

and check for sure. Contact Mark or me if you're willing. [-ecl]

2. I've got a little math problem for you. You've got a corral full of one hundred head of cattle and they all have hoof-and-mouth disease. After a steer has been in the corral for six hours he

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has, say, a 50% chance of being taken out and replaced with a new steer that does not have hoof-and-mouth disease yet. If the steer stays, six hours later he again has a chance of leaving the corral. The question is, how long will it be before the corral is free of hoof-and-mouth disease?

The answer is, of course, never. Hoof-and-mouth disease is contagious. If you want a corral free of hoof-and-mouth you've got to march out the cattle and stop playing this whole silly game.

What brought all this on? Well, I was just reading about how the Senate voted 95 to 5 to stop themselves from getting a 50% pay raise. They fought it valiantly, tooth and nail. But apparently the deck was stacked against them. The rules were set up so that, try as they might, they could not by themselves avoid getting a raise that by itself would make a pretty handsome annual salary. After losing the struggle they could utter a collective "Oops!", sigh to each other that you can't win 'em all, and accept the raise as gracefully as they can. What finally happened is that the House, under public pressure, voted it down reluctantly. It looked for a while as if the House would not vote it down in the hopes that they might fall into similar jaws and have a raise forced on them by the Senate.

Now I wanted to say something about this whole stupid arrangement of elected officials unable to avoid their own pay raises. I wanted to make it look absurd. I wanted, with a few well-chosen barbs, to imply that in a failing economy Congress was socking the Treasury and lining its own pockets and that they had set things up so it could look like they were crying all the way to the bank. I wanted to make the whole pay situation in Congress look ludicrous. But I have decided that anything I could say along those lines would be redundant. I cannot think of anything to say that is funnier or sadder than the facts. You can point out that Congress

did not get the raise and that all's well that ends well, but the idea that it took a massive public outcry even a_f_t_e_r the Senate voted against the pay raise leads one to wonder what sort of Alice-in-Wonderland foundation this country is based on.

3. I have somewhat shortened the schedule so as to keep in to under one page. This means that meetings won't be announced more than a couple of months in advance, conventions more than a couple of weeks. I will remind people, however, that memberships rates for Noreascon 3 are scheduled to go up March 15, that Hugo nomination forms must be postmarked by March 15, and that the main Noreascon 3 hotel is already more than half full. Noreascon 3's address is Noreascon Three, Box 46, MIT Branch P.O., Cambridge, MA 02139.

If you have strong feelings one way or the other on whether the schedule should include just our meetings, or include other New Jersey groups, or include conventions, and how far in advance all

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of these should be listed, please let me know. [-ecl]

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

If you would be a real seeker after truth, it is necessary that at least once in your life you doubt, as far as possible, all things.

The chief cause of human errors is to be found in prejudices picked up in childhood.

-- Rene Descartes

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1989 Nebula Ballot

NOVELS:

DESERTED CITIES OF THE HEART, Lewis Shiner, Doubleday/Foundation.

DROWNING TOWERS, George Turner, Arbor House.
FALLING FREE, Lois McMaster Bujold, Baen Books and ANALOG.
GREAT SKY RIVER, Greg Benford, Bantam/Spectra.
MONA LISA OVERDRIVE, William Gibson, Bantam/Spectra.
RED PROPHET, Orson Scott Card, Tor.
THE URTH OF THE NEW SUN, Gene Wolfe, Tor.

NOVELLAS:

"The Calvin Coolidge Home for Dead Comedians," Bradley Denton, F&SF June.
"The Devil's Arithmetic," Jane Yolen, Viking Kestrel.
"Journals of the Plague Years," Norman Spinrad, FULL SPECTRUM.
"The Last of the Winnebagos," Connie Willis, IASFM July.
"The Scalehunter's Beautiful Daughter," Lucius Shepard, IASFM Sept.
"Surfacing," Walter Jon Williams, IASFM April.

NOVELETTES:

"Do Ya, Do Ya Wanna Dance," Howard Waldrop, IASFM Aug.
"Ginny Sweethips' Flying Circus," Neil Barret, Jr., IASFM Feb.
"The Hob," Judith Moffett, IASFM May.
"Kirinyaga," Mike Resnick, F&SF Nov.
"Peaches for Mad Molly," Steven Gould, ANALOG Feb.
"Schroedinger's Kitten," George Alec Effinger, OMNI Sept.
"Unfinished Portrait of the King of Pain by Van Gogh," Ian McDonald,
EMPIRE DREAMS.

SHORT STORIES:

"Bible Stories for Adults No. 17: The Deluge," James Morrow,
FULL SPECTRUM.
"The Color Winter," Steven Popkes, IASFM Aug.
"Dead Men on TV," Pat Murphy, FULL SPECTRUM.
"The Fort Moxie Branch," Jack McDevitt, FULL SPECTRUM.
"Mrs. Schummel Exits a Winner," John Kessel, IASFM June.
"Voices of the Kill," Thomas M. Disch, FULL SPECTRUM.

FROM A SURGEON'S DIARY by Clifford Ashdown
Oswald Train, 1977 (originally published 1904-1905), no ISBN, \$7.00
THE STRANGE SCHEMES OF RANDOLPH MASON by Melville D. Post
Oswald Train, 1973 (originally published 1896), no ISBN, \$6.00
Two book reviews by Evelyn C. Leeper
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These two odd little volumes are an example of what Dover Books

used to do and what some small presses still do--reprint old and offbeat stories. By old, I don't mean five or ten years, but more like a century. (The Ashdown stories, being from 1904 and 1905, are comparative youngsters.)

Clifford Ashdown is a pseudonym for R. Austin Freeman (the creator of Dr. Thorndyke) and John James Pitcairn. The six stories in F_r_o_m_a_S_u_r_g_e_o_n's_D_i_a_r_y are "mysteries" encountered by the first person narrator, a locum tenens for medical practitioners in Victorian rural England. These mysteries are not so much solved by the narrator as revealed to him, making this somewhat of a disappointment--I had hoped for more investigation and analysis. Only in "How I Cured a Hopeless Paralytic" do we see any real deduction on the part of the narrator. In spite of this lack, however, the stories are enjoyable for their descriptions of rural medical practice, for the wonderful writing style and, yes, for the mysteries, somewhat obvious though they be.

F_r_o_m_a_S_u_r_g_e_o_n's_D_i_a_r_y is recommended to all those who enjoy turn-of-the-century mystery stories. (If, however, you want r_e_a_l medical detection stories, stick to Berton Roueche.)

T_h_e_S_t_r_a_n_g_e_S_c_h_e_m_e_s_o_f_R_a_n_d_o_l_p_h_M_a_s_o_n is a collection of short stories about Randolph Mason, a lawyer who specializes in telling his clients how to violate the spirit of the law without violating the letter, and thereby avoid punishment. He advises them how to murder, steal, embezzle, cheat, In general, he fulfills every bad stereotype of lawyers. Wouldn't this make a wonderful gift to a friend in law school? :-) (Apparently at least one of these stories resulted in changes to the law so that the described method would no longer get the criminal off the hook.) These stories lack the excellent writing style of F_r_o_m_a_S_u_r_g_e_o_n's_D_i_a_r_y, though, and I at least found their puzzle aspect interesting. Therefore, I can't really recommend them.

Unfortunately, the publisher of these and other delightful little volumes seems to have gone out of business a few years ago (I seem to remember hearing that the owner had died). T_h_e_S_t_r_a_n_g_e_S_c_h_e_m_e_s_o_f_R_a_n_d_o_l_p_h_M_a_s_o_n is available from three other publishers (check B_o_o_k_s_i_n_P_r_i_n_t for details), but F_r_o_m_a_S_u_r_g_e_o_n's_D_i_a_r_y is apparently out of print. I bought both of these in the dealers' room at a science fiction convention (Boskone), so for those who frequent such events, that's probably your best bet.

SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE CASE OF SABINA HALL by L. B. Greenwood

Simon and Schuster, 1988, ISBN 0-671-65914-6, \$16.95

A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper

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L. B. Greenwood wrote S_h_e_r_l_o_c_k_H_o_l_m_e_s_a_n_d_t_h_e_C_a_s_e_o_f_t_h_e_R_a_l_e_i_g_h

L_e_g_a_c_y two years ago, and has now followed up with a second Holmes pastiche. S_h_e_r_l_o_c_k_H_o_l_m_e_s_a_n_d_t_h_e_C_a_s_e_o_f_S_a_b_i_n_a_H_a_l_l is more accessible than R_a_l_e_i_g_h_L_e_g_a_c_y because it doesn't depend on detailed knowledge of Elizabethan England for its plot. Unfortunately, by setting this book (as well as the previous one) in the English countryside, Greenwood doesn't give the reader much of that Victorian London feel. (In fact, with both of the books set in dark, cold English country houses and climates so inhospitable that I'm surprised the British Tourist Authority hasn't attacked them.) However, Greenwood again does a good job with the characterizations, keeping everyone in character. This is an additional accomplishment given that the book has more of an emphasis on "the fairer sex" than most previous Sherlockian works did. (It has been pointed out that hardly any pastiches are written by women.) She has also abandoned the "Holmes-meets-famous-person" syndrome entirely (even though in the last one the famous person had been dead for hundreds of years). Greenwood seems to be the only author writing more than just a one-shot Holmes story these days, so if we're lucky we'll be seeing more from her.



THE BONFIRE OF THE VANITIES by Tom Wolfe

Bantam, 1988 (c1987), ISBN 0-553-27597-6, \$5.95

A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper

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It's not clear exactly to what the title of Wolfe's book refers. Is it a reference to the Northwest Amerind custom of the potlatch, the burning of all one's possessions at a ceremony designed to show off one's wealth? Or is it a reference to the medieval church custom of having the faithful cast into the fire those possessions leading to pride, particularly pride in appearance and worldly possessions? Certainly Sherman McCoy, the protagonist of T_h_e_B_o_n_f_i_r_e_o_f_t_h_e_V_a_n_i_t_i_e_s, is caught in that modern trap of conspicuous consumption: yuppie Manhattan. (Wolfe's description of what one "has" to do to maintain status in New York should do wonders for building up the population of Idaho.) But Sherman also eventually discovers how little all of his possessions ultimately mean.

T_h_e_B_o_n_f_i_r_e_o_f_t_h_e_V_a_n_i_t_i_e_s has been described by most reviewers as a comedy, but that is deceptive. It is too frightening/depressing to be funny. In the sense that D_r._S_t_r_a_n_g_e_l_o_v_e is a comedy, so is this. But

I think it is more accurately described as an attempt to show us how misguided much of our striving is. Unfortunately, I think the people at whom this warning is most aimed will heed it the least.

TRUE BELIEVER

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

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Capsule review: James Woods is great at playing characters who are just a little slimy and self-serving. As a not-very-choosy civil liberties lawyer he finds for once he wants to believe his client is innocent. James Woods' usual realistic performance matched with a plot as complex as an Agatha Christie make T_r_u_e_B_e_l_i_e_v_e_r one of Woods' better films. Rating: low +2.

James Woods is one of those actors like Harry Dean Stanton and Richard Farnsworth who have been around for a long time as character actors and who have built up a small following. He will probably never see his name in big letters over Times Square, but when he shows up in a coming attraction, a lot of people, myself included, make a careful mental note of the film's title. Woods, with a pock-marked face and a voice that is just this side of being actually gravelly, generally plays slimeballs very effectively. For me the films that come to mind when I think of Woods are V_i_d_e_o_d_r_o_m_e, S_a_l_v_a_d_o_r_e, and O_n_c_e_U_p_o_n_a_T_i_m_e_i_n_A_m_e_r_i_c_a. It is not that he is in such good films: T_r_u_e_B_e_l_i_e_v_e_r is in third crime film in a row, the other being B_e_s_t_S_e_l_l_e_r and C_o_p, neither bad but neither very good either. By a wide margin T_r_u_e_B_e_l_i_e_v_e_r is the best of the three and may well have the best script of any of his films.

Eddie Dodd (played by Woods with a ponytail) made a reputation for himself in the 1960s as a great civil liberties lawyer. He tells himself he is in the same civil liberties fight today, but his clients are almost exclusively drug dealers entrapped by the police and deep down it bothers him that while fighting for a constitutional principle he is also freeing a lot of guilty clients. Then he is shaken from this routine by a new assistant (played by Robert Downey, Jr.) and a case defending a Korean who was convicted eight years earlier of a Chinatown gang killing and is now accused of a second killing in prison. Dodd

decides to see if he can overturn the original conviction. In spite of Shu Kai Kim's lack of cooperation, Woods wants desperately to believe Kim was innocent of the original killing. So begins a complicated investigation involving neo-Nazis, drug dealers, and possible police corruption.

T_r_u_e_B_e_l_i_e_v_e_r has a puzzle of a plot with clues slipped to the viewer at unexpected moments. But like an Agatha Christie, everything makes sense by the end of the film. The byplay between Dodd and his new assistant is often witty and often angry, but unlike so many other crime films, it never seems artificial or set up. Director Joseph Ruben, who previously directed D_r_e_a_m_s_c_a_p_e and T_h_e_S_t_e_p_f_a_t_h_e_r, needs good actors and a good script. Woods is a good actor but he also needs a good script. Wesley Strick gave them a good script and they made a good, solid crime mystery. I rate it a low +2 on the -4 to +4 scale.

LAWRENCE OF ARABIA -- Restored Edition
Film comment by Mark R. Leeper
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While it is an old film, and a well-known one, I probably should say something about the restored version of LAWRENCE OF ARABIA since its release is one of the big events of the year. ("What? More words?" as Jack Hawkins asks early in the film.) And it's true, there has been a lot of media coverage. As a labor of love, Robert Harris has organized the restoration of a classic film, many people's favorite film of all time, and certainly one that deserves a +4 rating from me. The time spent on the restoration was longer than was spent on the original film (19 months on the restoration, 18 on the original film).

I think it is now film history what Harris and his people went through to restore the film. First Harris got Steven Spielberg and Martin Scorsese to tell Columbia that if the restoration did not get funded there would be no more Columbia films by either director. Harris's team scoured the world for prints that might have some footage that may have been cut from more commonly available editions. They found footage for which they had no sound and in some cases no script. They hired lip-readers to tell them what the actors were saying. Then

they re-hired Peter O'Toole, Alec Guinness, and several of the other actors to recreate their voices for 1962 and to redub the scenes, then they had to cut the new pieces in, artificially add hiss so the transition would not be so noticeable, and so forth. It was a remarkable piece of work. Further they had to remove the scratches for the pieces they had. Surprisingly, that is possible. The scratches are only on the surface and there is a process by which if you put the film in fluid, it fills up the cracks and you can transfer a scratchless image as long as you do so in the fluid.

So it was a giant piece of work, though I am told not incredibly expensive as new films go, and at the Ziegfeld in New York they did have lines wrapped around the block. I stood for 90 minutes in the cold to get in, and would probably do so again, though I have to say I was less than pleased with the Ziegfeld's presentation of the restoration, at least of the sound. The music was painfully loud and I would say it sounded distorted. It is rare that you see a 70mm print that is not a blown-up 35mm print. This was filmed on 70mm and you can see a difference, not a tremendous difference, but it is noticeable. The "mystical" experience of seeing the desert in all the glory of the original film eluded me. Yes, it is very good photography and seeing it in this really wide-screen version reminds you how good the photography is. It is a very good cinematic experience seeing the restoration, not much more.

Now here comes one of those pieces of heresy that I get my ears pinned back for occasionally. The people who cut down the film from 223

Lawrence of Arabia

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minutes to 187, they diminished the film. They did not butcher it. That 187-minute film that I got off of cable--that was a +4 film. The restored version seen on the wide screen is a better film, but not that much better. Given that the film was going to be cut, the "butchers" made pretty much the right cuts. There is one notable exception, the sequence of Lawrence massacring a group of Turks toward the end of the film. The cut version was incoherent; the full version was bloodier and made Lawrence less sympathetic, probably the reason for the bad cut. With the exception of that sequence and what it says about Lawrence, I find that what I like the film for was never cut out of it. (Speaking of what it says about Lawrence, I recommend an hour-long program they run on PBS that tells you more about the real Lawrence than the film

does.) I do not approve of the cuts that were made, but the result was still a very good film.