

release. Not that I hadn't seen the film. I actually have a very good copy on tape, stereophonic sound and overture and everything. I love a spectacular film with an overture. Somehow hearing five minutes of music before you see anything, then having the film actually start (if possible, with a curtain rise), just fills me with excitement and anticipation. I'm serious. I love it!

THE MT VOID

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Anyway, I really wanted to go see it on a wide screen. As the time grew near I really was sorely tempted to watch my copy, even without the "snails and oysters" scene. Big deal. One scene. And a few violent fight scenes that the censor cut. What is good about the film is Ustinov's performance, and Olivier's, and Douglas's. Well, a poster showed up at my local theater. I went away on vacation looking forward to seeing the film when I got back from vacation. When I got back the film was gone. "Pulled from circulation for lack of attendance." I should have watched my copy when I wanted to.

2. I am sort of looking forward to the next Leeperhouse film fest. On Thursday, August 1, at 7 PM, we will be showing one of the great historical epics. And if you make noise or distract me, I break your head.

Spartacus
SPARTACUS (1960) dir. by Stanley Kubrick

What can one say about Stanley Kubrick's account of the Servile Rebellion against Ancient Rome? It is considered to be both intelligent and spectacular. It has a superb score by Alex North. What can you say about a cast like Kirk Douglas, Laurence Olivier, Jean Simmons, Tony Curtis, Charles Laughton, Peter Ustinov (a superb scene-stealer), John Gavin, Nina Foch, Herbert Lom, John Ireland, and Woody Strode? It won four Oscars. And it, together with E_x_o_d_u_s, broke the Hollywood blacklist by openly giving screenplay credit to the blacklisted Dalton Trumbo. It could have easily been boycotted. When it wasn't, the blacklist was broken. Several moving scenes punctuate the film. If you have seen it, see it again. If you haven't seen it, you'd be stupid to miss it. Almost up to L_a_w_r_e_n_c_e_o_f_A_r_a_b_i_a.

3. Does anyone have a copy of "Over the Long Haul" by Martha Soukup (which first appeared in A m a z i n g, March 1990) that I could borrow? (Why is there always one Hugo nominee that's impossible to find?) If you do, send e-mail to mtgzy!ecl, or call me at 957-2070. Thanks. [-ecl]

4. I am told that in the last notice I referred to "Columbia." The current spelling is "Colombia." Yes, I know what you are thinking. It doesn't look right to me either. But that is the correct spelling of the country.

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All our knowledge begins with the senses, proceeds then to the understanding, and ends with reason. There is nothing higher than reason.

-- Immanuel Kant

TALES OF NATURAL AND UNNATURAL CATASTROPHES by Patricia Highsmith
Atlantic Monthly, 1987, ISBN 0-87113-341-5, \$8.95.
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper
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Patricia Highsmith is primarily known as a mystery writer, yet in this collection she is well withing the bounds of "speculative fiction." I suspect it is her unfamiliarity with the genre that leads her occasionally to re-use well-worn plots, yet her style helps rescue them from mediocrity.

The first two stories place more emphasis on style than on the actual events involved. "The Mysterious Cemetery" has an eerie quality that seems to be a cross between Poe and Lovecraft. "Moby Dick II; or The Missile Whale," on the other hand, while evoking Melville in the title, bears little stylistic similarity. Rather, parts of it reminded me of Richard Adams's "animal's-eye" view of things.

From these two atmospheric stories, we go on to more plot-oriented

ones. "Operation Balsam; or Touch-Me-Not" is a tale of what might be happening to the country's radioactive waste--not unlike other cautionary tales perhaps, but far more realistic in plotting and characterization than most (and far less optimistic than anything _ A_ n_ a_ l_ o_ g would print). "Naubuti: Warm Welcome to a UN Committee" may not be politically correct these days, but it probably reflects the reality of life in the newly independent states in Africa. ("Newly" here means in the last thirty years.) If Tor is looking for a thematic pairing of stories for their "Tor Doubles" series, I would suggest this and Mike Resnick's "Bully!" as excellent stories on the theme "Is Africa Ready for Independence?" (Boy, if that doesn't stir up discussion, nothing will!) (After writing this, I noted that "Bully!" has been paired with Resnick's "Bwana" so I suppose that puts an end to that. But there could still be a theme anthology....)

Just what a "kinder, gentler" America could lead to is examined in "Sweet Freedom! And a Picnic on the White House Lawn." Or as a friend of mine is fond of quoting, "Be careful what you ask for, because you might get it." If you want a classic horror story a la the old E. C. Comics, try "Trouble at the Jade Towers." (It also reminded me of the episode "Beetles" from _ T_ a_ l_ e_ s_ f_ r_ o_ m_ t_ h_ e _ D_ a_ r_ k_ s_ i_ d_ e.)

In "Rent-a-Womb vs. the Mighty Right" Highsmith points out the illogic in many of the positions of the "New Right." (Of course, that's just _ m_ y opinion. Your mileage may vary, as they say, in this case depending on your philosophy.)

As "Rent-a-Womb vs. the Mighty Right" is about birth, so "No End in Sight" is about death, making a neat diptych in the center of this book. The yellowish-green glow of Naomi predates Stephen King's _ G_ o_ l_ d_ e_ n_ Y_ e_ a_ r_ s

by four years, by the way, so I wouldn't rush to assume any influence here. Just because Naomi is over 200 years old and glows green could be a coincidence. (Then again, "No End in Sight" is right about the same time as _ T_ o_ m_ m_ y_ k_ n_ o_ c_ k_ e_ r_ s, the original green glow story.)

The politics of religion resurfaces in "Sixtus VI, Pope of the Red Slipper," as well as some older ideas as well. Does the Lord work in mysterious ways, his wonders to perform? Or is it all accident and

happenstance? In any case, this extrapolation of liberation theology certainly stimulates thought.

Unfortunately, the collection ends on a weak note with "President Buck Jones Rallies and Waves the Flag," heavily inspired (so far as I can tell) by Stanley Kubrick's _ D_ r_ =_ S_ t_ r_ a_ n_ g_ e_ l_ o_ v_ e_. What isn't Kubrick seems pure Ron and Nancy, and it's a pity that an otherwise good collection finishes up on such a lame story.

I haven't read other Highsmith books, and so can't comment on her work in general. But these speculative fiction stories are recommended as a way of seeing things from a different perspective.