

Our next film fest will be a showing of the first three episodes of "The Survivors," and I have claimed for years that I thought that this was the best science fiction TV series I had ever seen. (I don't count the 6-part Quatermass serials as being long enough to

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be series.) I recommend the series very strongly. In the mid-1970s I worked in Detroit when the CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) broadcast the first season. What a reaction! People who had never expressed any interest in science fiction before then would have animated lunch discussions about the previous night's episode of "The Survivors."

The plot of "The Survivors" is that almost all of the world has been killed by a virus. There are perhaps 7000 people left in Britain, in any case so few left that no two people who knew each other prior to the virus are now both alive (or at least can now find each other). Pockets of people are trying to form again into small societies. Some work out, some do not, and the question of what makes a society work is central to the series. There are three or four groups of people claiming to be the British army, none of which have any real claim to the title. Some group try to grab up pre-existing food and resources, others try to start farming anew. The story is very intelligently executed. Don't expect a lot of special effects, but do expect some very good writing and some very compelling situations.

One of the reasons I am showing the series is that I would like to see people writing their local PBS stations and requesting that they get the series. A friend is making me copies from a San Francisco area PBS station's broadcast, so it is in syndication. I have a source, but it loses a lot of the thrill if there aren't people to discuss the series with.

(If time permits we will show the fourth episode as well, but I suspect the discussion periods will make this infeasible. -ecl)

(I suspect that people will want to stay and see a fourth episode even if there is discussion. I may want to if for no other reason than I will not have seen it since my Detroit days.)

2. Some of you may know that WBAI, FM 99.5 has a two-hour radio program devoted to science fiction every Saturday morning from 5 AM to 7 AM. (I have a tape recorder on a timer to get it.) Jim Freund currently hosts the program, "Hour of the Wolf," invented by Margot Adler (currently a popular commentator on NPR). Saturday, May 2, will be the 20th anniversary of the program. WBAI will spend a whole day devoted to science fiction, fantasy, and enchantment.

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5:00 AM Subject: Terrence McKenna
7:00 AM Subject: Jorge Luis Borges
8:30 AM "By His Bootstraps," Richard Dreyfus in radio drama
10:30 AM "13 Clocks," Radio dramatization
noon Philip K. Dick interview
1:00 PM Piper in the Meadow Straying: science-fiction-related music
2:00 PM "Star Pit," reading by Samuel Delaney
5:00 PM "Soundtrack," science fiction in the movies
7:00 PM "Golden Age of Radio," classic science fiction radio drama
9:00 PM Reading at Dixon Place: current authors reading own works
11:00 PM "Hour of the Wolf" with Margot Adler (2 hours)

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The scientific attitude of mind involves a sweeping
away of all other desires in the interest of the

desire to know--it involves supression of hopes and fears, loves and hates, and the whole subjective emotional life, until we become sudued to the material, without bias, without any wish except to see it as it is, and without any belief that what it is must be determined by some relation, positive or negative, to what we should like it to be or to what we can easily imagine it to be.

-- Bertrand Russell

TOTO THE HERO

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

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Capsule review: The reminiscences of a man who blames all the pain of his life on a friend with whom he believes he was switched at birth. Childhood and adult fantasy intertwine with reality as Thomas

(nicknamed Toto) plots his revenge on Alfred.
Strange but likable film. Rating: low +2 (-4 to +4).
(Warning: there are spoilers in this review.)

Thomas van Hasbroeck is unstuck in time. Well, in fact his whole family was a little unstrung in various ways. Thomas grew up with the childish fantasy that he had been switched with another baby, Alfred, in the nursery and the rich kid across the street really belonged to Thomas's family and Thomas belonged to the rich family. Through life, every misfortune Thomas suffered he blamed on Alfred. Every piece of good fortune Alfred enjoyed should have gone to Thomas. Thomas blamed Alfred for the loss of the two women he loved. One was his sister Alice, who was attractive and had a natural flair for arson and incest. Later it was Evelyne, who loved Thomas but married Alfred. All this is a set of disjointed reminiscences of the old Thomas as he plans his revenge on Alfred. At each age, we see Thomas's fantasies of revenge against the dastardly usurper Alfred. Usually they are framed as scenes from a spy film about the great Toto--Toto is Thomas's nickname. And part of what the film is about is the function of fantasy as an important part of how we see reality. Thomas must know that he is making most of his fantasies up, but they impact strongly on his world view.

Flashing forward and backward in time, we see little enigmatic memories as flashes that will later be fleshed out. Eventually we discover that the film has played a nifty little sleight-of-hand on us--a double sleight-of-hand, in fact.

The director and screenwriter of this Belgian-French-German production is Jaco van Dormael, who went from being a clown to being a children's theater director to being a film director. He has fun with children and the way they look at the world.

This film has been getting a lot of positive comment after appearing at several film festivals. It is a little slight for the comment it is getting, but it is worth seeing. I give T_o_t_o_t_h_e_H_e_r_o a low +2 on the -4 to +4 scale.

THE FANTASTIC CIVIL WAR edited by Frank McSherry, Jr.
Baen, 1991, ISBN 0-671-7206-5, \$4.50.
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper
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This anthology is brought to you by the same group of people who produced T_h_e_F_a_n_t_a_s_t_i_c_W_o_r_l_d_W_a_r_I_I: Frank McSherry, Jr.; Charles G. Waugh; Martin Harry Greenberg; introductions by S. M. Stirling; and a cover by Ken Kelly that is visually striking but totally unrelated to any story in the book (and extremely similar to the one of T_h_e_F_a_n_t_a_s_t_i_c_W_o_r_l_d_W_a_r_I_I, which is also totally unrelated to any story in that book). And just to keep the record straight for any readers outside of the United States, this is the United States' Civil War that is being discussed.

About a third of the book is Ward Moore's classic B_r_i_n_g_t_h_e_J_u_b_i_l_e_e, not the first "what if the South won the Civil War?" (the first I know of were Winston Churchill's "If Lee had not Won the Battle of Gettysburg" from S_c_r_i_b_n_e_r'_s December 1930 issue, James Thurber's "If Grant Had Been Drinking at Appomattox" from T_h_e_N_e_w_Y_o_r_k_e_r'_s December 6, 1930, issue, and Virginia Dabney's "If the South had Won the War" from S_c_r_i_b_n_e_r'_s October 1936 issue. Milton Waldman's "If Booth had Missed Lincoln" in S_c_r_i_b_n_e_r'_s November 1930 issue is not quite the same premise), but certainly the best-known and most highly regarded. About this all I need say is it's a classic and if you haven't read it, you should.

Though one might think this book would contain alternate histories of the Civil War, there are several pieces which are science fiction or fantasy and n_o_t alternate histories. Robert E. Howard's "For the Love of Barbara Allen" is a touching love story--not at all what one might expect from an author best known as the creator of Conan the Barbarian. "The Valley Was Still" by Manly Wade Wellman is n_o_t a departure from that author's style, however, since Wellman is known for tales of backwoods witchery and magic, and the story delivers that--and delivers it well.

Several stories suppose some sort of Southern super-weapon. (Look at that alliteration!) In Eric L. Davin's "Avenging Angel" the weapon is home-grown. This seems to have a Vernian touch, but the main story is one of those "it seemed like a good idea at the time" ones. In this case, the super-weapon's effects are very different from what was expected. (I also see some possible extrapolations for alternate Hiroshimas here.) In "The Chronicle of the 656th" by George Bryam, a regiment of soldiers from 1944 suddenly finds itself hurled back in time eighty years. They have weapons more powerful than any of that time; they also have both Northerners and Southerners in their ranks and both of these ideas are used to develop the story. Jack Finney's "Quit Zoomin' Those

"Hands Through the Air" has an inventor with a time machine go forward in time looking for a new weapon and return with the Wright Brothers' plane.

"The Long Drum Roll" by Harry Turtledove is an excerpt from his upcoming novel of the same name. In this, Afrikaaners from the 21st Century come b_a_c_k in time to help the South and hence achieve their vision of a better world. It's hard to judge this excerpt except to say that it makes me want to read the novel when it comes out. (I find it ironic that the introduction for this, as for all the stories, is written by S. M. Stirling, whose best-known works are a series of alternate histories based on the premise that defeated Southerners founded a South African state and eventually became a major world power. And now the idea has come full circle, so to speak. Though if Turtledove hasn't been updating his manuscript, he will be writing about alternate Afrikaaners as well.)

Charles L. Harness's "Quarks at Appomattox" i_s an alternate history--but not in the way you think. In this case, the time traveler is Oberst Karl von Mainz, Colonel of the Army of West Germany of 2065, fine when the story was written in 1983, but now a noticeable historical artifact, as is von Mainz's reference to "Leningradoh, St. Petersburg to you of the 1860s]." Yes, and to the rest of us also, with little chance of reversion, I would say.

The two remaining stories are time travel without being alternate histories. John M. Ford's "Slowly By, Lorena" is another in Ford's "Alternities" series. In this one, the time traveler is a doctor who went on a ten-day trip to a simulated Civil War and got stranded there for five years. (Okay, I lied--this is an alternate history. But the alternate history aspect is not the point.) Rounding out the book is "Time's Arrow" by Jack McDevitt (original titled "Hard Landings") which has a time traveler go back to Gettysburg as well as to other destinations. The fact that the Civil War is only a small part of the story makes it a weak choice to conclude this particular book, though the story itself is a perfectly good story.

I suppose there may be enough material for a third volume, T_h_e
F_a_n_t_a_s_t_i_c_A_m_e_r_i_c_a_n

_ R_e_v_o_l_u_t_i_o_n, but then what? _ T_h_e_F_a_n_t_a_s_t_i_c
_ S_p_a_n_i_s_h_A_m_e_r_i_c_a_n_W_a_r? _ T_h_e
_ F_a_n_t_a_s_t_i_c_P_e_r_s_i_a_n_G_u_l_f_W_a_r? When they
get to _ T_h_e_F_a_n_t_a_s_t_i_c_G_r_e_n_a_d_a
_ I_n_v_a_s_i_o_n, we'll know they're tapped
out.