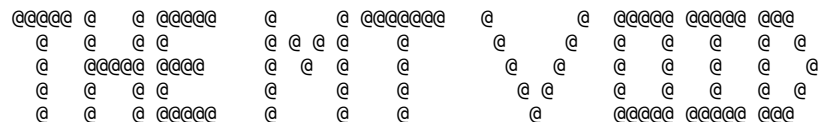


# MT VOID 11/26/21 -- Vol. 40, No. 22, Whole Number 2199



Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society  
11/26/21 -- Vol. 40, No. 22, Whole Number 2199

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### Science Fiction (and Other) Discussion Groups, Films, Lectures, etc. (NJ):

Both groups have returned to the B.C. (Before Covid) schedules, and the films will be shown as part of the Middletown meetings.

The November MTPL meeting was postponed due to scheduling conflicts with several members.

December 2 (MTPL), 5:30PM: NIGHT OF THE DEMON, short story  
"Casting the Runes" by M. R. James  
<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/9629>  
January 6, 2022 (MTPL), 5:30PM: Stanislaw Lem Centennial:  
PILOT PIRX'S INQUEST (1979), short story "The Inquest"  
by Stanislaw Lem  
<https://tinyurl.com/Pirx-More-Tales>  
January 27, 2022 (OBPL) 7:00PM: THE TIME MACHINE by H. G. Wells

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

At least for the record Howard Hawks did not direct The Thing from Another World, though he certainly did contribute to the creative process of that film. But a year after that film was made Hawks really did direct a science fiction film. It is not remembered like The Thing, but that is because it was really not intended for a science fiction audience. The film was a comedy with Cary Grant and Ginger Rogers. It was a somewhat half-hearted film at that, neither good science fiction nor good comedy. Even if it was Christian Nyby who directed The Thing from Another World, that film better represents the best of Hawks, and not Monkey Business.

Cary Grant plays the absent-minded Professor Barnaby Fulton and Ginger Rogers plays his wife Edwina. As the film opens they are on the way to a party. But before he can leave Barnaby gets involved thinking about a problem he is having with an (as yet) unexplained formula he is trying to develop for Oxley, the chemical company for which he works. Edwina humors him and fixes him a hot bowl of soup. This gives Barnaby the idea he thinks he needs to use with his formula-he has to heat it. Too late to go to the party at least his mind is off of his problem. He has a romantic evening home alone with Edwina rather than going to the party. Having romantic evenings when they are expected at parties is a continuing theme of this film.

The next morning at the office at Oxley Chemical we learn a little more about the formula. His boss Oxley (Charles Coburn) is waiting on his results and wants to call it B4. As we learn what he is working on is a rejuvenating formula, a sort of chemical fountain of youth. Almost immediately it seems that he has it. An elderly experimental chimpanzee is acting like a baby again. Barnaby and Oxley go to see and are impressed until Barnaby notices the chimpanzee really is another chimpanzee entirely, a young experimental subject. An accidental clothing switch has led to its being mis-identified. Disappointed Barnaby goes back to work on the formula. But when he is out of the room the playful young ape escapes again and starts mixing chemicals. The chemicals end up in the water cooler. Barnaby is ready to try his formula on himself in what should be a safe dosage. The drug is bitter, however, and he takes water from the water cooler with it, getting some of the chemical that the ape mixed up-which just happens to be the right proportions.

Barnaby starts getting an odd reaction all over his body, but then he identifies it as feeling younger. He starts feeling like a twenty-year-old. He finds he cannot be serious talking on the telephone. He leaves the lab by a window and goes out to get a younger haircut, a flashy jacket and pants, and a sport car. Oxley has sent out his sexy secretary Lois (Marilyn Monroe) out to find him. She finds him buying the car and joins him. He takes her out in the car and soon plows it into a truck. He leaves the car at a body shop and takes Lois out roller-skating, swimming, and for a general good time. At then end of the afternoon they pick up the car again.

Driving back to the lab Barnaby finds that he is reverting to his older self as the effect wears off. Again he wrecks the car. Edwina comes to find him as the lab and finds him resting up. He tells her about his adventures. She is a little suspicious of the lipstick on Barnaby's face, but is trusting enough. Barnaby tells her he has discovered his formula and it is a success. Barnaby is ready to try the formula again that same evening, but Edwina is not so trusting of her husband after all. She gets to it first and drinks it with water from the water cooler. After a few minutes it is her who is acting like a twenty-year-old. She insists that Barnaby take her to the hotel where they honeymooned. They even get the bridal suite. There is a dance floor and a band playing in the hotel and though it is now 11pm after a hard day they go out on the dance floor where Edwina dances like Ginger Rogers. From there it is up to the room.

What starts like a romantic interlude is even more like the first night of a honeymoon. Suddenly Edwina gets cold feet and ends up locking Barnaby outside the room in his pajamas (without the drawstring) and without his glasses. Barnaby ends up spending the night in the hotel laundry. Next morning Edwina is back to normal and takes Barnaby home, still in his pajamas. There Edwina's lawyer and her mother, called by Edwina under the influence of the formula, are waiting to castigate Barnaby.

Barnaby and Edwina return to the lab. The whole experience has been an eye-opener to him. He is ready to destroy the formula. But he still does not know the real formula is in the water cooler. Edwina makes coffee using water cooler water and the two of them are acting like children. Meanwhile the Board of Directors of Oxley Chemical knows the formula does not work and assume that there is an ingredient missing in Barnaby's recipe. However, coaxing a non-existent ingredient from a young child is more difficult than they had realized. Together Barnaby and Edwina wreak havoc through the neighborhood just acting like children. Barnaby uses some neighborhood children to have revenge on his wife's old boy friend.

There are the expected comical mix-ups including Edwina finding a young child and thinking that it is Barnaby. While the Board of Directors of Oxley Chemical are waiting for the formula to wear off the infant the board all drinks for the tainted water cooler and are all reduced to children. Finally all problems are resolved and Barnaby concludes that you are young if you feel young.

If this is science fiction, and it is by virtue of a technicality, it really is more the feel of a fantasy film. I do not think anybody writing the film seriously wanted to look at the human effect of the aging process and the affect it would have on society if it could be turned back. If the film had been made ten years earlier it would have used magic rather than science.

This is a film made for a few minutes diversion, but no thought of any great depth. It is the cinematic equivalent to playing solitaire. In spite of itself there is some serious content to the film, though it is easily overlooked. It suggests, somewhat complacently that youth is not as good as we like to think. Youth is associated in this film with superficiality. Basically it is a film made for adults that pokes fun at the behavior of young people. These days with young people going to digitized theaters, films are more likely to make fun of mature adults.

The film tells us there is nothing that a youth drug can do for you that cannot be better done by just getting in the proper frame of mind. Youth is not wasted on the young, but it would waste anyone else. "You are old only when you forget you are young," Grant tells his wife.

Of course the only way to put a happy ending on this film is to have people accept their aging and look on it as if it is a good thing. The film is somewhat contrived for this ending. Of course that is not all that is contrived. The chimpanzee is over-trained and behaves like no chimp ever would. This is chimpanzee behavior from the Tarzan school of animal acting. The adult imitations of child behavior are equally unconvincing. The script is mediocre in most regards. It is a Fifties film so it could not be explicit about sex, nor would that have fit well into the period, but there is plenty of sexual innuendo in the dialog without actually saying anything overt. Presumably that was part of the art of script writing at the time.

It makes the film a little more interesting is the reprise of two actors familiar from *The Thing from Another World*. Douglas Spencer who played Scotty and Robert Cornthwaite who played Carrington are two of the chemists at Oxley. It is not enough to salvage the film and their roles are quite small, but it is still a minor reward.

I would give *MONKEY BUSINESS* a high +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

[*MONKEY BUSINESS* (1952), December 1, 12:30AM]

Evelyn notes that there are the usual Christmas fantasies, including \*three\* showings of the 1938 *A CHRISTMAS CAROL*. There \*is\* a Hanukkah double feature, though:

12/05/2021 08:00 PM The Dybbuk (1938)

12/05/2021 10:00 PM Tevya (1939)

Look for Mark's review of THE DYBBUK in next week's issue.

There is also Guillermo del Toro's first feature-length film:

12/06/2021 02:45 AM Cronos (1993)

And there is a day devoted to Tarzan:

12/09/2021 08:15 AM Tarzan the Fearless (1933)  
12/09/2021 09:45 AM Tarzan and His Mate (1934)  
12/09/2021 11:45 AM The New Adventures of Tarzan (1935)  
12/09/2021 12:45 PM Tarzan Escapes (1936)  
12/09/2021 02:30 PM Tarzan's Revenge (1938)  
12/09/2021 03:45 PM Tarzan Finds a Son! (1939)  
12/09/2021 05:15 PM Tarzan's Secret Treasure (1941)  
12/09/2021 06:45 PM Tarzan's New York Adventure (1942)

[-mrl]

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

LIVES OF THE STOICS--THE ART OF LIVING FROM ZENO TO MARCUS AURELIUS by Ryan Holiday and Stephen Hanselman (Portfolio Penguin, ISBN 978-0-525-54187-5) covers twenty-six Stoic philosophers:

- Zeno the Prophet
- Cleanthes
- Aristo
- Chrisippus
- Zeno the Maintainer
- Diogenes
- Antipater
- Panaetius
- Publius Rutilius Rufus
- Posidonis
- Iotimus
- Cicero
- Cato the Younger
- Portia Cato
- Athenodorus
- Arius Didymus
- Agrippinus
- Seneca
- Cornutus
- Gaius Rubellius Plautus
- Thræsea
- Helvidius Priscus
- Musonius Rufus
- Epictetus
- Junius Rusticus
- Marcus Aurelius

Some are well-known (e.g., Marcus Aurelius); others are known only to specialists in Stoicism (e.g., Cornutus the Common).

That this is aimed at the non-specialist reader is shown by the description of how while Julius Canus waited for the executioner to arrive from Caligula, he played a game of chess. Chess wasn't known in Europe until many centuries later; an academic book would (I hope) use a more accurate name for the game, but Holiday and Hanselman want something the reader can identify, even if inaccurately.

Holiday and Hanselman also have a bit of a political agenda. In their chapter on Publius Rutilius Rufus, they write, "It's a populist irony--the strongman comes to power by making impossible and destructive promises to the disenfranchised. Do they actually have any intention of helping these people? Of course not. In fact, they'll actively stymie any reforms that will actually make the system more fair. All that matters is their iron grip on their ignorant base and the power that comes from it."

In the chapter on Seneca, they talk about how Seneca "enabled" (my word) Nero for a long time, and then attempted to withdraw. But

they note, "There is no evidence of a principled resignation, as the Stoic-inspired secretary of defense James Mattis would give to President Donald Trump in a disagreement over policy in Syria." Comparing Trump to Nero is a pretty clear statement of the authors' position.

"Why did Marcus [Aurelius] remain good while so many other rulers have broken bad? His relationship and deference to a wise, older man like [Junius] Rusticus explains a lot of it." Well, actually no. His "relationship and deference to a wise, older man" is just another aspect of it. Nero had a relationship with and at least the possibility of deference to a wise, older man (Seneca), but he did not make the same use of it, or turn out to be as good a ruler as Marcus Aurelius.

LIVES OF THE STOICS is interesting, but I think actually reading the Stoics (which pretty much means the "Meditations" of Marcus Aurelius for a start) is a better use of one's time. [-ecl]

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Quote of the Week:

From Alexander the Platonic, not frequently nor without necessity to say to any one, or to write in a letter, that I have no leisure; nor continually to excuse the neglect of duties required by our relation to those with whom we live, by alleging urgent occupations.  
--Marcus Aurelius

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