

MT VOID 11/03/23 -- Vol. 42, No. 18, Whole Number 2300



11/03/23 -- Vol. 42, No. 18, Whole Number 2300

Table of Contents

- [THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS](#) (film review by Mark R. Leeper)
- [Writing in the MT VOID](#) (comments by Mark R. Leeper)
- [This Week's Reading](#) (TEN PERCENT OF LIFE) (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.

THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS (film review by Mark R. Leeper):

[We just passed the 30th anniversary of the release of THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS. In honor of this, here is Mark's review from 1993.]

Capsule review: Tim Burton proves himself a creative genius with a film deserving of instant holiday classic status. Just about everything comes together and genuinely works in the best holiday film since Alistair Sim starred in A CHRISTMAS CAROL. Rating: +3 (-4 to +4).

From the on-again off-again career of Tim Burton comes a film so original and incredibly creative that it genuinely is unlikely to be surpassed as a holiday film for decades. While Burton did not actually direct in this outing (Henry Selick did), Burton produced and wrote the story, creating the characters. And THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS shows an unmistakable Burton style. The entire film is done in beautiful 3-D animation and is the culmination of the poetic fairy tale style we saw some of (but not enough) in EDWARD SCISSORHANDS crossed with the tongue-in-cheek horror-spoof style of "Frankenweenie" and "Vincent." This film dazzles the viewer with so many beautiful images that I found just taking my eyes off the screen to make notes meant I was missing something I wanted to see. The style the film kept reminding me of some exceptionally creative Czech films--particularly those of Jiri Trnka--and wishing more films like that could be done elsewhere. Now a visual style every bit as compelling, perhaps more, has found its way into an American film. The fairy tale style that I liked so much in EDWARD SCISSORHANDS I attributed to Caroline Thompson, a then first-time screenwriter whose talents I claimed were just what Burton needed. I am very pleased that Burton seems to have had the same insight. Thompson wrote NIGHTMARE's screenplay also and this time she and Burton have completely fulfilled

the promise their pairing showed in that film. The ten musical pieces here are written and scored with the clever style and quality of a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta.

The story takes place in a land where holidays are born. One town makes Halloween each year, another makes Christmas. The artistic genius of Halloweentown is one Jack Skellington, a sort of skeleton with a globular head. But then everyone in Halloweentown is a horror, that is the spirit of Halloween. The town is full of werewolves, vampires, bats, spiders, mad scientists, and things for which there are no names. Jack is dissatisfied with Halloween and stumbles on Christmastown. He is enchanted and puzzled by the idea of Christmas and decides he and his town of horrors can do it all better. Halloweentown starts working on putting on a horror-tinged Christmas. If that seems a silly plot, well you don't expect a holiday film is going to have a Dostoyevsky-level story. Just accept the story and watch how well it is told. Regardless of the plot this is a film that you *will* find rewarding. Take it from me you may possibly have seen a film like this before but only rarely, and you have never seen it done so well for 75 minutes. If you thought THE WIZARD OF OZ was an impressive children's film, go see THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS. Amazingly to me I give a Christmas film a rating of +3 on the -4 to +4. [-mrl]

Writing in the MT VOID (comments by Mark R. Leeper):

Some of you may have noticed an abrupt change in the writing style of the writing in the MT VOID during weeks gone by. Evelyn and I are now both writing under the house name of Leeper. We each write and then collect the results as if it was the single writing. (This is due in part to the difficulties my Parkinson's is causing with my typing.) [-mrl/ecl]

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

TEN PERCENT OF LIFE by Hiber Conteris (translated by Deborah Bergmann) (Fireside, ISBN 0-670-63419-44) is a 1985 Uruguayan Philip Marlowe novel, though not set in the "Philip Marlowe universe". In TEN PERCENT OF LIFE, Philip Marlowe is a private detective who gets involved with the case of the murder of Raymond Chandler's literary agent Yensid Andress. This Marlowe, a real person in the Raymond Chandler universe, seems to have been a model for the private eye in this Chandler's novels. And this Chandler seems to have taken the names of real people (in his universe) and applied them to characters in his novels, who have, however, no resemblance to the characters with those names in his novels. For example, "Velma Valento" is the ex-wife of Andress in this universe.

In support of all this homage, Conteris provides a quiz at the end asking the reader to identify where all the names, locations, events, etc., came from in Chandler's works and life. (This is a book that cries out for an annotated version!)

Anyway, Conteris also confuses things with changes of both tense and point of view. (I assume that Bergmann has retained the original tenses and points of view.) He starts out on the present tense, then switches to the past. He has some chapters third person limited point of view of Charles Morton, others as first person point of view as Marlowe, still others as third person omniscient. Several chapters consist of long speeches/monologues by several authors, including Chandler, with most of Chandler's words coming from Chandler's essays, letters, and other writings. As far as I can tell, Bergmann seems to have gone back to the original Chandler, rather than translating what I assume was Spanish in Conteris's novel back into English. (It seems obvious, but I've seen examples of a double layer of translation. They're not pretty.)

Which is to say, even before you consider the convoluted plot, TEN PERCENT OF LIFE is just as confusing as any Chandler novel.

(Yes, "Yensid" is "Disney" backwards. And "Andress" is an anagram of Sanders; George Sanders played the detective in the 1942 film FAREWELL, MY LOVELY, which was based on THE HIGH WINDOW even though the detective was not called Philip Marlowe.)

[-ecl]

Mark Leeper
mleeper@optonline.net

Quote of the Week:

Recession is when a neighbor loses his job.
Depression is when you lose yours.

--Ronald Reagan