

are paying a piece of the rent on that store. And you have to pay only half as much rent if the amount of floor space you use is half as big. This is why virtually every store in Manhattan is going in for the same sort of micro-miniaturization that is used in electronics. If you stand still and browse you are probably in

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somebody's way and will have to move out of the way in a few seconds. It tends to make things very stressful and it makes people neurotic. It is the same way with electronics miniaturization. In audio equipment we used to give electrons big tubes to run around in. It was warm, it was pleasant, the electrons were happy and they showed it by playing music like Beethoven and Berlioz. Now they are confined to nasty crowded little chips. They are running into each other all day and pushing past each other and all they feel like producing is headbanger rock and Def Leppard. Can you blame them?

And have you tried parking a car in New York? You have to pull into this underground bunker that looks like NORAD Headquarters. It is comforting to know, I suppose, that in the event of nuclear attack you'll be French Toast but your car will survive. And very likely you will find that you bought your first car for less than what you have to pay to park your current car in Manhattan for a day.

But to be fair it isn't all bad. Entertainment is not as expensive as everybody seems to claim. You persistently hear that show tickets are now over \$75, but I have never paid more than \$35 a ticket, tops. And I won't even pay that if I think it will play at our local multiplex. [-mrl]

2. STAR TREK: VOYAGER (a film review by Mark R. Leeper):

(Note: Many of the proper names in this review are undoubtedly misspelled. They are phonetically accurate, at least as far as I can tell. Hey, I never was too hot with Earth languages. Put me in front of an extraterrestrial and I am hopeless.)

After whole moments of anticipation, the fifth "Star Trek" series (counting the animated episodes but not counting the films) has come along and in spite of negative expectations the first episode is at least mediocre. Being mediocre it is probably the most impressive "Star Trek" series premiere ever.

The approach seems to be an acknowledgement on the part of the producers that the original series had the most exciting concept. "Star Trek" and "Star Trek Animated" took place in the frontiers of an unexplored universe--extra-terra incognita, so to speak. "Star Trek: The Next Generation" took place in a universe much more cosmopolitan with a more widespread Federation. The "Next Generation" Enterprise was less like the Golden Hind and than it was like the Queen Elizabeth II. "Star Trek: Deep Space Nine" also takes place in a universe that is settled, but with a mousehole into a not very explored quadrant. Still, it has not really taken

much advantage of the possibility of unknown civilizations on the other side of the hole. Instead of an exploring ship, it really takes place in a port. The problem is that all this leaves people hungry for the good old days when the universe was less settled, back in the Sixties. At least, that seems to be the philosophy behind the new series, which uses a huge contrivance to move the ship, the Voyager, seventy light-millennia away and into unexplored territory.

All of the artistic decisions point toward a recreation of aspects of the first series. Having success with the character of Spock who had funny ears, the new series has a lot of alien life forms with funny ears in funny shapes or in funny places. But apparently no matter where your ear are in this universe or what shape they are, the language they are used to hearing is good, old-fashioned English. Light from our sun reaching this quadrant would have had to leave our sun something like 68,000 B.C. but everybody speaks a language that did not leave Earth until the twentieth century A.D.

Of course, the first thing that a "Star Trek" fan wants to see in the new series is the Bridge. No, not the bridge of the new starship, but the bridging of the last series into the present one.

The first episode of "The Next Generation" had DeForest Kelley show up as Old Bones. "The Next Generation" Enterprise docked at Deep Space Nine to christen that series. And not too originally, the Voyager also docks at Deep Space Nine for a few nominal moments in the opening episode until it is clear that the visit is just delaying the real story. Each older series lends legitimacy to the new series in that unbroken chain of "Next Generation"s. I wonder how will they manage next time with the Voyager some seventy light-millennia from home?

The crew of the Voyager is headed by Kate Mulgrew as Captain Kathryn Janeway, who in the first episode we see in an array of emotions from tender to tough--probably a wider range than a male counterpart would have had to portray in the first outing. Also along is Tuvak, a black Vulcan, played by Tim Russ, who has the voice and mannerisms right, but still looks distressingly like some "Saturday Night Live" parody of a Vulcan. The new comic relief is Neelix (Ethan Phillips), a scruffy scavenger with a roguish way. He looks like something the cat caught and has been playing with for a week. Another member of the crew is B'Elanna Torres (played by Roxann Biggs-Dawson), half Klingon, half human. That means she only has subtle ridges over her eyes where most Klingons look like they have horseshoe crabs glued to their foreheads. Then there is Chakotay (Robert Beltran), an American Indian with a big tattoo on his forehead making him look like that venerable old Indian Queequeg in MOBY DICK. Also notable but not present is Doc Zimmerman (Robert Picardo) a petulant physician who is present only as a hologram--a perfect character for the 1990s, when image is everything and substance is purely optional.

The story starts with a Maquis ship in a STAR-WARS-like blaster battle with a much bigger ship. (If you don't know who the Maquis are, don't worry. It makes absolutely no difference to the plot who the heck they are. I'm not sure I remember myself and I'm reviewing the episode.) Suddenly the Maquis ship is plucked out of space by a ray of some sort. Cut to the credit sequence.

Each new series has a more impressive-looking credit sequence. This one has a theme by Jerry Goldsmith, who writes some of the most majestic "Star Trek" music, like the theme from STAR TREK: THE

MOTION PICTURE which was reused for "Star Trek: The Next Generation." The score is actually by Jay Chattaway, but the theme was composed by Goldsmith. The sequence shows the Voyager flying through some spectacular space scenery in the vacuum of space (except it clearly does not look like a vacuum). This is the first we see the new ship which looks from some angles like a scrawny flying duck with a huge bill. Well, too late to change it now.

The new Voyager, under the command of Janeway (and after a quick and pointless docking at Deep Space Nine), heads off in search of the missing Maquis ship and finds itself lost in space and plucked seventy light-millennia away. The story from there borrows from a number of sources, starting with Ray Bradbury's "Mars Is Heaven" and continuing with pieces of old "Star Trek"s, and even bits from the film TOWERING INFERNO. The script by Michael Piller and Jeri Taylor does not produce great science fiction, but it does demonstrate the dramatic intelligence by intentionally splitting up the nine major crew members into groups of two or three to allow the viewer time to become familiar with them.

The style of the new series is polished and better than the writing. As is traditional in the series, the model effects work is superb. It is not as imaginative as some of the Video Toaster graphics of "Babylon 5," but is still beautiful to look at. In the "Star Trek" tradition matte paintings of landscapes are spectacular, though not always convincing. Speaking of traditions, the computer still has Majel Barrett's voice. The traditional long scene of a shuttle flying around a new ship, whichever new ship it is, is there but much shorter than the minutes-long sequence in STAR TREK: THE MOTION PICTURE. Some of the effects work is surprisingly understated. The seventy light-millenia trip shows up as just a simple generic spacestorm effect. It could have been a little more dramatic, considering it provided the theme for the new series. The costume design is occasionally a bit silly. One group called the Ocampo seem to be wearing scarves or their collars over the lower part of their faces to give the impression of Bazooka Joe.

Until now the series has been trying to make the starship a character and even gave it Majel Barrett's voice. The writers have taken the second step by giving the Voyager something called "bio-

neural circuitry." One might wonder how much longer it will be before we have a starship with human emotions ("Oh, please don't make me fire on that... Oh, no. Now you did it. Uh-oh! They's firing back. Will you put up my shields please? Ouch! Hey, dammit, put up my shields you bozos!") Some of the science is questionable. The Voyager travels seventy light-millennia into unexplored space in seconds and almost immediately the navigator knows where he is. For some time the series has been asking us to accept some peculiar things about hologram technology and the ability to interact with it. The Doc Zimmerman hologram seems to be able to hug humans and hold up physical objects. Along with the unexplained ability everybody has to understand English, there seems to be a standard concept of what it means for a character to live nine years. Nobody asks anyone how long their years are, nor even if they would get any useful information in the answer. How do you express to an alien who doesn't know how long it takes for your planet to circle the sun how long a year is?

There was one great moment in the episode for anyone who has ever gotten fouled up by an uncooperative computer center. Captain Janeway confronts the alien being who has taken her ship and pulled it seventy light-millennia off course. Oops, coulda happened to anyone, right? All she asks is that he undo the damage he has done and send the ship back. He stops his banjo-playing, looks her in the eye and whines "Sending you back is complicated. I just don't have the time." I wonder if he trained some of the computer centers I've worked with.

Overall impression? The series is okay and somewhat better than expected. But I am still a "Babylon 5" sort of guy. [-mrl]

3. ALIEN SHORES edited by Peter McNamara and Margaret Winch (Aphelion, ISBN 1-875346-09-0, 1994, 603pp, A\$19.95/US\$15) (a book review by Evelyn C. Leeper):

Five years ago, I asked, "What country has as many English speakers as Canada, has hosted two World Science Fiction Conventions, has produced one of the definitive reference works on science fiction, and **still** gets forgotten when people talk about science fiction authors?" The answer? Australia. (Except now it's **two** of the definitive reference works.)

ALIEN SHORES is the tenth book from Aphelion Press, which is (as far as I can tell) the leading Australian publisher of science fiction. This anthology of twenty-nine stories, twenty-two of them original to this volume, is an overview of Australian science fiction today, and a varied and fascinating field it is.

I will not attempt to review every story, but will comment on the ones I found most memorable. "First contact" is a popular theme, perhaps because of all the English-speaking countries, Australia has gone through its own "first contact" period the most recently. George Turner, certainly one of the major lights of the Southern hemisphere, has a new variation on the theme in "Flowering Mandrake," and "The Miocene Arrow" by Sean McMullen is another variation, albeit less obviously so, and several other stories deal either with first contact, or other alien contact. (I was going to say "interracial" contact, but that term has been hijacked. For that matter, even talking about aliens is not always clear.)

Australia may be far away from the United Kingdom and the United States, but it's not isolated. "The Soap Bubble" by Sean Williams tells me that "Star Trek" has reached Australia and influenced at least one writer. "Crash Jordan in the Art World of Drongo" by Jeff Harris likewise testifies to the presence of Flash Gordon stories. Leanne Frahm's "Land's End" seems to follow in the tradition of disaster stories such as those written by J. G. Ballard and then George Turner, having the indescribably Australian feel of the latter. Sue Isle's "Kill Me Once" also follows a long tradition, then one going back to a certain Irish author.

Bill Dodds's "Mnemonic Plague" is a science fiction murder mystery of the sort one would have found in ANALOG in the 1950s--or even today. Simon Brown's "Rain from the New God" is another story that echoes the 1950s, but more stories of alien contact than of the future as here; "The Magi" by Damien Broderick is another religiously-themed story that does involve alien contact.

For alternate histories fans (like me), Lucy Sussex's "Kay & Phil" is a real treat: an alternate history within an alternate history about alternate histories. Sound complicated? Just read it.

"The Caress" by Greg Egan deals with the lengths some people will go to in their appreciation of art, and shows why Egan is one of the rising stars on today's science fiction scene. Stephen Dedman also looks at the demands of art (along with first contact) in "The Desired Dragons." And "The Last Lion in Africa" by Geoffrey

Maloney looks at the whole idea of "sense of wonder" from the other side.

While I'm not going to nominate any of the stories for Hugos, it's primarily because most of the ones I rated very highly are in the subset that have appeared previously. There are certainly several stories that I would not be distressed to see on the ballot, though given the relative unavailability of ALIEN SHORES to the general reader in the United States (and one suspects in the United Kingdom as well) I would be surprised. Nevertheless, for once the back blurb on a book is accurate: "A Landmark Collection of Australian

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Science Fiction." I highly recommend it.

(In the United States, ALIEN SHORES and other Aphelion books can be ordered from Mark V. Zeising, P. O. Box 76, Singletown CA 96088. Add US\$3.50 for shipping.) [-ecl]

4. SUMMER KING, WINTER FOOL by Lisa Goldstein (Tor, ISBN 0-312-85632-6, May 1994, 287pp, US\$20.95) (a book review by Evelyn C. Leeper):

Unlike some of Goldstein's other fantasies, SUMMER KING, WINTER FOOL takes place in a never-never fantasyland rather than an unspecified country in our world. In the land ruled by the city Etrara, the people worship the gods Callabron and Scathiel. In summer, Callabron rules from heaven and Scathiel is here (or rather there) on earth, while in winter their positions are reversed. Etrara is your typical pre-industrial feudal kingdom, ruled by the not very good King Gobro. But at the start of the story, palace intrigues lead to social and political upheaval, while Callabron has apparently decided to remain below and not ascend to heaven.

I got into the mood from the very beginning of this book--we had had a power failure and I read part by candlelight. Even read by ordinary electric light, there is a fantasy aura throughout this

book. Maybe it's that Goldstein gives the power in the book not just to mages, but to poet-mages, who weave their spells through the poems they compose. The pen, or at least the word, is indeed mightier than the sword in these battles. It's a pity therefore that Goldstein resorts to a deus ex machina resolution to resolve it all, though she does avoid the obvious pat ending.

In general I am not a fan of this sort of fantasy, preferring fantasy set in our own world, but Goldstein has a certain modern sensibility that makes this more enjoyable (to me) than most others of this sort. It reminds me of such works as Ellen Kushner's SWORDSPOINT, and is part of a new, more modern branch on the fantasy tree. [-ecl]

5. FUTURE QUARTET by Ben Bova, Frederik Pohl, Jerry Pournelle, and Charles Sheffield (AvoNova, ISBN 0-380-71886-3, 1995, 294pp, US\$5.50) (a book review by Evelyn C. Leeper):

Well, since the directive given to the authors here was for each to write a "speculative essay" and a story set in 2042, one very

pessimistic, one very optimistic, and two in between, it's not surprising that what resulted was pretty didactic and preachy. After all, that's basically what was asked for. It is certainly possible to write stories set in the future that are entertaining first and give the reader a message almost as a side effect--but that was not the path taken here.

Bova leads off with "2042: A Cautiously Pessimistic View," supposedly a speech given by the Chairman of the World Council in 2042, and follows with "Thy Kingdom Come" (which has the Chairman as a character). The story has speeches almost at the level of the essay/speech itself, and I was somewhat irked that all the main characters found their common heritage (rather conveniently for the plot, I might add) in the Lord's Prayer. Yes, it's possible, but given that the Chairman is Vietnamese with a Chinese name, it seems contrived (in my opinion).

Frederik Pohl's essay, "A Visit to Belindia," is as much a story as his official story, "What Dreams Remain," but again, both spend a lot of time in lectures and speeches by various characters. Pohl says he was chosen to give the most pessimistic future, but even here there much have been a lower limit, as he doesn't postulate any massive nuclear, chemical, or biological wars. And just as Bova *makes* his future "cautiously pessimistic" with his particular story ending, so does Pohl make his pessimistic. The worlds the two of them draw could be swapped, or become optimistic, without much change to the stories, so in that sense they aren't drawing their society to order--they're meeting their goal only in how they end their story.

Charles Sheffield's "Report on Planet Earth" would lead the reader to believe his future was to be the most optimistic one, yet his "Price of Civilization" is not what I would call a positively portrayed future, but rather a fascist one of superior and inferior classes, secretly enforced anti-miscegenation policies, and so on. Whether Sheffield realized what a negative picture he was painting is not clear, since superficially his characters seem to be the best off of those in any of the four scenarios.

And finally there is Jerry Pournelle's "Democracy in America in 2042" and "Higher Education." This is the "cautiously optimistic" scenario, but it reads like a lot of other science fiction: rookies being trained in the dangerous job of asteroid mining. And true to what one friend predicted, it has a character who explains it all to the young newcomers.

This book might work as a catalyst for discussions about the future in a high school classroom, but even there one can find better stories to trigger discussion. These are merely preachy, and not at all satisfying. [-ecl]

I recently read Harold Bloom's WESTERN CANON, the appendix to which lists the eight hundred works that Bloom considers part of the Western canon of literature. (He cheats a little and includes some Sanskrit writings.) Skimming through the list, I was struck by the curious assortment of science fiction (and fantasy) works that Bloom included:

- Mary Shelley's FRANKENSTEIN
- Lewis Carroll's ALICE IN WONDERLAND and THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS
- Robert Louis Stevenson's DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE
- Bram Stoker's DRACULA
- Mark Twain's CONNECTICUT YANKEE IN KING ARTHUR'S COURT
- Italo Calvino's INVISIBLE CITIES, BARON OF THE TREES, IF ON A WINTER'S NIGHT A TRAVELER, and T ZERO
- H. G. Wells's science fiction novels
- David Lindsay's VOYAGE TO ARCTURUS
- Aldous Huxley's BRAVE NEW WORLD
- George Orwell's 1984
- Franz Kafka's AMERIKA; BLUE OCTAVO NOTEBOOK; TRIAL; DIARIES; CASTLE; PARABLES, FRAGMENTS, APHORISMS; and complete stories
- Mikhail Bulgakov's MASTER AND MARGARITA
- Karel Capek's WAR WITH THE NEWTS and R.U.R.
- Stanislaw Lem's INVESTIGATION and SOLARIS
- S. Ansky's DYBBUK
- Jorge Luis Borges's ALEPH AND OTHER STORIES, DREAMTIGERS, FICCIONES, LABYRINTHS, and PERSONAL ANTHOLOGY
- Ursula K. LeGuin's LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS
- John Crowley's LITTLE, BIG; AEGYPT; and LOVE AND SLEEP
- Russell Hoban's RIDDLEY WALKER
- Thomas M. Disch's ON WINGS OF SONG
- Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.'s CAT'S CRADLE

Now, some of these are not surprising, but some are entirely unexpected. I mean, one expects to see a nod to Mary Shelley (and trust me, Bloom is not doing this just because she is a woman), but Karel Capek? Bloom admits that the modern authors' places are much less secure (having not yet withstood the test of time), so one might take that into account for them, but Capek is an older author, and one I've seen discussed only in terms of his influence on science fiction. And where was Bloom when the children of my generation were being told we couldn't write book reports on H. G. Wells because that was just science fiction? (Huxley and Orwell were okay. I notice that Jules Verne did not make Bloom's cut.)

One has to admit that the science fiction works follow the same pattern many have noticed in the "canon" in general. David Lindsay's VOYAGE TO ARCTURUS may be a classic and all that, but who reads it nowadays? (The same is probably also true of Aldous Huxley's BRAVE NEW WORLD.) One of Bloom's requirements for inclusion in the canon is that a work should sustain a second reading, but one wonders if some of these will get even a first.

Bloom is on firmer ground with the non-English-language authors, maybe because they have to pass some sort of test merely to get translated into English (and I suspect Bloom has read them in translation). Calvino, Lem, and of course Borges are well-respected authors, perhaps because fantasy has not as much negative connotation in the rest of the world, but is rather part of a long tradition. I am somewhat surprised at the inclusion of S. Ansky's DYBBUK and the exclusion of Gustav Meyerink's GOLEM, but I suppose it's a close call.

As I noted, Bloom is less definite about the current authors. Ursula K. LeGuin's LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS is the obvious choice, and John Crowley's LITTLE, BIG; AEGYPT; and LOVE AND SLEEP have gotten much acclaim in the mainstream of literature. I must admit to surprise at the inclusion of Russell Hoban's RIDDLEY WALKER, a post-holocaust novel written in dialect. I liked it a lot, but is it really part of the Western canon along with Shakespeare and Chaucer? I am even more skeptical of Thomas M. Disch's ON WINGS OF SONG and Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.'s CAT'S CRADLE. But then I suppose the only true test is to wait a hundred years and see.

(Although Bloom may be an expert in the literary value of the works he discusses, his grasp of science is somewhat weaker. For example, he says of Shakespeare and Cervantes, "they died, it is thought, on the same day." Actually, while they both died on the same date, April 23, 1616, this was actually ten days apart due to England's delay in switching over to the Gregorian calendar.) [-ecl]

7. MURDER IN THE FIRST (a film review by Mark R. Leeper):

Capsule: This is a story partially based on truth about a man who was tortured for 38 months in Alcatraz. In the early 1940s he is on trial for a murder he was forced to commit

in prison. While the visuals give in to stylistic excesses, the film boasts terrific performances from Kevin Bacon and Gary Oldman.
Rating: high +2 (-4 to +4)

Back in the 1930s and 1940s Warner Brothers was known for its crime and gangster films. And while they were generally indictments of Organized Crime, Warner Brothers also occasionally would make a film such as I WAS A FUGITIVE FROM A CHAIN GANG criticizing the barbarities of the system. In that tradition and considerably stronger is MURDER IN THE FIRST, also from Warner Brothers. This is a fictionalized story of an actual case history of petty thief Henri Young (played by Kevin Bacon) sent to the maximum security Alcatraz Federal prison because they had space and he had stolen \$5 from a post office. After an escape attempt he is placed in solitary confinement in a nearly pitch black underground cell for 38 months--19 days should be the maximum. During the confinement he is tortured brutally and reduced to little more than an animal. He is abused by Associate Warden Glenn (Gary Oldman) who takes the escape attempt as a personal affront. Glenn's sadistic torture and his diatribes are reminiscent of Amon Goeth in SCHINDLER'S LIST, Upon release from solitary, Young is manipulated into murdering the only other prisoner survivor of their four-man escape attempt.

Young is assigned a Public Defender, a young lawyer who is given the case only because it is absolutely hopeless. James Stamphill (Christian Slater) has in Young a client who was seen to commit the crime by two hundred convicts and who refuses to talk to Stamphill or even react to his presence. And Stamphill is under strong pressure to lose the case. MURDER IN THE FIRST is a harrowing and powerful drama set in a Kafkaesque world of omnipresent abuses of power and trust. With the possible exception of the judge (R. Lee Ermey) just about everybody in this film in a position of power abuses that power. Bosses verbally abuse their employees, prison officials and guards abuse and torture the inmates, trolley car conductors abuse their customers, even family members exploit each other. The script by Dan Gordon has a strong anti-establishment message and a powerful noir-ish tone.

Top-billed Christian Slater does his best to hold on to the film but he is still just Christian Slater in a 1940s business suit. Slater never conveys more than muted emotions at the best of times. In this film he is acting with Gary Oldman, the Robert Duvall of his generation. Oldman nearly always turns in a terrific performance, and as the sadistic Glenn he is genuinely chilling. Kevin Bacon is generally not so impressive, but this is the best role of his career so far. Robbed of his soul by the cruelty of 38 months of unspeakable tortures, harrowingly portrayed in the first half hour of the film, he is little more than a wounded automaton.

Director Marc Rocco has a style that verges on the expressionistic. He uses a very dark and bleak photography throughout the film. Nearly all of the scenes, particularly in and around Alcatraz, are painted in grays, blues, and blacks to underscore the somber noirish feel. Rocco gets the downbeat feel he would have had in black and white. Or perhaps he gets it more so because the viewer is

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aware that these depressing tones are in full color. The only time we see much color at the prison is a shot through some colorful weeds up at the gray prison. But even more noticeable than the artificial color scheme is the use of the camera. Fred Murphy's camera gives us overhead shots, sideways shots, pan shots, dolly shots, track shots, steadicam shots and a few shots there may not even be names for. Initially it seemed to be showing Young's disorientation because of his confinement in darkness, but the lively and active camera lasts through the whole film. In mock 1940s newsreels we are treated to hand-held camera shots that I thought were not invented until decades later. This and the pretentious usage of Christ images during Young's suffering add a mild irritant of pretentiousness.

This is a powerful message film at a time when most films' strongest statement is political correctness. MURDER IN THE FIRST gets a high +2 on the -4 to +4 scale. [-mrl]

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Action: the last resource of those who know not how to dream.
--Oscar Wilde