

THE ORANGE PULP

Orange Co. Science Fiction Club
10720 Westminster
Garden Grove, CA.
92643



EXT MEETING:
MAY 27TH 7:00PM

ISSUE #04

NEWSLETTER OF THE ORANGE COUNTY SCIENCE FICTION CLUB

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NEXT MEETING: May 27, 1987, at 7:00. At Fullerton Savings, 2400 East Chapman, Fullerton, a half mile West off the Orange Freeway.

A note of appreciation for the many cards, calls and home visits I received during my recent illness. It's always good to know one has friends who care.

Thanks,
Bill Hilburn

MAY 27th, MEETING

Club members Rose Secrest and Michael Peralta will discuss their article on the life and writing career of Walter M. Miller Jr.

JUNE 24th, MEETING

A presentation of Japanese animation by Jeff Roady.

JULY 29th, MEETING

Eric Gerds of DAG Productions offers a program of filking.

CLASSIFIED AD

Are there any Doctor Who fans out there??? If there are, see me at the meeting in May.

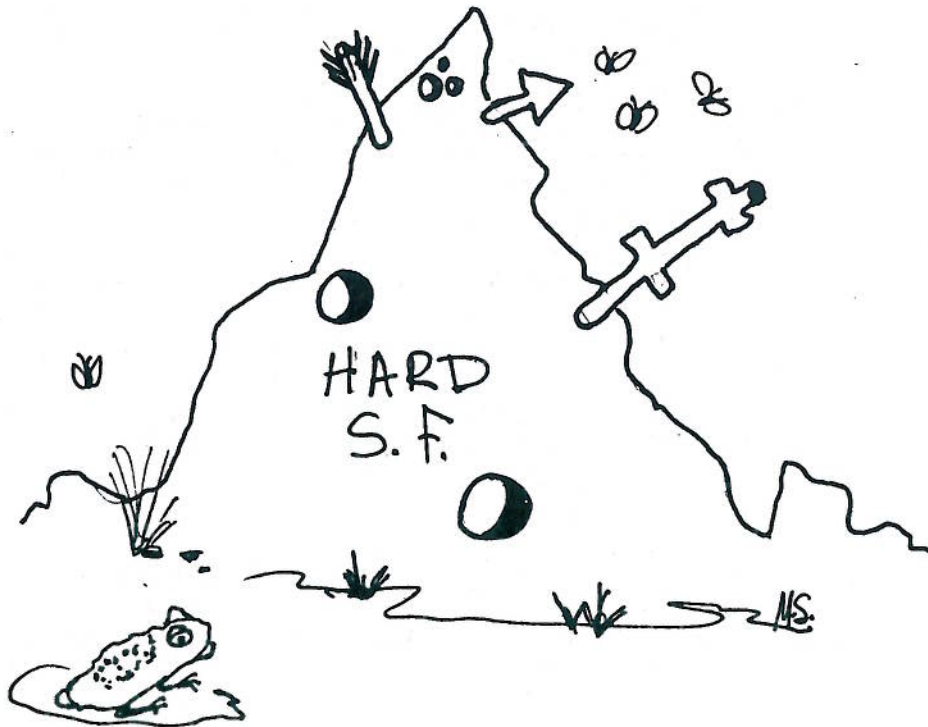
Roland Gagne

CLUB EXCURSION TO JPL

June 14th, Sunday: This is the first open house for the public by Jet Propulsion Lab in 5 years. We will meet at Fullerton Savings at 10:00, for car pooling, and depart for Pasadena at 10:30. If you have other plans for Sunday JPL will be open Sat., June 13th.

ROBERT SHECKLEY AUTOGRAPH SESSION:

One of my favorite writers, Robert Sheckley will be signing Saturday, June 13th, from 2-5pm, at Dangerous Visions, 13563 Ventura Blvd., Sherman Oaks.



BOOKSHOP GUIDE

THE LITTLE BUT WISE BOOKSTORE, 216 So. Brea Blvd, Brea. Open Tues, Wen, Fri, Sat, 10:30-4:30. A lot of people don't know about this very small shop because of the irregular hours, but they have good books on a wide variety of subjects. SF paperbacks about half price. Club member Lila Pawelczyk's husband Ed works there on Saturday. Let him know you're a club member if you drop in.

AMES, 6742 Greenleaf, Whittier, half block No. of Philadelphia. Open 10am-9pm Mon-Sat, Noon-5pm on Sun. Largest bookshop in Whittier. All SF paperbacks at half cover price. They have a separate horror/ supernatural section and you can usually find some recent hardcover SF firsts.

MEETING NOTES MARCH 25, 1987

PRO/FAN JEFFERSON P. SWYCAFFER TALKS

By Dee Craig

This month's guest, Jefferson P. Swycaffer, holds the distinction of being both a fan (a member of S.T.A.R. San Diego) and an author. His comments and anecdotes gave us insights into what it's like to be of "both worlds."

With regards to his writing career, Jeff says he broke all the rules of breaking into writing by selling the very first thing he ever wrote to the first place he submitted it to. He added that since that first stroke of luck he's accumulated his fair share of rejection slips.

He likes to encourage new writers to take the plunge, and write...if they feel they have something to say. He adds a word of caution: "If you have an idea, don't talk about it...sit down and write it. It takes the same amount of energy, but if you tell someone your ideas, that energy is wasted." He personally feels that outlining a story kills that flow of creativity, becoming like a dead-thing after the creative flow put it into outline form. From that point on, it's strictly a "craft-thing" fleshing the story into novel form. He was quick to add that this is his opinion, and that something else might work just as well for another writer.

On the subject of his own four (going on five) novels, he says that the reader does half the work of creating the story. They see things in a novel that the author doesn't even realize he's put in there. He finds reader feed-back invaluable to his writing.

Those unfamiliar with Swycaffer's novels will find a review of them in the last issue of the ORANGE PULP. There is a basic theme of "obedience", exemplified by the "slave race" in all his books. "...creatures genetically bred to obey without question any order given them." He considers his style of writing to be political science science-fiction, and his research has

spanned studies of the Russian politics of WWII to studies in "genetic - cues" (one such reference was WHAT SORT OF PEOPLE SHOULD THERE BE? by Jonathan Lubber, a philosophical work on the questions about genetic engineering). It is this question that Jeff deals with in his stories.

On the question of the differences of Orange County fandom and San Diego fandom, Jeff says that the major differences stem from San Diego fandom being so centralized and O.C.'s being so spread out. Also, STAR San Diego is 14 years old, and OCSFC is about 4. STAR has gone through a lot of "factioning" within the group over the years. They've also had run-ins with LASFS, although Jeff says that is in the past now. Their current program chairman is former LASFS president Chuck Donahue. Part of Jeff's job with the group is inter-club relations; part of his reason for visiting OCSFC. He says that nearly all groups go through rough phases at one time or another...even SFWA isn't immune to them. Jeff mentioned that a recent SFWA publication got pretty nasty about the recent Nebula winners...even resorting to name calling. They also got pretty vicious in their on-going war of "word-processors vs typewriters." OCSFC has avoided such internal goings-on, and certainly hopes to keep it that way!

In parting, Jeff said that if he could wish for anything, it would be that more fans who've said they're "gonna do such-and-such" actually follow up and really do what they said they'd like to do. There's a lot of potential in fandom - let's put it to good use.

Martin Miller has donated a large box of fanzines to the club. They will be brought to the next meeting for anyone who wishes to borrow them.

MEETING NOTES APRIL 29, 1987

By Dee Craig

The attending membership seemed favorably interested in putting together a future trip to the Pendragon Gallery, reportedly the largest F&SF art gallery on the west coast. Future info on this in next newsletter.

A WELCOME SURPRISE GUEST

Tonight's meeting was to have been an open forum, for talk, trades, and socializing. We received a surprise visit from Robert Butler, father of Chris Butler, who has been with us before at OCSFC. Robert brought several small model space ships to accompany his talk about the work that he and Chris are doing preparing a program for public access GROUP W TV. Both are members of the O.C. Astronomers Club. Even prior to that, Robert was no stranger to science fiction. He bought his first SF magazine in 1927!

The videos they do emphasize hard scientific accuracy, educational values, and entertainment. They've had two videos aired so far by GROUP W. The first was Starlight Theatre, followed by Space Rendezvous. Both were well received. They've compiled well over 1000 slides that they incorporate into their programs. Some are actual JPL shots, and some are their own simulated mock-ups, and others are a combination of the two. He proudly stated that their simulated slides were shown as a joke during an "open slide" night at the Astronomer's club, and were taken to be actually photographs taken with a telescope!

Most people are familiar with the chroma-key process commonly used by newscasters. Up to now GROUP W's only chroma-key capabilities were used in their mobile van. Chris has conducted a number of tests using this technique at the television facilities at C.S.F., and convinced GROUP W to get in-studio chroma-key cameras. Using this process will greatly enhance their videos productions.

Which brought Robert to the current project they were planning. The space ships he brought were small scale mock-ups of a ship they were going to use in their next production; constructed entirely from blueprints designed by Chris and complete in detail down to the cabin lay-outs within the ships. The purpose of the current films were intended for secondary schools as adjuncts to astronomy classes.

Robert's talk was an unexpected treat, and we've invited him to return at a latter time when we can arrange to have a video set up to air their films. We hope their current projects are successful, for they sound an ambitious and worthwhile undertaking.

APOCALYPSE NOW: THE THEOLOGY OF ARMAGEDDON IN THE SCIENCE FICTION OF JAMES
BLISH AND GREG BEAR

by Michael C. Peralta

Black Easter (1968) and The Day After Judgment (1971) by James Blish
Psychlone (1979) by Greg Bear (also published as Lost Souls)

The boundaries that separate science fiction, fantasy, and horror fiction are slippery and prone to shift at a reader's touch, or an author's whim. In general, however, most novels can be placed in one category or another, or, at most, in a borderline classification such as "science fantasy", or "dark fantasy", or some other popular pigeonhole. Nonetheless, there exist certain themes so vast that they can only be approached by combining all three genres into unique works of imagination.

The late James Blish chose to consider such a theme in a trilogy of novels to which he gave the overall title After Such Knowledge. This series is

like no other in speculative literature. The books do not share characters or backgrounds, and are not even in the same genre. Rather, they all concern themselves in very different ways with a single philosophical question: "Is the desire for secular knowledge, let alone the acquisition and use of it, a misuse of the mind, and perhaps even actively evil?" (the title of the trilogy comes from an appropriate quote from T. S. Eliot: "After such knowledge, what forgiveness?") The first book in the series is the little-known historical novel Doctor Mirabilis (1964), which is set in medieval England and deals with the conflict between science and theology. The third part of this trilogy is the classic science fiction novel A Case of Conscience (1958), set in deep space in the distant future, and concerning a race of aliens who are apparently without sin.

The middle portion of Blish's literary triptych consists of two books so closely linked that they should be considered as one long novel. Black Easter and The Day After Judgment seem to be set in the future (as can be deduced from certain technological advances mentioned in passing), but one so near to the present that the President of the United States is, apparently, Spiro Agnew. (Recall that Blish was writing in the late '60s and early '70s.) Against this science fictional background is set a tale of fantasy and horror. Theron Ware, a master of black magic specializing in crimes of violence, is hired by munitions manufacturer Baines (whose first name, interestingly, is never given) for a most unusual purpose: "I would like to let all of the major demons out of Hell for one night, turn them loose in the world with no orders and no restrictions, and see just what it is they would do if they were left on their own hooks like that." Baines takes an artistic pleasure in mass destruction in keeping with his profession, and Ware agrees to the assignment for no other reason than curiosity. The demons are unleashed and, with a shocking revelation that ends the first volume, Hell comes to Earth and Satan is triumphant.

The second part of the story takes place after this unplanned Armageddon. Baines, his weak, lust-ridden executive Jack Ginsberg, Ware, and the white magician-monk Father Domenico (who was forbidden by the rules governing magic from interfering with the actions of his arch-enemy Ware) all journey to the gates of Hell, now located in Death Valley, to confront Satan. Meanwhile, the few American survivors of the nuclear holocaust that followed the demons' release wage an unsuccessful war against Hell in some of the strangest scenes in science fiction. The tale comes to a close with a soliloquy by Satan in the style of Milton's Paradise Lost. Any reader is sure to come away from these books with a new perspective on traditional theology.

One reader who obviously did so was Greg Bear. His early novel Psychlone is dedicated to Blish, is written in the same understated, cool style as Blish's novels, and takes its main idea directly from an incident in The Day After Judgment. Blish speculates that an atomic explosion may be so powerful as to damage and even destroy immortal beings. Bear takes this idea a step closer to daily life in a story of a "psychic cyclone" created by the damaged souls of those killed by the atomic bombs that destroyed

Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The possibility of being able to not only kill human beings in the ordinary sense, but being able to destroy their souls, leads to a chilling technological conclusion.

Any reader of science fiction interested in eschatological questions could do no better than to start with these three fine novels.

THE HANDMAIDEN'S TALE

by Margaret Atwood, Houghton Mifflin, 1986

Reviewed by Dave Silva

While *The Handmaid's Tale* came out in hardcover late last year, and so is hardly new, I have several good reasons for reviewing it now. I bought it on the basis of a favorable review it received in the L.A. Examiner, which rarely reviews SF books and probably did so only because Margaret Atwood is a mainstream writer of some repute; also because I could get it at Crown Books at a good discount. Another reason is that *The Handmaid's Tale* was nominated for the Nebula award last month and it deserves that nomination for its style and innovation.

Atwood takes her subject matter right out of today's headlines to create a chilling near future anti-utopian America. Told in first person narrative, Offred (not her real name; read of Fred) is a property of the revolutionary government of Gilead, a militaristic outgrowth of the fundamentalist new religious right that filled the void left when congress was wiped out by terrorist bombs and the nation suspended the constitution for martial law. The story of how Offred became a protected ward of God (a slave for the purpose of breeding) unveils slowly, personally...lapsing back through her memories before the revolution. Atwood always leaves a few aces to play at the proper time for dramatic purposes.

First person does limit the readers viewpoint more in SF than in other forms of literature. We know what our present world is like and don't need to go over the ground rules for the readers benefit, and in this near future society the characters are forbidden to say anything good about the evil society they once inhabited, so it does take some time to know what its about. One of the problems with a puritanical society is that while its the pits at the bottom its not much fun at the top either...unless you have enough power to bend the rules. In Jack Williamson's *The Humanoids* robots protected man from harm by exaggerated means, such as cutting up their food because knives are dangerous. In the Gilead society women are protected from the evils of the world as long as they do God's will. To reinforce the wisdom of doing God's will there is a public wall where abortionists, unrecanted Jews, and Catholics are hung on hooks with bags over their heads. A similar method was used during the Spanish inquisition to depersonalize victims of the regime by covering their faces with a clowns mask.

As in all anti-utopian societies there is an underground resistance, partially supported from outside the U.S. It's not the whole world gone mad, just America. In fact, there are Japanese tourists whose exposed limbs and clicking cameras are tolerated for the much needed foreign exchange they bring. Offred takes joy in small acts of rebellion and compensates for her drab existence with poetic insights into the smallest of things. Such as: "the sidewalks here are cement. Like a child, I avoid stepping on the cracks. I'm remembering my feet on these sidewalks, in the time before, and what I used to wear on them. Sometimes it was shoes for running, with cushioned soles and breathing holes, and stars of fluorescent fabric that reflected light in the darkness. Though I never ran at night; and in the daytime, only beside well-frequented roads.

Women were not protected then."

Atwood is a poet, but she has the good sense not to bombard the reader with similies and metaphores. The Handmaidens Tale probably won't win the Nebula and I'd be surprised if its even nominated for the Hugo, but I think it is one of the best SF books of 1986.

THE EYES OF THE DRAGON

by Stephen King

Viking 1987, \$18.00

reviewed by Janet M. Alvarez

This story is Stephen King's effort to write something that would appeal to his daughter Naomi. When I hear something like that, it bodes ill for the success of the book. Trying to 'write for children' has entrapped many an author before King.

This story, however, has a drive and energy all its own. Ignore the O. C. Register's review, who thought this was an attempt to do Lord of the Rings. King's book The Stand is much more in that vein. I think a better comparison is James Thurber's The Thirteen Clocks.

Like The Thirteen Clocks, this story takes place almost entirely in an ancient castle and the villians have quite a lot in common. The books both have a tone similar to English children's books that have authorial intrusions, and both have moments of surprising depth. But there is no Golux in 'Dragon'. Too bad.

There are some problems with 'Dragon'. The authorial intrusion takes some getting used to and King seems to be working at his children's book tone. But often he gets swept up in his own story and the reader is carried along in King's momentum, learning why he is one of the best story-makers around. He is so good that even in mid-story, when you feel that there is need of

some action and a change of scene, his realization of the story's world and its characters keeps you hooked.

The plot involves the evil magician Flagg (this is the same name as the villain in The Stand) to bring ruin to the kingdom of Delain by imprisoning Peter, the rightful inheritor of the throne, and manipulating his younger brother Thomas. He makes it look as though Peter has murdered his father, Roland the King, and locks him in the tower called the Needle.

The action deals with Peter's plan to escape, the plans of his friends to rescue him, and the pressure to succeed before Flagg can bring his plans to completion.

King does an excellent job of showing how a person can be led to evil. Poor Thomas is delineated so well that we can see exactly how he fell under Flagg's influence, and pity him. Flagg, the ruin-bringer, is a study in the nature of evil...malice for its own sake. King's larger books, especially The Stand, also are outstanding in their treatment of this theme. The last part of the book, where Flagg is stalking up the Needle's steps to destroy Peter, who is trapped at the top, had me reading like an Olympic sprinter.

The book examines many other things, such as why is it called The Eye of the Dragon? Why is Peter so fixated on napkins? It's one of the few books I wish was longer (we ought to rebel against buying books by the pound), and I think that it somehow seems a good companion volume for So You Want To Be A Wizard, by Diane Duane.

CREATION CONVENTION
ANAHEIM-MARCH - 1987

An Observer's Review
By Roland Gagne

What follows is a detailed review of the convention. In general, I would like to say my weekend was well spent. I'd like to say that, but in all honesty I can't.

GUEST SPEAKERS: HARLAN ELLISON

An exuberant speaker with a fast paced delivery that has a tendency to wander. Known to become somewhat coarse, Mr. Ellison limited his profanity and the few slips were either designed to induce a humorous response or, in the heat of the moment. It was unfortunate however when Mr. Ellison climbed upon his soap box. Running through his current enemies list he sounded somewhat like one of those video evangelists he tends to ridicule. On the whole, Mr. Ellison's appearances were entertaining but not very informative.

GUEST SPEAKER MARK LENARD

An easy - informal - speaker who started out a little stiff. Mr. Lenard at first seemed unable to gauge his audience. His side stories and insights

were good and enjoyable. Unfortunately, it appeared the audience wanted Sarek of Star Trek fame (who was portrayed by Mr. Lenard) while Mr. Lenard provided himself as the actor who portrayed Sarek as well as other roles. Even with this handicap, the appearance went well for both the audience and Mr. Lenard.

GUEST SPEAKER

DOUG WILDEY

A dissertation on the creation and production of the Jonny Quest animated series. Initially answering pre-arranged questions asked by a convention representative Mr. Wildey was informative but only mildly interesting. The appearance markedly improved when questions were asked by the audience, where Mr. Wildey seemed to relax, telling those small stories and insights that make a guest speaker informative and entertaining.

EVENTS

FILMS AND PREVIEWS

Every convention sets up time for passive visual entertainment. As one of the themes was Star Trek there was the obligatory Blooper Reels (the film had seen better days) as well as episodes of Star Trek, Robotech & Outer Limits. There were also previews of soon to be released movies in both film and slide presentations. The film, of course, was professional but even the slide show was good as the narrator knew his material. A slide presentation based on classic T.V. shows was a failure. The narrator was simply unprepared and almost anything seemed to have been dumped into this program. All these events were shown in the same auditorium as live events and guest speakers. As such, the edges of these programs were filled with arrivals and departures that proved distracting. further, one became chained to the same uncomfortable chair for hours, need I say more.

EVENTS

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT

Guest speakers may get you in the door but live entertainment spells the difference between a trek through a pleasant forest or a crawl through miles of broken glass and iodine. The two plus events were the Creation 'No Minimum Bid' auction and the Creation Costume Parade. The former had a few flaws but bargains were to be had. The latter was an excellent diversion, and even cute with the junior diversion, though it too had a few glitches. The Creation Trivia Competition and the appearance by the dance troupe Choreography Excellence were good concepts laid to waste in their application. The former was mismanaged and inept. A so called 'panel of experts' chosen from the audience couldn't hope to win the game and the MC delayed the game in order to limit the number of prizes awarded. The latter was disaster come to Anaheim. Only one of the three routines had a Science Fiction theme and to add insult to injury the dancers were forced to perform in a corner of the auditorium, due to insufficient stage area, and danced on the carpeted floor, where they were invisible to those not in the first few rows. I'd have to rate the live events between poor and fair.

OVERVIEW AND STRATEGY

The Creation Convention isn't a total write off. Even though held locally

you shouldn't consider attending unless at least two guest speakers spark your interest. Strategy then comes into play. If your interest is in the dealer's room, you should attend the first day when the inventory is adequate and suffer through the chaos of the rest of the convention. If your interest is in the guest speaker alone, or with the live entertainment, plan to attend the second day. The speakers will be more relaxed and less prone to pontificate politically and the live entertainment less chaotic as the first day will serve as sort of a dress rehearsal. Also, the timing of events and between events is markedly better the second day. On the whole, attending both days isn't advisable unless you're a glutton for punishment, enjoy throwing away money, or plan to review the convention.

HEART OF THE COMET

By Gregory Benford and David Brin
A Bantam Spectra Book - 1986

Reviewed by Roland Gagne

A lot of books are good but only a few can be called great.

The story in a nutshell involves an attempt by a band of scientists and technicians to adjust the orbit of Halley's Comet, so it can be harvested for mankind's benefit. Destined for a decades long voyage (reduced in real time through a type of hibernation) each volunteer has their own reason for being there. As time progresses most of the crew gravitate to one or another of the small cliques, and factionalism quickly develops. Then - for a bit more spice - add the discovery of extra-terrestrial life that goes from mere annoyance to sheer terror. The men and women who've hitched a ride with this gargantuan wanderer must now struggle not only against the life from the comet itself, but also the plots hatched by other crew members.

The story works. Even with three main characters and a host of others. Even with separatist group forming hither and yon. Even with plot complications around every corner the story comes together with only a few glitches. The story flows through the three main characters and adjusts to their own perceptions of events without warping. Linked together in a bitter love triangle, that doesn't overwhelm the story, they interact believably with the other characters and each other. Events flow through and around them in a manner that breathes life into this novel. This novel is a must read. It blends science and sociology in a tale of humans reacting individually and collectively to crisis, external as well as internal.