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### Mini Reviews, Part 4 (ARRIVAL, LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS (1960)) (film reviews by Mark R. Leeper and Evelyn C. Leeper):

This is the fourth batch of mini-reviews:

ARRIVAL (2016): We re-watched ARRIVAL because we're watching "Sci-Phi: Science Fiction and Philosophy" from the Great Courses, and this is one of the films covered ("ARRIVAL and Radical Translation").

Professor David K. Johnson begins by talking about radical translation in term of whether a lion's language would have, for example, conditionals. "Radical Translation" is a theory of Willard Van Orman Quine that says you can never be sure you understand the meanings of words. (However, the chances of misunderstanding all the words in a language, or even most of them, is too unlikely to be accepted as a theory. Noam Chomsky's "Universal Language" theory fits in with all this.)

Johnson talks about language, but he doesn't really address what constitutes a language. For example, Charles F. Hockett's rules ("design features") insist that if communication doesn't have conditionals, it is not a language. (Actually, he insists on displacement, which allows one to talk about things not present and presumably includes conditionals. See THE DAY OF THE DOLPHIN, where George C. Scott uses a conditional when talking to an "uplifted" dolphin, and the dolphin doesn't understand it is a conditional.) Johnson does say that language have to have nouns and verbs and distinguish between them. This is not necessarily followed in fiction (e.g., STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION: "Darmok" or Jorge Luis Borges's "Tlon, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius"). But Johnson is talking about reality rather than fiction.

Wittgenstein's "picture theory" ("statements are meaningful if, and only if, they can be defined or pictured in the real world") says most philosophical propositions are meaningless--which turns out to include not just his writings, but even the word "meaningless".

Also, a statement is meaningless unless it can be verified. Can the statement in the preceding sentence be verified? This is similar to "the problem of induction"--why is induction (predicting the future based on past observations) valid? Well, because it has always worked in the past. Wait a minute ...

The lecture covers a lot of somewhat peripheral ideas (sort of like these comments). For example, the lecture covers the Drake Equation. It is claimed that one of the Drake Equation factors is how long a technological civilization survives. But consider CONTACT: the aliens "discover" us through radio waves (a television broadcast). But today, there are fewer and fewer broadcast signals for aliens to pick up. If all our communication signals are short-range or contained within physical media (e.g., fiber optics), would aliens be able to detect us even if our civilization lasted a million years? Or if an alien civilization was super-advanced, but never used radio waves that traveled into outer space, we wouldn't detect them through radio waves, and why would they even look for them from other civilizations like us which do use them?

Mark and Evelyn disagree on why this is not a 10/10 movie. Evelyn thinks that adding a saboteur and explosions drops it a notch, while Mark thinks that some of the long drawn-out scenes have a negative effect on the film. [-ecl/mrl]

Released theatrically 11 November 2016. Rating: low +3 (-4 to +4), or 8/10.

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2543164/reference>

What others are saying: [https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/arrival\\_2016](https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/arrival_2016)

LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS (1960): LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS (the 1960 version) was the film for the film-and-book group this month. (The books--or rather stories--were "The Flowering of a Strange Orchid" by H. G. Wells, and "The Reluctant Orchid" by Arthur C. Clarke, which I mentioned in my column in the 08/02/24 issue of the MT VOID). This was filmed on standing sets in two days (with three days of rehearsals). A few scenes were filmed outdoors, including several on skid row. Second Unit Director Chuck Griffith said that Corman wouldn't pay for a long lens, so the crew had to get out of the van and shoot on the sidewalk. As soon as the "winos" (as Griffith called them) saw this, "they started acting all over the place--staggering, falling over, showing off."

So Griffith had to actually hire some so they would do what he directed. He says he gave them the change from his pocket and "they shot craps, brawled, acted out knifing each other, staggered around." Not only did he hire them as actors, he apparently also hired some to handle cables and such. The tire yard and toilet yard were also real locations.

For such a shoe-string-budget film (actually more a string-budget; Corman would never pay extra for aglets), this is still surprisingly watchable. It also pioneered the on-screen eating of flowers as a delicacy forty years before MONSOON WEDDING. [-ecl]

Released theatrically 05 August 1960.

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0054033/reference>

What others are saying: [https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/1012514-little\\_shop\\_of\\_horror](https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/1012514-little_shop_of_horror)

### Hugo Award Winners:

- Best Novel: SOME DESPERATE GLORY by Emily Tesh (Tordotcom, Orbit UK)
- Best Novella: "Thornhedge" by T. Kingfisher (Tor, Titan UK)
- Best Novelette: "The Year Without Sunshine" by Naomi Kritzer (Uncanny Magazine, November-December 2023)
- Best Short Story: "Better Living Through Algorithms" Orbit UK) by Naomi Kritzer (Clarkesworld May 2023)
- Best Series: Imperial Radch by Ann Leckie (Orbit US, Orbit UK)
- Best Graphic Story or Comic: SAGA, VOL. 11 written by Brian K. Vaughan, art by Fiona Staples (Image Comics)
- Best Related Work: A CITY ON MARS by Kelly Weinersmith and Zach Weinersmith (Penguin Press; Particular Books)
- Best Dramatic Presentation, Long Form: DUNGEONS & DRAGONS: HONOR AMONG THIEVES (Paramount Pictures)
- Best Dramatic Presentation, Short Form: The Last of Us: "Long, Long Time" (Naughty Dog / Sony Pictures)
- Best Game or Interactive Work: Baldur's Gate 3, produced by Larian Studios
- Best Editor Short Form: Neil Clarke
- Best Editor Long Form: Ruoxi Chen
- Best Professional Artist: Rovina Cai
- Best Semiprozine: Strange Horizons, by the Strange Horizons Editorial Collective
- Best Fanzine: Nerds of a Feather, Flock Together, editors Roseanna Pendlebury, Arturo Serrano, Paul Weimer; senior editors Joe Sherry, Adri Joy, G. Brown, Vance Kotrla
- Best Fancast: Octothorpe, by John Coxon, Alison Scott, and Liz Batty
- Best Fan Writer: Paul Weimer
- Best Fan Artist: Laya Rose
- Lodestar Award for Best YA Book: TO SHAPE A DRAGON'S BREATH by Monique Blackgoose (Del Rey)
- Astounding Award for Best New Writer (sponsored by Dell Magazines): Xiran Jay Zhao (eligibility extended at request of Dell Magazines)

Full details of nominations, eligibility, and final placement are at <https://www.thehugoawards.org/hugo-history/2024-hugo-awards/>.

### Misquotes (letters of comment by Hal Heydt, Keith F. Lynch, and Gary McGath):

In response to [Evelyn's comments on \[the love of\] money as the root of all evil](#) in the 08/09/24 issue of the MT VOID, Hal Heydt writes:

[Evelyn wrote, ] "But money itself is not 'the root of all earthly evils'; the reference is to 1 Timothy 6:10, which says, 'For \*the love of\* money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.' [italics mine]"

Far from the only modern idiom that is a mangled Biblical quote. Take "gilding the lily", where the original is "painting the lily and gilding refine'd gold." [-hh]

Keith F. Lynch points out:

Someone is wrong on the Internet! That's from Shakespeare, not the Bible. [-kfl]

Evelyn adds:

And the actual quote (from KING JOHN, Act IV, Scene II) is "To gild refined gold, to paint the lily ... is wasteful and ridiculous excess." [-ecl]

Gary McGath adds:

Shakespeare quotes get messed up as often as the Bible. I wrote a post a couple of days ago and just made it public, on how Britannica misquoted and incorrectly explained the most famous line in Romeo and Juliet:

<https://garymcgath.com/wp/britannica-blunders/> [-gmg]

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

Okay, this week we're back to normal--or at least as normal as "H. P. Lovecraft for Beginning Readers" can be. These are two books, H. P. LOVECRAFT'S THE CALL OF CTHULHU FOR BEGINNING READERS (Chaosium, ISBN 9781568821122) and H. P. LOVECRAFT'S DAGON FOR BEGINNING READERS (Chaosium, ISBN 9781568821832), published in 2017 and 2018 respectively, by R. J. Ivankovic that are quite charming. The titles are actually "H. P. LOVECRAFT'S The CALL of CTHULHU for beginning readers" and H. P. LOVECRAFT'S DAGON for beginning readers", and they are done in the style of Dr. Seuss. Ivankovic apparently did both the text and the artwork. The text is the anapestic tetrameter that is so distinctive of Seuss's poems: here is a sample:

When that city, named R'lyeh,  
comes up from the deep,  
then Cthulhu will stir  
and give up his great sleep.

The artwork is also an excellent imitation of Seuss's style.

What isn't clear is who the target audience is for these books. The original Dr. Seuss books are aimed at beginning readers, but these seem more designed for people familiar with Lovecraft--in other words, older teens or adults.

(<https://www.best-books-for-kids.com/dr-seuss-book-titles.html> gives a break-down of the target audiences for the original books.)

These are available from Amazon, of course, but also from the H. P. Lovecraft Historical Society (<http://hplhs.org>), which has also produced a couple of excellent Lovecraft movies on its own, as well as having DVDs of others.

Above in this issue you will find a listing of the Hugo Awards. I have definitely lost touch; the only one I am familiar with is Neil Clarke. [-ecl]

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Quote of the Week:  
Our national flower is the concrete cloverleaf.  
--Lewis Mumford

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