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Mini Reviews, Part 8 (film reviews by Evelyn C. Leeper):

Three miscellaneous films:

HERE (2024): HERE is a gimmick film. The camera stays in one place (until the very last couple of minutes of the film), but shows you scenes from a half dozen periods of time. Not only are the scenes shown in non-chronological order, but within each scene sections of the screen are blocked out which show a different time than the rest of the screen. All this is undoubtedly to demonstrate William Faulkner's observation, "The past is never dead. It's not even past."

It also demonstrates that how we describe the past to others is not always accurate, but whether this is because we genuinely believe the incorrect story, or because we want to project that view of the past to others, is not clear.

But the most memorable part (for me) is probably the scene in which two Black parents sit down with their teenage son and give him "The Talk", about how he should act, and what he should say, if he is pulled over for a traffic stop. I am sure this has been in movies before, but this is the first time I remember seeing it, and it was chilling in the same way "Tomorrow Belongs to Me" is chilling in CABARET. [-ecl]

Released theatrically 01 November 2024.

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt18272208/reference>

What others are saying: https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/here_2024

PEEPING TOM (1960): In the first scene of PEEPING TOM, the viewer is looking through the camera lens, and seeing what Mark sees, in vivid color. But when we see him watching the film later, it is black-and-white film. This repeats throughout the movie, emphasizing that film is not reality, but is a "watering-down" or dilution of reality. (This is not Technicolor, but Eastmancolor; it must have been restored magnificently. Many of Michael Powell's have a glorious use of color.) [-ecl]

Released theatrically 16 May 1960 (UK), 07 November 1961 (US festivals).

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0054167/reference>

What others are saying: https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/peeping_tom_1960

THE ENGLISHMAN WHO WENT UP A HILL BUT CAME DOWN A MOUNTAIN (1999): THE ENGLISHMAN WHO WENT UP A HILL BUT CAME DOWN A MOUNTAIN may not be the longest movie title in English, but if one rules out titles clearly designed as a gimmick, and titles of the form "(words), or (more words)" (e.g., DR. STRANGELOVE, OR HOW I LEARNED TO STOP WORRYING AND LOVE THE BOMB), it is certainly in the running.

The irony is that for a film with such a substantial title, it's a rather insubstantial film. Oh, it's pleasant enough, and has beautiful scenery and a happy ending. (Not really a spoiler--with this sort of movie, there is never any doubt.

But it is a puzzle movie, in the same way as THE DAM BUSTERS or ALL AT SEA MIRACLE ON 34TH STREET are puzzle movies: it requires thinking out of the box. Come to that, one sees the same sort of thing in GETTYSBURG and THE LIGHTHORSEMEN.

Of course, the solution in the movie wouldn't work. Soil has a 20-degree angle of repose, hence a 20-foot mound would have a radius of about 55 feet, so a volume of about 63,000 cubic feet. At 75 pounds per cubic foot (the average for soil), that's 2400 *tons*. There were not enough people to move that much soil in the time given. [-ecl]

Released theatrically 12 May 1995.

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0112966/reference>

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

China Miéville Interview (pointer):

<https://techcrunch.com/2025/03/30/author-china-mieville-says-we-shouldnt-blame-science-fiction-for-its-bad-readers/>

Excerpt:

To Miéville, it's a mistake to read science fiction as if it's really about the future: "It's always about now. It's always a reflection. It's a kind of fever dream, and it's always about its own sociological context."

He added that there's a "societal and personal derangement" at work when the rich and powerful "are more interested in settling Mars than sorting out the world" -- but ultimately, it's not science fiction that's responsible.

"Let's not blame science fiction for this," he said. "It's not science fiction that's causing this kind of sociopathy."

Originalism (letter of comment by Peter Rubinstein):

In response to [Evelyn's comments on originalism](#) in the 03/28/25 issue of the MT VOID, Peter Rubinstein writes:

[Evelyn wrote,] "the originalists need to pay more attention to the Preamble, in particular, to the phrase 'promote the general Welfare.'" [-ecl]

Unfortunately, there is a great deal of interpretation that alters conclusions based on "promote the general Welfare." [-pir]

"Cocoon" (letter of comment by Arthur Kaletsky):

In response to [Evelyn's comments on the film COCOON](#) in the 03/25/25 issue of the MT VOID, Arthur Kaletsky writes:

Apropos COCOON, I just cannot resist recommending the excellent Greg Egan story of that title, which shares nothing with the film. IIRC it's in several collections. [-ak]

Evelyn responds:

The ISFDb lists it as being in Gardner Dozois's YEAR'S BEST SCIENCE FICTION 12TH ANNUAL COLLECTION, as well as in ISAAC ASIMOV's DETECTIVES and the Egan collection LUMINOUS. [-ecl]

THE MYSTERIOUS ISLAND (1929) (letter of comment by Gary McGath):

In response to [Mark's comments on THE MYSTERIOUS ISLAND \(1929\)](#) in the 03/28/25 issue of the MT VOID, Gary McGath writes:

[Mark wrote,] "THE MYSTERIOUS ISLAND (1929) is the first film version of the Jules Verne novel." [-mrl]

The 1916 [film] 20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA incorporates parts of MYSTERIOUS ISLAND, including Nemo's back story, though it takes major liberties with both novels. [-gmg]

Evelyn adds:

All films back then seem to take major liberties with their sources when they are novels by dead authors. A classic example is the 1930 version of MOBY-DICK (see <http://leepers.us/mtvoid/2019/VOID1108.htm#mobydick> for Mark's classic review). [-ecl]

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

I've been bingeing Agatha Christie television series. The Hercule Poirot series (1989-2013), with David Suchet, are excellent, up through Series 7, but then started to go downhill, as plots were changed, characters added and deleted, and so on.

After that I watched the Miss Marple series (1984-1992), with Joan Hickson. These were also quite good, though I do prefer Poirot to Marple. After that I went to the Geraldine McEwan series (2004-2009). I had remembered not liking McEwan as much as Miss Marple, but in re-watching, I have concluded that what I didn't like were the liberties taken with the stories. For starters Jane Marple wan't even in some of the original stories, and the authors also added and deleted other characters, changed the killers' motives, and in some cases, changed the killer. They also seemed to feel it was necessary to add gay or lesbian romances in several of the stories. (They also made one of the romances in one of the mysteries an interracial one, though no one seemed to comment on that.)

I then ordered the first set of the Julia McKenzie series. I find her less like I picture Miss Marple (more perky, for one thing), but they also have a lot of changes from the original. For example, two never had Miss Marple in them, but even the ones that did had major changes. In THEY DO IT WITH MIRRORS, both Carrie Louise and Ruth and have their personalities vastly changed. (Ruth is downright obnoxious.) And apparently the producers decided to kick off the series by having an explicit sex scene at the beginning of A POCKET FULL OF RYE--no skin is exposed, but there's a lot of thrusting and such. I will not be ordering the rest. [-ecl]

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Quote of the Week:

By virtue of its unbounded aggression, Roman imperialism
was ultimately responsible for its own destruction.
--Peter Heather, closing line of
THE FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

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