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Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society
 05/15/20 -- Vol. 38, No. 46, Whole Number 2119

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http://leepers.us/mtvoid/back_issues.htm.

Cowe and Bull (comments by Mark R. Leeper):

As a writer and the main force behind a major international news publication, the MT VOID, I believe it is very important to present all sides of an issue. I am not the kind of person that you have to dislocate my jaw if I am not presenting your point of view. No, sir, never again. A viewpoint has been presented to me and I want to pass it on and be rid of it. I recently argued against the eating of beef on the grounds (no pun intended) that a cow/bull is a reasonably intelligent animal that makes friends with others of its own kind. You should not be fooled by the fact that it spends all day eating the same grass it makes doo-doo in; we are not here to argue matters of taste.

The argument has been put to me that my attitude is unfair to cattle. (Yeah! Can you believe it?) The argument is that cattle are bred to be eaten and look at all the cattle I would be denying life to if I don't eat them ground up in tiny little pieces on a bun. This argument traces back philosophically to one of the more common and hence weirder views of the universe. That is that the universe is a giant amusement park with one ride called The Life. Souls, in this case cow souls, stand in a long line waiting to ride The Life. In some parts of the East the belief is that when a cow soul gets off it says, "Wow! Let's go on that one again!" In our part of the world we believe that if you rode the ride following the rules and sat quietly and enjoyed the ride, when you get off you go and get cotton candy. If, however, you stood up in your seat and screamed and waved your arms when you weren't really scared, then when you get off you throw up for all eternity.

Now if no cow soul ever gets off the ride, then the poor cow souls waiting in line never get a chance to ride. Now what my learned correspondent is suggesting is that we alleviate the problem by building an artificial brick wall on the ride where the car rams into it, killing the passenger. This frees up the car to return for the next passenger and gives us something we can scrape off the wall, put on a bun, and eat. And this is supposed to be a kindness to the cow souls waiting in line. I trust the fallacy in that argument is now abundantly clear. [-mrl]

Retro Hugo Finalists--The Other Categories

(comments by John Hertz):

John Hertz writes:

In the Retro-Hugos, I keep nominating Alex Raymond for Best Pro Artist. This year he might even be thought more deserving than some of the finalists (Berger, Brundage, Dolgow, Fox, Orban, Timmins). However, at least he appears on the ballot under Best Graphic Story or Comic for two achievements with FLASH GORDON.

The Best Fanwriter ballot of Leiber, Morojo, Rosenblum, Speer, Tucker, Warner happens to be exactly the list of candidates at http://fanac.org/fanzines/Retro_hugos.html. Indeed they are all worthy. However--just to mention one additional name--what about Bill Watson, whose DIABLERIE is worthily on the Best Fan Ballot?

"Best Fanartist" was dropped again, presumably for not drawing enough nominations. However, to go no further than than fanzine images at the Fanac.org candidates page, what about Ron Clyne, Lora Crozetti, Ava Lee, Maliano, Frank Robinson, Alva Rogers, Jack Weidenbeck? That's two more than the five an eligible nominator could have listed, just to give choices.

What, indeed? [-jh]

Scary Movies and Television Shows (letters of comment by Guy Lillian and Tom Russell):

In response to [Mark's comments on television shows that frightened him as a child](#) in the 05/01/20 issue of the MT VOID, Guy Lillian writes:

How right you are about the TV shows that freaked us out as kids. I turned off the "Captain Midnight" "Electrified Man" episode just before the title menace met the little girl on roller skates--what happened? who remembers?--and the "face on the wall" eppy of "One Step Beyond" sent me shrieking from the room at 10, and still freaked me when I looked it up at 69. Worst was the classic "Twilight Zone" starring Rod Taylor, "And When the Sky was Opened", which blew me away when I saw its first run. Poor Ms. Argo was babysitting me and had to spend an hour calming me down. Now that show is one of my favorites.

And what about that Birmingham kids' show that scared me so much when I was 4? It opened with a spooky head caroming around the screen moaning "Mr. MAAAAAAAAGIC! Mr. MAAAAAAAAGIC!" Nuts to that noise. I moved on to Willie the Worm and Winky Dink. [-ghl]

Mark replies:

You have a good memory. But I still get a chill from the stain on the wall story from "One Step Beyond". And I would say my scariest "Twilight Zone" episode would be the doppelganger at the bus station. [-mrl]

Tom Russell writes:

I was 10 years old in 1953 when I saw HOUSE OF WAX. Couldn't sleep for three nights. Couldn't keep my dinner down.

What made it scary was that innocent people became victims of (to me) unimaginable horror.

Since then I have avoided all "horror" films. [-tlr]

Mark replies:

Only two, but they were fun ones. Your reaction to HOUSE OF WAX is a good one. Somehow I like to be horrified in the same way I like very spicy mustard, very piquant hot sauce, and wasabi. I guess there is a little masochist to me. [-mrl]

Polenta and Eggs (letters of comment by Fred Lerner and Sherry Glotzer):

In response to [Mark's comments on eggs](#) in the 05/08/20 issue of the MT VOID, Fred Lerner writes:

Have you tried polenta as a substrate for your hot sauces? [-fl]

Mark replies:

I have had it when I traveled, but we have ever had it in the house. I have had tamales; I think that is much the same thing in a

different form. [-mrl]

Sherry (Leeper) Glotzer writes:

Loved your essay on "Eggs My Way", Mark. Your description of Mom's reaction to your choice of condiments seems very familiar to me. I also had my problems with her culinary skills. Lima bean soup leaps to mind. I was in sixth grade when she made the above item. I had a great deal of trouble finishing it. She made me sit at the table alone until it was gone. Some things are never forgotten. I can eat lima beans today, but not a whole bowl of that soup!

And I can remember your taste for the exotic started when you were just a toddler. You wanted mustard and jelly sandwiches. It went on from there... [-slg]

Mark responds:

The lima bean incident is very familiar. I still hate dry lima beans. Had you not eaten them they would have constituted an inconvenience, and Mom did not take did not take well to inconvenience. I remember once had this shown to me. Mom had packed a lunch for a picnic. While we were eating Mom asked how did the chicken come out. The coating was a bit soft and greasy. I replied and said so. Mom made a face filled with rage and said, "Oh. And I suppose you can do better." I had completely missed the point of her question. [-mrl]

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

Once again, the "Decameron" podcast is lagging behind, so I have no idea when the next column on that will appear. This week I'll discuss the finalists for the Hugo Award for Best Dramatic Presentation (Short Form).

THE CANTERVILLE GHOST: Based on the Oscar Wilde story, this suffers from too much "thee" and "thou" and "yea" and heavy under-cranking (which speeds up the action) in the first scene, and one wonders how the Allies won the war if American soldiers were this wacky. Then again, this is in keeping with other American comedies during the war--the soldiers seem a cross between Abbott and Costello, and the Marx Brothers. (I suppose the idea is to downplay the fact that these soldiers are supposed to go out and kill people, and make them just like the friendly neighbor back home.) Charles Laughton is a bit over the top (but he always is) and Una O'Conner is way over the top (but she always is). And while the curse will be lifted when a Canterville has to do something brave while wearing the signet ring, no one thinks to give the ring to Margaret O'Brien, who keeps doing brave things. Still, it's more enjoyable than something like *THEY CAME TO A CITY* or the many low-budget horror films that came out in 1944.

THE CURSE OF THE CAT PEOPLE: RKO told Val Lewton that they wanted a sequel to *THE CAT PEOPLE*, but they got this instead, a film about a troubled child who lives in a fantasy world and is visited by the ghost of her dead mother, Irena from *THE CAT PEOPLE*. There is also a subplot of an unbalanced neighbor and her unbalanced daughter. Yes, I suppose it's a sort of sequel, but there is no plotline overlap at all. On the one hand, it is a very atmospheric and well-thought-out movie; on the other, there is really little fantasy of note. (It is notable for being Robert Wise's first film as a director.)

DONOVAN'S BRAIN: This is the two-part "Suspense" adaptation on the CBS Radio Network, not the film *THE LADY AND THE MONSTER*, which was also a 1944 production based on the Curt Siodmak novel *DONOVAN'S BRAIN*. Since I haven't read the novel, I cannot say whether it is a faithful adaptation, but I will say that the listener having to picture the apparatus (and the brain) rather than having it shown on the screen is a definite plus, and an example of what Mark was talking about a few issues ago--that radio is perhaps the best common dramatic medium for horror.

HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN: By 1944 the Universal was resorting to "Monster Rallies"--films which combined two or more of their classic monsters in one film, and as a result could draw in people who hoped to see monsters fighting each other. This one had the Frankenstein monster, Dracula, and the Wolf Man, but no such fights ever developed; the various monsters do attack humans, but that is nothing new. (At least in the 1943 film *FRANKENSTEIN MEETS THE WOLF MAN*, there was a fight between the two title characters.) Boris Karloff is also back as a draw, but not as the Frankenstein monster.

THE INVISIBLE MAN'S REVENGE: This is yet another example of Universal playing on movie-goers' memories of their earlier classic films in order to get them to quick cheapies. The main character in this is named Robert Griffin, but has no connection to the Griffin of the first film in the series, nor is he even the scientist who develops the invisibility serum. (Basically, by the third film in any Universal series except the "Frankenstein" series, all quality had been discarded in favor of the attempt to make a quick buck.)

IT HAPPENED TOMORROW: This is somewhat similar to another 1944 film, *BETWEEN TWO WORLDS*, in that it is similar to a "Twilight Zone" episode--in this case, "Printer's Devil". Larry Stevens is a reporter who gets copies of the next day's newspapers, but when he tries to act on the advance information, things don't turn out as he hoped. (No surprise there.) There is also a romance, and a lot of comedy, but altogether it is nothing special.

Ranking: THE CURSE OF THE CAT PEOPLE, DONOVAN'S BRAIN, THE CANTERVILLE GHOST, no award, IT HAPPENED TOMORROW, HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN, THE INVISIBLE MAN'S REVENGE

[-ecl]

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Quote of the Week:

Until you walk a mile in another man's moccasins you
can't imagine the smell.

--Robert Byrne

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