

physical powers what ODD JOHN did for mental powers, and both novels have endings that are less than satisfactory. The main character in GLADIATOR is also the literary basis for Superman, so the novel is of considerable interest. It should also be

THE MT VOID

Page 2

noted that a current DC Comic THE YOUNG ALL-STARS has a character described as the son of the main character in GLADIATOR. A recent issue covered in comic form the events of GLADIATOR under the guise of having the son read his father's private journal.

"SLAN is A. E. Van Vogt's slam-bang story of Jommy Cross, mutant superman, taking on the world. SLAN is more fun than GLADIATOR, but makes less sense. I read it a couple of times when I was 12, and haven't touched it since.

"The third acknowledged classic of 'superhuman fiction' is, of course, ODD JOHN, and, in my opinion, it is by far the best. However, GLADIATOR is a serious attempt to look at superhuman powers, and SLAN may be the most fun to read."

All except ODD JOHN are available in the Science Fiction Club library and are quick reads. (WILD CARDS I is an anthology.) [-ecl]

2. I was in a toy store this last weekend buying gifts. That in itself is a stupid thing to do. How can I tell you what it was like in the parking lot? Did you ever play with a puzzle that has fifteen plastic squares and one space in a four-by-four frame? That was what moving around was like. Except there were a few hundred cars and one parking space...until I took it.

You probably know the store I visited. It's the national chain with two hundred varieties of educational toys but the store name has in three words a grammatical error, a spelling error, and a dyslexic letter. really gives you confidence.

Anyway, so I'm looking at the new toys and wondering about the state of American education and then I see the Pound Puppies. These are toy dogs riding the Cabbage Patch trend which proved soft and ugly is appealing. (I'm working on it for myself.) And what do they come with now? From the name I would have guessed wooden mallets. But no, they come with new "Baby Puppies." I seem to remember tribbles were born pregnant, but that was an invented creature. I have yet to figure out what a "baby puppy" might be. It doesn't sound biologically possible. But if there's a buck in it, I bet baby puppies will soon have infant baby puppies.

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

FORGE OF GOD by Greg Bear
Tor, no ISBN number, \$17.95.
A book review by Mark R. Leeper
Copyright 1987 Mark R. Leeper

There is a curse that says, "May you live in interesting times."
If you look back at what were the interesting eras in history, you will understand why you want to live in the dullest times possible. Well, you can tell that you are in for an interesting time when Europa, one of the moons of Jupiter, suddenly goes AWOL. You can guess that something is happening that is pretty unusual. What is happening is that our world is being invaded, not by one, but by two alien races at the same time. Or maybe it is just one race. In any case, it is darn hard to tell what we've been invaded by, but part of it is something that ate Europa, and that cannot be a good sign.

Unfortunately, it is a little tough to say much about F_o_r_g_e_o_f_G_o_d without giving away too much of the plot. It is quite likely that you have not read an invasion novel in which the Earth has been invaded in quite this way before. This is certainly not a standard "interstellar

gunship" sort of invasion. This is very much an alien invasion novel of the 1980s and it has 1980s concerns. It concerns itself with questions like the Fermi Paradox, which asks, with all the possible intelligent races out there, why haven't we been contacted--it in fact comes up with a neat if not entirely pleasant solution to this paradox. It also deals with Von Neumann machines--the cybernetic equivalent of viruses. They do little in life but reproduce themselves.

It has been suggested that because F_o_r_g_e_o_f_G_o_d deals with these concepts it is a very realistic science fiction novel. I doubt that myself. It contains up-to-date ideas, but there is a certain pomposity to saying that in the 1960s we didn't know how really advanced aliens would be likely to attack us but in the 1980s we do. About the best I could say is that F_o_r_g_e_o_f_G_o_d is a better guess than many we have seen before. And still there is a lot about the invasion technique that Bear leaves unexplained and other parts that seem out-and-out wrong. But overall, it is a novel that keeps the reader guessing and turning pages. That and some decent ideas to chew on make this a well-above-average invasion novel.

PLANES, TRAINS, & AUTOMOBILES
A film review by Mark R. Leeper
Copyright 1987 Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: Pleasant compilation of all the holiday travel horror stories that fit into a short 93 minutes. Two very opposite travelers, played by Steve Martin and John Candy, are repeatedly thrown together by

fate and finally by choice. John Hughes can handle comedy about adults almost as well as comedy about teens. Rating: +1.

Mention John Hughes's name and most people think of films about teenagers. Most are light comedies that hide perceptive character studies. S_i_x_t_e_e_n_C_a_n_d_l_e_s and T_h_e_B_r_e_a_k_f_a_s_t_C_l_u_b are among his better efforts. F_e_r_r_i_s_B_u_e_l_l_e_r's_D_a_y_O_f_f was fair and W_e_i_r_d_S_c_i_e_n_c_e...well, even Frank Capra made occasional duds. P_l_a_n_e_s,_T_r_a_i_n_s,&_A_u_t_o_m_o_b_i_l_e_s is about people who are at least technically adults. But for that fact it bears all the hallmarks of Hughes's earlier work.

Neal Page (played by a somewhat subdued Steve Martin) wants to do something very simple. he wants to go from New York City to Chicago. He is leaving the Tuesday before Thanksgiving and he expects in hours to be with his family in Chicago. It will be hours (and hours and hours). Page is about to discover everything that can possibly go wrong when you travel and a few things that probably can't. One of the things that goes wrong is that he gets as a traveling partner Del Griffith (played by John Candy), who may well be the personification of every personality trait that Page does not want in someone to whom he will be in close proximity. Griffith is a boisterous, obnoxious shower-curtain-ring salesman. Page is prim, fastidious, intolerant, and uptight. Fate and coincidence have bound the two of them together on a circuitous and frustrating route to Chicago. Their trip is just one Murphy's Law incident after another, with just about anything going wrong that Hughes's sadistic mind can arrange. The basic plot is fairly predictable--the two will find every possible pitfall of traveling by air, rail, or road.

Martin has some funny bits on his own, but he is repeatedly upstaged by Candy, who plays his part far more broadly but at the same time winningly. Neither seems the kind of companion anyone would really want to go across the country with, though eventually we find ourselves inexplicably liking each. P_l_a_n_e_s,_T_r_a_i_n_s,&_A_u_t_o_m_o_b_i_l_e_s is pleasant holiday fare and worth a viewing. Rate it a +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

THE NEW ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES
edited by Martin Harry Greenberg and Carol-Lynn Rossel Waugh
Carroll & Graf, ISBN 0-88184-334-X, \$18.95.
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper
Copyright 1987 Evelyn C. Leeper

In honor of the Holmes Centenary, Martin Harry Greenberg and Carol-Lynn Rossel Waugh have assembled this collection of all new Sherlock Holmes stories (well, almost all new--two of the fifteen stories are reprints). (I think there's a rule in the publishing industry that Greenberg must edit or co-edit at least 50% of all anthologies published these days.) While a new Holmes collection is always welcome, this one is a little spotty.

John Lutz's "The Infernal Machine" is the first story and the one of the truest to Doyle's style of ratiocination. Yet it seems slightly more contrived and Holmes's deductions more lucky guesses than in Doyle's stories. Still, it is recommended. The last story is a nifty little locked-room mystery by Stephen King. Called "The Doctor's Case," it gives Watson a chance to show his powers of observation and deduction for a change. Greenberg and Waugh have sandwiched the rest of the stories between the best of the stories.

"The Adventure of the Persistent Marksman" by Lillian de la Torre is another classic ratiocination tale, having none of the flaws that many recent stories have had (see below). Why can't they all be like this?

"Shadows on the Lawn" by Barry Jones succeeds both as a Holmes story and a horror story, with overtones of the animate topiary of Stephen King's T_h_e_S_h_i_n_i_n_g. "Dr. and Mrs. Watson at Home" by Loren D. Estleman does not read well, but I think if it were performed--on S_a_t_u_r_d_a_y_N_i_g_h_t_L_i_v_e perhaps, with Dan Aykroyd and Gilda Radner--it could be hysterically funny.

"The Phantom Chamber" by Gary Alan Ruse is well-done but very derivative and predictable. On the other hand, you might expect "The Return of the Speckled Band" by Edward Hoch to be derivative and predictable, but it isn't. I think Hoch would have been wiser to write a totally independent story rather than create a (totally unnecessary) connection to a story in the Canon, but it manages to survive the grafting anyway.

Stuart Kaminsky's "The Final Toast" is strangely dissatisfying, perhaps because it consists of Holmes relating what happened rather than the reader being "at the scene." True, many of Doyle's best stories were told this way, but those seemed more alive than this.

Michael Gilbert's "The Two Footmen" is singularly uninvolved--every time I set it down, it totally leaves my memory banks. I get the feeling that Dorothy Hughes wrote "Sherlock Holmes and the Muffin" for a teenage audience and it doesn't hold up well either.

Jon L. Breen's "The Adventure of the Unique Holmes" is a story which tricks the reader--but not to the reader's delight. It is not even a full-blown story, but one of those Holmesian episodes that authors seem to love turning out to cash in on his popularity--it saves them the work of thinking out a case worthy of the Master.

Michael Harrison brings back Irene Adler in the predictable "Sherlock Holmes and 'T_h_e Woman'." This is another shortcut much beloved of those who would write Sherlockiana--the re-use of characters who have appeared in only one Canonical story. Naturally Holmes and Watson can appear in new stories, and Lestrade, Mrs. Hudson, and other continuing characters are fair game, but the wholesale name-dropping that goes on in new stories is beginning to grate.

The same re-use is even more annoying in "The Adventure of the Gowanus Abduction" by Joyce Harrington, which is set in modern-day New York City, seems inspired more by Dashiell Hammett than by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and deals with the d_e_s_c_e_n_d_a_n_t_s of one-time characters from the Canon.

"The House That Jack Built" by Edward Wellen may well be the first cyberpunk Sherlock Holmes story, so I suppose it must be read. Other than that, however, it has little to recommend it. Peter Lovesey's "The Curious Computer" is also computer-related, though not as cyberpunkish as "The House That Jack Built." Both of these stories use Irene Adler as a character; in fact, four of the fifteen use her. I know she was "T_h_e Woman," but I don't think the emphasis on the definite article here was supposed to indicate that she was the o_n_l_y woman. Give it a rest, folks!

And while we're at it, how about the following rules for all new Sherlock Holmes stories:

1. They will be set between 1870 and 1920.

2. They will not re-use one-time Canonical characters.
 - Corollary: They will especially not re-use Irene Adler.
 3. They will make passing references to _ a _ t _ m _ o _ s _ t one published or unpublished story.
 4. They will not change the basic personae of Holmes or Watson.
- Authors may break these rules only if they are going to write a genuine classic. None come immediately to mind.

Anyway, back to the book at hand. The afterword by John Gardner ("Moriarty and the Real Underworld") is a brief description of the criminal side of Victorian London which adds little to the book. Mollie Hardwick's introductory poem "221-B," however, strikes just the right note of nostalgia and sentiment for this commemorative volume.

So there you have them--fifteen stories, an afterword, and a poem in the "Centennial Edition Authorized by the Conan Doyle Estate." After a hundred years, Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson are as popular as ever. And a hundred years from now? Why not? After all, as Vincent Starrett said, "Here dwell together still two men of note, who never lived and so can never die."

HELLO AGAIN

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Copyright 1987 Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: Director Frank Perry is best at making odd, thought-provoking dramas. His attempt at making a light comedy in the Touchstone tradition is less than a roaring success. Shelley Long plays a woman magically brought back from the dead who has to get back into life. Nobody's reactions are believable. Rating: 0.

A few months ago, when O u t r a g e o u s F o r t u n e was released, I wrote

about what I expected would be fondly remembered as "the Touchstone comedies." They were a set of formula comedies, but each was fairly enjoyable. Well, the formula is already starting to wear a little thin.

H_e_l_l_o_A_g_a_i_n has a below-par script, some spotty acting, and very little in the way of humor. For the first eighty minutes or so the story seems aimless but amiable, then suddenly things do start to happen, but nothing very good.

Lucy Chadman (one of a number of nearly identical characters Shelley Long has played) has a bland existence as the wife of a Long Island plastic surgeon. About the only thing really unusual in her life is the year she was dead before her occult-loving sister brought her

back to life. The repercussions are not unlike those in M_y_F_a_v_o_r_i_t_e

Y_e_a_r and M_o_v_e_O_v_e_r,D_a_r_l_i_n_g in which supposedly dead wives prove to be

alive. Chadman finds her husband has married her mercenary best friend (played by Sela Ward, who is nowhere nearly as striking as she was in

N_o_t_h_i_n_g_i_n_C_o_m_m_o_n). People react in different ways to Chadman's return

and each reaction rings false. This could have been a very emotional comedy, but Susan Isaacs's script keeps sabotaging itself. Long's character is supposed to be incredibly clumsy for no other reason than to throw in a little gratuitous slapstick. It may work with some slapstick actors, but Long is incredibly inept at acting inept. Her pratfalls all seem mechanical and staged. In fact, the film has the feel of having been written for Chevy Chase and then modified for a female lead.

What makes the film even more disappointing is the track record of its director and writer, Frank Perry and Susan Isaacs, who were also

responsible for C_o_m_p_r_o_m_i_s_i_n_g_P_o_s_i_t_i_o_n_s. Perry's earlier works,

incidentally, include films stranger and more memorable than H_e_l_l_o

A_g_a_i_n, including D_a_v_i_d_a_n_d_L_i_s_a,

L_a_d_y_b_u_g_L_a_d_y_b_u_g, T_h_e_S_w_i_m_m_e_r,
M_a_n_o_n_a

S_w_i_n_g, and R_a_n_c_h_o_D_e_l_u_x_e. In such company

H_e_l_l_o_A_g_a_i_n will be quickly forgotten. Rate it a low 0 on the -4 to +4 scale.

Star Trek Funnies II
Anonymous
Provided by Seth Meyer and William Chao

Picard: Star Date Unknown - The Enterprise has just come out of Warp speed from an apparent "accident" with our Warp Engines. I sent Commander Ryker down to Engineering to find out what happened.

Ryker: [On Communicator] Captain, Ensign Wesley was playing with the warp drive controls again - shall we toss him in the brig?

Picard: Oh, no, Number One - You know that ever since that Alien in "The Last Outpost" told me to encourage his learning I have let him play with every control system on the ship! Hehehe, poor kid was simply having fun. I think that even though he placed 3,100 human lives in danger we can let this pass as usual, right, Ryker?

Ryker: Of course, Sir - we'll just do the usual "naughty little child" speech and send him down to Transporter Control so he can dinker with that. Ryker out.

Picard: Hehehe...Kids today, always getting in to trouble, aren't they? Reminds me when I was....

Troi: CAPTAIN! Shouldn't you be thinking up a way to get us out of here?

Picard: Oh, yes, you're quite right.... Okay, so where are we, Data?

Data: Appoximately 25 years before our show went on Television Sir. In the days of the Free Speech Movement, Vietnam, Food for Peace, The Cuban Missile Crisis, Civil Rights, Protesting, Drug Experimenting, The Beatles, Woodstock....

Picard: JUST THE FACTS, DATA.

Data: Well, to put it simply, we have traveled back in time, Sir. Back to the days when GOD...er, I mean...Gene Roddenberry first started writing these scripts...you know back in the dark times.

Picard: Yes, Data, I know of it - Worf, Yar, what do the scanners show?

Worf: Captain, unidentified craft is approaching us. It is registered as - CAPTAIN! The U.S.S. Enterprise!

Picard: NO! You mean the original ship with all of its flaws and mistakes that we were created to improve upon? You mean the mold for which 90% of our series has copied line for line, story for story?

Worf: Yes Sir, and it is pulling into orbit around us, Captain.

Picard: Well then I guess it's time to do the all famous, completely overused, everyone-give-a-suggestion-to-the-captain scene.

Yar: We should take 5 hostages from their ship and torture them until....

Picard: Thanx, Yar - anyone else?

Worf: I say we fight to the lastman and self destruct the ship.

Ryker: Of course - Never says anything.

Yar: Captain, communication from the other Enterprise.

Picard: Put it on Visual, Yar.

[The screen clears and Kirk is on viewer - Sulu, Chekov, Uhura, Spock are in the background]

Kirk: This is the USS Enterprise calling unidentified ship, can you read me?

Picard: Enterprise, this is the USS Enterprise of your future. My name is Captain Picard. I want you to know that I surr....

Troi: NO! Captain, you DON'T HAVE TO DO THAT.

Picard: ...Ah, yes...er, I invite you over here to see what your future looks like. We are from the year 1987 - Where Gene is given a new job after 25 years and gets to recreate a New Generation of Star Trek. Enterprise, we are the Next Generation!

Spock: Captain, he referred to Gene Roddenberry. I believe he was the one that got all of us into this mess. I believe that he might be telling the truth.

Kirk: Commander, Enterprise - Prepare to receive us.

[In the Transporter Room]

[Kirk materializes with Spock, McCoy, and Scotty]

Picard: Welcome to the Enterprise, Captain Kirk; my name is Picard.

Kirk: Hello, Mr. Picard, this is my first officer Mr. Spock, Chief Medical officer McCoy and Engineer Mr. Scott.

Scott: [Sees Worf] A Klingon! [Pulls his phaser] I canna believe it. How'd this nasty little beastie get on 'er ship? Captain, I knew this was a Klingon trap.

Kirk: Easy, Scotty, let's let Picard explain to us about this - Captain?

Star Trek Funnies 2 December 11, 1987

Page 3

Picard: Well...um...ah...you see, Gene decided that there would be this new alien in 1987 and it would be named the Ferengi...and, uh... we would pretend like all the aggressions of the past didn't happen and we are all friends now and there is no real explanation...uh.

Kirk: I see. You mean to tell me that we have to be friends!!! After all I've gone through - and now Gene makes us friends!! Where's the script writer...LET ME AT 'EM, LET ME AT 'EM!!!!

Spock: Hypo him doctor!

McCoy: [Hypos him] Easy Jim. Here's a sedative.

Scotty: All right, Klingon - at ease. I guess Gene has his reasons, but someday I'll get even.

Kirk: Whew...I am okay now - shall we tour the ship, gentlemen?

[Picard leads them to the bridge]

Picard: This is the bridge gentlemen.

Spock: [Sees Wesley] Fascinating, Captain; they use teenagers on the bridge!

Kirk: Picard, why do you let allow teenagers on the bridge?

Picard: Well...uh captain, you see Gene has determined that today's viewing audience is below the age of 13 years old. Therefore all of us that have spend years and years working for Star Fleet and attending the academy have been outclassed by - you guessed it - someone that is 1/5 of our age. Let me show you - Wesley?

Wesley: Yes, Captain?

Picard: I want you to turn my communicator into a combination phaser rifle and grenade launcher, okay?

Wesley: But of course, Captain, right away!

McDougal: Captain, I have been an Engineer for 27 years and I am absolutely positive that that cannot possibly be done!

Wesley: What? You must be the dumbest, stupidest person I know!! All you have to do is push these three buttons, turn this dial, pull down this lever, turn this gadget [okay - this goes on for another 30 seconds] and presto - what is absolutely, positively impossible is done!

Picard: Isn't that amazing! I mean my Engineer now looks like the biggest dolt on the ship- but boy, doesn't Wesley look intelligent!

Star Trek Funnies 2 December 11, 1987

Page 4

Spock: Fascinating, Captain - the kid actually does "steal the show" as the 20th Century producers used to call it.

Scotty: Ay - but if he was in my Engineerin' section and double talked me like that I'd have 'em placed into the matter/anti-matter condenser to be sure.

Kirk: Uh-huh...well, I tell you what, I think we'd better be getting back now.

Picard: So soon, I was going to let Ryker show you the rest of the ship.

Spock: This unit...er...person seems to serve no purpose - what does he do?

Picard: ...er...uh well he takes over for people when they should be doing it themselves. He's like a Wesley in reverse - he takes over someone else's job and screws it up worse than they would have done otherwise.
But he always looks like a hero in the end.

Kirk: [putting on a faked smile] Well isn't that helpful!

[Pulling his Communicator]

Kirk: Sulu, 4 to transport back.

Wesley: Wait - Remember I made modifications to our transporter! Can I transport you back, can I, can I?

Kirk: Well...uh...okay - Sulu relay that order - we'll use the New Enterprise transporters instead.

Wesley: Weeeeeeeee! Okay here we go! Locking on to your coordinates - okay, beaming!

COMPUTER: MALFUNCTION, MALFUNCTION, MALFUNCTION -

Kirk: Hey uh - AAARRRRGGGGGGG!!!!!!!!!!

[And the Rest is - uh hummm - history!]