

1. In Middletown we will be discussing cyberpunk, in particular proto-cyberpunk. For example, John Brunner's T_h_e_S_h_o_c_k_w_a_v_e_R_i_d_e_r has the first known description of a computer worm, and David Gerrold's W_h_e_n_H_a_r_l_i_e_W_a_s_O_n_e has the first known description of a

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computer virus. (Interestingly enough, "Release 2.0" of W_h_e_n_H_a_r_l_i_e_W_a_s_O_n_e eliminates all references to the virus!) Are these works cyberpunk, proto-cyberpunk, or just plain old science fiction? Is cyberpunk something more than just computer-related science fiction? Come to the meeting and give your opinion!

2. Jerry Ryan has sent a description of Sheffield's B_e_t_w_e_e_n_t_h_e_S_t_r_o_k_e_s_o_f_N_i_g_h_t since I didn't get one before the meeting. The "parallel universes" it talks about aren't anything like what standard "parallel universes" are like, so our apologies to anyone who was misled:

You mention in the latest newsletter that you never got a description of Sheffield's book.... It was serialized in A_n_a_l_o_g within the last two years. The idea he uses is that it is possible to substantially reduce the temperature of people and have them remain conscious. People who this has been done to are able to talk, eat, sleep, etc., etc... but they do it at an incredibly slow rate. So slow, in fact, that interstellar travel takes "weeks" or "months" as perceived by these people, instead of the many decades it takes in "real time."

So the parallel universe is these people who are living their lives very, very, very slowly and those of us who are not "cooled down."

I won't spoil the story for you; there's some interesting stuff about the discovery of the effect and how people get recruited to "join up" with the folks that are living slowly. It was a slightly above average book.

3. I haven't written as much here recently as I have in the past. I have sort of been writing, but at a low level. This is because I

have been very, very busy. As is typical of AT&T I have been working on eight or nine unrelated things at once including supporting at least two tools that have (gasp!) users. I get a lot of the type of calls like "I have read your memo on retrieving documents from COMPAS. It says to type on something called a keyboard. I only have car keys and I don't hang them on a board, I keep them in my pocket. Where can I find a keyboard?" You know, technical stuff like that.

But anyway, things should let up a little now. I have gotten myself this great little work-saver called a SUN workstation. For those of you who have not seen one of these babies, let me give you an idea about the size of one of these things. Do you remember in the movie BRAZIL where there is a room full of people working on terminals with little tiny screens that require Fresnel lenses to read? Well the SUN workstation is about the size of that room. I tell you it's "Hello SUN. Good-bye desk space." And is it happy

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with that? No way, it sends out tentrals in the form of a mouse to colonize more of the desk. And every mouse needs a pad. And the pad takes up even more of the desk. The screen of this beauty looks like something out of THINGS TO COME.

This dandy little labor-saver comes complete with a 35-pound box of helpful documentation for the casual user. So anyway, the thing promises to save me lots of time once I get through all the documentation, then get it connected up right and find out what it is all for. In the meantime, don't expect a lot of spare time.

Mark Leeper
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...mtgzz!leeper

Every person is like thousands of books. New, reprinting,
in stock, out of stock, fiction, non-fiction, poetry,
rubbish. The lot. Different every day. One's lucky to

be able to put his hand on the one that's wanted, let
alone know it.

--Russell Hoban, LION OF BOAZ-JACHIN & JACHIN-BOAZ

GOR
The Movie
Reviewed by Jack Shadow

Twenty-one novels or so ago, a chap "named" John Norman starting writing a series of Edgar-Rice-Burroughs-style adventure novels set on a counter-Earth (opposite the Earth on the other side of the Sun). They had titles like T_a_r_n_s_m_a_n_o_f_G_o_r and R_a_i_d_e_r_s_o_f_G_o_r. Much as in ERB's classic Mars series, the Goreans possessed an unlikely mix of high and low technology, combining spaceships and perfect birth control with

swords. A relatively minor part of the background was slavery, as is frequently the case with hack-work adventure novels.

This continued for five novels or so, and Mr. Norman achieved some recognition as a writer of more or less enjoyable escapist adventure literature. At some point about the fifth novel what had been a few lines describing a slave being chained, whipped, or branded became a few pages ... and then an entire chapter. The Gor series became an open secret - the only source of soft-porn S&M material at Waldenbooks. Fortunately for Mr. Norman, Falwell and Robinson have for some reason neglected his publisher, DAW Books, and the owner of DAW is apparently well pleased with the Gor series. Rumor has it that the Gor profits more or less pay for all the innovative, low-profit, high-quality SF published by DAW Books.

The recent Gor movie must be viewed against this background. Some may have hoped for a decent action-adventure film while others for a bevy of beauties in chains. Both are sadly disappointed. The Gor film, is, to quote one critic, "a travesty of a mediocrity." Gone are the SF/fantasy elements of the novels (spaceships, alien priest-kings, tarns, etc.). Instead a magical stone transports our hero (Tarl Cabot) to Gor where he quickly becomes an amazing fighter in spite of a total lack of prior experience. The plot vaguely resembles some elements of the novels, but only to a point. There are some dancing slaves, but nothing like the preponderance in the novels. There is a plot, but it makes even less sense than that found in the novels, and at the end Cabot is returned to Earth via the "homestone" where he knocks down a beach-bully-type with his new-found skills.

My personal nomination for the most gratuitous scene involves the main characters sneaking through a cave. They come upon a blond woman in chains. One character says to another, "She has the dread disease narcosis. Terrible, isn't it?" or words to that effect. They move on and nothing further is said of the "dread disease." Lest you get the idea that although this is a bad film with a silly plot these flaws are compensated for by the presence of hordes of nubile slaves, I feel compelled to point out that this is the one of a very small number of such scenes in the entire movie.

Did I mention the poor acting? No? Well, there is plenty of bad acting as well. There is also a sequel, strongly but illogically hinted at by the final scene of the movie. This is definitely a (-2) movie, verging on (-3).

COSMIC KNIGHTS

(Isaac Asimov's Magical Worlds of Fantasy #3)

Pub. Signet (NAL), Jan. 1985, 339pgs., \$3.95

SPELLS

(Isaac Asimov's Magical Worlds of Fantasy #4)

Pub. Signet (NAL), May 1985, 350pgs., \$3.95

MYTHICAL BEASTIES

(Isaac Asimov's Magical Worlds of Fantasy #6)

Pub. Signet (NAL), May 1986, 343pgs., \$3.50

Book reviews by Michael E. Lukacs

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Capsule review: Slightly better than mediocre "theme" collections of fantasy stories from the last fifty or more years hiding under Isaac Asimov's name to help sales. One or two very good pieces might be worth the price of each of the books, but most are too lightweight or to familiar. Overall Ratings: #3=+1, #4=0, #6=+2. Individual stories are rated below.

These three books are from the Leepers' "Free reviewers copies in search of a reviewer" collection. I would not have bought them myself, nor would I have reviewed them had I read them in my normal stream. Why not? The answer to the second part is easy. I am very lazy. I do not like to write much. Therefore, I only write reviews of books that are very impressive to me either positively or negatively (ie: my recent review of Hawking's book or my following review of Whitley Streiber's book: "?" by Whitley Streiber; Rating: -4; Capsule Review: It made excellent kindling.) The first part of the question is harder to answer. I don't normally buy multi-author "theme" anthologies because I have been reading science fiction and fantasy for 37 years now and am a compulsive reader with a very good memory, therefore I have probably read and remember >50% of such a book's content, and unless the book contains several stories that I remember *so* fondly that I want to reread them, it is a bad bargain. I also have an aversion to books whose covers proclaim "JOHN BIGNAME presents sally who, or paul neverheardofhim writing in the universe of FAMOUS AUTHOR. Such blurbs seem to say to me that the publisher knows the contents are not worth much, but is trying to fool the public into buying this book.

I read these books. I am reviewing them. They are not bad, not great but not bad. They would be good books to give to a new young reader of the genre. More than that they had some excellent stories in them that I had not read before, but the contents of these books is so variable that I will give capsule reviews of each story below and let you decide for yourself if you haven't read and want to read enough from each book to be worth the price.

IAMWoF #3 - Cosmic Knights - \$3.95

"Crusader Damosel" by Vera Chapman

A mediocre love story set in the somewhat magical crusades.

Rating: 0

"Divers Hands" by Darrell Schweitzer

Story of a knight possessed and undone. Not totally remembered, but it seemed too familiar, the foreshadowing is too obvious.

Rating: +1

"The Reluctant Dragon" by Kenneth Grahame

The Disney Classic. Too Familiar!

Rating: -1

"The Immortal Game" by Poul Anderson

Cutesy living chess story.

Rating: 0

"The Stainless-Steel Knight" by John T. Phillifent

An amusing "Walter Mitty" story, not remembered.

Rating: +1

"Diplomat-at-Arms" by Keith Laumer

An important episode in Laumer's Retief saga, revealing formative influences upon the protagonist not mentioned in any other story, and completely new to me.

Rating: +2

"Dream Damsel" by Evan Hunter

Lightweight and predictable.

Rating: 0

"The Last Defender of Camelot" by Roger Zelazny

A very original addition to the Arthurian legends.

Rating: +1.5

"A Knyght Ther Was" by Robert F. Young

The second most obvious time-travel plot in the universe, but entertaining prose.

Rating: +0.5

"Divide and Rule" by L. Sprague de Camp
Familiar plot ala "War of the Worlds" and "Tripods."
Rating: +1

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IAMWoF #4 SPELLS

"The Candidate" by Henry Slesar
Lightweight and obvious.
Rating: -1

"The Christmas Shadrack" by Frank R. Stockton
Managed to be long and boring in less than 20 pages.
Rating: -1

"The Snow Women" by Fritz Leiber
Not bad early Fafhrd story.
Rating: +1

"Invisible Boy" by Ray Bradbury
Classically Bradbury, touching, pointless, and boring.
Rating: -1

"The Hero Who Returned" by Gerald W. Page
An interesting plot, and not overwritten.
Rating: +1

"The Toads of Grimmerdale" by Andre Norton
This was a good story the first two or three times I read it.
Rating: 0

"A Literary Death" by Martin Harry Greenberg
A small "Appointment with Death" story.

Rating: 0

"Satan and Sam Shay" by Robert Arthur

A "beat the devil" story for those with little imagination.

Rating: 0

"Lot #249" by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

A moldy oldy" by the man who made fairies-at-the-foot-of-the-garden famous. *Not* Sherlockian.

Rating: -1

"The Witch Is Dead" by Edward D. Hoch

A reasonably good mystery.

Rating: +1

"I Know What You Need" by Stephen King

The master of boring horror movies gives us a story too short to be boring and not very horrible. I found myself identifying with the antagonist.

Rating +1

"The Miracle Workers" by Jack Vance

A Magic-vs-Science Story. Not bad, but others have done better.

Rating: 0

IAMWoF #6 MYTHICAL BEASTIES

"Centaur Fielder for the Yankees" by Edward D. Hoch

Very lightweight, not very amusing.

Rating: 0

"The Ice Dragon" by George R. R. Martin

A good story, but too familiar.

Rating: 0

"Prince Prigio" by Andrew Lang

An amusing story, with some original ideas.

Rating: +1

"The Gorgon" by Tanith Lee

One interesting idea is enough for a short story.

Rating: +1

"The Griffin and the Minor Cannon" by Frank R. Stockton

Slow and pointless.

Rating: -1

"The Kragen" by Jack Vance

An excellent dawn-of-science story. Pure Hard SF.

Rating: +3

"The Little Mermaid" by Hans Christian Anderson

This immortal fairytale has no place in a book like this one. It is much too well-known.

Rating: -1

"Letters from Laura" by Mildred Clingerman

Lightweight, but amusing.

Rating: +1

"The Triumph of Pegasus" by F. A. Javor

An entertaining story of genetic engineering.

Rating: +1

"Caution! Inflammable!" by Thomas N. Scortia

Short. Pointed. Stupid.

Rating: 0 {at two pages I only paid \$0.02 so can't be negative.)

"The Pyramid Project" by Robert F. Young

Bad science hurts the suspension of disbelief, but it is an engrossing and different sort of story.

Rating: +1.5

"The Silken Swift" by Theodore Sturgeon

A satisfying story, with marvelously evocative imagery. A nearly perfect adult fairytale.

Rating: +3

"Mood Wendigo" by Thomas A. Easton

Interesting ideas, but badly expressed. Perhaps the author could have done a better job in a longer piece.

Rating: +0.5