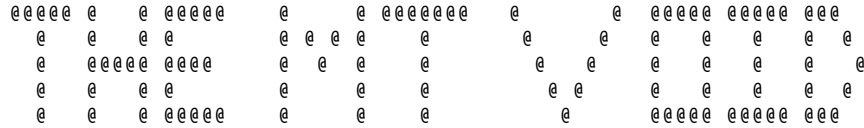


MT VOID 07/28/23 -- Vol. 42, No. 4, Whole Number 2286



07/28/23 -- Vol. 42, No. 4, Whole Number 2286

Table of Contents

- [Science Fiction \(and Other\) Discussion Groups, Films, Lectures, etc. \(NJ\)](#)
- [My Picks for Turner Classic Movies for August](#) (comments by Mark R. Leeper)
- [This Week's Reading](#) (GIRLFRIEND ON MARS) (book comments by Evelyn C. Leeper)
- [Quote of the Week](#)

Co-Editor: Mark Leeper, mleeper@optonline.net
 Co-Editor: Evelyn Leeper, eleeper@optonline.net
 Sending Address: 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
 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.

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

Meetings in Middletown are in-person; meetings in Old Bridge are Zoomed. The best way to get the latest information is to be on the mailing lists for them.

- August 3, 2023 (MTPL) FANTASTIC VOYAGE (1966) & novel
 FANTASTIC VOYAGE by Isaac Asimov
<https://allnovel.net/fantastic-voyage/page-1.html>
- September 7, 2023 (MTPL) TBD
- September 28 (OBPL) TBD

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

This month I want to point out a film that is not in a genre I usually cover. That film is BLACK NARCISSUS (1947), written and directed by the team of Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger (a.k.a. "The Archers"). Powell and Pressburger collaborated on two dozen films between 1939 and 1972, including the well-known fantasy films A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH and THE TALES OF HOFFMAN. Michael Powell also directed the 1940 THE THIEF OF BAGDAD starring Sabu, and Sabu is one of the main actors in BLACK NARCISSUS. And the film is the story of a group of nuns who try to establish a hospital and school in a remote mountain

area of India.

The first thing that strikes one about BLACK NARCISSUS is its use of color, or more specifically its use of Technicolor by cinematographer Jack Cardiff (who won an Academy Award for this film, as did Alfred Junge for Art Direction/Set Decoration). However, they were possibly somewhat constrained by the Technicolor Motion Pictures Corporation's requirement that studios were required to hire Natalie Kalmus as a "color consultant" on any film that used the process. Kalmus frequently clashed with directors, cinematographers, set designers, and costumers about color, so it is never quite clear who should get credit (or blame) for the results on Technicolor films from 1934 to 1949. Still, the decision to use Technicolor was obviously key in the eventual look of the film.

The film's backgrounds are also striking, so it is a bit of a shock to discover that the rugged Himalayas were either matte paintings or the rugged scenery of County Galway in Ireland. (The English locations were used for the gardens, the forest, and various interiors and Asian scenes.)

The performances at times seem a bit overwrought, especially Kathleen Byron as Sister Ruth, and May Hallat as the servant. All the nuns seem affected in one way or other by the isolation and alienness of the convent high in the Himalayas, but Sister Ruth started out a little unbalanced already. Deborah Kerr is Sister Clodagh, in charge of the convent, and prone to the sin of pride and ambition. Flora Robson is the sister in charge of the gardens, who falls under the spell of the environment. Judith Furse is the sister in charge of the infirmary, and Jenny Laird is to teach the girls of the area lace-making, but becomes too attached to the children. Sabu as the local Rajput general's son and David Farrar as the general's agent are more restrained (though Farrar's character is prone to drunkenness). Jean Simmons is also in the cast as a local girl attracted to Sabu (whose character is never named, but always called "the young general"). (Both Kerr and Byron were nominated for the New York Film Critics Award for Best Actress Award; Kerr ultimately won.)

[BLACK NARCISSUS (1947), Saturday, August 12, 10:00 PM]

Other films of interest include:

WEDNESDAY, August 2
5:45 PM The Trial (1963)
8:00 PM Psycho (1960)

MONDAY, August 7
2:00 PM Captain Nemo And The Underwater City (1970)

WEDNESDAY, August 9
12:00 AM Topper Returns (1941)

THURSDAY, August 10
11:30 PM A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court (1949)

TUESDAY, August 15
11:30 AM Lost Horizon (1937)

THURSDAY, August 17
9:45 PM The Ghost Breakers (1940)

WEDNESDAY, August 23
2:00 PM Twice Told Tales (1963)
6:15 PM The Last Man on Earth (1964)
8:00 PM House of Wax (1953)
9:45 PM House on Haunted Hill (1958)
11:15 PM The Pit and the Pendulum (1961)

THURSDAY, August 24
12:45 AM The Masque of the Red Death (1964)
2:30 AM The Tingler (1959)
4:15 AM The Bat (1959)

SATURDAY, August 26
1:30 AM Escape from New York (1981)

SUNDAY, August 27
10:15 AM The Return of Doctor X (1939)

MONDAY, August 28
6:15 PM George Washington Slept Here (1942)

TUESDAY, August 29
 6:00 AM The Lion Hunters (1951)
 7:30 AM Tarzan's Fight for Life (1958)
 9:00 AM Tarzan's Three Challenges (1963)

THURSDAY, August 31
 4:15 AM Ghosts - Italian Style (1969)

[-mrl/ecl]

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

GIRLFRIEND ON MARS by Deborah Willis (Norton, ISBN 978-0-393-28591-8) starts out as a commentary on reality shows and billionaires with more money than either sense, ethics, or both. There is a lot that reminds me of some of Kim Stanley Robinson's work, particularly towards the end.

Geoff Task is a multi-billionaire who decides to send two people (one-way) to Mars, and to pick them on a reality show where Season 1 has two candidates vote off the spaceship every week. (Well, not actually *off* the spaceship, but rather off the roster for the spaceship. The second season will start with the launch and follow the couple (one male, one female) to Mars. (Any similarities between Task and a certain multi-billionaire who shares half the letters in his last name is, I am sure, purely intentional.)

Amber Kivinen has decided to try for a slot. Her boyfriend Kevin, on the other hand, is content to stay on a rapidly worsening Earth, tending their illegal pot farm and drifting through life. Chapters alternate between Amber and Kevin as they both try to adjust to the possibility that Amber may leave Earth--and Kevin--forever.

We get to see various training/test scenarios, which are often ludicrously insufficient. Each week viewers get to vote two people off, but with basically 24/7 cameras, the producers can pretty much rig the voting.

There's also a lot of Amber and Kevin getting involved with other people to varying degrees. This is of less science fiction interest, but then this book is not being marketed as science fiction or to science fiction fans. And really, the first part is a look at social media and reality shows; it is not until the last 15% or so that there is any overt science fiction content. Still, there is discussion of climate change throughout, as well as what motivates people to go to space.

Do I recommend this? If you are looking for a more "mainstream" science fiction novel, rather than something that could be serialized in "Analog", this will certainly fill the bill.

[Deborah Willis is a Canadian author, presumably no relation to Connie Willis, even though there is a similar undercurrent of satire and humor in both of their writings, as well as attention to interpersonal relationships.] [-ecl]

Mark Leeper
 mleeper@optonline.net

Quote of the Week:

Book love ... is your pass to the greatest, the purest
 and the most perfect pleasure that God has prepared for
 his creatures.

--Anthony Trollope

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