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### Mini Reviews, Part 22

(film reviews by Mark R. Leeper and Evelyn C. Leeper):

This is the twenty-second batch of mini-reviews, all older films.

DARBY O'GILL AND THE LITTLE PEOPLE (1960): DARBY O'GILL AND THE LITTLE PEOPLE reminded me of THE WICKER MAN (1973). Given that DARBY O'GILL AND THE LITTLE PEOPLE is a G-rated Disney film, and THE WICKER MAN is most definitely an R-rated horror film, this may seem like an odd statement. But both of them use attempt to fool the audience with a trick in the credits.

In DARBY O'GILL AND THE LITTLE PEOPLE, Disney credits King Brian, saying, "My thanks to King Brian of Knocknasheega and his Leprechauns, whose gracious co-operation made this picture possible. -Walt Disney"

In THE WICKER MAN, the credits read, "The Producer would like to thank The Lord Summerisle and the people of his Island off the west coast of Scotland for this privileged insight into their religious practices and for their generous co-operation in the making of this film."

Everyone comments on FARGO (and other films) which claim to be based on true stories but aren't, but DARBY O'GILL AND THE LITTLE PEOPLE and THE WICKER MAN add a layer of subtlety which is rather charming.

Released theatrically 22 June 1960.

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0052722/reference>

What others are saying: [https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/darby\\_ogill\\_and\\_the\\_little\\_people](https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/darby_ogill_and_the_little_people)

ROLLERBALL (1975): Our film and book group watched the original 1975 ROLLERBALL and read the short story of the same name. The themes were are pertinent now as then, but the film does have problems. There was (in my opinion) far too much of the sports aspect. Obviously one of the ideas behind the film was that the crowds like violent sports--and the more violent, the better. The uniforms and equipment purposely invoke gladiatorial contests, and the progression of rule changes to make the game even more violent seems to meet with the approval of the crowds. The message pushed by the corporations--that it is the team, not the individual, that matters, and hence employees are just interchangeable units--is one that still persists.

There are times that I was reminded of ZARDOZ in some of the pastimes of the idle rich. The way women are treated seemed to be inspired by how they were called "furniture" in SOYLENT GREEN. And the use of sharp glass vanes to give the appearance of openness while actually enclosing a cage/trap was a nice touch. [-ecf]

Released theatrically 25 June 1975.

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0073631/reference>

What others are saying: <https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/rollerball>

KISSES FOR MY PRESIDENT (1964): I just watched KISSES FOR MY PRESIDENT, and a painful experience it was too. It was the first film with a female President of the United States, but it was just as patronizing as you might expect, and with an ending that meets all one's expectations for a film like this made in 1960. Everyone seems totally clueless about having a "First Gentleman" instead of a "First Lady": the bedroom assigned to him was more feminine than anything outside of a farce, he is left to wander around the White House rather than being taken around to familiarize himself with it, and people still treat the President as if she's still a housewife. From the post-Hillary, post-Chastain era, this looks totally ludicrous. Actually, it probably looked fairly ludicrous even then. Polly Bergen is at times at least somewhat Presidential, though not consistently. Fred MacMurray is totally at a loss as "First Gentleman", even though Bergen must have had a long career in politics before she became President. And the Secret Service seems not just inept, but positively derelict in duty. (Yes, this was made before the Kennedy assassination, but even so the Secret Service would not have let the First Gentleman get in a car alone with a clearly unbalanced foreign dictator, or visit an ex-girlfriend alone without explicit instructions from him.)

Released theatrically 21 August 1964.

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0058266/reference>

What others are saying: [https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/kisses\\_for\\_my\\_president](https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/kisses_for_my_president)

### Hugo Award Finalists Announced:

We are not going to include the entire list here (it is over 200 lines long). It can be found at <https://glasgow2024.org/hugo-awards/2024-hugo-award-finalists/>.

We will list the two "major" categories, and will actually include all the info for them (in the Roman alphabet), rather than just the titles and authors:

Best Novel:

- THE ADVENTURES OF AMINA AL-SIRAFI by Shannon Chakraborty (Harper Voyager, Harper Voyager UK)
- THE SAINT OF BRIGHT DOORS by Vajra Chandrasekera (Tordotcom)
- SOME DESPERATE GLORY by Emily Tesh (Tordotcom, Orbit UK)
- STARTER VILLAIN by John Scalzi (Tor, Tor UK)
- TRANSLATION STATE by Ann Leckie (Orbit US, Orbit UK)
- WITCH KING by Martha Wells (Tordotcom)

Best Dramatic Presentation, Long Form:

- BARBIE, screenplay by Greta Gerwig and Noah Baumbach, directed by Greta Gerwig (Warner Bros. Studios)
- DUNGEONS & DRAGONS: HONOR AMONG THIEVES, screenplay by John Francis Daley, Jonathan Goldstein and Michael Gilio, directed by John Francis Daley and Jonathan Goldstein (Paramount Pictures)
- NIMONA, screenplay by Robert L. Baird and Lloyd Taylor, directed by Nick Bruno and Troy Quane (Annapurna Animations)
- POOR THINGS, screenplay by Tony McNamara, directed by Yorgos Lanthimos (Element Pictures)
- SPIDER-MAN: ACROSS THE SPIDER-VERSE, screenplay by Phil Lord, Christopher Miller and Dave Callahan, directed by Joaquim Dos Santos, Kemp Powers and Justin K. Thompson (Columbia Pictures / Marvel Entertainment / Avi Arad Productions / Lord Miller / Pascal Pictures / Sony Pictures Animation)
- THE WANDERING EARTH II, based on the novel by Liu Cixin, screenplay by Yang Zhixue, Frant Gwo, Gong Geer, and Ye Ruchang, script consultant Wang Hongwei, directed by Frant Gwo (CFC Pictures Ltd / G!Film (Beijing) Studio Co. Ltd / Beijing Dengfeng International Culture Communication Co, Ltd / China Film Co. Ltd)

Glasgow reports:

The following nominees received enough votes to qualify for the final ballot, but declined nomination:

Best Novel - SYSTEM COLLAPSE, by Martha Wells  
Best Novelette - "The Far North" by Hai Ya  
Best Related Work - Bigolas Dickolas Wolfwood's promotional tweets for THIS IS HOW YOU LOSE THE TIME WAR  
Best Editor, Long Form - Natasha Bardon  
Best Fan Writer - Camestros Felapton

The following nominees received enough votes to qualify for the final ballot, but were not eligible for specific reasons:

Best Novel - COSMO WINGS by Jiang Bo - publication in 2024  
Best Fancast - Discover X: interviews by Tina Wong - professional production; also qualified in the Best Related Work category.  
Best Fancast - Diu Diu Sci Fi Radio - also a professional production.

If/when there is a website showing where some of the short fiction works can be accessed free on-line, we will provide that URL. [-ecf]

### BLACKFACE

(letter of comment by Gary McGath):

In response to [Evelyn's comments on blackface](#) in the 03/29/24 issue of the MT VOID, Gary McGath writes:

Evelyn wrote, "Is TCM having a theme of blackface and racial stereotypes this month? We have: THE TEAHOUSE OF THE AUGUST MOON (1956): A combination of progressiveness (interracial romance) on one hand, and racial stereotyping and yellowface (Marlon Brando as a Japanese) on the other." [-ecf]

It annoys me whenever I see the term "blackface" used in a trivial way. Blackface was a device used by the minstrel shows of the 19th century. It isn't simply dark makeup, but \*caricature\*. You can see it, for example, in the final scene of the 1927 THE JAZZ SINGER. In the minstrel shows, it was part of a shtick which made black people objects of ridicule. "Coon songs," sung in fake dialect, generally went along with it. Even black performers sometimes had to wear that makeup, which helps to show that it wasn't just to make the actors look like black people.

Using terms like "blackface," "yellowface," etc. for makeup that simply alters a performer's skin tone trivializes what it was. [-gmg]

Evelyn responds:

I understand what you are saying, but you are fighting a losing battle, because the terms have come to mean having actors portraying an ethnicity or race other than their own with the use of make-up. I think we can agree, though, that Mickey Rooney in BREAKFAST AT TIFFANY'S is definitely yellowface. [-ecf]

### This Week's Reading

(book comments by Evelyn C. Leeper):

THE PENGUIN BOOK OF MURDER MYSTERIES edited by Michael Sims (Penguin, ISBN 978-0-14-313753-5) is, thank goodness, not a doorstop of a book. It is about 325 pages with thirteen murder mysteries from the nineteenth century. Sims gives a couple of pages of introduction for each story (and author).

Sims definitely reveals a twenty-first sensibility, both in his overall introduction (where he talks about how people of color, women, and LGBTQ folks were considered the outsider in stories of this period) and in the individual introductions, where he also warns of derogatory racial terminology (which is much better than re-writing the language in the story).

Sims does make a goof when he explains why there are no Sherlock Holmes or Auguste Dupin stories: "The world does not need another reprint of 'A Scandal in Bohemia' or 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue.'" What's the goof? "A Scandal in Bohemia" is not a murder mystery.

The stories are clearly of a different era, and so will appeal primarily to those who have enjoyed other, better-known stories of the era. For the reader who has read Doyle and Poe, but prefers modern murder mysteries, however, there is little to appeal. Somewhere in between these two periods would be authors such as Jacques Futrelle ("The Thinking Machine" stories), Baroness Orczy ("The Man in the Corner" stories), and others. These can be found in the "Rivals of Sherlock Holmes" series edited by Hugh Greene. [-ecf]

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Quote of the Week:

The degree of one's emotion varies inversely with one's knowledge of the facts -- the less you know the hotter you get.

--Bertrand Russell

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