

Lincroft-Holmdel Science Fiction Club  
Club Notice - 2/19/86 -- Vol. 4, No. 31

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

02/26 HO: DUNE by Frank Herbert

03/19 HO: "Chronicles of Narnia" by C. S. Lewis

04/09 HO: AT THE MOUNTAINS OF MADNESS by H. P. Lovecraft

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. As you may already know, Frank Herbert died last week. Herbert had long been a science fiction writer of some popularity but the "Dune" series was his most popular and successful creation. What you may not have heard is that his death was artfully planned and executed by John "The Butcher" Jetzt as a ploy to discourage people from coming to a discussion of DUNE at Holmdel on February 26. It is intended that Herbert's fans will be in mourning and will forget to come to the discussion. That way Jetzt can go to an earlier lunch. If you let The Butcher get away with this one, there is no telling what he will try next. If you have any shred of decency, any moral fiber, I urge you to go to the Holmdel discussion of DUNE and keep Mr. Jetzt from getting his ill-earned early lunch.

2. The following list of nominees for the Nebula is courtesy of gladys!dalton:  
(Finalists are listed on this ballot in alphabetical order by title.)

Novel:

BLOOD MUSIC by Greg Bear

DINNER AT DEVIANT'S PALACE by Tim Powers

ENDER'S GAME by Orson Scott Card

HELLICONIA WINTER by Brian W. Aldiss

THE POSTMAN by David Brin

THE REMAKING OF SIGMUND FREUD by Barry Malzberg  
SCHISMATRIX by Bruce Sterling

Novella:

"24 Views of Mt. Fuji, by Hokusai" by Roger Zelazny

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"The Gorgon Field" by Kate Wilhelm  
"Green Days in Brunei" by Bruce Sterling  
"Green Mars" by Kim Stanley Robinson  
"The Only Neat Thing to Do" by James Tiptree, Jr.  
"Sailing to Byzantium" by Robert Silverberg

Novelette:

"Dogfight" by Michael Swanwick & William Gibson  
"The Fringe" by Orson Scott Card  
"A Gift from the Graylanders" by Michael Bishop  
"The Jaguar Hunter" by Lucius Shepard  
"Paladin of the Lost Hour" by Harlan Ellison  
"Portraits of His Children" by George R.R. Martin  
"Rockabye Baby" by S.C. Sykes

Short Story:

"Flying Saucer Rock and Roll" by Howard Waldrop  
"The Gods of Mars" by Gardner Dozois, Jack Dann, & Michael Swanwick  
"Heirs of the Perisphere" by Howard Waldrop  
"Hong's Bluff" by William F. Wu  
"More than the Sum of His Parts" by Joe Haldeman  
"Out of All Them Bright Stars" by Nancy Kress  
"Paper Dragons" by James P. Blaylock  
"Snow" by John Crowley

A total of 285 members voted.

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

Mercury Capsules - February 10, 1986

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

A medium for quick reviews of anything of interest in the world of science fiction. I'll pass along anything (not slanderous or scatological) without nasty comments. I prefer to get reviews by electronic mail: send to pa!psc from the AT&T-IS ENS systems in Lincroft, {pegasus,mtgzz,ihnp4}!lznv!psc from everywhere else. If that's impossible, I'm at 113A LZ 1D-212, 576-2374.

+o B\_r\_i\_d\_g\_e\_o\_f\_B\_i\_r\_d\_s: novel, Barry Hughart, 1985. Terrific! Wonderful! Marvelous! Nominate this for a Hugo!

This is the story of Number Ten Ox and his travels with Li Kao to save the children of his village from a mysterious plague. It's full of the feel of China and the Orient. It's full of philosophy and humor and you should all run out and read it immediately!

(P.S. I liked it.)

Evelyn C Leeper

+o C\_r\_o\_s\_s-T\_i\_m\_e\_E\_n\_g\_i\_n\_e\_e\_r: novel, Leo Frankowski, 1986. Conrad Schwartz, loyal citizen of Communist Poland, goes to sleep in the basement of an inn and wakes up in 1231 A.D. In the best "Connecticut Yankee" tradition, his knowledge revolutionizes the society he falls into. Of course, he does all this in the spirit of good Marxist dedication. He doesn't worry about the paradoxes of trying to change history so that the Mongols are defeated in their (in our universe, successful) attempt to over-run Poland in 1241. (There are some time travelers in the future who are watching him via a viewscreen who do talk about this, so the reader doesn't feel cheated.)

Other than the aforementioned similarity to A\_C\_o\_n\_n\_e\_c\_t\_i\_c\_u\_t\_Y\_a\_n\_k\_e\_e\_i\_n\_K\_i\_n\_g\_A\_r\_t\_h\_u'r's\_C\_o\_u\_r\_t, and a somewhat gratuitous emphasis on nude saunas, the only drawback this book has is that it's Book 1 of a 4-book series and leaves, as they say, "more loose ends than an explosion in a tinsel factory." Assuming the last three are the same level as the first, wait for all four, then read them as a set.

Evelyn C Leeper

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+o A\_f\_t\_e\_r\_L\_o\_n\_d\_o\_n: novel, Richard Jeffries, 1885 (1980). Billed as one of "The World's Classics," this post-holocaust story is interesting mostly from an historical perspective. Though the afterword deals with the question of how it "all fell apart," the story itself is just another feudal adventure story. (It actually reads a lot like T\_h\_e\_C\_r\_o\_s\_s-T\_i\_m\_e\_E\_n\_g\_i\_n\_e\_e\_r, which I have also just read and reviewed.) Don't expect rousing adventure, but the literary style is interesting.

Evelyn C Leeper

+o R\_e\_l\_a\_t\_i\_v\_e\_s: novel, Geo. Alec Effinger, 1973. Yes, this is YAAH (yet another alternate history)--everyone has their favorite sub-genre, so why should I be an exception? Similar to Russ's F\_e\_m\_a\_l\_e, M\_a\_n and Finch's I\_n\_f\_i\_n\_i\_t\_y'\_s W\_e\_b, this novel follows the same character through different alternate universes. Ernst Weinraub lives in a dystopian future New York (a la 1\_9\_8\_4). Ernst Weinraub lives in the one city in Africa in a world in which Europe never colonized the New World or Africa and civilization is crumbling. (Anti-space-developers, take note.) Ernst Weinraub lives in a world in which Germany won World War I (yes, that's right, "I", not "II").

Effinger is more consciously "literary" than most authors of alternate histories. On reflection, I found the novel unsatisfying because Effinger has really written three novellas rather than a novel. The characters never interact between worlds, so that (possible) unifying thread is lost. Had he published them as three novellas it would have been an interesting concept; interleaving them into a "novel" adds a level of confusion that left me less than enthralled.

Evelyn C Leeper

+o T\_h\_e\_P\_r\_o\_t\_e\_u\_s\_O\_p\_e\_r\_a\_t\_i\_o\_n: novel, James P. Hogan, 1985. Hogan has written an unusually complex alternate history novel. Unfortunately, I can't explain the complexity without ruining some of the surprises, but I can say that he does think through many of the real questions of time travel and alternate history.

The main character, living in a 1974 in which Germany has won World War II, travels back in time to 1939 to try to convince Winston Churchill to take action to prevent this from happening. In addition to all the usual obstacles they expect, there are many surprising twists and turns which make this a most satisfying novel. I can't speak for the accuracy of all the historical details, but I found no obvious errors, except for Hogan's portraying Isaac Asimov as "somebody [...] who entertained hopeful notions of becoming a famous science-fiction writer one day." Since Asimov himself has said that it was decades later that he even considered making science fiction a career rather than a mere sideline, this sort of name-dropping definitely falls under the heading "gratuitous."

This book is a definite must for alternate history fans.

Evelyn C Leeper

+o S\_h\_i\_v\_a\_D\_e\_s\_c\_e\_n\_d\_i\_n\_g: novel, Gregory Benford and William Rotsler, 1980.

A 30-billion ton comet is going to hit Earth. What an original idea! I had gotten tired of books about asteroids about to hit the earth. And what happens? There are riots, and religious fanatics, and orgies, and in the midst of it all, a few rational, dedicated scientists working their little hearts out to save the rest of humanity from almost certain doom. And sex--there's lots of sex.

It would be a hell of a mini-series. As science fiction, well, blech!

Evelyn C Leeper

+o A\_u\_n\_t\_J\_u\_l\_i\_a\_a\_n\_d\_t\_h\_e\_S\_c\_r\_i\_p\_t\_w\_r\_i\_t\_e\_r: novel, Mario Vargas Llosa, 1985.

Vargas Llosa is Peru's leading novelist. Since I just spent two weeks in Peru, I thought I would try the latest of his works to be translated into English. The plot revolves around Mario's infatuation with his Aunt (by marriage) Julia. The fact that she is much older than he, and divorced, scandalizes the family. As a comic novel, it's fairly low-key (though one can imagine a filmmaker having great fun with the part where Mario and Julia try to convince a drunken mayor to marry them), but for me, at least, its value was more in giving me a glimpse of Peru (albeit the Peru of the 1950's). People who like quiet humor may find it appealing.

Evelyn C Leeper

RIO BRAVO  
A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: Classic Western with a very good reputation but with feet of clay.

This month Cinemax is running the 1959 Howard Hawks Western R\_i\_o B\_r\_a\_v\_o. The film is a sort of answer to H\_i\_g\_h N\_o\_o\_n. John Wayne plays a sheriff about to have problems, just like Gary Cooper did in H\_i\_g\_h N\_o\_o\_n. In the earlier film Cooper had to face a handful of killers. Hawks's one-ups-manship has Wayne facing dozens. And how do they react? Cooper spent his time trying to get someone to help him. The Duke, of course, has more of an image to live up to. He spends his time trying to discourage people who want to help him. The question never enters his mind that he might not be man enough to take on any number of people who want him dead. Sure enough Wayne, with a little help from two or three selected friends, is more than enough to take on a small army. Of course, Rambo later took on bigger armies in even more contrived plots, but Wayne was modest and was willing to be equal to only three or four dozen men in his scripts.

The cast for this film were chosen more for marquee value than for acting talent. Besides Wayne, who always did the world's best imitation of John Wayne, there was current heart-throb Ricky Nelson for the teenage girls in the audience and Dean Martin for their mothers. Neither ever won any acting awards. Also on hand are Angie Dickinson, Walter Brennan, and Ward Bond.

I am not sure where the title came from. There isn't one scene with a river in it in the entire film. But then, Westerns with Spanish names--you know, R\_i\_o G\_r\_a\_n\_d\_e, R\_i\_o L\_o\_b\_o, E\_l D\_o\_r\_a\_d\_o, V\_e\_r\_a C\_r\_u\_z, S\_i\_l\_v\_e\_r\_a\_d\_o-they all have a sort of epic feel.

I won't deny that R\_i\_o B\_r\_a\_v\_o has some fun to it. Most critics seem to like it and it is worth a peek. It has some reasonable humor; most Hawks films seem to. Also there is a long opening sequence, somewhat experimental, in which for three or four minutes there is action but no

dialogue. Any Howard Hawks film is worth seeing, but R\_i\_o\_B\_r\_a\_v\_o is good in spite of itself. So if it is enjoyable why am I picking holes?

Well, nobody else seems to be doing it. Rate R\_i\_o\_B\_r\_a\_v\_o a flat 0 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: Santiago, by Resnick

Path: mhuxt!mhuxr!ulysses!bellcore!decvax!decwrl!amdcad!lll-crg!caip!daemon

Date: Tue, 11-Feb-86 11:45:39 EST

Santiago, a new release from Mike Resnick, is definitely the best of his that I've read. It deals with the quest for the infamous Santiago, a criminal whose exploits have so shocked the galaxy that (I think), there are 11 bureaus of the galactic govnrnt (the DEMOCRACY, which says it all) whose sole duty is tracking him down. Mainly the novel focuses on the efforts of Sebastian Nightingale Cain, a bounty hunter, to cash in on the cr 20M reward -- as the old line goes "Dead or Alive -- preferably dead!"

This is probably the best of Resnick's attempts to render the 19th century American frontier milieu in an alien environment. Unfortunately, reading about characters who ALL have nicknames (or real names) like ManMountain Bates, Halfpenny Terwilliger, Songbird Cain, et al. can grow kind of wearisome, but this is only a minor annoyance. Actually, it probably says something that the only major character who doesn't use a name like that is Santiago himself and he --- well you'll have to read about it.



If you liked any of Resnick's previous books, then you'll certainly like this one; if you didn't (like me), then you'll still probably find Santiago very worthwhile.

-Laurence

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Subject: review, Steve Perry's Matadora  
Path: mtuxo!drutx!ihnp4!mhuxn!mhuxr!ulysses!gamma!epsilon!mb2c!umich!msudoc!ctj  
Date: Wed, 12-Feb-86 14:56:13 EST

"Matadora" by Steve Perry  
Score: Beginning: 7, Middle: 6, End: 8, Overall: 7

Blurb:

On some worlds, the name of Khadaji is a prayer for resistance fighters...

Khadaji, master warrior, martyr, legend. The one-man resistance to the Confed on Greaves. Known as "The Man Who Never Missed," he only let himself be taken when he'd done what set out to do. With his death, Khadaji became the inspiration and idol of students of

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martial arts everywhere.

Matador villa, the training center for the best fighters in the galaxy, disciples of the great Khadaji. A rigorous program of political tactics and psychological warfare, physical discipline and martial force. A mysterious school on the planet Renault ... Its ultimate motives unknown.

Dirisha Zuri, a dangerous drifter, a dark-skinned beauty, Khadaji's colleague. A ronin, whose expertise in body control and knowledge of the fighting arts drew the attention of Matador Villa. The school wanted her talents ... and the galaxy desperately needed her deadly skills.

Opinion: READ "The Man Who Never Missed" FIRST. As a sequel, "Matadora"

is well written with the flow being well defined from the start. No great surprises in plot but some nice twists. Though the book is complete as written, it is very much an introduction (bridge) into the next book, as yet unwritten.

I enjoyed the book but then again I like most "future-combat" books. The training, combat, and people interactions move very fast and are fun to read. Some of the "whys" and "wherefores" which are presented as "history" moves very slowly.

All in all, a fun book that leads cleanly from "The Man Who Never Missed" to the rest of the story.

/eom ctj                      ..!ihnp4!msudoc!ctj (Chris Johnson)

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Subject: R.M. Meluch's "Wind Child"

Path: mtuxo!drutx!ihnp4!mhuxn!mhuxr!ulysses!gamma!epsilon!mb2c!umich!msudoc!ctj

Date: Wed, 12-Feb-86 16:47:51 EST

"Wind Child" by R.M. Meluch

Score: Beginning: 4, Middle: 4, End: 4, Overall: 6+

Blurb:

Born of wind and woman. Daniel East's mother was dead. Laure Lafayette-Remington East, the only person who had ever been able to speak with the Kistraalians, the wind beings who'd called Aeolis their home long before humans transformed it into a paradise planet for the very wealthy. Alive, Laure could have warned the winds about the human weapon that could threaten their very existence. Now Daniel alone remained to carry his mother's message of survival. But to accomplish his mission Daniel had to learn how to communicate with the winds. And in the learning, he discovered a ten-thousand-year-old secret that sent him rocketing across the

galaxy in search of a living legend which could herald the beginning of a new age or the final extinction of an entire race...

Opinion: A sad statement of person-kinds treatment of the unknown. The story is very much an tear-jerking statement of how man has treated the natives of any land. Within the story are some interesting moments when you must cry out shame that humans can be this way.

Some of the ideas seem to come from the expansion of the pioneers in to the lands of the native american indian. The total parinoia of the military leaders is a good example. There is also some strong statements on the ideas of possession of land and "things".

Overall, the book was a very nice change from my standard book diet. I think that most people willing to read SF will like the book for its slightly diffrent handling of human expansion into space.

/eom ctj                      ..!ihnp4!msudoc!ctj (Chris Johnson)

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Subject: GOLEM IN THE GEARS by Piers Anthony (mild spoiler)

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

Date: Thu, 6-Feb-86 10:54:24 EST

The jacket reads:

"Grundy Golem was the size of an inconsequence, and nobody had any respect for him--including Grundy! To prove himself, he volunteered to ride the Monster Under the Bed to the Ivory Tower to find little Ivy's long-lost dragon, Stanley Steamer.

After many adventures, he reached the Tower, to learn that the evil Sea Hag kept lovely Rapunzel imprisoned there, her body destined to be used to maintain the witch's immortality. Grundy managed to free the damsel, and they fled together.

As the descendent of Jordan the Barbarian and Bluebell Elf, Rapunzel could become any size, even that of any Golem's dreamgirl. But Grundy knew she was surely fated for someone better than he. Besides, the Sea Hag still pursued them to destroy him and get her back.

And he still hadn't found Stanley Steamer."

The jacket is completely accurate. Unfortunately, you can pretty much guess how things turn out just by reading the jacket, and so the story never builds any suspense. This book is similar to the later Xanth novels: lots of small adventures, frequent puns, a few games, and an easily-learned lesson or two. It's pleasant enough, like a marshmallow, but don't expect much nourishment.

A lot of characters from previous Xanth books appear here, such as Bink and Chester, but they are rather blandly portrayed this time around. One thing of interest, and the only reason I'll keep this book: the last chapter of the book is a nice lexicon of Xanth.

I give this book 2.5 stars (good). By the way, the author notes that he has more Xanth novels in mind, but that he plans to write new "Adept" novels first.

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

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Subject: THE LIFESHIP by Harry Harrison & Gordon R. Dickson (mild spoiler)  
Path: ihnp4!seismo!hao!noao!terak!mot!anasazi!duane  
Date: Tue, 11-Feb-86 10:47:03 EST

The jacket reads:

"A mysterious explosion has destroyed an Albenareth spaceship and left nine survivors trapped in the confines of a fragile lifeship -- eight humans and their alien commander now face a test far more grueling than the terror they have survived...

Giles Steel, member of Earth's master race, will lead this strange band of survivors through a power struggle as ruthless as the very forces of nature they must outlive!"

The summary above is rather terse, and the book is a lot more interesting that you'd think. The jacket also contains a comment by Roger Zelazny: "Before you have turned very many pages, you are riding on a wave of suspense that carries you through an entire book."

Zelazny's right. The book is full of suspense. Most of the action takes place on a tiny lifeship, and, as expected, things break down and people start acting funny. The suspense and mystery is heightened by Steel's underlying task.

The "universe" for this story is also interesting. Basically there are two races, and spaceships are manned exclusively by aliens. Earth is divided between "adelmen" (from the German Edelman = noblemen) and "arbiters" (from Arbeiter = worker). Steel is an adelman, but one of the interesting processes to watch on the lifeship is how his views about the function and nature of arbiters changes.

This book has an awful lot going for it: the suspense of trying to survive on the lifestrip, the interpersonal conflicts on the ship, the relation between Terrans and the aliens, Steel's mission, the technology, and the nature of the societies (Terran and alien). And there are some surprises.

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I give this book 3.5 stars (very, very good). It's one I'll keep.

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

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Subject: REVIEW: The Color Purple  
Path: bellcore!decvax!tektronix!uw-beaver!fluke!moriarty  
Date: Mon, 10-Feb-86 03:35:53 EST

It's been a bleak several months for movie watching. Ever since the summer of '85 has been over (and with it, the Seattle Film Festival), I've been fairly dissatisfied with many of the pictures that have come out. There were a few good ones over the fall and winter months, but not one of them was a a real pleaser; I might be enthused about many of the films' points, but none gave me the rush of delight that a The Sure Thing or McArthur's Children or Restless Natives (why the \*HELL\* hasn't this been released?) or Cocoon or Tender Mercies or even Silverado -- no film came out and wildly surpassed my expectations. The ones I was really hoping for a good time with -- Enemy Mine and Young Sherlock Holmes were not only flawed, but lackluster; good movies, but not something to come away from feeling enthusiastic about films in general and optimistic about the coming film schedule.

Well, two things have happened over the last couple of weeks. I saw The Color Purple, which broke the long dry spell, and there seems to be a flood of good-to-excellent films to fill the void (The Trip to Bountiful, Down & Out In Beverly Hills, Hannah and Her Sisters, and Murphy's Romance). I'll concentrate on the former, and try to avoid the emotional diatribes that previous reviewers have gotten into around here (i.e. I am a white male reluctant-yuppie and think I was able to get much out of the film

despite my race and sex; just put it down to equal rights for imagination). I haven't read the book, so I didn't have any expectations, and thus faithfulness to the text will not be an issue here.

Drama, in films of late, tends to be dark and somewhat sparse. The excellent Ordinary People started this trend, I think, and thus the scenes that stay with you the longest from Terms of Endearment or Twice In A Lifetime are those gloomy, grainy close-ups of tense and pain-filled faces and tattered lives. You wouldn't expect Stephen Spielberg to shoot this way (he doesn't here); the point is, you're not quite sure *\*what\** way he's going to shoot it. This is not the type of subject he's handled before, and the possibilities for cinematic mutations are incredible. Happily for all involved, Spielberg and Company (many of the Amazing Stories people appear in executive duties credits) are talented (at least Spielberg is), and he has come out with a very pleasing and beautiful creature indeed. The film reminds me of a cross between To Kill A Mockingbird and Gone With the Wind without

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the Epic Movie touches. Instead of tight shots in dark interiors, the majority of the scenes have the wide Southern landscape to shoot from, and there is a sense of freedom that belies the condition of many of the characters. Spielberg is not afraid to do a up-in-the-air boom shot now and then, something we've seen dozens of times in the fabulous space operas; here, I was surprised to find that it works well also. Even the interior shots have texture and light (although often smokey), and you have the feeling that you're watching an adaptation of an old family classics, except old family classics usually don't discuss prejudice and lesbianism much.

But while the cinematography keeps the train on track and running smoothly and more pleasantly than would be expected, it is the actors which power the engine. And power is the right word here, as I have seen few performances more powerful than Whoopie Goldberg's in the last year; this is especially surprising after seeing several of her comedy specials beforehand, for there is never even a hint to me that she could do this. She plays a woman so oppressed and abused and tortured that the audience probably dismisses any real will under the sympathetic but pitiful shell; but when she does bloom, she does it with a force of character which both blossoms and explodes, literally. If the id is

forged in an oven of misfortunes, than Ceilly's persona must therefore be the texture of diamonds, and Goldberg makes you believe it is. Very, very few people can place physical force in a stare or a hand held forward; but Ceilly, towards the end of the film gives the impression that Christopher Reeve in his blue-n-red jammies couldn't do better. The other characters do exactly what good characters do -- they fill in and expand the events surrounding the main character with style; the people here do this.

When looking at the script, though, the thing which made this film work for me (besides Goldberg) was the way that the conflict and drama and pain were balanced with comic character elements in each actor. It gives the film a flavor of Twain or Dickens (the latter in particular), in that the modern bleakness is not permeating every frame of the movie. This is a very tricky move, both on the part of the actor and the scriptwriter; if the buffoonery is too blatant or unrealistic, you lose realism and your dramatic edge; too little, and it looks sarcastic and cynical.

And most emphatically, The Color Purple is *\*not\** a downbeat or cynical movie. It has a character who (with some help from her friend) draws herself out of a hell NOT of her own making, against incredible (but quite common) ignorance and savagery. A lot of people are crying and cheering at this film's end. Made sense to me; I joined right in.

This review deserves longer, but I unhappily don't have the time. If you haven't read the book, I think you'll enjoy this film very much; if you have read the book, it'll depend how much of a stickler for details you are.

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Moriarty, aka Jeff Meyer

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Subject: REVIEW: Down and Out In Beverly Hills  
Path: bellcore!decvax!tektronix!uw-beaver!fluke!moriarty  
Date: Mon, 10-Feb-86 12:11:56 EST

I saw DOWN AND OUT IN BEVERLY HILLS almost immediately after seeing

HANNAH AND HER SISTERS, so perhaps I did not see this film with the appreciation (or the attention) it deserves. DOWN AND OUT IN BEVERLY HILLS is by Paul Mazursky, known most recently for his excellent film MOSCOW ON THE HUDSON; while I do not find this film either as touching or as funny, it does have his fine eye for comic detail about Americans, and it does point out two different lifestyles which differ vastly (and not in a primarily economic manner, either). It opens with the fairly looney family of David (Richard Dreyfuss) Whiteman, a coat-hanger millionaire and his slightly off-balance family who live in Beverly Hills. One day Jerry (Nick Nolte), a bum who has lost his dog and his will to live at the same time, tries to drown himself in David's pool. David saves him from drowning, and is so taken in with what he did that he invites Jerry to stay with them, against the strident protests of his wife (Bette Midler). What follows is the effect Jerry's devil-may-care attitude has on the rest of the family; his advice helps several family members in some ways, but screws up other members in other cases. He is a person who will not be constrained by responsibility, which allows him to advise people over-burdened with it; on the other hand, without those who \*do\* deal with responsibility, he'd be out on the streets again, and David, as the breadwinner, begins to become jealous at the esteem others have for Jerry while he is still holding down his position.

I did laugh some through this film, but not as much as I had expected to, given reactions from friends and family and from reviews. Almost all the actors are good here (the Whiteman's dog, Maurice, is amazing), and the characters quite likeable (Midler improves a lot after she loosens up); and the script has some very good points in it. Rather than satarizing the Beverly Hills lifestyle to the hilt, as BEVERLY HILLS COP does, this movie makes it look both odd and appealing at the same time, like almost any community portrayed in a screwball comedy. But much of the humor is low-key, and you feel like it's not hitting you hard due to some message Mazursky is trying to bring across. I laughed a few times at this film, but not all that often, and came away generally giving it a C-/D+. If you have a choice between DOWN AND OUT IN BEVERLY HILLS and HANNAH AND HER SISTERS, the clear choice, I think, is Woody Allen's new film. Mazursky does a good job, and I would have probably enjoyed this more during the Christmas dearth of quality.

Moriarty, aka Jeff Meyer

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Subject: REVIEW: The Trip to Bountiful  
Path: bellcore!decvax!tektronix!uw-beaver!fluke!moriarty  
Date: Mon, 10-Feb-86 12:02:11 EST

[I wrote to my folks about this movie, and think that I summed up my reactions to the movie there. A portion of the letter is below.]

Dear Mom (Dad can read over your shoulder if he wishes),

Know I just wrote last week, but I (just now) got back from seeing a preview showing of "The Trip to Bountiful"; and like a few other films I've seen, it made me think a lot after I got out of the theatre and was walking home. Wanted to talk it out, as it has generated a few ideas in my mind (no applause, just throw money). First of all, I think you and Dad will enjoy it a lot; I think you will really enjoy it, as many of the characters in it remind me of Iowa and the times we've gone back, or I've gone back alone. It's about a elderly woman (Geraldine Page) who runs away from living with her son and her domineering daughter-in-law, to go back and visit Bountiful, a town on the Gulf Coast of Texas where she and her son grew up. The opening credits show a young woman and her son running through fields of flowers and reeds at night; it is to Page's (and the director's) credit that we can see the essence of that girlish, laughing spirit fifty or sixty years later, still living (though somewhat dampened) in Page's character.

But the texture of the film is what I noticed the most, and what I wanted to write to you about. There are small-town people, and the friendliness I remember (and sometimes still find) on Greyhound busses. It's one of those things where the photography, and the locations, bring back memories that I had forgotten (hmm, poor wording there). The bus trip, and the fields, and the way the sun hits grass and cotton -- those are the things that register the most, though the characters, actors, and dialogue are very good too (Horton Foote, who wrote the screenplay for Tender Mercies, did this, and his dialogue always seems to strike a resonant tone in me). I don't see sunlight like that much up here; by the time I leave from work, the sun only bounces off the windshields of the cars coming north on I-5, and looking on the side of the roads yields, at best, small forests of pine trees and, at worst, Levitz Furniture Clearing Houses. I remember a lot about the suburbs, too, but I've yet to see a film that could generate romantic nostalgia about them.

But I guess some of this film brought back some of the feelings about those day trips to Fort Dodge; the times when we used to go out to (what I think was) Grandpa Harry's farm, or his folk's; where we'd walk back, past the farm that's there now, past the cows and through the fence, to where the old, broken-down, deserted house was. I don't know whose it was -- his or his parents or his brother's -- because, at that age, I guess I wasn't too interested. I wanted to be reading or watching TV or playing miniature golf or something else. But, luckily, some of those days sank in; some of them sat deep enough to be pulled out and lit up

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by this film. I don't think everyone in the theatre liked it -- there were some snickers towards the end -- but I think for people like you and Dad and, to a point, I, this is the kind of film that brings out much of the feelings and the memories generated by the country. Not nostalgia -- it doesn't make you want to live in the past; and while the city doesn't thrill me in many respects, it has things like lots of films and book stores and privacy which I have gotten to take for granted, and that a small town would not provide. But it does make you want to remember, to look back and have something to point to and have a memory of.

Hope that you are well, work is low-stress (hear, hear), and that Dad is enjoying himself in the Gulf refuges and that he's spotted a few species that he hasn't marked off in the book. Say hello to him from me when you see him.

Jeff

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Subject: REVIEW: Hannah and Her Sisters (some spoilers)  
Path: bellcore!decvax!tektronix!uw-beaver!fluke!moriarty  
Date: Mon, 10-Feb-86 12:06:59 EST

How much did I like HANNAH AND HER SISTERS? Let me count the ways...  
In fact, let me start out what little I \*didn't\* like about this film.

...

Well. Let me instead guess at what \*others\* may not like about this film. If you're looking for a surprising and original plot, or something more than human drama about the human comedy, I'm afraid you're out of luck. Woody Allen is once again taking a close look at that select breed of New York yuppie that lives in so many of his films; and the creatures he studies basically have no real problems like starvation, war, being sent to prison, injustice, etc.; i.e. they're like the majority of us, except they still talk and act like they were in college (a gifted college, to be sure). And this includes their romantic life and relations...

OK, so let's say that you're not particularly turned on by watching some of the most realistic (very often, uncomfortably realistic) characterizations of the year (and probably the decade). Should you skip it? Decidedly not. Definitely not. Absolutely not! For you'd be missing some of the funniest dialogue and best satire I've seen in ages. I'm going back next weekend with a pad and pencil just to write down quotes for my sign-off list; I figure I'll get 10 or 15 -- and I'm being PICKY, people! Stuff that was so funny that the audience's laughter drowned out the next couple of lines. Add to that his deft eye for needling the New York and Yuppie lifestyle, and even the most cynical person will love the first three-quarters of this film.

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That, of course, is only one side of it; the most important, or, I should say, the most beautiful thing about this film, is the way Allen firsts deliniates, and then fleshes in, his characters; how he gives them words and reactions which seem familiar and normal and very solid, despite the different world in which these people exist; and, MOST OF ALL, the things he says (at least to me) at the end of this film. He doesn't make it particularly difficult to assimilate, though some may see the ending as a standard comedic happy conclusion; but (and I have to give Roger Ebert credit here) this film tends to be a re-affirmation of life, saying pretty much that even if there is no God, no after-life, no re-incarnation, and that this is all there is -- Life's worth it. I know some of you will say "Of course Life's worth it to the people in this film! They've all got money and talent and jobs and good looks (mostly) and too much education and great dialogue! If I had Barbera Hershey in a hotel room, Life would look good to me, too! These people don't have \*troubles\*!" Yup. And I'll bet the same could be said (sans the great dialogue) about 99.9% of the people on the net. Which may be something to ponder if you're thinking of seeing this film.

OK, got past what I saw in the spirit of the film. The acting. Nobody puts in a poor or mediocre or even good performance. Everyone is excellent. Mia Farrow and Michael Caine and Barbera Hershey and Barbera Weir (that spelled right?) are to be savored. Woody Allen provides comic relief in the first half of the film, but goes on to probably the most memorable moments of the film, sitting in a theatre, watching the Marx Brothers. And then there are all the smaller roles, fine-tuned to distinction; the characters at Allen's character's (a Lorne Michaels

TV-producer type of something resembling Saturday Night Live) job; Max Von Sydow (who has lines that will live forever in movie trivia contests); Lloyd Nolan and ?, playing Hannah's parents; and Tony Roberts in an uncredited role, who appears in Allen films almost like a tailsman. A fine cast doing fine work.

But the lion's share of the credit (though there is much to go around) has to go to Allen, for his script and his dialogue and his directing and his acting. In essence, I think this is a film for romantics, romantics who are having a tough time, what with age or cynicism or disillusion or too much philosophy or a combination of the above. It does something that few films do, re-affirming that romanticism; but even better, it gives it a new foundation to build on, a way to look back and redefine why life's got more to it than beer commercial gusto; in short, it celebrates about the best thing this world has to offer us.

I hope you see this film. I think you will like it.

Moriarty, aka Jeff Meyer