

MT VOID 05/29/20 -- Vol. 38, No. 48, Whole Number 2121



Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society
 05/29/20 -- Vol. 38, No. 48, Whole Number 2121

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 The latest issue is at <http://www.leepers.us/mtvoid/latest.htm>.
 An index with links to the issues of the MT VOID since 1986 is at
http://leepers.us/mtvoid/back_issues.htm.

Best 250 Adventures of the 20th Century (pointer from Guy Ferraiolo):

Guy Ferraiolo writes:

This is a pretty extensive list with some unexpected items. And more lists assuming you completed that speed-reading course.
 [-gf]

http://www.hilobrow.com/250-adventures/?utm_campaign=Recomendo

They have many other reading lists, including:

- 100 Best Radium Age Sci-Fi Adventures
- 75 Best Golden Age Sci-Fi Adventures
- 75 Best New Wave Sci-Fi Adventures
- 75 Best Diamond Age Sci-Fi Adventures

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

Needless to say, everything here is tentative.

All Middletown meetings cancelled/postponed until further notice

July 23, 2020: CLIPPER OF THE CLOUDS by Jules Verne (a.k.a.
 ROBUR THE CONQUEROR, [Fr. title ROBUR LE CONQUERANT],
 published by Ace in 1961 in an omnibus titled MASTER OF THE

WORLD, which is the title of the sequel), Old Bridge Public Library, 7PM
<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/3808>
 September 24, 2020: TBD from Europe/Latin America, Old Bridge Public Library, 7PM
 November 19, 2020: Rudyard Kipling:
 "A Matter of Fact" (1892)
<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/16578>
 "The Ship That Found Herself" (1895)
<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/2569>
 ".007" (1897)
<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/2569>
 "Wireless" (1902)
<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/9790>
 "With the Night Mail [Aerial Board of Control 1]" (1905)
<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/29135>
 "As Easy as A.B.C. [Aerial Board of Control 2]" (1912)
<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/13085>
 "In the Same Boat" (1911)
<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/13085>
 Old Bridge Public Library, 7PM

Northern New Jersey events are listed at:
<http://www.sfsnnj.com/news.html>

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

One American writer, Thorne Smith, was very popular in books and the movies from the 1920s to the 1940s. Sadly, today he is nearly forgotten. Thorne Smith had made for himself a sharply defined niche market. Smith wrote humorous stories that took one or more humorous characters contemporary with his story, and had them meet up with someone from the realm of the supernatural (invariably it was a heavy drinker).

In TOPPER, his most popular novel, two bon vivant ghosts haunt their very repressed friend Cosmo Topper, an extremely straight-laced banker who has to deal with the two ghosts who want to teach Cosmo how to have a good time just living. They want Topper to get more fun out of life. Much of the humor comes with Topper having conversations with the recently deceased George and Marion Kirby. He might as well be talking to Harvey the Rabbit.

This month I am also pointing out Thorne Smith's TURNABOUT (1940), Smith's story of a married couple, Tim (John Hubbard) and Sally Willows (Carole Landis), who in the midst of a very heated argument somehow through some hocus pocus involving a bronze statue of Buddha find they have traded bodies. The description only sounds simplistic but the film gives the audience a lot of fun:

TURNABOUT (1940)
 [TUESDAY, JUNE 2 @ 11:30 AM (ET)]

TOPPER (1937)
 [SUNDAY, JUNE 14 @ 11:45 AM (ET)]

TOPPER TAKES A TRIP (1939)
 [TUESDAY, JUNE 2 @ 01:15 PM (ET)]

Probably the most interesting film this month is BLACK ORPHEUS. This is a Brazilian/French/Italian film set in Rio de Janeiro. It is a retelling of the myth of Orpheus walking into Hell to rescue his Number 1 fan, his lover Eurydice. [-mrl]

Some Thoughts on STAR WARS IX: THE RISE OF SKYWALKER (comments by Evelyn C. Leeper):

[SPOILERS]

Does everyone in the Star Wars universe speak fluent English (or Galactic Standard, or whatever) *and* fluent Wookiee *and* fluent Droid?

Using discarded footage of Carrie Fisher from STAR WARS VII is a solution to the problem of how to deal with retaining Princess Leia as a character after her death, but it is also a big distraction for the viewer.

I never saw Flip Zimmerman in BLACKKLANSMAN as Kylo Ren, but I can't help seeing Kylo Ren in STAR WARS IX as Flip Zimmerman.

The Acky Acky Festival? Really? And we get a replay of the pod race in basically the same terrain, except for higher stakes.

Does every planet have spiders (that leave cobwebs in ships)?

I would think they could get C3PO to runic symbols from memory, and then find some else to translate them.

Mark thinks that some of the doorways look like Krell doorways.

Rey lifts the ship just the way Luke did in STAR WARS IV. There are other "call-backs", for example, someone saying, "I care" when someone else accuses a third person of not caring, Lando saying, "I got a bad feeling about this," or C3PO saying, "Madness!"

Why does Rey say her name is "Rey Skywalker", not "Rey Organa"? [-ecl]

Alcohol (letters of comment by Dorothy J. Heydt, Kevin R, and Keith F. Lynch):

In response to [Mark's comments on alcohol](#) in the 05/22/20 issue of the MT VOID, Dorothy J. Heydt writes:

"Could man be drunk for ever
With liquor, love, or fights,
Lief should I rouse at morning
And lief lie down of nights.

"But men at whiles are sober
And think by fits and starts,
And if they think, they fasten
Their hands upon their hearts."

A. E. Housman

[-djh]

Kevin R writes:

In the 80s, my friends and I would crack wise about being members of DAMM! Drinkers Against Mad Mothers. We considered the campaign for a national 18-year-old drinking age to be an equal protection violation against 18-, 19- and 20-year-old citizens who had the voting franchise, could be tried as adults, serve on juries, etc.

If they seriously wanted to re-infantilize that cohort, they should have just repealed the 26th Amendment. [-kr]

Keith F. Lynch responds:

The federal government doesn't actually have the power to mandate the drinking age. They got the national 18-year-old drinking age by threatening to deny highway funding to states that didn't pass such a law. That's one more reason why the state governments shouldn't be dependent on money from the federal government. And why, ideally, no individual should be dependent on money from any government.

I refused the \$1200 that was recently offered to every non-wealthy American. All I want from the government is to be left alone.

Also, if the concern is about drunk driving, how about giving people under 21 the choice between a driving license or a drinking license.

As an aside, if it took a constitutional amendment to ban alcohol, why did it only take an act of congress to ban other drugs? And why, more recently, do the unelected bureaucrats at DEA get to ban yet more drugs? [-kfl]

Kevin R replies:

[The issue of the Federal funds] went to the Supreme Court. The states resisting the reduction of federal funds lost.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Dakota_v._Dole

It's a case of "who takes the king's shilling..." and, IMNSHO, seriously damaged federalism.

Critics of the changes at the time suggested that enforcing the laws against moving violations, speeding, and even failure to maintain a speed consistent with the flow of traffic would have allowed officers to catch plenty of those driving under the influence. At the time all of this was going down I was already over 21, but couldn't yet afford a car, so the damage to me,

aside from a general interest in the liberty of my fellow citizens and legal residents of the country, was that it really hurt the live music business, since taverns of one type or another were venues for acts that drew smaller crowds than theaters or arenas.

Congress did ban making or selling booze as a war measure before the amendment passed, but in peacetime the "drys" couldn't get a national prohibition through the Congress. Many states had local prohibition, but wanted to impose a national rule on the states that did not, to keep booze out of their jurisdictions.

Once again, "war is the health of the state." [Bourne]

[The DEA getting to ban drugs is] Congress ceding rule-making power to bureaucrats to avoid taking tough votes. [-kr]

[There is more in this thread, but it has drifted into more politics than we want to include here. -ecl]

Uncertainty Principle (letter of comment by Kevin R):

In response to the [closing quote on the Uncertainty Principle](#) in the 05/22/20 issue of the MT VOID, Kevin R writes:

Cartoon Network ran this as part of "Teen Titans, GO! this a.m.:

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But wait! The act of observation
changes the effects of this conversation!
'Cause when you measure and take a hard look,
the electron is in one place, it stays put!
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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CwgctC1y1wc>

https://teen-titans-go.fandom.com/wiki/Thru_a_Double_Slit

https://teen-titans-go.fandom.com/wiki/Quantum_Fun

[-kr]

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

This week I had intended to review the finalists for the Retro Hugo Award for Best Novella. But it is a somewhat abridged column, because two of the novellas--the Leinster and the van Vogt--are available (to me) only in scans in the Internet Archive (). These are scans of heavily tanned pages, with lower contrast and smaller print than would be ideal. In short, while I might put up with this for a short story, an entire novella (or rather, two entire novellas) is beyond the call of duty.

"The Jewel of Bas", Leigh Brackett: The writing here is of a much higher level than some of the novelettes that I discussed last week. But then I hit the following: "[Children's] imaginations were still elastic enough not to see the ridiculous side. He always gave the Distance Cycle a lot of schmaltz." Schmaltz? Really? Yes, it's a perfectly good word, but totally wrong for this story of, if not strictly sword and sorcery, then something very close. It is as if in the middle of an Arthurian tale someone said to another, "Hey, dude, what's with the new threads?" In spite of that, it is quite good, and I find myself wondering if Fritz Leiber's *Fafhrd* and the Grey Mouser did not owe some of their names and characters to Ciaran and Mouse.

"A God Named Kroo", Henry Kuttner: This is actually a rather deep look at what happens to a god when he has no more worshippers. This is an idea that goes back as far as Aristophanes, but Kuttner posits that the god does not die, but goes into a state of hibernation which may or may not eventually end in death. He also gives it a modern setting in World War II, which we see in other finalists on this ballot. It's actually quite ... well, not exactly touching, but at least containing some emotion and characterization, and it ages better than most of the stories on the ballot. [This one was available outside of the Internet Archive, but only in a crumbling pulp reprint magazine we had. Even so, it was marginally easier to read.]

"Trog", Murray Leinster: As noted above, physically unreadable (at least by me).

"Intruders from the Stars", Ross Rocklynne: Back in the 1960's, I often had to type on an old typewriter that had no "1" key, and hence had no exclamation point as a shifted "1" either. For a "1", one used a lower-case "L", but for the exclamation point one needed to type an apostrophe, then backspace and type a period. One wishes Rocklynne's typewriter had this feature, because he might have not peppered his story with exclamation points. (This was also in a reprint magazine, but from the 1970s, not the 1950s, so it was in better physical condition than the Kuttner.)

"Killdozer!", Theodore Sturgeon: I know it's a classic, but frankly, a novella-length story which spends much of its time talking about the inner working of bulldozers and other construction equipment does nothing for me. It would seem to be ideal for making into a movie, but when that was done, the movie was mediocre. (Richard Matheson's "Prey" and the subsequent movie almost seem like versions of this story.)

"The Changeling", A. E. van Vogt: As noted above, physically unreadable (at least by me).

Ranking: "A God Named Kroo", "The Jewel of Bas", no award, "Killdozer!", "Intruders from the Stars"

Not ranked: "Trog", "The Changeling"

I had thought of covering the Best Series finalists, but enough is enough. I will say that when I read the "Jules de Grandin" series by Seabury Quinn back in the 1970s, I quite enjoyed it. But the "Cthulhu Mythos" series is clearly a classic and heavily influential. Although Edgar Rice Burroughs ("Pellucidar") has an established fandom, and "The Shadow" (Maxwell Grant) is a bit of a cult figure, I would be very surprised if "Cthulhu Mythos" does not win. [-ecl]

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Quote of the Week:

We'll love you just the way you are if you're perfect.
--Alanis Morissette

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