left the entire balance of his estate, which is very substantial, to Scientology," Cooley said.

Hubbard and his third and surviving wife, Mary Sue Hubbard, founded the church in 1954. He laid out the Scientology doctrine in "Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health," a book that has sold millions of copies.

The wealthy church has battled the Internal Revenue Service and has fought suits filed by former members. The church has claimed up to 6 million members worldwide since the height of the movement in the 1970's. Defectors, however, have put the number at closer to 2 million.

\*\*\* End of article\*\*\*

Well, I think THIS gives lots of food for speculation. He died and was cremated and the ashes scattered, hmmm... Well, those that have claimed tht he has been dead for some time can use THAT as start for discussion! Also, he left bequests to "CERTAIN of his children". Again, sounds like

the makings of a fairly bitter internecine quarrel...

Regards, Will

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Subject: Clan of the Cave Bear (a shorty)

Path: bellcore!decvax!ittatc!dcdwest!sdcsvax!sdcrcf!oberon!spencer

Date: Wed, 29-Jan-86 20:19:10 EST

It just ended at such a point of "...yeah, and the point is...?" I was fascinated by the things that the actors (well, not the actors) had come up with to communicate with. To a 20th century man watching a subtitled movie in downtown LA it seemed like the hand signs were very authentic (of course, who knows). I just saw Iceman on cable and I didn't really get that much more out of this show. The real deep interest and conflict never got started.

The book is very thick and I guess they never had the time to really dig into the scenes. The opening scene is a young Daryl Hanna walking through the woods and before you can say anything there is an earthquake and Daryl's mom is sucked into the ground, and we never got to see her before she is almost dead. The majority of the opening of the film seemed to me to be just fragments that were included so they could later be referred to, then as soon as they had been on long enough to register, off they went, "we have to get through this in 2 hours!".

I was really looking forward to this since my sister seemed so taken by the book, and since I have been so impressed by Daryl Hanna since I saw her in Blade Runner (back when), and since they have plastered LA with that great photo of her on huge 12 foot posters everywhere. Alas, I wish I had seen it on cable.

Life goes on... Randal Spencer    Student DEC Consulting - University  
of Southern California



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NOMINATE MARK R. LEEPER FOR HUGO FOR BEST FAN WRITER