

# MT VOID 02/09/24 -- Vol. 42, No. 32, Whole Number 2314



02/09/24 -- Vol. 42, No. 32, Whole Number 2314

## Table of Contents

[Correction](#)

[Mini Reviews, Part 18 \(MAY DECEMBER, DALILAND, NYAD\)](#)

(film reviews by Mark R. Leeper and Evelyn C. Leeper)

[THE WINGS UPON HER BACK by Samantha Mills](#) (book review

by Joe Karpierz)

[Howard Waldrop](#) (letter of comment by Kip Williams)

[This Week's Reading](#) (THE DREAM ARCHIPELAGO)

(book comments by Evelyn C. Leeper)

[Quote of the Week](#)

Co-Editor: Mark Leeper, [mleeper@optonline.net](mailto:mleeper@optonline.net)

Co-Editor: Evelyn Leeper, [eleeper@optonline.net](mailto:eleeper@optonline.net)

Sending Address: [evelynchimisleep@gmail.com](mailto:evelynchimisleep@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](mailto: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](http://leepers.us/mtvoid/back_issues.htm).

### Correction:

In my comments on Howard Waldrop in the 02/02/24 issue of the MT VOID, I mentioned "R. A. Rafferty". Obviously, that should have been "R. A. Lafferty". I don't know if it was a typo prompted by Lafferty's first initial, or because there was a supervisor in my department named Rafferty, but anyway, it was wrong. [-ecl]

### Mini Reviews, Part 18 (film reviews by Mark R. Leeper and Evelyn C. Leeper):

This is eighteenth batch of mini-reviews, all films based on real people.

MAY DECEMBER (2023): MAY DECEMBER is loosely based on the true story of Mary Kay Letourneau, who was 34 years old when she had an affair with a twelve-year-old. The film takes place about twenty years later, when an actress who is going to play her in a movie comes to town to do research. As with many films "based on true stories", the details should be taken with a grain of salt, which makes this film a little peculiar--it would seem to have little to recommend it but the story behind it. [-ecl]

Released theatrically 17 November 2023. Rating: +2 (-4 to +4), or 7/10.

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt13651794/reference>

What others are saying: [https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/may\\_december](https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/may_december)

DALILAND (2023): DALILAND is a bit of a jumbled mess, which is a lot like some of Dali's work, and indeed of Dali's life. Dali was always flamboyant, but watching his flamboyance for almost two hours can be disorienting and tiring. (Oddly, some reviewers have found the film bland.) The standout of the film (to me) is Barbara Sukowa as Dali's wife, Gala. Maybe it's my fascination with forgeries, but to me the most interesting aspect of this period of Dali's life is his signing of thousands of blank sheets of paper, supposedly to be used for prints of the tarot deck Dali designed for (but was never used in) the film LIVE AND LET DIE. Somehow the number of signed sheets grew, and other artwork appeared on some, and maybe not all of it was Dali's. But that story requires a more straightforward approach, and DALILAND concentrates on Dali himself, who was anything but straightforward. [-ecl]

Released streaming 9 June 2023. Rating: low +1 (-4 to +4), or 5/10.

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt8399658/reference>

What others are saying: <https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/daliland> NYAD (2023): This is based on Diana Nyad's attempt to swim unaided from Cuba to Florida. It seems to be reminiscent of a small part of THE CURIOUS CASE OF BENJAMIN BUTTON crossed with the beginning of MRS. HENDERSON PRESENTS.

The route Nyad wants to swim will take sixty hours and at the beginning she has trouble going even four hours. (I was reminded of a made-for-TV movie from forty years ago or so about a woman who has difficulty running two blocks to a bus and decides to train to run a marathon.) It was interesting to see how the director covered this route, giving it enough variety to keep the viewer interested. This includes dramatizations of hallucinations Diana suffered when she was swimming. There are some inaccuracies, and some collapsing of events (it took Nyad five tries to succeed in her attempt). From the beginning Nyad antagonizes her crew and it makes one wonder if that isn't a bad idea. For some reason, though, they seem to stand by her. [-ecl]

Released theatrically 20 October 2023. Rating: 0 (-4 to +4), or 4/10.

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt5302918/reference>

What others are saying: <https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/nyad>

**THE WINGS UPON HER BACK** by **Samantha Mills** (publishing date April 2024, Tachyon Publications, print ISBN: 978-1-61696-414-6, digital ISBN: 978-1-61696-415-3, print length 336pp) (book review by Joe Karpierz):

THE WINGS UPON HER BACK is the debut novel by Hugo, Nebula, Sturgeon, and Locus Award winner Samantha Mills. Mills won all four of those awards last year for her short story "Rabbit Test". There was an itch at the back of my mind that needed to be scratched, so I did a bit of digging around and found that she had a story in "The New Voices of Science Fiction", edited by Hannu Rajaniemi and Jacob Weisman, published back in 2019. So, she's been around for at least a little while. Based on "Rabbit Test" and now THE WINGS UPON HER BACK, I believe she is going to be around for a very long time. The setting for the story is the city of Radezhda which was founded by five gods, each of whom brought a different gift, a different discipline, to the city. Each god helped to bring prosperity and advancement to the people of Radezhda. As is the way of things, the five gods didn't always agree on things, but together they helped bring progress and improvements to the city. Until one day, the gods left the city, going high into the sky and falling into a deep sleep. The disciples of each of the gods all had something in common: the desire to determine why the gods had left them. Each of the five disciplines built skyscraper-like towers in an attempt to reach up to their god and bring them back home. The leader of each faction is called the Voice, and those leaders are the only ones that get to talk to their gods, and infrequently at that.

Eventually, and again as is the way of things, without the leadership of the gods conflicts arose, and the city came to war with itself. As each of the factions had different viewpoints, the city was being torn apart by violence. The Mechas, a warrior sect originally tasked with the job of protecting the city from outsiders, added the task of protecting the city dwellers from themselves. The Voice of the Mechas is the ruthless and power-hungry Winged Vodaya.

Zenya, the true focus of the story, is a teenager in a family that is in the scholar sect. She is unsatisfied and unhappy being a scholar. Her goal is to join the Mecha sect, get her wings, and become one of the protectors of the city. She runs away from her family and joins the Mechas, and soon shows enough aptitude that Vodaya takes Zenya under her wing (no pun intended). Eventually Zenya earns her Wings and becomes the Winged Zemolai. As time wears on, Zemolai gets weary of the constant fighting and battles and, in a rare (as

in never) show of mercy, lets a spy who infiltrated the Mecha sect from the Scholar sect, go free after she discovers his treachery. This gets her Wings torn away, and she is cast out on the street with nowhere to go.

The story is told in two different timelines. One covers Zenya's story, her background, and how she came to be one of the Winged. The other is Zemolai's story after she gets cast out of the Mecha sect, and how she comes to find out that things are significantly different than she thought they were while she was one of the Winged. But there are two additional sides to the novel. One is that THE WINGS UPON HER BACK is a straightforward action adventure story, complete with a maniacal, single minded leader who is blinded by her ambition and who tries to take complete control of her domain. The other is a story of discovery, of a person learning who they are after they've achieved their life's goals, who their friends really are, and what really is going on in the world around them, the world they thought they knew well but really didn't know at all.

It's early in 2024, and there are a lot of books yet to come, many of which will be terrific. Many will come from authors that have been in the field a long time, and authors that are new. But for me, THE WINGS UPON HER BACK is the best book I've read in 2024 so far. Sure, Samantha Mills has been around a few years now, but it appears that her star is just now starting to take off. If THE WINGS UPON HER BACK is any indication, Mills will be providing us with great reads for a long time. I look forward to what she'll be bringing us in the future. [-jak]

**Howard Waldrop** (letter of comment by Kip Williams):

In response to [Evelyn's comments on Howard Waldrop](#) in the 02/02/24 issue of the MT VOID, Kip Williams writes:

I'm indebted to my friend Paul King for being in conversation with this guy at the last Boskone I made. I hovered until forbearance gave way, and for the next measureless interval Paul and Howard Waldrop and I discussed the rich lore of Highway 287 from Loveland to Texas, and the roadside attractions (motels with movie screens outside the window) and the pie. It was a good con and all, but that was definitely the best part of it right there. [-kw]

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

THE DREAM ARCHIPELAGO by Christopher Priest (Gollancz, 2009, ISBN 978-0-575-09406-1) is a much-revised version of the collection AN INFINITE SUMMER (Dell, 1979, ISBN 0-440-14067-6). It drops two stories which are not "Dream Archipelago" stories, and adds four more which are. It also has revised versions of the remaining three stories.

[The ISFDB (IMHO) erroneously lists the novelette "An Infinite Summer" as a "Dream Archipelago" story, basing this on a claim by Priest in the introduction to the German edition of the first collection. I would love to know his explanation. And if it is, why exclude it from the collection THE DREAM ARCHIPELAGO? And even stranger is that Priest says in the introduction to the collection AN INFINITE SUMMER that the novelette "The Infinite Summer" was originally intended to be part of his novel THE SPACE MACHINE, which is not set in the Dream Archipelago.]

"Palely Loitering" is also in AN INFINITE SUMMER but not in THE DREAM ARCHIPELAGO. I don't think there is any dispute that this one is not a "Dream Archipelago" story. It does deal with "time vortices", but within a recognizable if alternate London rather than the totally fictional world of the Dream Archipelago. ("An Infinite Summer" also plays with time in a similarly recognizable London.)

"The Equatorial Moment" was not the first "Dream Archipelago" story written, but it does explain the background of what makes the Dream archipelago so strange. Actually, that seems to be its primary purpose; the plot is minimal and the character is you, that is to say, it is one of those rare stories written in the second person.

In this collection, "Whores" has been expanded from the version that appeared in AN INFINITE SUMMER. The general plot is the same, but Priest provides more description of the Archipelago and its islands, as well as of the characters in the story. It is bookended (in a sense) by "The Discharge", which was not in AN INFINITE SUMMER. The former tells of a draftee's induction and first days in the army; the latter of a soldier's final days in the army.

Similarly, "The Negation" and "The Watched" have also been expanded, while "The Miraculous Cairn" and "The Cremation" are new (in the sense of not appearing in AN INFINITE SUMMER; they had been published elsewhere before this collection). "The Watched" is more science fictional than the others (which lean to fantasy), and recalled the question "Who will watch the watchers?" "The Miraculous Cairn" is more focused on memory than on the temporal aspects of the Ream Archipelago. There is a feel of magical

realism about it.

AN INFINITE SUMMER is out of print, but used copies are available at reasonable prices. The good news is that the two stories in it that were not reprinted in THE DREAM ARCHIPELAGO have been included in Priest's 2019 collection EPISODES (Gollancz, ISBN 978-1-4732-0063-0). Both are recommended.

[As I was writing this, I saw an announcement that Christopher Priest had just died. Another unique voice has been lost.]

[-ecl]

---

Mark Leeper  
mleeper@optonline.net

Quote of the Week:

We die only once, and for such a long time.  
--Moliere

Go to [our home page](#) THE MT VOID