

# MT VOID 05/27/22 -- Vol. 40, No. 48, Whole Number 2225



Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society  
05/27/22 -- Vol. 40, No. 48, Whole Number 2225

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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](http://leepers.us/mtvoid/back_issues.htm).

## Science Fiction (and Other) Discussion Groups, Films, Lectures, etc. (NJ):

Meetings are still fluctuating between in-person and Zoom. The best way to get the latest information is to be on the mailing lists for them.

June 2, 2022 (MTPL), 5:30PM, in-person: A.I. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (2001) & short story "Supertoys Last All Summer Long" (1969) by Brian Aldiss  
<https://archive.org/details/supertoyslastall000ald/>  
July 7, 2022 (MTPL), 5:30PM, in-person: THE LOST WORLD (1925) and novel THE LOST WORLD by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle  
(<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/139> has various formats available)  
July 28, 2022 (OBPL), 7:00PM, Zoom: A PSALM FOR THE WILD-BUILT by Becky Chambers

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

In truth there are not a lot of werewolf films. In many the plot could have been taken from a film about an escaped psychopath. These films are too often not all that creative.

In 1973 Amicus Films (or horror writer James Blish) took the plot of Agatha Christie's TEN LITTLE INDIANS and substituted the trappings of a werewolf film. At an isolated English mansion and grounds, the Christie plot is working itself out. There are several dramatic touches gimmicks such as a five-minute break for the audience to try to register their guesses as to who they think the werewolf/killer is. It is not a great idea, but it is in one stroke one of the more interesting attempts at cinema lycanthropy. The film features British horror film regulars Peter Cushing and Charles Gray.

[THE BEAST MUST DIE, June 18, 2:00AM]

Evelyn adds:

June also features Robby the Robot's two best-known films:

06/13/2022 11:00 AM Forbidden Planet (1956)

06/13/2022 01:00 PM Invisible Boy, The (1957)

Robby is one of the few non-living actors to have an IMDB entry: [https://www.imdb.com/name/nm1119475/?ref=fn\\_al\\_nm\\_1](https://www.imdb.com/name/nm1119475/?ref=fn_al_nm_1)

Other films of interest include:

06/06/2022 12:00 AM Wizard of Oz, The (1925) (95 minutes)

06/13/2022 12:45 PM Voyage to the Sky (1937) (11 minutes)

and the usual assortment of films they have run a zillion times already.

[-mrl]

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### Nebula Award Winners:

- Novel: A MASTER OF DJINN, P. Djeli Clark (Tordotcom; Orbit UK)
- Novella: "And What Can We Offer You Tonight", Premee Mohamed (Neon Hemlock)
- Novelette: "O2 Arena", Oghenechovwe Donald Ekpeki (Galaxy's Edge 11/21)
- Short Story: "Where Oaken Hearts Do Gather", Sarah Pinsker (Uncanny 3-4/21)
- The Andre Norton Nebula Award For Middle Grade And Young Adult Fiction: A SNAKE FALLS TO EARTH, Darcie Little Badger (Levine Querido)
- The Ray Bradbury Nebula Award For Outstanding Dramatic Presentation: WANDAVISION: Season 1
- Game Writing: THIRSTY SWORD LESBIANS (Evil Hat Games)

### Reforming the Short Form Hugo: A Guest Post by Dale Skran (reprinted in FILE 770):

Dale Skran's column on Reforming the Short Form Hugo, which appeared in the 05/13/22 issue of the MT VOID, has been reprinted in Mike Glycer's FILE 770 at

<https://file770.com/reforming-the-short-form-hugo-a-guest-post-by-dale-skran/>

And boy, are there comments...

[-ecl]

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### Mini Reviews, Part 5 (film reviews by Evelyn C. Leeper):

HECTOR AND THE SEARCH FOR HAPPINESS: HECTOR AND THE SEARCH FOR HAPPINESS is a very hard-to-categorize film. Director Peter Chelsom calls it a fable, which may be as good as anything, and I like movies that are fables: JOE VERSUS THE VOLCANO, INTERSTATE 60, THE INVENTION OF LYING. In this film, Hector (played by Simon Pegg) is a psychiatrist who seems to be content, but is really just stagnant, and is not "happy". So he decides to travel the world to learn what happiness is and how to achieve it. Pegg strikes just the right balance of humor, confusion, fear, and, yes, happiness.

Released 2014. Rating: +3 (-4 to +4) or 9/10.

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1626146/reference>

What others are saying: [https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/hector\\_and\\_the\\_search\\_for\\_happiness](https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/hector_and_the_search_for_happiness)

APOLLO 10-1/2: A SPACE AGE CHILDHOOD: It starts out as the story of a young boy chosen for an Apollo mission because the lunar lander was accidentally built too small for an adult astronaut. In actuality, it is a reminiscence of growing up in the 1960s, specifically in Houston, but almost everything would strike a chord with anyone of that age, which includes Mark and me. It is animated in the same style as writer/director Richard Linklater's earlier films WAKING LIFE and A SCANNER DARKLY, and the script, consisting mostly of narration by the first-person character, has the same philosophical and psychological elements as those. A wonderfully nostalgic film, and recommended.

Released on Netflix streaming 04/01/22. Rating: low +3 (-4 to +4) or 8/10.

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt7978758/reference>

What others are saying: [https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/apollo\\_10\\_1\\_2\\_a\\_space\\_age\\_childhood](https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/apollo_10_1_2_a_space_age_childhood)

THE BUBBLE: This is "filming in the time of COVID." The "bubble" of the title is an English country manor in which the entire cast and crew of a "Jurassic Park" rip-off are living and working. The fact that many of them are not the brightest bulbs in the Klieg lights merely adds to the confusion and humor, although even with that element it is fairly lame. This may be because, according to Hollywood insiders, there is more truth to the film than one might think. Look for some unexpected cameos.

Released on Netflix streaming 04/01/22. Rating: high +1 (-4 to +4) or 6/10.

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt13610562/reference>

What others are saying: [https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/the\\_bubble\\_2022](https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/the_bubble_2022)

CAPTAIN NOVA: This is a Dutch film release on Netflix streaming with English-language audio and/or subtitles. The premise is that someone from a eco-disaster future travels back to 2025 to try to prevent the disaster, but somehow gets regressed to being twelve years old, and looks remarkably like real-life climate activist Greta Thunberg. The story is fairly predictable, probably comparable to an after-school special. (For what it's worth, if this were a book, it would be labeled "Young Adult", the TV-14 rating notwithstanding.)

Released on Netflix streaming 12/01/21. Rating: high +1 (-4 to +4) or 6/10.

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt14915608/reference>

What others are saying: [https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/captain\\_nova](https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/captain_nova)

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### A Television in Your Head (request by Tom Russell):

Tom Russell asks:

Many years ago I read about lecture in which the speaker asked, "Does anyone have an idea how human vision works?" Someone from audience offered, "It's like we have a little TV in our heads." The lecturer replied, "Good ... but who is watching the television?"

Perhaps you (or one of your readers) know who the lecturer was? I would like to reread the account of the lecture. [-tr]

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### MOTHERLAND: FORT SALEM, THE KAIJU PRESERVATION SOCIETY, TCM Movies, THE EXTRACTIONIST, Reforming the Short Form Hugo, and COMFORT ME WITH APPLES (letter of comment by Heath Row):

In response to [Dale Skran's comments on MOTHERLAND: FORT SALEM](#) in the 04/22/22 issue of the MT VOID, Heath Row writes:

Having recently received several new issues of MT VOID via the National Fantasy Fan Federation's franking service--and having had a letter of column printed and even responded to by a fellow reader (Hello, R. Looney!)--I see fit to write again after reading #2220-2223.

The reprint and discussion of Dale Skran's review of MOTHERLAND: FORT SALEM is intriguing. Given the current anti-woman and anti-reproduction rights leaning in the United States, I'm not sure if I'd enjoy the television program right now, but I did recently read Margaret Atwood's THE HANDMAID'S TALE. Perhaps the fantastic elements of the show will dull the parallels sufficiently. Last weekend, my wife and I participated in a reproductive rights rally in downtown Los Angeles. We definitely don't need another witch hunt right now. Skran's review also reminded me slightly of THE NEVERS, which is streaming broadly--and an excellent television program. Have you watched THE NEVERS? You and Mr. Skran might also get a kick out of the Image comic book limited series MAN-EATERS: THE CURSED. Its precursor (MAN-EATERS) was an amazing story, and the subsequent miniseries quite good as well, swinging the title's attention from women as lycanthropes to witchcraft.

In response to [Joe Karpierz's review of THE KAIJU PRESERVATION SOCIETY](#) in the same issue, Heath writes:

I also recently read John Scalzi's THE KAIJU PRESERVATION SOCIETY and appreciated Joe Karpierz's review. My review appeared in "The N3F Review of Books" April 2022 issue and is available at <https://tinyurl.com/scalzi-kaiju>. I read it, while Karpierz listened to it, but I can imagine how enjoyable Wil Wheaton's narration must have been. Very cool.

In response to [Evelyn's reviews of TURN BACK THE CLOCK and AS THE EARTH TURNS](#) in the 04/29/22 issue, Heath writes:

The reviews of relevant movies recently aired on Turner Classic Movies were welcome--but I wish I'd been aware of their scheduling beforehand so I could watch them, too! I'll have to pay more attention to their schedule. I usually do in October for their active classic horror lineup leading up to Halloween. Maybe it's something my alter ego Cathode Ray could work into his "Celluloid Sentience" movie and DVD release column for "FanActivity Gazette". Not a bad idea, and one for which I thank you. (As a side note, I've been enjoying the MT VOID mini-reviews that Philip De Parto circulates to the The Science Fiction Association of Bergen County. Another

pleasant surprise in my in box!)

In response to [Joe Karpierz's review of THE EXTRACTIONIST](#) in the same issue, Heath writes:

Karpierz's review of Kimberly Unger's THE EXTRACTIONIST doth compel, but the book isn't even out yet! (Now, that's science fiction for you.) The reviewer, lucky fellow that he is, must have received an advance reading copy. Evelyn's consideration of Arthur Conan Doyle's A STUDY IN SCARLET was also inspiring. I'm curious whether you're active in Mrs. Hudson's Cliffdwellers or The Priory Scholars of NYC. It looks like The Sherlock Breakfast Club in Los Angeles hasn't met since 2017, but The Curious Collectors Of Baker Street are still active. Thanks for the inadvertent nudge!

In response to [Dale Skran's comments on reforming the Dramatic Presentation, Short Form Hugo Award](#) in the 05/13/22 issue, Heath writes:

And I found Skran's "Reforming the Short Form Hugo" of high interest. The N3F and its directorate has been having a similar discussion about the categories and approach to nominees for the National Fantasy Fan Federation Speculative Fiction Awards, or Neffy Awards, which while not as notable or visible, still run slightly parallel. I agree with Skran's proposal: a Dramatic series Hugo focusing on series from the last year. We could even take some cues from the Emmy Awards, which offers useful precedent. My preference--for the Neffy Awards at least--is to focus on shows that premiered during the previous year. But my Neffy thinking hasn't gone further than that. For the Hugos, the Emmys' attention to any six eligible episodes for final-round judging might be a useful standard. Skran's three is also a reasonable number.

The Emmys also concentrate on episode length. They consider Short Form series as having episodes with an average running time of two to 20 minutes, Half-hour series as 20-40 minute episodes, and Hour-long series as 40-75 minute episodes. Taking that approach could still allow room for other shorter-form content. And I think Skran's general concern about the Hugo category being potentially biased toward large streaming platforms (or network or cable TV, for that matter) has merit. The N3F Directorate has had similar conversations about conventionally published, print-on-demand, and self-published books. I'd advocate for breaking them all out and including them all, while we currently lump them all together and have a slight bias against conventionally published books in some quarters.

In response to [Joe Karpierz's review of COMFORT ME WITH APPLES](#) in the 02/11/22 issue, Heath writes:

But why I'm really writing to you is because I read Catherynne M. Valente's COMFORT ME WITH APPLES last night. I'd requested the ebook from my local library, missed the first hold release, and wanted to jump on the subsequent hold release. So I read it in one sitting lest my 21 days pass uneventfully. What an absolutely wonderful and surprising read. Thank you, Mr. Karpierz, for recommending it. Given my remarks in the letter of comment in #2221, it did not end up being the book I was expecting. Though it was wholly unlike THE CABIN AT THE END OF THE WORLD, THE COUPLE NEXT DOOR, or LYING IN WAIT--though still a domestic thriller--it was even better than I'd imagined. More along the lines of Ira Levin's THE STEPFORD WIVES reimagined by Neil Gaiman. I'm not sure what Looney would make of it. The COMFORT ME WITH APPLES he mentioned (by Peter DeVries) is described as "a laugh-out-loud novel about teenage pretensions and adult delusions from an author whom the New York Times has called 'a Balzac of the station wagon set.'" Valente's book, a serious doozy of a read, is not that comic, for sure. Instead, it is darkly fantastic, mundane and mythic in its scope, and subtly shocking at times. I would not have read it were it not for MT VOID. Thank you.

I hope you and yours are well. [-hr]

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### **Implausibilities in THE MARTIAN** (letter of comment by Jim Susky):

In response to [Evelyn's comments on THE MARTIAN](#) in the 05/20/22 issue of the MT VOID, Jim Susky writes:

"I love THE MARTIAN by Andy Weir, although I have often nit-picked various details"

No comment on Weir's "inspiration", but I found quite a few nits in the film (no comment on the novel).

I was primed by two things regarding scientific/technical veracity in THE MARTIAN:

In 1968, Kubrick, Clarke, his NASA guru, his thousands of hours of reading, and others conspired to make his art film/sci-fi-epic technically unimpeachable.

The hype on NPR about how "rigorous" they were making THE MARTIAN (expect those two windstorms--two! one wasn't enough)--and that they had informed "help".

If I'd have helped them I'd tell them:

1) An overnight run on a 2040-2050 "supercomputer" would not be required to recalculate the ballistics on the rescue ship. All of us have the requisite computing power at home--and there is undoubtedly much more computing power on the ship itself.

Weir himself wrote back to say:

"Considering I, personally, calculated the trajectory on my PC at home while writing the book I knew it was a bit of an overstatement. But I figured Purnell was running all the abort and failure scenarios as well, and also checking which of several variations of his idea would work best."

2) Did they address fuel for that ship? I don't recall. If not that's a big #3 for not accounting for a suicide mission.

3) To scrap that feeble "solar farm"--not close to big enough--especially at 60% of the solar flux at similar earthly latitude. Sure--that was "fashionable" but you're not foolin' me.

Weir stated:

"In the book, the Hab was a single domed room about eight meters across and the airlock was about the size of a phone booth. The solar farm required about 100 square meters of lightweight paneling to keep everything running. And all that stuff was sent in advance by 14 pre-supply missions before the astronauts even got there. Solar panels are considerably more reliable and require much less maintenance than a nuclear reactor."

At this writing I wonder how feasible scalable RTG power generation would be? Comparing the tiny 1960s versions for probes with the 2005 solar-plus-batteries that failed on the comet probe ESA sent--I suspect the mass penalty would be comparable.

Although I asked Weir what energy-density he'd used for batteries--I got no answer.

4) The EVA with improvised thruster--the filmmakers had the thruster spraying perpendicular to the direction-of-travel, which would have blown the astronaut off the frame.

Weir: "Yeah, that was ridiculous. And it wasn't in the book. In reality, if you poked a hole in your suit, the impulse you got would be really, really small. Nothing like what was shown."

IIRC only 2001, THE ANDROMEDA STRAIN, and GATTACA are scientifically credible in the SF-genre.

I'm sure you both (and readers) know of others. [-js]

Evelyn replies:

Mark and I both immediately thought of CONTAGION.

For all the various nit-picking columns on THE MARTIAN that I wrote, see <http://leepers.us/evelyn/reviews/weir.htm>. [-ecl]

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

I was reading the Norton edition of BEOWULF (translated by E. Talbot Donaldson) and had the chance to pick up the Neil Gaiman/Robert Zemeckis/Roger Avery 2007 film version of the story (BEOWULF) cheap at a library sale.

As far as the book goes, though it is formatted as prose, it is obviously a blank verse translation of a poem. It is rife with the compound nouns (and adjectives) of the original poem: whale-road, house-dweller, wolf-slopes, guest-building, sea-booty, life-injury, water-sport, ... We still have many such nouns, but nowhere near as many, and certainly not in common usage.

But the film was a total disappointment, both in the script and in the visuals. The filmmakers have said that they were trying to restore the pagan roots of the poem, which had been buried under a layer of Christianity by later writers/copyists. The problem for me was that this was no longer a film of the poem, but a film inspired by the characters and events in the poem. This can be done well, but in this case, the heroes end up much more unpleasant than they were in the poem, and the villains (at least Grendel's mother) less unpleasant. I suppose that may be truer to life, but it doesn't make for a great epic. And the visuals, while possibly cutting-edge in 2007, now appear in that "uncanny valley" of almost-realistic animation that just looks creepy.

On the other hand, BEOWULF & GRENDEL (2005) was fairly decent. It removed a lot of the mythical parts, and the Icelandic locations and actors made it much more realistic. And THE 13TH WARRIOR (1999), starring Antonio Banderas and based on Michael Crichton's EATERS OF THE DEAD, while munging together both the Beowulf story and the actual travelogue of Ahmed Ibn Fahdlan, an Arab who traveled among the Vikings in the 10th century. While obviously a bit of a mish-mash, it has been praised for its depiction of Ahmed learning Old Norse by having the spoken dialogue by the Vikings start out entirely in Norse (and unintelligible to the viewer), then gradually having a few words of English creep in as Ahmed starts to pick them up, and eventually switching entirely to English. [-ecl]

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Quote of the Week:

Education is what survives when what has been learned  
has been forgotten.

-- B. F. Skinner

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