

Lincroft-Holmdel Science Fiction Club  
Club Notice - 1/14/87 -- Vol. 5, No. 27

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

Unless otherwise stated, all meetings are on Wednesdays at noon.

LZ meetings are in LZ 3A-206; MT meetings are in MT 4A-235.

  D  A  T  E                    T  O  P  I  C

- 01/21 MT: Movie: THE WAR GAME (Rm MT 4A-229)  
01/28 LZ: 1984 by George Orwell            {A Retrospective}  
02/04 MT: CONTACT by Carl Sagan            First Contact  
02/18 LZ: RINGWORLD ENGINEERS by Larry Niven World Creation  
03/11 LZ: THE DREAMING JEWELS by Ted Sturgeon Children (and Child-raising)  
04/01 LZ: HELLLICONIA VINTNER by Brian Aldiss Oenology  
04/22 LZ: MURMURS OF EARTH by Carl Sagan    SF-related Non-Fiction  
05/13 LZ: TO YOUR SCATTERED BODIES GO by    Reincarnation  
          Phillip Jose Farmer

HO Chair:       John Jetzt   HO 1E-525  834-1563  
LZ Chair:       Rob Mitchell  LZ 1B-306  576-6106  
MT Chair:       Mark Leeper  MT 3E-433  957-5619  
HO Librarian:   Tim Schroeder HO 3M-420  949-5866  
LZ Librarian:   Lance Larsen  LZ 1C-117  576-2068  
MT Librarian:   Bruce Szablak  MT 4C-418  957-5868  
Jill-of-all-trades: Evelyn Leeper MT 1F-329  957-2070  
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1. Next week we will be showing one of the most important science fiction films ever made. The BBC commissioned Peter Watkins to make a documentary about what would really happen if a nuclear war came to Britain. Watkins somehow did it without the BBC getting a good look at what he was doing. When they saw the completed documentary, it was clearly too powerful to show on television. Watkins instead released his documentary to art houses and won the Academy Award for Best Documentary Short. Every other film about nuclear war I have ever seen is weak tea by comparison. Even THREADS, which was greatly inspired by THE WAR GAME, failed to have the same impact.

By showing this film we are not taking a political stand that one approach to avoiding nuclear war is better or worse than another. We are saying (well, I am saying) that a nuclear war must never be allowed to occur.

2. The following was sent in by Jo Paltin:

Let me give a brief post-script for those unable to attend today's (January 7th) exciting discussion of William Gibson's NEUROMANCER

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in LZ (so I can redeem myself for failing to provide a pre-meeting blurb).

Of the six attendees, the three who had read Neuromancer rated it about 1:30 (that's good) on the noon-to-six-o'clock scale. This tremendous rating consistency extended past the scalar rating into agreement on other dimensions, such as the fact that Gibson gives NEUROMANCER most of its strength with stylistic innovation rather than plot. In fact, Gibson has gained great popularity as the founder of the 'cyberpunk' movement in Science Fiction -- though people disagree on the proper term for the genre.

NEUROMANCER -- and I cannot disclose who [the] Neuromancer is -- describes a future rich in technology, with a social structure still timelessly unaffected by it. Outcasts roam the corridors of crime, while major corporations wrestle for market dominance. People have access (legally or otherwise) to technology that gives them cybernetic implants to enhance their physical or mental capabilities.

In this world, computer expertise culminates in the ability to enhance one's consciousness by connecting mentally to computers, then controlling, via the computer network, the collection of physical powers (e.g., satellites, industry, utilities) that it controls. In this way, a computer expert's body is holed up someplace (e.g., the living-room) while the mind manipulates great resources under the computers' control, and battles other similarly endowed powers.

Other books that came up during the discussion, include Vernor Vinge's novella TRUE NAMES and Bruce Sterling's novel SCHISMATRIX, which was nominated for future Club discussion in LZ. [-Jo Paltin, mtuxo!paltin]

3. Attached to this Notice you will find a copy of the 1987 Cinema Club schedule, which may be of interest to some of you. [-ecl]

4. Look at this notice carefully. Some lucky member who receives it will have a free half of a tunafish sandwich hidden in some non-obvious place in the notice. If that member finds the sandwich, it is his or hers to keep. If the member does not find the sandwich in the notice, I guess some lucky cat or dog out there hanging around the member's wastebasket will get it. Note that I am not saying if I hid the half sandwich in a paper or electronic version of the notice. I will give the clue that the Middletown cafeteria now puts onion in the tuna salad, a barbaric custom that I dislike intensely.

Mark Leeper  
MT 3E-433 957-5619  
...mtgzz!leeper

My Ten Best Films of 1986  
Film comment by Mark R. Leeper

It has been suggested to me that since the various reviewers have listed their top ten films, I ought to list mine. It is a little foolish at the outset because your average professional reviewer gets to see many times the number of films I do. Some of these are probably too good to get much distribution in the wilds of New Jersey, where C\_r\_o\_c\_o\_d\_i\_l\_e\_D\_u\_n\_d\_e\_e passes for great cinema for most film-goers. I strongly suspect that P\_l\_a\_t\_o\_o\_n will get added to the list and something will be dropped off. But in any case, of the films I have seen I can break them into the five I liked most and what are probably the next five after that. I don't claim they were quality cinema, but I did enjoy them. Flamers, get ready:

Top Five for Enjoyment (in alphabetical order)

A\_G\_r\_e\_a\_t\_W\_a\_l\_l  
L\_a\_b\_y\_r\_i\_n\_t\_h  
M\_o\_n\_a\_L\_i\_s\_a  
M\_y\_B\_e\_a\_u\_t\_i\_f\_u\_l\_L\_a\_u\_n\_d\_e\_r\_e\_t\_t\_e

S t a r \_ T r e k \_ I V

Next Five

T h e \_ C o l o r \_ o f \_ M o n e y

L i t t l e \_ S h o p \_ o f \_ H o r r o r s

S t a n d \_ b y \_ M e

A \_ R o o m \_ w i t h \_ a \_ V i e w

R u t h l e s \_ P e o p l e

BIG MEAT EATER

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: Even at a midnight show people don't get into a weird enough mood to like this pointless film. B i g \_ M e a t \_ E a t \_ E a t e r is a waste of time whenever you see it.

Since T\_h\_e\_R\_o\_c\_k\_y\_H\_o\_r\_r\_o\_r\_P\_i\_c\_t\_u\_r\_e\_S\_h\_o\_w made it big as a midnight cult film, there has been established a market for weird counter-culture films intended for the same sort of midnight audiences. R\_o\_c\_k\_y\_H\_o\_r\_r\_o\_r is the king, but it has been joined by E\_r\_a\_s\_e\_r\_h\_e\_a\_d, L\_i\_q\_u\_i\_d\_S\_k\_y, R\_e\_p\_o\_M\_a\_n, and maybe one or two others. And as always when a market is shown to exist, there will be less competent filmmakers trying to make films for that market. Richard O'Brien, who had already made the most successful entry in the midnight sweepstakes, made the disappointing S\_h\_o\_c\_k\_T\_r\_e\_a\_t\_m\_e\_n\_t. It had probably the biggest budget of any midnight cult film attempt, but it turned out to be a disappointing bore. For my money the best cult film that never found a cult was F\_o\_r\_b\_i\_d\_d\_e\_n\_Z\_o\_n\_e, which was constantly weird, constantly creative, and had a good musical score.

A weak entry in the midnight sweepstakes came from Canada in 1982. I had read a recommendation of B\_i\_g\_M\_e\_a\_t\_E\_a\_t\_e\_r, knew where it was available for rent, and so rented it. In many ways it is like F\_o\_r\_b\_i\_d\_d\_e\_n\_Z\_o\_n\_e, but it is less weird, less creative, and has a very poor musical score. It has about six plots going on at once, none very interesting. The story takes place in the happy community of Burquitlam, where a happy-go-lucky butcher hires Abdullah, an extremely obese assistant played by black actor Big Miller. Unknown to the butcher, Abdullah is also a psychopathic killer. At the same time aliens, played by toy robots, come to Burquitlam to steal the rare mineral baloneum and are resurrecting the dead for their purposes. When the plot calls for it, they are also mutating people temporarily, for reasons not very clear. The town's greatest hope is the genius son of an Eastern European family who has cyclotrons in his bedroom. The boy inexplicably has a British accent while his parents seem like refugees from the gypsy camp in T\_h\_e\_W\_o\_l\_f\_M\_a\_n. The film could have been amusing but it is feebly done and none of the subplots generates much interest value at all. Neither is the satire on '50's popular music witty nor is the music particularly likable. B\_i\_g\_M\_e\_a\_t\_E\_a\_t\_e\_r is a big misfire. I strongly suggest that people who like it try the much better F\_o\_r\_b\_i\_d\_d\_e\_n\_Z\_o\_n\_e. Rate it a -2 on the -4 to +4 scale.

HITLER VICTORIOUS edited by Gregory Benford and Martin H. Greenberg  
Garland, 1986, \$?.  
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper

Someone who knew my predilections gave me this anthology for Hanukkah. Not one, but eleven "what if Germany had won the war?" stories! I immediately set aside the other book I was reading and dove in.

Benford begins by giving a good introduction to the alternate history sub-genre of science fiction (or fantasy, if you prefer). Spinrad's discussion of the fascination of the Nazis is worth reading, though I quibble with his inclusion of his own T\_h\_e\_I\_r\_o\_n\_D\_r\_e\_a\_m as one of the three major "Nazi-victory" novels (the other two he lists are Dick's T\_h\_e\_M\_a\_n\_i\_n\_t\_h\_e\_H\_i\_g\_h\_C\_a\_s\_t\_l\_e and Sarban's T\_h\_e\_S\_o\_u\_n\_d\_o\_f\_H\_i\_s\_H\_o\_r\_n). I would claim that Deighton's S\_S-G\_B is at least as widely known and Mackie's A\_n\_E\_n\_g\_l\_i\_s\_h\_m\_a\_n's\_C\_a\_s\_t\_l\_e is notable for having been made into a three-part mini-series in Britain which played on PBS here. But the rest of his article is thought-provoking and recommended.

The stories themselves were published between 1957 and 1986, the latest being three times as far removed from World War II as the earliest. This means that the earliest were written by people who remembered first-hand how Nazism arose and spread, while the latest have the benefit of historical perspective and continuing revelations to build upon.

The question one usually asks about alternate histories is "Is it believable?" While that's still a valid question, the very topic of these stories reminds us that reality may not be believable. When people first heard about the concentration camps, they refused to believe the stories because, they said, no one could do such things. Even today, there are those who deny the Holocaust existed. So when I say something in a story in this anthology is not believable, in the back of my mind is the thought that, in spite of that, it c\_o\_u\_l\_d happen.

The first story, C. M. Kornbluth's "Two Dooms," is also one of the oldest. That it was a story of the Fifties is obvious, yet it still carries a strong message. (Readers should remember that most of those working on the Manhattan Project expected the Bomb to be used against the Germans rather than the Japanese.)

Hilary Bailey's "The Fall of Frenchy Steiner" was a good portrayal of England after defeat, but the story didn't convince me and only the main character seemed fleshed out enough to be three-dimensional. The setting makes it worth reading, reminiscent of the recent version of the film 1\_9\_8\_4 in its drabness and general decay.

"Through Road No Whither" by Greg Bear suffers from having its ending telegraphed, but even without this problem would be a minor piece.

"Weihnachtsabend" by Keith Roberts is reminiscent of Sarban's T\_h\_e\_S\_o\_u\_n\_d\_o\_f\_H\_i\_s\_H\_o\_r\_n. I personally found myself confused in spots since Roberts has his characters, and indeed his narrator, lapse into German quite often. I don't understand German. Again, I found parts of this story unbelievable, but in this anthology, that criticism can only be made with the side-note that much of history was also unbelievable.

David Brin's "Thor Meets Captain America" is (in spite of the sound of its title) a serious story. Much has been made of the Nazis' interest in the occult (Spielberg, for example, has made millions) and Brin looks at what would happen if the interest had borne fruit.

"Moon of Ice" by Brad Linaweaver tries to show that National Socialism carried within it the seeds of its own defeat, and whether this defeat came through Germany losing the war, or later, after Germany won the war, it was inevitable. This could be either a trite or an interesting idea, and Linaweaver doesn't do all that could be done to make it interesting. The result is a conclusion that seems shallow.

Sheila Finch's "Reichs-Peace" is a tale of Romany psychic powers. It's also a tale of deception, and the deception is even harder to believe than the psychic powers, which is a pity. This could have been a much better story had the deceptions been thought out a little bit more. Finch also wrote I\_n\_f\_i\_n\_i\_t\_y'\_s\_W\_e\_b, a novel dealing with alternate worlds. This is better.

In "Never Meet Again" by Algis Budrys, Professor Jochim Kempfer is dissatisfied with his personal universe in a world of "Hitler victorious." But he discovers that a change of universe doesn't solve all his problems--merely changes them. A well-done story that makes a point worth noting, particularly to all those who say, "If only I had done thus-or-so differently." Not all change is for the better.

Just as "Through Road No Whither" is more a fantasy piece than science fiction, Howard Goldsmith's "Do Ye Hear the Children Weeping?"

is more a horror story, and not a bad one.

Tom Shippey's "Enemy Transmissions" shows us a Dreamer (the occult Reich again?). He dreams of things that were--like the Unification War. He also dreams of things that were not--like some war or battle or something in the Falklands. At least he thinks that's what it is, but it makes no sense. Why would anyone fight a war in the Falklands? (Good question? Anyone want to volunteer an answer?)

"Valhalla" by Gregory Benford seems to be an attempt to leave the reader with a satisfactory ending to this anthology. The philosophy behind it, and its attitude toward retribution (read, "revenge"),

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however, strikes me as exactly what caused the problem in the first place, with France, Britain, and the United States determined to have their revenge on Germany and thereby laying the groundwork for Hitler's rise to power. Maybe the positive attitude toward revenge that I see in the story wasn't Benford's intention, but that's how I read it.

Of course, no one seems to have written the story I want to read: what if Nazism had never come to power, World War II had never happened, and everything was much w o r s e because of this. (As I mentioned above, everyone seems to assume that things would be better.) Jerry Yulsman's

E l l e a n d e r M o r n i n g hints at this, but I think the reason no one has tried

this is two-fold: no one wants to be a position that seems to defend the Nazis, and no one wants to try to imagine something w o r s e than the Holocaust. There are limits, apparently, to what even the most down-beat of authors will do.



THE CURSE OF THE GIANT HOGWEED by Charlotte MacLeod  
Avon, 1986 (c1985), \$2.95.  
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper

From the cover, this sounded like a madcap mystery, possibly with some horrific touches, as three horticulturists attempt to control the giant hogweed that threatens Britain's hedgerows. Before the end of the first chapter, however, it had metamorphosized into a bizarre fantasy, complete with witches, druids, magic potions, dragons, damsels in distress, and the whole shebang. In many ways reminiscent of

  C  o  n  n  e  c  t  i  c  u  t  Y  a  n  k  e  e  i  n  K  i  n  g  
  A  r  t  h  u  r'  s  C  o  u  r  t, this novel shows how

resourceful modern men can do quite nicely in the past--though this past is more like a fantasy-land than a real, historical past. The mystery, or at least the hogweed, gets side-tracked for most of the novel, though it crops up every now and again (as it were). Instead, somewhere around page 6, our characters walk into a Welsh bar and find themselves

transported to the Wales of folklore. If this sounds like A l i c e i n  
W o n d e r l a n d o r T h e L i o n, t h e  
W i t c h, a n d t h e W a r d r o b e to you, don't worry--it sounds that way to the characters themselves. It may not be a classic like those novels, but it is thoroughly enjoyable. MacLeod has a dry wit and does understated humor very well (example: "The meeting was being held in one such place, among the lush green hills where England blends so delightfully into Wales and the sheep all begin bleating in Cymric as soon as you cross the border.") There seems to be

a sub-genre starting up of fantasy spoofs: W i z a r d s a n d

W a r r i o r s o n

television, Marvin Kaye's T h e M a g i c U m b r e l l a, Chelsea Quinn Yarbro's A

B a r o q u e F a b l e, and now this in books. Let's hope subsequent ones are as good as this one.

THE RETURN OF SHERLOCK HOLMES  
A film review by Evelyn C. Leeper

Well, if Sherlock Holmes had been alive and tending bees on Sussex Downs at the age of 132 last week, he's certainly dead now. One look at T\_h\_e\_R\_e\_t\_u\_r\_n\_o\_f\_S\_h\_e\_r\_l\_o\_c\_k\_H\_o\_l\_m\_e\_s would have killed him.

T\_h\_e\_R\_e\_t\_u\_r\_n\_o\_f\_S\_h\_e\_r\_l\_o\_c\_k\_H\_o\_l\_m\_e\_s is obviously an attempt to capitalize

on the Holmes Centenary this year and CBS must be assuming that Holmes fans everywhere would tune in. Well, I suppose they're right--after all, I watched it--but its re-run potential among these fans is nil.

Why? Well, for starters, we are introduced to Jane Watson, the great-granddaughter of Dr. John H. Watson and current owner of a detective agency in Boston. She returns to England to sell the ancestral country home and receives from the Watson family solicitors instructions which send her down into the basement (where she finds a 60-year-old oil lantern that still has oil in it and works). There she discovers a body frozen in suspended animation and follows her great-grandfather's instructions to revive it. She doesn't seem at all surprised to find the body, or a laboratory that looks like Frankenstein's, nor does the idea that maybe she should call in some doctors or police or other authorities ever seem to occur to her. She revives the body and it turns out to be Sherlock Holmes. She tells him how she read all her great-grandfather's stories about him, and he tells her how he was frozen in 1901 after being poisoned by a spring in a matchbox. Second and third inconsistencies: Watson recounted at least ten cases involving Holmes a\_f\_t\_e\_r 1901, and if Holmes managed to see through the poisoned-spring-in-the-matchbox trick in "The Adventure of the Dying Detective" which took place in 1887, it's hard to believe he would fall for it fourteen years later. (The first inconsistency is that there was never any indication of Watson having a country home--indeed, his financial situation as portrayed in the original stories would hardly admit to such an expense.)

So now that they've established that this story takes place in a universe in which the Holmes stories w\_e\_r\_e written and published, what do the writers do? They populate this film with characters named Bart Sholto, Tobias Gregory, J. Small, Violet Morstan, a housekeeper named Huston whom Holmes refers to as Hudson, and a truck built by "Tonga" (honest!). At no point, however, does anyone involved in this comment on how many of the names are straight out of the Canon or how much this sounds like "The Sign of the Four," though people do comment on the pairing of "Holmes" and "Watson" before Holmes adopts a pseudonym (so Watson did n\_o\_t read stories that were only privately published).

In addition, they have various scenes of Holmes attempting to cope with modern society which seem to be taken straight from Nicholas Meyer's T\_i\_m\_e\_a\_f\_t\_e\_r\_T\_i\_m\_e. Holmes also fluctuates between making

brilliant deductions that are correct and brilliant deductions that are

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totally off the mark because he doesn't understand modern life (like his analysis of the paper used for a note which turns out to be a photocopy). Somewhere along the line, Watson should start to realize that his deductions are not trustworthy--but she never does. The solution to this mystery was also obvious to the viewer before it was obvious to the detectives.

In addition to all the other un-originalities, the twist of having Watson be a woman was already done in T\_h\_e\_y\_M\_i\_g\_h\_t\_B\_e\_G\_i\_a\_n\_t\_s. And the scene of Holmes seeing London Bridge is just like Wells seeing the Bank of England in T\_i\_m\_e\_a\_f\_t\_e\_r\_T\_i\_m\_e. I cannot think of a single new idea in this film.

And 221B Baker Street is n\_o\_t a McDonald's--it's an insurance company.

January 5, 1987

Dear Club Member:

The Holmdel Cinema Club is pleased to announce its 1987 schedule. We hope you'll agree that a better schedule (in quantity and in quality) justifies the membership dues of \$15 per year. With 30 films on the schedule, the cost per person per film is still only 50 cents! In addition, each member will receive 4 guest passes.

Membership in the Holmdel Cinema Club is open to employees of all AT&T Entities (current or retired) and to contract employees. Subscriptions may also be purchased for family members and friends. Admission to film showings is by subscription only. You are invited to renew your membership by filling in a membership form (available from Charlie Harris, LZ 3G-307, 576-3757 or mtuxo!xchar).

If you know someone who might be interested in becoming a member, please provide him or her with a copy of the renewal form and a copy of our new schedule -- and make an enthusiastic sales pitch! We want to make 1987 our most successful year ever.

Your membership card should be displayed as you enter the auditorium. Entrance to the building for the purpose of attending a film should be through the main entrance if a guest is brought along, and security

regulations do not allow your guest to visit other parts of the building. Your cooperation is requested.

This year we will continue to sell discount tickets to local theaters. We will also try to continue to send out film reviews prior to film showings. Our club continues to have a reciprocal agreement with the Murray Hill Cinema Club whereby members may attend the films of either club.

On the back of this letter you will find the 1987 schedule. If you are able to post it in your work area, it will serve to remind you of the upcoming showings and also to advertise the Holmdel Cinema Club to anyone who might see it.

- Volunteers of the Cinema Club

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1987 SCHEDULE OF FILMS                      HOLMDEL CINEMA CLUB

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NORTH BY NORTHWEST	FRI. JANUARY 16
THE 39 STEPS	WED. JANUARY 21
MON ONCLE D'AMERIQUE	FRI. JANUARY 30
WATERSHIP DOWN	WED. FEBRUARY 11

THE CHANT OF JIMMIE BLACKSMITH      FRI. FEBRUARY 27  
 EAST OF EDEN                              WED. MARCH 11  
 A NOUS AMOUR                              FRI. MARCH 27  
 MURDER SHE SAID                          WED. APRIL 8  
 BLOOD OF THE CONDOR                      FRI. APRIL 24  
 CATCH-22                                      WED. MAY 6  
 THE ATOMIC CAFE                              FRI. MAY 8  
 THE SEVENTH SEAL                              WED. MAY 20  
 THE GOLD RUSH                                FRI. JUNE 5  
 MODERN TIMES                                WED. JUNE 10  
 THE GENERAL                                  FRI. JUNE 12  
 CEDDO    WED. JUNE 24  
 LOVE AND DEATH                                FRI. JULY 10  
 LA SALAMANDRE                                WED. JULY 22  
 THE COURTESANS OF BOMBAY                  FRI. AUGUST 7  
 ALL ABOUT EVE                                WED. AUGUST 19  
 BLADE RUNNER                                 FRI. AUGUST 28  
 THE OFFICIAL STORY                          WED. SEPTEMBER 9  
 MEETINGS WITH REMARKABLE MEN            FRI. SEPTEMBER 18  
 DEATH BY HANGING                            WED. OCTOBER 7  
 ATTACK OF THE KILLER TOMATOES            FRI. OCTOBER 23  
 DONA FLOR AND HER TWO HUSBANDS          WED. NOVEMBER 4  
 LIQUID SKY                                    FRI. NOVEMBER 13  
 ERENDIRA                                      WED. NOVEMBER 18  
 A ROOM WITH A VIEW                          FRI. DECEMBER 4  
 VIRIDIANA                                      FRI. DECEMBER 18

\_ N \_ O \_ T \_ E \_ S    \_ F \_ R \_ O \_ M \_ T \_ H \_ E \_ N \_ E \_ T

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Subject: Amber chronology  
Path: seismo!rochester!pt.cs.cmu.edu!f.gp.cs.cmu.edu!knight  
Date: 7 Jan 87 06:31:25 GMT

Well, folks, here is a new chronology for Zelazny's Amber books. I posted a shorter version of this last year. The new one includes TOD and BOA, and it also includes a timeline. All dates are "Amber time", not "Corwin time"; I adjusted for time differentials wherever possible. Time zero is Corwin's "accident" (sentimental reasons).

Many of the dates come by way of inference and calculation, and many (e.g. 3000y) are approximate. If you think I missed something, or got some dates really wrong, I'd like to hear from you.

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## THE BEGINNING

Oberon is born  
Dworkin flees from Chaos to a small sudden island  
Dworkin meditates upon the abyss  
The Jewel is revealed to Dworkin by the Unicorn  
Dworkin creates Amber out of Chaos  
Oberon marries Cymnea  
-3000y Benedict, Osric, Finndo, born to Cymnea  
Eric born to Faiella  
Oberon dissolves marriage to Cymnea  
Oberon marries Faiella  
Osric and Finndo die, purportedly in the service of Amber  
Corwin, Caine born to Faiella  
Faiella dies giving birth to Deirdre  
Sand, Delwin born to Rilga  
Oberon marries Clarissa  
Fiona, Bleys born to Clarissa  
Llewella born to ?  
Oberon divorces Clarissa  
Oberon recognizes Llewella as legitimate  
Brand born to Clarissa  
Flora born to ?  
Julian, Gerard born to Rilga  
Random born to ?  
-187y Sand and Delwin depart from Amber  
Dworkin fashions the family Trumps

## THE OLD DAYS

Deela the Desacratrix burns unicorn shrines at Begma



Oberon defeats Deela, takes her prisoner, rapes her  
Deela escapes  
Dalt born to Deela  
Deela begins to raid once more around Begma  
Oberon sends Bleys to defeat and kill Deela  
Corwin and Bleys strand Random on an island  
Random puts a spike in Corwin's boot  
Brand, Bleys, and Fiona study with Dworkin  
Corwin rules over Avalon  
Random goes to Rebma and elopes with Morganthe  
Martin born to Random and Morganthe  
Random banished from Rebma  
Martin walks Pattern, leaves Rebma  
Corwin gulls Caine  
Corwin beats Julian at his favorite game  
-160y Moonriders out of Ghenesh attack Amber  
Benedict holds the pass above Arden against the Moonriders  
Benedict leaves Amber for Avalon  
Dark things out of Shadow attack at Jones Falls  
Brand has argument with Corwin  
Corwin and Eric fight while hunting in the Forest of Arden

## BEFORE THE CHRONICLES

-156y Corwin exiled by Eric after their fight  
Brand and Gerard search for Corwin in many shadows  
Tomb built for Corwin, assumed dead  
-74y Flora goes to Shadow Earth  
-72y Flora first spots Corwin on Shadow Earth  
Dworkin tells Oberon how to destroy the Pattern  
Oberon imprisons Dworkin  
Brand, Bleys, and Fiona form cabal  
Oberon gets mad with Eric and glorifies Corwin over dinner  
Brand allies with powers from Chaos and learns how to destroy Pattern  
-65y Brand asks Llewella and Random about Martin  
-22y Jasra becomes consort to King Menillan of Kashfa  
King Menillan dies  
Jasra organizes coup headed by Jasrick and Kasman  
Jasra and Brand meet over magical operation, secretly marry  
Brand leaves Kashfa  
Jasra bears Rinaldo  
Jasra has Jasrick killed  
Jasra leaves for the Keep of the Four Worlds

Rinaldo is left in charge of Kashfa  
Jasra stays in the Keep, trying to win over Sharu Garrul  
Rinaldo takes Dalt to walk the Pattern at Tir-na Nog'th  
Rinaldo worries about Jasra, attack the Keep with Dalt  
Jasra beats Sharu in a sorcerous duel, pays off Dalt  
Kasman takes over in Kashfa  
Kasman attacks the Keep in order to eliminate Jasra and Rinaldo  
Rinaldo leaves the Keep

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Dalt attacks the Keep on his own  
Dalt attacks Amber, fails, is wounded by Benedict  
-2y Random goes to Texorami  
Brand paints a trump of Martin  
-1y9m Brand finds Martin and stabs him over the Pattern  
Brand, Bleys, and Fiona involve Benedict with the hellmaids  
Oberon is lured away by Brand, Bleys, and Fiona  
-1y6m Oberon goes into hiding  
-3m Bleys and Eric argue over the throne; Bleys leaves Amber  
Eric seizes control of Amber  
Bleys builds military strike force  
Brand tries to win Caine over to the cabal, fails  
Eric-Caine-Julian alliance formed  
Brand sees Corwin in Tir-na Nog'th  
Brand sees Corwin is Eric's mind  
Brand under surveillance by Eric in Amber  
Bleys and Fiona split with Brand  
Corwin begins to regain memory  
-2d Brand escapes Amber, puts Corwin in Porter Sanitarium  
Brand recaptured by Eric  
0 Brand escapes again, shoots Corwin's tires out  
Eric puts Corwin in Greenwood, under Flora's care  
Brand captured by Bleys and Fiona, put in Tower  
Brand calls Random for help  
Random attempts to save Brand, fails  
Julian contacts Random about the throne  
Random loses his Trumps

## NINE PRINCES IN AMBER

+6d Corwin escapes Greenwood, goes to Flora's house

Corwin finds Flora's Trumps  
Flora attempts to return to Amber, fails  
Random arrives at Flora's house  
+7d Corwin and Random set out for Amber  
Corwin and Random take Julian prisoner in Arden, release him  
Corwin and Random save Deirdre, go to Rebma  
Random sentenced to marry Vialle  
+9d Corwin walks Pattern in Rebma  
Corwin transports himself to Amber  
Corwin and Eric fight  
Corwin goes to Bleys, encamped at Avernus  
Bleys and Corwin make alliance  
Corwin makes deals with Gerard and Caine to open the seas  
Corwin contacts Oberon and Brandby Trump, both weakly  
Corwin and Bleys build force, attack Amber, fail  
+96d Bleys falls off stairs, Corwin taken  
+100d Eric crowned  
Corwin blinded, imprisoned, fed by Lord Rein  
+4y10d Corwin escapes to Cabra with Dworkin's help  
Corwin stays with Jopin at the Lighthouse

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+4y100d Corwin resists Trump contact, decides to leave Cabra

## THE GUNS OF AVALON

Corwin goes to Lorraine  
Corwin meets Lance, travels to the Keep of Ganelon  
Corwin meets Lorraine, the girl  
Someone attempts to contact Corwin once more  
Corwin and Ganelon defeat the Black Circle  
Corwin and Ganelon travel to Avalon  
Benedict defeats the Hellmaids  
+5y90d Corwin and Ganelon meet Benedict  
+5y93d Corwin meets Dara  
Ganelon kills Benedict's servants  
+5y94d Corwin gets diamonds and gunpowder  
+5y95m Corwin and Ganelon leave Avalon, encounter Black Road  
Corwin saves girl from Black Road  
Benedict chases Corwin, fights, loses  
Corwin calls Gerard to help Benedict

- +5y129d Corwin gets guns on Earth
  - Eric begins major battle with Black Road
  - Corwin visits old house, reads Eric's message
  - Ganelon and Corwin go to Riik to collect troops
- +5y150d Ganelon and Corwin march on Amber
  - Dara arrives in Amber
- +5y156d Corwin wins battle at Amber
  - Eric dies in battle
  - Corwin and Random go to the Pattern
  - Dara completes the Pattern
  - Dara claims "Amber will be destroyed"
  - Merlin born in the Courts of Chaos

## SIGN OF THE UNICORN

- +5y162d Caine is found dead
  - Random tells his story (of the Tower) to Corwin
  - Corwin attunes to the Jewel
  - Flora tells her story (of Eric, etc.) to Corwin
  - Corwin visits his tomb with Ganelon
- +5y163d Corwin and Gerard fight, bury Caine, at the Grove of the Unicorn
  - Corwin and Gerard see the Unicorn
  - Brand is returned by united family effort
  - Fiona stabs Brand
  - Gerard takes care of Brand
  - Caine stabs Corwin
  - Corwin returns to Shadow Earth, stashes Jewel
- +5y164d Random brings Corwin back to Amber
  - Corwin visits Brand
  - Brand recovers well
  - Corwin goes to Tir-na Nog'th, gets mechanical arm from Benedict
- +5y165d Corwin, Ganelon, and Random follow Unicorn to Primal Pattern

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## THE HAND OF OBERON

- Martin's Trump found in the Pattern
  - Benedict and Random seek Martin
  - Corwin talks to Vialle
- +5y167d Corwin goes to Dworkin's quarters
  - Corwin trumps to the Courts of Chaos, kills rider, meets Merlin

+5y175d Corwin returns via Gerard's Trump  
Corwin talks to Brand again  
Caine attacks Brand  
Ganelon tells Benedict about Dara  
Corwin and Benedict form alliance  
Gerard fights Corwin again, Ganelon intercedes  
Corwin talks to Julian  
Corwin returns to Earth to retrieve the Jewel, talks to Bill Roth  
Brand gets the Jewel first  
Corwin orders all the Patterns guarded  
Corwin talks to Fiona  
Brand show up at the Pattern in Amber, met by Gerard, flees  
Brand starts walking the Primal Pattern  
Corwin intercepts him, forces Brand to transport out  
Random finds Martin, who tells his story  
Brand goes to Tir-na Nog'th to walk Pattern there  
Benedict intercepts him, regains the Jewel, using mechanical arm  
Ganelon reveals himself as Oberon

## THE COURTS OF CHAOS

+5y178d Oberon takes command, gives separate orders to his children  
Brand draws Trumps for Sand and Delwin, who refuse to help him  
Replay of Tir-na Nog'th scene in Amber, Benedict loses arm  
Corwin talks to Dara, learns of Merlin  
Corwin tries to repair the Pattern himself and is stopped by Oberon  
Corwin talks to Oberon  
Oberon orders everyone to attack Chaos  
Corwin begins his hellride  
Oberon starts walking the Pattern to repair it  
Oberon sends the Jewel to Corwin via the bird  
Brand takes Rinaldo to walk the Pattern  
Brand's first contact with Corwin ("Dad failed")  
Corwin hides in cave, meets man with scripture  
Corwin almost lured by dwarves and by Lady  
Brand's second contact with Corwin (appears with crossbow, loses eye)  
Corwin meets Ygg, Hugi, and the Jackal  
Corwin inscribes a new Pattern  
Brand's third contact with Corwin (grabs the Jewel)  
Corwin and Brand both transport to Chaos  
Corwin kills Duke Borel of Chaos  
Battle of Chaos  
Oberon's message in the sky  
Brand killed by Caine's crossbow, drags Deirdre over the cliff

Family reunites after the battle  
Oberon's funeral  
Merlin appears  
Random made King of Amber by the Unicorn  
Corwin attunes Random to the Jewel  
Random diverts the Wave of Chaos  
+5y6m Corwin tells his story to Merlin  
Rinaldo hears of his father Brand's death, on April 30

## TRUMPS OF DOOM

+5y6m Merlin goes to Shadow Earth, studies computer science in college  
Bill Roth works up Patternfall Treaty between Random and Swayvil  
Merlin meets Luke (Rinaldo) in college  
Merlin takes his girlfriend Julia through Shadow  
Rinaldo attempts to kill Merlin on April 30  
Rinaldo tries again the next year, and the next  
Rinaldo breaks off the attempts on Merlin's life; Jasra continues them  
+9y6m Merlin and Rinaldo graduate and join Grand Design  
Merlin begins building Ghostwheel  
Merlin breaks up with Julia  
Jasra attempts to kill Merlin, making a total of seven tries  
+13y6m Merlin quits Grand Design, talks to Rinaldo about it  
Julia is killed by a dog-beast from Shadow  
Merlin goes to Julia's place, finds her dead, kills the beast  
Merlin finds the Trumps of Doom  
Merlin visits Rick Kinsky, Julia's old boyfriend  
Merlin visits Victor Melman, kills him in self-defense  
Jasra arrives at Melman's place, bites Merlin  
Merlin trumps off to the Sphinx, escapes  
Dalt gets ammo from Melman's building, burns it  
Merlin returns to Melman's building, finds a shotgun shell  
Caine murdered by Rinaldo, Bleys wounded by Rinaldo  
Merlin goes to Rinaldo's hotel, gets ring  
Merlin checks into Hilton in Santa Fe  
Merlin meets up with Rinaldo  
Dan Martinez talks to Merlin  
Merlin removes ring  
Rinaldo and Merlin drive into the country  
Rinaldo kills Martinez  
Merlin goes to Bill Roth  
Merlin meets George Hansen  
Merlin and Bill Roth go to Amber  
Random discovers that the shotgun shells explode in Amber  
Merlin talks to Fiona and goes back to a bar on Earth  
Merlin meets Meg Devlin and goes to her apartment  
Caine's funeral  
Rinaldo attempts to bomb the Amberites, fails  
Merlin tells Random about Ghostwheel, is told to shut it down

Merlin tries to reach Ghostwheel, but is told to go back  
Merlin meets a lady in Shadow

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Merlin meets Rinaldo in Shadow  
Rinaldo imprisons Merlin in a crystal cave

## BLOOD OF AMBER

Merlin is locked in the crystal cave for over a month  
Merlin rigs a booby trap and escapes  
Merlin meets up with Jasra, immobilizes her, trumps to Flora on Earth  
Rinaldo grabs Jasra away from Merlin  
Flora tells Merlin about Jasra, Kashfa  
Merlin tells Flora about Rinaldo  
Merlin tries to call Meg Devlin and George Hansen, fails  
Mask contacts Merlin  
Flora and Merlin go to Julia's place  
Merlin goes through trap door at Julia's place  
Merlin runs into Scrof, defeats him  
Rinaldo hires Dalt to attack the Keep with him  
Merlin goes to the Keep of the Four Worlds, meets the hermit Dave  
Dave tells Merlin about Sharu, Dalt, Kashfa, Jasra, Rinaldo, Brand  
Merlin tries to move closer to the Keep, is stopped by Mask  
Merlin trumps to Amber  
Dalt intentionally wounds Rinaldo in battle at the Keep  
Random tells Merlin about Dalt and Deela  
Merlin goes to Bloody Bill's for seafood  
Merlin meets Old John, the King's emissary  
Merlin leaves, gets attacked, saved by Vinta Bayle  
Merlin and Vinta go to Arbor House, where they trade information  
Ghostwheel contacts Merlin  
Rinaldo calls Merlin, trumps in  
Merlin calls Dalt, Dalt shows aggression, Merlin hangs up  
Rinaldo asks Merlin to help rescue Jasra  
Merlin takes Rinaldo to crystal cave, negotiates deal  
Merlin returns to Arbor House briefly  
Merlin runs into a lop-eared wolf, which tries to kill him and escapes  
Merlin returns to Amber, talks to Bill Roth  
Merlin goes to Corwin's tomb  
Merlin goes to the Pattern, walks it, trumps to the Keep

Merlin finds Jasra frozen  
Mask appears  
Merlin trumps back to Amber with Jasra  
Rinaldo contacts Merlin  
Merlin goes into the main hall  
Benedict and Random enter the mail hall  
Rinaldo tells all about Dalt's plan to attack Amber with riflemen  
Merlin walks into a huge trump of Rinaldo, disappears into Wonderland

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Subject: "Free Live Free" by Gene Wolfe  
Path: ihnp4!cuae2!gatech!seismo!lll-lcc!mordor!styx!ames!amdahl!drivax!holloway  
Date: 7 Jan 87 18:05:04 GMT

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Okay, so it finally came out in paperback, and I had this gift certificate to Waldenbooks....

"Free Live Free" is actually three stories in one book, all intermingled. Wolfe could have written a book from any of them. In fact, I'd rather. The book opens as four destitute people... a Gypsy witch, a salesman, a private detective (with a badge), and a fat hooker - these titles describe them completely - try to save the home of Benjamin Free from destruction to make way for a new freeway overpass. They live free -no rent - as long as they do whatever they can to keep that building standing.

Ben Free hints that there is a ticket to his home - the "High Country", hidden in the walls somewhere. The witch takes this in a figurative sense... that Free is some sort of supernatural being who has taken on the mantel of mortality for a time, and has left his "crown" somewhere about.

In any event, Free passes out hints to everyone about the "crown", then the house is partially destroyed and Free disappears. Okay, that ends the first part of the book. Before I bought it, I thought that's all there was.

But it continues for several hundred more pages. It's not the writing I have issue with; Gene Wolfe is a fantastic writer. But as all the



characters scurry about trying to find Free and his "crown" or "ticket", it begins to read a little like a John Irving novel, but without the characterizations.

Because about a third of the way through the book, I realized that every character was a stereotype - each character acted exactly as you'd expect. Not only the four main characters, but a reporter from a pair of supermarket rags, employees at a mental asylum (where everyone is automatically assumed to either be a patient, or very much deserving to be), the fanatical cop, nosey neighbor (who talks entirely in fractured cliches), etc.

So after a couple of hundred pages of these unrealistic characters shuffling from one screwball encounter to another, the last part of the book zips in to gather up the loose threads and tie them together in one incredibly convoluted knot. I won't spoil this -- it'd take away any reason for reading the book.

My recommendation: Read the book if you can get it without paying for it. Or if given to you, then read the first part of the book, then skip directly to the last part -- the middle isn't really necessary to the ending.

Also, the American paperback edition includes a timeline of Ben Free's life in the back. A note explains that the American publisher asked for this, and it does not appear on foreign editions, or any hardback

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edition.

And then go read Glen Cook's "A Matter of Time".

...!ucbvax!hplabs!amdahl!drivax!holloway

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Subject: Reviews of six recent collections

Path: mtuxo!houxm!ihnp4!cuac2!gatech!lll-lcc!seismo!rutgers!daemon

Date: 9 Jan 87 09:42:24 GMT

I suppose it goes without saying that I have a huge pile of unread books

on a table next to my bed. Sometimes I feel like my reading is a quadratic curve which is trying to catch up with the factorial curve of my book purchases... Every now and then I read a book which is so good that I feel compelled to plug it in public. This is normally a fairly rare circumstance (do I hear distant sighs of relief?), but occasionally I hit a streak of books which seem to deserve this treatment. Recently I appear to have picked up the knack of buying excellent single-author story collections -- the last seven in a row that I've read have been uniformly superb. I've already attempted to foist HOWARD WHO? by Howard Waldrop upon an unsuspecting public, and now I propose to do the same for the remaining six books.

MYTHS OF THE NEAR FUTURE. J G Ballard. Triad/Granada (UK) 1985, c1982. 205 pages, paperback.

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH THE DEITY. Michael Bishop. Peachtree Press 1986, c1986. 307 pages, trade paperback.

BURNING CHROME. William Gibson. Arbor House 1986, c1986. 200 pages, hardcover.

ONE HUMAN MINUTE. Stanislaw Lem. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich 1986, c1986. 102 pages, paperback.

THE PLANET ON THE TABLE. Kim Stanley Robinson. Tor 1986, c1986. 241 pages, hardcover.

TALES OF THE QUINTANA ROO. James Tiptree, Jr. Arkham House 1986, c1986. No page count, hardcover.

When I was in high school I discovered Ballard's early work and loved some of it, loathed some of it and was baffled by the rest. Eventually I set it aside and hoped that someday I would understand it all. When EMPIRE OF THE SUN came out and proved to be as interesting as I'd heard it was, I began to read and re-read Ballard and this time I became completely hooked. The clue came when I read his novel THE UNLIMITED DREAM COMPANY, a beautiful work that I forcefully recommend to everyone who has the misunderstanding that Ballard is always opaque or depressing... The collection MYTHS OF THE NEAR FUTURE provides a very good cross-section of Ballard's work, encompassing several styles and moods. The title story is Ballard at his most essential, a delicate and moving revelation -- I now consider it my all-time favorite Ballard story. "News from the Sun" is in the same uniquely Ballardian genre and is almost as good. There is a "condensed novel" story, a few nasty sf-

here), an amusing bit of sf satire and a visit to Shanghai in 1945 (cf. EMPIRE OF THE SUN); all of these are quite good. Only one story feels like a dud -- "Theatre of War" is an attempt to portray a future Vietnam-style war in the UK, using a collage of materials from the actual Vietnam war; frankly I think the material is more horrible on its own than in some hypothetical situation... Unfortunately Triad Granada didn't see fit to print the original publication information for the stories in this book, so I don't know if they come from a cross-section of Ballard's career, as they appear to.

Michael Bishop is still a startlingly original writer. His latest collection, CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH THE DEITY, contains some very different stories which (sometimes quite subtly) all concern the topic of religion. I don't know of any other sf writer who could produce a volume quite like this... There are a couple of outstanding stories in this book; the rest are merely very good. In the former category, "Alien Graffiti" is a beautiful fable of man's communication with God, while "The Gospel According to Gamaliel Crucis" is a funny account of the arrival of the Messiah in the form of an intelligent mantis-like insect from an alien planet. I'm still an atheist and a materialist, but I really liked these stories (and I think theists will be impressed, too). I also liked "A Short History of the Bicycle: 401 BC to 2677 AD", about a man stranded on a planet of intelligent bicycles (shades of "Or All the Seas with Oysters!"); "A Gift from the Graylanders", a haunting tale about a little boy's fear of ugly monsters who come in the night and how that fear is realized; "Storming the Bijou, Mon Amour", in which a man who rebels against the systematized torture of human beings who are made to watch drive-in movies over and over again discovers how things could be worse; and "A Spy in the Domain of Arnheim", about a character in a Magritte painting. Hackers should note that Bishop invents the concept of electronic enlightenment in "The Bob Dylan Tambourine Software & Satori Support Services Consortium, Ltd.", in which you discover that your PC can be used to commune with God... ENCOUNTERS has a couple stories which verge upon the cute or the sentimental, but this didn't dim my enjoyment very much.

William Gibson is hot right now. Normally that's a bit of a turn-off for me -- when I read reams of hype about a new writer, it tends to contaminate my appreciation of his work. If I'd read Bruce Sterling's introduction to BURNING CHROME before buying the book, I might never have even considered the purchase... Fortunately the stories are very good (even if I still don't believe all the hype!). Three classic "cyberpunk" stories are in here: "Johnny Mnemonic", "New Rose Hotel" and "Burning Chrome". I think these stories are a cut above the imitations which have appeared since they came out; the writing is bright and melodramatic but never seems to parody itself (a constant danger when writing an action story). I particularly liked "New Rose Hotel", a fast-moving adventure which revolves around some novel technological advances and is superficially about corporate espionage but more deeply about loyalty. There's also a prototype "cyberpunk" story which I

possibly like even better than some of its successors, "Fragments of a Hologram Rose", which has some fascinating images. Possibly the best story in the book is "Dogfight", a collaboration with Michael Swanwick, which is about the next step after video games; it makes a sharp point about human behavior that is somewhat in contrast with its "cyberpunk" setting. I suppose that's one of the reasons why I continue to read Gibson in spite of the hype -- Gibson's characters are never overwhelmed by the technology or the action. It would be terribly convenient for Gibson to rely on the cardboard cut-outs which I see in "hard-boiled" detective fiction or cheap spy novels... There are a couple of straight fantasies in CHROME that I really enjoyed too. "The Belonging Kind", a collaboration with John Shirley, is about a man who wishes to be one of those people who always know what to say and how to dress, who look right in good restaurants or fancy parties (but there's more to it than he imagines). "The Gernsback Continuum" is a bit of fluff about a man whose reality is being invaded by hokey "technology" and architecture from the covers of '30s sf pulps; it reminded me a little of Blaylock's "Paper Dragons"... This collection may never sell as well as NEUROMANCER but it is every bit as worth reading.

Some time ago, Stanislaw Lem wrote an amazingly inventive collection called A PERFECT VACUUM, in which every piece was a review of some nonexistent book. VACUUM gets my unequivocal recommendation as a book which is essential for any sf library (or any library at all!)... ONE HUMAN MINUTE is a collection of three more of these "reviews". The title piece is about a book which is even more comprehensive than such best-sellers as THE BOOK OF LISTS or THE GUINNESS BOOK OF WORLD RECORDS: it describes what every member of the human race is doing during the period of one minute.

You learn how many people die per minute from police torture, and how many at the hands of those without government authorization; what the normal curve of tortures is over sixty seconds and their geographic distribution; what instruments are used in this unit of time, again with a breakdown into parts of the world and then by nation. You learn that when you take your dog for a walk, or while you are looking for your slippers, talking to your wife, falling asleep, or reading the paper, a thousand other people are howling and twisting in agony every consecutive minute of every twenty-four hours, day and night, every week, month, and year. You will not hear their cries but you will know that it is continual, because the statistics prove it.

If you were to know what every human being was doing during any given minute on this planet, what would happen to your opinion of human beings? The next piece, "The Upside-Down Evolution", reviews a military history of the 21st century and we discover that the next trend in weapons development will abandon the "gigantomania" of current systems and will concentrate instead on microscopic self-guiding weapons which spread like diseases. What happens when people finally become completely irrelevant to warfare? The last "review", "The World As

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Cataclysm", attacks the view popular in sf that the existence of life on Earth implies the existence of life on other planets. Lem maintains that we may be the only life-bearing planet in the universe. Reading this piece definitely shook up some cherished assumptions of mine... This is Lem at the top of his form, and as such this work is in my opinion so far superior to what normally passes as sf that I almost have to wonder how anyone could treat "normal" sf seriously.

After saying something as contentious as this, I suppose I shouldn't qualify it by saying that there are good sf stories and there are good stories that are sf, but that's how I feel. Lem excels at the former, while I think Kim Stanley Robinson is superb at the latter. I think both kinds are worthy of attention. In Robinson's best stories, the sf is an integral part but it isn't the whole point -- instead, it's used creatively to write a tale about human beings that wouldn't be as interesting without the fantastic element. Robinson's collection THE PLANET ON THE TABLE contains some excellent examples of this kind of story. "The Disguise" is about an actor in a new form of drama in which a persona is downloaded into the player and the lines and actions arise "naturally" from the player's subconscious. When the actor thinks he detects a murderer among the other members of the troupe, is it true, or is it part of the play?"The Lucky Strike" is about a slightly different World War II from our own, where a different crew must fly the atomic bomb to Hiroshima. When I read it, I was right there, looking through the bombsight with the bombardier, and was forced to ask: Did it really have to happen the way it happened? This is one of the most powerful sf stories I've read in ages... "Black Air" is about a slightly different Spanish Armada, in which a child shanghaied aboard a fighting ship is visited by an angel during an attack. It's really impossible to describe the impact of the story in a simple precis -- you must read it to find out that it is violently original and moving and

beautifully written. The other stories are uniformly good too; if you read and liked any of the three stories I've mentioned, you'll be more than pleased with the entire collection. My only complaint is that the book doesn't include the long novella "Green Mars", another excellent story which came out last year.

I read all three of the stories in TALES OF THE QUINTANA ROO by James Tiptree, Jr, when they appeared in magazines back in '81 and '82. So why did I buy the book? Well, for one thing, the book is another excellent example of publishing art from Arkham House, with some striking illustrations by Glennray Tutor which enhance the spooky mood of the stories. And yes, I think the stories are good enough on their own to justify the purchase of this volume. I certainly enjoyed re-reading them... Each story is a tale within a tale, a popular style of long ago which works wonderfully in Tiptree/Sheldon's gentle hands. All are set in the territory of the Quintana Roo on the east side of the Yucatan peninsula, and all capture a certain mystery which pervades the native culture and its ancient artifacts. "What Came Ashore at Lirios" is the tale of an American man who seems to have wandered the coast of the Yucatan for ages, who once had an incredible meeting on a beach

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which he may never find again. "The Boy Who Waterskied to Forever" is about a young Mayan man who ambitiously decided to be the first to waterski from Cozumel to the mainland, and didn't expect what he found when he arrived there. In "Beyond the Dead Reef" we meet an eccentric Briton who is emphatic that the narrator should not go diving in a certain spot near Cozumel despite a guide's recommendations... These stories are a bit formulaic and certainly have no major technical innovations, but they have vivid writing, interesting characters and just the right touch of the fantastic. Not bad for \$11.95 in hardcover.

Cozumel is a nice place to be when the pogonip rolls over Salt Lake,

Donn Seeley University of Utah CS Dept donn@cs.utah.edu

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Subject: Platoon  
Path: seismo!husc6!panda!genrad!decvax!ucbvax!ucsfcl!pixar!good  
Date: 3 Jan 87 03:59:24 GMT

"Platoon" claims to be the first realistic movie about the Vietnam War. That's a mighty tall claim, but it may be true. I just missed the draft, and so was never there. After seeing this film I have the feeling that I may have gained an inkling of what it must have been like.

This is a personal story, told from the point of view of the "grunts" in the infantry. The great, strategic decisions of the amateurs in Washington are far removed. Only the bitter fruits of those decisions are tasted here. The soldiers fight an enemy they can't see, and they sometimes even fight each other. They don't know where they are fighting or why. Surviving their tour to return home is the only real goal.

Charlie Sheen, a chip off Martin's block, is central in a group of gritty, convincing characters. There isn't a bad performance in the bunch. "Platoon" is as unpredictable as it is unforgettable. You can't predict who will die nor how a battle will turn. The violence is as coldly random as a real war. Bullets and fragments honor no rules of film making. I was gripped from the opening sequence, and often flat-out frightened.

Do not confuse "Platoon" with any Audie Murphy/John Wayne/Sly Stallone "war" movies. It is not so much about war as about the effect it has on those who fight. Think more in terms of "Gallipoli" and "The Killing Fields", and you'll be on the right track.

This movie is going to be compared to "Apocalypse Now". The difference between the two is well illustrated in the choice of music. Coppola's epic had Wagner's "Ride of the Valkyries" while "Platoon" effectively uses Barber's haunting "Adagio for Strings". The greatest similarity

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between the two movies is the fact that you will not be able to forget what you see. This film is going to be with me a long, long time.

--Craig

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Subject: Andrei Tarkovsky and "The Sacrifice"

Path: mtuxo!houxm!ihnp4!cbatt!gatech!lll-lcc!rutgers!mit-eddie!thakur

Date: 8 Jan 87 04:58:04 GMT

Andrei Tarkovsky died about a week ago of cancer. About three weeks ago, I saw "The Sacrifice," his latest (and last) film. I had not heard of him before, but I was quite impressed with Tarkovsky's work. If you are interested in films as a legitimate art form, you should see this film.

The film is made in a very Ingmar Bergman-type style. It was filmed by Bergman's favorite cinematographer (sorry, the name escapes me now) on Bergman's own island on the coast of Sweden. The film is about a man who sacrifices himself both metaphorically and literally to the powers at large (God, nature, call it what you will) in order to save his son, who has been rendered mute by a tonsilectomy, from an impending nuclear disaster. The man goes on a deeply personal and introspective journey to accomplish his goal. That is the value of this film. It is such a personal realization of Tarkovsky (he dedicated the film to his own son) that we begin to understand this character's very thoughts and motivations and reasons. Very few filmmakers these days will (or can) produce such a personal film.

The camera work is fabulous. It is very much in the style of mise-en-scene as in the films made during the late 19th century and the early 20th. The opening scene is about 10 minutes long -- and it is all one take. That Tarkovsky and his actors can film such a long scene in one take shows an immense amount of maturity and fundamental understanding of the extent and limitations of the film medium. As the film becomes more and more cerebral, the color retreats from normal color of reality to one inhabited (yes -- the colors do seem to have a life of their own) by grey and green. The film reverts back to "normal" colors as the film leaves the inner mind of the main character to become more of a third person narrative.

Some parts of the film are almost unbearable in the intensity with which personal thoughts and ideas are played out. You have to have a good attention span to watch and appreciate this movie. It is *very* different from your typical Hollywood or MTV fare. This film expands the definition of film itself, and achieves the complexity level of literature or poetry. Such a movie can only be designated as a work of art. It is fitting that Tarkovsky made his last film such a highly personal one, as he knew he was dying of cancer. His work was not in vain.



If you were despairing of ever seeing a truly artistic film made in the eighties, this movie is for you. I highly recommend this film.

Manavendra K. Thakur

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Subject: Andrei Tarkovsky and "Stalker"  
Path: seismo!cmcl2!yale!husc6!uwvax!astroatc!gtaylor  
Date: 8 Jan 87 16:18:05 GMT

I don't have any idea of how you will go about finding it, but you should do everything in your power to locate a copy for viewing of "Stalker"...the last film that Tarkovsky made as a Russian director. It had precisely the same effect on me that you describe-that sense of having one's expectations for film viewing stretched and redefined as one watches. The plot is painfully simple: some sort of unknown catastrophe (from space? man-made) has created a pocket of ah.... non-causality? something...in the world called "the zone". It is said that there is a place in the zone in which desires are made manifest. Real wishes. Real miracles. The zone is sealed off, and only the illegal stalkers enter the zone and ferry others about inside for a fee. The cost of this for the stalker is the terrible disfigurement through mutation of his only daughter. Two men hire him to provide passage into the zone. One of them has come to obliterate the place of wishes.

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