

The subject of the next SF club meeting is "alternate mythologies" or "man-made mythologies." Now, before all the atheists in the club cry out that any mythology or religion is man-made I would like to specify the discussion topic a little more clearly. What we will be discussing are religions that were created in works of

THE MT VOID

Page 2

fiction, and that are nearly universally acknowledged as fictitious religions. I say "nearly universally" to avoid offending any worshipers of Cthulhu or Eru out there.

I have been interested in man-made mythologies ever since I first encountered H. P. Lovecraft's imaginative mythos. I happened to mention this at an SF club meeting to explain why I was watching the Hellraiser movies. This also happened to be a meeting where new books and subjects were being selected for future discussions and Rob Mitchell thought this might be a good topic. Unfortunately, the only "popular" book that we could come up with which pertained to this topic was T_h_e_S_i_l_m_a_r_i_l_l_i_o_n.

I read T_h_e_S_i_l_m_a_r_i_l_l_i_o_n several years ago. Actually, I started reading it several years ago and just have never gotten around to finishing it yet. If a book doesn't capture my imagination within the first 100 or so pages this is what usually happens to it. T_h_e_S_i_l_m_a_r_i_l_l_i_o_n had all the color, adventure, and complex character interaction of the New Jersey Bell Yellow Pages. I apologize in advance for any perceived slight to the NJ Bell Yellow Pages. This turgid tone was especially startling because I had just finished reading T_h_e_L_o_r_d_o_f_t_h_e_R_i_n_g_s when I started to read this book.

T_h_e_L_o_r_d_o_f_t_h_e_R_i_n_g_s is one of my all time favorite books.

T_h_e_S_i_l_m_a_r_i_l_l_i_o_n didn't make it quite that far on my list.

In any case, I have probably offended enough people by now to make the next SF club meeting a rather lively one. Who knows, I may even finish reading T_h_e_S_i_l_m_a_r_i_l_l_i_o_n by then. I would then be able to speak intelligently (for the first time, some club members would say) about the discussion book. [-ns]

3. In my recent review of R_a_i_s_i_n_g_C_a_i_n--not a very good film--I observed that at his peak Brian De Palma could do a Hitchcockian thriller as well as Hitchcock did. And as far as I am concerned, De Palma's best Hitchcock thriller is O_b_s_e_s_s_i_o_n. Well, now we are going to let you decide. We will show the best Hitchcock thriller of De Palma and what is often pointed to as the best of Hitchcock. You decide. On *WEDNESDAY*, September 16, at 7 PM, the Leeperhouse fest will feature

Hitchcockions

OBSESSION (1976) dir. by Brian De Palma

VERTIGO (1958) dir. by Alfred Hitchcock

(Note we are showing these out of chronological order to be fair to De Palma. We have chosen a Hitchcock from the top of Hitchcock's form. O_b_s_e_s_s_i_o_n is more comparable to just a good Hitchcock.)

O_b_s_e_s_s_i_o_n stars Cliff Robertson, Genieve Bujold, and John Lithgow. Robertson plays a man who cooperates with the police and does not pay the kidnappers of his wife and daughter. The plan to catch the kidnappers is botched and Robertson is left without a family.

THE MT VOID

Page 3

Several years later he finds a woman in Italy who resembles his wife and from whom he thinks he can recreate his wife. The pulsing Bernard Herrmann score, the single-word title, and much of the feel of this moody film give this the feel of a Hitchcock.

V_e_r_t_i_g_o was Jimmy Stewart's last Hitchcock film and is probably among the best remembered of Hitchcock's thrillers. Stewart is hired by a school friend to watch the friend's wife (played by Kim Novak). But when Stewart starts watching her a little too closely, things start to happen. Again the score is by Bernard Herrmann.

Mark Leeper
MT 3D-441 908-957-5619
...mtgzy!leeper

Real charity doesn't care if its tax-deductible or not.
-- Anonymous

FATHERLAND by Robert Harris
Random House, 1992, ISBN 0-679-41273-5, \$21.00.
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper
Copyright 1992 Evelyn C. Leeper

Usually alternate history novels are written by science fiction authors, but every few years we see one by a "mainstream" author. And for whatever reason, they seem to choose the "what if Germany won World War II" scenario. In 1978 we had what is probably the

best-known, Len Deighton's *S_S_G_B: N_a_z_i-O_c_c_u_p_i_e_d B_r_i_t_a_i_n_1_9_4_1*; in

1980, we had Kenneth Macksey's *I_n_v_a_s_i_o_n: T_h_e_G_e_r_m_a_n I_n_v_a_s_i_o_n_o_f*

E_n_g_l_a_n_d, J_u_l_y_1_9_4_0; now we have Robert Harris's *F_a_t_h_e_r_l_a_n_d*.

The year is 1964. The Reich extends from the Caspian Sea in the east to the French-German border in the west. Western Europe is apparently joined in something similar to the Common Market which follows the Reich's lead (though the included map shows them as separate nations still). The president of the United States, Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr. (yes, *a_n_o_t_h_e_r* alternate Kennedy story as well), is about to visit Berlin on the occasion of the Fuhrer's seventy-fifth birthday. And then the corpse of Joseph Buhler, high-ranking official (now retired), is found washed up on the riverbank near his home. In the course of investigating this death, Detective Xavier March is led into some of the best-hidden secrets of the Reich.

Harris is the author of *S_e_l_l_i_n_g_H_i_t_l_e_r: T_h_e H_i_t_l_e_r_D_i_a_r_i_e_s* and

therefore has a good background for this novel. (He did make one minor technical slip on page 73: although this takes place in Europe, dates are given in the American format [mm/dd/yy] rather than European [dd/mm/yy].) His extrapolations on the whole are reasonable (though I question the Beatles playing in Hamburg in Harris's world--does it seem a likely locale for the gay Jewish manager to pick?). If there is a weak point, it is in the secret the Reich is trying to hide. Without revealing it, let me just say that 1) it isn't a secret to us, 2) it doesn't seem to be a real secret to most of the people in Harris's world, and 3) I'm not convinced the Reich would be so concerned about keeping it a secret. Evidence in our world indicates quite the contrary.

The result is that the book failed to involve me--I kept thinking, "This is supposed to be exciting, or at least suspenseful, but it isn't." It has some interest as an extrapolation of the Reich twenty years later, but whether that will satisfy the reader who is expecting a "taut thriller" is doubtful, and readers who find any suspense in the story won't appreciate the background.

