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2. SNOW WHITE, BLOOD RED edited by Ellen Datlow and Terri Windling (AvoNova, ISBN 0-380-71875-8, 1993, 411pp, US\$4.99) (a book review by Evelyn C. Leeper):

There is a revival in the fairy tale (or _ m _ a _ r _ c _ h _ e _ n , to use the German word, since as Windling points out in her introduction, there is no true English equivalent). One even sees panels on them at science fiction conventions--and not in the children's programming. The twenty authors here have also returned them to their adult origins after decades (or more) of being watered down for children (though some--Hansel and Gretel, for example--would be hard to sanitize without destroying them completely).

The authors split about fifty/fifty on how they do this. Some retain the ancient, never-never land settings for their stories.

Others move them into modern cities and give their characters urban apartments and VCRs instead of cottages and magic mirrors. This follows the pattern of the "Fairy Tale" books that Windling edits, and S_n_o_w, W_h_i_t_e, B_l_o_o_d, R_e_d could be considered as part of that series. (It's not officially, of course, since the series name is owned by Tor. Still if there were no labels on the books, this would certainly l_o_o_k like part of the same series, especially with the gorgeous Tom Canty cover.)

I never thought of myself as a fan of fairy tales, so I was somewhat surprised to find myself enjoying several of these stories. Not all, mind you, and the ones I enjoyed seemed to be mostly the ones that frame an old fairy tale in a modern setting. (I've also recently enjoyed T_h_e W_a_r_f_o_r_t_h_e O_a_k_s by Emma Bull, J_a_c_k t_h_e G_i_a_n_t-K_i_l_l_e_r by Charles de Lint, and B_r_i_a_r R_o_s_e by Jane Yolen, the latter two also from the "Fairy Tale" series.) Even if you are not a fantasy reader, you might want to give the stories in S_n_o_w W_h_i_t_e, B_l_o_o_d, R_e_d a try. Or perhaps especially if you're not a fantasy reader, since it almost seems to have been designed as an introduction to the modern fairy tale, complete with essays by Windling and Datlow, and a recommended reading list at the end.

(The latter, by the way, lists several out-of-print books, but inexplicably--to me, anyway--omits the Charles Lang "Fairy Books," which are where my mother first read her fairy tales and are still in print from Dover.)

3. THE LIST OF 7 by Mark Frost (Morrow, ISBN 0-688-12245-0, 1993, 368pp, US\$20) (a book review by Evelyn C. Leeper):

Sherlock Holmes is a fictional character whose use is still restricted by copyright (at least that is my understanding). But Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was a real person whose use as a character in a novel is not restricted. This, I believe, is what led Mark

Frost to write a novel with Arthur Conan Doyle as the main character and another character very similar to Sherlock Holmes but not called Sherlock Holmes--it has all the cachet of a Sherlock Holmes novel without the legal hassle.

It also allows Frost to use Doyle's interest in the occult without inflecting it on the ultra-rational Sherlock Holmes. And Frost really pours on the horror and the occult, both the psychological horror of an unbalanced personality and the more classical horror of monsters, reincarnated spirits, and Egyptian magic. Doyle's friendship with Bram Stoker also figures in, and mention is made of a ship carrying wooden boxes landing at Whitby and a dog jumping off it and running up the beach.

The Sherlock Holmes character is different enough from Sherlock Holmes to have his own personality, while retaining all of Holmes's talents and techniques. At first I thought the ending a cheap trick, but on reflection concluded that it was not just thrown in, but in fact formed the logical conclusion of the novel.

T_h_e_L_i_s_t_o_f_7 is not technically a Sherlock Holmes novel, but it should appeal to Sherlock Holmes fans, especially those who also enjoy Victorian horror novels. (Mark Frost was one of the co-creators of "Twin Peaks," if that gives you some clue to the style.)

4. FOUR WEDDINGS AND A FUNERAL (a film review by Mark R. Leeper):

Capsule review: F_o_u_r_W_e_d_d_i_n_g_s_a_n_d_a_F_u_n_e_r_a_l has humor, good dialogue, people the audience cares about, all to tell a story with just a wisp of a plot. With a genuine plot this could have been a film really worth seeing. Rating: +1 (-4 to +4)

There is a lot of truth in advertising in the title of the British comedy F_o_u_r_W_e_d_d_i_n_g_s_a_n_d_a_F_u_n_e_r_a_l.

This is a film that is about

80% happiness and 20% pain. Hugh Grant plays Charles, a bachelor who tells himself that he is looking for a wife but is too indecisive and unwilling to commit to any one woman. So he goes to wedding after wedding getting increasingly desperate and frustrated. One after another marriage picks off members of Charles's group of close-knit friends. The group is centered around the flamboyant Garath, played superbly by Simon Callow. Both the character and the actor are incorrigible scene stealers, upstaging everybody else in sight. Charles has flitted from woman to woman without ever deciding on one. The only woman really close to him is Scarlett who is either a sister or a fraternal friend and housemate. However Charles's latest interest is in a visiting American, Carrie (Andie MacDowell) who seems to be going to the same weddings. Charles finds Carrie very attractive--and is often tongue-tied in her presence--and almost would be willing to commit to her. The two exchange intimacies of various kinds but neither can really decide to marry the other.

This film is a portrait of Charles and as with many painted portraits, most of the interest is in the background. Charles's friends may well have more interesting stories to tell than Charles does. The film lets you do some jigsaw puzzle work to piece together the stories of some of the friends. The script was written by Richard Curtis, one of the founding forces of British TV's "Black Adder" series. Here his writing combines the slapstick of that show's style with more subtle personal drama. Everybody's worst nightmares about just what could go wrong at a wedding combine with visual gags, dialogue gags, and even subtitle gags. Hugh Grant is boyish and pleasant enough but not always believable as Charles. He is the current holder of the Anthony Hopkins Ubiquity Award for simultaneously being in this film, in S_i_r_e_n_s, and in Roman Polanski's B_i_t_t_e_r_M_o_o_n. (Of course some of us will remember him best as a gay Cantabrigian in M_a_u_r_i_c_e or a kilted Scot in L_a_i_r_o_f_t_h_e_W_h_i_t_e_W_o_r_m.) Ironically, Andie MacDowell is central

to the story without having much of a role except to look attractive. Scarlett, the sister or whatever, is actually a more intriguing role than is Carrie. But the plum role, of course, is Garath, whose boisterous love of life makes him the focal point of so much of the film.

This is a decidedly lightweight film but well made and one that has occasionally very funny gags. I would give it a +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

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The world is a funny paper read backwards--and that way it isn't so funny.

-- Tennessee Williams

