

Lincroft-Holmdel Science Fiction Club
Club Notice - 3/19/86 -- Vol. 4, No. 35

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.

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_T_O_P_I_C

- 04/02 LZ: THE STARS MY DESTINATION by Alfred Bester (Psionics)
04/09 HO: AT THE MOUNTAINS OF MADNESS by H. P. Lovecraft
04/23 LZ: ORION SHALL RISE by Poul Anderson (Societal Reconstruction)
04/30 HO: ?
05/14 LZ: THE WEREWOLF PRINCIPLE by Clifford Simak (Biological Constructs)
05/21 HO: ?
06/04 LZ: THIS PERFECT DAY by Ira Levin ("Utopias")
06/11 HO: ?
06/25 LZ: STAR GUARD by Andre Norton (Humans as underdogs)
07/16 LZ: SHADRACH IN THE FURNACE by Robert Silverberg (Ethics)
08/06 LZ: TUNNEL IN THE SKY by Robert Heinlein (Faster-Than-Light Travel)

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. Come to the Lincroft chapter's next meeting, on Wednesday, April 2, when discussion will center around "Psionics in Science Fiction." We'll talk about books and stories that involve unusual mental abilities, such as teleportation, telepathy, and telekinesis. One such book is our subject book -- Alfred Bester's THE STARS MY DESTINATION.

What if humankind learns how to teleport (with more skillful teleporters able to travel thousands of miles), and how to read minds (with the most adept telepaths going into either law enforcement or crime)? Gulliver Foyle is a man obsessed with revenge. With animal cunning and superior teleporting ability, he sets out to commit the perfect murder, despite the technological and parapsychological difficulties. THE STARS MY DESTINATION is a Great Book in my opinion -- lots of classic "sense of wonder," well-written characterization, a nicely detailed picture of the

future, and even some "pictures." That's not the only book that deals with our theme: also to be considered might be Stephen King's FIRESTARTER, James Hogan's THE CODE OF THE LIFEMAKER, A. E. Van Vogt's SLAN, Philip K. Dick's UBIK (where telepaths are used for industrial espionage!), or Theodore Sturgeon's classic MORE THAN HUMAN. [-Rob]

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2. Don't forget folks--Hugo nomination deadline is April 1! [-ecl]

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

GALAPAGOS by Kurt Vonnegut
Delacorte Press, 1985, \$16.95.
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper

I really enjoyed this book. The fact that I read it in the Galapagos has nothing to do with it. :-)

G_a_l_a_p_a_g_o_s is the story of the "beginning of the human race" in 1986, told a million years in the future by a ghost who has seen it all. It starts in Guayaquil, Ecuador's major port and largest city. The B_a_h_i_a_d_e_D_a_r_w_i_n is about to set sail on "The Nature Cruise of the Century" to the Galapagos Islands. Originally scheduled to carry the great (or at least the famous) personages of our time, it has been reduced by financial crisis, economic collapse, and threats of war to carrying ten passengers and a captain to fulfill their destiny as the ancestors of the "human race." The "human race" in this book is a race of fur-covered seal-like descendents of what we think of as the human race (which the narrator refers to as the "big-brains").

The picture of Guayaquil gradually sinking into chaos as the world

situation degenerates is well drawn. Vonnegut has traveled to Guayaquil and the Galapagos and it shows. (One minor quibble--the Galapagos has no vampire finches such as he describes. On islands populated mostly by birds and reptiles, what would they feed off? Vonnegut is certainly allowed this literary license; I just feel obliged to point out that it i_s literary license.)

Anyway, our cast of characters includes a drunken captain, a middle-aged widow, a slick con artist, a Japanese couple, a millionaire, his daughter and her seeing-eye dog, and six Kanka-Bono girls who speak no English or Spanish. How they come together and how they produce "the human race" is reminiscent of Stapledon's L_a_s_t_a_n_d_F_i_r_s_t_M_e_n, though considerably shorter. (I realize I have listed more than the ten passengers I mentioned earlier. They don't all make it to the ship; Vonnegut tells you this from the start.) The device of the first-person ghostly narrator has an interesting effect in that, although the attitude of the narrator is clear, Vonnegut's opinions are not so clear. Does he believe (as the narrator does) that the "big-brains" were stupid and useless and an evolutionary dead-end? Or does he have the narrator present these ideas in such a manner that the reader is supposed to see how wrong they are? How you interpret G_a_l_a_p_a_g_o_s will depend in large part on how you perceive mankind, technology, and progress. Read it and decide for yourself.

Mercury Capsules - March 19, 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 nv!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 W_o_n_d_e_r'_s_C_h_i_l_d: novel, Jack Williamson, 1984. This rather quirky autobiography has a lot going for it. For one thing, it's unselfconscious; Williamson doesn't suffer from the ego one sees in (for example) Asimov's I_n_M_e_m_o_r_y_Y_e_t_G_r_e_e_n. For another, Williamson has led a long and interesting life, though his experiences outside of science fiction are far more interesting than those within it. If Williamson seems to gloss over the specifics of writing this story or that--well, how well could you describe events and feelings after a gap of forty years or so?

W_o_n_d_e_r'_s_C_h_i_l_d won the Hugo as Best Non-Fiction Book of 1984. Some of that might have been due to an urge to honor someone who may very well be science fiction's oldest living author (I can think of no living science fiction author published before Williamson), but don't let that put you off. W_o_n_d_e_r'_s_C_h_i_l_d is well worth reading. novel, Fred Saberhagen, 1986.

Evelyn C Leeper

+o T_h_e_F_r_a_n_k_e_n_s_t_e_i_n_P_a_p_e_r_s: novel, Fred Saberhagen, 1986. Saberhagen did such a wonderful job with his "Dracula" series (T_h_e_H_o_l_m_e_s-D_r_a_c_u_l_a_F_i_l_e, A_n_O_l_d_F_r_i_e_n_d_o_f_t_h_e_F_a_m_i_l_y, T_h_o_r_n, and D_o_m_i_n_i_o_n, as well as T_h_e_D_r_a_c_u_l_a_T_a_p_e) that I was eagerly looking forward to this novel. What a disappointment!

Told in the dual first-person (half by Benjamin Franklin's son, half by the monster), it suffers from the division of point-of-view. Had the monster told the entire tale it might have been better. The addition of Franklin seems to be more so that famous personages can be discussed than for any real dramatic reason. And the denouement is both predictable and disappointing. read Saberhagen's "Dracula" books, but skip this one.

Evelyn C Leeper

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Subject: SF Magazine summary
Path: mtuxo!houxm!ihnp4!ltuxa!we53!wucs!slu70!guy
Date: Tue, 11-Mar-86 10:08:01 EST

Enclosed is a lightly edited and very belated summary of the responses I received to my request for information on SF magazines. Thanks to all who replied.

Guy M. Smith

I have been subscribing to STARLOG since its beginning. They are very current-media oriented. They feature articles and news from SF and all its sub-genres from fantasy to spy movies.
Jim Deacon

I have been getting Analog and Fantasy and Science Fiction for nearly 20 years. F&SF is much more literate, as a rule, and more stylistically experimental, while Analog is hard science almost all the way. I find that a really good Analog story (one every several issues) hits closer to home for me than almost all F&SF stories, while the average F&SF story is more readable. Analog's politics tend to be more conservative, but the science in the stories seldom grates against reality. F&SF includes Isaac Asimov's science column every month, while Analog has a "science fact" article about something frontier, be it astronomy, physics, psi, or anything. F&SF used to have good cartoons by Gahan Wilson, but he left, and they have usually unfunny cartoons now. Analog has thoughtful editorials, but the authors are sort of anonymous (except for the one which is featured in that month's "Biolog"), while F&SF usually has a 2-sentence blurb at the beginning of each story with a piece of information. On the whole, I find that when I need to relax, I can always settle down with one of these magazines (though F&SF tends to get read faster than Analog), even when I don't feel like getting into an SF novel.

There is seldom any reference to the current magazines in sf-lovers; maybe a review of each issue with capsule subject (NOT plot) descriptions could be posted.

-Doug Mink, aging hippy astronomer

I used to read Fantasy & Science Fiction but over the last couple of years the magazine has gone to too many "ghost" stories for my taste. I switched over to Analog and love it!

David Purks

I currently subscribe to both Analog and Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine. Analog runs science fact articles and tends toward hard SF. I have a feeling that they are sometimes a little desperate for material, as in order to remain completely in the realm of hard SF, they have to take some pretty bad stories. When they run a good one, though, it's a doozy. On the whole, their record has been pretty good, with only four or five of what I would consider absolute clinkers over the four years or so in which I've subscribed. Asimov's publishes hard, medium, and soft SF, and sometimes verges on fantasy and mainstream. Their interest is in the quality story, and the editor does not limit the stories to one particular sub-genre of SF. As a result, the stories are of overall better quality than those in Analog. I have also subscribed to Asimov's for about four years, and have enjoyed it tremendously.

If you only have funds in the budget for one of these, I'd recommend Asimov's for its overall higher story quality, as long as you're not limited to one "flavor" of SF.

Mary Shurtleff decvax!ittatc!bunker!bunkerb!mary

Okay, I'll bite. I read two SF magazines - Asimov's and Analog. I can demonstrate which I prefer easily; Asimov's is read within three days of its receipt, but I'm usually a month or two behind on Analogs.

Asimov's contains a much broader range of stories. Please note, by the way, that Asimov's has just switched editors from Shawna McCarthy (sp?) to Gardner Dozois, and I've only seen one Dozois issue. Analog tends a lot more toward 'hard' high tech sf. Fantasy stories show up in Asimov's, but rarely in Analog.

I enjoy them both, but if I was going to read only one, it would definitely be Asimov's.

Karl M. Owen

My husband has a preference for *Analog* -- the stories are more into

'hard Science Fiction', and he feels the quality is generally better than *Asimov's* and *Fantasy and Science Fiction*.

Barb

I read Analog and Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine. Analog's personality has remained very stable over the years. The magazines contents are generally "hard science fiction," with not much literary or artistic ambition beyond that of telling a story briskly and clearly. IASFM's stories are sometimes "fantasy," are more likely than Analog to have female protagonists, and are more likely than Analog to end tragically.

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IASFM's quality is more variable; sometimes great, sometimes a bummer. Analog is relatively predictable, and if you have liked it before you will probably like it now. If not, not. -- Christopher J. Henrich

Subject: Spider Robinson's NIGHT OF POWER
Path: bellcore!decvax!decwrl!sun!idi!styx!mcb
Date: Thu, 13-Mar-86 02:32:37 EST

Robinson, Spider. NIGHT OF POWER. (Berkley, January 1986, pb, 287 pp., \$2.95. ISBN 0-425-008475-2.)

Before discussing the merits of Mr. Robinson's latest novel, I find it necessary to disclose that I do in fact believe in Hell, and, in particular, I believe that there is a place in Hell where the temperature is kept at an exquisitely painful degree and where demons laugh with glee while torturing those confined there. This is the place reserved for the people that design paperback book jackets and write the cover blurbs.

The Berkley cover for NIGHT OF POWER shows three urban terrorist-punks, presumably white, one with a hockey mask, one with a Mohawk, and one with merely a menacing expression, wielding various weapons in front of a burning suspension bridge. The teaser reads, "A FAMILY IS TRAPPED IN A CITY'S HOLOCAUST!"

No, Spider Robinson hasn't written the sequel to ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK. The front cover teaser (and its back cover companion, "NEW YORK IS BURNING!") are both textually incorrect. I have mentioned the excesses of cover blurbists to both authors and publishers, both of whom seem to mumble and shuffle their feet uncomfortably when the subject is broached. I would have hoped that Mr. Robinson was sufficiently well-connected in the SF publishing industry by now to insist on a contractual right of approval of the pb cover (I haven't seen the Baen hardcover jacket; perhaps someone could describe it?). Apparently he isn't, or else it's his idea of a good joke.

Anyway, this is Robinson's race relations novel, a subject that seemed to drop out of both SF and mainstream literature around 1970 or so. Each of us has had since about 1966 to form our own opinions on the subject, so there's little point in attempting to dissect Robinson's (or his protagonists') precise ideology of racial relations. It will suffice to say that they are well thought-out, interesting, and provocative, regardless of whether you agree or disagree.

NIGHT OF POWER is a Heinleinian novel, much in the tradition of THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS or IF THIS GOES ON. It is a novel of ideas and politics; the characters are *utterly* competent like Heinlein's but are somehow not as interesting as the usual Robinson cast. (With the exception of Jennifer, a precocious 13-year old, and her bodyguard and

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friend, Jose.) The plot follows the fairly routine path of Ordinary Family Gets Mixed up in Major Events. (The main characters, parents of the 13-year old, are of course an interracial couple, which I suppose is the Lowest Common Denominator of race relations.) Throughout the book, Robinson shows he can discuss political issues without being didactic or boring. Along the way are lots and lots of observations on the nature of cities, methods of self-defense, forms of government, popular music, and a reasonable number of puns.

Robinson is probably getting tired of being compared with Heinlein; NIGHT OF POWER certainly will not cause anyone to stop.

This isn't Spider Robinson's best book, but it isn't his worst, and it's still one of the better books I've read this last year. Race is a tremendously difficult subject to deal with in fiction without being

strident or preachy; Robinson is about 90% successful in this regard. I know that many of us thought that racial tension in this country magically ended with the 1960s; NIGHT OF POWER may convince you otherwise whatever your views on the subject.

Michael C. Berch