

telling us where to meet us. Somebody in our family, who shall remain nameless (because I am too embarrassed to admit it was me), thought that to illustrate the Japanese influence in science fiction we should signify our presence by putting up our 5-ft inflatable Godzilla. I decided that it was not a good idea. Heck,

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somebody might stick a fork in my Godzy and I would have nothing to play with at the beach this summer. [-mrl]

2. Speaking of matters international and their influence on us... Well, America is grudgingly becoming part of the global community. I recently walked the streets of San Francisco for the first time since the mid-1970s and was surprised to see how much Japanese culture you really see in the streets there. You see Japanese signs in shop windows, you see more Japanese on the streets, you see restaurants from countries I suspect most Americans could not find on a world map. But each of these things are the results of people from other countries actually coming here. On the whole, we Americans do little to reach out and pull in other cultures. When I was in Japan I listened to their commercials. What did I hear? A long string of Japanese and embedded in it was the phrase "to-ma-to ket-chup." Another ad talked about skin care. I am waiting for the day when I hear an American television commercial mention something as common as "wasabi." If we do use foreign phrases, and it's very rare, they are European. I guess we respect European culture if we respect any culture but our own. I have heard "Cordon Bleu" mentioned in more cultured ads. I think we don't respect the economic power of France or their military power, but some of us respect their culture. That is probably pretty much what Japan thinks of us.

When we do reach out to cultures of Asia we end up with chop suey. Chop suey was invented in the United States to be "the sort of thing the Chinese eat." Curiously, I am told sukiyaki was a Japanese invention intended to be "the sort of food Westerners eat." Each is roughly as successful at its approximation, which is to say not at all.

Actually, what brought this comment on is reading a book catalogue that got sent to my house. I have to share this with you, even if

it deals with matters a little more sexual than I usually talk about. Anyway, this catalogue is for all sorts of close-out books and included is an "adults only" section. Well, you know me. My strength is as the strength of ten because my heart is pure. But I figured I wouldn't be corrupted by just reading an ad or two.

Anyway, one of the books sums up for me a lot of how our culture assimilates Asian culture. The ad said:

P_o_p-U_p_K_a_m_a_S_u_t_r_a by J. Briggs. The ancient Indian guide to love and love-making springs to life through the magic of 3-D pop-up illustrations. This witty piece of erotica has been beautifully produced in lush full color to capture the essence of the original Kama Sutra. For sale to adults over 21 only.

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Somehow I think I'd prefer chop suey.

3. Estes Slade offers these comments on Mark's dress routine:

"Not unlike Mark I too keep yesterday's pants on the left while selecting today's from the right. I also have about a dozen pants ranging in color from grey to black (what a selection) and twice as many shirts of different colors.

Often I will select today what I will wear tomorrow. This is because I discovered back in seventh grade that I suffered from a rare form of color blindness that is only active early in the morning around 6:30 AM.

I must confess I am probably one of those people that tells other people what they're wearing looks fine when actually it doesn't.

For the past three to four months I had been wearing what some polite employees called a caterpillar on my upper lip. As the "strange larva" grew people began to say things like "Wow Estes! It makes you look so much more mature," or "I really like a man with a moustache." All of a sudden I actually felt like I made a

good decision!

Now everyone might not agree with me but I think Sammy Davis, Jr. is among the top worst entertainers I have ever seen. The only reason I never told anyone before is that for years people were telling me, "Ya know, you 'almost' look like Sammy Davis, Jr." I guess I was supposed to take it as a compliment.

Anyway once the larva firmly attached itself to my lip, peoples' comments became "Ya know, you DO look like Sammy Davis, Jr.! Well I just couldn't take it anymore especially after my 5-year-old godchild, Heather, told me she no longer wanted to kiss me because "that thing (moustache) itches!" So this past weekend I shaved it off.

Now on this Monday back at work the exact same people who told me how mature I looked with it say I look a lot better without it.

The point of all this is to say I'm just going to keep on doing what I like to do and wearing what I like to wear. To hell with everyone else! Right, Evelyn?" [-ecs]

4. Our film festival has been postponed for one week. We are still replacing the den window and the toilet seat after the "little excitement" at our last film festival.

Mark Leeper
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...mtgzx!leeper

JAGUARS RIPPED MY FLESH by Tim Cahill
Penguin, 1989 (1987c), 0-14-011440-8, L4.99.
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper
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J_a_g_u_a_r_s_R_i_p_p_e_d_M_y_F_l_e_s_h is Tim Cahill's answer to the sort of articles he used to read in men's magazines such as might be called "M_a_n'_s_T_e_s_t_i_c_l_e" (in his words). Cahill talks about the r_e_a_l_i_t_y of

sky-diving, scuba-diving, caving, and other such manly pursuits, rather than the idealized, super-macho image projected in those other articles. Much of the danger in exploring the South American jungle, for example, is not from thirty-foot poisonous snakes, but from the trigger-happy local militia. When faced by sharks, "actual human beings, as opposed to r_e_a_l_m_e_n, feel genuine terror" (emphasis Cahill's).

Cahill's writings emphasize what real people do. Sometimes they're smart, sometimes they're stupid, and sometimes they survive even when they're stupid (but don't count on that in your life). People who do the sorts of things Cahill writes about will probably understand the book better than I do, but even a non-adventurous sort can appreciate the writing. And most non-adventurous sorts would rather read a description of shark-diving than do it.

THE COMPLETE TIME TRAVELER

by Howard J. Blumenthal, Dorothy F. Curley, and Brad Williams

Ten Speed Press, 1988, ISBN 0-89815-284-4, \$13.95.

A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper

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Micro-review: You absolutely must go out and read this book!

Have you finished it? Good, now I'll continue.

It was for books such as this, I believe, that the "Other Forms" Hugo category was invented. Of course, the category is gone, so now T_h_e_C_o_m_p_l_e_t_e_T_i_m_e_T_r_a_v_e_l_e_r sits on the shelf, fitting nowhere. Which is a pity, as this is certainly as deserving of a Hugo as many of the nominees who have the benefit of actually fitting into a category. It's not non-fiction (yet), though it's certainly presented as non-fiction. It's not a novel (though I suppose one could stretch and call it a novel written in the second person). So what is it?

This book is subtitled "A Tourist's Guide to the Fourth Dimension" and reads very much like the books on videocassette players that came out in great abundance in the early 1980s. It starts with a description of time and time travel, then goes on to describe the various devices (TTV devices, Chronovision, etc.), complete with brand-names and consumer evaluations. It covers the various governmental rules regarding time travel, time travel basics ("Don't flick your Bic in medieval Europe."), and destinations. And it does all this from the perspective of 2038. Yes, everything about this book--even the copyright page and dust jacket--is done as if the book had been (will be?) produced in 2038. You want to know where to get appropriate clothing for 1902 New York? This book tells you. What happens if you try to wear a brassiere to Crete? This book tells you that also. (Time Customs and Immigration has a storeroom full of confiscated brassieres.)

I could go on and on, but that would spoil your enjoyment in reading this book yourself.

Of course, given my nit-picking temperament, it would be difficult for me to read a book such as this without wanting to pick nits. And though Blumenthal et al do an excellent job of avoiding 95% of the time travel paradoxes, they do make a couple of slips. They claim, for example, that 36% of all travelers have taken the "Cradle of Liberty" tour (or similar) which visits the major events of the American Revolution. Assuming a couple of million time travelers (a low estimate), that would be 720,000 people watching the Battles of Lexington and Concord. You'd think someone in 1775 would have noticed.

But nits aside, this is an absolutely wonderful book, with its charm not only in its content, but in every aspect of its production. For science fiction fans, a must, of course, but also a must for those

who love to read travel books. If your local bookstore is sold out of this volume, you should hop back a few months and pick it up then.

THE AQUILIAD, VOLUME III: "Aquila and the Sphinx" by S. P. Somtow
Del Rey, 1989, 0-345-34791-9, \$3.05.
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper
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Somtow Sucharitkul wrote an alternate history novel (actually a collection of novelettes) called T_h_e_A_q_u_i_l_i_a_d. Then he decided/discovered that people couldn't pronounce his name and started writing under the name S. P. Somtow. The second volume, T_h_e_A_q_u_i_l_i_a_d I I: A_q_u_i_l_a_a_n_d_t_h_e_I_r_o_n_H_o_r_s_e, was published under the new name. Now volume three has been published and in addition, the first volume has been reissued under the name S. P. Somtow as well.

The setting of volume three is the same as that of the first two. Nine hundred years after the Founding of Rome (or around 200 A.D. to those who follow the strange Christian religion), Rome rules the world--or most of it--including Novum Terrum, which Bigfoot exists, technology seems to be at the level of about one hundred years ago on our Earth, and a deranged traveler from the future is trying to destroy the world. The latter "feature" was introduced in the second novel and definitely represents a downhill turn.

While some things have improved over the second volume (Somtow spends less time harping on the differences between the Roman and Lacotian [Amerind] ways of life), others have not. There are still far too many cute names (Equus Insanus isn't bad, but "longus porcus" is ridiculous!), and the series seems to have degenerated into a slapstick conflict between Aquila and the inter-dimensional green pig that is trying to control the universe. Aquila flies pyramids and sphinxes around (they were left from ancient astronauts) and the green pig shrinks cities down and puts them in bottles. Had the series started out this way, I probably wouldn't object so much (I would have given up much earlier), but Somtow showed he could do serious alternate history, and now he's opting for cheap laughs instead.

THE RED LIMIT by Timothy Ferris
Bantam, 1979 (1977c), ISBN 0-553-11431-X, \$2.25.
A book review by Mark R. Leeper
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A few months ago I reviewed A B r i e f H i s t o r y o f
T i m e by Stephen
Hawking. As I remember, I was generally favorable but could not give
the book an unqualified recommendation. After a few chapters of
understanding virtually everything that Hawking was saying, I felt that
he picked up speed in his narrative and he quickly became very hard to
follow. As I told some enraged readers afterward, I greatly respect
Hawking as a physicist, but that does not mean that I think he is
infallible as a science writer. There is nothing that implies that good
scientists make good science writers. If being a good scientist is not
sufficient to be a good science writer, at least I can say it is not
necessary either. Timothy Ferris is a journalism teacher from Brooklyn
College. I think I can whole-heartedly recommend T h e R e d L i m i t.

I was vaguely aware that I had heard of Ferris when the BBC World
Service recently broadcast a review of his book C o m i n g o f A g e i n
t h e
M i l k y W a y. The reviewer was very positive, claiming she wanted to skim
it and instead found herself engrossed. That prompted me to check what
I had by him and found a pictorial book on galaxies and T h e R e d L i m i t.
In fact, the description of C o m i n g o f A g e i n t h e

M_i_l_k_y_ W_a_y made it sound
a lot like _ T_h_e_ R_e_d_ L_i_m_i_t. Perhaps it was even an expansion of the 1977
_ R_e_d_ L_i_m_i_t.

_ T_h_e_ R_e_d_ L_i_m_i_t is not as solidly technical as Hawking's _ B_r_i_e_f
_ H_i_s_t_o_r_y_ o_f_ T_i_m_e--if one can call a book that, like _ A
_ B_r_i_e_f_ H_i_s_t_o_r_y_,
leaves out all math to sell better. _ T_h_e_ R_e_d_ L_i_m_i_t is a history of
modern astronomy and cosmology. Ferris begins in 1751 with Immanuel
Kant misinterpreting a bad translation of an account of cosmological
theory by Thomas Wright and coming away from it with the mistaken belief
that Wright said the Milky Way was a disk-like formation of stars. Of
course that is just what the Milky Way is, but that leaves us with
nobody to have been the first to present that theory.

Ferris quickly jumps to Harlow Shapley in the early 20th century
and we are off and running, learning about the theories and the people
who presented them. Ferris explains the science in a clear crisp
fashion and just when readers' minds start to wander, he tells an
anecdote about the lives of the people making the discoveries. When
it's over the reader has a surprising feel for how the history and
theory fit together and who were the people who made both. Ferris
conveys wonder without making the science at all dry. He always
explains clearly why people believed what they did about the universe.
There are none of the gaps of comprehension that I had with Hawking's
book. _ T_h_e_ R_e_d_ L_i_m_i_t won Ferris the American Institute of Physics
writing award. And he deserved it.

[Postscript: There is a new updated edition of _ T_h_e_ R_e_d_ L_i_m_i_t
currently in print as a trade paperback.]

THE HIGH-TECH KNIGHT by Leo Frankowski
Del Rey, 1989, ISBN 0-345-32763-2, \$3.95
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper
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The second volume of "The Adventures of Conrad Stargard" is finally
out. Given that the first (_ T_h_e_ C_r_o_s_s_ s_ T_i_m_e_ E_n_g_i_n_e_e_r)
came out in early
1986, this is a long time to wait for volume two. (Frankowski promises
that volumes three and four will be out later this year, so it won't

take a lifetime to finish reading the series!)

As you probably _ d _ o _ n' _ t remember from three years ago, the premise is as follows: Conrad Schwartz, loyal citizen of Communist Poland, goes to sleep in the basement of an inn and wakes up in 1231 A.D. In the best "Connecticut Yankee" tradition, his knowledge revolutionizes the society he falls into. Of course, he does all this in the spirit of good Marxist dedication. He doesn't worry about the paradoxes of trying to change history so that the Mongols are defeated in their (in our universe, successful) attempt to over-run Poland in 1241. There are also some time travelers in the future who are watching him via a viewscreen and who have provided him with a bionic intelligent horse.

_ T _ h _ e _ H _ i _ g _ h _ T _ e _ c _ h _ K _ n _ i _ g _ h _ t continues the story with yet more inventions,

yet more progress, yet more nude saunas and other bits designed to keep adolescent boys interested (this being written from the male perspective, the women involved in these episodes tend to be interchangeable and uniformly attractive--strange that Conrad never meets any homely women). There is a fair amount of build-up to a duel, which finishes in about four pages, leaving this reader with the feeling not unlike that of those people who pay hundreds of dollars for boxing tickets and then see the bout end in a knock-out after fifteen seconds.

The horse is still annoying me--the time travel premise would be plenty without her. The interference from the future still smacks of _ d _ e _ u _ s _ e _ x _ m _ a _ c _ h _ i _ n _ a to me. The sexual interludes still bore me. But the Mongols are still off on the horizon somewhere, and I want to find out what happens. My recommendation to wait for the entire series and then read it still holds.