



Table of Contents

- Middletown (NJ) Public Library Science Fiction Discussion Group
Mark's Picks for Turner Classic Movies for January
The MT VOID (letters of comment by Guy Lillian III)
THE LAST DANGEROUS VISIONS edited by Harlan Ellison
Hannah Arendt (letter of comment by Wesley Brodsky)
This Week's Reading (THE EVERYMAN CHESTERTON) (book comments by Evelyn C. Leeper)
Quote of the Week

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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:

January 2, 2025: MILLENNIUM (1989); short story: "Air Raid" (1977)
by John Varley
https://www.baen.com/Chapters/9781625791542/9781625791542__3.htm
novel: "Millennium" (1983) by John Varley
https://www.you-books.com/book/J-Varley/Millennium

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

Okay, this is almost redundant, but how about a recommendation for THE WIZARD OF OZ? It is certainly not a hidden gem, but it is not over-exposed either. This is ironic, of course. Back when I was a child, before home video, THE WIZARD OF OZ played once a year on television, and if you missed it, you had to wait another year. It was an event. (I can remember in college, I missed it for the first time I could remember because of a field trip.)

Then it became available, first on VHS, and then on DVD, and now on Blu-ray. And you could watch it any time you wanted, the result being you did not watch it every year. It might be two years or more between viewings. We have watched it only six times in the last twenty-four years. (By comparison, we have watched GETTYSBURG seventeen times.

Anyway, now that TCM is running THE WIZARD OF OZ, recover your childhood (if you can remember when it was an event), or just re-discover this classic. [-ecf]

[THE WIZARD OF OZ, Friday, January 10, 8:00PM]

In honor of the 90th anniversary of Elvis Presley's birth, on January 8, TCM is running a twenty-four-hour Elvis Presley marathon:

- WEDNESDAY, January 8
6:00 AM Live a Little, Love a Little (1968)
8:00 AM The Trouble with Girls (1969)
10:00 AM Double Trouble (1967)
12:00 PM This Is Elvis (1981)
2:00 PM Speedway (1968)
4:00 PM Kissin' Cousins (1964)
6:00 PM It Happened at the World's Fair (1963)
8:00 PM Jailhouse Rock (1957)
9:45 PM Viva Las Vegas (1964)
11:15 PM Elvis: That's the Way It Is (1970)

- THURSDAY, January 9
1:00 AM Girl Happy (1965)
2:45 AM Spinout (1966)
4:30 AM Elvis on Tour (1972)

Other films of interest:

- TUESDAY, January 7
2:45 AM Tickle Me (1965)

- FRIDAY, January 3
3:30 AM A Clockwork Orange (1971)
8:00 PM Spellbound (1945)
10:00 PM The Manchurian Candidate (1962)

- SATURDAY, January 4
12:15 AM Nightmare (1956)

- MONDAY, January 6
8:00 PM Creature from the Black Lagoon (1954)

- TUESDAY, January 7
8:00 AM Seven Keys to Baldpate (1947)
1:00 PM The Seventh Victim (1943)

- THURSDAY, January 9
8:00 PM Young Frankenstein (1974)
10:00 PM Oh, God! (1977)

- FRIDAY, January 10
8:00 PM The Wizard of Oz (1939)
10:00 PM The 5,000 Fingers of Dr. T. (1953)
11:45 PM Jack and the Beanstalk (1952)

- SATURDAY, January 11
10:15 AM Tarzan Triumphs (1943)
3:30 PM Ice Station Zebra (1968)

- SUNDAY, January 12
11:45 AM The Red Shoes (1948)
2:15 PM From The Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler (1973)

- WEDNESDAY, January 15
4:15 AM The Yellow Cab Man (1950)
7:15 AM Baby Doll (1956)
9:15 AM Period of Adjustment (1962)
11:15 AM The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone (1961)
1:15 PM The Night of the Iguana (1964)
3:45 PM A Streetcar Named Desire (1951)
6:00 PM Sweet Bird of Youth (1962)

- FRIDAY, January 17
3:15 AM Eyes Wide Shut (1999)
6:00 AM The Sea Hawk (1924)
8:15 AM Captain Blood (1935)
10:15 AM The Spanish Main (1945)
12:15 PM The Three Musketeers (1948)
2:30 PM The Flame and the Arrow (1950)
4:00 PM Scaramouche (1952)
6:00 PM The Prisoner of Zenda (1952)

- SUNDAY, January 19
6:30 AM Jack and the Beanstalk (1952)
8:00 AM Tom Thumb (1958)
6:00 PM Seance on a Wet Afternoon (1964)

- TUESDAY, January 21
1:45 PM The Great Dictator (1940)

- WEDNESDAY, January 22
2:15 AM Around the World in 80 Days (1956)
8:00 PM The Man Who Knew Too Much (1934)
9:30 PM The 39 Steps (1935)
11:00 PM Sabotage (1936)

- THURSDAY, January 23
12:30 AM Young and Innocent (1937)
2:00 AM The Lady Vanishes (1938)
3:45 AM Becoming Hitchcock - The Legacy of Blackmail (2024)
5:00 AM Foreign Correspondent (1940)
12:15 PM The Thief of Bagdad (1940)

- SATURDAY, January 25
12:30 AM The Horn Blows at Midnight (1945)
3:30 AM I Married an Angel (1942)
5:00 AM Turn Back the Clock (1933)

- MONDAY, January 27
4:15 AM Loves of a Blonde (1966)

- TUESDAY, January 28
6:15 AM One Million B.C. (1940)
7:45 AM Forever, Darling (1956)
9:30 AM A Guy Named Joe (1943)
11:45 AM Turnabout (1940)
1:15 PM Topper (1937)
3:00 PM It Happened Tomorrow (1944)
4:30 PM I Married a Witch (1942)
6:00 PM Time After Time (1979)

- FRIDAY, January 31
8:00 PM 8 1/2 (1963)

- SATURDAY, February 1
12:15 AM Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie (1972)
2:15 AM The Last Wave (1977)
4:15 AM Eraserhead (1977)

The MT VOID (letters of comment by Guy Lillian III):

In response to several issues of the MT VOID, Guy Lillian III writes in THE ZINE DUMP #59:

Amidst the commentary, reviews and whatnot and after Mark's detailed suggestions for Turner Classic Movies, Evelyn provides a slew of links relating to the Hugo controversy--I knew I could count on the Leepers and their weekly journal. Other contributors chime in with Evelyn and Mark. Well-written and well-reasoned, refreshingly free of fandom's frequent strife, the Void is well worth one's time. [-ghliii]

And again in THE ZINE DUMP #60:

Every week my inbox is visited by an MT Void, and with it the love of SF which brought us to this "thing of ours." In recent numbers Evelyn and Mark review strange films, mention the passing of Earl Holliman, compare the ancient story "The Brick Void" to Japan's recent wooden satellite ... sharing their fannishness generously. A subscription to MT is a great way to keep one's interest in the field rolling, week to week. [-ghliiii]

THE LAST DANGEROUS VISIONS edited by Harlan Ellison (copyright 2024, Blackstone Publishing, \$27.99, hardcover, 433pp, ISBN 979-8-212-18379-6) (book review by Joe Karpierz):

Anticipation. Expectations. Hype. We generally apply these words when looking forward to events, whether it be sports (the Super Bowl of American football), movies (a new "Star Wars" installment), television shows (a new season of STAR TREK: STRANGE NEW WORLDS), or books. Ah books. We all look forward to the publication of a new book from a favorite author. But whatever the thing is that we're looking forward to, it can either bring elation and joy, or disappointment, or even a vast sense of "meh".

THE LAST DANGEROUS VISIONS is one of those books that pretty much nobody expected would see the light of day. Harlan Ellison was working on it back in the 1970s, but never pulled the trigger on. He bought hundreds of stories for the book. It grew to three volumes at one point (it should be noted that AGAIN, DANGEROUS VISIONS, the follow up to the original DANGEROUS VISIONS, clocks in at 1141 pages with 46 stories). It never got published. The science fiction community resigned itself to never seeing the book. The reasons why it never saw the light of day were unknown. And the anticipation was high. Given the success of the first two books, the stories and authors they contained, and the awards that resulted from those two books, who wouldn't want to see THE LAST DANGEROUS VISIONS?

Then Harlan Ellison passed away, and that was that.

The story is fairly well known in science fiction circles. J. Michael Straczynski became the executor of the Ellison estate, and he set his sights on publishing THE LAST DANGEROUS VISIONS. Selecting the stories was a daunting task. He had a ton of stories that Harlan had bought back in the day and still had the rights to (the rights to some of the stories had been sold back to either the writers themselves or their estates). Straczynski wanted to include present-day authors, and he wanted to include new authors, since Ellison was a champion for new writers.

I'm going to say it up front, before I get into the details. For me, the book brought on a vast sense of "meh".

There are a few reasons for that. What was considered "dangerous" back in the 1970s is fairly tame and commonplace today. Stories that were edgy back then are not edgy today. From what I've gathered from podcasts and reading things about the time LDV (LAST DANGEROUS VISIONS, in case it wasn't obvious) was to be published, authors were getting skittish about publishing things that were on the cutting edge, that were considered "dangerous". And, quite frankly, not only do the stories that Straczynski included not hold up over time, they are fairly uninteresting.

If I were to pick a "best" story from what would have been the original LDV, I'd pick Ed Bryant's "War Stories", although "The Final Pogrom", from Dan Simmons, stands out as well (it's hard to believe that Simmons is still out there producing work after all these years, although to be fair it's been awhile since he's published anything). The astounding (see what I did there) thing is that most of the stories that Straczynski chose were from authors that I really haven't heard of. Sure, there are a few, like A.E. Van Vogt ("The Time of the Skin"), Robert Sheckley ("Primordial Follies"), and P.C. Hodgell ("Dark Threshold"), but for the most part none of the stories from back in the day were from authors that made it big (unlike those that were already big when they had stories published in the first two "Dangerous Visions" volumes).

The modern day writers that are included here *did* have stories that were at the least very good, if not terrific. The best of the bunch was James S.A. Corey's "Judah Iscariot Didn't Kill Himself: A Story In Fragments", followed closely by Adrian Tchaikovsky's "First Sight" and Corey Doctorow's "The Weight of a Feather (The Weight of a Heart)". The Corey will be a story that I nominate on my Hugo ballot in 2025.

Maybe it's not fair to compare this volume to prior installments. I've elsewhere reviewed the original DANGEROUS VISIONS (and listed the authors that came out of that book with awards and award nominations), but as I look at the Table of Contents of AGAIN, DANGEROUS VISIONS (which I have yet to read but now feel like I need to sooner rather than later), I see Ursula K. Le Guin, Gene Wolfe, Ray Bradbury, Kate Wilhelm, Joanna Russ, Kurt Vonnegut, David Gerrold, Greg Benford, and a host of other huge names in the field. I don't even see any names that ended up being huge out of the stories that made it to LDV from that era (yes, you could argue Van Vogt, but even that story wasn't that good).

The two pieces that were interesting to me were "Ellison Exegesis", in which Straczynski tells the story of just why Ellison couldn't get LDV published (which some people have stated is an invasion of Ellison's privacy--I'll leave that up to the reader), and the afterward, entitled "Tetelestai! Compiling THE LAST DANGEROUS VISIONS", which as you might guess is a look at how Straczynski put the book together.

I don't often reread books these days. I just have too much on my to-be-read list and not enough time to read what is there. While I may go back some day and reread DANGEROUS VISIONS, and I have yet to read AGAIN, DANGEROUS VISIONS, I most likely won't go back and reread THE LAST DANGEROUS VISIONS. And that makes me sad.

I also want to issue a formal apology to Blackstone Publishing, which was kind enough to allow me to read an eARC of THE LAST DANGEROUS VISIONS. Life got in the way, and I'd bitten off more than I could chew in requesting eARCs from NetGalley. This review is two and a half months past the publication date of LDV, and it is unconscionable that this review is this late. I'm grateful that the Blackstone gave permission for me to read the book in advance of the publication, and sorry that I didn't get it done in time. [-jak]

Evelyn asked for clarification:

I would think it should more accurately be called "THE LAST DANGEROUS VISIONS edited by Harlan Ellison and J. Michael Straczynski". [-ecf]

And Joe replied:

Good question. The title page of the book only shows ELLISON. The cover only shows ELLISON, in case it wasn't obvious) was to be published, authors were getting skittish about publishing things that were on the cutting edge, that were considered "dangerous". And, quite frankly, not only do the stories that Straczynski included not hold up over time, they are fairly uninteresting.

Hannah Arendt (letter of comment by Wesley Brodsky):

In response to [the quote by Hannah Arendt](#) at the end of the 12/20/24 issue of the MT VOID, Wesley Brodsky writes:

Hooray for the Arendt! I read her excellent book THE ORIGINS OF TOTALITARIANISM [published 1973] and wrote a review of it for Amazon September 2023. The title of the review was "URGENT: U.S. citizens should read this book immediately, before the presidential elections continue!" I did not go into my own preferences for political candidates. I merely urged U.S. citizens to read this book before making their own decisions. [-wb]

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

THE EVERYMAN CHESTERTON by G. K. Chesterton (Everyman's Library, ISBN 978-0-307-59497-6) is a collection of Chesterton's works, but not the better-known ones. In the Introduction, Ian Ker says this is intentional: works such as "The Ballad of the White Horse", THE MAN WHO WAS THURSDAY, and THE NAPOLEON OF NOTTING HILL are so well known and easy to find that it would be redundant to include them.

I was reminded of the first book The New England Science Fiction Association published that was not a small volume as a souvenir book for a Guest of Honor at Boskone: THE BEST OF JAMES E. SCHMITZ. Afterwards, people told them they should have included A, or B, or V. But NESFA realized they had painted themselves into a corner, because they could hardly publish a book titled "The Second Best of James E. Schmitz".

(Actually, there are authors who could have such a book published, because they are known as quirky people who love a good joke. But *they* have to make that decision.)

NESFA never made that mistake again. All of their future author collections were the complete works (or at least the complete short fiction), even if it took multiple volumes.

All this was to point out that, effectively, the editor is saying that this book is "The Second Best of Chesterton". So, back to Chesterton.

The section on Dickens was written just a hundred years ago. Chesterton claims that in Dickens's era only Dickens created characters that would be instantly recognizable by name. (The only exception he acknowledges is Doyle's Sherlock Holmes.) And he does a comparison with another popular of the time, Rudyard Kipling. Who would recognize Learoyd or Mrs. Hawksbee? But then he lists Dickens's characters: Pecksniff, Mrs. Gamp, Smauke, Sam Weller, and Podsnap. And I would claim that these are now equally unrecognizable. (Meanwhile, Sherlock Holmes keeps chugging along.)

Chesterton chose characters from THE PICKWICK PAPERS. Without choosing title characters, I would say that there might be a few recognizable characters from Dickens's later novels: Barkis, Micawber, and of course Fagin (whose name has fallen into common use as someone who exploits children). Still, what I goes to show is that it is hard to judge literary immortality too close to the work itself. (People at the turn of the century thought James Fenimore Cooper was going to be the literary author best remembered and read in a hundred years, and Arthur Conan Doyle was just a writer of popular fiction.)

Chesterton also seems to not understand how the word "sensibility" was used in Jane Austen's time. Chesterton writes that sense and sensibility are not "in a kind of opposition to each other. "... not only are they not opposite word; they are actually the same word. They both mean receptiveness or approachability by the facts outside us." Maybe now, but in Jane Austen's time, "sensibility" referred to being particularly susceptible to emotions and feelings, which are hardly "facts outside us". Marianne's problem in SENSE AND SENSIBILITY is not the facts, but her emotions. When she has to leave Norland, she sobs that she could never love a place as much as Norland, then when she is "away from Barton, she misses it terribly, and then she adores Delaford. She is reacting to external facts (having to move, etc.), but in a dar more emotional way than Elinor, who looks at the estates with a more practical and factual eye (i.e., their size, cost, and so on).

And once again I have drifted far afield, not just from Chesterton, but from his topic, Charles Dickens.

Strangely, Chesterton has little to say about Dickens's best-known books: DAVID COPPERFIELD, OLIVER TWIST, GREAT EXPECTATIONS, A TALE OF TWO CITIES. He is, rather, enamored of THE PICKWICK PAPERS, and of Dickens's other early works.

And in describing Dickens's work, Chesterton writes (in CHARLES DICKENS: A CRITICAL STUDY, 1911), "Nature is as air; art is forced to look probable." He doesn't credit Mark Twain, who wrote in 1897 in FOLLOWING THE EQUATOR, "Truth is stranger than fiction, but it is because Fiction is obliged to stick to possibilities. Truth is."

Because THE EVERYMAN CHESTERTON is so long, and includes many different works, I will end these comments here, and (probably) write another column or two on some of the other sections. [-ecf]

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Quote of the Week:

Recipe: a series of step-by-step instructions for preparing ingredients you forgot to buy, in utensils you don't own, to make a dish the dog won't eat.
--Unknown

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