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Mini Reviews, Part 24 (film reviews by Mark R. Leeper and Evelyn C. Leeper):

This is the twenty-fourth batch of mini-reviews, all relating to men finding themselves in women's roles. (Note that the review of KISSES FOR MY PRESIDENT is a reprint of Evelyn's review from 04/05/24.)

I WAS A MALE WAR BRIDE (1949): I WAS A MALE WAR BRIDE came out a few years after the war, when the bombed-out European setting could be used for a comedy. (In general, most wartime comedies were set in the States, or well behind enemy lines, e.g., London.) Cary Grant is inexplicably a French army officer, though he retains his Mid-Atlantic accent. (The film is based on a true story, although the "male war bride" in reality was a Belgian resistance fighter.)

Most of the film has the typical boy-meets-girl, boy-hates-girl- and-girl-hates-boy, and then boy-and-girl-realize-they-love-each- other structure, with only the last part dealing with the (supposedly) amusing aspects of having the bride be in the American military and the groom be the non-citizen.

(Note: Catherine's line about Grant being "an octopus with hands" got recycled in another Howard Hawks film (THE THING FROM ANOTHER WORLD) as "Well, you had moments of kind of making like an octopus. I never saw so so many hands in all my life".)

I am also reviewing here KISSES FOR MY PRESIDENT and A SLIGHTLY PREGNANT MAN. Note that all three are basically about how difficult it is for a man to be treated like a woman even when people know he is a man, and how we are supposed to sympathize with him. Contrast this with TOOTSIE, where a man is being treated like a woman because people think he is a woman. In TOOTSIE you sympathize with Hoffman, but also with all the women who are treated the way he is. In I WAS A MALE WAR BRIDE, KISSES FOR MY PRESIDENT, and A SLIGHTLY PREGNANT MAN, there is no suggestion that there is anything wrong with treating women the way they are treated in those films. [-ecl]

Released theatrically 26 August 1949.

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0041498/reference/>

What others are saying: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0041498/reference/>

KISSES FOR MY PRESIDENT (1964): I just watched KISSES FOR MY PRESIDENT, and a painful experience it was too. It was the first film with a female President of the United States, but it was just as patronizing as you might expect, and with an ending that meets all one's expectations for a film like this made in 1960. Everyone seems totally clueless about having a "First Gentleman" instead of a "First Lady": the bedroom assigned to him was more feminine than anything outside of a farce, he is left to wander around the White House rather than being taken around to familiarize himself with it, and people still treat the President as if she's still a housewife. From the post-Hillary, post-Chastain era, this looks totally ludicrous. Actually, it probably looked fairly ludicrous even then. Polly Bergen is at times at least somewhat Presidential, though not consistently. Fred MacMurray is totally at a loss as "First Gentleman", even though Bergen must have had a long career in politics before she became President. And the Secret Service seems not just inept, but positively derelict in duty. (Yes, this was made before the Kennedy assassination, but even so the Secret Service would not have let the First Gentleman get in a car alone with a clearly unbalanced foreign dictator, or visit an ex-girlfriend alone without explicit instructions from him.) [-ecl]

Released theatrically 21 August 1964.

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0041498/reference/>

What others are saying: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0041498/reference/>

A SLIGHTLY PREGNANT MAN (1973): A SLIGHTLY PREGNANT MAN stars Marcello Mastroianni as the title character and Catherine Deneuve as his wife in this marginally science fictional story. When Mastroianni starts feeling sick and developing a pot belly, he goes to the doctor, who explains that the reason is that Mastroianni is pregnant. This is because of, the doctor says, all the artificial foods we have been eating. The question of how conception actually happened is not addressed, nor that of where the fetus is developing, nor that of how delivery will happen, so clearly there is a lot of fodder for the IMDb "Goofs" section. What is addressed is the social aspect of all this, especially as more men around the world report pregnancies. One of a group of women discussing this says that her husband would get an abortion, and another adds, "And there would be no jail [for him or the doctor] either." A maternity fashion house starts a line of "paternity" clothes, advertised just as patronizingly as their maternity clothes are. A man who is given stereotypical gay characteristics says he specifically wanted to meet Mastroianni, and then asks if he feels that this is turning Mastroianni into a female. Well, okay, this is a film of its time, and the attitudes it reflects are those of its time. Just watch it in a double feature with I WAS A MALE WAR BRIDE and get a double dose. [-ecl]

Released theatrically 20 September 1973 (France).

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0041498/reference/>

What others are saying: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0041498/reference/>

Ratherm The Documentary (film review by Art Stadlin):

Last night we watched RATHER, the Dan Rather documentary now playing on Netflix. It was better than I expected and definitely worth watching for anyone who harbors an interest in the history of TV journalism or TV history in general.

Where to start... I suppose this documentary on the life of Dan Rather might also double as his eulogy, with "Courage" engraved on his tombstone. Of course he's still going strong, even at 92. Snippets from his daughter, grandson, and several other notables in the industry all sing his praises. A patriotic man... A man with deep religious faith... A proud 4th-generation Texan...

His critics, mostly on the right-wing of politics, branded Dan as a liberal. And in those days, when Americans got their nightly TV news from only three sources, the TV press garnered significant influence. Dan's in-your-face style, unafraid to ask the difficult questions, was not well received by those in power who had lots to hide. This documentary covers it all, the lows and misses as well as his journalistic triumphs.

In the category of documentaries, this was a good one. Fast paced, lots of actual photos and video all the way back to Dan's start as a sportscaster on a Texas radio station. As Dan tells it, sportscasting taught him how to ad-lib, to fill the dead air. He would need that skill later as he covered so many live events, like the drama in Dallas involving the assignation of JFK.

From Dan's reporting in the war zones, to his seat in the CBS anchor chair, to his on-air role at 60-Minutes, he pushed to get the facts and bring the truth forward, without regard to whose feathers were ruffled. Honest and hard-hitting journalism was his passion. And then things went off the rails with the reporting of Presidential candidate G.W. Bush's military service. As that unfolded, Dan himself became the news. And he parted ways with CBS, after an on-air apology for getting the story wrong.

But that wasn't the end of Dan Rather's career. Today he leads a team that writes an on-line newsletter on Substack, named Steady - a word his Dad would say often to Dan while he was bedridden as a child. Dan got better and enlisted for military service in Korea. But he got kicked out when they discovered his rheumatic fever. He found a way to serve through journalism. And the rest is history.

<https://www.netflix.com/title/81772239>

<https://steady.substack.com>

[-as]

TERRAFORMERS (letter of comment by Richie Bielak):

In response to [Joe Karpierz's review of TERRAFORMERS](#) in the 05/03/24 issue of the MT VOID, Richie Bielak writes:

Thanks for the review of TERRAFORMERS. I recently added this book to my input queue. I was intrigued by its author, when I listened to her podcast "Our Opinions Are Correct"--the episode on the Turing test). Now I will move the book closer to the front on my queue. [-rb]

Ancestors and Descendants (letter of comment by Paul Dormer):

In response to [Evelyn's comments on word use and mis-use](#) in the 05/03/24 issue of the MT VOID, Paul Dormer writes:

I remember, some years ago, seeing a description of a forthcoming TV programme. It was about someone setting up a company to provide office lunches. The person was described as an ancestor of the Earl of Sandwich. [-pd]

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

A couple of weeks ago, I wrote about TO PROVE A VILLAIN edited by Taylor Littleton (MacMillan, ISBN 978-0-023-71360-6), which included an excerpt from Clement R. Markham titled "Richard III: A Doubtful Verdict Reviewed". This is an excerpt from Markham's RICHARD III: HIS LIFE & CHARACTER, REVIEWED IN THE LIGHT OF RECENT RESEARCH (1906) (CreateSpace, ISBN 978-1-508-60166-1), but it turns out that the entire work is available relatively cheaply, as well as from Project Gutenberg, from the Internet Archive, and through Hoopla (at least from my library).

Reading the full text, I am even more convinced that Josephine Tey used it as her major source for THE DAUGHTER OF TIME. It is not just the historical facts. Tey has basically the same reminiscence of the green and wooded England before everything got divided and fenced in. Tey takes that Richard's mother was the "Rose of Raby" (as mentioned in Markham) and creates an entire historical novel in THE DAUGHTER OF TIME called "The Rose of Raby". She has the same minor details, such as Richard paying for cross-Channel transport with his fur-lined coat, or about Caxton bringing printing to England. Markham calls John Morton "one of the greatest pluralists on record"; Tey refers to him as "the greatest pluralist on record". And so on.

Obviously Markham has more than Tey could cover, including the background of the War of the Roses, detailed descriptions of the various battles, and so on. But much of it will be very familiar to anyone who has read THE DAUGHTER OF TIME.

In fairness, Tey does mention Markham. When Grant asks Carradine when the rehabilitation of Richard III began, Carradine says it was in Tudor times and then, "A man Buck wrote a vindication in the seventeenth century. And Horace Walpole in the eighteenth. And someone called Markham in the nineteenth." But this is not much credit for such a major source.

At any rate, if you're looking for a well-researched non-fiction source on the Richard III controversy, I would recommend Markham.

[Oh, and Josephine Tey claims that Henry VII was the first king to have an armed bodyguard. This is apparently not true; other sources say that Richard II started having a bodyguard toward the end of his reign.]

[-ecl]

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Quote of the Week:

The time you enjoy wasting is not wasted time.
--Bertrand Russell

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