

people's nervous systems and turning their hosts into mindless puppets. Fast-moving tale of paranoid (anti-communist?) fears run wild. Well-handled, a classic of its type." Since Heinlein is a very controversial author, there should be some spirited discussion.

THE MT VOID

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As an added feature, there will be a brief videotape of a panel discussion of the _ t _ w _ o film versions of _ T _ h _ e _ P _ u _ p _ p _ e _ t _ M _ a _ s _ t _ e _ r _ s currently in pre-production--and why there are two. (This videotape was made at Chicon V by Jo Paltin--thanks, Jo!) These new films should not be confused with the earlier filmed version of _ T _ h _ e _ P _ u _ p _ p _ e _ t _ M _ a _ s _ t _ e _ r _ s (_ T _ h _ e _ B _ r _ a _ i _ n _ E _ a _ t _ e _ r _ s featuring Leonard Nimoy) or the _ O _ u _ t _ e _ r _ L _ i _ m _ i _ t _ s episode inspired by it, "The Invisibles." The viewing of these works should also not be confused with actually reading the book. I know this is how many people got through their English literature courses, but it won't work here. [-ecl]

2. I saw a sign in the grocery today for "free kittens." It seems to me that the word "free" is one of the most mis-used words in English. It has been claimed that free is the most powerful word in American advertising. Everybody wants to get something for nothing and they turn off their minds entirely in the hopes of getting something for nothing. I think it is engrained in all animal life. A fish sees a worm suspended in the middle of water. Does Mr. Perch ask himself, "What is a worm doing suspended in water? Do we have many worms floating there, not on the bottom, not on the surface, but just here at eye level?" No, Mr. Perch says, "Wow! A nice worm just here for the effort to bite it." Next thing Mr. Perch knows he's lying on his side with a wedge of lemon for company.

A free kitten is like a free worm. It is a package deal. With every kitten you get comes a cat. Now I like cats. In spite of what some folks think, I like cats. I like most animals. I just don't respect cats because they have no conscience. A cat has a

natural in-bred tendency to want to feel it is getting away with something. A cat is a nice animal, but you have to take it on its own terms. I already have an animal like that in my life. I call her Evelyn.

Evelyn is a real piece of work. She is sleek. She is clever. She is more clever than a cat since she can actually argue for her point of view. You can at times almost see her point of view. But deep down she has the conscience of Madam Pussycat. She is a book person. She can read a paperback book and leave it looking like it is still hot off the press. There are no creases in the binding. Open it up and you feel the binding stretching as if it has not been opened before. If I didn't read her review, I would not believe she had read it. (If I read the book later I may still be unconvinced.) I underlined some passages in a book I read about Saddam Hussein and she was shocked. How could I do that to a book? On the other hand, she drove the car into a curb. The front end down by the license is bent back at a 45-degree angle. What is her reaction? "Well, we were going to trade the car in soon anyway." (We were?) How can she be more concerned about a \$2 book than a \$10,000 car? "A car is a car. A book is forever." I disagree and so does this wedge of lemon next to me.

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WHO'S AFRAID OF BEOWULF? by Tom Holt
Ace, 1991 (1989c), ISBN 0-441-88591-8, \$4.50
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper
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Since I thought Holt's E_x_p_e_c_t_i_n_g_S_o_m_e_o_n_e
T_a_l_l_e_r was the
funniest writing since Anna Russell summarized the Ring, I eagerly
awaited this book, which was actually first published before
E_x_p_e_c_t_i_n_g_S_o_m_e_o_n_e_T_a_l_l_e_r. Was I
disappointed? Well, I hoped for
(expected?) a 10 and got only a 9, so in a sense I was. I guess
what I'm saying is that you c_a_n finish your breakfast before rushing
out to buy this book.

One thing it has going for it (in addition to Holt's style, of course) is that it is not a prequel, sequel, coquel, or in any other way related to E_x_p_e_c_t_i_n_g_S_o_m_e_o_n_e_T_a_l_l_e_r. No Norse gods inhabit W_h_o's_A_f_r_a_i_d_o_f_B_e_o_w_u_l_f?, just Vikings, chthonic spirits, and the odd sorcerer or two. Oh, yes, and an archaeologist to serve as the "straight man" (or in this case, "straight woman," and the reference is theatrical, not sexual). Not surprisingly, having all these beings from a thousand or more years ago running around in 20th Century England causes some difficulty. (Even in Scotland, they're a bit outre', but in London, they're real standouts.) But they adapt surprisingly well--the sorcerers are even running a multi-national, which probably surprises no one.

In short, Holt was n_o_t a one-cook author and shows promise of becoming the best fantasy humorist around. Buy this book!

THE TIME OF THE FOX by Matthew J. Costello

ROC, 1990, ISBN 0-451-45041-8, \$4.50.

A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper

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Graduate student Jim Tiber wants to use the time machine he's just heard about at Columbia to go back and gather information on whatever or whoever influenced the Beatles to rise from mediocrity to one of the most important musical influences of our time. (This is Tiber's theory, not mine--take up any disagreements with him.) But just as he is about to discover the secret in Hamburg in 1962, he finds himself thrown back in time to Rommel's North Africa campaign. But Rommel isn't losing the way he should be--he's winning!

Okay, it's another alternate history story, but even I probably would not have read it if I weren't doing research for someone assembling an annotated list of alternate history stories. First of all, the fact that it's "Time Warrior 1" means that you know ahead of time there will be no resolution, just a set-up for a sequel. And the North African campaign is not a period in history that I have great interest in. The latter meant that I couldn't always follow what the differences were in what was happening, but since the book is obviously aimed at people who know that time period well (Matt Costello used to review games--and may still for all I know) and gamers _ w _ o _ u _ l _ d know this period, I could live with that. (For example, I could have sworn that Tiber was surprised that Rommel wasn't attacking Tobruk where he was supposed to have lost, but Rommel _ t _ o _ o _ k Tobruk in our world--and later lost it--so I must have remembered wrong.) What is more difficult to live with is the way the rules seem to bend as the plot requires. The scientists in the present are in a specially shielded building which protects their memories if the past is changed. Yet somehow they can get information about the current present in as well. And though they claim they can't bring people back to the present from the past, they manage to move Tiber around when the plot requires. And even the North Africa campaign gets buried under other plotlines involving another set of time travelers, art thefts, and various other attempts to change history.

Unless you're a hard-core Rommel fan, give this one a miss.

