



Going for It

BLUE COLLAR (1978) dir. by Paul Schrader

KING OF COMEDY (1983) dir. by Martin Scorsese

Paul Schrader's directorial debut (before making films such as  C a t

P e o p l e and  M i s h i m a) starts out as a comic heist film about three

THE MT VOID

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Detroit auto workers their union, but it becomes much more than that when the plan turns to blackmail and they find themselves riding a tiger. Danny Peary called it an "excellent, unusual film ... strongly written, provocative, extremely well-acted." Richard Skorman said, "The acting throughout is outstanding. [Richard] Pryor gives one of his most controlled performances to date and [Harvey] Keitel and [Yaphet] Kotto are equally convincing."

One of Robert DeNiro's most memorable characters is Rupert Pupkin, who idolizes the celebrity of superficial talk show host Jerry Langford (played by Jerry Lewis). Thwarted too often in his plans to become famous on Langford's program, he decides to take matters into his own hands. While the character is very different from the one in Scorsese's  T a x i D r i v e r, there are some surprising parallels.

2. We now begin our annual cycle of discussions of the Hugo nominees (at least those available in paperback), and our next Lincroft discussion book is therefore  P r e n t i c e A l v i n by Orson Scott Card, of which Lance Larsen says:

"  P r e n t i c e A l v i n is the third book in  T h e T a l e s o f A l v i n M a k e r. You can read this book without having read the previous two volumes ( S e v e n t h S o n and  R e d P r o p h e t), but I would recommend reading them all--in order. This fantasy series is set in an alternate United States (that aren't) where magic works. Alvin Maker is the seventh son of a seventh son; hence he is blessed with very potent abilities that he must learn how to use. In this volume, while apprenticed to a blacksmith, Alvin comes of age and learns to use (and not use) his magical abilities. In this novel, as in the previous two, Card does a wonderful job of storytelling in this alternative history. The characters struggle and grow throughout

the story. He is creating an epic, and getting it right!" [-lfl]

3. The following donations have been made to the Lincroft science fiction library from Patricia Eisenstein via Kathleen Kennedy:

Robert A. Heinlein	THE STAR BEAST
Robert A. Heinlein	THE ROLLING STONES
Robert A. Heinlein	ROCKET SHIP GALILEO

Mark Leeper  
MT 3D-441 957-5619  
...mtgzx!leeper

Of tyrannies on human kind  
The worst is that which persecutes the mind.  
-- John Dryden

THE UNCONQUERED COUNTRY by Geoff Ryman  
Bantam Spectra, 1987 (1986c), ISBN 0-553-26654-3, \$2.95.  
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper  
(with some comments on CHEAP TRUTH)  
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[This started out as a review of T\_h\_e\_U\_n\_c\_o\_n\_q\_u\_e\_r\_e\_d\_C\_o\_u\_n\_t\_r\_y, but, like some mutant plant, it grew off in a different direction and ended as much about C\_h\_e\_a\_p\_T\_r\_u\_t\_h as about the book in question.]

When I reviewed F\_u\_l\_l\_S\_p\_e\_c\_t\_r\_u\_m last year, I said that Andrew Weiner's "This Is the Year Zero," whether intentionally or not, was basically the story of the Pol Pot takeover in Kampuchea (now once again named Cambodia) presented as science fiction and that rewriting a historical event as science fiction rarely results in good science fiction, no matter how tragic the event. Someone suggested T\_h\_e

\_ U\_ n\_ c\_ o\_ n\_ q\_ u\_ e\_ r\_ e\_ d\_ C\_ o\_ u\_ n\_ t\_ r\_ y as another, better written, example of the same

phenomenon. And then I saw that \_ C\_ h\_ e\_ a\_ p\_ T\_ r\_ u\_ t\_ h #16 had listed this as one of its top ten (at least for that issue), and described it as a "slightly expanded version of the instantly classic \_ I\_ n\_ t\_ e\_ r\_ z\_ o\_ n\_ e novella, a shocking, brutally depressing SF tragedy that directly confronts the reader with high-voltage visionary excess." In addition, the novella version had won the British Fantasy Award \_ a\_ n\_ d the World Fantasy Award in 1985.

There are some basic differences between Weiner's story and Ryman's. In Ryman's book (expanded from the novella, but still only novella length--30,00 words) the story is presented as fantasy rather than science fiction, and in fact is written in such a way than it is about the Pol Pot takeover itself rather than an imitation or copy of it. But the fantasy makes the entire story so surreal as to detract from the human beings involved in it. (For example, houses are apparently living beings with feelings.) There is a certain distancing, a certain coldness, that the reader may find conflicts with the sympathies that s/he knows s/he should have for the victims of this. Lisa Goldstein's \_ R\_ e\_ d\_ M\_ a\_ g\_ i\_ c\_ i\_ a\_ n is a fantasy set in a Nazi concentration camp that avoids this distancing, at least for me, so it does not seem to be a necessary element. It could be that some critics will say that the distancing is intentional and part of the literary style of the novel. But for me, I found it disturbing (in a negative sense--one would hope a book about Pol Pot would be disturbing) and it seriously detracted from the book. Also, because the book is so clearly a representation of events in Cambodia, I found myself trying to map all the names and events onto real names and events. This, too, provided distraction from the flow of the story.

The structure of the narrative is unusual. Although short itself, the novella is divided into several sub-stories. The structure and the style seemed alien enough that I found myself wondering if Ryman were

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copying the style from Southeast Asian literature in the same way that Charles Whitmore copied the style of Scandinavian sagas in \_ W\_ i\_ n\_ t\_ e\_ r'\_ s \_ D\_ a\_ u\_ g\_ h\_ t\_ e\_ r.

In fairness I should say that \_ L\_ o\_ c\_ u\_ s and the \_ L\_ o\_ n\_ d\_ o\_ n\_ T\_ i\_ m\_ e\_ s

L\_i\_t\_e\_r\_a\_r\_y  
S\_u\_p\_p\_l\_e\_m\_e\_n\_t apparently loved T\_h\_e  
U\_n\_c\_o\_n\_q\_u\_e\_r\_e\_d\_C\_o\_u\_n\_t\_r\_y (to judge from the  
back cover). Maybe there is some background for appreciating Ryman's  
style that I don't have. I can't say it's a bad book, but after the  
build-up, I did find it a bit of a let-down.

And what of C\_h\_e\_a\_p\_T\_r\_u\_t\_h's rave review? Well, in #10 C\_h\_e\_a\_p  
T\_r\_u\_t\_h  
says, "You've already heard about Gibson's N\_e\_u\_r\_o\_m\_a\_n\_c\_e\_r, and if you've  
got any sense you've already read it. This book had half again as many  
recommendations as its closest competitor to get on the preliminary  
Nebula ballot, and its brilliant depiction of a credible future has  
appealed [sic] to the sense of wonder in even the most hardened of  
intellects." Then when everyone has read it, in #12 we read, "Now that  
NEUROMANCER has garnered so many accolades, maybe it's time to sit back  
and see just what heights have been climbed. ... The book has, yeah,  
STYLE.... Wonderful! ... And that slick style carries us forward on a  
garbage-reeking tide for about a hundred pages. ... But then you  
become uncomfortably aware that Gibson doesn't actually k\_n\_o\_w much about  
computers beyond brand names, and you are enmeshed in a standard pulp  
plot." And on, and on, demolishing what two issues ago they had been  
lauding.

So what has replaced N\_e\_u\_r\_o\_m\_a\_n\_c\_e\_r in C\_h\_e\_a\_p  
T\_r\_u\_t\_h's eyes? Well, in  
that same issue #12, they rave about Greg Bear's B\_l\_o\_o\_d\_M\_u\_s\_i\_c: "In a  
triumph of the human spirit that makes one glow, Bear has shattered the  
limits of formula and is delivering truly superior fiction. B\_l\_o\_o\_d\_M\_u\_s\_i\_c  
in its award-winning short form was a fine, visionary piece; as a novel,  
it's staggering." Of course, come #14, they describe it as a novel  
which "expands predictably his earlier ... short story" and in a later  
paragraph goes on to other works saying, "Even the good stuff here [...] is  
tainted with guilt and predictability."

So it seems as though recommendations from C\_h\_e\_a\_p\_T\_r\_u\_t\_h are designed  
more to stir up the waters than actually to present a coherent and  
consistent critical viewpoint. (Yeah, I know--who am I to criticize  
Bruce Sterling and Lewis Shiner? The only answer to that is: I don't  
know; who do I have to be?) But they were right about one thing:  
"Really great illustrations!" (I should note that the illustrations are  
by Sacha Ackerman and the cover is by Ilene Meyer.)

