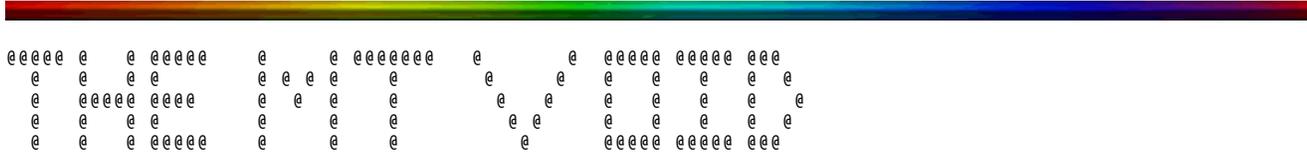


MT VOID 05/19/17 -- Vol. 35, No. 47, Whole Number 1963



Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society
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Table of Contents

[Correction and Apologies to Philip Chee and David Goldfarb](#)
[Hugo Finalists Change](#)
[Spot the Space Station](#)
[Imitation Is the Sincerest Form of Flattery](#)
[Superman vs. the KKK, Part 2](#) (comments by Mark R. Leeper)
[Retrospective: FANTASTIC VOYAGE \(Part 2\)](#) (comments by Mark R. Leeper)
[WICKED WONDERS by Ellen Klages](#) (book review by Joe Karpierz)
[Stefan Zweig and HORROR OF DRACULA](#) (letter of comment by Allan Maurer)
[FANTASTIC VOYAGE](#) (letter of comment by Paul Dormer)
[This Week's Reading](#) (BREAKING THE MAYA CODE (REVISED) and RHINOCEROS) (book comments by Evelyn C. Leeper)
[Quote of the Week](#)

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Correction and Apologies to Philip Chee and David Goldfarb:

In the 05/12/17 issue of the MT VOID, [comments sent by David Goldfarb](#) on Joe Karpierz's review of ALL THE BIRDS IN THE SKY were mistakenly attributed to Philip Chee. My apologies to both.

In my [very weak] defense, let me say that I hate the Google web interface for rec.arts.sf.fandom, but it is what I'm stuck with after my ISP stopped carrying newsgroups. [-ecl]

Hugo Finalists Change:

In the Best Fan Artist category, Mansik Yang has notified the Hugo administrators that he had no published fan art in 2016 and has withdrawn from that category. His place on the ballot has been taken by Elizabeth Leggett.

Spot the Space Station:

If you want to find out when you can see the ISS fly overhead, <https://spotthestation.nasa.gov/> will give you a list of when and where in the sky to look for your location.

Imitation Is the Sincerest Form of Flattery:

<https://www.facebook.com/mtvoid/>

Superman vs. the KKK, Part 2 (comments by Mark R. Leeper):

In the 03/10/17 issue of the MT VOID, I talked about how the Superman radio program struck a strong (and justified) blow against the Ku Klux Klan.

<http://lepers.us/mtvoid/VOID0310.htm#superman>

I see somebody has published an entire book on the subject:

<http://tinyurl.com/mtv-superman>

[-mrl]

Retrospective: FANTASTIC VOYAGE (Part 2) (comments by Mark R. Leeper):

Spoiler Warning
 Spoiler Warning
 Spoiler Warning

Last week I was reviewing the film FANTASTIC VOYAGE (1966) and mostly discussed the basic plot. That piece avoided spoilers (in my opinion). This time I will not be so careful. After all the film is more than fifty years old, it is expected that most readers will have seen it in more than half a century since its release.

The screenplay was contributed by Harry Kleiner who went on to write the screenplays for BULLITT (1968) and LE MANS (1971). It was based on a story written by Otto Klement and noted science fiction writer Jerome Bixby. David Duncan who wrote THE TIME MACHINE (1960) also had his hand in it.

It was not a sophisticated script by today's standards. We know we are getting set up when the doctors say something like "You know things are safe because you will not go anywhere near the heart." Immediately you realize there will be script jiggery-pokery to get the submarine into the dangerous heart. If they explicitly say they will not do such-and-such, you just know they will.

We are told that the submarine is driven by an atomic particle and the captain says nuclear fuel cannot be shrunk. Really? That is convenient. Why can't they shrink nuclear fuel?

From the beginning we are told most unsubtly that Donald Pleasence's Dr. Michaels is a really good guy and he is watching Arthur Kennedy's Duval who is not to be trusted. Grant is even given to confiding in Michaels when there have been sabotage attempts. But actor Donald Pleasence has been the villain of so many other films that he becomes the viewers' prime suspect as soon as there is anything to suspect. And there is not too much in the film to change that perception. Nobody seems to notice that Michaels' claustrophobia that exhibits itself early in the mission later seems to go away. But Pleasence might as well have worn a t-shirt that said "Bad Guy" on the front and back.

Well, one question is asked by me, Isaac Asimov, and just about everyone else who sees the film. When all is said and done, didn't our heroes leave the submarine to de-miniaturize somewhere inside Benes' head. And when it de-miniaturizes, won't that leaves a few tons of metal inside Benes' head? Also, there is the matter of a few hundred gallons of saline solution. This is all fantasy but isn't there some law of conservation of mass that cannot be cheated (for more than an hour)?

Just as we have seen that the interval of miniaturization seems to be exactly one hour, the length of time that a heart can be stopped is exactly one minute. Aren't those numbers a little too convenient? I guess we can mark it all down to the fact that we live in an orderly universe.

I am not sure even a surgeon with a scalpel could trim a wire down to a smaller gauge. I will reserve judgment on that one.

Arthur Kennedy's Dr. Duval pronounces Benes ben-ESH and everyone else calls him BEN-esh. He also pronounces "laser" like it was "lacer." Dr. Duval is a little slow on the uptake since when I saw the film, audience members recognized a fistula before Duval did.

Shrinking effects often are portrayed as the image stands still and just gets large or smaller in the frame. The last scene of the film show the four survivors standing perfectly stable. Their shoes are stepping on the same little piece of the floor. They would be falling away from each other as the hour ends.

One shot I thought was fun was as the sub was spun by the fistula the crew is plastered on the walls by centrifugal force. It is just like the barrel spin at some amusement parks.

Well, one question is asked by me, Isaac Asimov, and just about everyone else who sees the film. When all is said and done didn't our heroes leave the submarine to de-miniaturize somewhere inside Benes' head. And when it de-miniaturizes, won't that leaves a few tons of metal inside Benes' head. Also there is the matter of a few hundred gallons of saline solution. This is all fantasy but isn't there some law of conservation of mass that cannot be cheated (for more than an hour)?

Computer technology has much improved special visual effects in the last half century. In 1966 you could see how special effects were done. They did not have to be convincing, they only had to carry the narrative. In one of the first sequences Grant is in a car that is lowered several stories into the underground CMDF installation. They simply took a single image of his car on a lift, then that image shrank to give the impression that the car was descending and receding away. Much the same effect was used to show the submarine being miniaturized. A two-dimensional image just dilated. It was obvious how they did it, but it communicated what was happening. I like to point out to people that after seeing a marionette show you do not complain that you could see how the marionette was manipulated and that it did not realistically look like a human actor. These days we also know just how they effects are created. They are assembled from bits in a CGI program. I am not sure it is much of an improvement and it costs incredibly more these days.

One effect also rather noticeable is having members of the team swimming; they are rather obviously filming dry for wet. The actors are (probably) on wires kicking their legs but nowhere near water. The cost of having to set those sets up actually under water would have blown the budget way out of proportion.

Most of the story takes place in the military's miniaturization base. What appears to be an underground installation seems to have been filmed in an underground parking garage. That would have saved on budget. To give the impression this is a very big organization, there are golf carts running through the installation and they even have someone directing traffic. How much golf cart traffic do they have that they need to have a man there to direct it? I guess that is just your tax dollars at work.

There is one final touch that I suspect few modern audiences pick up on. To label parts of Benes' head they use cheap plastic Dymo tape. This is plastic tape with adhesive on one side to stick it where you want it. It is run through a hand-held embosser and labels are made one character at a time on the tape. It is just peculiar to see little squares of Dymo tape stuck on Benes' bald head.

FANTASTIC VOYAGE has a lot of little faults weighing against a super sci-fi film among the very best of its decade. [-mrl]

WICKED WONDERS by Ellen Klages (copyright 2017, Tachyon, Paperback, 240pp, ISBN-10: 1616962615, ISBN-13: 978-1616962616) (excerpt from the *Duel Fish Codices*: a book review by Joe Karpierz):

WICKED WONDERS is a collection of fourteen stories, one of which is non-fiction, all of which has been written in the last decade or so by Ellen Klages. Klages is a multiple Hugo and Nebula award nominee, and has won the World Fantasy Award with Andy Duncan for their novella "Wakulla Springs". WICKED WONDERS is my first deep dive into her fiction--I've read a couple of stories that are in this collection in other places, so I was at least passingly familiar with some of her work.

The stories in WICKED WONDERS are similar in theme in that their primary focus is on a young girl or girls, but I wouldn't call this a YA collection by any stretch of the imagination; it certainly doesn't have that feel to me. The fantastical elements do not take center stage in any of the stories, and don't necessarily play a major part in the story. What every story does have in common are well-written and developed characters as well as well-crafted storytelling. They are mostly fantasy stories, although there is a science fiction story or two thrown into the mix. There's something here for everybody, although the reader may not realize it until getting all the way through the collection.

My favorite story, one of those that I've read before, is called "Amicae Aeternum". The story is sneaky, because Klages doesn't let the reader in on what's happening until more than halfway through it. The story centers on two friends, Corry and Anna. They are meeting just before dawn, probably not unlike many other days they've met. This day is different, though, as Corry's life will be changing irrevocably. The story's focus on friendship and loss is, in the end, riveting and poignant. This is an excellent piece of fiction.

Another story that I previously encountered is the magical "Caligo Lane", about cartographer Franny Travers who lives on the titular street and makes maps that allows people to travel between locations as long as the map is folded correctly. That's an overly simplified statement of the story, which is really a description of Travers making a particular map. The story is short but engaging, leaving the reader wanting to know more about the maps that Travers makes.

Other stories are just as engaging and entertaining, if not moreso, than the previous two. In "Hey Presto", Hugh Werdlow is a magician who is in need of a new female assistant on very short notice. He asks his daughter Polly to join the crew for the show, and she must learn all the stage tricks and misdirections that go into this particular show. It's a tale of just how difficult

it is to put on a magic show as you and I understand it--this tale has nothing of the fantastic in it--and how that show helps a young woman prepare her life's path. "Echoes of Aurora", which follows immediately after "Hey Presto", is the tale of middle-aged Jo Norwood returning to the place of her youth to finish cleaning up the family business after her father passed away. It's a haunting tale of memories that return to Jo in an unusual form, and how she spends her time with those memories.

"Friday Night at St. Cecilia's" relates the tale of a wager gone wrong at an all-girls religious boarding school and the girl who figures out how to beat the system. It's a fun tale that has the reader travelling back to childhood to remember all those board games they used to play as a kid. I absolutely enjoyed the very short tale (I now wonder if its length is intentionally in keeping with the story itself) about Annabel and Midge who get together for a treat in the Mission District in San Francisco. Since the story is so short I really can't say anything else otherwise I would give it away. I do, however, get the impression that Klages had a bit of fun with this one. I know I did.

There are two very powerful stories in the collection (that's not to say that others aren't powerful, but in my estimation these two are at the top of the list). The first is "Goodnight Moons", the tale of an expedition to Mars and what happens when it is discovered that one of the colonists is pregnant. The extra body wasn't planned for, of course, but the extra "crew member" was approved. The power in this story lies not in the birth of the child and the early stages of her life, but the inevitable affect being born on Mars has on humans. The ending is heartrending. The other is "Woodsmoke", about two young girls who befriend each other at summer camp. Peete is a veteran; she's been going there for years, and this year due to her parents' work she gets to stay the whole summer for the first time. Margaret is from a foreign land, and brings much strength and knowledge to the camp. She is there because her parents are afraid that once she gets her first period the men in their village will go wild and she wouldn't be safe. Again, the ending is gut wrenching, and shows the reader that even when you think you know someone, you really don't.

As is evident, many of these stories don't contain elements of the fantastic at all. "The Education of a Witch", "Singing on a Star", "Sponda the Suet Girl and the Secret of the French Pearl", and "Gone to the Library" certainly do, however, and are all terrific stories. "Household Management", I think, defies description, although the landlady makes us think of a famous crime solver. It's short, strange, and offbeat.

Finally, there's "The Scary Ham", a non-fiction piece that Klages told at a Nebula Awards banquet about a real ham that her father had hanging in the basement. It's truly a twisted tale--mostly because it's true. Google it some time--if you get the right result, you even get a picture of the ham. Scary stuff indeed.

WICKED WONDERS is truly a wonderful collection of recent short fiction by Ellen Klages. It's a terrific introduction to her work for someone who has not read her before now; take my word for it, because I fell into that category. The stories are well-written and the characters will pull at your heartstrings. This is really good stuff, and has caused me to add yet another author to my list of those of whom I wish to read more. That last sentence may not be particularly grammatically correct, but rest assured that the sentences Klages writes will be that and a whole lot more. [-jak]

Stefan Zweig and HORROR OF DRACULA (letter of comment by Allan Maurer):

In response to [Mark's review of STEFAN ZWEIG: FAREWELL TO EUROPE](#) in the 05/12/17 issue of the MT VOID, Allan Maurer writes:

Isaac Asimov wrote about being so taken with Stephan Zweig's chess story, "The Royal Game" that he walked around for days asking others if they wanted to play a game of chess, which he admitted he wasn't very good at.

A free version of the text has disappeared, but a radio drama adaption is available on archive.org. [-am]

In response to [Evelyn's comments on HORROR OF DRACULA](#) in the same issue, Allan writes:

HORROR OF DRACULA may have its plot flaws, but it was one of a handful of horror films that actually scared me and gave me nightmares. I saw it in the theater at age ten in 1957. The scene of Dracula bending over Mina in her bed and the earlier castle sequences did it.

The only other horror films that actually scared me were Val Lewton's CAT PEOPLE and THE BODY SNATCHERS. [-am]

Mark responds:

We most of us have a list of films that scared us as kids. They terrified me and I have loved them for it ever since. I saw WAR OF THE WORLDS at age three. (It was the first film I remember ever seeing. By age six I would have hocked my parents to see it again.) At age eight THE FLY did it for me. At age ten there was PSYCHO.

Where were you that you could see HORROR OF DRACULA in 1957 (actually maybe 1958)? Until now I did not realize that it got a 1958 release in the United States. But I am guessing you might have seen it outside of the United States.

FANTASTIC VOYAGE (letter of comment by Paul Dormer):

In response to [Mark's comments on FANTASTIC VOYAGE](#) in the 05/12/17 issue of the MT VOID, Paul Dormer writes:

I had a fascination with this film when it came out, even though I didn't see it at the time. As part of the publicity for the film, extracts from the novelisation were printed in a paper we got and I enjoyed reading them. Memory tells me that it was "The Sun", a paper mostly famous these days for printing photographs of topless models on page 3 (and more recently for having to dismiss a columnist and former editor for racists comments).

I remember seeing clips on a TV film review show but never went to see it. The IMDb says it got an A rating at the time which meant I wouldn't have been able to go and see it on my own and my parents presumably didn't want to take me.

The book turned up in my local library and I read it, and found friends at school who'd also read it and enjoyed it and we had a mini-cult following for it. I bought a paperback copy, but my nephew vandalised it when he was a toddler.

Finally, when I was at university in the early seventies it turned up at a fleapit in north Leeds and I finally got to see the film for the first time. And I probably saw it on TV a few times in the seventies. It turned up again about ten years ago which was the last time I saw it. [-pd]

This Week's Reading (book comments by Evelyn C. Leeper):

BREAKING THE MAYA CODE (REVISED) by Michael D. Coe (ISBN 978-0-500-28133-8) goes into much more detail than the NOVA special "Cracking the Mayan Code", to the extent that it is not always easy to follow what Coe is trying to say, especially in terms of analyzing the component parts of the glyphs, and the categorization of them as logographic, syllabic, or alphabetic (phonetic, actually). The television show could highlight various parts of a glyph as the narrator explained its role in the total meaning of the glyph, while that does not happen in the book.

While in general Coe seems to be fair and even-handed, a couple of slips stood out. I can understand why Coe gave full credit to Michael Ventris for the decipherment of Linear B: the contributions of Alice Kober to that task were pretty much unknown until several years after BREAKING THE MAYA CODE was written. (See my review of THE RIDDLE OF THE LABYRINTH: THE QUEST TO CRACK AN ANCIENT CODE by Margalit Fox in the 03/21/2014 issue of the MT VOID [<http://lepers.us/mtvoid/2014/VOID0321.htm#reading>], for details on this.) His use of the phrase "the famous husband-and-wife team of Col. William Friedman" is more worrisome--unless somehow Col. William Friedman married himself.

As I said, it is often difficult to follow what Coe is saying, and maybe it just required more concentration than I gave it; it seems more at the level of an academic-level book (undergraduate, probably) than one aimed at the general public.

[I know what someone is going to say--the idea that the general public would be interested in *any* book on translating Mayan glyphs is risible. But I think you know what I mean.)

RHINOCEROS by Eugene Ionescu (ISBN 978-0-802-13098-3) is supposedly a parable of how an entire population can be taken over by a mindless herd instinct, whether it be to become rhinoceroses, Nazis, or Communists. But there are some lines that can be interpreted in quite the reverse. For example, one of the arguments against the rhinoceroses is that humans have moral standards developed through centuries of civilization, and the rhinoceroses don't follow those standards. One of the characters also thinks the rhinoceroses "should be rounded up in a big enclosure." Another objects to the color of the rhinoceroses' skin. The problem is that these arguments are often used against groups that are not Nazis or Communists, but Jews, or immigrants, or homosexuals. It is all well and good to draw parallels to how we often don't recognize dangers to society until it is too late, but we must not fall into the trap of false parallels. [-ecl]

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Quote of the Week:

Life is like playing a violin solo in public and learning
the instrument as one goes on.

--Samuel Butler

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