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### An Unofficial List of the Most Influential Science Fiction Works Ever:

Well, at least having to do with space travel:

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2023/01/11/science-fiction-space-travel/>

The list includes Robert Heinlein's works, Isaac Asimov's "Foundation" series, Andy Weir's THE MARTIAN, and of course, "Star Trek".

(The comments often seem to miss the implied "space travel" part.)

[-ecl]

### Mini Reviews, Part 11 (film reviews by Mark R. Leeper and Evelyn C. Leeper):

This is the eleventh batch of mini-reviews, all horror films:

**TROLL:** TROLL is the latest movie featuring this creature from Nordic folklore. In true monster movie style, after a strange monster is found the military is called in to manage the situation and you can tell you are not going to like them, or their solution.

TROLL borrows a couple of ideas and images from JURASSIC PARK. The protagonist is a paleontologist on a dig when she is summarily pulled off it to help in a totally different context. And TROLL uses disturbances in a coffee cup to show the approach of something very large.

The troll itself is attracted by Christian blood, but there are a lot fewer Christians in Norway these days. While the film pays a nod to

this, one is reminded of a similar trope in THE WICKER MAN that was shown more clearly.

And there is beautiful Nordic scenery, starting with the limitless beauty of the troll peak. (Of course, it may be just CGI, but it's still beautiful.)

Released on Netflix streaming 1 December 2022. Rating: +2 (-4 to +4) or 7/10

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt11116912/reference>

What others are saying: [https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/troll\\_2022](https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/troll_2022)

BONES AND ALL: In BONES AND ALL, Maren is an Eater (their term for "cannibal") (not a spoiler; we find this out in the first ten minutes). She meets Sully, another Eater who has a code not unlike that of Francis in BLOOD RELATIVES as the vampire. In fact, this whole movie seems like another version of BLOOD RELATIVES, with a young person on a road trip trying to terms with their cannibalism/vampirism. For what it's worth, this has more graphic gore than BLOOD RELATIVES.

Released theatrically 18 November 2022. Rating: low +2 (-4 to +4) or 7/10

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt10168670/reference>

What others are saying: [https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/bones\\_and\\_all](https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/bones_and_all)

ULTRASOUND: ULTRASOUND has a disorienting first scene, and continues to be disorienting. It becomes clear that we really don't understand what we're seeing, but we hope it will all make sense once we know what's going on. Every line of the dialogue seems like it is a message for the viewer. We see a lot of gadgets but we don't know what they do. And filmmakers have made horror films about mad psychiatrists since THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI (1919). As a result, some of the ideas are cliches in other films and will not be unexpected.

Released 11 March 2022. Rating: high +1 (-4 to +4) or 6/10

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt12989912/reference>

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

[-mrl/ecl]

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**Louis L'Amour** (letter of comment by Peter Rubinstein):

In response to [Evelyn's comments on THE HILLS OF HOMICIDE](#) in the 01/13/23 issue of the MT VOID, Peter Rubinstein writes:

Apropos of the SF theme, L'Amour also wrote an SF western, "The Haunted Mesa". I'm not sure I'd recommend it as a great read, but it is genre. [-pr]

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

I just watched GODS AND GENERALS for the tenth time. (I've seen GETTYSBURG at least sixteen times--my logs go back to only 2000.) And I have mixed feeling about it. As a war film focusing only on the war, it gets high marks from me. But when it turns to the motives of the various people and governments involved, it is a disaster.

Most of the reviews say that there are only two Black speaking characters. This isn't true--there are at least three, but perhaps even this error tells us something about their portrayal. (See my comments on the book at the end.) One is Jim Lewis, who the dialogue tries to imply is free, but all the existing records indicate he was enslaved. And Stonewall Jackson is given lines that make him out to be in favor of ending slavery, yet he hasn't freed any of his slaves. (He did teach some to read and write in violation of Virginia law.) Jim Lewis even says that he is fighting for his home and family just like Jackson, which sounds like total insanity, on a level with Jewish slave labor in World War II saying that they are fighting for their homes and families against the invading Allied troops.

The other Black character reviewers remember is Martha, who is enslaved by Jane Beale (whom I suspect is a fictional character). Martha seems to love her enslavers, and even insists on staying in their Fredericksburg house and pretending it is hers to protect it from Union troops. She says it is to make sure she and her children have some food left, but it's clear she has affection for the Beales. The writers did give her a speech where she says that she was born a slave but wants to die free and wants her children to be free. That's as close to a condemnation of slavery we get from her.

The third character is a younger man--he seems more like a teenager--who is working as a cook with Jim Lewis. He is free, because his master gave him his freedom papers when the war started. He is now being paid for his work, and one can argue that his respect for his former master has at least some basis.

But what we don't see or hear are any Black characters railing against slavery, plotting to escape, or ever saying anything negative about their enslavers. All three Black characters seem to have had remarkable benign masters--they are well-dressed, well-fed, apparently not whipped or beaten, and in general treated perhaps even better than Victorian-era servants in England.

And all the while, the white Southerners talk about how they are fighting for freedom, and now wanting Northerners to interfere with their way of life. That they are doing far more than interfering with the lives of those they keep enslaved does not apparently occur to them.

So after all this, I found myself wondering how much of this was in the book, and if the fact that Jeff Shaara (hereafter referred to as "Jeff" to avoid confusion) wrote GODS AND GENERALS while his father Michael Shaara had written THE KILLER ANGELS, the book upon which the film GETTYSBURG was based. The chronology is that the book THE KILLER ANGELS came first, then the film GETTYSBURG, then the book GODS AND GENERALS, and finally the film GODS AND GENERALS.

On reading the book (Ballantine, ISBN 978-0-345-42247-7, I discovered that Jeff has stuck pretty much entirely to the generals (and the ranking officers, and their families) and has not concerned itself with civilians, slaves, or free Negroes. The one conversation with a black man is when Nate, one of Lee's former slaves whom Lee had freed, asks to buy his brother's freedom. Lee says that he has told all his slaves that they can have their freedom and leave any time they want, so Nate doesn't have to buy his brother's freedom, and Lee writes out the freedom papers right then. This is totally wrong--Lee inherited most of his slaves from his father-in-law, who required that Lee free them within five years. Lee fought to extend this time, and whipped those who attempted to escape, so Jeff's portrayal of his emancipationist ideals is completely made up.

(Actually, quite a few reviewers have criticized the mis-characterizations and generally poor historical accuracy of the book.)

Jeff also described an old black woman in the Lee household as a "servant", but given that in real life the reason Lee gave for not freeing his slaves was that he couldn't afford to pay them wages, this seems like Jeff is trying to soften the truth.

What Jeff did write about were the scenes only referenced in GETTYSBURG, for example, the going-away dinner with Armistead and Hancock in California before they left to join opposing armies. But the movie starts well after that point (since it was already covered) and so omits the "Nate and Lee" episode. The movie also focuses more on Stonewall Jackson than the book did (probably why the Jim Lewis sequences were added).

So where does this leave us? The book dodges the slavery issue almost entirely, and what little it does say is a cover-up. And many people also say the characterizations in general of the generals is not accurate. The movie adds some Black characters, but only to reinforce the bias of the book, and it also focuses on Stonewall Jackson to the extent of making him into some sort of saint. On the whole, the movie is best watched as taking place in some alternate universe. [-ecl]

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Quote of the Week:

All bad poetry springs from genuine feeling.  
--Oscar Wilde

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