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Mini Reviews, Part 8 (film reviews by Mark R. Leeper and Evelyn C. Leeper):

This is the eighth batch of mini-reviews, all films of the fantastic:

SLAY (2024): A quartet of drag queens are accidentally booked at the wrong bar, and end up at a biker bar fighting vampires, There's great sequence when they are trying to determine vampire characteristics: "Well, if this is a 'Blade: scenario, they're X, but if it's 'Twilight', they're 'Y'." But what if it's 'From Dusk to Dawn'?" And so on, although clearly these people are unfamiliar with anything before "Interview with the Vampire".

Another great line [SPOILER]: "The Black one survived!" [-ecl]

Released streaming 22 March 2024.

Film Credits: https://www.imdb.com/title/tt31629757/reference>

What others are saying: <u>https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/slay\_2024></u>

MY OLD ASS (2024): Eighteen-year-old Elliott takes some psychedelic mushrooms and meets her thirty-nine-year-old self (whom Elliott nicknames "My Old Ass"), who gives her a few hints of the future and a few suggestions about what to do. The main suggestion is to have nothing to do with anyone named Chad, and so of course Elliott meets someone named Chad.

It's not a new trope--getting advice from the future, or wanting more advice than the future wants to give, but it's reasonably engaging, although the end is a bit heavy-handed (and possibly reinforces a harmful myth about lesbians--sorry, I had to ding them a bit for that).

(I suppose this is what's called a "chick flick", in case it matters.) [-ecl]

Released theatrically 13 September 2024.

Film Credits: <u>https://www.imdb.com/title/tt18559464/reference></u>

What others are saying: https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/my\_old\_ass>

THE VELOCIPASTOR (2018): A priest sees his parents murdered, goes to China to forget, and is infected by a prehistoric tooth, which makes him turn into a dinosaur when he gets angry. The dinosaur suit is truly the worst I have ever seen, and the whole production is fairly amateurish. (It grew out of a student trailer, and may be a student film itself.) [-ecl]

Released theatrically 13 August 2019.

Film Credits: https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1843303/reference>

What others are saying: https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/the\_velocipastor\_2019>

#### **R.I.P. Earl Holliman**:

An obituary and tribute to Earl Holliman, who played the cook in FORBIDDEN PLANET, may be found at the following unlock Washington Post link:

### https://wapo.st/41kbxAn

### THE SECRET LIVES OF NUMBERS by Kate Kitagawa and Timothy Revell (book review by Gregory Frederick):

THE SECRET LIVES OF NUMBERS by Kate Kitagawa and Timothy Revell is an engaging exploration of mathematics that blends history, storytelling, and mathematical concepts. The book shines a spotlight on underrepresented figures in mathematical history, offering a broader perspective on the field. Readers are introduced to the lives of notable mathematicians like Emmy Noether and Srinivasa Ramanujan, alongside explanations of mathematical principles such as infinity, prime numbers, the development of calculus, and the golden ratio, all tied to their practical and cultural significance. The ancient Mathematics of India, the Middle East, and China are included.

The authors' approach makes the subject accessible and captivating for both math enthusiasts and general readers. While it is comparable to other popular mathematics books, its emphasis on lesser-known contributors and historical context sets it apart. However, some reviewers have noted that seasoned readers of popular math might find many stories familiar.

If you enjoy learning about the interplay of mathematics with everyday life, as well as the triumphs and challenges of the mathematicians who shaped the field, this book is a thoughtful and inspiring read. [-gf]

Evelyn asks:

"underrepresented figures in mathematical history"--was that pun intentional? [-ecl]

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

Our discussion group did THE METAMORPHOSIS by Franz Kafka (Classix Press, ISBN 978-1-557-42766-3, among many others) as the "Halloween" book and film, albeit in November.

Even with the first sentence, the book is a puzzle. "One morning, when Gregor Samsa woke from troubled dreams, he found himself transformed in his bed into a ..." what? "Horrible vermin"? "... monstrous verminous bug"? "monstrous vermin"? "... monstrous cockroach"? "... beetle"? "... giant insect"? (David Wyllie, Ian Johnston, Stanley Corngold (and Google), Michael Hofmann, Vladimir Nabokov, and unknown, respectively)

The original German is "ungeheuren Ungeziefer", which is no help, because "Ungeziefer" is not a strictly defined entomological term.

Gregor sees himself as indispensable to the family. Yet when he is removed, they actually do better. He was a crutch that kept them from walking normally. He sees everything they do--leaving him to eat along, moving furniture out of the room and then moving things into the room--as being done out of concern for him, yet to an impartial observer, they appear to be unconcerned about him or even dismissive of him.

As I mentioned before, someone compared THE METAMORPHOSIS to "The Granton Star Cause" by Irvine Welsh. I would say it has taken its inspiration from BEDAZZLED (the original 1967 Peter Cook and Dudley Moore version)--in particular, the episode in which Stanley Moon is turned into a fly. In "The Granton Star Cause" Boab Coyle is turned into a fly by God (who is disgusted with what people in general and Boab in particular

have done with their lives). There is also a bit of "The Court of Tartary" by T. P. Caravan (F&SF December 1963, and THE BEST FROM FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION: 14TH SERIES). (That I remember the story, even though its only reprint was sixty years ago says something, though I will admit I had to Google to find the name and author.) [-ecl]

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Quote of the Week:

Conscience is thoroughly well-bred and soon leaves off talking to those who do not wish to hear it. --Samuel Butler

