



MAD LOVE (1935), dir. by Karl Freund

Richard Connell's short story "The Most Dangerous Game" has been filmed multiple times, but the original version done by RKO is considered by critics to be the best. It was made just prior to

THE MT VOID

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\_K\_i\_n\_g\_K\_o\_n\_g, directed by Schoedsack, scored by Max Steiner, and starred Joel McCrae (well, he wasn't in \_K\_o\_n\_g), Fay Wray, and Robert Armstrong. Some of the same glass paintings were used for jungle scenes. It is a pretty good adventure film with horror touches.

\_W\_h\_i\_t\_e\_Z\_o\_m\_b\_i\_e is an independent production from 1932, inspired by William Seabrook's study of voodoo, "The Magic Island." Fans of Bela Lugosi seem to consider this to be his second most memorable performance, ranked just below the role of Dracula. The low budget in places works against the film but also in some scenes helps to set the mood. Some scenes are considered classics.

Another oft-filmed story is Maurice Renard's "Hands of Orlac," but again the most popular version is \_M\_a\_d\_L\_o\_v\_e. Peter Lorre plays the surgeon Gogol who has a taste for the macabre. This was Lorre's first American film and one of his weirdest. Gogol grafts the hands of a killer onto pianist Colin Clive's wrists after Clive's hands are destroyed in a train crash. The hands seem to have a will of their own.

Again, this is on FRIDAY, October 27. (And they have finished the construction--you can use the old route again.)

Mark Leeper  
MT 3D-441 957-5619  
...mtgzx!leeper

The strongest of all the arguments against interference of the public with purely personal conduct is that, when it does interfere, the odds are that it interferes wrongly and in the wrong place."

--John Stuart Mill in "On Liberty", 1859

THE ROAD TO AVALON by Joan Wolf  
New American Library, 1989.  
A book review by Frank R. Leisti  
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The\_Road\_to\_Avalon by Joan Wolf is yet another rendition of the Arthurian Legend. It is a bittersweet love story with action, strategy, tactics and typical human tragedy resulting from poor management.

Joan Wolf is one of a small group of historical fiction writers that write about historical fiction as an "it could have happened this way." Her restructure of the Arthurian Legend shows Merlin as grandfather to Arthur through his daughter Igraine, an adulteress who slept with Uther Pendragon before the untimely death of her husband. As a result, Arthur was born only three months after the wedding and as an embarrassment, was removed from sight and mind. Only after numerous miscarriages, does Uther have to pull a rabbit out of the hat to get a suitable heir for Britain. Merlin goes to fetch the boy, Arthur - only to find that the boy is under the care of an abusive man who has frequently beat and whipped Arthur.

Given this scenario as a start into her story, Joan completely ignores the human psychology of repetitive child abuse. While she portrays Arthur as a private man, whose circle of friends can only get so close to him, he becomes this fantastic leader of men after being spurned by his childhood sweetheart, Morgan (his aunt - Merlin's daughter). Regardless that Arthur and Morgan are about the same age, they have an innocent relationship that develops into the intimate knowledge gained by youngsters ignored by parents. Arthur is told of his destiny and yet he is first willing to give it all up for the sake of his love for Morgan (shades of the Duke of Windsor). Because of the scandal of incest - Morgan forsakes Arthur and gives him to Britain. Arthur, the new high king of Britain is tested in battle and is truly discovered to be a great strategist and has introduced the heavy calvary fighter into battle with terrifying effect. With his chief rival killed, Arthur unites the Celtic kings against the Saxons with 10 years of fighting. After pushing back the Saxons, a temporary peace settlement is made. It is at this time that Arthur is forced to marry. After a poor start, as Arthur's heart is still for Morgan, he becomes civil to the new queen and beds her time and time again. She, however wants more than his friendship - she wants to be his love. Time and time again, she is frustrated by the fact that she is not bearing any children.

The barrenness of the queen is given a passing concern against the her jealousy when she discovers the previous relationship that Morgan and Arthur had. Morgan was called to Arthur when he was dying from the lack of will to live after he was shot by a Saxon arrow. This healing by the Lady of Avalon brings Arthur and Morgan back again as lovers. The queen finds her own bedmate in the strong arms of Arthur's calvary

leader. When Arthur is confronted by his bastard, he names him heir when Britain celebrates the construction of Camelot. Political intrigue almost brings civil war to Britain as Arthur's heir is duped into being a puppet king by his brother. Morgan saves the day by calling to King Arthur to return him prematurely from a campaign in Gaul. Arthur is killed protecting his son and touchingly says goodbye to his friends and names Constantine as his heir.

While the Arthurian Legend is reduced in scope, certain elements are kept to amuse and touch the psyche of the reader. The story weaves

its plot and sub-plot back and forth to present the likely historical facts. The story, in its attempt to keep the historical perspective in line with the legend - loses both. If it were to be historical, one would expect to be besieged with references discovered in this day and age about the positions of Camelot and the battles, life styles of change from the Roman era to the British era. The bittersweet love between the major players shows the extent to which people act in roles. Arthur relinquishes his love for Morgan to keep Britain secure from the Saxons. If such a great leader, why do mostly legend remain? A few historical facts do place a person named Arthur in that time period as king of Britain - yet very little is known about the battles and the motivations of the man. The legend paints him as a miracle leader. There is no drawing a magical sword from a stone to prove that one is king - only the relentless hardwork necessary for logistics, strategy and for growth of Britain.

SORCERY AND CECELIA by Patricia C. Wrede and Caroline Stevermer  
Ace, 1989, ISBN 0-441-77559-4, \$2.95.  
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper  
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This epistolary novel was produced (according to the afterword) as a result of the "Letter Game" with Wrede writing as Cecelia and Stevermer as Kate. Cecelia and Kate are two young ladies of 1817 England, but not quite the England we know. Everything seems to be the same (politics, society, economy) but magic and sorcery work. Whether one considers this alternate history or not is a matter of definition--many require a definite split-point, and specifically disallow the "it's our world but magic works" genre of stories.

Cecelia is stuck in Essex while Kate is in London, being introduced to society and becoming engaged to the Mysterious Marquis. Along the way Kate gets on the wrong side of an evil sorceress and, of course, Cecelia becomes entangled in the plots as well. Not being an expert on regency romances, I can't say whether this is typical of that genre, but I did enjoy it, especially the style, which of course was an imitation of the style of actual letters and novels of the period. If some of the action was a bit predictable, well, that's forgivable, as I don't believe plot surprises were in vogue at that time.

If you enjoy novels of the Jane Austen variety, you will probably enjoy this book. If you are bored silly by descriptions of clothing and balls, then you probably won't enjoy this book, though the charming style may overcome this drawback for you. (Is it just my imagination or does Kate on the cover look just like Raquel Welch?)

THE FLYING WARLORD by Leo Frankowski  
Del Rey, 1989, ISBN 0-345-32765-9, \$3.95.  
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper  
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Well, the Mongols have invaded at last. And Conrad Schwartz, loyal citizen of Communist Poland (well, it was Communist when the series started!) who awoke one morning in 1231 A.D., finally has his chance to do battle with them.

The engineering descriptions are toned down, replaced by battle descriptions instead. I'm no expert on warfare, but some of the battles--and particularly the casualties in them--sound unconvincing. After a suitable number of pages of political intrigue and fighting, the book ends, more or less. But the series probably does not, because Frankowski has left more loose ends than an explosion in a tinsel factory (to borrow a phrase from Donald Willis). There is a 24-page appendix describing just how Conrad's meddling resulted in the development of a Polish utopia, and this certainly leaves a lot of room for future books. And Conrad has also "shattered the temporal continuity of all creation," which sounds to me like an action that might have s\_o\_m\_e consequences along the line.

If you've read the first three books, you'll probably read this. If you haven't, I'd have to say that the series is probably not worth spending the time on: it drags out to four books what could have been accomplished in one, and pads the pages out with long engineering details and male chauvinist observations and descriptions. Which is a pity, because I think the basic idea held real promise.

CRY REPUBLIC by Kirk Mitchell  
Ace, 1989, ISBN 0-441-12389-9, \$3.95.  
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper  
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This is the third novel in this series (the first two were P\_r\_o\_c\_u\_r\_a\_t\_o\_r and T\_h\_e\_N\_e\_w\_B\_a\_r\_b\_a\_r\_i\_a\_n\_s). The premise of the series is that Pontius Pilate's wife has a dream which convinces her to convince him not to crucify Jesus, hence Christianity never gets started, hence never brings about the fall of Rome. Now (in the series) it is the equivalent of the present (i.e., 2000 years later) and Rome is still the Empire it always has been. Science has progressed to about the World War II level but the rulers in Rome are still emperors in an unbroken string back to Augustus.

I said of the first two novels that the problem with this premise is that (as Terry Carr once said) it's the aerodynamics of a bird in flight--if it doesn't keep moving forward, it falls. Rome did not appear to have advanced politically in any notable fashion in the intervening two thousand years in this novel. She still had rule by imperial fiat, decadence, conspiracies--in short, all that helped cause her fall in our universe. But now, in C\_r\_y\_R\_e\_p\_u\_b\_l\_i\_c, Mitchell has introduced the idea that change might actually occur, as he writes about a plot to return to the pre-Augustan Republic rather than imperial rule. The book is full of political conspiracies and assassinations, with traitors and plots galore, but somehow it never caught my interest.



It's possible, however, that students of history who know more about the real Republican plots in ancient Rome might find it more appealing

THE CASTLE OF OTRANTO by Horace Walpole  
(in THREE GOTHIC NOVELS edited by E. F. Bleiler)  
Dover, 1966 (1811c), ISBN 0-486-21232-7, \$3.00.

A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper  
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Every once in a while, I decide to dig out some older fantasy work and read it. Two years ago it was V\_a\_r\_n\_e\_y\_t\_h\_e\_V\_a\_m\_p\_i\_r\_e (1847) and T\_h\_e\_V\_a\_m\_p\_y\_r\_e (1819), last year it was W\_a\_g\_n\_e\_r,\_t\_h\_e\_W\_e\_h\_r-W\_o\_l\_f (1846), and earlier this year it was V\_i\_k\_r\_a\_m\_a\_n\_d\_t\_h\_e\_V\_a\_m\_p\_i\_r\_e (an 1893 translation of a 1799 version of an 11th Century work). Because of the titles, I was

asked whether I had some personal preference for the end of the alphabet. So, perhaps in response to that, I started reading

The  Arabian  Nights (an on-going project) and The  
Castle  Otranto. It's

probably good that I'm working on The  Arabian  Nights, because  
The  Castle

  of  Otranto could easily lead one to flee back to the end of the alphabet  
(which is, by the way, easy to do in this edition, since the omnibus  
volume also includes The  Vampyre and Vathe  k.)

Walpole originally claimed this novel (novella, actually, with a word count of approximately 38,000) was a translation of an Italian work and only with the second edition did he reveal the truth. It's full of evil princes, virtuous maidens, religious hermits, and gigantic ghosts, yet in spite of all that manages to be supremely dull. This has been cited on occasion as a classic that no one has read, and I think I understand why. In some ways, I found Sir Walter Scott's Introduction and Bleiler's prefatory remarks about Walpole more interesting than the work itself, and while it may be that

The  Castle  Otranto  
"has been

called one of the half-dozen historically most important novels in English" and "the founder of a school of fiction, the so-called Gothic novel," I have to say that it has been far exceeded by its imitators.

I suppose now I'll head back to the end of the alphabet and Vathe  k.

CRIMES AND MISDEMEANORS  
A film review by Mark R. Leeper  
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Capsule review: Two stories somewhat intertwined to make a single story of morel decisions and their consequences show up most of the popular dramatic media as being pallid morality plays. These are clearly not morality plays. They are realistic and at least one is very worth seeing.

There are not many filmmakers who can make a film about moral philosophy and get away with it--at least not a film with deeper thoughts than that unjust acts are punishable by having Sly Stallone blow you up with a hand grenade. Woody Allen is one director who can make a film about ethical dilemmas. And he has the courage to treat them in a manner that is realistic and non-Hollywoodish enough that some may feel that the story does not work or is somehow incomplete. C\_r\_i\_m\_e\_s a\_n\_d M\_i\_s\_d\_e\_m\_e\_a\_n\_o\_r\_s does not just reject the popular ending, it is an indictment of the popular dramatic media and the people who create it.

C\_r\_i\_m\_e\_s a\_n\_d M\_i\_s\_d\_e\_m\_e\_a\_n\_o\_r\_s is really two stories only tangentially related as far as the plot is concerned, though each in some way throws light on the other. One of the stories starts superficially as if it was inspired by F\_a\_t\_a\_l\_A\_t\_t\_r\_a\_c\_t\_i\_o\_n. Successful ophthalmologist Judah Rosenthal (played by Martin Landau in his best role ever) has been having a two-year affair with a neurotic stewardess (played by Anjelica Huston). She now threatens to ruin his career, frame him for embezzlement, and destroy his marriage if he does not marry her. His brother (played by Jerry Orbach) offers to arrange to have the mistress murdered. Judah has very strong moral principles, but he also has a lot he can lose if the mistress is not stopped.

The other story involves Cliff Stern (played by Woody Allen), an unsuccessful documentary filmmaker whose dream and long-term goal is to make a film about a philosophy professor with a very deep life-affirming philosophy. Instead he is commissioned to make a film about a very successful television comedy producer who happens to be Stern's brother-in-law. The producer (played by a perfectly cast Alan Alda) is glib and polished, makes pseudo-profound pronouncements on the nature of comedy, and in general personifies just about everything that Stern despises. The situation is exacerbated by a love triangle with a television documentary maker (played by Mia Farrow, who steadfastly refuses to let talent rub off on her no matter how many times Allen casts her). The irony is that Stern's hero, Dr. Levy, seems to have ideas no more profound than those of the television producers Stern hates, even if Levy does express them more eloquently.

Of the two stories by far the more meat is in the story of the ophthalmologist with the moral dilemma. In that we see the ethical philosophy illustrated. The story of the filmmaker is more comedy and is sure to be more of an audience pleaser, but it is also far less ambitious. It is the spoonful of sugar that helps the medicine go down.

There seem to be four ways to get a major role in a Woody Allen film. You can be an established actor such as Claire Bloom. You can be an under-rated actor such as Landau, whose career took a nosedive with "Space: 1999" and who until last year's Tucker had been getting thankless roles not nearly commensurate with his talent. You can get a role if Allen wants to make a point about you as an actor, which he seems to have done with Alan Alda. Actually it is surprising that Alda accepted a role that is so much of a put-down on Alda himself. The fourth way to get into an Allen film is the way Diane Keaton and Mia Farrow did and neither has really been an asset.

This is probably one of Allen's better "serious" films and I give it a +2 on the -4 to +4 scale.

