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1. URL of the week: <http://www.cs.cmu.edu/Web/books.htm>. The "On-Line Books Page" will point you to hundreds of on-line texts for classic literature and history in the public domain. [-ecl]

2. Hugo Factoid of the Week: Robert Silverberg has been nominated 23 times (and won 3), Harlan Ellison has been nominated 18 (and won 7), Ursula K. LeGuin and Connie Willis have been nominated 16 times each (each has 5 wins). Niven has been nominated 14 times by himself, 4 times with Jerry Pournelle and 1 time with Steve Barnes. Next week: who has been nominated the most times in the fiction categories *without winning*? [-ecl]

3. I am starting to believe that women have really been written out of the history books. There was a reference in a documentary about one woman who who apparently was very important to the cattlemen in the American West. She was extremely important in transforming the cattle industry, yet I cannot find her mentioned in any of the standard history texts. Can anyone point me to more references about Barb Dwyer? [-mrl]

4. Cable TV has resurrected the TV series THE OUTER LIMITS. For the most part I have to say that the new series is a disappointment. It misses the point of what made the original series good. It throws in a few stories that are fantasy-horror, and others that are just barely science fiction. But not all the

stories are bad and just a very few are quite good. I commented to Evelyn after their adaptation of Larry Niven's "Inconstant Moon" that it they had made a single feature film of that and the recent episode "Trial by Fire," I would probably nominate that feature film for a Hugo award. Then I decided that if it was that good, we could show the two of them together as a film festival. So on Thursday, May 16, at 7:30PM at the Leeperhouse we will show what I consider to be the two best episodes of the current series.

THE OUTER LIMITS

"Inconstant Moon" is, as I said, an adaptation of a story by Larry Niven. It starts one night when a college professor notices that the sky is particularly beautiful. Then he realizes why and that this is the final night of the Earth's existence. He has to decide what he would do on his final night alive.

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"Trial By Fire" is a tense thriller (and I do not use that expression loosely) about a new President of the United States who finds his first and in all probability last crisis as President involves something that has been seen in the sky. Robert Foxworth stars. [-mrl]

5. THE TRUTH ABOUT CATS & DOGS (a film review by Mark R. Leeper):

Capsule: THE TRUTH ABOUT CATS & DOGS is a modest, pleasant trading-identity comedy with at least a little serious thought at its core.

The plot is a bit contrived and far-fetched but its anti-lookist theme sets this film apart from many romantic comedies. If only Michael Lehmann's film practiced what it preaches, this comedy would be a lot easier to recommend.

Rating: high +1 (-4 to +4)

"The Truth About Cats & Dogs" is a popular radio talk show for pet

owners to call in and ask questions of veterinarian Abby Barnes (played by Janeane Garofalo of "The Larry Sanders Show"). Abby is intelligent and very funny, but she feels she is short and plain-looking. (Garofalo herself is actually attractive, but perhaps is plain by Hollywood actress standards.) To put it mildly, Abby is extremely self-conscious about her looks, particularly when compared to her tall, blond neighbor Noelle Slusarsky (Uma Thurman). When a listener to her program, Brian (Ben Chaplin), becomes interested in Barnes and wants to set up a rendezvous with her, he needs a description, and on a lark Abby describes Noelle. So begins a love triangle in which Brian thinks he loves a single woman with Abby's personality and Noelle's body. He believes Noelle is actually Abby and that Abby is the veterinarian's friend Donna. If the basic plot sounds familiar, it borrows no small amount from Rostand's play "Cyrano de Bergerac" or perhaps that play's reframing in modern terms, ROXANNE. The result is the sort of light romantic comedy with the two women trying to pull off the charade and keep Brian from suspecting. But eventually the plot gets beyond the charade into the question of what is it that is the source of the real attraction? Is it the physical beauty of Noelle or is it the personality of Abby? The film makes some very serious, albeit sugar-coated, observations about how our society discriminates by degree of attractiveness.

And if one wants to see examples of that discrimination in action, one need only look at the billing of this film. Top billing goes to Uma Thurman who is not the main character, has fewer lines than Abby, and who has less personality on the screen. The practical fact is that Thurman is more of a star, particularly after PULP

FICTION. As such she has more marquee value. Viewing audiences are perceived as having precisely the same set of misplaced values about which the film is complaining. Had Janeane Garofalo gotten top billing one might feel a little better about the film. This is not to say that Thurman does a bad job, by any means. This may well be her best role to date. She is in some ways a mirror image of Garofalo's character. Garofalo is actually attractive but believes she is ugly. This may have been an artifact of bad casting or it may be intentional. Thurman's character is relatively bright but has convinced herself that she is all looks

and hairdo with nothing of any substance inside of her. In any case Thurman, knowing she has top billing, is content to let Garofalo be the real star. And Garofalo easily fills the vacuum with sparkle and wit.

This is a first produced script by Audrey Wells whose previous work includes being a jazz disk jockey and producing and directing political commercials. Some of her dialogue is very funny, though often one gets the feeling that real people are not this witty spontaneously and the conversations are too polished to be credible. Of course the same complaint could be leveled at Woody Allen's screen writing. Probably more bothersome is the character of Brian who seems to be incredibly dense not to realize that the shorter woman has both the voice and the quick wit of the woman on the radio. He seems perfectly willing to believe that the tall blond who is afraid of his dog and the radio veterinarian who has explained to him how to handle and calm that dog could be the same woman. The fact that Uma Thurman's character has to consult with Janeane Garofalo's character before treating a turtle does not seem to tip him off that there is anything strange going on.

The film boasts a bouncy score by Howard Shore, who is good when he does his own composing, but the film relies a little too much on source music. Telephones seem to play a large part in THE TRUTH ABOUT CATS & DOGS and it would not surprise me to hear that this film has contributed greatly to the sale of cordless phones. There is even an advertisement for an identifiable long distance phone company played in the background of one scene, which seems a somewhat crass touch. Direction of this somewhat spotty is by Michael Lehmann whose own career has been spotty, having directed HEATHERS, MEET THE APPELGATES, HUDSON HAWK, and AIRHEADS.

THE TRUTH ABOUT CATS & DOGS could have stressed its more serious theme a little more, but it is an enjoyable comedy and rates a high +1 on the -4 to +4 scale. [-mrl]

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The worshipper is the father of the gods.
--H. L. Mencken