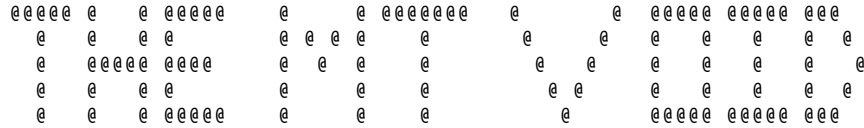


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Co-Editor: Mark Leeper, mleeper@optonline.net
 Co-Editor: Evelyn Leeper, eleeper@optonline.net
 Sending Address: evelynchimelisleeper@gmail.com
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 An index with links to the issues of the MT VOID since 1986 is at
http://leepers.us/mtvoid/back_issues.htm.

Middletown (NJ) Public Library Science Fiction Discussion Group:

The only local meetings left are in Middletown, and they are in-person. The best way to get the latest information is to be on the mailing list for it.

- Jan 4, 2024 ARRIVAL (2016) & "Story of Your Life" by Ted Chiang (1998)
<https://tinyurl.com/Chiang-StoryOfLife>
- Feb 1, 2024 METROPOLIS (1927) & novel "Metropolis" by Thea Von Harbou (1925)
<https://tinyurl.com/Metropolis-Harbou>

Mark's Picks for Turner Classic Movies for January (comments by Mark R. Leeper and Evelyn C. Leeper):

The first "Godzilla" movie was called simply "Gojira". (When it was released in the United States, it added a bunch of Raymond Burr and was renamed "Godzilla, King of the Monsters".) It would probably be impossible to find any film series with as many twists of style or intended audience as even just the original "Godzilla" series(*). The style included a film that was deadly serious, and then descended into buffoonery, though towards the end improving somewhat.

TCM is showing eight of the original series on January 1; here is the schedule (with the various alternate titles these films appeared as):

6:00 AM Godzilla (1954) (Godzilla, King of the Monsters
 [US edit])
8:00 AM Godzilla Raids Again (1955) (Gigantis the Fire Monster
 [US edit])
9:30 AM Mothra vs. Godzilla (1964) (Godzilla vs. the Thing)
11:15 AM Ghidorah, the Three-Headed Monster (1964)
1:00 PM Monster Zero (1965) (Godzilla vs. Monster Zero)
2:45 PM Ebirah, Horror of the Deep (1966)
4:30 PM Son of Godzilla (1967)
6:15 PM Destroy All Monsters (1969)

(*) There have been six sub-series; the first four Japanese, all Toho Pictures, and the last two American:

- Showa era (1954-1975)
- Heisei era (1984-1995)
- Millrennium era (1999-2004)
- Reiwa era (2016-)
- TriStar Pictures (1998-2000)
- Legendary Pictures (2014-)

[-mrl/ecl]

And some comments on some other films:

THE VANISHING (1988): Turner is showing the original classic Dutch film about a man's search for his wife, who disappeared from a roadside stop. (The American 1993 remake is an abomination, even though it is the same director for both.)

INSOMNIA (1997): This is the original Nordic noir film with Stellan Skasgard. In this case the American remake (directed by Christopher Nolan) may be just as good, but you should definitely watch the original.

THE POWER OF FILM (2023): The first four parts of a six-part original documentary on film.

And there are also four Marx Brothers films.

[-ecl]

Other films of interest include:

MONDAY, January 1
6:00 AM Godzilla (1954)
8:00 AM Godzilla Raids Again (1955)
9:30 AM Mothra vs. Godzilla (1964)
11:15 AM Ghidorah, the Three-Headed Monster (1964)
1:00 PM Monster Zero (1965)
2:45 PM Ebirah, Horror of the Deep (1966)
4:30 PM Son of Godzilla (1967)
6:15 PM Destroy All Monsters (1969)
8:00 PM Monkey Business (1931)
9:30 PM Horse Feathers (1932)
10:45 PM A Night at the Opera (1935)

TUESDAY, January 2
12:30 AM A Day at the Races (1937)
2:30 AM Room Service (1938)

4:00 AM At the Circus (1939)
6:00 AM Children of the Damned (1964)
7:45 AM The Incredible Mr. Limpet (1964)
9:30 AM 7 Faces of Dr. Lao (1964)

THURSDAY, January 4
3:00 PM The Body Disappears (1941)
8:00 PM The Power of Film: Episode 1 (2023)
11:15 PM The Power of Film: Episode 1 (2023)

FRIDAY, January 5
4:00 AM The Great Dictator (1940)

MONDAY, January 8
2:00 AM The Vanishing (1988)
4:00 AM Insomnia (1997)
11:00 PM Film: The Living Record of Our Memory (2021)

TUESDAY, January 9
1:15 AM America America (1963)

THURSDAY, January 11
10:15 AM The Glass Bottom Boat (1966)
6:00 PM The Time Machine (1960)
8:00 PM The Power of Film: Episode 2 (2023)
11:15 PM The Power of Film: Episode 2 (2023)

FRIDAY, January 12
12:15 AM Network (1976)

SATURDAY, January 13
12:00 AM The Tale of Zatoichi (1962)

TUESDAY, January 16
8:00 AM Kismet (1955)

THURSDAY, January 18
7:15 AM The China Syndrome (1979)
8:00 PM The Power of Film: Episode 3 (2023)
11:15 PM The Power of Film: Episode 3 (2023)

FRIDAY, January 19
2:00 AM A Night at the Opera (1935)
4:00 AM Modern Times (1936)
6:00 AM Jalopy (1953)

MONDAY, January 22
7:30 AM At the Circus (1939)
9:00 AM House of Wax (1953)
1:00 PM The Face of Fu Manchu (1965)
4:45 PM The Thief of Bagdad (1940)
6:45 PM Man Alive (1946)

TUESDAY, January 23
6:00 AM The Eyes of Orson Welles (2018)
6:00 PM The Glass Bottom Boat (1966)

THURSDAY, January 25
8:00 PM The Power of Film: Episode 4 (2023)
11:15 PM The Power of Film: Episode 4 (2023)

FRIDAY, January 26
12:15 AM Psycho (1960)
2:30 AM King Kong (1933)

WEDNESDAY, January 31
1:00 PM Tarzan, The Ape Man (1981)
3:00 PM Tarzan and His Mate (1934)
5:00 PM Mighty Joe Young (1949)
6:45 PM The Gorilla (1939)

TRANSLATION STATE by **Ann Leckie** (copyright 2023, Orbit, 12 hours and 3 minutes, ASIN: B0BJ4DTXSB, narrated by Adjoa Andoh) (audio book review by Joe Karpierz):

I was taken a bit by surprise when I discovered that it's been four years since Ann Leckie's last novel, *THE RAVEN TOWER* (which I did not read), six years since her last Imperial Radch novel *PROVENANCE*, and *ten* years since her debut novel, *ANCILLARY JUSTICE*, which you may remember won all sorts of awards, including the Hugo and Nebula Awards for Best Novel in 2014. *TRANSLATION STATE*, Leckie's latest novel, marks a return to the Imperial Radch universe, but stands neatly to the side of the original "Ancillary" trilogy.

The story follows three characters: Enae, who lived under the thumb of an elderly relative, and who was cast out of the house when the relative died, although not without a purpose; Reet, a mysterious orphan found as an infant on a spacecraft, adopted by a loving family who makes a habit of taking in orphans; and Qven, whose story we follow from her very beginnings as a very young Presger Translator. As is the way of stories with characters that are wholly different from each other, the lives of the three characters eventually intertwine within the confines of this engaging novel.

Enae is offered a diplomatic position in which she is assigned the task of finding a Presger Translator who went missing 200 years prior to the event of the novel. It is meant to be a nothing posting, as the person who took over the estate where she lived just wants her out of the way. It's meant to be easy, with not many tasks or responsibilities. No one expects her to find the missing Translator, whose trail has gone cold in the last 200 years. What we learn about Enae is that she has a great amount of ambition and a feeling of duty. She wants to earn the money she is getting paid, and thus no one has expected that her determination to find the lost Translator will bear fruit.

Enae makes some educated assumptions about where the missing Translator may have traveled to all those years ago, and ends up on the same planet as Reet. Reet has never really felt that he's fit in anywhere or with anyone. Reet is a bit strange, having urges to eat people. He is approached by a group that believes that he is the descendant of the rulers of a political faction to which they belong. He's never had a job that would allow him to amount to anything, but through this group he gets a job escorting visiting dignitaries, which results in him meeting Enae. Enae is curious about his background, which leads her to believe he may be a descendant of the missing Translator (this really isn't much of a spoiler, because that fact only leads to the main storyline, and is not the main storyline itself).

We learn about Qven, and thus the Presger Translators, as we follow her life from that of a very young child to the adult stages of her life. And what we learn is not very pleasant, to say the least. The young Translators are pretty much left on their own, and only as they slowly grow up do they change from creatures that eat their own kind--yes, you read that correctly--to adults who "match", to become one person with two bodies. Qven doesn't want to match, and circumstances land her in hot water when she is blamed for the attempt upon her of a forced match. Qven was meant for big things, but now those plans are ruined because of the attack.

I haven't even begun to discuss the rest of the story that follows from her. As with the previous Imperial Radch books, there is much political intrigue and infighting. Reet and Qven end up as pawns in a game that is much bigger than they could imagine.

TRANSLATION STATE is a story of gender, identity, friendship, and bonding. It is also one of belonging and identity. Leckie has woven a very complex tale and, I think, may have outdone herself in the process. I feel that *TRANSLATION STATE* is probably the second best Imperial Radch book, overshadowed only by *ANCILLARY JUSTICE*. This book can and does stand alone, with very little mention of Ancillaries or anything else from the original trilogy. It's been, as I said, six years since *PROVENANCE*, and the time was well spent.

I still struggle with commenting on the narrator of a book, and this time is no different. Adjoa Andoh narrated *PROVENANCE*, a fact I didn't remember while listening to *TRANSLATION STATE*. I don't know if it's good or bad that I didn't remember her. Good, because I don't remember getting thrown out of the story by her in *PROVENANCE*, or bad because she didn't stand out in any way. More likely it's the fact that *PROVENANCE* is six years in the past and I can't remember what I did last week. [-jak]

Will Science Fiction Conventions Ever Be the Same? (comments by Evelyn C. Leeper):

1) There is the breaking of inertia. If you go every year to a certain convention, and suddenly miss it for three years, there is no longer than inner drive to maintain your "streak".

2) In the 20th century, Worldcons were almost always in the United States, which meant a stable base of attendees. As non-US Worldcons became more common, it became less likely to see all the same people. If most of the friends you want to connect with

won't be in Wakanda for the Worldcon, that's one less reason for you to go.

3) Travel was in a sweet spot for quite a while (we paid under \$1000 each to fly to Japan in 1996, under \$600 each in 1998 to fly to Turkey, and under \$1800 each for the flight to Australia plus three flights within Australia in 1999). Now flights are way more expensive (even taking into account inflation), and they are also way more hellish. So people are being priced out of distant conventions, and given the increases in hotels and food, even from nearby conventions.

4) Virtual access is good for virtual attendees, but doesn't contribute to physical atmosphere of the convention. Virtual attendees don't solve the problem of wandering half-empty halls and con suites.

5) All the old con-goers are getting, well, old. And I'm not convinced that the younger fans need conventions as a way to find "their people" the way previous generations did. Zoom and Facetime have changed things a lot. [-ecl]

"Happy Birthday to You" (letters of comment by Kip Williams and Gary McGath):

In response to [Evelyn's comments on "Happy Birthday to You"](#) in the 12/22/23 issue of the MT VOID, Kip Williams writes:

You can sing "Happy Birthday To You" in public without paying royalties, and they even seem to have determined that the sisters who kept that gate (even after death) were claiming something that wasn't even really theirs. People found the song they stole it from ("Good Morning To All"). [-kw]

Gary McGath also wrote:

The copyright on "Happy Birthday" has been dead since 2015, though it withstood more blows that should have been fatal than Rasputin.

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/happy-birthday-officially-public-domain-180956740/>

[-gmg]

Evelyn responds:

At the time I wrote the review (2009) the song was supposed covered by copyright in the United States. Subsequent to that, the courts have ruled it is (and was) in the public domain. [-ecl]

BLIND WILLOW SLEEPING WOMAN (letter of comment by Gary McGath):

In response to [Evelyn's review of BLIND WILLOW SLEEPING WOMAN](#) in the 12/22/23 issue of the MT VOID, Kip Williams writes:

[Evelyn writes,] "... there is a giant frog that talks and sings".

Sounds very familiar, other than the frog being giant. [-gmg]

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

I've been doing a lot of re-reading lately. While enjoyable, it doesn't lend itself to a lot of new observations. Agatha Christie's "Hercule Poirot" short stories, because they are short stories, don't have a lot of complex plotting to comment on. This might actually be a good thing--it prevents a lot of the multiple coincidences that often pepper her other works. For example, A MURDER IS ANNOUNCED has *two* instances of people key to the plot just happening to show up--independently--in the village, and someone else accidentally overhearing a key conversation. And several novels have characters suspected in a murder who turn out to be drug smugglers or antiquities thieves or atomic spies who have nothing to do with the murder.

I also re-read THE INNOCENCE OF FATHER BROWN by G. K. Chesterton, containing such classic stories as "The Hammer of God" and "The Eye of Apollo". Chesterton seems to have imbued his Father Brown with an incredible ability to cause criminals to repent and confess their crimes. Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple always solved the crimes, but relied on making sure that the police

had the evidence necessary to arrest and convict the criminal. Yes, sometimes the criminal confessed (in MURDER IN MESOPOTAMIA, quite unbelievably), but often these were confessions tricked out of them (in CARDS ON THE TABLE, by producing a fake eyewitness). Father Brown appeals to their higher natures. Christie's murderers often had no higher nature. [-ecl]

Mark Leeper
mleeper@optonline.net

Quote of the Week:

Happiness is having a large, loving, caring, close-knit family in another city.

--George Burns

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