

MT VOID 11/30/18 -- Vol. 37, No. 22, Whole Number 2043



Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society
11/30/18 -- Vol. 37, No. 22, Whole Number 2043

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Correction:

Last week I misspelled Dale Speirs's name; my apologies. [-ecl]

Science Fiction (and Other) Discussion Groups, Films, Lectures, etc. (NJ):

- December 13: THE THING FROM ANOTHER WORLD (1951) (film) and "Who Goes There?" by John W. Campbell, Jr. (short story), Middletown Public Library, 5:30 PM
<http://www.goldenageofscifi.info/ebook/Who Goes There.pdf>
- December 20: TBD, Old Bridge Public Library, 7:00 PM
- January 24, 2019: THREE-BODY PROBLEM by Cixin Liu
- March 28, 2019: WE by Yevgeny Zamyatin (1920)
- May 23, 2019: DIASPORA by Greg Egan
- July 25, 2019: THE STRANGE CASE OF DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE by Robert Louis Stevenson (1886)
- September 26, 2019: TBD from Europe/Latin America/Africa/Canada
- November 28, 2019: THE SLEEPER WAKES by H. G. Wells (1910)
- January 23, 2020: TBD from Europe/Latin America/Africa/Canada
- March 26, 2020: TBD by Edgar Rice Burroughs
- May 28, 2020: TBD from Europe/Latin America/Africa/Canada
- July 23, 2020: TBD by Jules Verne
- September 24, 2020: TBD from Europe/Latin America/Africa/Canada
- November 19, 2020: Rudyard Kipling:
 - "A Matter of Fact" (1892)
 - "The Ship That Found Herself" (1895)
 - ".007" (1897)
 - "Wireless" (1902)
 - "With the Night Mail [Aerial Board of Control 1]" (1905)
 - "As Easy as A.B.C. [Aerial Board of Control 2]" (1912)
 - "In the Same Boat" (1911)

Northern New Jersey events are listed at:

<http://www.sfsnnj.com/news.html>

My Picks for Turner Classic Movies for December (comments by Mark R. Leeper):

This is not really a "Pick of the Month" but just a pointer to a strange and fun film. As I assume most of my readers know in the 1930s up into the 1970s it was common practice for movie theaters, particularly drive-in theaters, to have double features, offering the public two films for the price of one. Too frequently the second feature was of minimal budget. That sounds like a bad thing, but the second film often was made with more creativity than the feature attraction. The filmmakers were less likely to depend on large profits and they would take chances trying to find a concept that might intrigue a filmgoer who stumbled on the poster. Instead of something only semi-unimaginative like a giant ant or a giant spider or some other giant arthropod or crustacean, you might get a giant evil, angry tree stump. The latter was featured in *FROM HELL IT CAME* (1957).

The concept of *FROM HELL IT CAME* (1957) is that if a man has been treated with sufficient injustice, in this life he could come back not as an avenging ghost but as a Tabonga. What is a Tabonga, you ask? It is a walking (and avenging) spirit wrapped in a tree trunk." Do you want to see what an angry tree stump looks like? Well it sort of looks like a cross between an angry Orthodox rabbi and a cinnamon sticky bun. See if your heart can take it. New York Times reviewed the film with three succinct words: "Back send it." Not a very good film, but it has its moments of fun and the idea is weird enough to make up for the film's numerous deficiencies. [*FROM HELL IT CAME*. Friday, December 14, 3:30 PM (ET)]

BEN-HUR is a sweeping historical epic. If you think about it, *BEN-HUR* is, among other things, both a sports film and a religious film on a grand scale. I usually do not care for sports films or religious films, but I have to say that *BEN-HUR: A TALE OF THE CHRIST* (1925) but is both and features a chariot race every bit as exciting as the race in the 1959 version of the same story. It is one of the most impressive spectacles ever made. If you have any doubts about that watch it. [*BEN-HUR*, Sunday, December 9, 12:30 AM (ET)]

Happy Holidays!!! [-mrl]

MAC AND ME (comments by Gary Labowitz):

Just a quick note:

I was up really late before Thanksgiving, working on a soup, and out of boredom turned on the TV to see what was happening. I hit on Turner Classic Movies with a picture (in progress, but just starting) about some kids discovering a small alien. After about ten minutes of watching it I decided it was a horrible movie. The acting was really bad, with the kids poorly reading the lines; the direction was awful, and very distracting. The filming looks cheap and clumsy. I thought to myself, "This is horrible. One of the worst pictures I've ever seen." But I got dragged into it a little and I started watching it just see what was going to happen. It seemed to get better. It dragged along with the usual kids accepting everything, and the parent (in this case) busy with her own stuff and ignoring the kids. I starting thinking, "ET ... it's ET." Then I wondered who stole from whom? I couldn't turn it off. The ending was notably inane, so I won't spoil it for you. FBI or CIA or something men chasing the kids and falling down at the least provocation (tripping over a skate board, running into cars, etc. to make it an "exciting almost gotcha you now chase"), but eventually everybody including the stupid mother come to accept that the aliens are not a threat and the kids are, of course, right.

After it was over I just had to check it on Wikipedia to see the dates of *E.T.*, *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL*, and this mess ... which turned out to be called *MAC AND ME*. So, *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL* was 1951, *E.T.* was 1982, *MAC AND ME* was 1988. Totally derivative. Wiki also told me that the movie had a perfect Rotten Tomatoes score of 0%. Reviews at the time were quoted as its being one of the worst, or actual worst movie ever made, and it didn't even get a Raspberry Award of any kind.

Still, it was on TCM! It turns out it is a major "Cult Movie," meaning it stinks but people enjoy watching it and booing. It was on SF Theater 3000 as well. I bet they had a lot of fun with it.

Anyway, if you have never seen this mess and have 90 minutes on your hands ... try and see it. I have no idea of how often it will be offered up, and I can't imagine it is available for purchase (you'll have to DVR it). The comment was that it cost \$13 million or so, earned \$6 million, and became profitable with world-wide sales of VCR tapes. Yikes!

This has been just a quick note. [-gl]

Mark replies:

I never saw the film, but I remember when it came out. After Reeses Pieces got lots of valuable product exposure from E.T., this film was made to give exposure to McDonald's. The film was called MAC AND ME. But the film that resulted was considered just awful and the McDonald's tie-in may not have ever been used. Did the film have references to McDonald's? [-mrl]

Gary answers:

Yes! There was a party scene, and Ronald MacDonald was in it. I believe some sort of award went to the Ronald MacDonald character. [-gl]

The Metric System (letter of comment by Gary Labowitz):

In response to [Dan Cox's comments on the metric system](#) in the 11/16/18 issue of the MT VOID, Gary Labowitz writes:

Oh my Foofoo, Dan Cox:

You raise a lot of problems I hadn't thought of. Do we have to rewire and re-plumb all our houses and commercial buildings? Or tear through them to insert joint adapters from English to Metric? Remember the Y2K scare and the work done to convert century-less variables in programs to century variables (i.e., for non programmers, changing the storage from "14" to "2014" instead of assuming "1914." You'd be surprised at the number of original designers who "saved" two characters of storage by programming that way. One of my first projects for IBM was to rewire a board on a 405 calculator to add "20" to the dates being processed and printed which had been used as "xx" with an automatic "19" added while running. It was for an insurance company (in the North part of Missouri) that sold insurance than was meant to expire or pay out in 40-100 years after issuance. So, in 1962 when I was hired, they were writing policies that would expire in 20xx, and the boards had been set up to automatically put "19" on the date. They didn't like that some of them read "expires 1902." So I was working on the Y2K problem in 1962! Gee, this was a long aside.)

Back to the Metric problem. Well, this is much the same scope converting to metric. Further aside: a propo to nothing else, my wife just wandered in and asked me whether it was "blessed" or "blest". (Spell check doesn't recognize "blest.") I launched into an explanation of the German vs. French origins of our language and the weak and strong conjugations, and she left, probably more confused than ever. I think metric vs. English usage will be the same. Of course, we could leave the actual sizing the same (number of threads per inch, etc. and just call it 3.8 or 4.17, etc. for standard "sizes" or numbers assigned to the actual item. (Aside: I run into this all the time while doing calligraphy: nibs are sold in mm, and markings for scripting and printing are done in inches. I have to use a computer to convert from one to the other.) I didn't know the 5K was already metric. I can only do the 100 feet (oooo, English!) before I have to sit down. Thus, my handicap parking permit.

Which, of course I have a nit pick about! Stores are putting an inadequate number of parking spaces near their entry doors for handicapped parking. But, for stores that use carts (mostly grocery stores) they put the cart return somewhere out in the middle of the parking lots. Or, I think, you are supposed to return them back to the entry door area where they are stored. This means that it is convenient to pick up a cart when you enter, but after loading your car with your purchases you either have to make two trips (one to return the cart and one to then return to your car) to put the cart back. This doesn't make sense. The point was to make it less distance for the handicapped to go to shop there. So why don't they have a return area next to the handicapped parking area? I'll answer that: Like most Americans today they don't think of consequences when they choose to do something. Sloppy and lazy thinking has come to dominate our culture. I knew we were in trouble when the cry first erupted of "If it feels good, do it.") Look at the mess we are in. Culture is now working toward operation on the principle of how one feels, rather than how one thinks. Our laws are starting to be "feel good" laws (like having "hate" crimes instead of "crimes" or making regulations (not even laws) that protect plants and animals so we can feel good instead of doing what is needed in each case to achieve an objective. If someone says they feel good when they are not seeing "guns" (and usually calling everything an "assault" weapon without a definition or knowing what they are talking about) and their solution is that they should not be exposed to "guns" (seeing them, talking about them, or thinking about them). They never stop ;to consider having a solution that prevents "guns" from getting into the hands of criminals and idiots. By this I mean laws that would deal with the "gunners" rather than the "guns." [Aside: see my suggestions in my blog, <http://garythecommonman.blogspot.com>.]

So, metric? Not in my lifetime, I guess. I still measure by the King's foot. Foolish, but effective. Sorry, I don't know how many nanometers that is. [-gl]

Penguin Quote (letter of comment by Denise Moy):

In response to [Paul Dormer's comments on the source of the quote](#), "This book told me more than I wanted to know about Penguins." in the 11/23/18 issue of the MT VOID, Denise Moy writes:

When I checked the quote on Google, I found this tidbit which offers no verifiable information about the girl or the book club:

<https://www.futilitycloset.com/2011/12/31/cold-shoulder/>. [-dm]

Thanksgiving, Square Dancing, and ISLE OF DOGS (letter of comment by John Purcell):

In response to various comments in [the 11/16/18 issue of the MT VOID](#), John Purcell writes:

Good morning, Mark and Evelyn. I hope that you two are well and we in the Purcell household and Petting Zoo wish you a happy Thanksgiving weekend. My wife and I, being employed in the education field, both have a nice long holiday weekend off: Valerie has had this entire week off--counting this past and forthcoming weekends, she has nine days off--while I get a five-day weekend starting today. That's nice, and gives us both a chance to relax and catch up on housework and prepare for the holiday shopping season, something that neither one of us cares for at all.

Mark's continued Square Dance Saga reminds me of when I did a lot of square dancing back in the early-80s. This was when I was in the midst of my first gaffiation from fandom (lasted all of eighteen months) and it was actually a lot of fun. In fact, when I met my first wife a couple years later I was still swinging my partner, whoever the heck it was since this was a bunch of people I barely knew since it was a community square dance club, so not many single men and women were involved. This was not exactly the best way to meet women. In any event, while dating Lori I took her to that a couple times and discovered much to my chagrin that she had three left feet compared to my one. Apparently my musical abilities translated to being relatively well-coordinated, too. Her? Not so much. Long story short--too late!--is that I enjoyed square dancing. back then. In fact, I probably still would. It's great aerobic exercise. Chances are if I started skipping to my Lou I'd probably slip and bruise my ego, or slip a disc, or get so winded I'd need oxygen, or... You get the idea.

I have never seen ISLE OF DOGS, but heard of it. We have a dog. Duckie is an abnormally tall pure-bred Yellow Labrador, and at ten years old is still full of vim and vigor. Lots of energy in his body. Come to think of it, if I put a calico hoop skirt on him, a blond wig on his head, add lipstick, I bet I could take him square dancing and no-one would be the wiser. Naw. He'd probably hook up with a two-bit floozy bleached-blond Poodle and run off and live the rest of his life in sin. Forget I ever mentioned it. [-jp]

Origami, Quotes, James Bond, and THE SONG OF SWAY LAKE (letter of comment by John Hertz):

In response to various comments in past issues of the MT VOID, John Hertz writes:

I cannot even imagine what a ripping yarn about origami could possibly (VOID 2032). The "gami" is the Japanese word "kami". "paper" And I understand you can only fold, not staple or mutilate.

Quoting things--or saying one quotes them (the verb "to purport" is used by lawyers, perhaps because we often enough have to say "They say they're doing it, but we don't care to express an opinion about whether they really are doing it")--with no citation of who spoke, when, where found, what the source is--was not invented by Electronicland, but seem to be worse there. I'd guess *the most surprising, shocking, and stupid statements, with no citations, would not justify the third word of that subtitle.

I like Ian Fleming's "James Bond" books. I like them as literature. Inter alia they are very well made. I don't think them any more, or less, than what they are. I've taken up MOONRAKER for a Classics of S-F discussion. This surprised people. Shocked some. As I recall, I had to beat them over the head with Gala Brand's surprising and shocking Bond at the end. But a book isn't good because it rewards my friends and punishes my enemies. That would be stupid.

I wasn't around in the 1940s--or if I was, I don't remember--but I'm not so sure a mansion filled with swing music would have a peaceful life style. M makes THE SONG OF SWAY LAKE sound like a film made so as to put a Y in the title instead of a second N. But I haven't seen it. [-jh]

Mark responds:

Actually there were stories of origami masters so good that their figures actually came to life. They would have been able to fold demons and set them on Their enemies. There are possibilities there.

I have no idea why the film was titled as it was, but it was "Sway" in the title. [-mrl]

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

I recently watched READY PLAYER ONE. It took me about thirty seconds after one character was introduced to figure out where this was going. James Halliday is Steve Jobs. Oasis is the Metaverse. Clearly i-R0k is Raven. The Distracted Globe is the Black Sun. The Curator is the Librarian. Wade doesn't live in a storage locker per se, but what he does live in is not very

different.

SPACE OPERA by Catherynne Valente (ISBN 978-1-481-49749-7) reminded me of the works of Douglas Adams or Raymond Chandler. But if Adams and Chandler use their stylized language as hot fudge on a sundae, where a little goes a long way, Valente has made a sundae that seems to be 75% hot fudge and very little ice cream. I liked the style but after a while I was just overwhelmed by it.

100 GREATEST FILM SCORES by Matt Lawson and Laurence E. MacDonald (ISBN 978-1-5381-0367-8) would undoubtedly mean more to someone more familiar with music than I am. Lawson and MacDonald are by no means overly technical, but they must sometimes be. My major complaint is with the arrangement: alphabetical rather than chronological, without even a chronological list at the end to help one read in that order if one prefers. And it omits FORBIDDEN PLANET, certainly one of the most original scores of the 1950s. [-ecl]

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Quote of the Week:

I do not mind lying, but I hate inaccuracy.

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