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1. Of the next discussion book (M\_i\_n\_d\_b\_r\_i\_d\_g\_e, to be discussed October 30 in Lincroft), Paul Chisholm offers this brief description:

Mankind has stumbled to the stars, but there's a price: the instantaneous transportation method of getting there usually isn't permanent, and exploring is dangerous. Mankind has stumbled onto a way of making people telepathic, but there are several prices; the loss of privacy for mental intimacy is pretty low on the list. Mankind has stumbled across another intelligent race; the price may be our extinction.

There are some problems with M\_i\_n\_d\_b\_r\_i\_d\_g\_e, Joe Haldeman's second SF novel. It seems to violate Asimov's guideline that you can have only \*one\* impossible element in your story (this has two or three). Dale Skran has complained that it uses Haldeman's Standard Wrap-EVERYTHING-Up Ending. If you don't like "dark capitalism" settings (where corporations are very powerful, and most individuals aren't, like Haldeman's Confederation in other stories), M\_i\_n\_d\_b\_r\_i\_d\_g\_e will make you uncomfortable. But if you read SF stories for ideas, for plots of adventure, for characterization, for unusual settings, or for excellent writing, I can highly recommend M\_i\_n\_d\_b\_r\_i\_d\_g\_e. [-psrc]

2. I have been talking about kosher cuisine in these last couple of articles. I have figured out just what is wrong with kosher cooking. I think the people who cook kosher really have their mind on something else. There is a hidden agenda in kosher cooking--perhaps more than one. If you want to get the idea of what a cuisine is like with a hidden agenda, go into a health food store. These places have all the gustatory appeal of the medicine section of your local drug store. Most grocery stores choose food

primarily by what tastes good and secondarily by what is healthy. Health food stores concentrate first on what is healthy and secondarily on what tastes good or what anyone would want to eat. They end up with lentil loaf mixes and boxes of blue corn flakes (honest!). Blue corn, we are told, was what made Mayan civilization all that it was. That may go a long way toward explaining the archaeological mystery of why the Mayans abandoned their civilization at its height and returned to the jungles. Blue corn might have been what did it.

Well, if you think placing health considerations over flavor leads to a weird set of foods (and you'd be right!), you should read the article in K\_o\_s\_h\_e\_r\_G\_o\_u\_r\_m\_e\_t on "Symbolic Eating." There you choose your food for its symbolic meaning, not because it is healthy or tastes good. You eat beets because their name in Aramaic is "silki," which means "to remove." You eat beets to remove the bad things in life, to remove your enemies. If you want to remove your

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friends, I guess you eat garlic though presumably eating beets might do it also. They just mean "to remove." You eat beans because they are a symbol of abundance. That chunks of meat dish with the beans and the fat sitting on top of the gravy, that had beans for abundance. I'd throw in a beet or two to symbolically ask for the cholesterol to be removed from my arteries. Then I'd throw the whole mess out to avoid the cholesterol in the first place. I wouldn't want to eat that muck anyway.

3. Several people have mentioned that they would love to get summaries of the book discussions. If anyone attending them has a urge to write up a summary, we would be more than happy to print it. [-ecl]

4. And several (other) people have asked that I not include underlining and backspacing in the electronic copy of the MT VOID. Is there anyone who would object to my changing all underlined words to all capital letters (in the electronic copy only)? If not, I will start with next week's notice. (I still need to deal with the problem of backspaces for other reasons, such as accent marks. But that's another problem.) [-ecl]

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If a man could kill his illusions he'd become a god.  
-- Colin Wilson

THE SILENT STARS GO BY by James White  
Del Rey, 1991, ISBN 0-345-37110-0, \$5.99.  
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper  
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Healer Nolan is about to set forth on a starship to a new world. Using cold sleep, ten thousand colonists will travel to a new world. Led by the Kingdom of Hiberia, the voyage is a joint

venture with the Royal Court of Tenochtitlan, the Redmen of the West, and the courts of Cathay and Nippon. Because of rivalries and intrigues, however, Nolan is forced into a role he never expected.

Yes, it's an alternate history--but why? (The answer that White is Irish and wanted to postulate a world in which the Irish are the super-power is not acceptable.) Because the ship takes off fairly early, there isn't enough time spent on the alternate Earth to use the background to its fullest, and the intrigues after the ship takes off could have been grounded in some future of ours, not in an alternate past. The space travel adventure story is certainly strong enough to stand on its own, and the alternate history just necessitates long expository passages about the history that led to this world. And the epilogue is the straw that breaks the camel's back for the alternate history element.

Now what White s\_h\_o\_u\_l\_d have done (in my not-so-humble opinion) would have been to write two novels, one set on the alternate Earth and stressing that part of the story, and one stressing the story of the spaceship traveling to a distant star system. They could even have been issued as a Tor Double.

Because the adventure element, particularly the trek across an alien planet, is more than enough to make up for the shortcomings of (or short shrift given to) the alternate history plot. White does a good job with his many characters and their situation and manages to provide an enjoyable story that keeps you involved. So I recommend T\_h\_e\_S\_i\_l\_e\_n\_t\_S\_t\_a\_r\_s\_G\_o\_B\_y as a space adventure novel, even though the alternate history elements make it drag at times.

RETURN TO THE FORBIDDEN PLANET  
A theatre review by Mark R. Leeper  
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back in the 1960s there were a bunch of novelty records that were popular. They would tell a story and illustrate it with little snatches from rock 'n' roll classics. They would say something like, "Martians have landed in Washington. How do you feel about that, Mr. President?" Then you would hear Elvis Presley singing, "I'm all shook up!" "Well, do you have a message for the Martians?" Then you would hear from "Flying Purple People Eater," "Pleee-ese don't eat me." It should be noted that the stories told this way were a long way from winning Pulitzer Prizes, but of course nobody expected a good story from one of these outings. The story was secondary to the clever choices of rock and roll snatches.

Now suppose you wanted to do that sort of thing in a larger format--say a play. You want to tell the story of the film F\_o\_r\_b\_i\_d\_d\_e\_n\_P\_l\_a\_n\_e\_t and cut to rock and roll classics. Of course, it would have to be a campy retelling, but then you have a tradition and audience from R\_o\_c\_k\_y\_H\_o\_r\_r\_o\_r\_S\_h\_o\_w and L\_i\_t\_t\_l\_e\_S\_h\_o\_p\_o\_f\_H\_o\_r\_r\_o\_r\_s you can play to. And say, isn't F\_o\_r\_b\_i\_d\_d\_e\_n\_P\_l\_a\_n\_e\_t a reworking of Shakespeare's T\_h\_e\_T\_e\_m\_p\_e\_s\_t? Let's write all the dialogue in pseudo-Shakespearean style. (A minor aside: F\_o\_r\_b\_i\_d\_d\_e\_n\_P\_l\_a\_n\_e\_t does take the basic situation of T\_h\_e\_T\_e\_m\_p\_e\_s\_t as a springboard and borrows an idea or two. In my experience the people who most vehemently say that F\_o\_r\_b\_i\_d\_d\_e\_n\_P\_l\_a\_n\_e\_t retells T\_h\_e\_T\_e\_m\_p\_e\_s\_t are also the people least familiar with T\_h\_e\_T\_e\_m\_p\_e\_s\_t.) Now as long as we are imitating Shakespeare, let's throw in a bunch of puns on the Bard's most famous lines ("I cannot tell if it is one beep or two." "Two beeps or not to beeps....").

To bring all this together into one rambunctious stage play requires a great deal of undeniable talent. So does building a huge standing structure out of many decks of playing cards. In each case, however, whether you are really entertained watching them do it is a matter of taste. Certainly the plot itself does nothing to entertain the audience nor is it intended to. It intentionally is a stupid skit borrowing a little from F\_o\_r\_b\_i\_d\_d\_e\_n\_P\_l\_a\_n\_e\_t but avoiding any real human drama and certainly any science fiction value. As I am sure even author/director Bob Carlton would tell me, the plot is not really the point. This story has less to do with the human condition than a liverwurst sandwich has to do with the kings of Siam. This is the sort of play where if it is easier to have the spaceship inexplicably drawn to the planet rather than told to stay away, you do that. So what makes this planet "forbidden"? Well, it was expected you would not notice the title does not fit. That isn't the point. For that matter, if there is not even an explanation in the plot why the spaceship is drawn to the planet,

that is not the point either. The point is to sit there and have a good time and to turn your mind off. Way, way off. Unfortunately even turning my mind to its lowest setting, I still found the lack of any sort of story to be a serious problem.

The point, of course, is first of all to hear some classic rock and roll music performed live. Next it is to see some gimmicky pyrotechnic staging, in some cases quite literally pyrotechnic. Third, it is to hear some jokes. Acting is optional, though talent is not. The actors in this play are also the band and they seem to trade musical instruments as readily as they trade quips. If one of the trombone players has a bad cold he could take out a big piece of the cast. Most talented is Gabriel Barre, who plays Ariel the robot and does pretty much anything anyone else in the cast can do, but he does it on roller skates. If this play has another actor it is Louis Tucci as Cookie the ship's cook. The cook ends up in a rather silly love triangle competing with the ship's captain, a Robert Goulet look-alike. Cookie demonstrates emotions deeper than a quarter of an inch, which makes him a real stand-out.

The staging is a very important part of this play. The entire theatre becomes the inside of a spaceship. The ship itself is a cross between junkyard-parts-tacky and Las Vegas lights. At appropriate moments strange and unexpected things happen which are mechanically triggered. And, of course, the set only enhances to pre-show hi-jinx. This is one of those plays that actually starts fifteen minutes before the time on your ticket, so arrive early if you go.

This is a play that never works well, but with all the patchwork of intentionally mismatched parts, it is amazing it works at all.

## HOMICIDE

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

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Capsule review: Strange and disturbing thriller about a Jewish policeman torn between two cases. David Mamet's best film so far is one of those films you cannot fairly even give thought to until it is all over. A spoiler included after the review discusses several of the questions raised by the film. Rating: +3 (-4 to +4).

Bobby Gold (beautifully played by Joe Mantegna) is a respected cop on the homicide squad who has reacted to police department anti-Semitism by struggling to assimilate and to ignore his Jewish roots. Early on we see him be the butt of a totally unreasonable tirade from a bigoted black superior who gets his jollies calling Gold a "kike." Gold is already involved in a case trying to find a black cop-killer before the FBI can find and kill him. He is getting enthusiastic about this project and its prospects for him to redeem himself in the department's eyes. Then, by accident, he becomes involved in another case and is told he must take charge of this case also. An elderly Jewish woman who ran a candy store in a black neighborhood has been murdered. The last thing he wants is an assignment that will tie himself in with the Jews, and it does not help that the woman's family seems to think that there is a deeper



conspiracy involved. But then evidence starts appearing that may point to an anti-Semitic conspiracy. That and an unmasking of Gold's own self-hatred as a Jew start pushing him to value this case more and to neglect the other.

    H    o    m    i    c    i    d    e is just a sort of typical David Mamet. That is, there is a fair amount to say about it, but most of it falls under the classification of spoiler. Any review that does not ruin some of the surprises of this marvelous puzzle of a film will be so general as to be nearly pointless. David Mamet, like the Coen Brothers, specializes in crime films with a sort of unexpected spin. I first became aware of Mamet through a radio play called "The Water Engine" which had a marvelous 1939 period feel and dealt with one of the great American myths, the engine that runs on water for fuel and that the insidious auto companies have hushed up. Mamet wrote DePalma's     U    n    t    o    u    c    h    a    b    l    e    s, but also has directed his own screenplays     H    o    u    s    e    o    f    G    a    m    e    s and     T    h    i    n    g    s    C    h    a    n    g    e. Both were good;     H    o    m    i    c    i    d    e is better.     H    o    m    i    c    i    d    e lacks     B    a    r    t    o    n    F    i    n    k's visual style and craftsmanship, but its story is better and a case could be made that the two are thematically linked. They are the two of the best films I have seen this year and they would be very interesting seen as a pair.

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Mamet's excellent screenplay is a grabber from the very first scene. The film is already tense and suspenseful before the first word of dialogue is spoken. Most enigmatic is Joe Mantegna's Bobby. Does he suddenly feel a solidarity with the Jewish community or is he reacting from guilt and to prove something. How real was his anti-Semitism earlier; how real was his reversal? Was he doing what he believed or was he first professing not to like Jews in order to win approval from his buddies, then reversing to prove something to the Jews he met through the case. There is a lot to this film. I give it a low +3 on the -4 to +4 scale.

\*\*\*\*\*VERY HEAVY SPOILER WARNING\*\*\*\*\*VERY HEAVY SPOILER WARNING\*\*\*\*\*

Mamet's story is an amazing orchestration of smoke and mirrors. Like     T    h    e    D    a    y    o    f    t    h    e    J    a    c    k    a, we follow the reasoning each

step of the

at

way to its logical conclusions. But in T\_h\_e\_D\_a\_y\_o\_f\_t\_h\_e\_J\_a\_c\_k\_a\_l least we feel we know our logic was wrong earlier. At the end of this film we do not even have the security of knowing anything. We have no idea to what degree Bobby was right, to what degree he has misled himself, and to what degree he has been intentionally manipulated.

In a bad James Bond film, such as M\_o\_o\_n\_r\_a\_k\_e\_r, the clues are all laid out for Bond. He gets into a fight in a factory, knocks into a crate, finds an address on it, and goes to that address only to get into another fight and find another clue. Bond never goes off in the wrong direction. In H\_o\_m\_i\_c\_i\_d\_e the clues seem a little too easy to find. It is almost as if they were left lying around intentionally. Bobby never stops to reason, for example, that organizations like 212 do not put their addresses on stationary. On the other hand, it is a tenuous chain of events that brought Bobby to that clue. If Bobby were intentionally being brought to 212, there were a lot of people in on the plot. How could they have been sure Bobby would come to that yeshiva and overhear the mention of 212. If the finding of 212 was just chance, how did the organization know so fast what it wanted from Bobby?

It seems almost impossible that there was not a Jewish conspiracy. But if there was a Jewish conspiracy to get back the names, the question is why? The law is not going to go after people who ran guns to the Israelis forty-five years ago. There might be a revenge plot going on against the gunrunners that would explain the murder. And we did catch a glimpse of someone on the roof. But that implies there are two opposed conspiracies. That seems a little far-fetched, particularly since the police think they know who committed the primary murder.

Then maybe there was no conspiracy at all. Except that 212 did seem to know they wanted Bobby's list. The plot is constructed like a bedsheet that you can tuck in only three corners on. If you try to tuck in the fourth corner, one of the other corners pops out. There is no consistent explanation of what we saw. And in the middle of this confusion is Bobby, who would be betrayed by his own people, much like Randolph was.