GAMES OF CHARACTER: THE ROLE OF BOARD, DICE & CARD GAMES IN POPULAR CINEMA

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This paper adopts a cultural biography perspective in examining some of the different ways board games are portrayed in the movies. It outlines the evidence base presented in appendices 1 and 2 and running to some 300 films. It identifies some of the shared linkages between board games, digital games and films and explores in more detail the role of dice, the way games shape and define character, place and time and how games help to define the past and the future.

Keywords: Backgammon, board games, cards, chess, dice, divination, fate, films, movies, snakes and ladders

Introduction: Laying out the board

This paper explores two forms of play and performance: board games (along with dice and card games) and movies/films shown in the cinema (the "board" to the "game" of movies). Specifically, it deals with how and why the former is depicted within the latter. Although I have been recording occurrences of board games in the movies for many years now this is my first pass at bringing some of it together, indeed it is a neglected area of both board games and cinema research (though for the intersection of films and games around ritual for example see Pezzoli-Olgiati 2012). The constraint of space means that I am not including any discussion of video or computer games, and also excluded are those films that derive from board games (e.g.

Clue) or from computer games (e.g the *Tomb Raider* franchise) or live role-playing games (e.g. the *Dungeons & Dragons* franchise, on these games see, for example, Perlini-Pfister 2012) However, several films from these categories are included as an indicative sample in tables 1-3, which summarise the evidence-base of games in films as far as it is known to the author at the close of 2020. These games are acknowledged here because of their several intersections and shared materialities with more traditionally-viewed board games (though of course video and digital has now been around long enough to also be traditional). Thus, some board games bridge and hybridise technologies (e.g. *Computer Chess*, e.g. *2001: A Space Odyssey* [again chess]), and board and digital games share an underpinning creativity and imagination and inspire the same in other media. There is a growing literature on this area, including Taylor 2006; Bissell 2010; Flanagan 2013; Costikyan 2013; Sicart 2014; Guins 2014; Sharp 2015; July 2015; Isbister 2016; Owen 2017 and Ross 2020.

Despite the optimism of my title I will also be saying very little about card games, which occupy the same cognitive and psychological territory as board games. There are huge numbers of these, particularly poker (in film-representation terms, the direct equivalent to chess) and they are particularly significant to the play dynamics (including but not restricted to the facilitation of gambling) of the Western genre (where gambling is often a crucial plot point or character motivation but where patience games or dominoes or board games including chess figure highly as amusements and boredom-killers), the Bond franchise and con-artist thrillers. Table 3 lists a large sample of these films as a starting point for future analysis.

In preparing this paper then, I compiled a table (see Appendix 1) to show there are at least 450 films made for the cinema that depict or mention board, dice and card games: the numbers breakdown is recorded in the table and the types of game in appendix 2. The numbers, other than minimum indicators, are actually fairly meaningless, in that I am sure there are many more films which have not come to my attention – those depicting card games (80, with almost half - 33 - depicting poker) are probably on a par with the number of films depicting chess (239 identified for this paper), which seems to be far and away the most popular, but the total presented here can probably be multiplied by a factor of ten. The numbers should occasion no surprise. Since chess' creation, no other board game has made such an impact in wider cultural creativity. The depiction of chess in cinema

then is a facet of its wider presence in art and culture (Mesch 2011; Bardiès-Fronty and Dunn-Vaturi 2012; Hall 2001; Hall 2009b; Hall 2016, 204-07; Strouhal 1996). Chess figures both as a physical game and as one discussed in dialogue and has a role in most genres: epics & period costume pieces, westerns, noir thrillers, melodrama, crime & detective, war, science fiction, fantasy, musicals, comedy, prison dramas, 'bio-pics' and art-house. The sheer diversity of the game's appearances is testament to its cultural, sociological and psychological symbolism. Below chess in numbers comes the dice (including knucklebones) category (51) and then four board games that appear in at least 10 films: draughts (26), backgammon (24), go (18), dominoes (14), snakes and ladders (12) and monopoly (10). With five or more films are mancala (5), mah-jong, scrabble and Cluedo (6) and merels (7). With less than 5 film appearances each are pachisi [and variants] (4), Battleships (3), followed by the Royal Game of Ur, hnefatafl, Pick-up-Sticks, Twister, Mad and Solitaire (all 2) and then Operation, Game of Life, Game of Goose, carrom, marbles, Risk, Lotto, Shuffleboard, Boggle, Anagrams, Candyland, Star of Africa, Trivial Pursuit and Nim (all 1).

Appendix 2 includes films that, *stricto sensu*, go beyond the depiction of board games *per se* to include games that are depicted alongside board games or work in similar ways. The key example is probably *Last Year in Marienbad* in which a range of games appear as the entertainments of elite guests at a spa hotel (which may or may not be in Marienbad) – draughts, dominoes, cards, pistol-shooting – and also the mathematical puzzle game Nim. It is depicted several times variously using matchsticks, cards, dominoes, torn paper and photographs to provide the starting layout of rows of 1, 3, 5 and 7 pieces. Their repetition reinforces the near-impossibility of the player who moves second being able to win, an oblique metaphor for the characters' inability to change the past regardless of how they reconfigure memory. Few films are keenly interested in precise distinctions between board and other games but the animation *Toy Story* (1995) is notable in drawing a clear distinction between games and toys. The latter, in a range of anthropomorphic and animalistic forms have the ability to come to life outwith the gaze of humans. Board games do not and the toys, like humans, play at board games and with them. Draughts (checkers), Battleships, Twister, Candyland and cards are played interchangeably by humans and

toys and elements of other games – dominoes and scrabble tiles – are used in non-play ways by the toys.

Coverage of Appendix 2 also extends to a clutch of films that deal with fate/luck and the future – a subject that I return to in the discussion below. This clutch of films is annotated with the phrase 'fate/universal play' as they share the deployment of some aspect of play whether board games - chess in *A Matter of Life and Death*, *The Seventh Seal* and *Sherlock Holmes: Game of Shadows*; mahjong in *Crazy Rich Asians* - or other types of game – marbles in *Men in Black*, coin-tossing in *The Gay Divorcee*, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* and *No Country For Old Men*, football in *Run Lola Run*, tennis in *Match Point*, and American Football in *Flash Gordon* – or crypto-games that allude to the idea of chess as the mechanism by which the Gods determine the fates of humans (*Jason and the Argonauts*, *Clash of the Titans*). The link between games play and divination in antiquity is a well-aired area of debate (e.g. see Becker 2007; Finkel 2007; Piccione 2007; Burger 2012a and 2012b), part of a wider debate around the role of play in ritual and religious practice (Piccione 2007; Bornet & Burger [eds] 2012).

PART I The Throw of the Dice

Dice as a gaming medium have a somewhat ambiguous, not to say amphibolous, status in that they are sometimes part of board games, sometimes not and sometimes the only pieces of equipment in primarily gambling games. Medieval chess for example had variations that used and did not use dice (Hall 2001, Eagles 1986, 24). Sometimes they are so essential to board games – for example in the many varieties of pachisi and chaupar in India – that the game becomes known as "dice" because of that critical role (Ray & Ghosh 1999; Fritz & Gibson 2007; Soar 2007; Bhattacharaya, Finkel and Soni 2011). Typically Hollywood movies show dice as part of the gambling lifestyle, in or out of casinos and in a variety of historical contexts (including the Old West), see for example *Guys and Dolls*, *A Bronx Tale*, the James Bond franchise, the Ocean's series, *Molly's Game*, *21* and *The Magnificent Seven*.

In Oriental, that is to say Japanese and Chinese-set films, dice crop-up regularly in historical dramas, where the hero/heroine will often be shown to be accomplished at dice – symbolising their heroic status through the ability to command chance and fate or not be cowed by it, so even when

they lose a game this does not seal their fate. Just to focus on Zato Ichi (latterly Zatoichi), or Ichi for short, he (sometimes she, as in the recent incarnation, *Ichi* [2008], which derives from a Manga comic but also nods too the rival film series *Crimson Bat*, about the blind swords woman, Oichi) is the character of a long-running film franchise that started in the 1962 (Silver 1983, 76-86). The character is a blind swordsman and master shogi and dice player. The film's conventions generally require a scene in a dicing house where Ichi (both he and she) can hear the dice being rolled and knows when they are swapped for cheating dice. In the late 1960s, skilled dice-women operating heroically in the contemporary Yakuza underworld was for a short while an iconic element of popular culture (the *Woman Gambler* series for example running to 12 films and copied by other shorter run series or one of films – Paghat, no date). Western cinema has been less interested in their historical dimension, though there are notable exceptions, including *Agora,* which tells the story of pagan philosopher Hypatia and her martyrdom during the pagan-Christian conflict in early 5th century AD Alexandria. The play of dice is seen during the siege of the pagan library by a Christian mob. Hypatia's wounded father is rolling a parallelapiped, hexagonal bone dice, agitatedly trying to get the three to come out. Hypatia gently tends him and stops the dice. Staying with western cinema, the ancestor of craps, hazard, is depicted infrequently. A notable exception is *A Knight's Tale,* though even then we do not ever see the game being played just the outcome of Chaucer frequently ending up naked – losing everything including his shirt. Chaucer, of course, did write about the hazard of gambling, in *The Canterbury Tales*, 'The Pardoner's Tale' (lines 177-81and 304-15):

> In Flanders, once, there was a company
> Of young companions practised to folly,
> Riot and gambling, brothels and taverns;
> And, to the music of harps, lutes, gitterns,
> There danced and played at dice both day and night …
> I'll take up gambling, showing you thereby
> The curse of chance, and all its evils treat;
> From it proceeds false swearing and deceit,
> Blaspheming, murder, and- what's more- the waste
> Of time and money; add to which, debased
> And shamed and lost to honour quite is he,

Who once a common gambler's known to be.
And ever the higher one is of estate,
The more he's held disgraced and desolate.
And if a prince plays similar hazardry
In all his government and policy,
He loses in the estimate of men
His good repute, and finds it not again.

And the film playfully inverts this by making Chaucer a dicing addict and thus giving him first-hand experience for the writing of his book *The Canterbury Tales*. As several medieval illuminations show, loss of everything down to clothing was a common outcome and one of the social concerns that prompted the church to persistently try and ban such games (for the medieval context see Hall 2009a). Wrapped up in this contemporary concern with social order was the fact that at the crucifixion Christ's clothes had been gambled for with the rolling of dice, thus making them subject to fate and fortune. This episode notably makes it into film in *The Robe*, in which the scene is remarkably close to how that scene is painted in medieval art, though perhaps lacks the outbreak of violence conveyed in so many of the paintings (e.g. *The Crucifixion* by Hans Schäufelein [circle of], painted 1510x1520, e.g. *The Preparation of the Cross* by the Strasbourg Master, painted 1510x1520, both in the collections of the Städel Museum, Frankfurt; for a lees violent, manuscript version see the Crucifixion scene in Avignon *Missale romanum* - Bardiès-Fronty & Dunn-Vaturi 2012, cat. 160). As one might expect the paintings are also more explicitly morally judgemental of the undertaking (Hall 2009a, Purdie 2000), than a1950s Hollywood epic with an eye on the box office returns and not giving offence. Nagel's (2020, 302-7) discussion focuses on three crucifixion paintings by Mantegna, Giotto and Altichiero. He suggests that Mantegna's depiction (created in 1457-9) shows the dice being rolled onto a painted Rota board, which he adapts for its compass-like patterning to reinforce the playing out of fate. However a Rota board in this context seems less likely than a representation of a soldier's shield. Several similar designs are recorded for round shields in the *Notitia Dignitatum*, a medieval copy of which was made in 1436, commissioned by Pietro Donato, then Bishop of Padua.

The significance of rolling dice as a predictive or fortune-telling practice is well known in the West (Bardiès-Fronty and Dunn-Vaturi [eds],134-39; Dasen [ed.] 2019, 104-13) – we only have to think of Caesar's words *alea*

jacta est / 'the dice are cast' for example – but the cultural significance of such gestures are much older.

The oldest written account is probably that contained in the Sanskrit epic *The Mahabharata*, from around 400 BC in its earliest surviving written form and perhaps originating in the 9th century BC, and in which two rival crown princes and cousins play a dice game in which all is wagered and in which one of them uses false dice.

This well known episode influenced one of the earliest silent films to deal with dicing, *A Throw of the Dice,* an Indian-German-British co-production released in 1929 and borrowed from the Mahabharata its gaming episode, updating it to a rather fairy tale-like setting in the late Mughal dynasty, in which two rival kings stake everything on the roll of the dice. But here the dice are being used to govern the moves in a game of pachisi or chaupar, though throughout the film everyone simply refers to the throwing of dice. The dice prove even more critical in that it is the use of false dice by one of the kings that enables his victory through cheating. Moral condemnation of such behaviour and the reversing of the outcome concludes with the destruction of the dice.

PART II: Shaping the Future, Shaping Character, Defining Place

The blending of fate and attempts to determine the future with board games is a persistent theme across many films that include games, a trope borrowed from medieval and earlier engagements. Chess we shall explore shortly, but it's worth noting the connection in this respect with Snakes and Ladders, which serves as a metaphor for fate to come in the films *The Lair of the White Worm* and the *Night of the Demon* (both British horror films) and the Mexican drama *Serpientes y escaleras*. This fate theme in films is also represented by the toss of a coin, that long established means of decision-making where the decision is seemingly arbitrarily left to fate. In *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* an extended sequence of over 90 tosses of the coin all turn out consecutively to come up heads, serving as a rumination on the philosophical nature of fate whilst the single toss of a coin in *No Country for Old Men* is a chilling encounter with fate as a psychopathic assassin. The concern with fate and the future and knowing what will happen and shaping what will happen has been of fundamental importance in underpinning dramatic conventions in 20th and 21st century art and it's prime medium,

the movie. Bergman's masterpiece *The Seventh Seal* is structured around a chess match between a knight and Death, a struggle over the future of the knight. Such notions underpin, for example, a range of character behaviours and are notably expressed through chess movies. For Bergman much of this was inspired by medieval depictions of Death as a chess player (especially in Sweden such as Albertus Pictor's murals in Täby Church – Strouhal 1996, plate 54); part of the Dance Macabre cycle, a cultural reaction to the devastation of the plague (Hall 2009a; Gertsman 2010).

Within story telling conventions board games, especially chess, also signal, character dispositions, often serving as a dramatic guide to future behaviours (with chess, since its early medieval inception, always carrying the ability to reflect elite roles in governing society, e.g. see the 13th century sermon of de Cessolis). Thus the intuitive, independent scientific genius of Jeff Goldblum's character, David Levinson, in *Independence Day* is signalled by his playing chess with his father, whom he always beats. At the same time the game of chess, seen early in the film, signals the contest, and its violence, to follow as humanity seeks to defeat intergalactic aliens bent on destroying the earth. In the 1963 prisoner-of-war movie *The Great Escape* – a chess checkmate is intercut with the same character successfully trapping a German guard by blackmail to provide key supplies. Thus success at the game is implied to forecast success in the necessary blackmail needed to help facilitate the escape. The link between chess and intelligence is often intimated by self-play in which the hero/villain plays solo chess. Somewhat untypically, Sergio Leone deploys chess in *For A Few Dollars More*, to signal boredom and imprisoned, unused intelligence on the part of a hotel-keeper's wife. In recent years films have linked the developing intelligence and independence of thought of young women with their playing of chess, e.g. *Queen of Katwe* (2015) and *An American Fable* (2015).

Chess in the movies is persistently linked with intelligence – whether cold, forbidding and malicious, often intent on world domination (sometimes with an undertone that such arrogance is misplaced and fatal) or whether independent, free-thinking and mis-judged - and sometimes calm rationality in the face of world-threatening danger. In *All the Money in the World* one of the ways in which the scheming, greedy, dominating intelligence of oil tycoon John Paul Getty is signalled is through the motif of his playing chess against himself. In *Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger*, the true character of Prince Kasim's benevolent intelligence, masked by the evil spell

that has transformed him into a baboon, is signalled by his ability at chess, which he retains in his baboon guise. In *Casabalanca* the lead character, Rick, eschews the gambling favoured by so many who visit his Café preferring to play himself at chess – a gesture of intelligence which is the same as that in *All the Money in the World* but with essentially the opposite meaning at an individual person level, whilst also expressing the futility of an American position in not entering the Second World War. In *The Thing From Another World* chess is the obvious leisure pursuit of a group of scientists isolated in the Arctic and contrasted with the military personnel's more direct intelligence opting to play cards. Sometimes both characterisations are placed against each other, as in the Marvel superheroes *X-Men* films: *X-Men*; *X2*; *X-Men III: The Last Stand*; *X-Men: First Class*; *X-Men: Days of Future Past* and *X-Men: Dark Phoenix.* A persistent thread across these films is the playing of chess between the friends but political enemies Professor Charles Xavier and Magneto and always representing a contest between the right moral actions to pursue. The chess playing motif frequently crops up in the *Marvel Universe* franchise of films. In *Spiderman: Homecoming*, a chess set is laid out in Peter Parker's bedroom. It signals not a cold, austere, isolated intelligence but rather, set out as a game in progress between Parker (the eponymous Spiderman) and his best friend Ned, the geeky intelligence of a science nerd and socially introverted teenager. Along with Peter and Ned's shared enthusiasm for *Star Wars* models and computer games, chess also serves as an indicator of the value of play for teenagers, something affirmed by a second chess scene, set in the school chess club.

This contextual and often witty depiction of chess is not unlike chess in real life, which, despite chess master Kasparov's (2007) insistence that the only thing that being good at chess signals is that you are good at chess, serves to satirise intelligence and power. Thus, in a recent (19/2/2019) opinion piece for *The Guardian* newspaper in Britain, Richard Wolfe observed that 'Barack Obama's staff liked to say he played chess while everyone else played checkers. Donald Trump struggles with both, but he has mastered the card game known as snap." (2019). Such satire has long been a staple of games-writing, as with the medieval satire of chess being the game of the wealthy, tables that of the merchants and merels that of the peasants (likened to monkeys), (Hall 2001).

The other key, not to say unique, role that chess has in the cinema is to define not just character but place. At least ten films depict New York

(notably around Union Square and Washington Square Park) through it's playing of chess: *The Front*; *Fresh*; *Independence Day*; *Bad Company*; *Two Weeks Notice*; *Knights of the South Bronx*; *Whatever Works, Pawn Sacrifice* and *Avengers Assemble*. The link between chess and outside environments is not a new one and again takes us back to the medieval period. Several manuscript illuminations and Romance episodes record chess being played in external or semi-external, publicly accessible environments, including atriums, loggias and cloisters (Bardiès-Fronty and Dunn-Vaturi 2012, cat. 155; Hall 2016, 193; Strouhal 1996, plate 53). There is though a key difference between the medieval and the modern depictions, a social difference: the medieval depictions are concerned with elite practices, whereas outside play in New York is about democratic access to the game. The film depictions signal both place and everyday realities and identities in that place, which brings us back to the importance of individual identities or rather future identities. In many of the films listed above, chess is linked with ability at the game and with a future-good in which those able at chess can escape poverty, crime or some other social ill. For Bobby Fischer in *Pawn Sacrifice*, the public tables in Washington Square Park are where his prodigal talent is partly honed at a young age and contra his mother's political life. Sometimes such stories are based on true lives that are not confined to New York or even America, as with the *Queen of Katwe*, which tells the story of Phiona Mutesi's escape from the slum of Katwe in Uganda through her skill at chess.

I want to conclude this theme with a brief case study around the work of British film-makers Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, by exploring three of their films and the increasingly central role played in them by chess. Powell and Presburger's interest in chess is perhaps only paralleled by that of director Stanley Kubrick, who deploys it pointedly across several of his early films (*The Killing, Spartacus, Lolita* and *2001: A Space Odyssey*). Before Powell and Pressburger got into their true creative stride they made a short number of low budget films including, in 1936, *The Man Behind the Mask*. The film's eponymous character was a criminal genius with both that genius and his ambition to control the world signalled by his skill at chess. By the time we get to 1945 and *I know Where I'm Going* chess is a much subtler metaphor: the lead character Joan fingers several chess pieces nervously as she attempts to persuade Kiloran to take a boat out against his better judgement; the pieces signify a short-term selfish strategy in play. In the World War II

drama *A Matter of Life and Death* (1946), chess plays a much bigger role, as a passion of its lead character, Airman Peter Carter, hovering between life and death after his returning bomber-plane crashes and his spirit refuses to die. His chess passion is woven into the surreal tale of Carter's mind fighting to stay alive. The figure that tries to tempt him to heaven and an acceptance of his death takes his copy of *My Best Games of Chess* by the Master Alexander Alekhine (who incidentally died in 1946, the year the film was made) taunting him with the prospect of endless games of chess in heaven, including against Phillidor, the great eighteenth century, French composer and chess master. The book is the physical link between the two worlds – earth and the after life – between which Carter must choose and chess helps him understand both. The film uses chess as an eloquent metaphor for the struggle for life (and some 10 years before Bergman's *The Seventh Seal*), and when Carter wins more time on Earth, his heavenly guide throws back the chess book down the celestial stairway for it to land in Carter's jacket pocket. Has it all been a chess dream or hallucination?

PART III: Conveying the Past, Defining the Future

I now turn to how games are used to signal and help create versions of a remote past and a remote future, sometimes linked to stages of human growth. On route we will take a detour to explore how the Lewis chessmen have been depicted in the movies.

Two films set in the 12th century - *Becket* (1964) and *The Lion in Winter* (1968) -deploy Lewis-style chess sets, red and white in the former (the property of King Louis of France, who plays against one of his noblemen) and black and white in the latter (played between Philip II of France and Henry II's son, Geoffrey). In both these films chess signals secret, political intrigue, some of it traitorous.

Since the first appearance of holographic chess, 'holochess' (also known as *Dejarik*) on board the Millennium Falcon in 1977's *Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope*, the game has developed a full history. In the film's internal chronology, a generation and more later than *Episode IV*, the character of Finn (played by John Boyega) - in *Episode VII: The Force Awakens* - discovers the game on board the Falcon, a ghost of times past and is puzzled as to what it is. In the off-shoot, *Rogue One*, set at the same time as the original Star Wars film, *A New Hope*, the game is also played by rebels in their hide-

out cave but it is with actual pieces rather than holograms and the moves are determined by dice. Set earlier than this is the off-shoot, *Solo*, in which Chewbacca first learns to play the game on the Falcon. Things come full circle with the final film, *Episode IX: The Rise of Skywalker*, in which we learn Chewbacca has been playing for 250 years, as Finn and Po jointly loose against him, on board the Millennium Falcon. As a game it is pivotal in creating the background cultural depth of the Star Wars universe.

Star Wars' holochess has informed other stories, notably *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone.* In that film red and white pieces are deployed in a game played by Harry and his friend, Ron, called Wizard's Chess, in which the pieces move themselves at the command of their players. The film's climax develops this into a deadly giant-size set of non-Lewis chess pieces, which the three heroes must defeat to succeed in their quest. The self-animated, red chess set is given a further spin in *MIB: International*, where they are in fact an alien race hiding out on earth in chess-maker's workshop in Marrakesh – massacred but for one pawn, who thereby escapes the social hierarchy of the board for the social equality of aiding the protagonists. This living chess trope has a long film pedigree (including the just discussed holo-chess in *A New Hope* and its successors), the roots of which go back, through the 3-D chess of the original Star Trek TV series (1966-1969), to 1967 British spy film *Deadlier than the Male*, to the 'live' or 'human' chess scene in the 1959 film *The Three Worlds of Gulliver*, and to the 1922 *John Carter* adventure *The Chessmen of Mars* written by Edgar Rice Burroughs and to Carroll's 1871 story *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice found There,* which begins with a dramatis personae that lays out the story as a game of chess that Alice (as a white pawn) has to win in eleven moves. In Tim Burton's 2010 version of *Alice in Wonderland* (conceptually continued in his version of the sequel *Through the Looking Glass* [2016]) the film climaxes with a chess battle between the red queen and the white queen, evoking Alice's words 'It's a great huge game of chess that's being played – all over the world – if this is the world at all you know.' All of these are non-Lewis style pieces with the exception of *Deadlier than the Male,* in which the Italian castle of Lirici, Liguria serves as the lair of the super-villain The hall of the castle is laid out with a lethal, life-size set of robot copies of the Lewis chessmen, in silver and black.

The ultimate well-spring though for these imaginative tropes is medieval. Medieval thought and imagination about the game of chess

always laid stress on its performative qualities and several tales and romances powerfully reflect the social significance of board games in the elite playground of the castle. Several Arthurian Romances include magical chess sets that move themselves, notably the tale of Peredur from the *Mabinogion*. In the Dutch Romance *Roman van Walewain*, Walewain (Gawain) pursues a magical, flying chess board which appears at Arthur's castle leading him on a quest that eventually brings him back to Arthur's castle. He also arrives at a castle where the hall is laid out as a chessboard, on which life-size chesspieces move themselves when touched with a magic ring. Several morality treatises of the Middle Ages, especially that by de Cessolis, reinforce the performance aspect in another way, linking behaviour demonstrated on the chess board with how real life behaviour should be acted out; in some respects the figurative pieces of kings, queens and bishops were the avatars of the real versions.

The earliest apparent Lewis chessmen influenced depiction on film, is probably 1957's Bergman masterpiece *The Seventh Seal*, which is set in the fourteenth century, in the wake of the Black Death. This is not a full Lewis set but their influence can be seen in the pawn pieces, clearly derived from what are generally described as warders in the Lewis hoard. These are combined with styles borrowed from later medieval and post medieval Swedish and Scandinavian pieces and combine with the film's aesthetic, drawing on much medieval art reflecting the Black Death, especially the 'danse macabre', as noted above. Even more anachronistic seeming, at first glance, is their appearance in the 1986 Western *Silverado*, in which, a rather-despotic, intelligent English sheriff in a mid-western town has a set; a metaphor for his self-perceived superiority of intelligence. The combination of chess and Western-setting is not unusual, *McLintock, The Sons of Katie Elder* and *Blazing Saddles* all include chess-playing sheriffs (and all use Staunton sets from the time the films were made in the 1960s and 1970s). More recent films to adopt the Lewis chessmen include *Kingdom of Heaven* and *Day of Wrath*, in both films chess is played by key characters, so that the game acts as an underscoring metaphor for the plot and serves as an analogy for political power-play. It says that we can understand the past because people then behaved in similar ways.

Black Knight is a modern re-working of Mark Twain's 1899 novel, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. It's time-travelling hero looses a game of chess using Lewis-style pieces, played against the chief villain, as a

foreshadowing of a physical combat to come: being the (Hollywood) hero he is able to overturn this predicted future and beat his enemy. Board games as predictors or manipulators of the future are at least as old as the eighth-century *History of the Langobards* in which king Hrodulf of the Heruli attempts to win a battle against the Langobards by simultaneously playing a board game, he loses the latter and then the battle. Recent analysis of this episode (Słupecki 2018, 204), citing Arthurian and Germanic parallels, suggests that the *History*'s author, Paul the Deacon turned it into a Christian moral lesson about the doom of slothful kings but that the event actually documents older, pagan attitudes, representing a royal ritual fusing magic and divination in which events on the game board determine events in life recounts. Though not medieval recreations the idea of the chess board as dictating the moves in life, and controlled by the gods, is conveyed super-anachronistically in both *Jason and the Argonauts* (1963) and *Clash of the Titans* (1981). In both films the gods in Olympus move figures around on a board-like map, the figures representing characters on earth, their fates determined by the gods.

In 2012 the Lewis pieces made their first animated film appearance, in the Disney production *Brave,* again serving as a metaphor for political instability, though also characterised as a children's game. Before leaving the Lewis chessmen mention must be made of the early 1960s TV animation, *The Saga of Noggin the Nog.* Oliver Postgate recalls that it was inspired by the Lewis chessman seen by himself and co-creator Peter Firmin on display in the British Museum. I quote: 'What had impressed us was that … it was clear that these were essentially kindly, non-belligerent characters, who were thoroughly dismayed by the prospect of contest . . . it occurred to Peter that the chessmen . . . could well have been called Nogs, that their prince was a Noggin and that the wicked baron . . . could be their . . . uncle, perhaps a Nogbad.'(Postgate 2000, 219-20). This is a revealing comment both on the depth of artistic inspiration and re-telling that museums and medieval material culture can fuel. Noggins are based on the chessmen and metaphorically work as surrogates or avatars for entangled past lives; they serve as physical manifestations of stories seeking to collapse time between then and now.

The Robe was mentioned above in the discussion about dice, and has a reasonably accurate depiction of the Crucifixion lot casting scene, certainly as understood in the medieval period but it is on much shakier ground in

trying to convey gaming in the Roman period. Both *The Robe* and *Spartacus* use chess, or a sort of crypto-chess given they do not bear any weight of scrutiny, to signify board games played by Roman elites. In *Spartacus,* a square-celled board has pieces being moved which are hard to discern as it is set in a dimly-lit bath-house. The players are senators and the game serves to underline a conspiratorial intelligence at play. In *The Robe,* the game, set out on a round, side-table is clearly meant to be chess and signal high-status gaming in a senatorial and high-ranking military household.

ENVOI

As a closing comment I observe that often board games seem to be about the sublimation of violence - a sublimation that often did not work - whether it was through using the pieces in a sympathetic magical practice to seek to control violence in the real world (e.g. on the battlefield) or whether because the games itself could end pre-emptorily in violence. Violence hovers around many of the depictions I have been sharing through this paper. Many movies tend to focus on the metaphorical, prefiguring of violence through games play, most graphically in the likes of *Independence Day*, several of the James Bond films and *Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* for example. In the latter the game itself does not appear but is metaphorically deployed in dialogue by Gandalf the wizard, to one of the Hobbits, Pippin, in Minas Tirith, on the eve of the Battle of the Pelennor Fields, which includes the lines '…the board is set, the pieces are moving…'. There is one notable exception in actually showing a game as the direct cause of violence rather than a comment upon it or prefiguring it. It is the oldest known film to depict chess, *A Chess Dispute*, made in Britain in 1903. Its running time is around 70 seconds. Its set in a café and shows two men coming to blows when they disagree about the legitimacy of one of the moves and have to be evicted by the waiter (available here on You Tube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vC4129xsqQE)

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Appendix 1: Numbers and types of board, dice and card games in films

Chess	219
Dice/knucklebones	48 (46/2)
Computer/Video/VR	25
Draughts/Checkers	25
Backgammon / tables	22
Go	18
Snakes & Ladders	11
Dominoes	11
Monopoly	9
Merels	7 (Nine Men's Morris 3, Noughts & Crosses 4)
Cluedo	6
Scrabble	6
Mancala	5
Other	32
• Mahjong	4
• Pachisi *et al.*	4
• Game of Twenty/Royal Game of Ur	2
• Battleships	2
• Twister	2
• Spillicans / Pick-up-Sticks	2
• Solitaire	2
• Hnefatafl	1
• Carrom	1
• Operation	1
• Game of Life	1
• Game of Goose	1
• Marbles	1
• Risk	1
• Mad	1
• Boggle	1
• Lotto	1
• Shuffleboard	1
• Nim	1
• Candyland	1
• Anagrams	1
Cards, including	70
• Poker	31
• Patience	8
• Baccarat	7
• Pontoon/21	5
• Bridge	4
• Whist	4
• Tarot	3
• Bezique	2
• Cribbage	2
• Rummy	2
• Snap	1
• Go fish	1

Appendix 2: Abbreviated catalogue listing of the film sample viewed, listed chronologically (*denotes films with a dialogue reference only)

Chess

<u>1900-1940:</u> *A Chess Dispute* (1903) [earliest known chess film, made in Britain]; *Entr'acte* (1924); *The Adventures of Prince Achmed* (1925); *The Chess Player* (1927); *A Throw of Dice* (1929); *The Story of Vernon and Irene Castle* (1939); *Thief of Baghdad* (1940); *The Sea Hawk* (1940).

<u>1941-60:</u> *Talk of the Town* (1942); *Casablanca* (1942) [self-play]; *The Falcon Strikes Back* (1943); **White Cliffs of Dover* (1944); *Cornered* (1945); *I Know Where I'm Going* (1945); *A Matter of Life and Death* (1946) [fate]; *Dark Mirror* (1946) [self-play]; *Lady in the Lake* (1947); *Bachelor Knight* (1947); *The Wooden Horse* (1950); *If Winter Comes* (1947); *The Thing From Another World* (1952); *Ivanhoe* (1952); *Scaramouche* (1952); *Shane* (1952); *The Robe* (1953); *Stalag 17* (1953); *Father Brown* (1954); *The Seventh Seal* (1955) [fate]; *Around the World in 80 Days* (1956); *Green Man* (1956); *The Killing* (1956); *Wild Strawberries* (1957); *The Great Man Hunt* (1957); *Hawks in the Sun* (1957); *Separate Tables* (1958); *Le Bosu* (1959); *Le Quatre Cent Coups* (1959); *The Three Worlds of Gulliver* (1959); *Spartacus* (1960); *School for Scoundrels* (1960).

<u>1961-80:</u> *One, Two, Three* (1961); *Lolita* (1962); *La Fabaleuse Aventur de Marci Polo* (1962); *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962); *Jason and the Argonauts* (1963) [Gods and Fate]; *McLintock* (1963); *The Great Escape* (1963); *The Moon Spinners* (1964); *A Shot in the Dark* (1964); *What's New Pussycat* (1965); *The Sons of Katie Elder* (1965); *The Saragossa Manuscript* (1965); *For A Few Dollars More* (1965); *Zatoichi and the Chess Expert* (1965); *Zatoichi and the Chess Player* (1967) [shogi, Japanese chess, including a verbal version as a duel prelude]; *Tony Rome* (1967); *Deadlier Than the Male* (1967); *Oliver!* (1968); *The Lion in Winter* (1968); *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968); *The Thomas Crown Affair* (1968); *Viimne Relikvia* (1969); *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (1969) [James Bond]; *Canon for Córdoba* (1970); *Chisum* (1970); *A Safe Place* (1971); *The Getaway* (1972); *Lost Horizon* (1972); *The Last of Sheila* (1973); *Three Musketeers* (1973) [live chess]; *Blazing Saddles* (1974); *Love and Death* (1975); *The Front* (1976) [New York as a chess city]; *Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger* (1977); *Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger* (1977); *The Chess Players* (1977); *Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope* (1977) [holo-chess]; *Superman II* (1980).

<u>1981-2000:</u> *Clash of Titans* (1981); *An American Werewolf in London* (1981); *Bladerunner* (1982); *The Thing* (1982); *The Great Chess Movie* (1982)

[documentary]; *Dangerous Moves* (1984); *1984* (1984); *Quest* (1984); *Fresh* (1984); *Gremlins* (1984); *Young Sherlock Holmes* (1985); *Silverado* (1985); *Lethal Weapon* (1987); *The Princess Bride* (1987); *Little Dorrit* (1987); *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (1988); *Gremlins 2: The New Batch* (1990); *Beauty and the Beast* (1991; anim.); *Silence of the Lambs* (1991) [using live beetles]; *Bill & Ted's Bogus Journey* (1991) [chess is satirically implied]; **The Hard Way* (1991); *Prospero's Books* (1991); *Aladdin* (1992, anim.); *Knight Moves* (1992); *Remains of the Day* (1993); *Sister Act II* (1993); *Searching for Bobby Fisher* (1993); *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994); *Fresh* (1994) [New York as a chess city]; *Swimming With Sharks* (1995); *Seven* (1995); *Long Live the Queen* (1995); *Kristin Lavransdater* (1995); *Independence Day* (1996) [New York as a chess city]; *The Stupids* (1996); *Flubber* (1997); *Anastasia* (1997); *Blade* (1998); *Alice in Wonderland* (1999); *Time Regained* (1999); *Perfect Storm* (2000); *The Luzhin Defence* (2000); *Lord of the Rings: the Fellowship of the Ring* (2000) [chess / tafl].

2001-2022: **Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* (2001); *Hero* (2001); *Brotherhood of the Wolf* (2001); *Black Knight* (2001); *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (2001); *The Count of Monte Cristo* (2002) [fate]; *Bad Company* (2002) [New York as a chess city]; *White Oleander* (2002); *Two Weeks Notice* (2002) [New York as a chess city[; *Four Feathers* (2002); *Game Over: Kasparov and the Machine* (2003) [documentary]; *X-Men* (2002); *X2* (2003); *The Interpreter* (2005); *Kingdom of Heaven* (2005); *On A Clear Day* (2005); *Zathura: A Space Adventure* (2005); *Knights of the South Bronx* (2005) [New York as a chess city]; *Man of the Year* (2006); *The Da Vinci Code* (2006); *Lucky Number Slevin* (2006); *Eight Below* (2006); *X-Men 3: The Last Stand* (2006); *Casino Royale* (2008) [James Bond]; *Bathory Countess of Blood* (2008); *Defiance* (2008); *Righteous Kill* (2008) [self-play]; *The Other Man* (2008); *Iron Man* (2008); *Babylon AD* (2008); *Shifty* (2008); *Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian* (2008); *The Reader* (2008); *Whatever Works* (2009) [New York as a chess city]; *Cry of the Owl* (2009); *The Young Victoria* (2009); *The Book of Eli* (2009); *The Heist* (2009); *Joueuse / Queen to Play* (2009); *Edge of Darkness* (2010); *Welcome to Paris* (2010); *Inception* (2010); *The Girl Who Played With Fire* (2010); *Alice in Wonderland* (2010); *Salt* (2010); *Harry Brown* (2011); **Midnight in Paris* (2011); *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* (2011); *Queen to Play* (2011); *Tangled* (2011); *Sherlock Holmes: Game of Shadows* (2011) [fate]; *Bobby Fischer Against the World* (2011) [documentary]; *X-Men: First Class* (2011); *Avengers Assemble* (2012) [New York as a chess city]; *Brooklyn Castle* (2012) [documentary]; *Brave* (2012); *Papadopolous and Sons* (2012); *Computer Chess* (2013); *A Good Day to Die Hard* (2013); *Red 2* (2013) [self-play]; *Out of the*

Furnace (2013) [includes arm tatoo]; *The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug* (2013); *Frozen* (2013); *Night Train to Lisbon* (2013) [self-play]; *Life of a King* (2014); *The Dark Horse* (2014); *The Equaliser* (2014); *X-Men: Days of Future Past* (2014); *The Game Maker* (2014); *Immortel ad Vitam* (2014); *Pawn Sacrifice* (2014) [Bobby Fischer]; *A Little Game* (2014); *X + Y* (2014); *Paddington* (2014); *The Tournament/Le Tournier* (2015); *Bone Tomahawk* (2015); *The Hateful Eight* (2015); *Momentum* (2015); *Spectre* (2015) [James Bond]; *Star Wars Episode VII: The Force Awakens* (2015) [holo-chess]; *Taken 3* (2015); *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story* (2016) [holo-chess]; *American Fable* (2016); *Live By Night* (2016); *Queen of Katwe* (2016); *Arrival* (2016); *Wazir* (2016); *The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo* (2016); *Magnus* (2016) [Magnus Carlson, documentary]; **The Accountant* (2016); *Alice Through the Looking Glass* (2016); *Death of Stalin* (2017); *The Chess Player / El jugador de ajederez* (2017); *All the Money in the World* (2017); *Molly's Game* (2017); *Spiderman: Homecoming* (2017); *Han Solo: A Star Wars Story* (2018) [holo-chess]; *Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom* (2018); *Green Book* (2018); *Mary Queen of Scots* (2018); *Game Night* (2018); *Shadow* (2018); *Star Wars Episode IX: The Rise of Skywalker* (2019) [holo-chess]; *MIB: International* (2019); *Tolkien* (2019); *Knives Out* (2019); *X-Men: Dark Phoenix* (2019); *John Wick 3: Parabellum* (2019); *A Dog's Journey* (2019); *The Gemini Man* (2019); *The Call of the Wild* (2020); *Come As You Are* (2020); *The Secret Garden* (2020); *Riders of Justice* (2020); *Godzilla Vs. Kong* (2021); *No Time to Die* (2021) [James bond]; *Eternals* (2021); *Ghostbusters Afterlife* (2021).

Backgammon/Tables

1920-1940: *No More Ladies* (1935); *Having A Wonderful Time* (1938); *Yes, My Darling Daughter* (1939); *And One Was Beautiful* (1940).
1941-1960: *Les Quatre Cent Coups* (1959)
1961-1980: *Guns of Navarone* (1961); *Topkapi* (1964); *Mr. Majestyck* (1974); *The Next Man* (1976); *Semi-Tough* (1977)
1981-2000: *Octopussy* (1983); *Benny's Video* (1992); *Ever After A Cinderella Story* (1998); *Rushmore* (1998)
2001-2022: * *Backgammon Survival of the Misfits* (2001) [title only]; *Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou* (2004); *Trilogy: The Weeping Meadow* (2004); *Iron Man* (2008) [improvisation]; *The Game Maker* (2014); *Backgammon* (2014); *Backgammon* (2015); *Three Bill Boards Outside Ebbing Missouri* (2017); *Phantom Thread* (2017).

Cluedo
1961-1980: *The Last of Sheila* (1973)
1981-2000: *Gremlins* (1984); *The Game* (1984); *Clue* (1985); *Bill & Ted's Bogus Journey* (1991).
2001-2022: *Game Night* (2018); **Knives Out* (2019).

Draughts/Checkers

1920-1940: *Monkey Business* (1931); *Duck Soup* (1933); *A Day at the Races* (1937) [all 3 checkers; Marx Brothers].
1941-1960: *Anchors Aweigh* (1945); *The Stranger* (1946); *The Wooden Horse* (1950); *Shane* (1952); *The Bandwagon* (1953); *The Killing* (1956) [with a Chess & Checkers Academy]; *Quatre Cent Coups* (1959) [part of compendium box]
1961-1980: *Last Year in Marienbad* (1962); *Hatari!* (1962); *Where Eagles Dare* (1969)
1981-2000: *Wyatt Earp* (1994); *Shawshank Redemption* (1994); *Toy Story* (1995)
2001-2022: *The Emperor's New Groove* (anim. 2001); *Hart's War* (2002); *Hour of the Pig* (2003) [draughts in a medieval setting]; *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou* (2004); *Apaloosa* (2008); *X-Men First Class* (2011); *The Game Maker* (2014); *Bone Tomahawk* (2015); *Carol* (2015); *Live by Night* (2016); *Game Night* (2018); *Toy Story 4* (2019)

Go

1941-1960: *Stray Dog* (1949); *Genji Monogatori* (1951); *Aisai Monogatori (Story of a beloved wife)* (1951); *Gojira / Godzilla* (1954)
1961-1980: *Sanjuro* (1962); *Kwaidan* (1964); *Zatoichi Demolishes the Barrier* (1964) & *Zatoichi at the Fire Festival* (1970); *Fist of Fury* (1972)
1981-2000: *Mishima: A Life in Four Chapters* (1985); *Pi* (1998); *Mulan* (1998 anim.)
2001-2022: *A Beautiful Mind* (2001) [& hex variant]; *Hero* (2002); *The Go Master* (2006); *The International* (2009); **13 Assassins* (2010); *Knives Out* (2019)

Mahjong

1961-1980: *Dirty Harry* (1971)
1981-2000: *In the Mood For Love* (2000)

2001-2022: *The Fast & the Furious: Tokyo Drift* (2006); *Lust, Caution* (2007); *Arrival* (2016); *Crazy Rich Asians* (2018) [fate]

Manacala

1981-2000: *Incognito* (1999); *Faat Kine* (1999); *Battlefield Earth: A Saga of the Year 3000* (2000)
2001-2022: *Old School* (2003); *I 'Heart' Huckabees* (2004)

Monopoly

1961-1980: *Cuba* (1979)
1981-2000: *Gremlins* (1984); *The Game* (1984); *Tucker: The Man and his Dreams* (1988); *I Love You to Death* (1990); *The Joy Luck Club* (1993)
2001-2022: *Immortel ad vitam* (2004); *The Queen* (2006); *Zombieland* (2009); *Jeu de societe* (2016); *First Man* (2018); *Game Night* (2018)

Pachisi/Chaupat

1920-1940: *A Throw of Dice* (1929)
1941-1960: *Les Quatre Cent Coups* (1959) [petite chevaux variant]
2001-2022: *The Game Maker* (2014); *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008) [pachisi]

Scrabble

1981-2000: *Sneakers* (1992); *Toy Story* (1995)
2001-2022: *Chasing Liberty* (2004); *Superman Returns* (2006); *Argo* (2012); *The Game Maker* (2014)

Snakes and Ladders

1941-1960: **Scaramouche* (1952); *Night of the Demon* (1957)
1961-1980: *Zig-zag − le jeu de l'oie* (1980); *Snakes & Ladders* (1980) [short]
1981-2000: *The Lair of the White Worm* (1988); *Snakes & Ladders / Serpientes y escaleras* (1992); *Snakes and Ladders* (1996); *Jane Austen's Mafia!* (1998) [snakes & chutes]

2001-2022: *The Shaggy Dog* (2006); *Manorama Six Feet Under* (2007); *Grown Ups* (2010)

Other (including merels variants)

1920-1940: *The Gay Divorcee* (1934) [fate through coin toss]

1941-1960: *Casablanca* (1942) [roulette & gambling]; *Mr. Lucky* (1943) [luck/ fate, gambling, roulette]; *The Big Sleep* (1946) [roulette]; *A Matter of Life and Death* (1946) [fate / universal play]; *Bob Le Flambeur* (1956) [gambling and casinos]; *Oceans 11* (1960 & 2001) [cards, roulette etc gambling / casinos]; *The Magnificent Seven* (1960) [gambling (Faro)]

1961-1980: *Hatari!* (1962) [Qubic/Checkline (3D tic-tac-toe)]; *Last Year in Marienbad* (1962) [spillicans / pick up sticks, nim (played variously with cards, matches, dominoes, photos and torn paper)]; *The Last of Sheila* (1973) [risk, tic-tac toe, solitaire, nine men's morris]; *Flash Gordon* (1980) [fate / universal play]

1981-2000: *Clash of the Titans* (1981) [fate & universal play]; *Tron* (1982) and *Tron: Legacy* (2010) [VR game worlds]; *Gremlins* (1984) [boggle, Mad]; *The Game* (1984) [Shadowlord, ms. Pac-man, Mad, the film's plot is that of a live-action role play game]; *Rosencrantz and Guildersntern are Dead* (1990) [fate through coin tossing]; *Bill & Ted's Bogus Journey* (1991) [battleships, twister and, satirically implied, chess]; *Pulp Fiction* (1994) [Game of Life, Operation]; *Casino* (1995) [casinos and gambling]; *Toy Story* (1995) [twister; candyland; battleships]; *Screamers* (1995) [Game of 20 / Ur]; *Jumanji* (1995) and sequels *Jumanji Welcome to the Jungle* (2017) and *Jumanji The Next Level* (2019) [films based on immersive role-playing games]; *Hard Eight* (1996) [casinos and gambling]; *Men in Black* (1997) [marbles as Fate / universal play]; *Run Lola Run* (1998) [Fate / universal play]; *The World is Not Enough* (1999) [James Bond, gambling, roulette]; *eXistenZ* (1999) [virtual and organic reality gaming fusion]; *The Matrix* (1999); *Dungeons and Dragons* (2000), *Dungeons & Dragons: Wrath of the Dragon God* (2005), *Dungeons & Dragons 3: The Book of Vile Darkness* [film adaptations of the live action role playing fantasy game]

2001-2022: *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider* (2001), *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider – The Cradle of Life* (2003) and *Tomb Raider* (2018) [film adaptations of the archetypal video game]; *Intacto* (2001) [gambling and fate]; *Avalon* (2001) [film version of VR gaming]; *The Good Thief* (2002) [casinos and gambling];

Owning Mahowny (2003) [gambling and casinos]; *Oceans 12* (2004) [cards, roulette etc gambling]; *Zathura A Space Adventure* (2005) [film based on immersive role playing game]; *Match Point* (2005) [fate/universal play]; *Beowulf & Grendel* (2005) [hnefatafl (?)]; *Lucky Number Slevin* (2006) [gambling]; *No Country for Old Men* (2007) [fate (coin tossing)]; *The King of Kong: A Fistful of Quarters* (2007) [doc.]; *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008) [carrom]; *21* (2008) [casinos and gambling]; *Up* (2009, anim.) [noughts & crosses]; *The Imaginarium of Dr Parnassus* (2009) [Game of Twenty/Ur]; *Gamer* (2009) [film version of VR gaming]; *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time* (2010) [film version of classic video game]; *Oceans 13* (2013) [cards, roulette etc gambling]; *Righteous Kill* (2013) [shuffleboard]; *Maleficicent* (2014) [nine men's morris]; *The Game Maker* (2014) [Komikan, game of goose, Lotto, Bingo, plus fictitious games]; *Atari: Game Over* (2014); *Assassins Creed* (2016) [film version of the classic video game]; *The Call-Up* (2016) [film version of VR gaming]; *Blade Runner 2049* (2017) [nine men's morris]; *All the Money in the World* (2017) [pick-up-sticks; ludo (?)]; *Ready Player One* (2018) [VR gaming fusion]; *Black Mirror: Bandersnatch* (2018); *Game Night* (2018) [trivial pursuit, pub quiz, battleships]; **The Personal History of David Copperfield* (2019) [noughts and crosses]; *Sonic the Hedgehog* (2020); *Riders of Justice* (2020) [Star of Africa]; *The Northman* (2022) [hnefatafl]

Dice/Astragali/Dominoes

1920-1940: *A Throw of Dice (1929)* [false dice]; *Duck Soup* (1933) [knucklebones / jacks as satire]

1941-1960: *Pimpernel Smith* (1941) [craps]; *Casablanca* (1942) [dominoes]; *Joan of Arc* (1948) [dice]; *The Lady Gambles* (1949) [craps]; *The Robe* (1953) [crucifixion dicing]; *Kiss Me Kate* (1953) [craps]; *Guys and Dolls* (1955) [craps]; *The Vikings* (1958) [knucklebones for prophecy (Odin)]; *The Magnificent Seven* (1960) [craps]

1961-1980: *Last Year in Marienbad* (1962) [dominoes]; *Tale of Zatoichi* (1962); *New Tale of Zatoichi* (1963); *Zatoichi and the Chess Expert* (1965); *Zatocihi the Outlaw* (1967) [all Zatoichi films dice]; *Pale Flower* (1964) [dice]; *The Greatest Story Ever Told* (1965) [dice/lots for Christ's robe]; *The Saragossa Manuscript* (1965) [hazard]; The *Woman Gambler* series (1967-1971), all dice: *The Woman Gambler, Champion Woman Gambler, The Woman Dicer, The Woman Gamblers' Revenge, The Woman Gambler is Coming, Woman Gambler and the Nun, The Woman*

Gambler's Supplication, The Woman Gambler's Tenth Game, Woman Gambler: Dice Make-Up, Female Travelling Dicer, The Woman Gambler's Trump Card, The Woman Gambler's Iron Rule; The Sister Gambles; Thoroughbred Women Gamblers; Kanto Woman Gambler; The Woman Killer; New Woman Gambler; Modern Woman Gambler. El Dorado (1966) [dominoes]; *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (1969) [dice]; *The Italian Job* (1969) [craps/hazard]; *Chisum* (1970) [dominoes]; *Knucklebones* (1971); *The Last of Sheila* (1973) [dominoes]

1981-2000: *The Abyss* (1988) [dominoes]; *The Time of the Gypsies* (1989) [hazard/craps]; *A Bronx Tale* (1993) [craps]; *Toy Story* (1995) [dominoes]; *Time Regained* (1999) [dominoes]

2001-2022: *A Knight's Tale* (2001) [hazard]; *Zatocihi* (2003) [dice]; *Stardust* (2007) [knucklebones − for prophecy]; *Ichi* (2008) [dice]; *Sherlock Holmes* (2009) [dice];*13 Assassins* (2010) [dice]; *Agora* (2010) [Late Antique dice]; *True Grit* (2010) [dominoes]; *The Game Maker* (2014) [dominoes]; *Hector* (2015) [dominoes]; *Knucklebones* (2016); *Detroit* (2017); *Game Night* (2018); *Bad Boys for Life* (2019) [dominoes]; *Bombshell* (2019) [dominoes]; *Jumanji The Next Level* (2019) [dice]

Cards

1920-1940: *Animal Crackers* (1930) [bridge; *The Man Who Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo* (1935) [baccarat]; **All American Chump* (1938) [whist]

1941-1960: *The Lady Eve* (1941) [poker]; *Pimpernel Smith* (1941); *Casablanca* (1942) [poker/bridge]; *In Which We Serve* (1942) [patience]; *Mr. Lucky* (1943); *I Know Where I'm Going* (1945) [bridge]; **The Big Sleep* (1946) [poker]; *Forever Amber* (1947) [piquet]; *Dark City* (1950) [poker]; *Scaramouche* (1952) [bezique]; *The Thing From Another World* (1952) [poker, patience]; *Kiss Me Kate* (1953) [rummy]; *Shane* (1952) [poker]; *The Bandwagon* (1953) [rummy]; *Battle of the River Plate* (1956) [patience, cribbage]; *Around the World in 80 Days* (1956) [bridge, patience]; *Night of the Demon* (1957) [cribbage]; *Rio Bravo* (1959) [poker]; *The Magnificent Seven* (1960) [patience, Faro]

1961-1980: *Last Year in Marienbad* (1962) [bridge, nim]; *Dr No* (1962) [baccarat]; *The Leopard* (1963) [patience, whist/briscola]; *Thunderball* (1965) [James Bond, baccarat]; *Cincinnati Kid* (1965) [poker]; *For a Few Dollars More* (1965) − poker; *Big Deal at Dodge City* (1966) − poker; *Kaleidoscope* (1966); *Casino Royale* (1967) [James Bond, baccarat]; *Cool Hand Luke* (1967) [poker]; *Five Card Stud* (1968) [poker]; *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*1969) [James Bond,

baccarat]; *True Grit* (1969) [poker & patience]; *The Woman Gambler's Trump Card* (1969); *The Italian Job* (1969) [rummy (?)]; *Lawman* (1971) [poker; patience]; *The Sting* (1973) [poker]; *Christ Stopped at Ebolli* 1978 [briscola/scopa/tresette]

1981-2000: *For Your Eyes Only* (1981) [James Bond, baccarat]; *The Thing* (1982) [poker]; *Little Dorrit* (1987) [to be identified]; *The Abyss* (1988) [tarot]; *The Music of Chance* (1993) [poker]; *Maverick* (1994) [poker]; *The Shawshank Redemption (*1994) [packs of cards]; *Golden Eye* (1995) [James bond, baccarat]; *Toy Story* (1995) [poker]; *Jane Austen's Mafia!* (1998) [go fish]; *Rounders* (1998) [poker]; *Lock Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* (1998) [poker]; *Time Regained* (1999) [bezique, solitaire]

2001-2022: *Ocean's 11* (2001) [poker and 21]; *Brotherhood of the Wolf* (2001) [solitaire, with fortune-telling implied]; *High Roller: The Stu Ungar Story* (2003) [poker]; *Holy Lola* (2004) [cards and tricks]; *Immortel ad vitam* (2004) [snap?]; *Trilogy: The Weeping Meadow* (2004) [solitaire]; *Tsotsi* (2005) [cards & fate – to be identified]; *Casino Royale* (2006) [James Bond, poker]; **The Young Victoria* (2009) [whist]; *21* (2008) [pontoon/21 et al]; *The Imaginarium of Dr Parnasus* (2009) [tarot]; *Backgammon* (2015) [poker]; *Knight of Cups* (2015) [tarot]; *Bridge of Spies* (2015) [poker]; *Live by Night* (2016) [poker]; *Hidden Figures* (2017*)* [rummy]; *Molly's Game* (2017) [poker]; *Baby Driver* (2017) [poker]; *Detroit* (2017) [poker]; *Simron* (2017) [baccarat]; *Tulip Fever* (2017) [whist?]; *The Favourite (2018) [whist]; *Crazy Rich Asians* (2018) [poker]; *Entebbe* (2018) [cards, non-specific]; *What Men Want* (2019) [poker]; *Jumanji The Next Level* (2019) [cards]