

MT VOID 10/06/23 -- Vol. 42, No. 14, Whole Number 2296



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Co-Editor: Mark Leeper, mleeper@optonline.net
 Co-Editor: Evelyn Leeper, eleeper@optonline.net
 Sending Address: evelynchmelisleeper@gmail.com
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Principles (comments by Mark R. Leeper):

We had a friend once who claimed that on her bookshelves, she filed all the female authors separately from the male authors. When we pointed out that GONE WITH THE WIND was in with the male authors, she said that didn't count. I observed that she had very strong principles, but she needed someone to proofread them for her. [-mrl]

GETTYSBURG (1993) (film review by Mark R. Leeper):

[November marks the 30th anniversary of the film GETTYSBURG, in honor of which we are reprinting Mark's review from 1993.]

CAPSULE: This film of military history contains more authentic military history than any other film I have ever seen. The film itself is more than four hours and very little seems to be fiction. Perhaps a little is speculation, but the highest proportion of time is reenactment of the most important battle in United States history. Rating: +3 (-4 to +4)

As usual when I see an historical film, I will go home afterward and pick up many historical accounts of the event and pick holes in what I have seen on the screen. I have not yet read Shelby Foote's account of the battle of Gettysburg (which is about 120 pages), but I

have read several shorter accounts. What I have discovered is that the film contradicts no account any more than the accounts contradict each other. And that is not surprising since by all accounts writer/director Ronald F. Maxwell, after basing his script on a Pulitzer Prize winning novel, *THE KILLER ANGELS* by Michael Shaara, allowed his small army of historical experts to be tyrants over the production of the film. What made it to the screen is what the experts agreed happened. What *STAR WARS* was to the special effects film, *GETTYSBURG* is to the historical film. Nobody who sees the film and later reads account of the battle can come away without the feeling of having witnessed the battle already and without remembering a flood of images from the film. As far as how well the actors look and dress like people of the Civil War the film gets an A+. For the degree to which each major actor looks like the actual person he is portraying the grade is a not-too-shabby B+. (The opening credits show the original and the actor and invite comparison.) Why not higher? Well for example at the time of his most familiar photographs, Lee had a fuller beard than Martin Sheen sports. That is the sort of variation you get. Of course nobody mentions how full Lee's beard was at the time of Gettysburg so perhaps I am underrating the film. But if I can find no less picayune quibble than the length of a beard in a 254-minute historical film, I am not just impressed, I am floored.

The actors are often familiar, if you can make them out under the heavy beards typical of the Civil War period. (The presence of women, incidentally, is limited to a count of two and a screentime of about six seconds.) But actors seem to be chosen more for proven acting ability than for marquee value. The players include Tom Berenger as Gen. Longstreet, Martin Sheen as Gen. Lee, Stephen Lang as Maj. Gen. Pickett, the late Richard Jordan as Brig. Gen. Armistead, Jeff Daniels as Col. Chamberlain, Sam Elliot as Brig. Gen. Buford, and Kevin Conway (whom I thought had been dead for at least a couple years) as the what I would guess was an interpolated character, Sgt. Buster Kilrain.

Gettysburg was the climax of the Civil War as Midway was the climax of the war in the Pacific. And I found myself comparing this film to the 1976 film *MIDWAY* as I watched it. *MIDWAY* is only five minutes longer than half of *GETTYSBURG*'s length, yet for that film a whole fictional plot of "human interest" was added about an American commander's son in love with a Japanese-American woman. Apparently the filmmakers thought that so much history was too much for the viewer. In *GETTYSBURG* with the exception of a few conversations to broaden the characters, and a rhetorical speech added here and there, what we see is all documented history and ironically the film is more and not less compelling as a result.

From the point of view of the film five men were responsible for the South going from a winning war to a losing war with this one battle. For the North, Buford created the strategy and Chamberlain defended the weak flank. For the South, Jeb Stuart chose to raid rather than reconnoiter, Ewell failed to attack at a strategic moment, and Lee's ego told him to fight the battle even on the enemy's terms because winning would almost certainly bring the end of the war. Of these the most screen time is devoted to Chamberlain who, torn with self-doubt, shows himself to nonetheless represent both heroism and decency.

GETTYSBURG was reportedly made as a television mini-series and at some point was redirected to the big screen. It will certainly lose much of the impact of its huge cast when translated to the small screen. In incredible list of historical reenactment societies apparently volunteered to act as extras and to reenact the battle. The men participating in Pickett's charge form a very long wall that will not be nearly as impressive when the flanks are cut for television's aspect ratio. On the other hand, getting the film on video will allow the stopping of the film and reading from historical sources about the various actions being depicted. My initial reaction to the film was that it must have cut out a lot of what was really happening to concentrate only on Buford's defense of the high ground the first day, Chamberlain's defense of the flank the second day, and Pickett's charge the third day. The first source I saw that described the battle in any detail listed three important actions and they were exactly the ones chosen by the filmmakers. This engaging film is almost a textbook about the battle and because at the same time it is so enthralling, this is one of best and perhaps in some respects is the best historical feature film ever made. Nothing quite like this has ever been done at this length and done this elaborately, so it is all the more impressive. [-mrl]

LEGENDS AND LATTES by Travis Baldree (copyright 2022, Tor Books, Trade Paperback, 304 pp., ISBN-10: 1250886082, ISBN-13: 978-1250886088, Macmillan Audio, 7 hours and 19 minutes, ASIN: B0B3G97QY1, narrated by Travis Baldree) (audio book review by Joe Karpierz):

It's a bit difficult to know where to start when talking about *LEGENDS AND LATTES* by Travis Baldree (well, it's difficult for me, anyway). I find it difficult to imagine an orc that wants to give up the fighting life and open her own coffee shop. That's probably because Viv (since when are orcs named Viv?), the orc in question, isn't an orc in the traditional sense as we know them via fantasy stories going all the way back to Tolkien. And maybe that's my problem as a reader of this novel. I mean, orcs don't want to reinvent who they are because they're tired of their life, and they want to do something better with it. That's not what orcs do. And, if I'm not mistaken with my orc lore--well, the orc lore as put forth by Tolkien, anyway--orcs don't team up with other scoundrels aside from other orcs. But that's what we're dealing with here.

At this point, you may be starting to think that I didn't like LEGENDS AND LATTES. You'd be wrong. But I'm setting up something for later on in this review. Please bear with me.

So, in Viv's last adventure with her gang of rogues, she takes as her share of the booty the Scalvert's Stone grown in the skull of the Scalvert Queen. The stone is supposed to bring good luck to its bearer. Viv's plan, as we've already learned, is to go to a town--in this case Thune--to set up a coffee shop. She purchases an abandoned stable in Thune, and in short order manages to recruit a hob carpenter named Cal and a succubus named Tandri to help her run the business. As time goes on she acquires a baker (Thimble), a bard (Pendry) to perform in the shop, and a dire cat named Amity to watch over the place.

As the story progresses, the cafe (named "Legends and Lattes", of course) gains customers, expands its menu, becomes successful, and draws the attention of the Madrigal, who, along with the requisite thugs, runs the local protection racket. But, strangely enough, it's not the Madrigal's thugs that cause the most problems for Viv, but her former colleague Fennus, who believes there's something more to the Scalvert's Stone than meets the eye. Fennus is the cause of the novel's requisite disaster (because there has to be one in a story where the main character is doing so well), which brings Viv, her friends, and the town, closer together than ever.

LEGENDS AND LATTES is light, cozy, and a comfort read. If the reader is looking for something deep, heavy, and meaningful, well, you get a little bit of the meaningful here. LEGENDS AND LATTES is a story of change, rebirth, friendship, cooperation, and community. It's funny at times, poignant at others, and satisfying. This is a pretty good book, which, according to Baldree's website, started out life as a National Novel Writing Month project in 2021. It's a low-stakes fantasy that turned into a best seller. It really is an enjoyable read, and a good story with good characters. I did like it.

What it is not is worthy of a Hugo.

Yes, that's harsh. I was having a discussion with someone who is close to me about what makes a book a Hugo finalist and eventually a Hugo winner. What we did agree on is that a Hugo winner must have some heft, if you will. Something that would make a long lasting contribution to the fields of science fiction and fantasy. Something that may change the field. Something that people might be talking about decades from now. I was at a Worldcon a few years ago and attended a kaffee klatsch (or however you spell it) with a couple of notable people in the field who produce a podcast and whose opinions I respect. I asked them, "what books will people like us sitting around a table like this be talking about 50 years from now?" (this came up because we were talking about DUNE, more than 50 years after its publication), and the answer was "The Broken Earth Trilogy" by N. K. Jemisin. That was the answer I was expecting, and I agree with it.

With regard to the Hugo Awards, no one will be talking about LEGENDS AND LATTES 50 years from now. But that's okay, because being a Hugo Award winner (or finalist) is not a prerequisite for being a good book, or even a great book (goodness knows that Kim Stanley Robinson's THE MINISTRY FOR THE FUTURE is a great book, and it wasn't a Hugo finalist, but I digress). LEGENDS AND LATTES is a fine, light read, and sometimes you just need that.

Travis Baldree himself narrated the novel. It turns out that Baldree is a full time audio book narrator, and it shows. He does a fine job narrating his own work. I wouldn't mind listening to something else that he has narrated. [-jak]

Lawyer vs. Attorney, and Alan Arkin (letter of comment by Jim Susky):

In response to [John Hertz's letter of comment](#) in the 09/26/23 issue of the MT VOID, Jim Susky writes:

Until the late (2023SEP29) MT VOID I hadn't known of a potential misuse of "attorney" and "lawyer".

I checked my trusty 1976 WEBSTER'S NEW WORLD DICTIONARY and now I find that I have been mispronouncing "law yer".

In that reference "attorney" is a broad term which denotes one who has been "legally empowered to act as agent for, or in behalf of another; esp. a lawyer."

(semi-colon in the original)

Then there is "lawyer"--"a person who has been trained in the law, esp. one whose profession is advising others in matters of law or representing them in lawsuits."

I suppose, then, that an "attorney general" who is appointed by a governor, president, or others who can get a confirming body to go along, and *then* get that confirming body to actually confirm her, need not be "trained in the law"? [-js]

Evelyn notes:

Hence "power of attorney" does not make one a lawyer, but makes one "legally empowered to act as agent for, or in behalf of another". [-ecl]

In response to [Mark's comments on THE IN-LAWS](#) in the same issue of the MT VOID, Jim writes:

I am sorry to hear that Alan Arkin died. One of his last hurrahs was as a lead with Michael Douglas in very funny show--THE KOMINSKY METHOD--a NETFLIX project. [-js]

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

I mentioned a couple of weeks ago picking up a half dozen books at Second Time Books in Mount Laurel (NJ). One of them was THE ANNOTATED BIG SLEEP by Raymond Chandler (annotations by Owen Hill, Pamela Jackson, and Anthony Dean Rizzuto) (Vintage Crime/Black Lizard, ISBN 978-0-804-16888-5), and it does annotations the right way. That is to say, the text is on the left page, the annotations on the right page facing it. (You may recall my complaining of an annotated edition where the text and the annotations did not stay in sync on the pages.) This synchronization naturally leads to blank spaces, either because some text has few annotations, or some text has extensive annotations. This edition often fills those space with illustrations: book covers, photographs of 1930s Los Angeles, short essays about private eyes, the detective genre, and so on. Since this is a large format trade paperback, the typeface is also very readable. The drawback is that this means the book weighs a pound and a half.

I have to say that Chandler was very kind to collectors. He wrote his Philip Marlowe books in alphabetical order, meaning one is not conflicted between alphabetical and Chronological shelving order. (This ordering fell apart with the posthumous Marlowe books write by other authors, PERCHANCE TO DREAM by Robert B. Parker, THE BLACK-EYED BLONDE by Benjamin Black, ONLY TO SLEEP by Lawrence Osborne, and THE GOODBYE COAST by Joe Ide.)

So THE BIG SLEEP was the first Philip Marlowe book written, and considered the best. (I have a fondness for THE LONG GOODBYE. though I can't say why. Interestingly, the two titles mean the same thing.) But the first six novels are all good, PLAYBACK is okay, and POODLE SPRINGS ... Well, the idea of marrying Marlowe off was a bad one to start with, and the fact that Chandler left the novel unfinished when he died may have been intentional.

Chandler is one of the great writers of private eye stories, THE BIG SLEEP is considered his best, and the annotations are both interesting and informative. If you haven't read THE BIG SLEEP yet, it might make sense to just read the book itself first, and then decide if you want to read the annotations. (Consider it similar to watching the movie before listening to the commentary.) But I wholeheartedly recommend this edition.

(And if you like Chandler's style, consider KAFKA'S COOKBOOK: A COMPLETE HISTORY OF WORLD LITERATURE IN 14 RECIPES and its "Lamb with Dill Sauce a la Raymond Chandler": "I needed a table at Maximâ€™s, a hundred bucks, and a gorgeous blonde; what I had was a leg of lamb and no clues. I took hold of the joint. It felt cold and damp, like a coronerâ€™s handshake. I took out a knife and cut the lamb into pieces. Feeling the blade in my hand I sliced an onion, and before I knew what I was doing a carrot lay in pieces on the slab. None of them moved.") [-ecl]

Mark Leeper
mleeper@optonline.net

Quote of the Week:

There is something fascinating about science.
One gets such wholesale returns of conjecture
out of such a trifling investment of fact.
--Mark Twain

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