

say sprawling--the colonization and terraforming of Mars. It is so big that it needs three books, of which this is the first. But this book is independent enough to stand on its own.

THE MT VOID

Page 2

Robinson's works often derive from history or historical trends, and so one isn't surprised to see that outlook brought to this book. Yes, it is a book about its characters, but it is about them as shaping (and being shaped by) history. Robinson also assumes his characters know their history--discussions of terraforming Mars are not the totally technical and scientific discussions one has come to expect, but include references to projects and events which affected Earth's environment. _ R_ e_ d_ _ M_ a_ r_ s is an adventure story, true, but it is not a simple-minded one and there is much to chew on. [-ecl]

2. I have been writing in the last few issues about requests for money through the mail. I promised you that this week I would include a real case history. This piece actually came. There was a business-size envelope with three cellophane windows: one with our name and address, one saying it was from my niece, Grade 2, Sandpiper Elementary School, in another state, and one saying, "P.S. I miss you a lot." Now, immediately I "smelled a rat." It was like those letters from prisoners of war that have funny phrasings, like "it is nice to be writing you." Nobody writes that way unless somebody is twisting their arm. My niece would never say she missed Evelyn or me. It may well be that she does, but I have never heard her express any sentiment remotely like that. If she had said, "I am unhappy here," _ t_ h_ a_ t would be like my niece. I opened it up and found the message:

Dear Aunt Evelyn, Uncle Mark,

My school needs more computers for our classrooms. You can help by ordering some new magazines or extending your current subscriptions at this time.

You'll save money with the special school prices and your magazine orders help provide more "hands on" computer training for me. If two orders arrive by the prize deadline, I get a free _ S_ c_ h_ o_ o_ l_ _ S_ p_ i_ r_ i_ t_ _ S_ h_ i_ r_ t.

Please help me if you can.
P.S. I miss you a lot.

It was, of course, a form letter, but my niece wrote the "Aunt Evelyn, Uncle Mark" and the "I miss you a lot."

Now, where should I begin? Is this an urban school strapped for funds? No, it is actually a fairly well-endowed suburban school in a fairly fancy neighborhood. I have been in the neighborhood and, to put it politely, it is one in which they can easily generate tax money if they wanted to. Take that estimate with a grain of salt, however, since these are people who also are likely to know how to avoid paying taxes. And perhaps this is one such strategy. But what really curdles my cottage cheese is what this school defines as "school spirit." If you can find two relatives to tap for funds for the school, then you have school spirit. Admittedly, I never had much school spirit. I made it a point of

THE MT VOID

Page 3

giving the football team all the enthusiasm and support they gave the math team. I leave it to your imagination how much that was, but let's say I didn't get any school spirit T-shirts myself. But even then I was sure "school spirit" was something else. But it _ m _ u _ s _ t have been something different than putting some insincere inscription on a form letter. Even in my most cynical days I thought it was something more noble than that.

3. Hugo Factoid of the Week: Poul Anderson has the most Hugo wins in the fiction categories, with 7 Hugos. Runners-up are Harlan Ellison, Fritz Leiber, and Roger Zelazny, with 6 each. Ellison also has one in the "Dramatic Presentation" category, for "The City on the Edge of Forever." (Asimov and Heinlein have 4 each, and Clarke has 3.) [-ecl]

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There are few minds to which tyranny is not delightful.
-- Samuel Johnson

THE WALL AT THE END OF THE WORLD by Jim Aikin
Ace, ISBN 0-441-87140-2, 1993, \$4.99.
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper
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In the world of the future, in a society of telepaths,
conformity is more than the norm--it's required. Periodic
Cleansings make sure that no one who deviates can contaminate the

society. Denlo Ree accepts this, until he has to come to terms with what this means. His struggle takes him outside the Wall, into the supposedly barren outlands which he discovers are not so barren after all. He meets Linnie, who comes from a very different society and they must learn to communicate with and understand each other.

In its picture of a restrictive, ordered society, T_h_e_W_a_l_l_a_t_t_h_e_E_n_d_o_f_t_h_e_W_o_r_l_d has been compared to Ursula LeGuin's D_i_s_p_o_s_s_e_s_s_e_d, but I found the resemblance deceptive. LeGuin is contrasting two supposedly different societies. While Aikin does this to some extent, he is more concerned with looking at how societies come about (or are built) and how people communicate with each other. The politics are important, but they are driven by communication: telepathy (or its lack) between people who share a common language and between people who don't, communication between of the same social level and between people of different levels (though they may disagree on who is the higher).

T_h_e_W_a_l_l_a_t_t_h_e_E_n_d_o_f_t_h_e_W_o_r_l_d is not a perfect book, but its flaws are minor. (I found myself spending what was probably too much time trying to figure out where all the modified place names came from (e.g., Missopy from Mississippi), but that's probably just me. If you're looking for a good, solid, socio-political novel, I recommend T_h_e_W_a_l_l_a_t_t_h_e_E_n_d_o_f_t_h_e_W_o_r_l_d. (Do not read the L_o_c_u_s review until you've read the novel--it gives too much away.)