

ODE TO JOY (film review by Mark R. Leeper):

CAPSULE: The strange medical condition portrayed in the film is a real thing. Charlie has cataplexy, one form of narcolepsy, which drops Charlie into a seizure as a reaction to any strong emotion, especially that of joy. Charlie has long suffered from cataplexy. His friends and family know how to take care of Charlie whenever his neurological condition suddenly knocks him unconscious. And Charlie knows that though he envies his friends who can enjoy their friends and family he can never enjoy normal relationships with them. Directed by: Jason Winer; Written by: Max Werner. Rating: +2 (-4 to +4) or 7/10

I have to admit that I have always found the titling of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony just a bit puzzling. Why would we need an "Ode to Joy"? I would have thought that joy was the one commodity that just about everyone would be in favor of. We all love joy. We may get it from a wide variety of different means and sources, but what good is life if not for the getting of joy? It is this right is even in the United States Declaration of Independence. We only write odes to things of controversial value, notably something like a Grecian Urn. But in the film ODE TO JOY, we meet a man who paradoxically does not get joy from joy and love. Charlie suffers from a form of narcolepsy that makes him sleep when he feels happy.

Charlie is a little nebbish librarian who suffers from cataplexy. He works in the Brooklyn public library. Charlie has worked out a number of clever tricks to depress himself when he needs to in an emergency. People who know Charlie like him, but there are not many of these friends. One day a couple arguing over their personal relationship and who are breaking up wander into the library for a place to argue. The woman is stunning dark-haired woman and Charlie would like to meet her. But he dares not start on a path that will lead him to constant seizures.

Charlie's cataplexy forces him to avoid getting joy from his own joy and love. He has cataplexy. This is a subject matter that creates some unique writing problems for the writer, Max Werner. Market forces require that it will be more or less necessary for Werner to put a happy ending on this film. This would require the lead character to be in a happy situation, a situation that gives him a certain amount of joy. But the rules of this universe do not allow Charlie to experience joy. So how is Werner going to have a happy ending? Or will he forgo the customary happy ending? Charley is played by Martin Freeman, which makes him one of the few British actors of his age who was not in Harry Potter. He did, however, play Watson in SHERLOCK.

This story (in unusual form) first appeared in very different form) as a chapter of the THIS AMERICAN LIFE podcast, "I've Fallen In Love and I Can't Get Up." Below I provide a link for the episode, which told the story of Matt Frerking on whom this film's Charlie is very, *very* loosely based. I rate ODE TO JOY a +2 (-4 to +4) or 7/10.

<https://www.thisamericanlife.org/409/held-hostage/act-three-0>

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt3009772/reference>

What others are saying: https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/ode_to_joy_2019

[-mrl]

THE MUMMY and Imhotep (letter of comment by Dorothy J. Heydt, Gary McGath, and Sam Long):

[This all relates to a discussion I could have had with a young horror film fan. -mrl]

In response to [Mark's comments on THE MUMMY](#) in the 08/02/19 issue of the MT VOID, Dorothy J. Heydt writes:

Mark wrote, "The first Mummy movie was made in 1932. That makes it a good deal older than your mother. The movie was called THE MUMMY. It starred Boris Karloff who at the time was famous for having made some scary movies." [-mrl]

And revealed himself to be capable of portraying himself as a romantic lover more expertly than anyone save maybe Valentino. And nobody seems to have noticed. [-djh]

But Gary McGath writes:

Juanita Coulson noticed, as her song "The Mummy Shuffle" shows. [-gmg]

Dorothy responds:

Well, good for her. I have never heard it, and a quickish google does not reveal any sites with the lyrics. Which is understandable, if she wishes to preserve copyright. But shucks. [-djh]

Evelyn adds:

"The Mummy Shuffle" was nominated for a Pegasus Award for "Best Love Song" in 1991. The song was included on the filk CD for the 2002 Windycon.

Mark found the lyrics on <https://nielsenhayden.com/makinglight/archives/011041.html>:

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Way back in the thirties, when I was young and green,
Each weekday seemed so endless, my impatience oh so keen.
And then, oh boy! came Saturday; I rushed to see the matinee,
The cowboys, the cops, and -- make my day -- those monsters on
the screen.
Yes, they were really thrilling, no other could compare,
From Frankie's shambling nightmare to the guy who grew wolf
hair.
But the one who stole my heart and soul (what a role to end all
roles) --
The guy in rags from top to toe, the answer to my prayer.

Oh, Kharis, Kharis --
That meanderin', molderin' pile of bandages puts me in a whirl!
Kharis, oh, Kharis --
I sure hanker to be his Princess Ananka; I wanna be his girl!
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Let me note here that in THE MUMMY Karloff played Imhotep, while Kharis was the Mummy in the four sequels (THE MUMMY'S HAND, THE MUMMY'S TOMB, THE MUMMY'S GHOST, and THE MUMMY'S CURSE), and played by Tom Tyler in the first and Lon Chaney, Jr., in the other three. So technically "The Mummy Shuffle" is not about Karloff at all. [-ecl]

In response to Mark's comments on Imhotep in the 08/02/19 issue of the MT VOID, Sam Long writes:

Regarding the item about THE MUMMY, I'm told that Imhotep was the first person known to have expressed an opinion; hence the abbreviation IMHO. [-sl]

Mark responds:

In My Humble Opinion That's Extremely Possible. [-mrl]

DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE (letter of comment by Paul Dormer):

In response to [Evelyn's review of DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE](#) in the 08/02/19 issue of the MT VOID, Paul Dormer writes:

I remember a few years ago I was at a party and Colin Greenland was there and he was saying that he'd just re-read the book and he'd realised that although it's supposedly set in London, Stevenson didn't know London very well and basically set it all in Edinburgh with the names changed. I have since re-read it myself, but I can't say I recognised Edinburgh, but it didn't feel like Victorian London either as you'd find in Dickens, say. [-pd]

Correction on Linguistics Article (letter of comment by Paul Dormer):

In response to [Evelyn's correction on the linguistics article](#) in the 08/02/19 issue of the MT VOID, Paul Dormer writes:

Evelyn wrote, "I was under the impression that the entire web site was by Geoffrey Pullum, based on the Home page, but apparently I mis-read it. The site (and quote) are Lynne Murphy's." [-ecl]

And I see how you might have thought that.

Currently, the first entry on the home page is a review of a book. The book is by Pullum, but the review is by Murphy.

And once again, I recommend Murphy's book THE PRODIGAL TONGUE about the friction between British English and American English. [-pd]

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

AHAB'S RETURN: OR, THE LAST VOYAGE by Jeffrey Ford (ISBN 978-0-06- 267900-0) has the premise that not only Ishmael, but also Ahab (and one other) survived the sinking of the Pequod. All three end up in New York City. There is a lot of atmosphere of the 1850s New York, especially the Five Points area, and of the condition of African- Americans in that time and place, and of the sensationalist newspapers, and so on. There is also a level of the fantastic in the story. There is

perhaps less than one might want about Ahab himself, who seems more a framework for the story than an active character.

Not surprisingly, AHAB'S RETURN is not up to the level of MOBY-DICK; who could expect it to be? But it actually depends very little on MOBY-DICK. The three "continuing characters" could be from any whaling voyage--and it's not even clear you need a whaling voyage. On the other hand, it is worth reading in its own right. [-ecl]

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Quote of the Week:

Never lend books, for no one ever returns them; the only books I have in my library are books that other folk have lent me.

--Anatole France

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