

@@@@@ @ @@@@@@ @ @@@@@@@@@@ @ @@@@@@ @@@@@@ @@@
 @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @
 @ @@@@@@ @@@@@@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @
 @
 @

Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society
 Club Notice - 05/03/91 -- Vol. 9, No. 44

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

Unless otherwise stated, all meetings are on Wednesdays at noon.
 LZ meetings are in LZ 2R-158. MT meetings are in the cafeteria.

_D_A_T_E _T_O_P_I_C

- 05/15 LZ: THE SCREWTAPE LETTERS by C.S. Lewis (Getting to Hell)
- 06/05 LZ: UBIK by Phillip K. Dick (Death and Hell)
- 06/26 LZ: ALTERNATE WORLDS by Robert Adams ("What If Things Were Different?")

_D_A_T_E _E_X_T_E_R_N_A_L_M_E_E_T_I_N_G_S/_C_O_N_V_E_N_T_I_O_N_S/_E_T_C.

- 05/11 SFABC: Science Fiction Association of Bergen County: TBA
 (phone 201-933-2724 for details) (Saturday)
- 05/18 NJSFS: New Jersey Science Fiction Society: TBA
 (phone 201-432-5965 for details) (Saturday)

HO Chair: John Jetzt HO 1E-525 834-1563 hocpa!jetzt
 LZ Chair: Rob Mitchell LZ 1B-306 576-6106 mtuxo!jrtr
 MT Chair: Mark Leeper MT 3D-441 957-5619 mtgzy!leeper
 HO Librarian: Tim Schroeder HO 3B-301 949-4488 hotsc!tps
 LZ Librarian: Lance Larsen LZ 3L-312 576-3346 mtunq!lfl
 MT Librarian: Mark Leeper MT 3D-441 957-5619 mtgzy!leeper
 Factotum: Evelyn Leeper MT 1F-329 957-2070 mtgzy!ecl
 All material copyright by author unless otherwise noted.

1. Our last films have been sort of frivolous exercises in
 adventure in Africa. I am afraid that the picnic is over. We are
 going to show three Japanese movies on some pretty serious themes:
 the responsibility of the scientist to the world, an allegory on
 atomic war, suicide, and honor. But what the heck--the time has
 come to put away childish things. On Thursday, May 9, at 7 PM, we
 will show:

GOJIRA (1954) dir. by Inoshiro Honda

GOJIRA NO GYAKUSYU (1955) dir. by Motoyoshi Hoda
RADON (1956) dir. by Inoshiro Honda

GOJIRA is an allegory about the closing days of World War II in Japan and the fear in the common people of what it was like to be

THE MT VOID

Page 2

struck by something beyond their understanding. In this case the Bomb is personified by a large creature that strikes in the same way the Bomb did. Also at question is the entire issue of the scientists' conflicting responsibility in developing weapons and the morality of the use of those weapons. For an artistic standpoint, the photographic effects filming the creature always from below, looking up, create an impressive effect. We will be showing a re-edited version of GOJIRA released in this country two years later as GODZILLA, KING OF THE MONSTERS.

GOJIRA NO GYAKUSYU, a sequel to GOJIRA, concentrates more on how various segments of society react under the stress of a fearful enemy such as the one in the first film. While it generally is not as respected by the critics and is received more as a pure action film, it still has much to offer the serious film student. It was released in the United States as GIGANTIS, THE FIRE MONSTER but these days is better known as GODZILLA RAIDS AGAIN.

RADON--no, it is not about a gas--returns to themes of large creatures causing havoc, but also hits some serious themes which don't readily come to mind unless maybe you count dinosaur suicide, which for all we know might have taken place in the past but somehow I doubt it. RADON was released in the United States in 1957 as RODAN, THE FLYING MONSTER.

2. Last week Mark asked for "responsible spokesmen" to respond to his comments on censorship, and the first to do so would get a shiny new dime. Well, that disqualified me from the very beginning, but luckily there were some men who responded. One said, "I want that dime." Sorry, Ralph, this does not count as a response from a responsible spokesman. Saul Jaffe responded with, "Just keep in mind that certain people *should* be censored - particularly those that write massive egocentric missives in electronic fanzines clearly designed to have the pleasing effect of

the right amount of black in the letters (and contrarily the right amount of white space) but which obviously loses its aesthetic qualities when one actually bothers to get close enough to read the words." He also included the comment, "I'm sure that I won't be the first one to write so I don't expect the shiny new dime. Though it won't even buy the winner a phone call to his lawyer to sue you for censorship when you don't publish his response in the MT-Void." [-ecl]

3. The 1991 Nebula Award winners (courtesy of Chuq Von Rospach) are:

Novel: Ursula K. Le Guin: T_e_h_a_n_u: t_h_e_L_a_s_t_B_o_o_k_o_f_E_a_r_t_h_s_e_a

Novella: Joe Haldeman: "The Hemingway Hoax"

Novelette: Ted Chiang: "Tower of Babylon"

Short Story: Terry Bisson: "Bears Discover Fire"

Grand Master: Lester Del Rey

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

Looking Backward: Some Reviews of Older Books

[some spoilers]

Book reviews by Frank R. Leisti

Copyright 1991 Frank R. Leisti

T_h_e_F_i_v_e_G_o_l_d_B_a_n_d_s by Jack Vance

This old story, copyright 1950, is set in a universe where the sons of Earth have moved out with a faster-than-light drive to distant worlds, such as Alpheratz, Badau, Almach, and Mirach. The story is about an Earther, the old kind, one Paddy Blackthorn, who gets apprehended while attempting to steal a space drive unit. As the production of the space drive units is controlled and limited by five Sons of Langtry, the original Earth inventor of the space drive who took his children to different worlds and they then controlled the secret of the manufacture of the space drive. With this control, they were able to maintain a high price for a single space drive.

Well, Paddy, having been apprehended and sentenced to death is noted for his ability to speak five different languages and as such is instructed to be the required interpreter for the five Sons for their

annual meeting. Paddy, chained to a pedestal before the five, does his job of translating the various requests and announcements by each of these leaders. He also discovers that no other knows the secret of the space drives and even if all five would die in some accident, ten years hence, an automated bank would empty the contents of a safety deposit box with the description of the construction of the space drive. An additional precaution is the information contained in five golden wrist bands that each son of Langtry symbolically passes to the other for safe-keeping. Well, Paddy throws a wrench into the works, kills the five sons in one quick response to his own death and the search is now on for the space drive information.

Throw into the works a spy from Earth, nerve suits for questioning prisoners, mental giants who check psychographs for a match against criminals, a doctor who sells out information on changes made to Paddy, and a greedy Koton who wants to have the secret all to himself and you have a merry puzzle, a who-can-figure it out and a wonderful conclusion to this early science fiction story.

From the time period, while Paddy talks a lot about the wonders of a certain type of woman, a Maevite, cow-eyed and underslung, he discovers more about Fay Bursill, the Earth agent with a sharp memory and a tongue to match it. Beyond all of this, the morals of sexuality between Paddy and Fay touch a time of prudishness, even when Paddy discovers the erotic dancing that Fay is capable of. Leave it to science fiction, that in the end, their love for each other wins over all, even the double-crossing that occurs.

It is somewhat melodramatic in that the story focuses efforts of Paddy and Fay in their search for the information about the star drive, that they have an easy time being able to pick up these secrets. While sometimes their effort is wasted, or misdirected, the ease at their accomplishment is astonishing. In short, the story reminds me of the Jack Chandler's novels about the Rings of the Master.

I would rate this story as a high -1 on the Leeper scale, enjoyable when you consider the era from which it was written.

T_h_e_D_r_a_g_o_n_M_a_s_t_e_r_s by Jack Vance

This story of the efforts of warfare, with weapons, not of projectiles or heat beams, or Q-beams, or primaries, deals with altered life forms, dragons, Termagants, Long-horned Murderers, silken Striding Monsters, ponderous Juggers, Blue Horrors, and Fiends. It deals a battle royal between two leaders, Joaz Banbeck and Ervis Carcolo and their particular tactics strategies and the monsters that they have bred for the sole purpose of battle in order to rake in the riches of the other. While Joaz's lineage speaks of a great battle and a particular battle with the Basics (creatures that came from the sky in large ships that took the people of the land), Ervis looks only for the glory of the battle and the victory and spoils of the conquered land.

Joaz is the planner, having worked on his lands, creating tunnels for his people in the event of the Basics appearing once again among his people. He even warns his rival, Ervis about what he should do against this common enemy, yet like so many ambitious men, Ervis would rather attack and take over the land of his enemy rather than work to protect his own. However, with the other precautions that Joaz has taken, a quick ambush routes Ervis's forces of monsters and he has to fall back in defeat. Meanwhile, Joaz, having discovered that a sacerdote has visited his library has finally trapped the one and questions the sacerdote at length. The sacerdote, whose philosophy is that of total honesty and non-interference must answer all of the questions put to it yet, even the answers are not always what is desired. Joaz, his mind ablaze with questions finds only further questions about the sacerdote, his society and what effect they might have on the upcoming battle with the Basics.

Of course, the battle between Ervis, Joaz and finally that with the Basics occurs with skin tearing gore and viciousness befitting that of total war. A few ironies are discovered by both the reader and by Joaz when the initial tactics of Joaz prove successful. With the addition of more Basic troops, Joaz must face his extinction and that of his people and the monsters that he has created.

This book from 1962 sets up interesting societies as a counterdrop to the growing sixties movement of non-involvement in war. Yet, with the presence of a common enemy, the effort expended is one of total

involvement before extinction. Indeed, when compared to the Vietnam war, where the North Vietnamese fought against a superior foe because it was their land, this book mirrors in many ways the fighting involved in that war.

As a science fiction story, however, placing in on a distant world away from humanity, with monsters working beside the last outcrops of humanity, it only rates a -2 on the Leeper scale.

T_h_e_N_e_m_e_s_i_s_f_r_o_m_T_e_r_r_a by Leigh Brackett

Destiny. A concept, a powerful word which brings to mind dictators who marched forward believing that destiny was theirs. The American idea of the Manifest Destiny in believing that they should rule all of the Americas and General Patton's belief in destiny to lead the army against the Nazi to free Europe all have a single pattern associated with it -- the person(s) belief that all acts will bow down before them on their quest for their destiny. No matter what the event, be it snowfall or lack of men, their destiny will not be denied.

Now, with destiny as only a belief, many men can go far in their lives -- against foes greater than themselves, against odds too huge to comprehend -- just on their belief. When you make destiny a sure thing, so that more than just a single man realizes it, it becomes a force unimaginable unto itself. Consider the possibilities, where a person knows that they will succeed against a superior foe, against the forces of nature, against friends who wish to save him, against the entire will of a world. It is with these conditions that we find Richard Gunn Urquhart, a spaceman, out for a good time on Mars, who has run into a little trouble with the equivalent of the chain gang looking for volunteers for their mining work. This Richard Urquhart also comes across a hidden passageway in a wall where a famous Martian seeress sees his shadow over Mars and seeing his destiny attempts to kill him on the spot. To save himself, a murder is committed and Richard is now on his way to his destiny.

From the bottom of a mine shaft to the top of the world, The Nemesis From Terra is on his adventure -- knowing that nothing can stop him -- not even the hatred of an entire planet, or the telepathic abilities of the security chief of the company who plans to run the inhabitants of Mars into the ground.

This story deals with Martians and humans, Martians who wish to overthrow the oppression of the Company men who force them to labor in the mines for the substance Fallonite, the chemically amorphous substance that was already beginning to revolutionize the Terran plastic industry. The humans include Richard and Mayo, a spy for the humans looking into getting information to inform the Earth authorities about the abuse that goes on at Mars. The destiny that brings Richard and Mayo together keeps them going on, even to the crucifixion of Richard

and then the crowning of him with a neckband of iron proclaiming him the leader of the Martians. Even last minute dangers and the fighting that breaks out does not deter Richard from his quest. The discovery of the fantastic weaponry of the old Martians and the ending duel between him and his adversary using those weapons still is no match for the knowledge that his destiny is at hand and that he will be victorious. For in the fight to the death against a telepathic opponent, one needs every special edge that they can get.

This story from 1961 is centered against the almighty Company from whose ruthlessness and profit-grabbing is most evident against the lowly laborer. With such people heading the Corporation, there is no love lost for them when they have beaten and forced workers to bring them profits. What is amazingly pointed in this story is the fact that a few bad leaders in the company can do such terrible damage to so many people (Martians included), and yet totally set the stage for a revolution of sorts -- a reminder of the labor unions fight for a more safer place to work.

 T h e N e m e s i s f r o m T e r r a has love, hate, a fight to the death, labor versus management, spying, humiliation, death before dishonor and everything rich in human emotions -- and it takes place on Mars. I would rate it a +0 on the Leeper scale.

 C o l l i s i o n C o u r s e by Robert Silverberg

The growth of two competing organisms is the basis for this story. With the law of diminishing returns on resources, these two organisms attempt to resolve their differences through some form of negotiation, rather than war against the other. Yet the law of cooperation does not have any hold in this story.

Robert Silverberg has brought the story of man's conquest into space to a new level in the 1959 book Collision Course. In the future, thirteen men rule the Earth as Archons of different disciplines, Education, Agriculture, Health, Security, Finance, and others. Technarch McKenzie has placed a huge effort on the development of a faster-than-light drive to supplement the current expansion and

colonization of other worlds with the use of slow drive vehicles which, upon landing, setup transmat stations which allow instantaneous transportation to the new world. However, these slow journeys take such a long time that full colonization might not take place for millennia.

The trial run of the new Daviot-Leeson Drive, which smashes holes in the space-time with controlled thermonuclear blasts turns out successful. Yet, there is a single catch. The space crew has discovered another race going through the process of colonization on this far distant land. When this is reported, a negotiation team is assembled and sent out to this colony in the hopes of getting an agreement on the limits of colonization.

Reviews

April 30, 1991

Page 5

Dr. Martin Bernard, a sociologist, Norman Dominici, a biophysicist, Roy Stone, a politician, and Thomas Havig, a religious Neo-puritan linguist form the four cornerstones of the negotiating team from Earth. These four and the original test crew of the ftl ship are sent on their merry way to meet with the Norglans. Time on a space ship, even a ftl ship runs slower than the team expected living in a world where instantaneous transportation is the rule. To pass the time, we learn a little about each of the members and see the growing interactions between them. The trials and tribulations suffered by the negotiating team in the initial meeting and the subsequent exchanges of language brings to mind the troubles that we here on Earth have in bringing successful negotiations for our benefit.

Discouraged by the failure in the negotiations, the team sets off for Earth and subsequently gets lost. In the midst of their troubles, they are discovered by a race called the Rosgollans, who with their advanced state of abilities and evolution call for the negotiations to continue. When the parties are put back together, sparks fly and a surprising outcome is decided. Then the difficult part of telling the authorities back on Earth the final verdict is placed to the test. While those that the reader has followed with anticipation of success do adjust to the verdict, others do not. It is another case of short term goals versus long term goals.

I found this story interesting both for the premise as well as the interactions between the major players. Also, the considerations in a first contact team for negotiation purposes was interesting, as well as

the implications of the first contact -- whether it would be peaceful or not and what the implications of that might be. I would rate it at the +0 level on the Leeper scale.

_ W_ o_ r_ l_ d_ I_ n_ E_ c_ l_ i_ p_ s_ e by William Dexter

Actions and reactions involving survival of multiple species is the center of this story by William Dexter. This novel, written in 1954, places a few human survivors back on the Earth after a thorium bomb exploded causing a chain reaction that destroyed all higher forms of life, with few exceptions. These few humans were able to survive the destruction because they were abducted by space ships that have been visiting and sampling Earth life for the past 3000 years. Yet, with the return, and the history of those first few months, the steps that are taken to preserve food stores, machinery, clothing, and other concerns are mere footnotes against a more sinister problem, the Vulcanids, a kind of evil giant sea anemones that had mental powers to convince others to do their bidding.

After the total destruction of human, animal and avian life on the planet, what steps would you, a repopulated survivor do? Would you tend to the land for grains? Would you take food from the shops? Would you ensure the continued growth of the human race? Would you be willing to

Reviews

April 30, 1991

Page 6

share the Earth with the captors that had picked you up originally? These questions and more are answered in the World in Eclipse.

The style of writing is that of a scientific journalist recording for future generations the information about the Return to the Earth. Of course, before the return, the abduction is noted only slightly in passing. It is lucky that both males and females were taken and have returned. With a small gene pool, considerations of future problems of in-breeding are not mentioned, not when troubles from the Vulcanids is more pressing -- even when not entirely believed or known. The valiant efforts at survival in London, England is the setting and these people have not assumed anything and so, lose precious species placed in protective custody by the Director of a zoo in an attempt to save the life of the animals during the deadly supersonic winds created by the thorium bomb.

Finally, it boils down to a fight against the evil Vulcanids with the Earthers getting assistance from frog-like creatures called the Nagani. To the victors goes the spoils of Earth, until the surprise ending.

William Dexter has brought together important points in the reconstruction of the human race -- with the available resources of the planet -- as if everyone had died, yet the articles were still in good order. There are a few points where fungi and molds appear to have enveloped the perishable foodstuffs, yet the concern about these fungi and molds are not developed. There is the case towards mental abilities of the Vulcanids who are looking to dominate the planet and the desires of other creatures from the other planets of the Solar System to make a home on Earth.

Dexter has placed the planet Vulcan among the asteroid belt, and along with other inhabited planets in the solar system as well as destroyed planets brings to the reader the interesting notion that we have been under a very long observation -- all for the purpose of sharing our lands with us. What might have been better, with his references to pyramids having been built by the Vulcans both on Vulcan and on Earth, is that these Vulcans might have been the American Indians, the Miyans, or the early Egyptians. Yet a story like that with the return of these cultures would not have been in the area of science fiction.

I found it enjoyable to read this story in a few hours, following the exploits of Denis Grafton, the British journalist who has written this story. Although the story does not follow that of a journalist, it does convey a lot of the events that one might expect given the repopulation of the Earth. I rate it only as a +0 on the Leeper scale.

_ T _ h _ e _ S _ u _ n _ l _ e _ s _ s _ W _ o _ r _ l _ d by Neil R. Jones

Remember the wonderful series of books that have been written in olden times with the same character or cast of characters, having furthering adventures in space and time: classics such as the Lensman,

Skylark series, Middle Earth, Tom Swift, Flandry series, Doc Savage as the Man of Bronze, and of course the Zoromes, with the wonderful representative of Earth, 21MM392, Professor Jameson? Well, this book by Neil R. Jones is the second in the Professor Jameson Space Adventure series.

This novel is broken into three adventures that follow those of the first in the series, "The Planet of the Double Sun." In the first adventure, Into the Hydrosphere, the Zoromes, mechanical box-like cyborgs with only the brain and stem present, find a miracle planet that appears to be a complete hydrosphere -- a planet with no land. For their measurements, it appears that the planet has no rocky center. When they encounter a frog-like race living on the large areas of sargasso material on the top of the ocean, they are surprised when a number of Zoromes fall off and drop deep into the ocean. The surprises that await the Professor finds him involved in a revolution as well as fighting for his own life and the lives of others.

The story continues with the adventure of "Time's Mausoleum," in which a flesh and blood scientist is captured by the Zoromes with his time viewing device. There is a lovely early explanation of future time travel described, yet it is the voyage into the Earth's vast past, that Professor Jameson wants to explore. With the various stopping points along the way, we see his dutiful nephew stealing Jameson's body from the grave and sending it into space where it surpasses the human race's presence on the planet. A tragedy occurs, yet the ever patient Zoromes, with their protection against heat and cold endure until saved.

The final story in this novel's journeys is "The Sunless World," a world with no sun, passing through solar systems and deep space on an endless journey. A world, which even though quite large does not have the weight of a similar planet. The wonderful story of a planet honeycombed with passages and empty space has its atmosphere at the center of the planet, rather than at the surface. Indeed, the abundance of life present shows the diversity of the universe and of Professor Jameson's involvement and curiosity and his remaining humanity. For a metal-encased brain, Jameson gets into more trouble and involved with numerous cultures almost to his extinction.

The Zoromes series has a few pat answers on the mechanics of what they do. Being essentially metal creatures, they can last a long time (nothing about the deterioration of the brain cells themselves is given), replacing worn out parts. With the long term, a faster than light drive is not required. The Zoromes use the power of radium to their meteorite screens to repel any foreign object from the ship. They have attachments, such as heat rays, mechanical wings and long distance communicators to assist in getting out of tight spots. The easiest

aspect is their communication with other cultures. While not explaining anything, the Zoromes can communicate telepathically to "advanced cultures -- capable of receiving their thoughts". This avoids wasteful time in attempting to learn another language and culture. And with the resurrection of Professor Jameson from death, we have someone to whom we can relate to in the adventures and investigations of the Universe as these cyborgs roam around before heading back to their home world.

While a good adventure series, stories about the wondrous aspects of the universe appear simply thought out and the author has resorted to the above mechanisms to have communication between species possible. I enjoyed the book and the series, yet I would only rate it as +0 on the Leeper scale.

BRAIN CHILD by George Turner
Reviewed by Dale L. Skran, Jr.
Copyright 1991 Dale L. Skran, Jr.

 O d d J o h n by Olaf Stapledon has always been one of my favorite SF novels. A haunting, downbeat young superman coming of age in the world of humans story, it was at once tender and heartless, completely free of the "happy ending" convention typical of the SF of its time. Now Turner has given us an O d d J o h n for our time, informed by another 50 years of science and the nagging feeling that very soon we are going to meet/create John, and that very little may survive the encounter, least of all our illusions of moral superiority.

 B r a i n C h i l d is brilliantly told and organized, a murder mystery in the best British tradition, while crackling with ideas and a sense of disturbing insight. Since there are so many deft turns of the plot, I am reluctant to describe it in very much detail. The basic story posits that in 2002 the Australian government sponsors "Project IQ" which births five groups of four youngsters. One group dies in the womb. Another dies en masse a few days after birth for no reason that anyone can ever discern. Of the three that survive, Group A possesses vast analytical ability but limited creativity. Group B has vast creativity but lessor analytical abilities. Group C is inhumanly intelligent and creative, as far above the common man as man is above a dog. One of their number, Conrad, the "Young Fella," is the amoral yet naive O d d J o h n for our time.

 B r a i n C h i l d's background for the year 2047 reads like an extrapolation of England in 1970 - high unemployment, strict government-enforced birth control, and a large state apparatus presiding over a nominal democracy. Technology has advanced some, but the moon colony has been abandoned, and dreams are increasingly limited in scope as people scramble ruthlessly for the few jobs not yet automated out of

existence.

SPOILER COMING. CONTINUE NO FURTHER. YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED.

Conrad tempts the world with his mysterious legacy - a plan for decoding and controlling the human genome. In the end, "A Group" destroys the legacy (as it killed Conrad) to protect humanity from knowledge it was not ready to have - immortality, among other things. I have several complaints with the ending. One is that there is really no reason to suppose that "good things" like high IQ and long life are necessarily tied to "bad things" like cancer in the genome. They *may* be, but this is not the same as being true. It is just as possible that it will be fairly easy to have perfect health, long life, and a high IQ.

Turner also seems to believe that a small number of really high-IQ people could not interwork well with society, and thus should not be created. In part, this derives from the stereotype of the intelligent as socially incompetent, and in part from Turner's xenophobia (A, B, and

Brain Child

April 30, 1991

Page 2

C groups are all deadly to normal humans, each in their own way). But is it really true? People with IQs of 160 co-exist with those having IQ 80 in our society. Having ten folks with IQ 400 around is probably no more dangerous than having Bell Labs around. In time, of course, the high IQ strain will probably dominate society, but that's the point, right?

Finally, Turner's plot fails at the very end on a small point. A Group destroys Conrad's legacy and all records they have of it, and apparently the intelligence agents who brought the legacy to them for examination failed to take any pictures or record in any way what is viewed by all players, including the head of the agency, as a vastly important item. Turner is trying so hard to make his "some things were not meant to be known" point that he loses control of the plot and has some very smart cookies do things that are highly inconsistent.

Overall, a very interesting book and possible Hugo contender for 1991.

THE SILICON MAN by Charles Platt
Bantam Spectra Special Editions, 1991, ISBN 0-553-28950-0, \$4.50.
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper
Copyright 1991 Evelyn C. Leeper

One of my major complaints with "cyberpunk" (whatever that is) is
that it is usually written in something not quite resembling English.

(One has only to look at Greg Bear's Queenof Angels as a recent example of what I'm talking about.) Now at last someone is writing something about computers, technology, and the future that's readable.

James Bayley is an FBI agent investigating the illegal trade in guns (and other more interesting weapons). Unfortunately, he accidentally discovers more than hot guns--he discovers a secret project that some scientists are working on. Well, it's not quite secret; the secret is how far along they've actually gotten. The project involves putting consciousness into a computer, and lucky Bayley discovers that he is going to end up in the forefront of science. Only one catch: the procedure kills the subject.

Platt draws an interesting picture of life inside a computer. Whether it's accurate, who knows? But it is original; Platt has not made a carbon copy (silicon copy?) of all the other cyberpunk visions. And he makes it real, makes it convincing, makes it logical. The style is straightforward, without all the "eye hits" that are supposed to characterize cyberpunk. And it has substance as well--Platt makes us think about the consequences of the changes our society is going through. The only flaw is the final chapter--why on earth this was tacked on to the end of a book that was perfectly fine without it I cannot understand. I suppose someone decided it was more "commercial" or "palatable" with it. I still wholeheartedly recommend The Silicon Man--just stop at page 247.

OBJECT OF BEAUTY
A film review by Mark R. Leeper
Copyright 1991 Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: A well-crafted comedy with some nice dramatic moments and some serious things to say. This story is of the theft of a valuable piece of art from a spendthrift American couple living in London. The story touches a broad range of emotions with some of the minor characters more interesting than the main ones.
Rating: +2.

It is fairly easy to make a comedy with an Eddie Murphy or a Bette Midler mugging away on the screen and a lot of artificial gags. With a film like that, you know why it is enjoyable and ten minutes after it is over it is really over. It is much harder to make a comedy with solid, three-dimensional characters in a situation that is not obviously comedic and just let well-observed characters drive the story. O _ b _ j _ e _ c _ t
 _ o _ f _ B _ e _ a _ u _ t _ y is at least nominally a comedy but it spans a broad range of emotion. It is a good story well-told.

Jake and Tina (played by John Malkovitch and Andie MacDowell) are an American wheeler-dealer and his girlfriend living together in a posh London hotel and virtually hemorrhaging money. The problem is that it is money that Jake can ill-afford to waste on meals that cost over a hundred pounds. Jake is hoping for a big return on an investment in cocoa which has been washed out by a dock strike in Sierra Leone. He needs money desperately and wants to sell a valuable Henry Moore sculpture that Tina was given by her husband Larry. Tina prefers hiding the _ o _ b _ j _ e _ c _ t _ d' _ a _ r _ t and claiming the insurance. Meanwhile the lonely deaf-mute chambermaid (delicately played by Rudi Davis) finds that this little bronze head is the only solace for the loneliness of her affliction. She spirits the head away and keeps it as a needed friend. Since Jake and Tina had just discussed hiding the head for the insurance, each suspects the other has done just that and is holding out on the other.

The story then moves between the two worlds. One is the hotel where Jake and Tina are finding this new strain destroying their relationship. It is also where Jake is finding it increasingly difficult to dodge the hotel management on the matter of his bad credit while he is still getting them to pursue the matter of the missing piece of art. The other world is the lonely one of Jenny (the chambermaid) and her delinquent brother. Here what has been a light comedy gives way to some serious drama including at least two scenes of real dramatic power.

The script by Michael Lindsey-Hogg, who also directed, seems to have attracted a first-rate but oddly matched cast of supporting actors, including Lolita Davidovich (from _ B _ l _ a _ z _ e) as Tina's best friend, veteran British heavy Joss Ackland as the hotel manager, Bill Paterson (from _ C _ o _ m _ f _ o _ r _ t _ a _ n _ d _ J _ o _ y), and Peter Riegert (from _ A _ n _ i _ m _ a _ l

H_o_u_s_e and C_r_o_s_s_i_n_g
D_e_l_a_n_c_e_y) as Tina's real husband. The script is subtle and rewarding in a way that the British seem to do far better than the Americans. This is a rewarding story with a good balance of comedy and drama. I rate it +2 on the -4 to +4 scale.

SHADOW OF A DOUBT
A film review by Mark R. Leeper
Copyright 1991 Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: The Hallmark Hall of Fame again does a very creditable remake of a classic story. This time they have taken Hitchcock's suspense film S_h_a_d_o_w_o_f_a_D_o_u_b_t and nearly everything works. Rating: +2 (-4 to +4).

When I was growing up, I was aware that there were a series of dramas brought to television by the Hallmark Hall of Fame. It seemed that near card-sending holidays Hallmark would do a television play, and some were decent, but I would have preferred to go out to a movie any day. I think as I got older Hallmark really did get better. I know my perspective changed, but I genuinely feel that objectively they improved also. I first noticed how good they had gotten in 1979 with the remake of A_l_l_Q_u_i_e_t_o_n_t_h_e_W_e_s_t_e_r_n_F_r_o_n_t. I liked the film a lot and really wanted to see the original classic film. Actually I was a bit disappointed by the original, which did not seem to be so detailed a story or have so well-developed characters. But I told myself it was not a fair comparison. The original was an early sound film before a lot of techniques were developed. Besides, I'd seen the remake first and it had formed my opinions on the story. I also preferred their B_e_a_u_t_y_a_n_d_t_h_e_B_e_a_s_t to Cocteau's, but then I am not a big fan of Cocteau's style.

I ran out of excuses with Michael Tuchner's H_u_n_c_h_b_a_c_k_o_f_N_o_t_r_e_D_a_m_e. I had seen the three major film productions with Lon Chaney, Charles Laughton, and Anthony Quinn in the title role. Anthony Hopkins was the best Quasimodo and this production was the most detailed. I have also liked some of their original productions, but have only recently started paying closer attention to them. D_e_c_o_r_a_t_i_o_n_D_a_y was

among the best five films I saw last year. If I was going to put made-for-television movies on my "Top Ten of the Year" list, this would have made the list. Now Hallmark is back, remaking the classic film. This may be their first real suspense film, but they are starting with grand style.

Overall, the production values of _ S _ h _ a _ d _ o _ w _ o _ f _ a _ D _ o _ u _ b _ t were very good.

They used the original script, which was co-authored by Thornton Wilder. The murderous gigolo "Uncle Charley" was played by Mark Harmon, in the role that Joseph Cotten originally filled. Now, Harmon is a lot better looking than Cotten--almost pretty. Had someone with Harmon's looks played the role in the Hitchcock, you have never have been able to put someone with Cotten's looks in the remake. But putting someone better-looking in the role of the charming and villainous lady-killer works just fine. Harmon is not a very good actor and he does not project much emotion. In this role his synthetic charm and the veiled emotion work

Shadow of a Doubt

April 30, 1991

Page 2

in his favor. The remake on its own is a pretty good suspense film.

The Hitchcock film was made in 1943 and, being made during the war, it was intended to show the soldiers what they were fighting for. It was a portrait of somebody's idea of an ideal American town: pearly-white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant. It was a town where just about everyone sees each other in church. It was set in its present of 1943. The remake is a slight update, being set in 1953, the year Fidel Castro was captured and imprisoned--we hear about the event on the console radio. That really is the film's one questionable note. In a town like Petaluma, California, I doubt there were still many wind-up Victrolas in 1953. With that one minor objection, this remake is done in fine style. I would give it a +2 on the -4 to +4 scale.

