

MT VOID 02/25/22 -- Vol. 40, No. 35, Whole Number 2212



Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society
02/25/22 -- Vol. 40, No. 35, Whole Number 2212

Table of Contents

[Science Fiction \(and Other\) Discussion Groups, Films, Lectures, etc. \(NJ\)](#)
[My Picks for Turner Classic Movies for March](#) (comments by Mark R. Leeper)
[REACHER \(Season 1\)](#) (television review by Dale Skran)
[Mini Reviews by Evelyn, Part 2](#) (film reviews by Evelyn C. Leeper)
[Holmdel Bell Labs Building](#) (letter of comment by David G. Leeper)
[Star Trek Economics, THE PLANETS, and THE END OF ETERNITY](#) (letter of comment by John Purcell)
[This Week's Reading](#) (THE DISPOSSESSED) (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.

Science Fiction (and Other) Discussion Groups, Films, Lectures, etc. (NJ):

Alas, both groups have returned to Zoom meetings, due in part to COVID, and in part to unpredictable weather. Movies for the Middletown meeting will be ones people can watch on YouTube, archive.org, or other free services.

March 3, 2022 (MTPL), 7PM: UNDER THE SKIN (2014) & novel
by Michel Faber
movie: <https://www.hoopladigital.com/title/12454572>
ebook: <https://www.hoopladigital.com/title/12325827>
audiobook: <https://www.hoopladigital.com/title/10024296>
[links are for MTPL card holders only]
March 24, 2022 (OBPL): TERRA INCOGNITA by Connie Willis,
containing three novellas: "Uncharted Territory", "Remake",
and "D.A."
(The first two are also in FUTURES IMPERFECT, and all are
available in stand-alone volumes.)

My Picks for Turner Classic Movies for March (comments by Mark R. Leeper):

There have been amazing number of film adaptations of Robert Louis Stevenson's mystery THE STRANGE CASE OF DR JEKYLL AND MR HYDE. It is a story that gives a bit of a chill without requiring much beyond makeup effects. There is one version that seems preferred over all the others. That is the 1931 version starring Frederic March doing both title roles: Jekyll and Hyde. It features the use of a makeup trick that allows Jekyll to become Hyde on screen (or stage) right in front of the audience. His Hyde is a really effective and ape-like.

[THE STRANGE CASE OF DR JEKYLL AND MR HYDE, March 8, 2:15AM]

March being "31 Days of Oscar" month, there are not a lot of science fiction or fantasy films on Turner except for those that got nominations for things like visual effects or make-up, or marginal films such as HAMLET (1948). (Trivia: A MIDSUMMER'S NIGHT DREAM, running on March 7 at 10:30AM, won the Oscar for cinematography, and is the only Oscar-winner ever to win on a write-in campaign; after it, the Academy prohibited write-in votes.) TCM is, however, running the infrequently-seen "The Dot and the Line" on March 10, at 6:15AM.

[-mrl]

REACHER (Season 1) (television review by Dale Skran):

Amazon has stepped up to the plate and corrected the errors of the two Tom Cruise "Reacher" movies by casting Alan Ritchson as Jack Reacher. Unlike the fairly short Cruise [5 foot 7 inches], Ritchson stands a full 6 foot 2 inches, and with a little bit of movie magic looms over everyone else like the character from the book, where Reacher is described as being 6 foot 5 inches. Also, Ritchson, whom you may know from his portrayal of the DC superhero "Hawk" in TITANS, is totally ripped, bringing more believability to the character.

Unlike the two Cruise films, which condensed and twisted the plots almost beyond recognition, REACHER sticks fairly closely to the first book, with the addition of a few elements from later books, notably the character of Neagley and the scene where Reacher's mother is dying of cancer. The final battle in the series is less cinematic in terms of how it looks in the book but more Hollywood in the way it breaks down into less than realistic one-on-one fights between our heroes and the bad guys.

Overall, though, REACHER is a great adaptation of the first book in the series, THE KILLING FLOOR. Some of the things that REACHER gets right include:

- The small-town, backwoods ambience of the books
- Brutal, realistic, well-choreographed fights that show the kind of techniques a really big, strong, well-trained fighter would use
- Lots of elbow strikes, punches, and head butts, with no fancy kicking or jumping. I was particularly pleased to see a large number of elbow strikes, which is probably the most powerful move available with your upper body, and far more directionally flexible than is generally understood.
- Honestly showing that Reacher has zero interest in a "fair fight."
- Showing clearly that Reacher is a great detective, on the level of Sherlock Holmes or Patrick Jane
- Communicating that although Reacher may not be steeped in book learning, he is almost always the smartest person in the room
- Highlighting the plain-spoken ex-military man of honor that Reacher is in the books
- A sense of how Reacher is quite different from your typical hero as he wanders the byways of rural America, seeking to experience firsthand the country he has spent his life fighting for overseas

Malcom Goodwin [iZombie] plays Oscar Finley, a black Boston cop who has moved to Margrave, Georgia for his own reasons, and Willa Fitzgerald has a turn as Roscoe Conkin, one of the few honest cops in Margrave. Finley and Conkin aid Reacher in his quest to find his brother's killer and bring Reacher-style justice to Margrave. The three have great chemistry, and I found their interactions believable. Goodwin is a very talented actor who is great fun to watch.

This is a violent, cable-style series, is plenty of beefcake and some female upper torso nudity, but it is true to the spirit of the books in a way that the movies were not. The series length--8 episodes--is plenty of time to fully adapt the novel w/o weird character mergers or gross over-simplifications of the plot.

As a Jack Reacher adaptation, REACHER is a must-watch for any fan of the series. Those who haven't read the books will find that the series stands on its own. As a fan of the books, it's hard for me to give an objective rating. REACHER is not as good as something like THE AMERICANS or BOSCH, but it is not that far below them either - a solid +2 on the -4 to +4 scale. With the graphic violence and sex, as well as post-torture viewing of bodies, REACHER may not be for everyone, and certainly is not for kids. [-dls]

Mini Reviews by Evelyn, Part 2 (film reviews by Evelyn C. Leeper):

MUNICH--THE EDGE OF WAR: MUNICH--THE EDGE OF WAR is not science fiction, but as a historical drama it veers towards alternate history. It is based on the novel by Robert Harris, who is best known (to me, anyway) as the author of FATHERLAND, which definitely *is* an alternate history. In MUNICH--THE EDGE OF WAR, the biggest change is in Neville Chamberlain, who is portrayed, not as being taken in by Hitler, but rather working a longer plan to prepare Britain (and America) for the war that he knows is inevitably coming. The rest is fairly accurate, if at times a bit hard to follow, but obviously of interest to those who like historical dramas.

Released on Netflix streaming 01/21/22.

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt7475578/reference>

What others are saying: https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/munich_the_edge_of_war

THE LAST DUEL: Ridley Scott is no stranger to historical dramas, and so the quality of the visuals of THE LAST DUEL are not unexpected. But what we have here is basically RASHOMON, and while it is instructive to see how the characters' actions, expressions, and intonations are subtly different in each of the three versions, it does make for a long film. Fans of Ridley Scott and historical dramas will want to see it; others should probably skip it. (The inquisitor at the trial seems to be a 14th century version of Rep. Todd Akin, and that and other aspects emphasize the attitudes towards women at that time.)

Released 10/15/21; available on various streaming services and on DVD.

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt4244994/reference>

What others are saying: https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/the_last_duel_2021

And rather than just another couple of isolated mini-reviews, I also have a double feature to recommend: MRS. HENDERSON PRESENTS (2005) and FLORENCE FOSTER JENKINS (2016). Both are about music and musical theater during World War II, though the types of performances are a bit different, both are based on true stories, and both are about women. MRS. HENDERSON PRESENTS is about the woman who bought the Windmill Theatre in London and used it to stage musical revues which eventually included nude tableaux. FLORENCE FOSTER JENKINS is about a woman who loved music, supported it as a patron in New York, and had absolutely no talent, but never realized it.

[-ecl]

Holmdel Bell Labs Building (letter of comment by David G. Leeper):

In response to [Evelyn's pointer in the 02/18/22 issue of the MT VOID to a movie trailer featuring the Bell Labs building in Holmdel \(NJ\)](#), David G. Leeper writes:

That's pretty cool for a nearly 60-year-old building. I still like seeing pictures of the interior because it brings back a flood of memories! [-dgl]

Star Trek Economics, THE PLANETS, and THE END OF ETERNITY (letter of comment by John Purcell):

In response to comments on Star Trek economics in the [02/11/22](#) and 02/18/22 issues of the MT VOID, John Purcell writes:

Many thanks for the latest installment, and I really must tell you how much I enjoyed the back and forth letters between correspondents. Both exchanges (re: Star Trek Economics and THE TIME MACHINE) made me chuckle, especially Scott Dorsey's timeline of CLAMS -> PEOPLE -> CRABS. Definitely amusing. I have yet to mutate into a crab as I advance in age, but welcome the eventuality of being a qualified curmudgeon in a couple years. As for the Star Trek Economics, I completely agree with Gary McGrath's assessment of the Ferengi working very hard to appear honest while taking advantage of their customers. That always livened up ST:TNG and DSN episodes for me. Great characters, those Ferengi.

In response to [Greg Frederick's review of THE PLANETS](#) and [Evelyn's review of THE END OF ETERNITY](#) in the 02/18/22 issue, John Purcell writes:

As for the books reviewed herein, THE PLANETS is one I would enjoy reading and staring at the pretty pictures of our solar system's planetary wonders. The price for this book is likely astronomical--see what I did there?--but I'm sure it's well worth the investment. As for re-reading Asimov's THE END OF ETERNITY, Evelyn's conclusion is totally true. A few years back I was on a re-reading kick of Asimov's novels of the early 1950s, and pretty much didn't care for them as much as I once did. Well, considering I was in my mid-teens when I read this book and all the FOUNDATION books (as of the late 60s, that is) and the Daneel Olivaw books, they definitely do not age well, except for the Olivaw novels. Those were still fun to read as detective stories, but the others didn't tickle my imagination as they once did. So it goes.

Thank you again for the issue, and keep the fires burning. [-jp]

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

THE DISPOSSESSED by Ursula K. LeGuin (Harper Voyager, ISBN 978-0-061-05488-4) postulates that the Odonians on Anarres do not use possessive pronouns, particularly in the first person. But there are some inconsistencies.

LeGuin writes, "The singular forms of the possessive pronoun were used mostly for emphasis; idiom avoided them. Little children might say 'my mother,' but very soon they learned to say 'the mother.' Instead of 'my hand hurts,' it was 'the hand hurts me,' and so on; to say 'this one is mine and that's yours' in Pravic [the artificial language constructed for Anarres], one said, 'I use this one and you use that.'"

But why *would* little children say 'my mother' unless they hear not just one person, but everyone around them saying it? And for that matter, why would Pravic--an invented language--even have the words "my", "mine", and so on?

There are many uses of "his" in sections told from the main (Anarresti) character's point of view. The ones in narrative can be passed over, but there are also ones in dialogue, e.g., "He was in terrible pain, mostly from his hands." At one point he says something is "in my head", though at another he says, "The head is heavy." He also refers to "my teacher".

It's true that some of these are after he has been on Urras a while: "He was accustomed to the constant use of the possessive pronoun by now, and spoke it without self-consciousness."

Still, "I will do my own work for a while now!" seems an incredibly proprietarian assertion for a lifelong Odonian.

One problem is that the "possessive" pronoun does not always express possession. Another is that they can express possession in a non-propertarian sense. For example, "my house" expresses possession in a proprietarian sense . "My age" does not express possession. And "my head" express possession, but in a non-propertarian sense. [-ecl]

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Quote of the Week:

He seems to have seen better days, as who has not
Who has seen yesterday?

--George Gordon, Lord Byron

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