

MT VOID 07/03/20 -- Vol. 39, No. 1, Whole Number 2126



Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society
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Co-Editor: Mark Leeper, mleeper@optonline.net
 Co-Editor: Evelyn Leeper, eleeper@optonline.net
 Sending Address: evelynchimelisleeper@gmail.com
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 An index with links to the issues of the MT VOID since 1986 is at http://leepers.us/mtvoid/back_issues.htm.

Why Are We Changing Volume Numbers Now? (comments by Evelyn C. Leeper):

The MT VOID started as the newsletter of the Science Fiction Club at Bell Labs. When "American Bell" split off temporarily from AT&T, Mark and I were in the new entity and so started a new numbering system in July 1982. Eventually the pieces came back together, but we retained the new numbering. So the MT VOID's "fiscal" year starts in July. [-ecl]

Bell Works (a.k.a. Bell Labs Holmdel) Is Becoming a Drive-In Theater:

And speaking of Bell Labs, ...

<https://www.tapinto.net/towns/middletown/sections/arts-and-entertainment/articles/holmdel-s-bell-works-to-bring-local-community-drive-in-movie-and-dining-experience>

"With movie theaters closed and families looking for entertainment on a summer evening, towns across the state are looking at providing outdoor movie experiences. During the Township committee meeting on Tuesday evening via Zoom, the governing body approved the request from Bell Works, permitting Bell Works to utilize their vast open parking lots to provide a traditional movie experience: a drive in movie and dinner!

"The concept from Somerset Development president, Bell Work's Ralph Zucker, is to provide regular drive-in movie experiences on a 65- foot screen, with the opportunity to enjoy curbside delivery from the restaurant tenants in Bell Works.

"It's dinner and a movie in the comfort of your car! The movies are slated to begin in July and will host 300 cars. Social distancing will be in place and CDC guidelines will be followed-- bring your mask for when you step out of the car."

LOCUS Award Winners:

SCIENCE FICTION NOVEL: *The City in the Middle of the Night*, Charlie Jane Anders (Tor; Titan)
 FANTASY NOVEL: *Middlegame*, Seanan McGuire (Tor.com Publishing)
 HORROR NOVEL: *Black Leopard, Red Wolf*, Marlon James (Riverhead; Hamish Hamilton)
 YOUNG ADULT NOVEL: *Dragon Pearl*, Yoon Ha Lee (Disney Hyperion)
 FIRST NOVEL: *Gideon the Ninth*, Tamsyn Muir (Tor.com Publishing)
 NOVELLA: *This Is How You Lose the Time War*, Amal El-Mohtar & Max Gladstone (Saga)
 NOVELETTE: "Omphalos", Ted Chiang (Exhalation)
 SHORT STORY: "The Bookstore at the End of America", Charlie Jane Anders (A People's Future of the United States)
 ANTHOLOGY: *New Suns: Original Speculative Fiction by People of Color*, Nisi Shawl, ed. (Solaris US & UK)
 COLLECTION: *Exhalation*, Ted Chiang (Knopf; Picador)
 MAGAZINE: Tor.com
 PUBLISHER: Tor
 EDITOR: Ellen Datlow
 ARTIST: John Picacio
 NON-FICTION: *Monster, She Wrote: The Women Who Pioneered Horror and Speculative Fiction*, Lisa Kroeger & Melanie R. Anderson (Quirk)
 ILLUSTRATED AND ART BOOK: *Spectrum 26: The Best in Contemporary Fantastic Art*, John Fleskes, ed. (Flesk)
 SPECIAL AWARD 2020: *INCLUSIVITY AND REPRESENTATION EDUCATION: Writing the Other*, Nisi Shawl, Cynthia Ward, & K. Tempest Bradford

The full list of finalists is at <https://locusmag.com/2020/06/locus-awards-winners-2020/>.

MS Found in a Garage (comments by Mark R. Leeper):

I give myself projects to do to get my creative juices flowing, but that is no longer enough to give me the push to complete the writing. I recently ran across such a piece. It seems a shame not to show it to anyone, so you get this fragment. Comments are welcome. Here's what I have. So far.

"A while ago I published an article on the ten best fantastic films of the 1970s. This is not exactly the next in a series of articles, one for each decade, but a commentary on the fantastic film in the 1960s in general. The choice of ten films from the 1960s would be a good deal easier than from the 1970s, surprisingly. The 1970s had a few excellent films and then a fair number of films that did not measure up as well. In the 1960s there were many more films I considered deserving of my top or second rating.

"During the 1960s the British film industry went into fantastic films in a big way and pretty much dominated the fantastic film market. Hammer Films revived some of the classic horror film series of the 1930s and made a set of films that still have a powerful influence on British films, American films, even PBS productions. The 1960s was Hammer's heyday, reaching their peak in 1968 (perhaps the best year ever for fantastic films). Two of the finest fantastic films ever made, *QUATERMASS & THE PIT* (a.k.a. *FIVE MILLION YEARS TO EARTH*) and *THE DEVIL RIDES OUT* (a.k.a. *THE DEVIL'S BRIDE*), were made by Hammer in that year.

"Most of the top ten films would be British or have a British director. What are the reasons for this overwhelming dominance of the cinema of the fantastic? Two reasons, probably. The British education system, more than any other country's, stressed drama. While American children were writing essays, British children were writing short plays. In addition it has been suggested there was a disillusionment with the quality of life. The same factors that led doctors and scientists to leave the country gave the people less able to emigrate a need for escape and hence the popularity for escapist films. This combined with the fact that Hammer was demonstrating that there was a solid worldwide market for fantastic films led to a fair number of British filmmakers to enter the genre. Several minor production film companies were formed with genre their main stock in trade. Notable among them were Amicus and Tigon." [-mrl]

Some Random Comments on BEN-HUR (1925) (comments by Evelyn C. Leeper):

Rome was not at her zenith in 4 B.C.E.; that would probably be some time between 96 and 180.

The actor playing Joseph was 53 years old; the actress playing Mary was 19. That makes him old enough (albeit barely) to be her grandfather.

The Princess of Hur has to let the audience know that she would free Simonides if she could, but is somehow prohibited. However, since everyone thinks he is free, it's not clear what this prohibition might be.

In this version Messala is more immediately scornful of Judah. We see little indicating any past friendship, let alone the closer bond implied in the 1959 version.

It is unlikely that there were Celtic warriors from Britain in Jerusalem in the early 1st century, since Britain was not conquered until the mid 1st century. Still, it is possible that some Celts served as mercenaries.

Pirates would not sail in a fleet that outnumbered the Roman fleet two to one.

Iras the Egyptian doesn't look very Egyptian; I think it's the platinum blonde hair.

When they make the bet, Judah and Messala appear to be writing in cursive.

During the chariot race, there is definitely under-cranking in some scenes.

When the chariots pass over the camera in rapid succession, this is actually done with rear projection and a series of quick cuts. (If you watch the men on the center divider at the right of the screen, it is easy to see.)

The chariot scene in this version is better than the chariot scene in the 1959 version. Carl Davis has a lot to do with that.

[-ecl]

Hot Food (letters of comment by Kip Williams and Arthur Kaletsky):

In response to various comments on hot food in the 06/26/20 issue of the MT VOID, Kip Williams writes:

I believe it was Indian food that Rob and Avedon treated us to in the London area the first time we visited them, and I found it rather hot, and I don't think I managed to finish it. Now I'm used to it, but this was a new experience. The real surprise was the next day on the train, when I went to use the WC, and almost jumped. WHAT THE HELL?

Similarly, the head of the art department at my first college guest-taught a printmaking class, and his entire lesson consisted of dictating to us his recipe for "Double Burner" chili. I was the dope who asked why it was called that, visualizing some process involving two different pots on the stove at once. "Well," he said with a gratified smile, "It burns on the way in..."

(When I saw the subject 'hot food,' my mind didn't go to spicy at first, and I thought of a meal I consumed, at a bus station in Lincoln, Nebraska, around midnight or 1:00 am. I was cold and starving, and wandered about in a disconsolately hopeless search for food in the short time we had there, and lo: There was a vending machine stocked with cans of food. HEATED cans of Beanie Weenee! I fed it some coins, and out came the nectar of the gods. Seriously, it was one of the best meals I ever had, and I think about it now and then, and almost believe in divine Providence.

Context is everything. On the same trip in England, we were in first-class seating on a cross-country train, and the menu they brought us just didn't appeal to me, so I went for a stroll and found Stouffer's chicken and dumplings in the snack car, microwaved on the spot, and it was thoroughly satisfactory. I never saw the product anywhere else, either--it's like H.G. Wells's magic shop: only comes along once.) [-kw]

Arthur Kaletsky writes:

See:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zCaou9pRvbA>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w2v_lpwjKUw

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jSZbzIHGj8U>

and several other sequences about vindaloo and phal not readily found on youtube. I strongly recommend "Red Dwarf" generally. [-ak]

THE MARTIAN and Books into Movies (letter of comment by Kip Williams):

In response to Evelyn's comments on THE MARTIAN in the 06/26/20 issue of the MT VOID, Kip Williams writes:

Evelyn, your comment on THE MARTIAN bring to mind some experiences I've had that lead me to state that it's often better to see the movie version of something first, apart from the possible hazard that when you read it, you'll picture the stars of the

movie instead of using your own imagination.

I read most of the Harry Potter books first, but at the third or fourth one, it happened that the movie came out before I could borrow a copy of the appropriate volume, and I was thus able to enjoy both book and movie.

Seeing the movie, I wasn't constantly comparing it unfavorably to the book and criticizing what they'd left out. Then, reading the book, I was rewarded with bits that weren't even hinted at in the movie.

Fortunately, by that time, Rowling had reined in the desire to over-explain every single damn thing and spend a half page reciting the manual and enumerating every ramification it had had in her fictional world (like a 60s Supergirl comic), so reading the books was less of a chore than in the beginning of the series. [-kw]

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

THE NOSE AND OTHER STORIES by Nikolai Gogol (translated by Susanne Fusso) (Columbia University Press, ISBN 978-0-231-19069-5) is a new translation of these stories. Since I am not familiar with the older translations, I cannot compare that aspect, though I will make one observation. When one reads a 19th century author (e.g., Jane Austen), one expects a certain style, and rewriting (e.g., PRIDE AND PREJUDICE) for a more modern sound would be a big mistake. But that seems to be what some translators try to do. There seems to be a little of that, but on the whole Fusso manages to retain a sense of the time when Gogol was writing.

Now, most people think of Gogol as just another Russian writer, like Tolstoy and Dostoevsky and all those writers who go on at length about the social conditions in Russia. But Gogol is more like Edgar Allan Poe, writing fantastical stories that are not 800 pages long. "The Lost Letter", for example, is about someone who sold his soul to the devil, complete with a witches' Sabbath. "Vij" (a.k.a. "Viy") is also about an encounter with a witch, and was adapted by Mario Bava into the film BLACK SUNDAY (the 1960 one, not the 1977 one set at the Super Bowl). "The Portrait" is about a magical portrait in a shop that offers to help the artist who sees it become successful.

"The Nose" may be the ultimate in this, being surreal as well as "merely" fantastical.

"Diary of a Madman" is somewhere between reality and fantasy: the first-person narrator descends into a fantasy world, but it is realistic in its portrayal of the narrator's madness. "The Overcoat" (often considered Gogol's masterpiece) is primarily realistic, but towards the end introduces an element of fantasy.

There are some exceptions. "Nevsky Avenue" (a.k.a. "Nevsky Prospekt"), on the other hand, is more of a realistic story of people on Nevsky Avenue. "The Carriage" is another realistic story with a surprisingly mundane ending.

Of course, even though many readers who like stories of the supernatural would probably enjoy this book, it is (alas) unlikely that they will ever find this, or pick it up if they did. Still, maybe this review will encourage them. [-ecl]

Mark Leeper
mleeper@optonline.net

Quote of the Week:

You and your mate living together but isolated in your house are 'entangled'! You both have it or don't. If you leave the house and goes to a testing facility-- even on the other side of the world, you will have Einstein's 'spooky action at a distance'! As soon as the test reveals that you have it (or not), then you know instantly what the state of your mate is!
--Unknown

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