

# MT VOID 01/08/21 -- Vol. 39, No. 28, Whole Number 2153



Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society  
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[http://leepers.us/mtvoid/back\\_issues.htm](http://leepers.us/mtvoid/back_issues.htm).

### The Date on the Last Issue (comments by Evelyn C. Leeper):

The last issue had the date "01/01/20". Someone pointed out it should have been "01/01/21". I could claim that 2020 was so bad, I thought we should just get a do-over, but, no, that was my mistake. [-ecl]

### Mini Reviews, Part 3 (film reviews by Mark R. Leeper):

Here is the third batch of mini-reviews, biopics about scientists.

**RADIOACTIVE:** Madame Curie is rarely associated with glamour, and this film is no exception. This is a film that should go well with last year's film THE AERONAUTS; both films deal with discovering new science in 19th century Paris. In RADIOACTIVE, the storytelling becomes non-linear and a bit disorienting at times. Released 07/24/20; available on Amazon Prime. Rating: +1 (-4 to +4) [-mrl]

[One problem with playing fast and loose with history is that a biopic relies on your reaction to the subject. But if the story is fictionalized, you are reacting to a fictional--hence non-existent--character, not to the real person. -ecl]

**AMMONITE:** In this biopic, the early paleontologist Mary Anning is portrayed as rude and hostile, and not at all a perfect person. This may be accurate, but it may not be, just as the nature of her relationship with Charlotte Murchison is a matter of speculation rather than of fact. (For example, in the movie, Roderick Murchison is trying to get his wife interested in his work; in real life, \*she\* drew him into geology and paleontology, and was a respected scientist in her own right. Elizabeth Philpot [played] by Fiona Shaw) was also a geologist and got Mary Anning started as a child in the field.) The whole movie is in a stilted style, and the plot is carried by facial expressions, which is good, because at times the accents make the dialogue (sparse at best) hard to understand. Released 11/13/20; not yet available on streaming or DVD. Rating; high 0 (-4 to +4) [-mrl]

[Towards the end, there's a great shot of Anning standing in front of a portrait in the British Museum that is hanging on a wall of many portraits, all of famous men. Her head perfectly obscures and replaces the head in the portrait, so it is almost as if it is a portrait of her hanging among the famous people, but all the viewer sees is the back of her bonnet--she is anonymous. -ecl]

**TESLA:** This is a biopic of sorts about Nikola Tesla (not the car). This has a claustrophobic and poetic style, but the style does not help with the message, and eventually it becomes tiresome. (As an example, Nikola Tesla sings songs that were not even written until

decades after his death.) There seems to be more emphasis on the characters around Tesla than on Tesla himself. Released 08/21/20; available on Amazon Prime Rating: high 0 (-4 to +4) [-mrl]

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**Friday Mailings, Bruce Sterling and THE PROFESSOR AND THE MADMAN** (letter of comment by John Purcell):

[In response to Evelyn's comments on Friday mailings](#) in the 01/08/21 issue of the MT VOID, John Purcell writes:

In my opinion you met the Friday mailing deadline, no question. Your explanation is perfectly acceptable. Quite frankly, I am glad that there was no damage to your home and you were without power for not too long.

Back in the summer of 2000, I was working on my Masters Thesis at something like 2:45 AM Wednesday morning because it was due at noon on Friday, when a thunderstorm suddenly rumbled through and our power went out before I had the chance to log off the computer. At the time I was working on the data analysis tables and charts. And I lost almost a half-hour's work. The damage wasn't too hard to redo, but my biggest fear was that we wouldn't have our power restored until Thursday night. Fortunately it was restored only six hours later, so I had enough time to finish working on final layout work and edit/revision work to meet to meet the deadline.

In response to [Joe Karpierz's review of ROBOT ARTISTS & BLACK SWANS: THE ITALIAN FANTASCIENZA STORIES](#) by [Bruce Sterling](#) in the same issue, John writes:

Bruce Sterling is one author I haven't read much of, and the reviews of these books, especially the short story collection, sound good. Thank you for calling my attention to these.

In response to [Evelyn's comments on THE PROFESSOR AND THE MADMAN](#) in the same issue, John writes:

I did not know that a movie was made out of THE PROFESSOR AND THE MADMAN, a book I have here and read it in one sitting as soon as I got home. Fascinating book, so I would like to see this movie version. Since we have Amazon Prime on our dish service, I shall have to search for it.

That's all for this time around. Good deal the power stayed on. [-jp]

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

Well, I finished the Solar Pons stories (seven volumes by August Derleth and four by Basil Copper). Derleth's are the best, clearly--Copper's have too much similarity to other stories, either Sherlock Holmes stories or stories with other detectives. Then I moved on to THE FURTHER ENCOUNTERS OF SHERLOCK HOLMES edited by George Mann (Titan, 978-1-781-16004-6). This anthology is truly a mixed bag, with some stories having definite fantastical or science fictional elements, and others firmly stuck in reality. Some of the authors take liberties with the personalities of Holmes and Watson. Holmes purists will probably not like all the stories, although I have to admit that even the unorthodox tales are well- written. [-ecl]

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Quote of the Week:

That knowledge which stops at what it does not know,  
is the highest knowledge.

--Chuang Tzu

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