

# MT VOID 03/30/18 -- Vol. 36, No. 39, Whole Number 2008



Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society  
03/30/18 -- Vol. 36, No. 39, Whole Number 2008

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Co-Editor: Mark Leeper, [mleeper@optonline.net](mailto:mleeper@optonline.net)  
Co-Editor: Evelyn Leeper, [eleeper@optonline.net](mailto:eleeper@optonline.net)  
Back issues at [http://leepers.us/mtvoid/back\\_issues.htm](http://leepers.us/mtvoid/back_issues.htm)  
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## Science Fiction (and Other) Discussion Groups, Films, Lectures, etc. (NJ):

- April 12: JOHN CARTER (2012) & A PRINCESS OF MARS by Edgar Rice Burroughs, Middletown (NJ) Public Library, 5:30PM
- May 10: CONTACT (1997) & CONTACT by Carl Sagan  
<https://tinyurl.com/void-contact>  
audiobook: <https://www.hoopladigital.com/title/11512889>
- May 24: TIME TRADERS by Andre Norton, Old Bridge (NJ) Public Library, 7PM (available in Project Gutenberg)
- July 26: FIRE WATCH by Connie Willis, Old Bridge (NJ) Public Library, 7PM
- September 27: TBD (probably a Hugo-nominated novella), Old Bridge (NJ) Public Library, 7PM

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

## Hugo Finalists to Be Announced March 31:

Finalists for the Hugo Award, the Retro Hugo Award, the Award for Best Young Adult Book, and the John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer will be announced at three separate locations at 3PM EDT on March 31, 2018. Approximately one hour following the live announcements, a video presentation of the finalists will be posted on the Worldcon 76 web site and on the Worldcon Events YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/user/WorldconEvents>.

[One suspects that the names will be available on Twitter et al even as they are being announced.]

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

Here I am again suggesting what my picks of April would be. These are the films that if I had not seen and they became available I would have liked someone to grab me by the lapels and sat me in front of. There is this problem that I am revealing my choices in March (February, actually) and it may be weeks before the films will actually show on TCM. I guess you may need to schedule a reminder to program your machine to record these films. Write yourself a note. Now. I'll wait. All films are listed as Eastern Daylight Time zone.

Turner has not shown THE IN-LAWS (1979) since 2002. That seems an excessive wait considering this film is one of the great laugh-out-loud comedies. Alan Arkin plays a simpy Manhattan dentist whose daughter is getting married. He has one reservation. He has not yet met his daughter's prospective father-in-law, Peter Falk. When they do meet Falk turns out to be worse than Arkin could have possibly imagined. Falk seems to want to be listened to and makes up absolutely absurd stories at the drop of the hat. He claims in Guatemala mosquitoes are so big they carry off babies. Soon Falk has Arkin breaking into buildings because Falk claims he is under special orders from the United States Government. Arkin is convinced for the sake of the upcoming marriage just to go along with Falk and that only gets him deeper and deeper into hot water. One thing just leads to another and another is bigger and stranger than the one before. Arkin and Falk would have made a great comedy team.

[Sunday, April 15, 2:00 AM]

What is the best film of the month? This is a good month on TCM and there are a lot of films that could be chosen for best film. I am going to go with my instincts and pick Billy Wilder's STALAG 17. The setting is a German prison camp in World War II organized to hold only captured American Sergeants. It does not sound like a fun setting, but there are well-drawn comic characters. The men keep trying to organize escape attempts, but the Germans foil every attempt. Soon the men realize they must have a spy in midst. The obvious suspect is Sefton (William Holden). Sefton makes a good living as the camp scrounge. Too good a living. Sefton has to prove his innocence against the growing hatred of his barracks mates. Side note: even the actors did not know who the traitor was. They only found out when they got the script pages just before the shot. This film MUST have inspired Hogan's Heroes, but it is much better than any TV series.

[Monday, April 9, 10:00 PM]

I would never forgive myself if I left out a plug for two of the four Quatermass films. The 1956 film THE QUATERMASS EXPERIMENT (sic) is the first Quatermass film in which Bernard Quatermass of the British Rocket Group has sent the first men into space and brought him back. I say "him" because there is only one man who returns to Earth. The two missing men constitute a threat to every human and animal on Earth. FIVE MILLION YEARS TO EARTH, originally titled QUATERMASS AND THE PIT is one of the most sophisticated and intelligent films ever made. Both films are based on BBC teleplays that built a huge following in Britain.

[Saturday, April 28, 8:00 PM]: THE QUATERMASS EXPERIMENT

[Saturday, April 28, 9:45 PM]: FIVE MILLION YEARS TO EARTH

TCM has set up a four-film series of films based on fanciful 19th century stories. I guess you could say they are "steam punk." Starting Thursday April 12:

8:00 PM DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE (1941)  
10:00 PM AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS (1956)  
1:15 AM FIRST MEN IN THE MOON (1964)  
3:15 AM TIME MACHINE, THE (1960)

[-mrl]

**THE FREEZE FRAME REVOLUTION** by Peter Watts (copyright 2018, Tachyon Publications, Print ISBN 13 978-1-61696-252-4, Digital Formats 978-1-61696-010-0) (book review by Joe Karpierz):

I've been a fan of Peter Watts since I read BLINDSIGHT, his 2006 novel that was a finalist for the Hugo award in 2007. I remember not being really sure of what I was reading, but I was convinced that Watts was writing some pretty cool stuff of the type I hadn't much seen before. His material is not for the weak of heart; it's dark, thought provoking, and in general not very optimistic. It's smart, layered, and involved. It's not summertime beach reading.

Watts' latest novella--or novel, if you believe the publisher (according to a footnote in the acknowledgements)--"The Freeze Frame Revolution", fits all those descriptions. It is, apparently, part of a sequence of stories called Sunflowers. One of the stories in the sequence, The Island, won the 2010 Hugo award for Best Novelette. The Island, which I made a point of mentioning in my review of Watts' short story collection Beyond the Rift, follows "The Freeze Frame Revolution" chronologically in the sequence. The other stories are "Hotshot" and "Giants", which I have not read. I don't believe that reading "The Freeze Frame Revolution" without reading the others will detract from the reader's enjoyment of the story, but of course your mileage may vary.

As with "The Island", the story tells the tale of the crew of a starship that is travelling throughout space to build a network of wormholes that will allow interstellar travel (and thus get around the problem of the limitation imposed by the speed of light).

It actually didn't occur to me until I was reading "The Freeze Frame Revolution" that those wormhole networks really had to be built by someone; they can't just mystically appear, although most novels don't spend much time, if any, talking about how the networks came to be. There are several thousand crew members, and every few thousand years the ship's AI, CHIMP, wakes up a subset of them to help build the next gate in the network. In general, CHIMP doesn't really need the human crew in most cases, but just in case something goes wrong some humans are awakened--to keep an eye on things. These crew members are only awake for a few days at a time, then go back to into hibernation.

And thus, we see the scale of the story and the challenge presented to the crew. The mission is lasting millions (if not billions) of years; after all, the ship, the Eriophora--an apt name given its function--does not have the benefit of the very wormhole gate network they are building. The mission planners are certainly no longer around, so the crew questions whether the mission is even useful any more. Has humanity developed some advanced technology that supersedes the need for the wormhole gate network?

And how do you make friends, how do you communicate with the people you do meet? CHIMP determines who is awake at any given time. While the crew is divided into groups such that group members work together, not all members of the group are awakened at the same time, and sometimes people outside the group are awakened to give the work teams a mix, a different perspective. How do you communicate across the millennia, especially if you're trying to organize a group with common interests? And how do you something in secret right under the nose of an AI that can monitor your every move, an AI that has control over everything on the ship, including who lives and dies?

While the basis to the story is the building of the wormhole gate network, this is really a story about humanity trying to perform a mission they're not sure has meaning any longer. It's dark, and it's not pleasant--but it's vintage Peter Watts. It's an engaging piece of fiction that will have you wondering about the makers of the next wormhole gate network you read about in someone else's story--and whether they ever finished the project, and if they did, what happened after that. It's science fiction on a grand scale, covering countless millennia and light-years. It's a story that doesn't leave the reader comfortable, and it's terrific. But if you wanted comfortable, you wouldn't be reading anything by Peter Watts. [-jak]

#### **1177 B.C.: THE YEAR CIVILIZATION COLLAPSED** by Eric H. Cline (book review by Gregory Frederick):

History has resonance even if it does not exactly repeat itself. That seems to be the theme of this history book. Cline's book looks into the fall of late Bronze Age civilizations in the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean around 1177 B.C. Before this approximate date there existed mighty Bronze Age kingdoms and empires like the Mycenaean Greeks, Minoans, Hittites, Trojans, and Babylonians. These empires were replaced in the early Iron Age which followed the Bronze Age by smaller city states like Classical Greece had. Most archaeologists believe that a mysterious group of people known as the Sea Peoples attacked these kingdoms by land and sea and brought about their destruction. But this author, who is also an archaeologist thinks that it is more complex than just blaming this event on a single group. These kingdoms were connected into one of the first global economies that the world had known. They were so inter-connected that the collapse of one kingdom could have initiated the fall of another. In this period in history Cline indicates that earthquakes, drought (or other climate change), invasions and the cutting of trade routes all could have led to this collapse. There are parallels to our own world in this ancient world collapse. Our own highly inter-connected world is susceptible to a one form of collapse or another. In 2008, the Wall Street Market collapse caused many to fear that worldwide monetary issues would occur if the banking institutions were not bailed out for example. The more inter-connected the world is the more vulnerable it is to a destabilizing event. This is a well-written account of an interesting period in ancient history. [-gf]

#### **Squid vs. Calamari** (letter of comment by Dan Cox):

In response to [various comments on squid and calamari](#) in the 03/23/18 issue of the MT VOID, Dan Cox writes:

The standard answer for beef vs. cow, pork vs. pig, is that after the Norman invasion, while French was the language of the upper class and Anglo-Saxon the language of the lower classes, the food names come from French and the animal names from Anglo-Saxon. Here's one article on the topic: <https://www.thedailymeal.com/eat/why-pig-meat-called-pork>

[-dte]

Evelyn responds:

This would be more convincing if Spanish did not also have different words for cow (vaca) and beef (res). [-ecl]

#### **Rules for Film Reviewing** (letter of comment by Arthur T):

In response to [Mark's comments on his rules for film reviewing](#) in the 03/23/18 issue of the MT VOID, Arthur T writes:

I have a few comments on your "Rules As a Film Reviewer":

These seem like good rules. Thanks for sharing them with us.

I like the distinction someone (Spider Robinson?) made, that a reviewer tries to tell you whether you will like something, where a critic tries to tell you whether you *\*should\** like something. That suggests to me that a critic can have guilty pleasures, that is works that objectively shouldn't be enjoyable, but that the critic liked, anyway.

You said, "A knowledgeable reader might find of more interest in where the idea was used before." I had to read that a few times before I figured out what you meant. Is that the phrasing you really want?

P.S. Your issue's "Whole Number" looked like a year at first. Do you have anything planned for when (probably next year) your issue's number matches the then-current year? [-at]

Mark responds:

How about "A more seasoned reader might be interested to see where an idea has been used in the past." [-mrl]

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

A lot of people have been raving about WHAT UNITES US: REFLECTIONS ON PATRIOTISM by Dan Rather & Elliot Kirschner (ISBN 978-1-61620-782-3). I am not going to write a full review, but I will make some observations.

First, though it is by "Dan Rather & Elliot Kirschner", Rather's name is in letters twice as high as Kirschner's, and everyone refers to it as being Dan Rather's book. This is probably accurate, since it is written almost entirely in the first person. Given that Rather was a journalist, I would not have thought he would need a co-author with the writing part.

Rather tells many stories of noble deeds, but they are never his. When he talks about his experiences, it is either neutral, or he relates how embarrassed or even ashamed he is now at his attitude or behavior at the time, towards minorities, or gays, or Jews, or women. The praiseworthy actions are those of others: his father, voting with African-Americans who dared to attend a precinct meeting in 1940s Texas; his mother, who said that gave the poor children across the street toys for Christmas not because they felt sorry for the children, but because they understood how the children felt. In other words, they were not different from the children--they were the same.

But too much of it seems to be more "what united us" than "what unites us." Rather writes of how what was great about us before and even up until recently, but then so often talks about how we seem to have lost that, or forgotten that, or think that is no longer important. He speaks of how we have recovered from low points before (World War I sedition laws, Japanese-American internment, McCarthyism) and how we can again, but the question still remains as to whether we will.

He also mis-attributes at least one important idea. He writes that Warren Buffet talks about the "ovarian lottery": before birth, you can design the political/social/economic system of the world, but your position in that world will be totally random. So you can design the ante-bellum South, but you are more likely to find yourself slave than free, and even if you are free, you could as equally be born a woman as a man. However, Buffet did not invent this. John Rawls wrote about this in 1971, calling it "the veil of ignorance."

On another topic: Why do the "Norton Critical Editions" label Mark Twain's works as being by Samuel Langhorne Clemens (on the front cover, the spine, and the title page, and in the bibliographic information), but label ALICE IN WONDERLAND as being by Lewis Carroll? [-ecl]

Mark Leeper  
mleeper@optonline.net

Quote of the Week:

The man whose life is devoted to paperwork has lost the initiative. He is dealing with things that are brought to his notice, having ceased to notice anything for himself.

--C. Northcote Parkinson

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