

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

THE CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON (1954) is imprinted on our cultural psychology perhaps only surpassed by King Kong and Godzilla. The creature himself is an icon more recognizable than any number of screen monsters that have appeared in the two-thirds of a century intervening. The science of the script is laughably problematic, but does not seem much of a flaw. What is remembered is a short sequence with Julie Adams swimming on the surface while unknown to her the creature is swimming a symmetric dance. This is certainly one of the most fondly remembered of the science fiction films of the 1950s. It probably is not for the script, which frankly is flawed, but some the visual images work well in the film. Still the film is a classic.

[A full retrospective on this ran in last week's MT VOID.]

[CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON, Monday, October 12 @ 2:00 PM]

Also, every Monday evening in October TCM is running a Peter Cushing festival:

October 5:

8:00 PM Cash on Demand (1961)
9:30 PM End of the Affair, The (1955)
11:30 PM Time Without Pity (1957)
1:15 AM John Paul Jones (1959)
3:30 AM Hamlet (1948)

October 12:

8:00 PM Sword of Sherwood Forest (1960)
9:30 PM Dr. Who and the Daleks (1965)
11:00 PM Daleks - Invasion Earth 2150 A.D. (1966)
12:30 AM She (1965)
2:30 AM Violent Playground (1958)
4:30 AM In Saigon: Some May Live (1967)

October 19:

8:00 PM Hound of the Baskervilles, The (1959)
9:30 PM Horror of Dracula (1958)
11:15 PM Mummy, The (1959)
1:00 AM Curse of Frankenstein, The (1957)
2:45 AM Frankenstein Created Woman (1967)
4:30 AM Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed! (1970)

October 26:

8:00 PM Nothing But the Night (1972)
9:45 PM Madhouse (1974)
11:30 PM From Beyond the Grave (1973)
1:30 AM Scream and Scream Again (1970)
4:45 AM Dracula A.D. 1972 (1972)

MACHINE by Elizabeth Bear (copyright 2020, Gallery Books, \$15.99, hardcover, ISBN: 9781534403017) (book review by Joe Karpierz):

MACHINE is the second book in the White Space series, the first being 2019's ANCESTRAL NIGHT. I will confess to not having read ANCESTRAL NIGHT, but it is sitting in my to-be-read pile/stack/list/whatever. The good news is that the reader need not have read the first book to enjoy and understand MACHINE. While there are references to the first book (I am given to understand), and a few people and things from that book appear in MACHINE, knowing the intricate details of those things--and people--is not necessary to the enjoyment of this book.

Doctor Brooklynn Jens is a rescue specialist. If there are entities that are in trouble, she will not hesitate to jump out an open airlock of a spaceship to help those in need. And, in fact, that's how MACHINE starts off. The ship Jens is assigned to is responding to a distress signal. When Sally--Jens' ship--arrives at the signal they discover that the signal is emanating from a ship that is docked (or attached to, take your pick) to an ancient generation starship that departed Earth hundreds of years earlier, from the time before humans joined an interstellar civilization called the Synarche and before they were able to overcome all the sorts of things our civilization was afflicted with. The process is called "rightminding", and just the name makes be a bit squeamish, although those who are rightminded are certainly more civilized than those who aren't. It's quite the complicated issue, and one that still has me thinking about being rightminded. While it may be for humanity's own good, it is somewhat frightening that our future selves would possibly allow themselves to have their minds meddled with in the name of better behavior.

In any event, Jens and her team enter the generation ship first, as that one is friendly to oxygen breathers while the other is not. What they find is that the entire crew is in cryogenic sleep containers, while their creepy caretaker, Helen (whose full name is a take off on Helen O'Loy), is somewhat confused and scary. The job is to get the crew of the generation ship *and* Helen on to the rescue ship and then somehow get the crew of the second ship taken back to the medical station Core General as well.

And that is probably the most straightforward piece of this entirely enthralling space opera. It turns out that Core General itself is the victim of sabotage, and Jens' assignment has changed from dealing with the survivors on the generation ship to finding out exactly what is going on at Core General. The weird thing is that several of Jens' colleagues and superiors are aware of what's going on, but there's nothing they can do about it. And they're the ones that have assigned Jens the job of finding out what's going on.

While it's clear to many long time readers of SF and space opera that MACHINE owes a lot to James White's Sector General stories, Bear also credits C. J. Cherryh as an inspiration in writing this novel. That inspiration shows as well.

MACHINE is a highly entertaining space opera that has, in Bear's own words, a Rube-Goldbergian plot. Just when the reader thinks they have figured out what's going on, Bear sends the story off in yet another direction that keeps that reader entertained until the very end. There have been a lot of space operas that have been written recently, all attempting in their own way to update the subgenre to make it relevant to the 21st century. Bear has done a terrific job in doing just that. MACHINE is highly recommended. Now I guess I'd better go read ANCESTRAL NIGHT. [-jak]

Gender-Reveal Update (comments by Evelyn C. Leeper):

G. Willow Wilson said that 10,000 acres were burned because of a gender-reveal party. The number is now 21,000 and there has been one fatality. (A previous gender-reveal party had the first fatality, so this makes two.) There has also been at least one plane crash. [-ecl]

Tarzan Movies (letter of comment by Kip Williams):

I have a definite favorite in the series: TARZAN'S NEW YORK ADVENTURE (1942) gives us the Ape Man in the Big Apple, climbing around in the concrete jungle, mostly wearing a business suit. And I'm pretty sure other stuff happens as well. There's a circus involved. I'm glad I have a recording of it that I can (theoretically) find and watch, since we don't have cable any more.

Other than that, I have preferences. The ones where he fights Nazis are always good, and TARZAN AND HIS MATE will always be watchable for me, for a reason I probably need not mention. [-kw]

Monsters (letter of comment by Dorothy J. Heydt):

In response to [Mark's comments on the Creature from the Black Lagoon](#) in the 09/18/20 issue of the MT VOID, Dorothy J. Heydt writes:

[Mark writes,] "They are really pushing convergent evolution particularly making the creature attracted to Kay. Consider how many more people know what the creature looks like and how few can picture the Martians from WAR OF THE WORLDS." [-mrl]

Oh. I remember that Martian vividly, although one sees it only for a few seconds. It's one of those etched-onto-the-retina images. YMMV. Note, if you can remember it, that the Martian is terrified of either the humans or their flashlight ... I'll have to get out the DVD and watch it again. [-djh]

[Mark writes,] "Does the writer think he himself could be attracted to a female gorilla, no matter how cute? [-mrl]

John Collier wrote a novel called HIS MONKEY WIFE. Although (mind, I haven't read it) the bride appears to be a chimp, not a gorilla. [-djh]

Evelyn adds:

"Rachel in Love" by Pat Murphy. [-ecl]

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST (1946) (letters of comment by Gary McGath, Paul Dormer, and Keith F. Lynch):

In response to [Evelyn's comments on BEAUTY AND THE BEAST \(1946\)](#) in the 09/18/20 issue of the MT VOID, Gary McGath writes:

I love that movie.

[Re Running the film backwards] Clever. The trick of running the film backwards is also used in the silent version of THE

TEN COMMANDMENTS for the parting of the Red Sea.

[Re this being a lookist film] Is it? Belle regards the Beast as hideous, even if that isn't well conveyed, and learns to see beyond that.

The ending felt like a letdown to me. The special effects overwhelm the characters.

[On the Beast lapping up water] I think the idea is that he's beastly in psychology as well as appearance. [-gmg]

Paul Dormer writes:

I haven't seen that film for years, but I did watch Cocteau's ORPHEE again last year. (I'd just been to see the Philip Glass opera and I wanted to see it again.)

Another simple special effect in that. Someone puts their hand into a mirror. It was actually a bath of mercury and the image was rotated so it looked like a vertical mirror.

At least the person was wearing gloves when they did that. Even in the Sixties we were handling mercury with bare hands in school chemistry lessons.

Actually, I think it was part of the plot. A special pair of gloves was needed in order to enter a mirror. [-pd]

Keith F. Lynch demurs:

Metallic mercury isn't particularly dangerous. One nurse attempted suicide by injecting herself with about a kilo of it. It didn't hurt her at all. It did make her x-rays look a lot more interesting.

You wouldn't want to sleep every night on a bed made of it, as a few rich people did. But the real danger is from methyl mercury. One person died because she got a single drop of that stuff on the outside of the latex gloves she was wearing. [-kfl]

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST (1946) and Translation (letters of comment by Paul Dormer, Tim Merrigan, Scott Dorsey, Dorothy J. Heydt, Keith F. Lynch, Kevin R, Steve Coltrin, and John Halpenny): In response to [Evelyn's comments on translation in BEAUTY AND THE BEAST \(1946\)](#) in the 09/18/20 issue of the MT VOID, Gary McGath writes:

[Regarding the horse being told to go] "Va ou je veux aller, Le Magnifique. Va! Va! Va!" (Accent mark omitted for the sake of sticking to ASCII.) [-gmg]

Paul Dormer writes:

I am reminded of a subtitling problem I saw in a French film shown on the BBC, it must have been back in the Eighties.

It was a slightly surreal policier. The detective finds a woman standing over the corpse of her husband. Instead of arresting her, he spends the night with her. The next morning, he's getting dressed, she's still in bed.

"Did you sleep well?" he asks, according to the subtitle.

I could hear the actual French of the reply:

"Oui. Et vous, uh, tu?"

The subtitle was just something like, "Yes, and you?" [-pd]

Tim Merrigan responds:

Considering that standard English doesn't use the informal, so most people wouldn't understand the significance of "Yes, and you, uh, thou," how would you have translated it? [-tm]

Paul Dormer answers:

Yes, my point was that it was untranslatable and you have to bear in mind when dealing with a translated text, you are not always getting the full picture.

There's a rather fun book called IS THAT A FISH IN YOUR EAR? by David Bellos on the joys and pitfalls of translation. [-pd]

Evelyn adds:

I reviewed Bellos's book in the 01/20/2012 issue of the MT VOID, with more comments in the 07/12/2019 issue; they are available at <http://leepers.us/evelyn/reviews/rev-b.htm#fish>. [-ecl]

Scott Dorsey replies:

It goes both ways. I remember watching GO WEST--a Marx Brothers film--with French subtitles. Groucho asks a Native American if he's the chief that goes from Chicago to Los Angeles in two days (which is a joke about a train which would not translate well to a European audience). The subtitles replaced it with a completely different joke altogether.

And then there is Jerry Lewis. The guy who dubs Jerry Lewis into French is actually funny and his jokes are much better than Lewis' too. [-sd]

Paul adds:

I have heard a report--possibly apocryphal--as told by an Englishman watching the film Cross of Iron being shown in a Paris cinema. The film opens with an extended action sequence with no dialogue. Then a head peeps over a parapet and see a line of armoured vehicles approaching.

"Tanks!" he cries.

The subtitle read, "Merci". [-pd]

Dorothy J. Heydt suggests:

The closest thing we've had in English for several centuries now is use of first name vs. last name. Miss Manners gave the example of a 19th-century gent saying to his beloved, "Miss Smith ... may I call you Martha?" It's the equivalent of the Spanish "vamos a tutearnos," which I saw in my second-year Spanish text, in which the two start using "tu" to one another *and* simultaneously start using first names.

But switching from last to first name is going out rapidly, at least in the US; everybody first-names everybody else, or so it sounds to a casual ear. [-djh]

Keith F. Lynch replies:

I agree. "They call me Mr. Tibbs" in the 1967 movie, IN THE HEAT OF THE NIGHT has aged badly. To modern audiences, Mr. Tibbs sounds very stuck up. [0kfl]

Kevin R disagrees:

An African-American professional demanding a form of respect normally only accorded to white folks from a white law enforcement officer?

I'd say that would resonate, today.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i6n8VyqaCQ4>

[-kr]

Keith responds:

I know the context. Do you really think there are any major movies about wrongful accusations that I haven't watched?

But today, regardless of race, everyone would address everyone else by their first name, and nobody would take offense at it. On the other hand, the cop's casual use of the N-word would get him fired, unlike merely killing an innocent person or three. [-kfl]

Kevin counters:

There are sure to be some reading the group who hadn't seen the film, or read the book.

Having just spent the last 10 years doing customer care by phone, and ~25 years before that in brick and mortar retail, perhaps I have different experiences and sensibilities. I have interacted with people who are fine with "hey, you!" all the way to folks who are very bristly when they are not addressed with honorifics they feel are their due.

My default has always been to start out with formal address, then to use less formal forms if invited to.

I have worked in cube farms where all co-workers were on a first-name basis, and I'd rack my brain sometimes trying to find out a last name when I needed one.

In '67, Gillespie's use of that word might get him elected to the state legislature. [-kr]

Paul Dormer responds to Dorothy:

I remember hearing recently a piece of comic verse the gist of which was a conversation between Jerome K. Jerome and Ford Maddox Ford about the problems they have with their names. If some just says "Jerome" are they being stand-offish or unnecessarily informal. [-pd]

Steve Coltrin suggests:

And as a second-order phenomenon there's full first name vs. brief vs. diminutive. (Viz. Russian, with full-first-name-and-patronymic vs. three different forms of diminutive, one of which only entered wide usage in the Nineties.) [-sc]

John Halpenny relates:

I was in Texas some years ago with some older gentlemen who addressed me as "you all" until they got to know me well enough to just use "you". [-jh]

Dorothy J. Heydt responds:

And there's the story of the Yorkshireman who said to his underling, "Don't tha thou me afore I thous thee!" [-djh]

Steve writes:

There's a scene in "Your Name." where one of the protagonists is stumbling over what pronoun they should use for themselves during a conversation. The subtitles are something along the lines of "I (wrong for X reason) ... I (wrong for Y reason) ... I". No idea how the English dub handled it--I won't watch dubs. [-sc]

Dorothy asks:

What was the original language? Japanese maybe? (About which I know not much, but I believe there are various honorific grades of pronouns; does this include first-person singular?)

Steve answers:

'Twas. Japanese has *oodles* of classifiers (they aren't pronouns) for first and second person, encoding things such as absolute social position, relative position between speaker and hearer, etc. (None for third person. For third, you use name, job, etc. And yes, there's a whole flotilla of honorific suffixes.)

(Also, Japanese doesn't really have grammatical number. In a very real sense, all Japanese nouns are mass nouns - you have to add a suffix to turn one into a count noun before you can specify how many there are. And the suffix depends on (mostly) what shape the thing is. (This is still simpler than what Navajo does.)) [-sc]

Evelyn notes:

John McWhorter's "Lexicon Valley" podcast from 09/15/20 covers similar topics--in particular, the use of different language (and not just pronouns) depending on to whom you are speaking. [-ecl]

[More at https://groups.google.com/g/rec.arts.sf.fandom/c/RMzuQ_mCPhc.

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

THE HAUNTING OF H. G. WELLS by Robert Masello (47North, ISBN 978-1-542-09378-1) is an odd mixture of historical fiction, romance, and the supernatural. Well, maybe to others it would not seem odd; I realize there are lots of supernatural historical romance novels. But it is not something of which I have read a lot.

The romance is the relationship between Wells and Rebecca West, as well as his relationship with his wife Jane.(whose real name was Amy Catherine, in case any of you TIME AFTER TIME fans was wondering). The historical part is World War I and the social movements of the time. And the supernatural ... well, that's a bit trickier. [SPOILERS] Masello keeps throwing

red herrings at us, starting with the "Angels of Mons", a genuine story/urban legend of a supernatural event during the war. After pretty much dismissing that, he hands us another possibility in the "ghouls" of the battlefield. And so on. He does eventually get to genuine supernatural happenings, but only after several "false starts." You will either find this clever, or you will want to strangle him.

I found the historical aspects of far more interest than the romance, and the supernatural aspects of interest only insofar as they served the historical part. Masello does have Arthur Machen and Alistair Crowley as characters, along with Wells and West, and Winston Churchill, but since one cannot tell how much of their characters are fictionalized, there's always the possibility of the unreliable narrator. Well, okay, we *know* the main plot is fiction. But it is the sort of "enemy agent" plot that one can accept in an historical fiction novel.

If you want a better World War I historical novel involving a famous character and possible supernatural goings-on, read **SHERLOCK HOLMES: THE SPIRIT BOX** by George Mann (Titan, ISBN 978-1-781-16002-2). Mann has written several books in the supernatural alternate history of Newbury & Hobbes, and Newbury appears here as well. Again, we have a German plot against England, this time more centered on espionage, and the question of whether there is anything supernatural going on runs throughout the book. [-ecl]

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Quote of the Week:

The analysis of variance is not a mathematical theorem,
but rather a convenient method of arranging the
arithmetic.

--Ronald Fisher

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