HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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# Destiny 1921

## Fritz Lang (1890-1976)

OVERVIEW

> When I saw *Destiny*, I suddenly knew that I wanted to make movies. It wasn't the three stories themselves that moved me so much, but the main episode—the arrival of the man in the black hat (whom I instantly recognized as Death) in the Flemish village—and the scene in the cemetery. Something about this film spoke to something deep in me; it clarified my life and my vision of the world.
>
> Luis Buñuel, *My Last Breath*

In *Metropolis* (1927), the young Freder Fredersen is terrified when he sees a scythe-wielding Grim Reaper in his nightmare. Fritz Lang once said he too had had a similar vision as a boy, at a time he was lying sick with fever (McGilligan, 70). His version of the Grim Reaper was unlike that of Freder—he said he had visualized death as a cloaked man with a wide-brimmed hat. Back in 1921, *Destiny*—Lang's first major feature-length film—had featured a personification of death as an impressive figure much closer to the one in the director's nightmare.

**Story.** *Destiny* was written by Fritz Lang and Thea von Harbou—their third collaboration following *Four for the Woman* and *The Wandering Image*. Bernhard Goetzke plays the mysterious Weary Death, a mild-mannered and wise-looking figure who sees to it that people depart the world when their time comes. When the dark-caped stranger claims the life of a young man, he gets stood up to by the latter's desperate fiancée—Lil Dagover from Robert Wiene's Expressionist film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920). The young woman is given three opportunities to prove her claim that love is as strong as death.

**Structure.** In each episode, the Maiden strives to prevent her lover's death in distinct and semi-fantastical situations set in the Middle East, Renaissance Venice and Imperial China. The structure with three interconnected tales recalls D.W. Griffith's *Intolerance* (1916) as well as two European films from 1920, Dreyer's *Leaves from Satan's Book* and Murnau's *Satan*.

**The Title.** In Germany, the film was released as *Der Müde Tod* (The Weary Death) and the alternate international title was *The Weary Death: A German Folk Song in Six Verses.* The six verses here refer to the three episodes framed by two introductory ones taking place in the Flemish town and a finale that wraps them up. A source of inspiration for the "folk song" would be a Brothers Grimm fairy tale, "Godfather Death" (Koller). As in this tale, the Weary Death oversees a chamber full of burning candles which represent the lives of individuals. Another possible influence would be the Indian folktale **Savitri.**

**The Three Tales.** Set in Baghdad during the Ramadan month, the first tale alludes to the *Arabian Nights*. Like the rest of the film, elements of fantasy and eclectic references prevail, such as the time when the young European—the Maiden's lover—produces a modern pistol to defend himself from the zealots. 'Desert romances' were popular at the time—Edith Maude Hull's bestselling novel *The Sheik* was published two years ago. Its film adaptation came out the same year as *Destiny* and catapulted Rudolf Valentino to stardom. With *Destiny*'s second tale, action shifts to Renaissance Venice. Again, it is the story of a romance in peril—with gondolas, a carnival, and a balcony scene recalling *Romeo and Juliet.* The last tale is the longest and features ambitious cinematic tricks. This time, the loving couple appears as the apprentices of a Chinese magician and they find themselves hounded by the Emperor of China. All three tales end with the failure of the young woman to save her lover. In the final part of the film, she is back at the Flemish village and the Weary Death gives her one last chance to unite with her fiancé.

**Themes.** Despite its gloomy mood, *Destiny* has several lighthearted moments (particularly the third tale set in China). The ending is somewhat ambiguous, which leaves enough room for an optimistic interpretation. Fascination with non-Western cultures is manifest in two of the tales. There are hints of themes and tropes that Lang would continue to explore in the following four decades: violent mobs, man hunts, corruption of power, love triangles, abusive relationships, time (and clocks), scientists (and alchemists) and last but not least, an engrossing fire to close the curtain.

**Historical Context.** A dismal scene early on in the Flemish town shows a horde slowly walking towards the wall constructed by the Weary Death. The semi-transparent folk are from all walks of life—among them are children as well as military men. The young woman observes that nothing can hinder these apparitions from entering the Weary Death's domain. *Destiny* was a product of a time when German society was coping with its losses in World War One. There was also the devastation of the Spanish Flu of 1918—which Fritz Lang had tackled with as the writer of Otto Rippert's *The Plague of Florence* (1919).

**Design and Cinematography.** A titlecard gives credit to "Heinrich Umlauff Museum" as the provider of *Destiny*'s costumes. Lang was obviously proud of the film's attention to ethnographic detail. Two of the art directors—Röhrig (the Flemish town) and Warm (the Venetian and Arabian episodes)—had contributed to *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*; the third, Herlt (Imperial China) would become a Murnau collaborator (Koller). According to a reviewer in 1921, its cinematography made *Destiny* unique:

> The material of this film differs strictly from the mass of existing movies which might just as well be novel, novella, fairytale or whatever else. This is subject matter that can only be expressed through film, can only be mastered using the instruments of film. Not a work of literature, not a work of illustration but—true cinematography. Cinema created by a cinematographer (not a 'poet', not an 'author', for the words borrowed from other arts do not fit here!), by the master of the game, Fritz Lang (Wollenberg).

Thanks to creative use of stop-motion and overlapping film, cinematographer Fritz Arno Wagner (*Nosferatu*, *Diary of a Lost Girl*, *M*) and Lang stage enchanting sequences, particularly for the Chinese tale's magic tricks. The flying carpet scene of this part impressed Douglas Fairbanks so much that he purchased the rights for the special effects for them to be used in *The Thief of Baghdad* (1924, Raoul Walsh) (McGilligan, 89).

**Legacy and Lineage.** *Destiny* was a favorite film of Luis Buñuel (Buñuel, 88), Alfred Hitchcock also acknowledged that it was the Lang film that inspired him (Truffaut, 24) (rather surprisingly skipping the director's other films). Bernhard Goetzke's Weary Death anticipates other personifications of death, notably Ingmar Bergman's ***The Seventh Seal*** (1957). Among other relevant films are *Death Takes a Holiday* (1934), Bernardo Bertolucci's *Grim Reaper* (1962), *Meet Joe Black* with Brad Pitt (1998) and Frank Wisbar's *Fährmann Maria* ("Ferryman Maria" and same director's 1946 Hollywood film *Strangler of the Swamp*). Not the death figure but the thrice-recurring endeavor of the Maiden is paralleled in Tom Tykwer's 1998 film *Run Lola Run*—with a woman who follows three different paths to save her boyfriend.

Retrospectively, Lang referred to *Destiny* as his "first success"—thanks to his collaboration with von Harbou (McGilligan, 75). This philosophical film is also action packed and brings together an incredibly varied array of subjects such as swashbuckling, desert romance, court intrigue, murderous plots, masquerading and wizardry. With its wide range of themes, diverse cultural references and masterful use of various cinematic techniques, *Destiny* showcases highlights from Lang's career to come.

CHARACTERS

**The Weary Death.** The mysterious figure purchases a lot near the village cemetery to construct a huge wall without any visible gates. Weary Death unnerves the young couple twice, in the horse carriage and later at the inn. Bernhard Goetzke plays other parts in all three tales—the gardener (Baghdad), the Moor (Venice) and the archer (China).

**The Maiden.** The Maiden arrives at a village inn with her fiancé—who soon goes missing. Her inquiries take her to the wall built by Weary Death, who informs her that her fiancé is dead. She wants to prove that her love is stronger than death and is given an opportunity to do so: if she could prevent the young man's death in distinct contexts, she would be united with him. Lil Dagover appears in the three tales as Zobeide, Monne Fiametta and Tiao Tsien.

**The Young Man.** He disappears at the inn and the Maiden finds out that the Weary Death had escorted him out. In the three tales, he reappears as the lover—the Frank, Giovan Francesco and Liang—who all die at the end of each tale.

First Tale

**The Caliph.** In the first tale, the Caliph is Zobeide's menacing brother. He clearly can't stand the idea of her having a relation with the Frank and sees to it that he is executed.

**The Dervish.** Caliph's sinister minion—the most despicable of the murderous zealots—plays a key role in capturing the Frank. Played by Rudolf Klein-Rogge (*Metropolis*' Rotwang the Inventor and the eponymous villain of *Dr. Mabuse the Gambler*).

**The Gardener El Mot.** Stoically observes the goings on at Caliph's palace and is finally revealed to be the Weary Death.

Second Tale

**Girolamo.** Girolamo is engaged to Monne Fiametta who hates him. The scheming Girolamo manages to foil Monne Fiametta's deadly plot against him and gets her to kill her lover. This is the second appearance of Rudolf Klein-Rogge.

**The Moor.** The Moor is Monne Fiametta's trusted manservant who mistakenly stabs her lover with the poisoned dagger. At the end of the tale, the Moor transforms into the Weary Death.

Third Tale

**The Emperor.** The emperor of China is a farcically cruel and lecherous figure—played by the Hungarian slapstick star Károly Huszár (*The Blue Angel, Dr. Mabuse the Gambler*).

**A Hi.** The magician tries to protect his assistants Tiao Tsien and Liang but easily succumbs to the will of the emperor.

SYNOPSIS

As a horse carriage approaches a small town, a new passenger hops in makes a young couple uncomfortable with his strange gaze. At the town's inn, notables gossip about this shadowy stranger.
The cloaked man had raised eyebrows in the town by purchasing a vacant lot adjacent to the town's cemetery; soon he had a towering wall built around his property. A while later the young woman's fiancé disappears. A desperate search takes her to the gigantic wall where she sees apparitions of numerous individuals sleepwalking towards the wall. Her fiancé is among them but is unresponsive to her and together with the others he disappears by going through the wall. She comes across the town's pharmacist and grabs a potion of poison from the shelf—it is 11 pm.

The Maiden somehow appears before the wall once again and is somehow able to enter and ascend, ultimately to be greeted by the cloaked stranger—now identified as the Weary Death. He tells the Maiden that it was her fiancé's time to die and nothing can be done about it. The only way out is for her to overcome a challenge: if she could manage to prevent the deaths—even only once—he promises to unite her with the young man. The challenge takes the Maiden to the Baghdad Caliphate, Renaissance Venice, and to Imperial China—each time she fails. Back at the town, the Weary Death gives her one last

opportunity--he promises to unite her with her lover if within an hour she can find someone that would give up their life.

The Maiden is once again at the apothecary and it is still 11 pm. She asks the pharmacist to consider giving up his life and is flatly rejected. She receives the same response after approaching a beggar and the elderly at the infirmary. Just as she loses hope and quits searching, the Maiden notices smoke coming from the window of a house, she enters the burning building and saves a baby. She refuses to hand the baby to the Weary Death and consequently joins her dead fiancé and hugs him. They are embraced by the Weary Death, who gently leads them outside.

SCENES

**"A Little Town Lost in the Past".** A young couple is happily travelling on a horse carriage. As they approach a small town, a new passenger hops in. The gaze of this brooding man makes the lovers uncomfortable. The stranger, soon to be identified as the Weary Death is played by Bernhard Goetzke.



Soon the couple arrives in the town and go to an inn to eat. Here, the town's notables are gossiping about the shadowy stranger encountered by the couple. The elders of the Flemish town—the scene anticipates the pub buddies discussing the murders in Fritz Lang's *M*)



**Flashback: The Eerie Wall.** The cloaked man had raised eyebrows in the town by purchasing a vacant lot adjacent to the town's cemetery. Town council is initially reluctant to sell the land adjacent to the cemetery; meek objections at the town council—the land was earmarked for the cemetery's expansion—were easily dismissed when he offered ample gold.





Soon the stranger had a towering wall built around his property. Without any entrance in sight, this imposing structure aroused the curiosity of the residents but they remained clueless about what it concealed. The massive wall with no entrance continues to puzzle the townsfolk.



**The Golden Unicorn Inn.** The story resumes with the young couple cheerfully sitting down to have their meal. However, the lover's gaiety doesn't last long, as the stranger enters the inn and takes a seat at their table. Then, they are unsettled by the appearance of a Memento mori: the beer mug turns into hourglass as a skeleton's shadow appears.



**A Frantic Search.** The woman feels the need to freshen up and briefly steps out of the dining room. Upon her return, she finds the table empty—both the stranger and her fiancé have vanished. When other patrons tell the Maiden that the two men left together, she dashes out. A desperate search takes her to the gigantic wall where she sees apparitions of numerous individuals sleepwalking towards the wall. Her fiancé is among them but is unresponsive to her and together with the others he disappears by going through the wall. Semi-transparent apparitions walk towards the wall—among them are children, a king, a nun.



**Drinking Poison.** In the evening she chances upon the town's pharmacist. He takes her to his apothecary to rest. Sitting exhausted and despondent, she spots *Song of Solomon* and reads the line "Love is as strong as death". She then grabs a potion of poison and proceeds to drink it. A clock shows that it is 11 pm. The moment the Maiden attempts to commit suicide, the Maiden somehow appears before the wall once again. This time, she is able to find an entryway and proceeds to walk up a steep flight of stairs to enter the realm of the Weary Death.



**A Challenge: Three Candles.** In the chamber of candles, the Maiden protests and wows that her love can overcome the Weary Death's design. He responds by presenting her with a challenge. He compassionately shows the Maiden three candles representing individuals who are about to die. If she could manage to prevent the deaths—even only once—he promises to unite her with the young man.



**The First Light – Baghdad.** The Maiden appears as Zobeide, the sister of a powerful Caliph. She is romantically involved with a European referred to as the Frank. During the couple's dalliance at the palace, a tribesman notices him and calls out his mates to seize the infidel. A chase ensues and the Frank narrowly escapes a hoard of pursuers by diving into the moat and making it to safety.



Bernhard Goetzke reappears in the Arabian caliphate story as Del Mot the Gardener.



The Caliph schemes with his minion (*Destiny*'s costumes were provided by the Heinrich Umlauff Museum; Warm was one of the three designers who contributed to the film). Goaded by his sneaky advisor, the Caliph is greatly annoyed by the incident.



Meanwhile, Zobeide instructs her loyal maid Ayesha to leave the palace and contact the Frank. Ayesha delivers Zobeide's message to meet her at the palace at midnight—but en route to the Frank's hiding place, she is observed by the dervish. He informs the Caliph and guards are ordered to allow everyone in, but not to let anyone out. Soon, the Frank comes to the castle for his rendezvous with Zobeide. Caliph's men find out about him quickly and capture him. The Caliph invites his sister to the garden—to shock her with the sight of her lover buried except for his head. The gardener doing the digging is revealed to be the Weary Death.

**The Second Light – Venice.** A carnival is taking place in Venice. Girolamo is a wealthy bourgeois and member of a secret fraternity holding the reigns in the city. He is despised by his fiancée Fiametta (the Maiden) who is in love with a young man named Giovan. Girolamo is well aware of their affair and in a burst of jealousy, tells her that he has seen to it that Giovan is framed as a traitor. Much to Fiametta's dread, he brags about getting the go ahead at the council to personally assassinate Giovan in a staged swordfight during the tumultuous festivities. Of the three designers, Warm was in charge of the Venice episode.



Fiametta schemes to foil Girolamo's plan and also get rid of him for good. She dispatches a messenger to deliver him an invitation to her house in the evening. The messenger is discreetly given another letter, this time addressed to Giovan and cautioning him to lay low for a while. Fiametta then calls her manservant the



Moor and hands him a dagger with its tip dipped in deadly poison. She instructs him to hide and wait in the parlor for Girolamo—and stab him when he gets close enough.



The cunning Girolamo becomes suspicious and gets the courier murdered. By reading Fiametta's letter for Giovan, he learns about her plan to ambush him. He then sends his rival a message signed by Fiametta, urging him to visit her in the evening. In the evening, while a masquerade is in full swing in the city, Giovan shows up masked at his paramour's residence. Fiametta springs behind a curtain, also wearing a mask. Thinking that he is Girolamo, she attacks him with a rapier and a furious fencing fight ensues. Only when the Moor stabs Giovan with the poised dagger does Fiametta realize the identity of her adversary.



The Moor transforms into the Weary Death and the second candle's flickering light snuffs out (Bernhard Goetzke reappears in this tale at this point, when Fiametta's servant the Moor gets transformed into the cloaked stranger).



**The Third Light – Imperial China.** The Magician A Hi receives an invitation from the emperor to come to his palace to entertain him—but take care not to be boring unless he wants to lose his head.



Hi and his two young assistants Tiao Tsien and Liang—a loving couple—hop on to their magical carpet and head out to the imperial palace (Douglas Fairbanks bought the rights to the film to use the special effects in *The Thief of Baghdad*).



The Chinese emperor's palace was designed by Hertl.



In legendary China, the Weary Death is seen again as the emperor's archer.



A Hi uses his magical wand to charm the emperor by creating a miniature army.



The emperor is amused, but not satisfied and demands to have the magician's female assistant Tiao Tsien as a gift. A Hi tries to resist but he is compelled to hand her over at the threat of execution. Liang is imprisoned and Tiao Tsien is taken to the emperor's private quarters.

When Tiao Tsien adamantly resists the emperor's sexual advances, he orders A Hi to make her oblige (The costumes of the magician A Hi with his assistant Tiao Tsien, like most of *Destiny*'s costumes, were provided by the Heinrich Umlauff Museum).



The magician and his assistant have a quarrel, during which the wand ends up in her hands and she breaks it—which transforms her master into a cactus. Using the continually degrading wand, she turns the guards into pigs and the prison tower into an elephant with a howdah—which she and Liang use to escape. The Emperor dispatches his troops and his archer (the Weary Death). The emperor's archer rides his horse in pursuit of the lovers—the rider is superimposed on a matte painting.



Magician's assistants manage to evade the emperor's troops but the archer finally catches up with them. The wand continues to dwindle; when all else fails, just before the wand vanishes, Tiao Tsien transforms herself into a Bodhisattva statue and Liang into a tiger. Tiao Tsien transforms herself into a Bodhisattva statue and her lover Liang into a tiger—which doesn't fool the archer; he shoots the tiger which immediately reverts back to Liang's body. The Weary Death rides away as tears roll down the statue's face.



**Back to the Chamber of Lights.** With all three of her attempts to save her lover failing, the Maiden finds herself standing in front of the burnt-out candles with the Weary Death. To her relief, he is willing to give her a last chance. He promises to unite her with her lover if within an hour she can find someone that would give up their life. The clock still shows 11 pm—this is an early example of Fritz Lang's favorite trope, the clock face.



**11 pm – The Final Hour.** The Maiden is once again at the apothecary and it is still 11 pm. This time, the pharmacist prevents her from drinking the poison. When she asks her savior if he would be willing to give up his life, he flatly refuses and the Maiden dashes out of the apothecary to find someone willing to do so. She stops by the town's beggar and asks him if he would like to put an end to his misery. Much to her surprise, he has no intentions to do so. Her next stop is the infirmary where she finds older folk grumbling. The moment she asks how they would like it if she could relieve them of their troubles, they run away in terror. Dismayed and hopeless, the Maiden quits searching.

**Self-sacrifice.** The Maiden suddenly notices smoke coming from the window of a house. The fire quickly spreads and flames engulf the rooms. As the townsfolk rush to the scene, a mother cries out that her baby is inside. While the crowd watches the fire helplessly, the Maiden enters the burning building and finds the baby. At this moment the Weary Death appears and gestures to accept the baby—a life whose time to die has not yet come—as the Maiden's fulfillment of their deal.



Instead of handing the baby to him, the Maiden walks to the window and slings the baby to safety. She then approaches her dead fiancé and hugs him. Apparitions rise from the motionless bodies and are embraced by the Weary Death, who gently leads them outside. The three figures solemnly walk on a ridge until they disappear.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

**The Weary Death** – Conscientious (Ubiquitous, Nonchalant, Compassionate)
**The Maiden** – Conscientious (Unyielding, Adroit and Strong, Selfless)

**THE WEARY DEATH.**

He controls a complex system—represented by the chamber of candles—which encompasses various historical periods and geographies.

Illustrative moments

**Ubiquitous.** The gardener in Baghdad, the Moor in Venice and the archer in China—the Weary Death is always there. With his Stoic expression, he merely witnesses history unfold.

**Nonchalant.** The Weary Death is apparently quite efficient. This is due to his sense of duty rather than any exhilaration he gets from carrying out his tasks. He is clearly not gratified by what he does, but carries on anyway.

**Compassionate.** In the three tales, the Weary Death appears quite dispassionate. His encounter with the Maiden reveals him to be an understanding character. In one scene, he even comforts the young woman with an assuring smile.

**THE MAIDEN.**

The Maiden refuses to accept her lover's death—she struggles to bring him back by the power of her love.

Illustrative moments

**Unyielding.** Her denial of the death of her fiancé may be viewed as a failure of the process of mourning, but the Maiden never accepts defeat. In the three consecutive scenarios, she does everything she can to change 'destiny'.

**Adroit and Strong.** Particularly in the Venetian and Chinese episodes, the Maiden emerges as a competent and formidable heroine. In the Venetian story, she nearly manages to have the upper hand on the crafty Girolamo. She executes her own plan—tries to get rid of him with a sword fight. Fiametta is a skilled fencer, worthy of any of the swashbuckling adventures of the period. In the Chinese story, she gives the emperor the cold shoulder, overpowers her own master, rescues her imprisoned lover and leads their escape.

**Selfless.** After all her attempts fail, the Maiden gets a last chance—find someone whose time to die has not yet come and bring them to the Weary Death. When she rescues the baby from the fire, she is in a position to keep her side of the deal simply by handing the baby to the Weary Death. Instead, she chooses to perish in the fire in order to save the baby.

THEMES

SOCIETY – (Orientalism)
POLITICS – (Politics, Tyranny)
PAST – (Transience of Life, Mourning)

**SOCIETY**

**Orientalism.** The first tale is set in a version of *One Thousand and One Nights* with a despotic caliph whose subjects happen to be religious bigots bent on violence. The Caliph's right hand man—the sinister and scheming "dervish"—"appears to be the worst of all. Elements of this eclectic tale—architecture of the palace, costumes, the whirling dervishes—constitute a spectacular Orientalist fantasy.

**POLITICS**

**Politics.** While the metaphysical theme dominates the story, there is also witty commentary about secular life. The main setting is the 19th Century town of the framing tale—and the town's social dynamics are outlined swiftly. The local elites—mayor, priest, schoolmaster, notary, physician—are simpletons who are not capable of understanding the significance of the presence of the Weary Death. The middle aged Weary Death appears more masculine, while they are portrayed as edacious men preoccupied with trivial

pleasures. Some of the same characters appear in the town council's meeting about the sale of a strip of land to the Weary Death. The council is reluctant to sell the lot adjacent to the cemetery—but plentiful gold coins generously offered by the Weary Death easily persuade its members. Overall, the local leaders appear to be weak, uncomprehending and greedy. Such characterization could have been intended to allude to the institutions of the Weimar Republic—anticipating Fritz Lang's next film, *Dr. Mabuse the Gambler* (1922).

**Tyranny.** The all-powerful rulers of the first tale (the caliph) and the third (the Chinese emperor) contrast with the fairly democratic setting of the framing story. The second tale's Girolamo is not an absolute ruler but obviously wields considerable power in Venice thanks to his membership in the secret council of fourteen. In contrast to the main setting of the Flemish town, the foreign lands are ruled by tyrants. This recalls Kracauer's observation that German cinema of the 1920s reflected the society's struggle between the prospects of anarchy and tyranny (Kracauer, 112).

**PAST**

**Transience of Life.** The Weary Death oversees a chamber that contains numerous burning candles. Once the fire of one of these candles burns out, the person it represents would come to the realm of the Weary Death. He is clearly unhappy with the grim work and carries it out from a sense of duty—hence the weariness. He is willing to present the Maiden with an opportunity to stop the process by proving that love can overcome death. In the three tales, the Maiden's devotion to her lover is not enough prevent his death. Mortality is an ineluctable force, regardless of the Weary Death's sympathy for humans' desire to live. A strong symbol of transience appears early on at the inn when a beer mug on the table turns into an hourglass and next to it a skeleton appears. As Tom Gunning observes, this is a memento mori in the tradition of the anamorphic skull present in Holbein's painting *The Ambassadors* (Gunning, 24).

**Mourning.** When faced with the death of her fiancé, the Maiden is shocked and bewildered. In despair, she attempts suicide—which she survives and struggles hard to bring back her betrothed. She sacrifices herself to save a baby and is united with her lover. Gunning points out that the progress of the Maiden's quest runs parallel to Sigmund Freud's theory of mourning. The Maiden never accepts her loss and the process of mourning is not successful (29).

**Discussion questions**

How would you compare *Destiny* with other films that feature a personification of death—e.g. Beng Ekerot in *The Seventh Seal* (1957, Ingmar Bergman), Vincent Price in *The Masque of the Red Death* (1964, Roger Corman), Woody Allen's *Love and Death* (1975) and Brad Pitt in *Meet Joe Black* (1998, Martin Brest)?

In what way(s) is the structure with the three stories different compared to D.W. Griffith's *Intolerance* (1916)?

On several occasions, main characters look directly into the camera in *Destiny*. What would be Fritz Lang's aim to accomplish with that and how to these shots shape your experience of the film?

What do you think about the representations of the Middle East and Far East? How would you explain the fascination with these cultures?

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