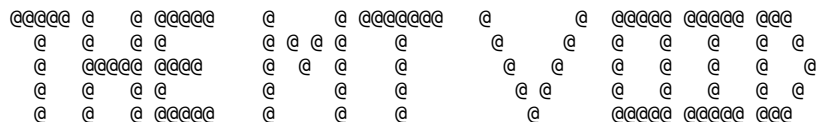


# MT VOID 02/10/23 -- Vol. 41, No. 33, Whole Number 2262



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### Mini Reviews, Part 12 (film reviews by Mark R. Leeper and Evelyn C. Leeper):

This is the twelfth batch of mini-reviews, all by and about women:

**SHE SAID:** SHE SAID starts out seeming to be about Trump, but that is merely the background for one of the main characters. The real story is about Harvey Weinstein and the toxic Hollywood environment. The reporters covering the story find it difficult to get people to speak out; there are either NDAs (non-disclosures agreements) or a fear of retribution in their careers. (At least two of the women who did come forward also appeared in the film as themselves.)

The film (directed by Maria Schrader and written by Rebecca Lenkiewicz, Jodi Kantor, and Megan Twohey--the last two the reporters who broke the story) is strangely similar to ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN with two reporters chasing a story. There are also elements of SPOTLIGHT, with reticent witnesses and a gradual revealing of the scope of the problem, though these seem less obvious. Carey Mulligan as Megan Twohey, one of the reporters in this film about sexual assault and harassment, reminds one of her role in PROMISING YOUNG WOMAN, though that had her as a victim as well as an investigator.

Released 06 January 2022 on streaming. Rating: +2 (-4 to +4) or 7/10

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt14807308/reference>

What others are saying: [https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/she\\_said](https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/she_said)

**THE WOMAN KING:** The specifics of THE WOMAN KING are fictional, but most of the generalities are accurate, except for the personality of King Ghezo and the position of Ghezo and the head of the Agojie regarding slavery. In the film, they oppose it; in real life Ghezo was one of the worst slavers in West Africa.

But the Kingdom of Dahomey (located in present-day Benin) did have a corps of female warriors, probably because so many males

had been killed in fighting with neighboring states. (This corps, the Agojie, was the inspiration for the female warriors in BLACK PANTHER.)

There is a certain irony (to us, anyway) that we know of this corps of female African warriors almost entirely through the reports and writings of white males. On the other hand, for this film the director (Gina Prince-Bythewood), both writers (Dana Stevens and Maria Bella), and the cinematographer (Polly Morgan) are all women, which is quite unusual for what is basically a historical war film. Notable in the cast are Viola Davis as the general of the Agojie, and Thusa Mbedu as Nawi.

Released theatrically 16 September 2022. Rating: +2 (-4 to +4) or 7/10

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt8093700/reference>

What others are saying: [https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/the\\_woman\\_king](https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/the_woman_king)

UNA GREAT MOVIE: UNA GREAT MOVIE (written and directed by Jennifer Sharp) is basically a remake of the 1989 Kevin Bacon film THE BIG PICTURE, which given the title, may not be an accident. A screenwriter talks to various Hollywood executives, and gradually her screenplay about a Black women traveling through Mexico looking for romance becomes full of stereotypes, and white-washed to boot. But UNA GREAT MOVIE itself retains its focus, and it updates THE BIG PICTURE with more current concerns.

Released theatrically 29 June 2022; now on DVD. Rating: +2 (-4 to +4) or 7/10

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt6765628/reference>

What others are saying: [https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/una\\_great\\_movie](https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/una_great_movie)

WOMEN TALKING: WOMEN TALKING is set in an anti-feminist world, in a world much like that of A HANDMAID'S TALE. But it is not a future dystopia; it is set in the present, and is an isolated society run by men where religion is used to control the womenfolk. And it is based on a real-life Mennonite colony in Bolivia in from 2005 to 2009. The film portrays this society of women kept illiterate and under total control in very muted tones, almost as if it were a black and white film.

This is a film that depends on the script and the acting. Sarah Polley both directed and wrote the script (based on the novel by Miriam Toews). The novel is told entirely from the "minutes" kept by the male school teacher, while the movie actually shows you the women talking, and gives you a better sense of their feelings. As Sheila O'Malley points out, in the novel you are getting the women's feelings filtered through the man who is taking the minutes. This is yet another 2022 film by a woman director and screenwriter that focuses on women and their feelings and perceptions. (MASTER; THE WOMAN KING; CATHERINE CALLED BIRDY; and GOOD LUCK TO YOU, LEO GRANDE are some other examples that come to mind.)

Released 6 January 2023. Rating: high +1 (-4 to +4) or 6/10

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt13669038/reference>

What others are saying: [https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/women\\_talking](https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/women_talking)

[-mrl/ecl]

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

For those who love 84 CHARING CROSS ROAD for its description of bookshops, I can heartily recommend the books of Shaun Bythell (THE DIARY OF A BOOKSELLER [Profile Books, ISBN 978-1-781-25863-7], CONFESSIONS OF A BOOKSELLER [David R. Godine, ISBN 978-1-567-92722-1], REMAINDERS OF THE DAY [David R. Godine, ISBN 978-1-567-92756-6], SEVEN KINDS OF PEOPLE YOU FIND IN BOOKSHOPS [David R. Godine, ISBN 978-1-567-92692-7]). Bythell is the owner of The Bookshop in Wigtown, Scotland. Wigtown is "Scotland's National Book Town", although unlike Hay-on-Wye in Wales, this did not come about naturally, but was planned as a way to revive the town.

I have read four of these through our public library's Hoopla account(\*); CONFESSIONS OF A BOOKSELLER is not available there, or through inter-library loan, and all the copies for sale are more than I want to spend. THE DIARY OF A BOOKSELLER concentrates mostly on the bookshop, albeit with some comments on other aspects of life in Wigtown. By the time Bythell gets to REMAINDERS OF THE DAY, however, it has become more a diary of his life in Wigtown, with far more characters than I can keep track of, and less a view into bookselling. There's nothing wrong with discussing other matters--reading about rationing, apartment dwelling, etc., was part of what made 84 CHARING CROSS ROAD charming--but by REMAINDERS it has become the tail that wags the dog (so I guess my recommendation is a bit less hearty for REMAINDERS). In my opinion, of course; you mileage may vary.

These lured me into searching for other books about bookselling, but what I found was, ironically, a book that was 100% village life and no bookselling whatsoever: HAY BEFORE THE BOOKSHOPS by Bridget Ashton (Austin Macauley, ISBN 978-1-398-45206-0). This is Ashton's reminiscence of her childhood in Hay-on-Wye in the early 1950s, when there were \*no\* bookshops in Hay--and not much else in the way of modern amenities (or mod cons, if you prefer). Of course, it doesn't claim to be anything but that (although the title means it is trading at least a bit off the whole bookshop thing). I suppose the most accurate review would be, "For people who like this sort of thing, this is the sort of thing they would like."

(\* Hoopla is a great way to borrow ebooks/audiobooks from your library; check if they offer it. The big drawback is that each library

has a daily limit on how many books it can lend out that day, and if you try to download something in the evening, you may well be told you have to wait until the next day. For that matter, I've gotten that message at 10AM. On the other hand, you night owls are good to go, because the count resets at midnight. [-ecl]

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Quote of the Week:

I never read the papers...I rely on Sven to tell me  
if there's a war broken out. No, I think there's far  
too much going on already without reading about it  
as well.

--Alan Ayckbourn

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