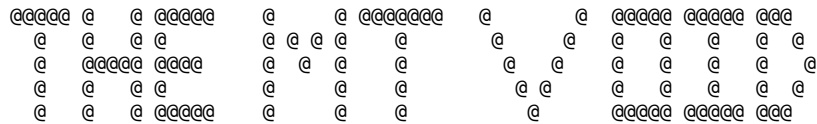


MT VOID 04/23/21 -- Vol. 39, No. 43, Whole Number 2168



Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society
04/23/21 -- Vol. 39, No. 43, Whole Number 2168

Table of Contents

[SF Author Talk at Old Bridge \(NJ\) Library](#)

[Mini Reviews, Part 14](#) (HILLBILLY ELEGY, THE PAINTED BIRD, THE PERSONAL HISTORY OF DAVID COPPERFIELD) (film reviews by Mark R. Leeper)

[Space News](#) (comments by Gregory Frederick)

[People of Color](#) (letters of comment by Fred Lerner, Kevin R, Scott Dorsey, Dorothy J. Heydt, and Gary McGath)

[LOST HORIZON and Rapid Aging](#) (letters of comment by Gary McGath, Scott Dorsey, Dorothy J. Heydt, Kevin R, and Tim Merrigan)

[This Week's Reading](#) (Hugo Award finalists) (book comments by Evelyn C. Leeper)

[Quote of the Week](#)

Co-Editor: Mark Leeper, mleeper@optonline.net

Co-Editor: Evelyn Leeper, eleeper@optonline.net

Sending Address: evelynchimelisleeper@gmail.com

All material is copyrighted by author unless otherwise noted.

All comments sent or posted will be assumed authorized for inclusion unless otherwise noted.

To subscribe or unsubscribe, send mail to eleeper@optonline.net

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.

SF Author Talk at Old Bridge (NJ) Library:

There will be a two-hour Zoom talk May 1 at 2:00PM with SF author Neil Sharpson (WHEN THE SPARROW FALLS). Details and sign-up are at <https://www.oldbridgelibrary.org/events/2021-05/>. (This is a library event, not the discussion group's.) [-ecl]

Mini Reviews, Part 14 (HILLBILLY ELEGY, THE PAINTED BIRD, THE PERSONAL HISTORY OF DAVID COPPERFIELD) (film reviews by Mark R. Leeper):

Here is the fourteenth batch of mini-reviews, this time of films based on books.

HILLBILLY ELEGY: Directed by Ron Howard, this is based on the best-selling novel of the same name. It keeps the viewer guessing about where the story is going, in part because it is not told in chronological order. Glenn Close plays the matriarch of the family and completely disappears in the role. The theme is summed up by one of her epigrams: "Family's the only thing that means a good goddam." Released 11/24/20 on Netflix streaming. Rating: high +2 (-4 to +4) [-mrl]

THE PAINTED BIRD: Based on the Jerzy Kosinski novel, this film shows a boy traveling across Eastern Europe in shortly before World War II and seeing the cruelty of the peasants for one another. Filmed in black and white in a naturalistic style, it has long, slow, contemplative stretches. The title comes from a form of entertainment of the peasants: they paint a bird with bright colors and release it back into its flock, where the other birds peck it to death. Available on Amazon Prime. Rating: low +3 (-4 to +4)

THE PERSONAL HISTORY OF DAVID COPPERFIELD: In this new version of the Charles Dickens classic, the style is more modern than the style of monochrome classic Dickens films from the Golden Age. Also, it is harder to pierce the various accents. Usually one expects with a Dickens tale to have a merciless look at his society, and while here that is present, the atmosphere here reaches more often for comedy. Fans of classic British dramatizations will be delighted by some of the familiar faces in this film.

Released 08/28/20; available on various video-on-demand streams, but not Netflix streaming or Amazon Prime. Rating: +1 (-4 to +4)

[-mrl]

Space News (comments by Gregory Frederick):

- NASA just selected the Space X design for their next lunar lander for the upcoming Moon missions. Many thought that Dynetics had the best design but NASA did not like that it was not flexible enough for expansion and too expensive. The Lockheed and Blue Origin (Jeff Bezo's company) design was also too expensive. Only Space X was willing to go down enough to a lower bid and therefore they got the contract. Space X's design also was flexible enough for future changes to the craft. NASA's budget would not allow for more than \$2.9 billion in the initial phase of the contract and the other companies would not go for that amount.

- NASA has announced that our next destination in the solar system is the unique, richly organic world Titan. Advancing our search for the building blocks of life, the Dragonfly mission will fly multiple sorties to sample and examine sites around Saturn's icy moon. Dragonfly will launch in 2026 and arrive in 2034. The rotorcraft will fly to dozens of promising locations on Titan looking for prebiotic chemical processes common on both Titan and Earth. Dragonfly marks the first time NASA will fly a multi-rotor vehicle for science on another planet; it has eight rotors and flies like a large drone. It will take advantage of Titan's dense atmosphere--four times denser than Earth's--to become the first vehicle ever to fly its entire science payload to new places for repeatable and targeted access to surface materials.

<https://www.nasa.gov/press-release/nasas-dragonfly-will-fly-around-titan-looking-for-origins-signs-of-life>

[-gf]

People of Color (letters of comment by Fred Lerner, Kevin R, Scott Dorsey, Dorothy J. Heydt, and Gary McGath):

In response to [Evelyn's comments on LOST HORIZON](#) in the 04/16/21 issue of the MT VOID, Fred Lerner writes:

You called Jesus "another person of color". Why? [-fl]

Kevin R also asks:

A first century, Common Era Jew in Roman Palestine is a "person of color?" Does "olive-skinned" translate into "POC?" Greeks, Italians, Spaniards are POC, " then?

Mind you, I don't think Y-b-Y was divine, if he even existed. But imposing 21st century identity politics on that era seems odd. Anyone from that part of the world would be a lot less pink than my Irish-descended tuches, and nobody really knows how "white" or "brown" he would have been. A member of an ethnicity that had little or no power? Sure, but so were my freckled ancestors. [-kr]

Scott Dorsey asks:

Why not? My grandfather complained he wasn't allowed to move into Shadyside in Pittsburgh because they didn't allow Italians. [-sd]

And Dorothy J. Heydt notes:

There are some Northern Europeans (or their descendants) who seem to think so. When Southern Europeans (Italians, etc.) started coming to the US, there were many complaints.

Of course, your Irish ancestors got the same treatment with knobs on. [-djh]

Kevin responds:

Some of the race-theory-mongers would have it that you could sunburn on a rainy day, you still weren't "white" until you were assimilated by the power structure. See:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Noel_Ignatiev

<https://www.publishersweekly.com/978-0-415-91384-3>

"Race is only a cultural construct..." and all that.

By the "Italians aren't white.." because they were poor immigrants who tanned, what did that make the Romans who were supposed to have executed "non-white Jesus?" [-kr]

Gary McGath suggests:

The retcon that all ethnic conflict and discrimination is and has always been based on skin color lacks historical support. The notion of "race" as genetically distinct subcategories of the human species didn't gain currency until the eighteenth or nineteenth century.

The great dividers throughout history have been the interrelated factors of culture, religion, country, and language. It comes from the

earliest times, when you could trust people from your village but found it best to assume strangers were enemies.

The arrival of southern Europeans got a hostile reception largely because they were heavily Catholic. Likewise for the Irish. It wasn't because of their red hair or whatever.

Luther hated the Jews, but it was a matter of religion for him, not an imagined difference in skin shade. If they converted, all was forgiven (literally). [-gmg]

Evelyn responds:

In response to the initial question:

Because in the circles I travel in (including during my work years), "people of color" includes those of Middle Eastern heritage (extending from Egypt and Arabia to Iran), and when movies have white actors playing (e.g.) Moses, that gets called out as white-washing. I realize that the census definitions disagree, but I call 'em like I sees 'em (to quote an old phrase). YMMV. [-ecl]

LOST HORIZON and Rapid Aging (letters of comment by Gary McGath, Scott Dorsey, Dorothy J. Heydt, Kevin R, and Tim Merrigan):

In response to [Evelyn's comments on LOST HORIZON and rapid aging](#) in the 04/16/21 issue of the MT VOID, Gary McGath writes:

It's a pretty common plot device, though. There's a "Twilight Zone" episode where a man gives up his immortality and is a pile of dust within a couple of minutes. In the Karloff version of THE MUMMY, the same happens to Imhotep when the scroll that revived him is destroyed. [-gmg]

Scott Dorsey adds:

I think the absolute best example is in the Mexican horror film THE WITCH'S MIRROR. [-sd]

Dorothy J. Heydt asks:

Care to spoiler it a bit? Googling did not reveal any site that had anything to say about the plot, let about how it use the common plot device. [-djh]

Kevin R responds:

The fate of "Black Adam" in MARVEL FAMILY #1 (1945).

<https://www.comics.org/issue/4708/cover/4/>

[-kr]

And Tim Merrigan explains:

It's a plot device that predates film. In THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY, when the painting is destroyed/Dorian Gray dies, all the deformities, some representing character flaws that wouldn't have normally manifested physically, leave the painting and appear on Mr. Gray's body. [-tm]

Evelyn adds:

My point was that while most of the novel/movie was something that one *might* accept as possible--after all, there seemed to be claims of Abkhazians having exception longevity--the rapid aging on leaving the valley tipped the whole thing into the supernatural/fantastical in an unexpected turn. (These longevity claims have since been pretty much discounted since then.) [-ecl]

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

Last week we published the list of Hugo Award finalists. This week I will make some general comments on them.

Last year was atypical, not just for Dramatic Presentation (Long Form), but for most everything. The Hugo finalists reflect this, and general strangeness in addition. And it is not just that I no longer recognize most of the names on the ballot.

For example, the "Video Game" category apparently requires at least two different types of equipment to play all of them, which presumably is what is desired, given that voting a preferential ballot is extremely problematic unless the voter is familiar with all the candidates.

It took only ten nominations to make the ballot for Fan Artist. Even given the low nominator base (1249 ballots), that makes one ask if this category is still a viable one, especially since it is always the category with the fewest nominations.

The semiprozine STRANGE HORIZONS listed 87 editors or contributors or *something*, which resulted in the de-alphabetization of that category, since listing the finalists in alphabetical order would put UNCANNY MAGAZINE (itself listing six people) after a 25-

line entry for STRANGE HORIZONS, and undoubtedly result in many people overlooking it entirely.

Normally I would have seen all the Dramatic Presentation (Long Form) finalists, or at least been familiar with them. However, 2020 was not a normal year, and I have seen only three (THE OLD GUARD, PALM SPRINGS and TENET), had a fourth on my Netflix queue (SOUL), and am totally unfamiliar with the other two (BIRDS OF PREY [AND THE FANTABULOUS EMANCIPATION OF ONE HARLEY QUINN], and EUROVISION SONG CONTEST: THE STORY OF FIRE SAGA). But the latter two are now on my Netflix queue and streaming list respectively. As for Best Dramatic Presentation (Short Form), as usual I have not followed most of the series represented.

The "Best Novella" category was swept by Tor.com (a.k.a. Tor). Tor has been the one major publisher to go in for novella-length books (basically under 200 pages). Others, such as PS Publishing and Subterranean Press, are also players in this niche, but with much smaller press runs--and higher prices.

In the weeks (months) to come, I will be reviewing the short story and novelette finalists (all of which are available on-line; see), the novella and Lodestar YA finalists if I can get them from the library, and the Dramatic Presentation (Long Form) finalists. (The voting deadline is not until November 19, so I hope my library system will resume inter-library loans so that I can get the two novellas my local library doesn't have in time to finish my reviews before voting ends.)

So I will be starting with the short stories and novelettes, then the dramatic presentation (long form) (the one I have to wait for here is SOUL) and novellas, and then the Lodestar.

The good news (sort of) is that there are no Retro Hugos this year. [-ecl]

Mark Leeper
mleeper@optonline.net

Quote of the Week:

He has all the virtues I dislike and none of
the vices I admire.

--Sir Winston Churchill

Tweet

Go to [our home page](#) THE MT VOID