

<https://tinyurl.com/void-asu-visions>

(It says, "There's even a version aimed at kids and educators, which takes out the profanity," which makes one wonder how necessary they were in the first place.) [-ecl]

Philcon 2014 Convention Report:

My Philcon 2014 con report is available at FANAC:

http://fanac.org/Other_Cons/PhilCon/q14-ecl.html

[-ecl]

Mad Men (comments by Mark R. Leeper):

I am sometimes amused to see the advertising slogans on food products after having seen the processes of creating advertising and the huge salaries that go to the people who come up with these slogans. I recently took a look at a package of Pennysticks pretzels. Their slogan is "Enjoy the Taste." No! Why did they think I bought them? Had I intended to use the pretzels as back scratchers? I wonder how much some executive got for thinking up that slogan.

But the classic is Barq's Root Beer. Its slogan right on a can or bottle is "It's good." I wonder how long they thought about that one. [-mrl]

KING KONG vs. GODZILLA and Why Do We Love Our Childhood Monsters (comments by Mark R. Leeper):

I recently was at a science fiction convention and one of the panels was about the future of Godzilla movies. It got me thinking that when the original GOJIRA was released the filmmakers could hardly have known that people would still be making Gojira movies 63 years later. Let us look at some of the features of Godzilla and some other cinema monsters.

I guess I find I to have some interest the lasting popularity of Godzilla. The character Godzilla made his debut in 1954. According to Google, at the beginning of 2017 there had been 29 Godzilla films in 63 years. That beat out James Bond. Clearly there is some sort of charge that audiences still get from seeing a man in a theropod lizard suit appear hundreds of feet tall.

The monster Godzilla himself was inspired by Ray Harryhausen's rhedosaurus in THE BEAST FROM 20,000 FATHOMS. The rhedosaurus appeared in just that one film and never appeared in another film. Gojira/Godzilla clearly has some sort of effect on audiences. It may be a man in a shabby monster suit, but we have a curious affection for Godzilla. I can think of only one other giant creature that has had his own series. That would be Gamera, and Gamera was certainly inspired by Godzilla. (I guess I should count Mothra and Majin, but somehow series so short do not seem to count.) What is it about Godzilla that makes him sopopular? Well, there are some aspects that work for the big guy's popularity, and some work against.

Let us start with the easy stuff. The rhedosaurus is just "the" rhedosaurus. Godzilla has a name to refer to him. The viewer is on a first-name basis with Godzilla. It does not mean that we like him or want him to go stomp Tokyo, but names are powerful. There are not a lot of monsters that have names. Kong has a name, of course. There is the aforementioned Gamera, and there is Gorgo. Actually, almost all the monsters from Toho Studios--Toho is the home of Godzilla films--have names. It is not a requirement necessarily. We have the Frankenstein Monster and the Creature from the Black Lagoon who get along without names, but having a name helps. It gives the monster a direct identity rather than an indirect relation to something else.

Then there is facial look and expression. Godzilla's face may change from film to film but not very much within a single film. It is a little-known fact that Toho builds the Godzilla suit anew for each film he is in. So there is some room for variation when the Godzilla suit is made. But it never had a very expressive face on it. His face is never has expressive as Kong's face. But Godzilla's face never expresses much emotion. Kong's face expresses some limited emotion but only in the stop-motion scenes. The gorilla in SON OF KONG easily beats both. He actually shows more emotion than Kong or Godzilla because more of the film is animated. This is one of the few cases where SON OF KONG is a real improvement over KING KONG.

At least Godzilla had going for him that he was a dinosaur. What kid doesn't love dinosaurs? Toho put together what might be the most convincing trailer ever made and ran it in children's television hours. It was really hard sell for 55 seconds of cool years before "cool" ever meant exciting. But for fans of a certain age, this trailer is what got many of them into science fiction.

Godzilla was originally supposed to be a dinosaur, actually a cross-breed. But at the same time he also was expected to be a metaphor for the nuclear bomb in solid form. Today Godzilla is no longer so much a dinosaur as a force of nature incarnate. He sometimes is hero and sometimes villain. Godzilla 2000 shows him as hero and then suddenly he fries a circle around him. [-mrl]

19th Animation Show of Shows (film review by Mark R. Leeper):

There are two or three annual films that are collections of animated films that go on tours. One is composed of the animated films that are nominated for Academy Awards that year. The Animation Show of Shows is different. It is just a good collection of films. Some are fairly recent, one or two may be a good deal older. This year the best film was 53 years old. It has a good straightforward style of telling a story. Your mileage may vary, but I really prefer straightforward language to films that are ethereal and abstract. I will rate each film A, B, C, or if it is particularly good, AA or AAA.

Can You Do It - Quentin Baillieux, France

This is an animated film set on the streets of Los Angeles. It is seemingly a celebration of multiculturalism where people are singing and dancing. There also seems to be a horserace down the center of the street. Every one of the many different cultures is singing a song called "Can You Do It." The same song plays under the closing credits.

Rating: B+

Tiny Big - Lia Bertels, Belgium

This film was hard to interpret. It seemed to be line drawings showing a family spending a day at the beach and there is a man shooting a gun. Things escalate until someone shoots a gun and it goes further until a missile pierces the planet. Any interpretation I would attempt would be pure speculation.

Rating: C

Next Door - Pete Docter, US

A very cubist man lives in his world made up of geometrical shapes that give his world a sort of order. His next-door neighbor has noisy fantasies and fairy tales. They come together over a certain toy.

Rating: B

The Alan Dimension - Jac Clinch, UK

Alan is a latter day Walter Mitty who seems to himself as having visions from across time and space. This gets on his wife's nerves. Eventually he decides to behave and ignore the visions. But this may not be the best choice.

Rating: A

Beautiful Like Elsewhere - Elise Simard, Canada

This film looks at some beautiful (or not) abstract space shapes. Some of the images are rather dingy. There is not much connective tissue connecting the star scapes. They seem to be pictures of celestial events.

Rating: C

Hangman - Paul Julian and Les Goldman, US

This is a 1964 adaptation and visualization of a poem by Maurice Ogden. But it is certainly a film that deserves to be plucked from obscurity. The story is actually very similar to a quote attributed to German Protestant Pastor Martin Niemöller: "They came for the Communists, and I didn't object - For I wasn't a Communist; They came for the Socialists, and I didn't object - For I wasn't a Socialist; They came for the labor leaders, and I didn't object - For I wasn't a labor leader; They came for the Jews, and I didn't object - For I wasn't a Jew; Then they came for me - And there was no one left to object."

Rating: AAA

The Battle of San Romano - Georges Schwizgebel, Switzerland

This film uses animation to show the chaos of war. It is based on Paolo Uccello's painting of that name, though it seems to be in theme much like Picasso's Guernica. But every figure in the painting is transforming into something else in a rolling boil of images. Eventually the painting returns to its original form.

Rating: B

Gokurosama - Clementine Frere, Aurore Gal, Yukiko Meignien, Anna

Mertz, Robin Migliorelli, Romain Salvini, France The title means "thank you for all the hard work." If you think the daytime is busy at the shopping mall, you should be there in the early morning when the cleaning crew dance, sing, and have adventures.

Rating: A

Dear Basketball - Glen Keane, US

When Kobe Bryant of the LA Lakers was retiring he wrote a love poem to the game of basketball and all it had done for him. Literally, as the title implies this is a love letter to a game that has been his whole life. And being the best he could be has

been his goal all his life. Disney veteran Glen Keane has taken the poem and rendered it as visual images and music.
Rating: B

Island - Max Mortl and Robert Lobel, Germany

This is a whimsical look at the flora and fauna of an absurd volcanic island. There is no story, but there are geometric animals moving to a rhythm. The art and animation is reminiscent of the classic film FANTASTIC PLANET (1973).

Rating: A

Unsatisfying - Parallel Studio, France

Again there is no story here. We just see a number of objects that do not meet customer expectations. In some sense the film can be consider it an homage to Road Runner cartoons in which no

technology ever worked.Rating: A

My Burden - Niki Lindroth von Bahr, Sweden

I have no idea what this was all about. Apparently because it has to do with human bodied fish, mice, and apes or animal headed people. You have fishes that wear shirts and ties. All are at the Hotel Long Stay dancing and singing (poorly) in Norwegian. All seem somewhat alienated. They are animated in old-fashioned stop- motion.

Rating: B

Les Abeilles Domestiques (Domestic Bees) Alexanne Desrosiers, Canada This one just seems to show us a modular house with pieces all the same rectangular shape and size. People seem to have monotonous and repetitious lives in the modules. The odd paths through the house remind one of Robert Heinlein's story "And He Built a Crooked House."

Rating: B

Our Wonderful Nature: The Common Chameleon - Tomer Eshed, Germany

This film one is a little comic in 3-D animation we seen an old fashioned cartoon. This is a parody of the David Attenborough style of nature films. We are introduced to the common chameleon that has a tongue twice as long as its body. This proves to be a mixed blessing.

Rating: A

Casino - Steven Woloshen, Canada

This is a piece of jazz music accompanied by crude drawings of casino objects painted on bright colored backgrounds. It is impressionist but not a masterpiece.

Rating: C

Everything - David O'Reilly, US

Alan Watts lectures on how every sentient animal thinks it is a human being. Behind him is a wholly synthetic forest scene with bears doing somersaults. I was never a fan of his philosophy. This did not appeal to me in its profundity.

Rating: C

[-mrl]

THE STONE SKY by **N. K. Jemisin** (copyright 2017, Orbit, \$16.99, 445pp, ISBN 978-0-316-22924-1) (book review by Joe Karpierz):

THE STONE SKY, the final book in N. K. Jemisin's masterpiece series "The Broken Earth", is something that seems to be becoming increasingly rare in this day and age: the final book in a trilogy that really is the final book in a trilogy. Whether it is science fiction or fantasy, it always seems that the last book of any sequence leaves the door open a crack for a continuation of the story. I truly believe that by the end of this book, it is game, set, and match on "The Broken Earth", and if there is any justice in this world THE STONE SKY will be a finalist for the Best Novel Hugo next year in San Jose. If it does indeed win the Hugo, "The Broken Earth" trilogy will be three for three with regard to Best Novel Hugos and may be remembered as one of the best genre series of all time.

There's that hedge again, the one I've been talking about for the last two years when discussing the other two books in the series, THE FIFTH SEASON and THE OBELISK GATE. It looks and feels like fantasy, given some of the trappings and the subject matter, but there is more than a hint of science fiction here, just enough to make the reader think that Jemisin was intentionally blurring the lines between the two genres. That blurring, whether intentional or not, is glorious and wonderful. Both fantasy and science fiction play a huge part in THE STONE SKY and ultimately bringing the trilogy to what can only be called a stunning and outstanding conclusion.

The novel follows three different stories. The two main stories-- or so we think they're the main stories--are those of Essun and Nassun, mother and daughter orogenes. Essun wakes up from a coma after using the titular Obelisk Gate of the previous book to destroy the enemies of Castrima. A nasty side effect of the usage of the Obelisk Gate is that she is partially

transformed into a Stone Eater. Essun has learned that the Moon is quickly approaching the planet from the distant part of its long elliptical orbit. She needs to use Obelisk Gate to capture the Moon and put it back in its orbit, thus ending the destructive cycle of Fifth Seasons. Nassun, who is angry and despondent over having killed her father using the power of an obelisk, wants to cause the Moon to collide with the Earth and destroy both. Nassun is accompanied by the guardian Schaffa, who agrees to help her in her quest. Both Essun and Nassun travel to the city of Corepoint in order to control the Obelisk Gate. It is there that they meet in a final confrontation for the future of the Earth, Moon, and humanity.

The third story is one that makes this a most satisfying novel for me. It begins thousands of years in the past and in a place called Syl Anagist. The story told in this portion of the novel, interspersed among the other two, takes place over a long period of time, and through its telling the reader comes to understand just how the world got into the predicament it is. This is the piece of the story that gives the novel its science fictional flavor with a dash of magic, as we learn how the Stone Eaters were created and how the Moon was thrown off its course. Through a bit of hand wavium that we really don't seem to mind, characters are transported to the Moon itself to finish their task. The goal is to start the Plutonic Engine, involves something called Geoarcany, as well as human conductors in a grand plot that, if the novel didn't have enough, presents the reader with a sense of wonder that, barring things like Cixin Liu's "The Rememberance of Earth's Past" trilogy hasn't been seen around these parts in awhile. But the novel does have other scenes that make the readers shake their heads in awe; Nassun travelling *through* the planet to get the to City of Corepoint to where she can destroy the world. The journey involves a breathtaking "fly by" of the Earth's core. Their transportation to Corepoint originates in a glorious, awe- inspiring city in the arctic where Nassun learns some secrets of the past.

This novel is about a lot of things: family, growth, and loss play a big part in the story, as does a sense of the other and the outsider. All of these and more are woven throughout the entire story. Essun and Nassun, mother and daughter, who have lost a husband and a father; Nassun, who has lost the only person, Schaffa, who she believes has ever cared for her; Essun, who has lost more than one loved one, the most recent being Lerna, the father of her unborn child; the growth of Nassun as she learns what is more important; the outsider and admittedly vicious treatment of the orogenes by the stills; the list goes on and on. Jemisin weaves it all and more into one of the most satisfying conclusion to a series in a long time.

A story like "The Broken Earth" comes along, I think, once in a lifetime. I've written more than once that the true test of how good a story might be is how long from now it will still be talked about. Ann Leckie's "The Imperial Radch" series, the aforementioned Cixin Liu series, and now "The Broken Earth", have all entered our collective consciousness within the last decade or so. Whether any of them stand the test of time is yet to be determined. I think we'd be wise to put our money on "The Broken Earth". Those of us who will still be around in twenty years need to check back and see if it was money well spent. I have a feeling it will be. [-jak]

ME-163 and Hannah Reitsch (letter of comment by Peter Trei):

In response to [Mark's comments on the ME-163](#) in the 12/08/17 issue of the MT VOID, Peter Trei writes:

There's a great interview on Youtube with Hannah Reitsch, who was an ME-163 test pilot. She describes it as 'like riding a cannonball':

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xJC2KTTZhTY>

Hannah was interesting. She "was the first woman to fly a helicopter, a rocket plane, and a jet fighter. She set over forty aviation altitude and endurance records during her career, both before and after World War II, and several of her international gliding records are still standing to this day."

... and also a huge fan of Hitler before and during WW2 (she got better). [-pt]

Evelyn notes:

That link goes to part 3 of an interview. More can be found by searching for "Hanna Reitsch" on YouTube. [-ecl]

Mark notes:

For those who have seen the film OPERATION CROSSBOW, Hanna Reitsch is the woman who flew the V-1 refitted to carry a human passenger in order to work out the design bugs in the V-1. She certainly appears to have been a remarkable woman. [-mrl]

Sine Wave Length (letter of comment by Andre Kuzniarek):

In response to [Gregory Benford's comments on the sine wave length](#) in the 12/08/17 issue of the MT VOID, Andre Kuzniarek

writes:

When you first brought up the question of sine wave length I just went straight to Wolfram/Alpha for the answer:

<https://tinyurl.com/void-sine-wave2>

It seems to match Gregory's response except for one detail, making me worry about a bug, but I'm told by one of our experts the site's displayed result is correct.

[Gregory's formula was:

$$\int_0^{2\pi} \sqrt{1 - \cos^2(x)} dx = 4 \sqrt{2} E(1/2)$$

The minus sign before the cosine rather than plus was probably a transcription error somewhere along the line. -ecl]

THE SHAPE OF WATER and THUS SPOKE ZARATHUSTRA/"All You Zombies" (letter of comment by Sam Long):

In response to [Mark's review of THE SHAPE OF WATER](#) in the 12/08/17 issue of the MT VOID, Sam Long writes:

The latest (11 Dec 2017) issue of THE NEW YORKER has a review of THE SHAPE OF WATER in it. [-sl]

And in response to [Charles Harris's comments on THUS SPOKE ZARATHUSTRA and "All You Zombies"](#) in the same issue, Sam writes:

I remember reading somewhere that, when women's auxiliary units were set up in the military services in WWI and WWII, the establishment of the Women's Home Organized Reserves for Emergency Service was eagerly awaited but never came to pass. But Women Marines were, so I'm told, sometimes called Leathertits, by analogy with Leatherneck, a word for (male) Marine, from the leather collars on late-18th-early-19th century uniforms. [-sl]

THE WHEEL OF TIME (letter of comment by Gwendolyn Karpierz):

In response to [Fred Lerner's comments on abridging THE WHEEL OF TIME](#) in the 12/01/17 issue of the MT VOID, Gwendolyn Karpierz writes:

Re: THE WHEEL OF TIME--Abridging THE WHEEL OF TIME is easy if you already have the patience for long series: only read the last hundred pages of books 6-10, and read everything else. [-gk]

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

When I was young, we watched WHAT'S MY LINE?, and at some point I asked my mother what Dorothy Kilgallen was known for. The answer basically, seemed to be that she was known for being Dorothy Kilgallen. Similarly, Vera Brittain seems to be best known for being Vera Brittain. She was a feminist, a pacifist, and a novelist, yet is best known now for her memoir TESTAMENT OF YOUTH (ISBN 978-0-143-03923-5), recounting her life before, during, and after World War I. Before the war, she managed to get accepted to Cambridge, and attended for a year. During the war, she served as a volunteer nurse. Hers is the major--perhaps only--memoir of World War I from a woman's point of view.

[Spoilers ahead.]

In THE DAUGHTER OF TIME, Josephine Tey's narrator is reading an historical novel(*) and relates its account of the scene of Cecily Nevill (the mother of Richard III) watching her husband, her brother, and her eldest son going off to war: "And Cicely, who in her time had seen so many men, and so many of her family, go off to war, went back to the house with an unaccustomed weight at her bosom. Which of them, said the voice in her unwilling mind, which of them was it who was not coming back? Her imagination did not compass anything so horrible as the fact that none of them was coming back again. That she would never see any one of them again."

Brittain saw her fiance Roland Leighton off to war, then her brother Edward Brittain, and their two close friends Victor Richardson and Geoffrey Thurlow. None of them was coming back again; she would never see any one of them again. Leighton was shot December 23, 1915, and died the next day--the day that was supposed to be the first day of his leave and for which Brittain was cheerfully making preparations in England. Word arrived Christmas night. Her brother was the last of the four to die, in June 1918.

Brittain served as a nurse in London, Malta, and France, and her descriptions of her work are enlightening. For example, the

volunteer nurses received very little training or instruction from the registered professional nurses, because the latter feared the volunteers would be job competition after the war. (Brittain thought the concept that the volunteers would actually want to continue this work in any substantial numbers was ridiculous.) In London, the nurses were billeted quite a distance from the hospital and no transport was provided, so they often arrived at work drenched by rain. And in general, Brittain criticized the total lack of planning or thought that went into much of what she saw-- and by extension, much of the execution of the war in general.

One passage often quoted (at least by Americans) is her description of the arrival of American troops in France:

Only a day or two afterwards I was leaving quarters to go back to my ward, when I had to wait to let a large contingent of troops march past me along the main road that ran through our camp. They were swinging rapidly towards Camiers, and though the sight of soldiers marching was too familiar to arouse curiosity, an unusual quality of bold vigour in their swift stride caused me to stare at them with puzzled interest.

They looked larger than ordinary men; their tall, straight figures were in vivid contrast to the under-sized armies of pale recruits to which we had grown accustomed. At first I thought their spruce, clean uniforms were those of officers, yet obviously they could not be officers, for there were too many of them; they seemed, as it were, Tommies in heaven. Had yet another regiment been conjured from our depleted Dominions? I wondered, watching them move with such rhythm, such dignity, such serene consciousness of self-respect. But I knew the colonial troops so well, and these were different; they were assured where the Australians were aggressive, self- possessed where the New Zealanders were turbulent. Then I heard an excited exclamation from a group of Sisters behind me.

Look! Look! Here are the Americans!

I pressed forward with the others to watch the United States physically entering the war, so God-like, so magnificent, so splendidly unimpaired in comparison with the tired, nerve-racked men of the British Army. So these were our deliverers at last, marching up the road to Camiers in the spring sunshine! There seemed to be hundreds of them, and in the fearless swagger of their proud strength they looked a formidable bulwark against the peril looming from Amiens.

An uncontrollable emotion seized me as such emotions often seized us in those days of insufficient sleep; my eyeballs pricked, my throat ached, and a mist swam over the confident Americans going to the front. The coming of relief made me realise all at once how long and how intolerable had been the tension, and with the knowledge that we were not, after all, defeated, I found myself beginning to cry.

Brittain always argued against the rules placed on her as a female that would not apply to males. One example she wrote about happened during the war was when she was serving in a hospital in France and her father wrote to her, "As your mother and I can no longer manage without you, it is now your duty to leave France immediately and return to Kensington." Brittain wrote, "I read those words with real dismay, for my father's interpretation of my duty was not, I knew only too well, in the least likely to agree with that of the Army, which had always been singularly unmoved by the worries of relatives. ... I only knew that no one in France would believe a domestic difficulty to be so insoluble; if I were dead, or a male, it would have to be settled without me." She further wrote, "I find myself still hoping that if ... war breaks out on a scale comparable to that of 1914, the organisers of the machine will not hesitate to conscript all women under fifty for service at home or abroad. In the long run, an irrevocable allegiance in a time of emergency makes decision easier for the older as well as for the younger generation."

(She wrote this well before World War II. Her hopes were not borne out, though I suspect whatever women were serving or volunteering in that war were not so cavalierly called home to tend to relatives.)

Though her experiences during the war and with the League of Nations afterwards eliminated much of her provincialism, she was still able to write in 1933 of having acquaintances of "every shade of religious conviction from Roman Catholicism to Christian Science." From the diversity of today's world, this seems very narrow indeed, and reminds one of the famous comment by Dorothy Parker that Katherine Hepburn "ran the gamut of emotions from A to B."

Some things seem bizarrely topical today. Brittain writes of the passage of the Criminal Law Amendment Bill, which raised the age of consent from 13 to 16, and removed "from the defense permitted to the assaulter the plea of 'reasonable cause to believe' that the child was over sixteen. This passed over strong opposition, and she rejoices, "I was conscious of quite a ferocious satisfaction because the plea made by a few gallant Englishmen that our liberties would be curtailed if the opportunities for attacking female children were made more difficult had not succeeded."

[Note: Both the novel Tey mentions, *THE ROSE OF RABY*, and the author, "Evelyn Payne-Ellis" are figments of Tey's imagination. This makes me wonder how many of the sources cited in *DAUGHTER OF TIME* were also fictional. Most of the history books seem to be described rather than defined by title and author, though the descriptions and citations are fairly

generic for the sort of book Tey is describing. Robert Piepenbrink says that the quotes attributed to Sir Cuthbert Oliphant are "word for word from Sir Charles William Chadwick Oman, a very distinguished historian of the period."

[-ecl]

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Quote of the Week:

Books, like friends, should be few and well chosen.
--Samuel Paterson

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