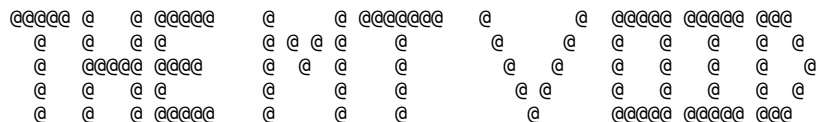


MT VOID 04/29/22 -- Vol. 40, No. 44, Whole Number 2221



Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society
04/29/22 -- Vol. 40, No. 44, Whole Number 2221

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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.

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.

- May 5, 2022 (MTPL), 5:30PM, in-person: SIMONE (2002) [SIMONE] & novel "Remake" (1995) by Connie Willis
<https://onlinereadfreenovel.com/connie-willis/41753-remake.html>
(reprinted in Willis: "Terra Incognita" & "Futures Imperfect")
- May 26, 2022 (OBPL), 7:00PM, ZOOM: THE DREAMING JEWELS
by Theodore Sturgeon

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

It is hard to imagine a film with a less distinct title than is MY NAME IS JULIA ROSS. The name Julia Ross is one not likely to be remembered by anyone. This title was a good deal more familiar in its own time. The story appeared in magazine form, in a radio play, and in a motion picture. In this strange mystery everybody seems to insist the main character's name was something else; in the mansion where Ross finds herself she is told she is someone else with a name she does recognize. Her only connection to the name she remembers is her insistence that her name was really Julia Ross. This is a what-is-going-on sort of mystery. One can see ideas that would later also show up in NORTH BY NORTHWEST in this film.

[MY NAME IS JULIA ROSS (1945), May 22, 1:00AM]

Evelyn notes:

While the science fiction and fantasy films are thin on the ground in May, there is Turner's usual Memorial Day marathon of war films, running from the evening of Thursday, May 26, through Tuesday, May 31.

Alas, this precludes them doing a Christopher Lee centenary celebration on May 27, the 100th anniversary of Lee's birth. In fact, they have *no* Christopher Lee movies in May. Through the magic of home video, however, you can construct your own. Note: Lee's favorite movie was *THE WICKER MAN* (1973), so be sure to include that.

[-mrl/ecl]

Jackie Chan Vs Buster Keaton Vs Harold Lloyd (pointer by Greg Frederick):

Greg Frederick writes:

Cool action and stunt filled video... I often wondered why Jackie Chan's stunts seemed to be comical, well now I know why.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=stuLoOXkutf>

[-gf]

FIDDLER'S JOURNEY TO THE BIG SCREEN (film review by Mark R. Leeper and Evelyn C. Leeper):

FIDDLER'S JOURNEY TO THE BIG SCREEN, directed by Daniel Raim, and written by Daniel Raim and Michael Sragow, is more than a "making-of" documentary. The people involved with making the film talk not just about making the film, but their own backgrounds and emotions, and how they affected their work. The documentary covers backers' initial skepticism about the stage play, and the film, and then covers the making of the film from multiple points of view.

NOTE: See the movie before the documentary; it will not work as well the other way around. (On the other hand, it is probably unlikely that there will be many people who haven't seen the original film who would watch this.)

The film FIDDLER ON THE ROOF enhance the stage play with photographic views of the various lifestyles in Anatevka, beautifully brought to the screen by Norman Jewison. As one would expect, this documentary is illustrated by numerous clips that are familiar from the film,

It is worth noting that Jewison, his name notwithstanding, is not Jewish. In fact, he tells the story of growing up in Toronto with the other children in his school thinking he was Jewish. The various ramifications of that led him to a life of supporting social justice, so it is not surprising that one of his other Academy Award nominations was for *IN THE HEAT OF THE NIGHT*. (Another was for *MOONSTRUCK*, a film with many similarities to *FIDDLER ON THE ROOF*.)

Jewison had directed musical variety shows on television, a background that served him well while directing *FIDDLER ON THE ROOF*. He talks about the various people considered for Tevye (including some surprises). As it tells the story of each character being cast one feels like cheering for that casting. This is the story of Tevye the Milkman and his five daughters, but the only ones interviewed are the three oldest daughters, and the stories of their casting and experiences are interleaved, which does tend to make them less individualized.

John Williams was the musical director of the film, a fact not known by many. He is better-known for such little films as *STAR WARS*, *CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND*, etc., etc. (Williams is considered the most popular film composer of all time.)

Other people involved in, or affecting, the production who are interviewed or discussed include production designer Robert Boyle, violinist Itzak Stern, Roman Vishniak, and Marc Chagall.

The Anatevka village they produced for the film seems almost overdone in its atmosphere of the Russian Jewish life of the time in which the film is set (1905 and the few years following).

In places this "making if" documentary is as touching as the film itself. It is mentioned that the filming location, Yugoslavia, is no more, just as Anatevka is no more. What isn't mentioned (because the film was made too soon) is that this "Russian" village of Anatevka is actually in what is now Ukraine, and references to the area around Anatevka, and Kyiv specifically, as being in Russia, are both outdated and topical, as are the scenes of the Anatevkans being attacked by Russian troops and being forced out of their homes as exiles.

Released 04/29/21. Rating: +2 (-4 to +4) or 7/10.

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt13660266/reference>

What others are saying: https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/fiddlers_journey_to_the_big_screen

[-mrl/ecl]

Mini Reviews, Part 4 (film reviews by Evelyn C. Leeper):

This month I'll review two films that ran on Turner Classic Movies, one a time travel fantasy, and one a story of a future war and a mad scientist.

TURN BACK THE CLOCK (1933): This is a fantasy film that showed up on Turner Classic Movies in April during their Thursday movies about time. Most of these were familiar (e.g., *THE TIME MACHINE*), but this was unfamiliar. Also, the plot is familiar: Joe Gimlet (Lee Tracy) regrets the decisions he has made and wishes he could live his adult life over. And guess what? He is hit by a car, knocked unconscious, and wakes up back in 1914. The problem is that he is even more of an idiot than William Feathersmith (Albert Salmi) in the "Twilight Zone" episode "Of Late I Think of Cliffordville", or Paul Driscoll (Ana Andrews) in "No Time Like the Past". Not only does Gimlet keep telling people that he knows what's going to happen, but he cannot seem to remember that he is in his past, and also cannot remember things like the date of the Armistice (even though he was a soldier) or when the stock market crash happened. This may be because Tracey was primarily a comedy actor, and this film decided it needed to be a comedy. Most of the plot seems to be about how he chose the wrong woman to marry and keeps talking about that. I suppose it's amusing enough, but considering how much he presumably knows and tries to change, there is no real alternate history to speak of.

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0024704/reference>

AS THE EARTH TURNS (1937/2019): This one on Turner Classics Movies is a real curiosity: a silent film shot in 1937 but not released until 2019. Director Richard Lyford, who died in 1985, made several award-winning documentaries, but this very early attempt of his languished until clips appeared in a "trailer park" reel and people became interested. It's about a future war, and the best that can be said about it is that it is not totally inept. There are some weird "goofs" in the script. One scene takes place in Washington, D.C., at "the Equatorial Time Center of the United States", whatever that means. There is also a "tidal wave" in Great Salt Lake, which has no tides.

The model work is painfully amateurish, and the staging overly dramatic, with acting very much at the overdone level common to silent films. The music (by Edward Hartman) was apparently added recently, but Hartman wrote in the style of silent films, keeping everything consistent. (This is unlike Giorgio Moroder for *METROPOLIS* or the Alloy Orchestra for various films.)

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt9203354/reference>

What others are saying: https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/as_the_earth_turns_2019

Both of these films may still be available on "Watch TCM" (or whatever it's called, or may show up in the future.

[-ecl]

THE EXTRACTIONIST by Kimberly Unger (Publication Date July 12, 2022, Tachyon Publications, ISBN: 9781616963767) (book review by Joe Karpierz):

When I reviewed *NUCLEATION*, the debut novel by Kimberly Unger, I said in part "The story has really just begun, and I'm interested in finding out what comes next, whether it's in the *NUCLEATION* universe or something else from Kimberly Unger. I believe she's a writer to watch." Unger's new novel, *THE EXTRACTIONIST*, has done nothing to change my mind about that assertion.

Eliza McKay is an Extractionist. She didn't necessarily start out as an Extractionist. She messed around in a dangerous way with nanotechnology that put her in a bad way with the law. Her licenses for that kind of work were revoked, and now she is working to get back her licenses and respectability by taking contracts to go into the Swim (think cyberspace) where people upload into digital persona for various reasons and get them out when they're stuck in there. She's really good at it. She has a high-powered computer system wired into her brain, and the combination of that computer system and her programming and virtual reality skills make her a highly desired Extractionist.

She takes a government job to go into the Swim and find the digital persona of Mike Miyamoto, an operative who is investigating a criminal case. The goal is to preserve the evidence that he has found there. The problem is that he has found something so disturbing that the persona doesn't want to come out of the Swim. With McKay's employers - yes, the government, but the explanation is not as straightforward as you might think, and that's not so surprising given the nature of the story - not being the only ones trying to retrieve Mike's persona, McKay must race against time and her opponents in an effort to get Mike's persona out of the Swim. When McKay is actively attacked by a malicious program in the Swim during one attempt to find Mike - a program dubbed the Beast - it becomes obvious that there is more going on here than she bargained for.

McKay runs into what seems like non-stop attacks that are designed from preventing her from achieving her goal. In addition to attacks by the Beast in the Swim, there are hired thugs who break into her home in an effort to hack into her cybernetic implants, and she is injured in an accident when her self-driving vehicle goes on the fritz-- something that never happens in her world (but we're still worried about here in our day). What she discovers throughout the course of the novel is a massive, complex coverup involving a big corporation and the government.

Unger has woven an action-packed tale that is a spy thriller with believable science, technology, and situations that keep the reader engaged. At one point in my life I wrote software for a living, but I can only dream of being able to write the code that McKay does in the novel or that Unger does in real life. In order to make this story work the Swim and the interactions with it must be believable, and while maybe some of the concepts are beyond our abilities right now, I never felt as if what McKay was doing was not achievable.

Maybe not in the near future, sure, but somewhere along the line it could happen. Combine that with a fast paced and complex tale of corporate and governmental intrigue, Unger has given the world another winner.

I said at the top that Unger is a writer to watch. With what I feel are two winning novels under her belt, she's not only a writer to watch but a writer that will be contributing great stories to the science fiction field for a very long time to come. [-jak]

COMFORT ME WITH APPLES, THE TIME MACHINE, SEVERANCE, NIGHTMARE ALLEY, END OF ETERNITY, and LAST NIGHT IN SOHO (letter of comment by Heath Row):

In response to the [02/11/22](#), [02/18/22](#), and [03/04/22](#) issues of the MT VOID, Heath Row writes:

I recently received MT Void #2210, 2211, and 2213 via the National Fantasy Fan Federation franking service. N3F president George Phillis often distributes copies of the fanzine, and it's a welcome occasional presence in my inbox. Thank you for publishing so consistently--weekly!--and for reviewing and recommending so many interesting books and movies.

In #2210, Joe Karpierz's review of Catherynne M. Valente's COMFORT ME WITH APPLES was intriguing enough that I've added it to my reading list. \$18 feels a bit dear for a 100-page hardcover, and the book costs \$11 as an ebook, but perhaps the library has it available. The description reminded me a little bit of the novels of Paul Tremblay (THE CABIN AT THE END OF THE WORLD), Shari Lapena (THE COUPLE NEXT DOOR), and Liz Nugent (LYING IN WAIT). Grocery store book rack thrillers, basically, or any book with a title including "next door" or "across the street." Good stuff.

Evelyn's comments on the recent book discussion group selection, H. G. Wells's THE TIME MACHINE made me yearn for a regular book group. I've dialed into a library SF discussion group across the country--and read its selected title twice--but I could use something more frequent with people I know otherwise through fandom or locally. Maybe that's something I can explore through LASFS or the N3F. I've been enjoying the short fiction of Wells recently and highly recommend "The Remarkable Case of Davidson's Eyes," "The Crystal Egg," "The New Accelerator," "The Star," "The Magic Shop," "A Vision of Judgment," and "The Queer Story of Brownlow's Newspaper," as well as the 2001 television miniseries THE INFINITE WORLDS OF H. G. WELLS, of which I've only watched one episode. I'll watch another.

Your comments on SEVERANCE in #2211 were my first indication that the show is science fiction! I thought it was just another sad workplace drama or satire. Didn't even know it was set in Bell Labs Holmdel, which is an attraction in and of itself. I'll have to reassess and consider watching. I'm surprised Cathode Ray hasn't mentioned the show in his N3F TV column on SF, fantasy, and horror programs, "Rabid Ears."

I applaud Mark's enjoyment of NIGHTMARE ALLEY. After watching the recent movie, I read the novel--which is a doozy. If you haven't read it, it's even sharper and more bleak than the film. William Lindsay Gresham sure could write. We also watched the original movie, which is more solidly noir than the new film, but the ending was a bit of a disappointment. Not at all what we expected, and while almost as bleak a turnabout at the end--returning to the beginning in a different way--it's not at all true to the book. Still, all versions are highly recommended, especially the novel.

Even though Isaac Asimov's END OF ETERNITY might not have held up well over the years, I haven't read it yet, so I'm curious about the time patrol and "basic state." Having just read Robert A. Heinlein's THE DOOR INTO SUMMER and watched a recent film adaptation, time travel has its appeal in recent days. But I can understand books not aging well. For example, I never really read Tom Swift books when I was younger, but I recently turned to the first installment, TOM SWIFT AND HIS MOTOR-CYCLE to see what all the fuss was about. I'm sure later editions smoothed out the racist portrayals, but holy cow, the first edition was enlightening in its inappropriate representations. There's a new "Tom Swift Inventors' Academy" series that I'm sure is much more vanilla and inoffensive.

And from #2213, we also enjoyed LAST NIGHT IN SOHO. I am resonating strongly with your taste, which is a good indicator that future reviews and recommendations will bode well.

See you next week! [-hr]

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

HERO OF TWO WORLDS: THE MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE IN THE AGE OF REVOLUTION by Mike Duncan (Public Affairs Books, ISBN 978-1-5417-3033-5) is somehow vaguely dissatisfying to me, and I think it is because it is neither fish nor fowl.

When I worked at Bell Labs, my department head insisted that the text of formal memoranda, reports, etc., should not use contractions, and he also objected to words such as "amongst". (And did not understand the correct use of "comprise", but that's a whole other story.) Duncan is writing a "serious" book, but every once in a while throws in informal usage such as "screwed up" or "face plant", and also throws in the occasional sentence fragment. These would be fine in a podcast, but I find them stumbling blocks in reading this book. I understand that Duncan is normally writing for his podcasts, where they would be fine, but I have to wonder where Public Affairs Books' editor was.

That aside, the book is certainly well-researched and thorough (Duncan moved to Paris for three years to be able to access all the sources there). There is a bit more foreshadowing than I would have chosen (e.g., "he hoped something something, but it was not to be" sort of thing), but that may be just my taste. (For that matter, perhaps my other objections are as well.) I'm not sure I got much more out of this than I did from the "Revolutions" podcasts, but for those not listening to them, it certainly covers the territory.

Another book connected to Mike Duncan's podcasts and books is *ROME'S REVOLUTION: DEATH OF THE REPUBLIC AND BIRTH OF AN EMPIRE* (Oxford University Press, ISBN 978-0-199-73976-9) by Richard Alston. This could serve as a follow-on to Duncan's *THE STORM BEFORE THE STORM: THE BEGINNING OF THE END OF THE ROMAN REPUBLIC* (Public Affairs Books, ISBN isbn). However, while Alston's book may be one of the best covering the period of the first century B.C.E. through the early first century C.E., there are a lot of books covering this period. (There are also a lot of movies and television shows, but don't trust any of those for accuracy. Only HBO's *ROME* comes close on the historical figures, but the two main characters are totally fictional.) Duncan's book is the only one I know of that covers how the Republic got to a state leading to the end of the Republic.

One paragraph definitely struck me as topical:

Earlier in the trip, [Auguste] Levasseur met some hard-core Jacksonian partisans in the Pennsylvania militia who threatened to take up arms if their man lost. After Adams won, he ran into them again. "Well," Levasseur said, "the great question is decided, and in a manner contrary to your hopes, what do you intend to do? How soon do you lay siege to the capital?" They laughed. "You recollect our threats," one said, "we went in truth to great lengths, but our opponents disregarded it and acted properly. Now that it is settled all we have to do is obey. We will support Adams as zealously as if he were our candidate, but at the same time shall keep a close watch on his administration and according as it is good or bad we will defend or attack it. Four years is soon past, and the consequences of a bad election are easily obviated."

How times have changed! :-(-ecl]

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Quote of the Week:

The major advances in civilization are processes that
all but wreck the societies in which they occur.
--A. N. Whitehead

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