Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society
Club Notice - 12/10/93 -- Vol. 12, No. 24

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

Unless otherwise stated, all meetings are in Holmdel 4N-509
Wednesdays at noon.

| _D_A_T_E | _T_O_P_I_C |
|---|---|
| 01/05 | A MILLION OPEN DOORS by John Barnes (Nebula Nominee) (MT) |
| 01/26 | Bookswap (MT) |
| 02/16 | Demo of Electronic Hugo and Nebula Anthology (MT) |

Outside events:
The Science Fiction Association of Bergen County meets on the second Saturday of every month in Upper Saddle River; call 201-933-2724 for details. The New Jersey Science Fiction Society meets on the third Saturday of every month in Belleville; call 201-432-5965 for details.

HO Chair: John Jetzt MT 2G-432 908-957-5087 holly!jetzt
LZ Chair: Rob Mitchell HO 1C-523 908-834-1267 holly!jrrt
MT Chair: Mark Leeper MT 3D-441 908-957-5619 mtgzfs3!leeper
HO Librarian: Nick Sauer HO 4F-427 908-949-7076 homxc!11366ns
LZ Librarian: Lance Larsen HO 2C-318 908-949-4156 quartet!lfl
MT Librarian: Mark Leeper MT 3D-441 908-957-5619 mtgzfs3!leeper
Factotum: Evelyn Leeper MT 1F-329 908-957-2070 mtgpfs1!ecl


1. There are relatively few professions that show up in films. Hollywood seems to have the idea that the vast majority of people are doctors, lawyers, architects, filmmakers, policemen, advertising executives, and maybe a few others. How often do you see a film in which the main character works in a dry cleaning store? How many people who maintain air conditioners? Probably not very many. How many films do you see about engineers? Relatively few, but I do have two good examples. On Thursday, December 16, at 7 PM we will be showing two such films.

Engineering
DAM BUSTERS (1955) dir. by Michael Anderson
TUCKER (1988) dir. by Francis Ford Coppola



These are both true stories.

_D_a_m _B_u_s_t_e_r_s is very unusual war film. More time is spent fighting the establishment than the Germans. When World War II started, in England an aviation engineer, Barnes Wallis, decided to treat striking a blow against Germany as an engineering problem. He analyzed vulnerabilities and decided just where they could be hurt the worst. The Ruhr dams seemed like the right idea, but no bomb then in existence could dent them and no plane could carry anywhere nearly enough explosives. Well, what engineer hasn't had setbacks? Wallis had to start rethinking and reformulating the problem. The film is about ninety minutes of engineering and politics, then about thirty-five minutes of the actual raid. Michael Redgrave stars as Barnes Wallis and Richard Todd is an RAF commander in charge of the raid. This has long been a hard-to-find film. This film is based on Paul Brickhill's book of the same title. The book has time to go into the engineering in more detail, but the film is still unique and very enjoyable.

The war won, _T_u_c_k_e_r, an American engineer decided that what Americans wanted was a new kind of car. Something unlike anything was on the roads. But this put him in direct competition with the Big Three automakers. Like Wallis, Tucker (played by Jeff Bridges) has to buck the establishment. Like Wallis, he must do everything he can think of to sell his ideas. And thereby hangs the tale. His manipulations to get approval for his ideas and his attempts to buck the establishment form the basis of this story. Martin Landau won critical acclaim for his role. Francis Ford Coppola directs.

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2. THE BROKEN GOD by David Zindell (Bantam Spectra, due out 1/94)
(a book review by Dale L. Skran Jr.):

As some of you may remember, I was vastly impressed by David Zindell's _N_e_v_e_r_n_e_s_s, a tale of a far-future humanity on the edge of godhood. In _T_h_e _B_r_o_k_e_n _G_o_d Zindell returns to this universe to tell the tale of Mallory Ringess's son, Danlo the Wild.

The bad news is that at 694 pages, Zindell is in desperate need of an editor. Although there is lots of interesting material here, there are also multi-page expositions that should have moved directly to the circular file. At 400 pages, _T_h_e _B_r_o_k_e_n _G_o_d would have been an excellent novel. At 700, the reader finds him/herself flipping pages once the main point of the exposition has been gleaned. Also, just as in _N_e_v_e_r_n_e_s_s there is a really gross scene about two-thirds of the way through the novel which could have been covered in about ten percent of the words used (the scene is important to the plot, but uggg!).



The good news is that _T_h_e _B_r_o_k_e_n _G_o_d stands alone well as it traces Danlo's journey from the wilds to Neverness, the city of glistening multi-colored ice, on his quest to become a starship pilot. He saves the life of his best friend and his worst enemy, and eventually falls in love. This well-worn plot is enlivened by a rich vein of philosophical speculation concerning how science might fissure into dozens of sub-specialties with fundamentally different ways of looking at truth. Imagine a world where logical positivists have become a minority religious cult called "Scientists" and you get some idea of what Zindell does best.

At his best, Zindell is engaging in a running dialog with the reader on the future of what it means to be human, and to be a god. Similar to _T_h_e _G_e_n_t_l_e _S_e_d_u_c_t_i_o_n by Marc Steigler or _T_r_u_e _N_a_m_e_s by Vernor Vinge in his vision of the expansion of human consciousness via computer enhancement to something akin to godhood (a process Zindell calls, appropriately, "vastening"), Zindell takes us on a wild ride through a future philosophical jungle, at a time when advanced technology makes the realization of even dangerous dreams possible.

_T_h_e _B_r_o_k_e_n _G_o_d takes place far enough in the future that Christians

and Jews are barely remembered cults, and religious conflict is mainly between various branches of the Cybernetic Universal Church, founded by the followers of Nikolos Daru Ede, the first god. Danlo is engaged in his own radical quest to face the truth at any cost, which, one guesses, will require that he eventually confront his ascended father, Mallory Ringess, and resolve his conflict with Hanuman the Cetic, his friend/enemy. Although this clearly takes place in yet another sequel, _T_h_e _B_r_o_k_e_n _G_o_d ends on a reasonable note.

This is the sort of book that makes you wish you could take a brief break to get a Ph.D. in philosophy before continuing. I'm not enough of a philosopher to know if Zindell is blowing smoke, but the ideas are intriguing. With spreadsheets giving way to virtual reality, and processor power doubling every two years, even the "person in the street" is starting to get an idea of what "vastening" might mean on an individual level. My personal recommendation for the best introduction to this idea is either _T_r_u_e _N_a_m_e_s or _T_h_e _G_e_n_t_l_e _S_e_d_u_c_t_i_o_n, and I especially suggest the latter for people who think they hate computers and technology in general.

Note carefully the use of "god" rather than "God" by both myself and Zindell. At the end of _P_r_o_f_i_l_e_s _o_f _t_h_e _F_u_t_u_r_e Arthur C. Clarke says:

> They [future humans] will have time enough, in those endless aeons, to attempt all things, and to gather all knowledge. They will not be like gods, because no gods imagined by our minds have ever possessed



> the powers they will command.

The point is that our "gods" are limited by our own all-to-human vision of what godhood might entail. We can already destroy planets. The control of life seems on the horizon. Physical immortality is not beyond reach. The global telecommunications revolution will soon create something akin to "far-sight" and "telepathy." However, these are ancient hopes and fears, and in time we will no doubt dream new dreams.

Zindell, Vinge, and Steigler are merely asking, "What happens when we do possess the powers usually associated with gods?" Zindell's contribution to this dialog focuses a good deal on the possible mental state associated with godhood, and how humans might react to the proven reality of vastening.

Zindell places this time period many centuries in the future but Vinge and Steigler suspect the moment is coming on us like a locomotive, propelled by a computer industry running at warp speed, so fast that even those involved in it have no real appreciation of what they are creating. Stay tuned--most of those reading this will likely live to see for themselves who is right!

Fortunately (perhaps), God with a Capital G lies safely beyond the reach of gods and men, who will always have faults and limitations, even if, as Clarke suggests, those limits lie beyond the current edge of our imagination.

Recommended to: fans of Zindell, Vinge, Steigler, philosophers, would-be-philosophers, and people with some time to kill.

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3. A Visit to THE ART OF MICHAEL WHELAN: SCENES/VISIONS (Bantam Spectra, ISBN 0-553-07447-4, 1993, $60.00) (a book "visit" by Mark R. Leeper):

Rather than simply to review this impressive book, I have decided to log my experiences as I encounter the book, much as I just finished a log of my experiences as I encountered India. The book is, after all, almost a museum in compact form. The difference between such a log and a review is that I reserve the right to digress and tell what other thoughts come to mind as I experience Whelan's book. Bear with me or skim. The same advice goes if you don't have a copy of the book to consult.

To begin I should preface my remarks with my own attitudes. In truth, I am sort of neutral toward Michael Whelan's art. I like most of what I have seen of it but cannot say that I have ever been totally bowled over by it. That is little reflection on him. Art

is just not one of my major science fiction interests. At world conventions I generally visit the art show, but walk through it quickly and later can remember little of what I have seen. However since this book has become available to review, I intend to review it and get my impressions on paper.

I do go into this exercise with very one minor bone to pick with Whelan, in general. That is I really do not like what he has done with H. Beam Piper's Little Fuzzies. I first read LITTLE FUZZY in an old Avon paperback with a Fuzzy on the cover. That cover artist portrayed Fuzzies as intelligent looking primates with a sort of downy fur. That is just about right. Whelan's Fuzzies are little teddy bears with huge glassy cat's eyes. He was clearly more interested in making them cloyingly adorable than intelligent. Whelan, the one time I met him, admitted that he himself was not really fond of his own conception of the Fuzzies. It is among the worst of his art, but it seems to have hit some sort of a responsive cord and it has brought him some success all by itself.

In any case, Whelan has put together a major selection of his art in a coffee table book. As of this instant I have barely looked inside of the book, and I will give you my impressions as I do.

Whelan starts with a short enjoyable preface mostly saying he skips prefaces in art books and you can also. Instead he has put in the text of three interviews and lets Anne McCaffrey, Terry Booth, and David Cherry bring out the questions the reader might want to ask.

Next there is a short introduction by Jackson Koffman giving some biographical information and a commentary on some of the paintings. A note here: there is a problem in the proof-reading. Two or three of the page references point to the wrong pages. However the paintings are worth digging out as they are well worth studying. One in particular, for his Avatar series, resulted from Koffman's suggestion that Whelan try consciousness deprivation. It show pillars seven stories or so high holding the ruins of the room. The same painting is also on the dust jacket, incidentally.

Anne McCaffrey's interview delves into the early days of Whelan's interest in art, including an amusing story about what Whelan did to his parents' coffee table. (Now why didn't I ever think of doing that? I still might.) He also goes into contributions his wife has made and contributions--or lack thereof--of teachers. McCaffrey also gets him to say a little about how he distills an image from a novel.

The collections of his paintings are divided in two sections--he uses the term "galleries" which fits nicely into my concept for this review. I often talk about art books which take "full disadvantage of the medium." Typically that means that illustrations are spread over two pages so that the crease ruins

just about every picture. Whelan usually does not take disadvantage of the medium. ("Wing" is spread over two pages and while not as bad as it might be, would have been better if printed smaller to avoid the crease.) His paintings generally appear only on the right page in beautiful reproduction with very rich colors. The left page has title, a two- or three-paragraph commentary, and one or two small monochrome reproductions of alternate concepts for the same cover or sketches he used to prepare the painting. The title, incidentally, may be the same or entirely different from the title of the painting or the work he is illustrating. I will use the title Whelan has used in the book on the page facing the painting.

The illustration for "Delirium's Mistress" shows a flying lion that seems a bit unstable. The lion would have too much weight behind the wings to keep its hind-end from falling down. Whelan's flying dragons seem a bit more aerodynamically correct. Ray Harryhausen, in a similar task, actually made a Pegasus look not too bad in flight in his film _T_h_e _C_l_a_s_h _o_f _t_h_e _T_i_t_a_n_s. Even the lion in the alternative concept on the facing page looks a little more air-worthy, but this fellow in the painting looks like he does not have enough lift in back. So his legs will fall, his wings will hit the air at the wrong angle, and he will stall. Sure, you could say the lion is magic and does not obey physics, but then why should it have wings at all? Oh, this lion clearly is strange in one more regard: it has the mane of a male lion, yet from this angle it seems to be missing an important piece of plumbing that for most lions is part of what makes having the big mane worthwhile. Poor fellow will be able to attract flying lionesses with that mane but then will find himself with nothing to do but flap his wings at her.

Whelan's six pages of Fuzzy art are ghastly, but at least he gets them out of the way early on.

His piece "The Amazing Dragon" did not do as much for me as the possibly unrelated pencil sketch of a dragon on the facing page. The muscular neck makes the pencil sketch more physical somehow.

It clearly wasn't the dragons that were on Whelan's mind when he did "Dragonsdawn." The painting itself, and especially the drawing that led up to it, show more effort on the female figure. Not that it is a bad sight to look upon, but one wonders why young women are always so attractive in Whelan's world. Hollywood takes a lot of heat for using this myth equating virtue and beauty, but popular graphic art like Whelan's does it no less.

The final dragon painting is "Dragon Fire" which reminds me a lot of what I consider one of the greatest (and most under-rated) fantasy films ever made, _ D_ r_ a_ g_ o_ n_ s_ l_ a_ y_ e_ r. The setting, the colors, and perhaps even the head of the dragon remind me of the visuals



from the film that came out early in the 1980s well before this painting was done. Looking at the painting, however, there is something very wrong with how the limbs come out of the body. What I see is anatomically unconvincing, sort of like illustrations I have seen of Edgar Rice Burroughs' four-armed Martians. I do like the snake-like coloring of the dragonhide.

The covers for _ T_ h_ e _ S_ n_ o_ w _ Q_ u_ e_ e_ n and _ T_ h_ e _ S_ u_ m_ m_ e_ r _ Q_ u_ e_ e_ n are the sort of illustration that gives inspiration and fits to costumers at science fiction conventions.

For "Paradise" we have one of the rare examples where Whelan picked wrong, in my humble opinion. The alien in the painting is almost without personality. The one in his alternative concept, only a slight variation, clearly seems to have a sort of wisdom and more interest value for me.

"The Doll" brings to mind the hilarious story of Kate Pott, a friend of mine, whose brother hanged her doll when she was young. If you run into her at a Worldcon or a Massachusetts convention, ask her about it. Again the alternate concept works better for me. But, of course I am just back from the land of the Thugee.

Both illustrations of "Nightmare in Red" are good, but while the main one is creative, the alternate is really disturbing, which makes it a better choice. I think the same is true for the

"Boogeyman" choices. I don't think there is any connection to "Tile Work" on the facing page, really. Clearly it is the former he prefers, but it is the latter that really is disturbing.

Whelan's concept for "The New Springtime" is not too different from what he should have done for Fuzzies, except it would not have paid as well. Certainly the eyes are a lot better than the goggly Fuzzy eyes.

"Aliens" is fun. It reminds me of some famous painting I have seen but I can't quite remember.

I cannot say I like Whelan's lion-man as Chanur. That may well be what Cherryh described in the novels, I haven't read, but when I see this sort of thing I think of a silly film called _ O_ c_ t_ o_ m_ a_ n in which the monster was a ridiculous combination of man and octopus. That creature was designed by George Barr as a joke after several better concepts of what an octopus-man would look like. When I talked to Barr he still cringed at the choice the filmmaker made. In any case, any evolutionary scenario that would create such a thing as this lion-man would be laughably absurd. Given that Whelan had to create such a beastie, he probably did a reasonable job, but it is a bit too sugary-cute a concept for me. Of course I know there are a lot of cat fanciers out there who read Cherryh, but as much as I am a dog fancier, I would _ n_ o_ t like to see Whelan's



concept for a race of Dachshund-men.

I am not sentimental about Heinlein sufficiently to appreciate "Last Look Back." The painting, particularly its colors, shows a strong Maxfield Parrish look.

How can they be "Amazons" if they all have both their breasts?

Whelan talks a little about what is necessary in doing a wrap-around cover for _ T_ h_ e _ S_ t_ o_ n_ e _ o_ f _ F_ a_ r_ e_ w_ e_ l_ l. It must be different from most paintings in that there must be two areas of focus at different parts of the painting.

The bee-like ship for "Santiago" is a creative image and among the better works of the book.

None of the above reservations about Fuzzies apply to Hokas. Hokas are supposed to be cutsey. While these may not be the most challenging images Whelan has painted, he has done a good job here.

"Red As Blood" nicely escapes being Disney-esque in style while still being a very Disney-like subject. The black-and-white on the facing page is a beautiful rendering of a horror scene. I take it from the caption that "The Birth of Lilith" was not used. Still it is better than a lot of his more familiar works. Of course the black and white helps the mood. Colors would have to be carefully chosen not to ruin the feel.

"Descent" is again in a color scheme reminiscent of Parrish, perhaps not as much, but it is still there.

For "Daetrin," the final painting is much better than the sketch of the alien. Whelan raises the question of whether the books with the alien or the human on the cover would sell better since some copies were printed with each, but he never answers the question. I suspect the copy with the human sold better, but not to me.

For "Golden Witchbreed" Whelan says he needed was a symbol to tie the composition together. Elsewhere he talks about symbolism in his paintings. I wonder if the symbolism is picked up by the book buyer on a conscious or even subconscious level. Or is it too subtle to make the impression he is hoping for. The figures look extremely unnatural and posed in this painting. I cannot imagine how they would ever get into this weird position, but then I haven't read the book.

Next we come to the "gallery" called "Visions." This section is where Whelan is a true artist doing his own thing. The section has non-commissioned art, art that Whelan has painted to please himself. It starts with a quote by Jung: "The dream is the small hidden door in the deepest and most intimate sanctum of the soul,



which opens into the primeval cosmic night .... In dreams we pass

into the deeper and more universal truth." Now this is purely an aside, but I wonder how many of us have questioned whether that is really true. Has anyone ever proven that the content of dreams has more than superficial significance? Are they significant any more than the position of the stars at the time of birth or the lines in the palm of the hand? You can build something that seems like a science out of reading deep meaning into any of these things, but how do you know that dreams really do have deep meanings? Sure, you can even appear to get some positive results out of studying each, but that does not necessarily make them valid.

Terry Booth owns the Brandywine Fantasy Gallery and interviews Whelan to lead off the section on Whelan's own art.

Whelan describes the difference between this art and the commissioned art as being the material we have seen already in scenes, what we are coming to now is visions. I guess that leaves no room for simple images from his imagination. Or perhaps he considers whatever he sees in his imagination as a vision. Maybe it has to have the force of a vision to last long enough to get it on canvas. Still calling them "visions" borders on pretension. And he does seem to use the "Vision" art for commissions also, apparently. Whelan says that his primary motivation in his art is to express his personal visions. This work is closer to his heart than the illustrations which he does to give him the financial security to do his own stuff. Also the illustrations allow him an opportunity to develop the techniques to apply to his visions. However, the fact that he is a commercial illustrator is looked down upon in the "serious" art community. Of course the serious art community cannot support many artists very well, so it is my guess that the really serious artists use everything they can to establish a pecking order. And many of the most successful do art that to me expresses a lot less than even Whelan's Fuzzies. There is a lot of truth in serious art but also a lot of sham also, at least in my opinion.

Whelan divides symbolism in his paintings into three categories: narrative, conscious, and subconscious. Narrative symbolizes themes in the book he is illustrating. Conscious symbolism is what he puts in intentionally responding to his feelings about what he is expressing. Unconscious is what he later reads into a painting after--perhaps long after--it is completed. He gives an example of the last by saying that there was a cover by another artist fascinated him as a child and which he had forgotten about. Later he used a similar idea in a painting of his own. Somehow I do not think that has much to do with symbolism, per se, but with just the use of one concept.

Booth says to Whelan, "One of the reasons your art is so successful is that you can reach people who are unsophisticated about the art

world but open to emotions and ideas." I had a chuckle at that. I am sure it was not intended as a put-down, but grocery store tabloids also appeal to people who are unsophisticated but open to emotions and ideas ... ideas like "Elvis is living on Mars." I think he left out that the people are not just open but also discerning.

Booth and Whelan choose different interpretations of "The Red Step" (page 139). Whelan painted this during a fit of artist's block. The painting shows a huge building and people moving toward the light. Whether that is optimistic (as Whelan thinks) or pessimistic (Booth's view) is a matter of interpretation.

Whelan sees art is a way to capture and preserve an experience. "Of all creatures on this earth, only people are aware of their own mortality, of the mortality and imminent decay of everything," he says. I am not sure how much evidence he has for that statement. I would qualify it with an "It seems likely that ...."

Booth asks if Whelan has special preferences for how his art should be displayed. Besides things like the right height off the ground and proper lighting, he said he wanted no food at a showing of his art. I guess it is a bit of a distraction.

Whelan says that his paintings should reflect the world but more importantly he wants his paintings to explore himself deeper and deeper with time. He calls himself a sort of Indiana Jones in his own personal universe. Okay.

Thus begins the actual entry to Gallery Two: Visions.

"Passage: The Avatar" I described already. Looking at this image of a truly spectacular ruin I started to ask myself what Whelan had in mind that the complete building would have looked like. My conclusion is that the painting probably does not make any sense. The platform is probably wrong. At least it look too small to have the much larger looking roof completely cover it.

This painting also introduces the flame-in-a-bubble image that runs (floats?) through the "Passage" series.

Ironically, in this section of the book where Whelan is showing the paintings that most represent his own ideas, he has less to say

about the works than he has to say about the commissioned art. He probably feels the images should speak for themselves.

"Climber" shows a huge ramped structure, but my question is, "Is there a climber in 'Climber'?" I see nobody unless it is supposed to be the little brown spot in the middle of the picture.



In "Armenia," a floating city has fallen in a desert setting while cute Fuzzy animals play in the foreground. Technology fails and nature lives on. Probably true, but it is more likely to be insects--especially beetles--who survive technology. But they are not as cute to us as something mammalian-looking.

The image of "The Causeway" does very little for me.

Whelan may know anatomy, but his physics seems lacking in "L'Echelle." This flier would fall like a stone unless there is some sort of magic keeping him aloft. "High and Dry" on the facing page warrants a second look. The lizards have surprisingly humanoid torsos. I didn't catch that the first time through.

In "Leavetaking" the position seems singularly uncomfortable. Why would anyone not posed by an artist get into such a strange position?

"Destroying Angel" is effective, though I doubt most of the symbolism comes across. This painting on the death of Jimi Hendrix strikes me as more impressive than anything Hendrix did. But I admit I am not much of a Hendrix fan.

The painting "Sentinels" shows small humans on huge hawk-headed statues of gods. Whelan is creating his own fictional mythology. I think the painting represents a nice concept and in some ways embodies what I look for when I travel to non-Western cultures. In his commentary Whelan says he thought the picture was painted too small. At exhibitions it gets lost among his other works. Now he uses at minimum a four-foot-square canvas. Perhaps this book has an equalizing effect. The size of the painting is lost in the

reproduction of this book. In any case, this is one of the better works.

"Lights" is a Christmas card with idealized pictures of his two children holding bowls with candles reminiscent of the flame bubbles of his passage series.

"Passage: Verge" seems to over-dramatize Whelan's decision to do his own work for a while without commissions. It represents Whelan's insecurity over the decision to work on non-commissioned art for a few months rather than do the more remunerative illustration work. It shows a woman standing on a ledge over a huge precipice. Personally I think the woman was is a more dangerous position than he was. If the woman goes over edge she will not come back, but Whelan can probably always go back to taking commissions.

"The Subterraneans" is a piece showing a man dwarfed a huge unknowable underground building. It evolved with time. Whelan got the idea of how to show the huge structure while at his daughter's



concert.

To make this huge edifice work Whelan said he had to break the laws of perspective. However, it seems to me that nobody says he has to obey laws of perspective. This is a digression, but it seem to me that contrary to popular opinion your eye does not see following the laws of perspective. (That is if I understand those laws and I cannot totally assure the reader that I do.) The laws are just a better description of the way things look than what came before them. The laws of perspective, as I understand them, say you see straight lines as straight lines, but that is only approximately true over short distances. Actually you see straight lines as subtle curves. Suppose you had a field of vision of more than 180 degrees, like a hawk does, and you were looking at two perfectly straight parallel lines, say rails of an idealized railroad track. Suppose you were standing on one rail so that the tracks went left and right from where you are standing. The rails would at one time seem to meet off to your left and off to your right at the two vanishing points. Your eye could not be seeing those rails as

perfectly straight lines since the two curves you see seem to be meeting at two points. Your vision would actually subtly curving the straight lines. But if it would curve the lines if you had 190-degree vision, it is probably doing it with the field of vision of about 120 degrees that you do have.

But I digress. Well I warned you I might. "The Subterraneans" shows huge abandoned structures. The earlier "Sentinels" showed mammoth hawk-god statues. These remind me of some of the immense structures we saw in the Nile Valley. I can understand his interest in huge abandoned archeological sites. They have much the same appeal as visiting real historical sites.

"Two Worlds" shows a Pan-like figure fluting on a bone while in the background we see a field of graves in Ethiopia. The theme is that we in the West are powerless to help and bring change to the Third World. I think the meaning does not come across. That may be just as well since there are a lot of people in the Third World who would find his attitude that we should be going in and solving their problems patronizing and insulting.

"The Apotheosis of War" was supposedly inspired by the fighting in Sarajevo. I have been in Sarajevo and there is nothing in the picture that really is evocative of the city with its influence of the architecture of three religions. Admittedly the foreground is symbolic, like the horsemen of the Apocalypse, but the background fails to capture Sarajevo. This is an emotional statement rather than an intellectual one.

"Wide" seems a bit redundant with "Open." Both seem to show entries into a new world to show up in Whelan's paintings. Whelan wants to explore this world more fully. Actually the world he



wants to explore seems to be the most angelically dull place imaginable. I hope he has some good ideas because after two paintings I have absolutely no wish to see any more.

The closing interview is about materials and methods and the interviewer is David Cherry. Cherry was the president of the Association of Science Fiction and Fantasy Artists from 1988 to

1990, and being an artist himself can ask Whelan about the technical aspects of his art.

Much of this discussion means very little to me and probably will not mean much to other non-artists reading the book. It is a discussion of materials used and of painting technique. For example it covers why Whelan prefers acrylics over oils. Much I skimmed.

If you look however, there are still interesting bits to cull from the interview. Whelan had some problems with the model for "Hecate's Cauldron" that are amusing.

Whelan is a little apprehensive about the video revolution and what it will mean to artists. An art director told him that in five years it will be video technology that art directors will be using instead of artists. Whelan doubts that the director will be able to find photos of dragons to process. Personally, I doubt the technology will proceed all that fast. People tend to underestimate both the size of the task of developing something in technology and the power of persistence. That means people overestimate technological advance on the short term and underestimate it on the long term. Whelan may be wrong about how hard it would be to photograph dragons, since artists like him have provided many photographable images of dragons. They are copyrighted, of course, but not every idea packed into one of those dragon images is. If you take the surface texture from "Filed Teeth" (page 48) and apply it to the dragon in "Dragon Fire" (page 56), then give it the body structure of "The Prize" (page 52), do you really still have a Whelan Dragon? At what point does it drop out of copyright protection? If an artist combined these elements on canvas, I doubt Whelan would have much of a legal case. But doing it entirely with image processing of Whelan's own images might not give Whelan any more of a legal handle.

Cherry points out that people thought that photography would replace art. Whelan said it only freed artists from drudgery art. Well as my corollary to Santana, I say, "Those who remember the past are condemned to be misled by it." Video-imaging is not just photography, and it inevitably will be a big chunk of Whelan's market--whether Whelan takes that chunk himself or leaves it to others is up to him. I suspect an artist as good as he is will never have to worry about employment, but the are a lot of others who will be pushed aside by new technologies. Whelan said of

"Filed Teeth" (page 48) that if he ever has to paint that many scales again he will commit ritual suicide. Well, details like that are just what video imaging will do well.

Whelan says there is no way to get an attractive permanent hardcopy for video imagery. First for a lot of applications the hardcopy you can get now is plenty good enough. Secondly the quality of what will be available in the future will follow the demand. I may be making the Santana error, but I suspect that hand-painted imaginative images, like Whelan makes now, will be prized but considered a luxury just like hand-made furniture is prized today. Of course, that seems to be ignoring how much a component of art imagination is, but what sets Whelan apart from thousands of other fantasy fans is not his imagination but his ability to render his ideas--essentially, his technique. And technology is going to make technique a lot easier to come by or at least replace it with something as effective. Lots of people with the imagination but not the technique will be getting into the act and letting the technology provide the technique. I didn't get much from the discussion of materials, but I did get that an artist's materials are hard to work with and take a lot of time--Whelan works sixty to seventy hours a week--and very little of that is time spent thinking up the idea. It is mostly spent on what the computer will do very quickly. Until now materials have really gotten in the way of expressing imagination in a visual way in a decent form. The computer will change that.

Whelan finishes his book with an appendix with details showing small reproductions, years, materials, who commissioned the work, etc.

And with that the book comes to an end. My opinion of _ T_ h_ e _ A_ r_ t _ o_ f _ M_ i_ c_ h_ a_ e_ l _ W_ h_ e_ l_ a_ n is that it is a bit pricey at $60, but well worth the effort to go through to experience Whelan's thought processes and work. It also makes a good coffee-table book.

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Interpretation is the revenge of the intellect upon art.
-- Susan Sontag