



nice it would be to be able to break the laws of physics. If you could break some law of physics for 5 minutes, what would you do? What would be the best use of this momentary lapse? We will be running one of our occasional contests. This time there will be a prize. We will be giving out three brand new bookstore editions of

THE MT VOID

Page 2

current science fiction. Each is a first edition unread hardback complete with dust jacket. Each is the work of one of the old masters who wrote before the great trifurcation of science fiction into cyberpunk, political correctness fiction, and others in search of the Golden Crown. These are authors with great untapped potential since some of their novels do not yet fit into a series. First, second, and third prize respectively are first, second, and third choice of a book from a selection of three. In alphabetical order by author:

- I, ASIMOV: A MEMOIR by Isaac Asimov. Yes he's dead, but that doesn't stop him from remembering and publishing, does it?
- RAMA REVEALED by Arthur C. Clarke and Gentry Lee. This is the final stake in the heart of the series Clarke promised would be only one book. This time Clarke promises to tell us what the heck he has been writing about.
- HOT SKY AT MIDNIGHT by Robert Silverberg. It must be good. It combines ecological disaster, space travel, and genetic engineering with a cover that features a large-breasted woman in a most revealing outfit. Yup, Silverberg may be an old master but he has written a novel for today.

Entries are due by March 15. This contest is open to anybody, but winners outside the reach of AT&T inter-office mail may have to provide their own means of getting their prize. This contest about circumventing laws is void where prohibited by law. We must have some standards, after all. [-mrl]

3. SHERLOCK HOLMES IN ORBIT by Mike Resnick and Martin H. Greenberg (DAW, ISBN 0-88677-636-8, 1995, 374pp, US\$5.50) (a book review by Evelyn C. Leeper):

In his introduction, Resnick says that Holmes is the world's most long-lived fictional character, and compares him to who Resnick says is the only other contender, Tarzan. (I don't know--I would say that Dracula--the fictional character, not the historical one--is certainly giving them some competition.) In any case, Resnick says that there has been only one non-Burroughs Tarzan story: Fritz Leiber's TARZAN AND THE VALLEY OF GOLD. Well, no. Barton Werper wrote five Tarzan novels before the Burroughs estate cracked down on him, and Philip Jose Farmer's LORD OF THE TREES and other works are certainly Tarzan stories; in fact, Farmer's ADVENTURE OF THE PEERLESS PEER has both Tarzan and Holmes, and Resnick even mentions it later! And I have a copy of TARZANI SEIKLUSED TALLINNAS (TARZAN'S ADVENTURES IN TALLINN) "by Edgar Rice Burroughs and

THE MT VOID

Page 3

Toomas Raudam." It's in Estonian, so I can't be sure, but I suspect that Burroughs had very little input, especially as it was written several years after his death.

But this of course has little to do with Sherlock Holmes, except perhaps to illustrate his axiom, "It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data." Resnick may have overstated some of the details, but the gist of his claim is correct: Sherlock Holmes \*is\* the most recognized fictional character in the world. In my various travels, I have rarely failed to find Holmes in whatever the language of the country is. It's true that there didn't seem to be a Latvian translation when I was there, but I did find him in Lithuanian, Estonian, Finnish, and Swedish. And I even found him in China in 1982 in comic-book form!

So the appearance of a new Sherlock Holmes anthology, while certainly welcome, can hardly be termed a surprise. Even the combination of Sherlock Holmes and science fiction is not new, dating back to Robert C. Peterson's SCIENCE FICTIONAL SHERLOCK HOLMES and continuing through Isaac Asimov, Charles Waugh, and Martin H. Greenberg's SHERLOCK HOLMES THROUGH TIME AND SPACE, as well as many individual pieces.

So here we have twenty-six new Holmes stories, arranged chronologically into four sections: Holmes in the Past, Holmes in the Present, Holmes in the Future, and Holmes After Death.

Reading these, I am struck by how Conan Doyle managed to write fascinating stories without dragging in any famous authors, artists, or events, while his imitators seem to insist upon it. So Holmes has dealings with Fu Manchu, H. G. Wells (twice), Lewis Carroll (twice), Charles Babbage, and even Conan Doyle himself (three times--at least two of these must be in an alternate universe where Holmes's exploits were not published by Doyle). When I first started reading this sort of story, I found it amusing, but after a while the novelty pales, and one gets tired of being able to guess the big surprise from a key phrase or two--when a character says he's sailing for New York in April of 1912, you \*know\* he's going to be on the Titanic. (Note: that story is not one of the ones in this book, though there is a Titanic story here.)

A few of the stories are not science fiction or fantasy; they have a science fiction or fantasy element, but it is proved false by the end (much as Doyle's own "Sussex Vampire" story). By the way, if you want to read an "original" science fictional Holmes story, Doyle's "Adventure of the Creeping Man" qualifies.

As for the stories themselves, they are a varied bunch. (If my comments on some seem brief or cryptic, it may be because many of the stories rely on some surprise twist that I am trying to avoid

revealing.) "The Musgrave Version" by George Alec Effinger is not so much a story as a vignette, suggesting much more than it delivers. "The Case of the Detective's Smile" by Mark Bourne is a bit too predictable. On the other hand, although also somewhat predictable, "The Adventure of the Russian Grave" by William Barton and Michael Capobianco does have a nice twist to it. (It also assumes more of a knowledge of Russian calendar reform than many readers will have, I fear.) Vonda N. McIntyre's "Adventure of the Field Theorems," Brian M. Thomsen's "Mouse and the Master," and Janni Lee Simmer's "Illusions" all use Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and

his interest in spiritualism; although they use different approaches, it may still be overkill. "The Adventure of the Missing Coffin" by Laura Resnick, combined with her stories in earlier anthologies, makes me think she has a thing about writing about Italians and Italy the way her father has about Africa. "The Adventure of the Second Scarf" by Mark Aronson is the "hardest SF" story in the first section of the book (most of the science fictional elements in the other stories are matter duplicators, time machines, and the like).

"The Adventure of the Barbary Coast" by Frank M. Robinson uses Irene Adler's sister. I once noted if I never saw another story about Irene Adler, it would be too soon, and though Carole Nelson Douglas's books have made me reconsider that statement, Irene's connection to this story seems totally unnecessary to me, and she needn't have been involved at all. Dean Wesley Smith's "Two Roads, No Choices" is one of the better stories in the book, though the fact that it is an alternate history may be influencing me here. "The Richmond Enigma" by John DeChancie is another alternate history of sorts, with yet another famous character for Holmes to interact with. "A Study in Sussex" by Leah A. Zeldes refers not to "The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire," but to Holmes's retirement. While some stories suffer from a deus ex machina, "The Holmes Team Advantage" by Gary Alan Ruse has what might be termed a "nihil ex machina" ending. Susan Casper's "Holmes Ex Machina," on the other hand, doesn't attempt to be more than it is, and works within the boundaries Casper sets, quite nicely. (Though I think Resnick errs in placing this in the present: it seems to be the future, albeit perhaps the near future.) Lawrence Schimel's "Alimentary, My Dear Watson" ends in the title pun, takes its main idea from a well-known science fiction film, and is arguably unfair to its most historical character, whose faults are generally believed to be of a much more non-participatory nature. And "The Future Engine" by Byron Tetrick could have been a great steampunk story, but shied away from following up on its premise.

Moving on to "Sherlock Holmes in the Present," "The Sherlock Solution" by Craig Shaw Gardner seems to serve mostly as an example of why science fictional Sherlock Holmes stories set in the present are hard to write--it's just not very convincing as science fiction. Similarly, "The Man Who Molded Himself" by David Gerrold

is only technically set in the present, in that it is a manuscript being read by somebody in the present, but the main action takes place in the past. Not surprisingly, Kristine Kathryn Rusch turns in the best story in this section in the form of "Second Fiddle," though again I would dispute calling this the present--last time I checked we did not have time travel, though I admit that the pressures of work may have made me overlook the news.

Jack Nimersheim's "Moriarty by Modem" is yet another hacker/computer virus story, with Holmes and Moriarty only secondary considerations. (What makes Casper's story present-day and this future, one wonders?) "The Greatest Detective of All Time" by Ralph Roberts was a bit convoluted to follow and I'm not sure didn't have major problems, but it *was* science fiction. "The Case of the Purloined L'Isitek" by Josepha Sherman seems like the sort of thing Isaac Asimov would have written, complete with the awful pun at the end. (I don't think I'm spoiling the surprise; when we are told in the first paragraph that the aliens have a love of puns, what else could we expect?) "The Adventure of the Illegal Alien" by Anthony R. Lewis is yet another Holmes in a computer.

I have yet to figure out what Barry N. Malzberg is doing in these anthologies. His stories usually blow all the others away in terms of style, literary value, and philosophical content, and "Dogs, Masques, Love, Death: Flowers" is no exception. Robert J. Sawyer's "You See But You Do Not Observe" is an original view of the idea of Schroedinger's Cat as applied to Sherlock Holmes: it may not be great literature, but it is an intriguing philosophical idea.

And finally, Mike Resnick ends the anthology with his own "The Adventure of the Pearly Gate," one of the better stories, adding a touch of George Bernard Shaw to the detecting involved.

I had saved up this book as a treat for a day when I had a three-hour bus trip, and even in spite of my various quibbles I found it enjoyable and varied. Sherlock Holmes fans who are not science fiction fans may find a few of the stories too science-fictional for their tastes, but on the whole this shouldn't be a problem. Science fiction fans who don't like Sherlock Holmes (if any such peculiar creatures exist) would probably be less enthralled, but for Holmes fans this is recommended.

(Proof-readers are starting to add more typos than they delete: For example, I am sure that Resnick wrote that Robert L. Fish wrote parodies featuring "Schlock Homes," and then some proof-reader decided to "fix" this to say that Fish's parodies featured "Sherlock Holmes," and likewise that Frank M. Robinson typed "Semiramide," not "Semirande." For this and other typos blame a very tight schedule, which resulted in the editors not actually receiving the galley until after the deadline for changes. I'm

all for faster publication, but I'd rather wait an extra couple of weeks for a book that's more accurate. Publishers, take note.)  
[-ecl]

---

#### 4. DEATH AND THE MAIDEN (a film review by Mark R. Leeper):

Capsule: This is a film full of questions about justice, tyranny, and the nature of truth. Ironically much of what is necessary to make it work will also be a turnoff to many viewers, but the film boasts two riveting performances. Rating: high +2 (-4 to 4) [The premise of the film is not made clear until some time into the film. I will reveal no more than is necessary to describe the film, but to that extent there will be a spoiler.]

Fifteen years ago, in an unnamed South American country, Paulina Escobar (played by Sigourney Weaver) survived arrest, interrogation, and inhuman torture at the hands of her country's former fascist dictatorship. But her body and her mind remain horribly scarred and her life is a waking nightmare. Now she lives for the justice that she hopes to get by the efforts of her husband, a leftist lawyer just named to the President's commission on human rights.

Fifteen years after her ordeal she still lives in fear and hatred for the doctor whom she never saw but who tortured and raped her repeatedly. Her husband Geraldo Escobar (Stuart Wilson) is brought home one night by a man who gave him road assistance. Pauline hears his voice and is convinced he is the man who has haunted her nightmares. When given the chance she traps Dr. Miranda (Ben Kingsley) in the house, ties him to a chair, and holds a sort of impromptu trial to determine if she should kill him or not. Geraldo as the moderating force must take the role of defense attorney but cannot fight too fiercely for Miranda for fear of himself becoming the victim of Paulina's rage.

DEATH AND THE MAIDEN, a play by Ariel Dorfman adapted to the screen by Rafael Yglesias and Dorfman, is one of those simple and enigmatic stories that you can take at face value or in which you can see a multitude of meanings and issues raised. Among the issues one might see in this film are: Can people avoid letting the magnitude of a crime affect their impartiality in the decision of guilt or innocence? Where is the line between avenging past wrongs under tyranny and becoming another tyranny? What is the nature of evidence and how much circumstantial evidence constitutes a convincing demonstration of guilt? Do we have a natural bias to

THE MT VOID

Page 7

believe one sex over the other and if so, which way?

Roman Polanski has been criticized for setting this film in a South American country, yet not giving appropriate accents to the characters. This is an unfair criticism of this film. In fact, if he were going for total realism he should have had the film spoken in Spanish and used subtitles. However, even accents would remind the viewer that the film is set in another country. Polanski may well have wanted to avoid the distancing effect that accents would give him. Where he does leave himself open to criticism is ironically in the makeup. His film has been accused of using gratuitous nudity. In fact the scenes are intended to show us the scars of Paulina's torture. But this is before the plot lets us know she has been tortured and, at least in the print I saw, the scars were not obvious and could have been missed by a viewer not expecting to see them. The screenplay's descriptions of torture are at once too muted to be realistic, but sufficiently graphic to bother some audiences.

Sigourney Weaver and Ben Kingsley both give tight, riveting performances. Weaver gives the erratic feel of a wounded and irrational animal. One is never sure what she will do. Kingsley gives a tightly-wound performance of controlled desperation. Stuart Wilson's performance is less memorable but entirely convincing.

As with PULP FICTION, one hesitates to recommend this film to anyone sensitive to violence in movies. But DEATH AND THE MAIDEN



is powerful, intelligent, and suspenseful for those willing to try it. I rate it a high +2 on the -4 to +4 scale. [-mrl]

Mark Leeper  
MT 3F-434 908-957-5619  
m.r.leeper@att.com

Government is an association of men who do violence to the rest of us.

--Leo Tolstoy

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT ALMOST BLANK