

"The Singular Habits of Wasps" by Geoffrey A. Landis (Analog)
"Solitude" by Ursula K. Le Guin (F&SF)
"The Matter of Seggri" by Ursula K. Le Guin (Crank!)
"A Little Knowledge" by Mike Resnick (Asimov's)

THE MT VOID

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Apologies to all concerned; this was caused by someone's error in transcribing the list from a fax to the Net. [-ecl]

2. They say the TV networks will do anything to please their sponsors. I would like to report that is a bald-faced lie. I just realized today one instance in which the networks act against the best interests of the people who pay the bills in return for their half-minute messages.

This is being written on May 7. I am looking at the TV listing for tonight. Boy, TV is sure good isn't it? Tonight, for example, PBS is running MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING. On CBS the film they are showing is GHOST. NBC is running JURASSIC PARK, a film that is just two years old and already is just 10% short of earning (?) *one billion dollars* at the box office. And so here we are, one typical night on television. Wellll Perhaps it is not quite so typical. This is the Sunday night of sweeps week when all of the networks, including the otherwise dignified PBS, jockey for the highest ratings. You see, in theory the same number of people will tune in to watch the third rerun of THE LORENA BOBBITT FOLLIES as tuned in to see JURASSIC PARK tonight. Or at least the same proportions of people who watch tonight, or something. Who knows?

But the point is, if you are a network executive your most important job is to make the other networks look worse than yours, particularly during sweeps week. That is not even the same thing as doing the best thing for your sponsors. If you ran any of those films opposite minor competition you would get just scads of people tuning in to see it and they would at the same time be seeing the commercials packed around the film. The three networks could run these films on three separate Sunday nights. The viewers would

benefit because they would get a chance to see all three films; the sponsors would benefit because more of their commercials would be seen by captive audiences. Even the networks would benefit because they would not have so many people turning to cable to escape the pea-witted entertainment masters and their knock-out-the-other-networks strategies. Of course, that is not the way the game is played. [-mrl]

3. Hugo Factoid of the Week: 208 people have been nominated for the Hugo in the fiction categories, and 65 people have won (not counting this year). Next week: who has been nominated the most times in the fiction categories? [-ecl]

4. Hugo Nominee Availability Update: Gregory Landis's "The Singular Habits of Wasps" is available to Intersection members by sending e-mail to him at G.LANDIS1@genie.geis.com. (An offer to repay him by buying him a drink at Intersection would undoubtedly be appreciated.) The non-fiction nominee THE BOOK ON THE EDGE OF FOREVER (a.k.a. THE LAST DEADLOSS VISIONS) by Christopher Priest is available at http://www.dcs.gla.ac.uk/SF-Archives/Misc/Last_Deadloss_Visions-Chris.Priest.

If you can't find BRITTLE INNINGS by Michael Bishop in the science fiction section of your local bookstore, check the mainstream fiction section. That's where the local Barnes & Noble is shelving it. [-ecl]

5. MY FAMILY/MI FAMILIA (a film review by Mark R. Leeper):

Capsule: This is the story of three generations

of a Mexican-American family from the writer-director of EL NORTE. Disappointingly too much of the plot is short subplot stories that have been told before. While there are undeniably some moving scenes, the end result is not the compelling film it should have been. Rating: +1 (-4 to +4)

Several films made for PBS's American Playhouse have been quality motion pictures and beat most theatrical fare by a wide margin. Eventually American Playhouse started giving theatrical release to some of their productions before having them appear on television. One of their earlier and definitely one of their better productions was EL NORTE. It was the story of a brother and sister who flee Guatemala and its politics and illegally enter the United States. That film was written and directed by Gregory Nava. With many of the same resonances Nava has co-written and directed MY FAMILY. Unfortunately, while this film, also made in part for American Playhouse, is by no means a bad or even a mediocre film, it fails to show the strength of EL NORTE. MY FAMILY is the story of three generations of the Mexican-American Sanchez family told as a mosaic of individual stories. The real problem is that most of the individual stories are well-worn and familiar. The film tells how as a boy Jose Sanchez walked from his home in Mexico to Los Angeles when the border was just a line drawn in the sand. Taking a gardening job at a wealthy home, he meets and marries Maria (Jenny Gago). He believes himself to be safe and secure in the United States, but the hand of United States Immigration reaches out and separates his family. The bitterness of this injustice and

the rage it causes reaches out and destroys two of the Sanchez sons. The two boys are Chucho (played by Esai Morales) and Jimmy (played by Jimmy Smits). Almost a generation apart, young Jimmy idolizes Chucho. Chucho becomes a likable and relatively benign Pachuco gang member, just slightly on the shady side of the law. He is severely punished for legal offenses for which a richer man would have received a much less harsh treatment. Young Jimmy sees what happens to his beloved older brother and grows to have an immense pent-up rage from the injustices done to his family. He is a rebel without any real cause until time gives him something he

wants to fight for.

What is right with this film is that it is a moving look at a community under-represented in film. What is wrong is that the writing is several notches below EL NORTE. Too often the film tries to be whimsical when a more serious approach would have been more effective. Nava undercuts the realism of the drama scenes that are just a bit funnier than they should have been, occasionally even unkindly turning characters into caricatures. And even the light dusting of the supernatural does not help the credibility either. And it seems to me that when an old couple look at each other and sum up saying "It's been a good life," it has to be because either they expect their lives or the film to end in the next few minutes.

Jimmy Smits has never been my favorite actor, but this is certainly the closest he has ever come to being a powerful actor in a serious dramatic role. Esai Morales and Eduardo Lopez Rojas, the latter as the adult Jose, coast through their roles without having to show much emotional range. Jenny Gago, on the other hand, carries much more of the film than her low fourth-billing status would indicate. Edward James Olmos and Mary Steenburgen have small parts. The latter seems to be present only to provide one of the film's two sympathetic Anglos.

I cannot say that there were not moments when MY FAMILY brought a tear to my eye, so Nava must have been doing something right. But as epics about ethnic families go, other films have given us fresher and more compelling material. I give this a +1 on the -4 to +4 scale. [-mrl]

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One should respect public opinion insofar as it is necessary to avoid starvation and keep out of prison, but anything that goes beyond this is voluntary submission to an unnecessary tyranny.

-- Bertrand Russell