

the skiers as they glide over the snow. Why is the owl so angry? Well, it may be that the skiers are frightening off its food supply or are just skiing too close to the owl's nest. This is the nesting season. Who can say what is going on in an owl's mind? It is just an animal, ha-ha!

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So what are the authorities doing about this menace? Well, they have fashioned a funny sort of trap. They have built an owl trap that is a cage with a live rabbit. And they have some wire entanglements above the cage. Then they play recordings of rabbits in distress. They expect the owl to hear the recordings, see the rabbit in the cage, swoop down on it, and get entangled in the wire. That should give the rabbit some excitement. He is completely enclosed so he is in no danger except from heart attack--ha-ha! That will give the people a good opportunity to separate the owl from his or her nest. In the meantime the rabbit can just sit in the cage and listen to his screaming buddy on the tape. Must be a real fun time! And soon, we are promised, the trails will be safe again for the skiers to enjoy the Great Outdoors. And as consolation for the owl, if enough are wiped out, maybe we can name a football team for them. Ha-ha!

2. Last Friday's N_e_w_Y_o_r_k_T_i_m_e_s had an article in the Arts Section on "futuristic novels." They did actually use the term "science fiction"--once. [-ecl]

3. No, we're not becoming Siskel and Ebert, but this week's MT VOID does contain two reviews of Robert Charles Wilson's T_h_e_D_i_v_i_d_e. [-ecl]

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The fundamental argument for freedom of opinion is the doubtfulness of all our belief. If we certainly knew the truth, there would be something to be said for

teaching it. ... When the State intervenes to insure the indoctrination of some doctrine, it does so because there is no conclusive evidence in favor of that doctrine.

-- Bertrand Russell

MEMOIRS OF AN INVISIBLE MAN

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

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Capsule review: It is unusual to find a film of quality and style being released outside the summer fluff season. Generally pretty good special effects from ILM are the real star of this very lightweight sci-fi (as opposed to science fiction) adventure.

Rating: high 0 (-4 to +4).

Stories of people with the ability to make themselves invisible (and the power this gives them) go back to ancient Greece. Perseus had a cap of invisibility, Gyges made himself king with a ring of invisibility, H. G. Wells questioned just how powerful a totally transparent man could be in T_h_e_I_n_v_i_s_i_b_l_e_M_a_n. (Wells, incidentally, recognized that a totally invisible eye would not focus and hence would be blind. The serum in his novel leaves the lenses of the eye intact and Wells says, questionably, that his invisible man just has to take care that the lenses of his eyes are

not seen.)

Early silent films would occasionally have people turn invisible, usually for comic visual effect. 1933 brought Universal's adaptation of Wells's novel and a whole series with it using the special effects of Arthur Edelson. Since then there have been only occasional films with invisible people. Mexico made a series of "Invisible Man" films; there have been two television series claiming to be based on the Wells. Films like T_h_e_I_n_v_i_s_i_b_l_e

B_o_y, T_h_e_A_m_a_z_i_n_g_T_r_a_n_s_p_a_r_e_n_t_M_a_n, and T_h_e_I_n_v_i_s_i_b_l_e_D_r.
M_a_b_u_s_e have

used the gimmick. The 1970s television series with David McCallum was an early application of bluescreen for the effect. The latest film version is M_e_m_o_i_r_s_o_f_a_n_I_n_v_i_s_i_b_l_e_M_a_n based on the novel by H. F. Saint and directed by John Carpenter.

Like most of the people Chevy Chase plays, Nick Holloway is in the wrong place at the wrong time. In Nick's case the wrong place is Magnescopics, a high-tech research lab. The wrong time is when their fusion experiment goes awry. (Computer experts beware. You will n_o_t like the scene that shows how the experiment went wrong.

V_o_y_a_g_e_t_o_t_h_e_B_o_t_t_o_m_o_f_t_h_e_S_e a fans might like it, though.)

Through some freak accident, large portions of the building are rendered invisible. So is Nick. What is the most pedestrian and predictable plot that could come out of this beginning. Yup! You got it. Sam Neill plays the villainous CIA operative who wants to get hold of Nick and use him as a weapon. Can one man with the power of invisibility outwit a CIA assassin who has a whole brigade of men in suits and sunglasses with guns? The suspense is terrible and the writing not much better. Of course, this is a part made for

Chevy Chase since it involves a lot of falling down and knocking into things. One of the things he bumps into is Alice Munro (played by Darryl Hannah) who does not really take much of an active part in the story. She is there more to react and to give the audience someone attractive to look at. They certainly don't have Chase to look at.

Industrial Light and Magic no doubt was anxious to see what their technology could add to Edelson's invention for the 1933 film.

Edelson's approach was to put an actor in a black suit so that nothing showed, then put visible pieces of clothing on the actor and film it against a black background. The negative would then be nearly transparent except for the visible clothing. Superimposing this on a scene of a room and then printing the result would give a look of empty clothing. Bluescreen--ILM's specialty--is a refinement of this process using video technology. ILM's imagination shows with some new invisibility effects, the nicest being a mask of facepaint visible from front and back.

The special effects are about the only thing to see this film for. Well, ..., perhaps there is a little original playing with the concept of invisibility, but not enough to make it worthwhile. I give this film a high 0 on the -4 to +4 scale.

THE DIVIDE by Robert Charles Wilson
Doubleday Foundation, 1990, ISBN 0-385-26655-3, \$8.95.
A book review by Dale L. Skran
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There has long been one overpowering classic of super-intelligence, Stapledon's O_d_d_J_o_h_n. Author after author has tried and failed to produce a believable super-intelligent character, but none have succeeded as well as Stapledon's haunting tale. The problem, in nutshell, is how does a SF writer of above average intelligence present to a general audience of non-geniuses a character who is more intelligent than both the writer and the audience? This is clearly extremely difficult, akin to a blind person who has never seen color writing about blending colors in an oil painting.

There have been some notable efforts that fall short. Thomas Disch's C_a_m_p_C_o_n_c_e_n_t_r_a_t_i_o_n deals with a prison camp filled with geniuses. Daniel Keyes skips around the problem in F_l_o_w_e_r_s_f_o_r_A_l_g_e_r_n_o_n by telling the tale of a retarded character who first becomes normal and then briefly super-intelligent before a final descent to retardation again. A very recent and quite well done (I suggest it be nominated for the Hugo) is B_r_a_i_n_C_h_i_l_d by George Turner. By the device of presenting three fundamentally different types of super-intelligent post-humans, Turner succeeds in conveying some of the complexity of this thing called intelligence. Another notable effort is Bruce Sterling's S_c_h_i_s_m_a_t_r_i_x, which deals peripherally with genetically engineered "Super-brights" as well as other experiments in intelligence. Sterling, like Turner, recognizes that intelligence is not just one thing. In his short story, "Sunken Gardens" (now available in the collection C_r_y_s_t_a_l_E_x_p_r_e_s_s-- highly recommended!), the main character has a highly enhanced left brain, leading her to leaps of pattern recognition far beyond the ordinary, but keeping her dancing on the knife-edge of paranoia.

The latest entry in the "super-intelligence" description race is T_h_e_D_i_v_i_d_e by Robert Charles Wilson. By the author of notable recent works such as M_e_m_o_r_y_W_i_r_e and G_y_p_s_i_e_s, T_h_e_D_i_v_i_d_e begins full of promise. A secret government project in the 1950s used hormone treatments to accelerate brain growth in the womb, resulting in a super-intelligent child, one John Shaw. The name is in fact a knowing take-off on M_a_n_a_n_d_S_u_p_e_r_m_a_n and O_d_d_J_o_h_n. This John, like the original, is not just a smart guy who never loses at chess. He is a super-man in every way, although lacking Odd John's telepathic powers. His almost instantaneous apprehension of minor details most of us never notice makes him super-Sherlockian in nature. One of the better scenes in the book comes when he attempts to demonstrate to a scientist just exactly what he is by reeling off hundreds of little details about her even though they have only met moments before. Other obvious but required scenes demonstrate the ease with which he can seduce a woman, defeat a man in a fight, or persuade someone to sell him their car.

This broad catalog of abilities is at least vaguely consistent with the notion of hormones causing the growth of additional nerve tissue in the brain.

Unfortunately, Shaw is farmed out at a young age to a normal couple. There, his inability to fit in leads him to create an artificial personality, "Benjamin," to deal with the mundane world. This notion, although plausible, is scarcely original. Piers Anthony did it ages back in M_a_c_r_o_s_c_o_p_e. Eventually, he awakens from the slumber of being Benjamin into an adulthood of being John Shaw, the super-intelligent hermit living on a remote Canadian island. Eventually, the extra brain tissue starts to break down, and he and Benjamin begin a struggle for dominance.

There is really nothing wrong with this story, but it is not ultimately about a super-intelligent character. It is about a super-intelligent character who's mind is breaking down and who needs psychological treatment. The story is predictable in every way, and almost seems intended for a TV mini-series, with a dramatic confrontation in a burning warehouse near the end during which John and Benjamin predictably fuse into a third personality who is neither the slack-witted Benjamin or the ultra-smart John. Unfortunately, John Shaw is far more interesting than the supporting cast, and we see far too little of him. In the end, Wilson can only show us brief glimpses of an intelligence beyond our ken.

T_h_e_D_i_v_i_d_e also suffers from an overall lack of plausibility. It seems amazing that the people running the "super-intelligence" program would send John out to normal parents (how could this lead to anything but trouble?), or that the people running the show would be concerned with a little detail like that fact the the extra brain tissue reverts to normal after a while. We are asked to believe that only one doctor ever knew about the program, and somehow all the details were concealed from his CIA sponsors. Far too little time is spent explaining these vital underpinning, and far too much in a burning warehouse.

Wilson promises a great novel, but only delivers a so-so effort, leaving the reader all the more disappointed for having their hopes raised so high.

THE DIVIDE by Robert Charles Wilson
Doubleday Foundation, 1990, ISBN 0-385-26655-3, \$8.95.
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper
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Let's clear something up right away: this book is n o t by the
co-author of the "Illuminati" books. That is Robert A n t o n Wilson.

No, this is by the author of A H i d d e n P l a c e M e m o r y
W i r e, and

G y p s i e s, all of which I read, liked, and recommended previously. So
it should come as no surprise that I liked this book as well. (My
delay in reviewing it is due to the relatively poor distribution
trade paperbacks get, coupled with an apparent change of publishers-
--Wilson's three previous novels were with Bantam Spectra and I
expected his future novels to appear under that imprint as well.)

John Shaw is the result of a government-sponsored experiment in
enhancing intelligence. (The back blurb compares T h e D i v i d e to
F l o w e r s f o r A l g e r n o, but there is something of

F i r e s t a r t e r here as

well.) But John found that greater intelligence was a curse as well
as a blessing, and so Benjamin was born. Beginning as a role that
John played, Benjamin became an independent personality, a normal
person who lived a normal life. And now, to complicate matters,
John/Benjamin gets a message that he is dying.

It is difficult to portray convincingly a genius so that the non-genius reader (or viewer) can comprehend it. This was one of the major failings of the film *Little Man Tate*, for example. Wilson knows this, and even has John comment on this in regard to Olaf Stapledon's *Odd John*, a classic work on this theme. Wilson succeeds in his portrayal by avoiding the specific--he doesn't show John solving polynomials in his head or doing esoteric scientific experiments. Rather, he is shown as subtly different in outlook, successful at anything he sets his hand to, and alone.

On the other hand, *The Divine Mind* does have problems. The "psychotic boyfriend" subplot seemed unnecessary (one might almost say gratuitous), and the resolution was singularly unsatisfying--it was just too fortuitous. (This is similar to the problem that Wilson had in his second and third novels, *Memory Wire* and *Gay Psies*, whose endings I felt were too predictable.) Because of these flaws I can't recommend this book as strongly as Wilson's previous works, but if you are interested in the subject of enhanced intelligence and its effects, this book is of definite interest to you.

FINAL ANALYSIS

A film review by Mark R. Leeper
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Capsule review: Psychiatrist finds himself involved with the sister of a patient and her gangster husband. Too much of the script follows well-traveled paths for the turns to be much of a surprise. Gere is acceptable as a psychiatrist, though the best acting comes from two smaller roles-

-a gangster and a detective. Rating: low +1 (-4 to +4).

There is a crime committed about a third of the way into this film. I turned to Evelyn and said, "Now tell me the plot of the rest of the film." To the credit of F_i_n_a_l_A_n_a_l_y_s_i_s, it was only the plot of the next third of the film, but it was extremely predictable. By the final third of the film interesting things are happening right up to but not including the again predictable climax. Not that F_i_n_a_l_A_n_a_l_y_s_i_s is not a classy thriller, but far too much of the plot is like that of too many other films with very similar plot twists. Fans of classic thrillers, be warned.

Isaac Barr (played by Richard Gere) is a successful San Francisco psychiatrist often called upon to be an expert witness in legal proceedings. He makes what, having seen T_h_e_P_r_i_n_c_e_o_f_T_i_d_e_s, we might call "the Lowenstein mistake." That is, he has the professional ethics not to get emotionally or sexually involved with his patients, but he is not so careful with their family members. He is intrigued by the strange dreams of his patient Diana Baylor (played by Uma Thurman), but is downright enchanted by Baylor's sister, Heather Evans (played by Kim Basinger). Heather is married to Jimmy Evans, a sadistic and rabid Greek gangster (played by Eric Roberts). Barr would like to rescue Heather from Jimmy the Greek. Then things start moving.

Contrary to some reviews, Gere is perfectly acceptable as a successful psychiatrist. He does not act like Judd Hirsch in O_r_d_i_n_a_r_y_P_e_o_p_l_e, but his manner is not so absurd for a psychiatrist either. Basinger, on the other hand, is only a mediocrity as an actress--a dressed actress anyway. Perhaps the best acting is by Eric Roberts, whom one can easily believe is meaner than a junkyard dog. Keith David does a great job as an angry police detective.

Some comments should be made about the opening credits. They are in the Saul Bass tradition of setting the tone for the whole film, not just throwing names on the screen. Screen credit goes to Wayne Fitzgerald for the credit sequence. Director Phil Joanou does a competent job with the flawed script. I rate it a low +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.