

Lincroft-Holmdel Science Fiction Club  
Club Notice - 4/4/84 -- Vol. 2, No. 40

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

Unless otherwise stated, all Lincroft meetings are on Wednesdays  
in LZ 3A-206 (HO meetings temporarily suspended) at noon.

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>
04/18	DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS by John Wyndham
05/08	Video meeting: LAST MAN ON EARTH pt. 1
05/09	Video meeting: LAST MAN ON EARTH pt. 2
05/30	1984 by George Orwell

LZ's library and librarian Lance Larsen (576-2668) are in LZ 3C-219.  
Mark Leeper (576-2571) is chairperson. HO's library and librarian  
Mike Lukacs (949-4043) are in HO 4B-510. John Jetzt (577-5316) is  
HO-chairperson.

1. There is no science fiction meeting to announce for next week  
and no film showing at my house. There have been no submissions to  
the notice by people I like to rag on and no books have been  
submitted to the library. There is no news from the Holmdel  
Oatmeal Club and the Hacky Sack people seem to have stowed it away  
until the weather gets better. Details at eleven.

Mark Leeper  
LZ 3E-215 x2571  
hocse!lznv!mrl  
houxa!mhtsa!lznv!mrl  
hogpd!lznv!mrl

## Nebula Award Nominations

### NOVEL

- Against Infinity by Gregory Benford
- Startide Rising by David Brin
- Tea with the Black Dragon by R. A. MacAvoy
- The Void Captain's Tale by Norman Spinrad
- Lyonesse by Jack Vance

### NOVELLA

- "Hardfought" by Greg Bear (2/83 IASFM)
- "The Gospel According to Gamaliel Crucis (or, the Astrogator's Testimony)" by Michael Bishop (11/83 IASFM)
- "Her Habiline Husband" by Michael Bishop (Universe 12)
- "Esterhazy and the Autogondola-Invention" by Avram Davidson (11/83 AMAZING)
- "Transit" by Vonda N. McIntyre (10/83 IASFM)
- "Homefaring" by Robert Silverberg (11/83 AMAZING)

### NOVELETTE

- "Blood Music" by Greg Bear (6/83 ANALOG)
- "Blind Shemmy" by Jack Dann (4/83 OMNI)
- "The Monkey Treatment" by George R. R. Martin (7/83 F&SF)
- "Black Air" by Kin Stanley Robinson (3/83 F&SF)
- "Cicada Queen" by Bruce Sterling (Universe 13)
- "Slow Birds" by Ian Watson (6/83 F&SF)
- "The Sidon in the Mirror" by Connie Willis

### SHORT STORY

- "The Peacemaker" by Gardner Dozois (8/83 IASFM)
- "Her Furry Face" by Leigh Kennedy (Mid-Dec/83 IASFM)
- "Cryptic" by Jack McDevitt (4/83 IASFM)
- "Ghost Town" by Chad Oliver (Mid-Sep/83 IASFM)
- "The Geometry of Narrative" by Hilbert Schenck (8/83 ANALOG)
- "Wong's Lost & Found Emporium" by William F. Wu (5/83 AMAZING)

Mercury Capsules - April 4, 1984

"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 mhmtsa!lznv!psc, houxalmhmtsa!lznv!psc, or hocse!lznv!psc from the Holmdel Computer Center, or nv!psc from the Lincroft Computer Center. If that's impossible, I'm at LZ 1D-212, 576-2374.

+ "The Marching Morons": short story, C M Kornbluth. Reprinted in The Science Fiction Hall of Fame, volume 2A, The Best of C M Kornbluth, and elsewhere.

In "The Marching Morons," Kornbluth uses the meaningless repetition of the catch phrase, "Would you buy it for a quarter?" as a symbol of the decline in intelligence of the general population (the average IQ is 45, according to one character). When presidential candidates use phrases like "Where's the beef?" it's time to start worrying!

Evelyn C Leeper

+ The Practice Effect: novel, David Brin.

Dennis Nuel is a physics graduate student studying the zievatronic effect. The zievatronic effect is, well, never mind, it's something that lets you travel between alternate universes, just like FTL drive lets you travel between star systems in real-time. Someone has built a working zievatron, but some problems have developed with the return mechanism of the device and Dennis goes through to the alternate world they have discovered in an attempt to fix it. Needless to say, he gets stranded. Needless to say, the novel is about how he copes.

Flasteria (as the other world is known) has a feudal society, with some twists. The twists are part of what makes the novel interesting, so I won't give them away here. While the book moves well, not all the reader's questions are sufficiently answered in the end (which is in itself a machina ex dei). In spite of the weak ending, though, the book is well worth reading.

One slip: Nuel uses a compass to take his bearings on Flasteria--why does anyone think that a compass would work on a planet other than Earth (i.e., why do they think that Flasteria has a magnetic north)?

Evelyn C Leeper

+ The Practice Effect: novel, David Brin.

If you're looking for a silly, reasonably well written SF novel, maybe you should try this one. On the other hand, if you're looking for another story in the Uplift series, or David Brin at his best, you'll have to wait.

The characters are flat, but the clash between technology and not-technology is fun. The explanations of why the world works are ludicrous; the world is interesting. (If you want someone to tell you what takes the character seventy-two pages to find out, go read the Net.) Any resemblance between The Practice Effect and The Warlock In Spite Of Himself has been noticed by a lot of people.

Paul S R Chisholm

+ The Planiverse: book, A K Dewdney.

Once upon a time, a computer science professor named Alexander Keewatin Dewdney read some books about two dimensional worlds: Abbott's Flatland, Hinton's An Episode of Flatland, and Burger's Sphereland. He was intrigued, and decided to try his hand at it. Alas, he wrote it as an almost-novel; a simulation of a two dimensional world is so good, it magically becomes a camera on a "real" two dimensional world. This leads to some rather boring scenes of non-action in our world, and a truly dreadful subtitle ("Computer Contact with a Two Dimensional World").

What is here is a neat collection of thoughts on how a two dimensional world could work. The book's full of illustrations of creatures and machines; good stuff. It's not as philosophically interesting as its predecessors, but it's kind of fun. (See also last week's reviews on the Net. P.S.: I saw it in the computer books section, of all places.)

Paul S R Chisholm

+ Universe 13: anthology, edited by Terry Carr. Recommended by Locus; all stories eligible for the 1984 Hugo awards. See below.

+ "Her Habiline Husband": story, Michael Bishop. Appeared in Universe 13; Nebula nominee.

This story is similar to "Her Furry Face" in subject, but it's far better. It's the tale of an artist, her ex husband (who runs a gourmet restaurant in a small town in Georgia), a scientist, a whole variety of rednecks, and one Homo Habilias (I think that's the way it's spelled). This is the kind of story that works very well or not at all. It works very well.

Paul S R Chisholm

+ "The Width of the World": story, Ian Watson. Appeared in Universe 13.

A map maker, who wants to make room for fantasy worlds in his company's new computer-based maps, provides the point of view for this story. In a world far too crowded and small for comfort ("breakfast in New York, second breakfast in London"), something decides to suspend the relationship of map and territory. When I was finished reading, I wasn't sure if I should be hopeful or scared. Good stuff.

Paul S R Chisholm

+ "Stone Eggs": story, Kim Stanley Robinson. Appeared in Universe 13.

A passenger on a bus takes a nap at a roadside tourist trap, and when he wakes up, things are very, very different. This story has some interesting things to say about what it means to be human, but it was hard for me to believe what was happening.

Paul S R Chisholm

+ "The Widow and The Body Sitter": story, Bill Bickel. Appeared in Universe 13.

The most conventional story of the book, which isn't saying a whole lot. This may be part of a series, where a technological breakthrough allows people to send their minds into other people's brains. A "body sitter" projects his or her mind into a client's disease-ridden body, giving the client a rest from his or her ills, and not incidentally keeping the sick body alive. (What keeps the body sitter's body alive? I dunno, I think it's in there somewhere.)

This is a stupendous concept, treated rather trivially. That's why I hope it's just one of many stories exploring this idea.

Paul S R Chisholm

+ "The Taylorsville Reconstruction": story, Lucius Shepard. Appeared in Universe 13.

It makes sense that if an intelligence agency found someone with psionic powers, and took him somewhere to test him as a weapon before they knew much about what exactly he did, they'd run into some surprises. In this story, the testing ground is a small backwater Southern town, and boy do the dumb Yankees underestimate the Rebels.

Paul S R Chisholm

+ "A Way Back": story, Leanne Frahm. Appeared in Universe 13.

No, of course you didn't see a dinosaur. This isn't some lost corner of the world, this is Australia. If there were dinosaurs wandering about, you'd see articles about it in the newspapers, and there aren't any. Well, not any reliable ones. Well, there weren't last week.

I'm being unfair to this story - the difference between dinosaurs and the ghosts of dinosaurs is an important one, and a critical part of the story. But the characters were so spooked (or so unaffected) that it was hard to get into the story. My second least favorite story in the book.

Paul S R Chisholm

+ "Cicada Queen": story, Bruce Sterling. Appeared in Universe 13; Nebula nominee.

Some people think Bruce Sterling's fiction is the best thing since sliced yogurt. I've never been too happy with "The Swarm" or "Spider Rose", and I didn't like "Cicada Queen", either. This one takes place in our solar system, with only one alien (the title character). To me, "Cicada Queen" helped prove that you can write about a strange civilization very different than our own, but it make not make much sense to anyone outside that fictional society. Lots of interesting detail, but it never seems to come together. My least favorite story in the book.

Paul S R Chisholm

+ Superluminal: novel, Vonda K McIntyre. Recommended by Locus; eligible for the 1984 Hugo award.

The first paragraph of the book is, "She gave up her heart willingly." The next begins, "After the operation . . ."

". . . lots of interesting detail, but it never seems to come together." This about pilots who travel through sixth dimensional space. (I wonder what Yendred, the hero of The Planiverse, would think of that!) Machines can do the same thing, so I didn't understand why pilots were considered so important. I also didn't understand why the pilots (who have had their hearts removed, and must control all their bodily functions consciously) got so out of whack when near someone with a pulse. I also didn't understand how the protagonist (who doesn't show up till about chapter four) did any of the things he did. I'm not even sure what happened at the end. (Well, it was quarter of two in the morning, so maybe that's not McIntyre's fault.)

I loved "Of Mist, and Grass, and Sand", but I had the same trouble with Dreamsnake: a mob of uncontrolled detail destroying any unity the story might have. I like her short fiction, though.

Paul S R Chisholm

+ Fire and Ice: film, from Ralph Bakshi and Frank Frazetta.

This film is a treatment of one of Ralph Bakshi's more complex themes, that of good fighting against evil. (His less complex theme is, of course, sex.) With characteristic Bakshi subtlety the bad guys bash the good guys and the good guys finally get their act together and pulverize the bad guys. In Wizards, the battle is resolved when it turns out the good guys can use technology just as ruthlessly as the bad guys, but it is okay because they are good guys. [If you buy that one, you must love Reagan's Central American policy.] In this one for no good reason on of the characters is impervious to magic. Well, that's not quite true--ending the film is one really good reason. An okay 81 minutes of mediocre animation of Frazetta paintings provided you weren't expecting Citizen Kane. Strictly thud and blunder school.

Mark R Leeper

+ Splash: film, directed by Ron Howard.

After reading Mark's review, I was left with a question: is he recommending the film? Since I'd already seen it and thought it was one of the most ENTERTAINING films of the year, I'd hate to have someone miss it because of his review.

Yes, its not a "Something Wicked..."; Canterbury Tales aren't Poe either. We aren't asked to think about what's going on or to concentrate on every scene so as not to miss something important; we're just entertained! My 10 year old also loved it, although some of the jokes (presumably) went over his head. But one word of caution--don't go to an afternoon matinee because the giggling teenyboppers will spoil some of the fun.

Doug Marsh

+ "Call Him Lord": short story, Gordon R Dickson.

\*\*\*\*\*SPOILER\*\*\*\*\*

Mild disagreement about that Dickson story:

I liked it, and thought that the ending was sufficiently non-stereotypical and believable to merit some applause. Dickson didn't condemn the boy for not being macho; Dickson condemned him for being, in essence, a bully -- all bluster and no backbone. Emperors must maintain a higher ethical standard than the common folk, since the actions of the ruler have much more dramatic and wide-ranging effects than do the actions of a "peasant." I tend to agree with Dickson; if the prince hasn't reached that high ethical level by the time he is eligible for that test, then he'll never reach it and hence should never take the throne. Human ambition being what it is, the prince would never tolerate being denied the throne, and so would do some state-weakening plotting that might as well be avoided by killing him now.

Rob Mitchell

+ "Call Him Lord": short story, Gordon R Dickson.

\*\*\*\*\*SPOILER\*\*\*\*\*

In "Call Him Lord", the emperor asks what his son did that caused him to fail. Whom did he hurt? Kyle says it is NOT what the boy did and lists some of the boy's actions but said the reason for rejection was "nothing he did to anyone else. It was only a fault against himself." And what was that fault? "He was a coward." Kyle is NOT condemning the boy for being a bully. Being a bully has is different from being a coward. Cowardice is a lack of courage. Being a bully has nothing to do with courage or lack thereof. Kyle is complaining not that the boy was willing to attack someone weaker but that he lacked the courage to fight someone bigger; instead he wanted to use the gun to avoid fighting. I would have been much happier with the story if Kyle had been concerned with the boy's ethics instead of specifically denying that it was the boy's ethics. The idea of the story, like something out of a cheap western, is that the only crime that a man can commit is in not standing up to the showdown. Frankly, Kyle's idea of what makes a good emperor just doesn't thrill me. Can you take another look at the end of the story and tell me if Dickson isn't specifically denying your interpretation?

Mark R Leeper

+ "Call Him Lord": short story, Gordon R Dickson.

OK, I'll recheck the story. My initial response was based on my memory of my most-recent reading, which was about a year ago.

Rob Mitchell

Gemini Capsules - March 30, 1984

"Gemini Capsules": SF review column, edited by Rob Mitchell. Appears in the "Lincroft-Holmdel SF Club Notice".

A medium for quick reviews of anything of interest in the worlds of science fiction, although the gimmick will be to relate pairs of interesting anything's. Unlike other columns, I'll pass along even the slanderous and scatological comments I receive. You can reach out and touch me at 576-6106, at LZ 1B-306, or via hogpd!jrtr.

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+ Latest of a Series: Gods of Riverworld, by Philip Jose Farmer, and Valentine Pontifex, by Robert Silverberg. One near-miss, and one hit, in that order. Farmer seems to be suffering from a mild form of "Herbert's Syndrome" -- the latest Riverworld book doesn't really give the reader any greater appreciation for the Ethicals, the Riverworld project, or even Loga's motivations. This book starts a few weeks after the last book ended; Burton et.al. are still in the mountain and are trying to decide what to do next. We see Loga get killed, and 95% of the book then deals with the way the survivors handle the god-like (hence the book's title) power that the Computer provides. I didn't like Farmer's style of continually telling you one thing, then several chapters later finding out that you were being intentionally misled, and then found out still later that you were right the first time (sort of). Sure, misdirection is a time-honored technique to maintain suspense, but Farmer abuses it. I did like the ending, though; if nothing else it implies that there will be no more Riverworld sequels.

Silverberg, on the other hand, has written a fitting capstone to the Majipoor trilogy. The first book, Lord Valentine's Castle, ended with a very unstable political situation between the Shapeshifters and the rest of Majipoor's inhabitants. The second book was essentially a collection of short stories that provided some background history while not advancing the "present" plot at all. In this, the third book, the instabilities and grudges left over from LVC come home to roost, as a long-range Shapeshifter plot to develop biological weapons bears fruit (what an organically mixed metaphor!). Diseased grain, viscious predators, and a host of other nasty things provoke political disintegration, starvation, and a host of other problems for Valentine and his protege from the first two books, Hissune. Although the denouement occurred a bit too suddenly for my tastes, in general this was a thoughtful and interesting novel; highly recommended.

R Mitchell

## THE ENTITY

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

It's a little hard for me to review The Entity without downrating it due to my own prejudices. I personally do not believe in supernatural phenomena and when a fairly interesting film about the supernatural claims to be true, my natural prejudice tells me that it is a cheap gimmick and the film should be downrated. It is also difficult not to think of this film as being strongly inspired by a film with a somewhat similar approach, Poltergeist. Checking the information I have on the film, I find it was copyrighted in 1981 and released in 1983. Poltergeist was released in 1982. That makes it more likely that the script of Poltergeist may have been influenced by the novel The Entity by Frank DeFelitta.

That confusion out of the way, let me move on to what the film is really about. Carla Moran (Barbara Hershey) is being repeatedly attacked and raped by an invisible being. At first her family and friends are incredulous but eventually the incubus--the film never uses the term but that is what he is--becomes indiscreet enough so that others see or feel him. Still, Carla's psychiatrist (Ron Silver) is convinced that the visitations are all due to Carla's mental aberrations. A chance meeting brings Carla in contact with some university parapsychologists. A battle of wills ensues between the psychiatrists and the parapsychologists until the latter set up a dangerous experiment to try to catch the incubus.

What makes this film interesting is that when faced with a supernatural evil, people try to examine it scientifically. Almost all films about the supernatural seem to feel if you are not a professor of folklore, a priest, or an old gypsy woman, you must be a complete incompetent in the field. Films that comes to mind that did not make this assumption are Five Million Years to Earth, Legend of Hell House, and Poltergeist. That puts The Entity in very good company--perhaps better than it deserves. However, the film is engrossing and tightly directed by Sidney Furie (Ipcress File, Lady Sings the Blues). While the first half of the film follows the well-trodden road of The Exorcist and a few dozen imitators, it does eventually take off. Catch it if it shows up on cable.

GREYSTOKE: THE LEGEND OF TARZAN, LORD OF THE APES  
A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Edgar Rice Burroughs wrote action stories. His best known action story is Tarzan of the Apes. It gave rise to a series of action films. Now Hugh Hudson brings to the screen a film touted as the most accurate screen adaptation ever made of Tarzan of the Apes. In many ways the first half of the film is accurate to the book< including the action. But when Tarzan is taken from the jungle to Scotland, things go disastrously wrong, not just for Tarzan, but also for the film's accuracy, its spirit of adventure, its pacing, and no less important, its audience. Hudson uses the film to portray--and also attack--the British upper crust. How accurate is it to the novel? Well, first, in the novel Tarzan goes to Baltimore, not Scotland. Next, anyone who can find a shred of social criticism in Burroughs's adventures for boys has as active an imagination as Burroughs himself had. And worst of all, once Tarzan gets to Scotland the film grinds to a halt in just precisely the way a Burroughs novel never would. The film turns into an actionless drawing room drama intended to show how callous and intolerant the upperclass can be.

Greystoke's first hour really seems like considerably less. Far more accurate to the novel than any Tarzan film since Elmo Lincoln made his Tarzan films in the silent era, Greystoke tells how John Clayton's parents are shipwrecked in West Africa. Clayton's mother, weakened by giving birth to him, succumbs to malaria and his father is killed by apes. A mother ape, always recognizable by sympathetic raised eyebrows, has lost her baby to some unknown disease and trades it for the odd white baby she finds. The child who will one day be called John Clayton (only the title calls him Tarzan) grows up a feral child very much like Mowgli in Kipling's Jungle Book. Until now, no film could tell the story of Tarzan's youth because of the impossible demands it would place on trained animal actors. With the help of Rick Baker, creator of very good ape makeup for many films, it was possible to do the story with actors instead of animals. The result makes the first hour an impressive achievement and makes the second hour a worse letdown by contrast.

When Tarzan goes to Scotland we suddenly have an entirely different film. The plot stops advancing and instead we see the interplay between Tarzan/John and his family's class. Instead of the rapid, excited cutting of the first half of the film, the camera languishes on John's senile grandfather (Ralph Richardson) explaining how John's father Jack won some sort of meaningless sport trophies. Even Richardson adds, "Quite silly, really." The editing frustrates the viewer in several scenes. In one, Tarzan reaches for a mechanical bird, thinking it to be real, but just as his hand touches it, the film cuts to the next scene. Oh, and a personal message to the director and the editor: When a dog in a scene stares directly into the camera the scene is ruined and must be reshot. Otherwise the audience is going to wonder why the dog is staring at them. Come on, guys, show a little professionalism!

This was a very good film for the first half. Had the film held off on bringing Tarzan to civilization until the last eighth of the story (the way the book does), the film would have been a winner. We might not have found out what the filmmakers thought of the British upper class, but we could have learned more about Tarzan. And he, after all, was supposed to be the subject of the film.