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"Fujiwara no Kamatari as a Shinto Deity," Nanboku-cho period (1336-92), after 1350. Purchase, Bequests of Edward C. Moore and Bruce Webster, by exchange, and Gifts of Mrs. George A. Crocker and David Murray, by exchange, 1985.

Kyoto

Capital of Artistic Imagination...4

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LITERATURE

'Pietas,' 'Virtus,' 'Familia':

SOME LESSONS FROM VIRGIL'S 'AENEID'

JEFF MINICK

Arma virumque cano..." Those three words—"I sing of arms and the man"—open one of the great classics of Western literature, the "Aeneid." Commissioned by the emperor Augustus to write an epic about the founding of the Roman people, Publius Vergilius Maro, known in English as Vergil or Virgil, created a poem in which he takes the hero Aeneas from the conquest of his native Troy to the Italian Peninsula, where his descendants will found the city of Rome.

Using as his model Homer's "Iliad" and "Odyssey," Virgil re-creates the fall of Troy; Aeneas's wanderings about the Mediterranean; his love affair with Dido, queen of Carthage, the city that would one day become Rome's deadly enemy; and the hero's eventual landing on the shores of Italy, where he wages war to secure a homeland for his people.

Here is an extraordinary work. In these 9,896 lines, almost all of them written in dactylic hexameter, Virgil creates a hero with whom we can identify. He's a man who trembles with fear during a storm yet has the courage to enter Dis, the underworld, to visit his father. Aeneas loves Dido, but when the god Jupiter orders him to abandon her and resume his travels, he goes about his preparations secretly, concealing his intentions from the queen, like many a fearful man slipping away from a woman.

And in Dido, Virgil gives us a woman who comes alive even in modern times, a powerful female who fights to found and build Carthage, a queen who directs a hundred projects yet remains a woman who can give herself completely to the man she loves.

The "Aeneid" became a sort of Bible to the ancient Romans. Well into the Renaissance, some readers even used it to practice stoicism, randomly opening the book and reading a passage to predict future events.

Its influence on literature was vast. Augustine as a young man wept over the death of Dido. And, of course, Virgil is the spirit who accompanies Dante through Hell and Purgatory.

Virgil creates a hero with whom we can identify.

The "Aeneid" also acted as a mirror for Roman males. They could gaze into that glass and compare themselves to this ancient hero. Were they worthy of empire? Were they stouthearted? Did they practice, as did Aeneas, certain virtues? Did they pay homage to tradition and to the gods?

Like the Romans, we moderns can also take lessons and inspiration from the "Aeneid." Here are just a few of them:



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'Pietas'

Virgil links this word to Aeneas as early as line 10 in the poem, and several times refers to his hero as Pius Aeneas. Our word piety derives from "pietas," but usually we associate piety with religious practices. Whereas to the Romans, pietas had a much deeper meaning: reverence for the gods, yes, but also the honoring of family, custom, and tradition.

This concept of pietas resounds throughout the "Aeneid." During the tumult of their escape from Troy, for example, Aeneas brings his father, Anchises, his son, Ascanius, and the household gods, the Penates, to safety but is separated from his wife, Creusa. He returns to the burning city, looking frantically for her. Having died, she appears to him as a ghost, commands him to leave her, and to find his way to Italy and to remarry.

In a much later incident, while visiting the Underworld, Aeneas again displays the pietas bred into his very bones. He sees that some souls are not permitted passage across the River Styx. The Sybil informs him that these are souls who have failed to receive the customs and practices of a proper burial. When Aeneas spots Palinurus, his helmsman who died from drowning, he deeply grieves for his fallen comrade.

'Virtus'

For the Romans, "virtus" meant practicing the ideals of manhood: courage, a strong character, and a desire to excel.

Aeneas embodies virtus. He is a man of "dignitas," a courageous warrior who treats others with respect, puts his followers ahead of his own interests, and obeys the will of the gods and fate.

Virgil describes him as "a man apart, devoted to his mission." As the poem progresses, we see Aeneas grow in that role, hiding his despair at times from his men and offering them encouragement by word and example.

Aeneas was not perfect. He was impetuous at times, temporarily lost his vision of a homeland in his entanglement with Dido, and refused mercy to Turnus, the leader of his enemies in Latium. To the Romans, however, Aeneas as created by Virgil undoubtedly seemed a near-ideal man and leader.

'Familia'

Aeneas's reverence, his pietas, for the past and the future is symbolized in the wonderful picture Virgil paints of his escape from Troy. In addition to taking the Penates with him on this flight, he carries his father on his back and holds the hand of his son.

The Romans paid homage to their ancestors, keeping shrines to them in their homes and celebrating them during "Parentalia," when they would visit the graves of those who had gone before them



PUBLIC DOMAIN

and pour libations of wine into the earth. They also cared deeply for their children, with the wealthier families seeing to it that their sons and even some of their daughters received as good an education as possible.

Here we have only scratched the surface of what can be gained from the "Aeneid." If you decide to tackle this classic, I would suggest the Robert Fagles translation, which I used with my Advanced Placement Latin students. If you lack the time to read the poem in its entirety, the first six books are considered by most scholars to be the best.

On his deathbed, and with the "Aeneid" still unfinished, Virgil requested that the manuscript to be burned, considering it unworthy of publication. Augustus overrode that request and ordered the book published expeditiously and with as few editorial changes as possible, thereby giving the rest of us an irreplaceable treasure of Western civilization.

Jeff Minick has four children and a growing platoon of grandchildren. For 20 years, he taught history, literature, and Latin to seminars of homeschooling students in Asheville, N.C. Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, Va. See JeffMinick.com to follow his blog.



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1. An illuminated leaf from Virgil's "Eclogues, Georgics, and Aeneid," circa 1470, by Cristoforo Majorana. Walters Art Museum.

2. "The Meeting of Dido and Aeneas," exhibited 1766, by Sir Nathaniel Dance-Holland. Purchased with assistance from the Art Fund, 1993. Tate.

3. "Aeneas Flees Burning Troy," 1598, by Federico Barocci. Galleria Borghese, Rome.

4. "Aeneas's Defeat of Turnus," 17th century, by Luca Giordano. Palazzo Corsini.

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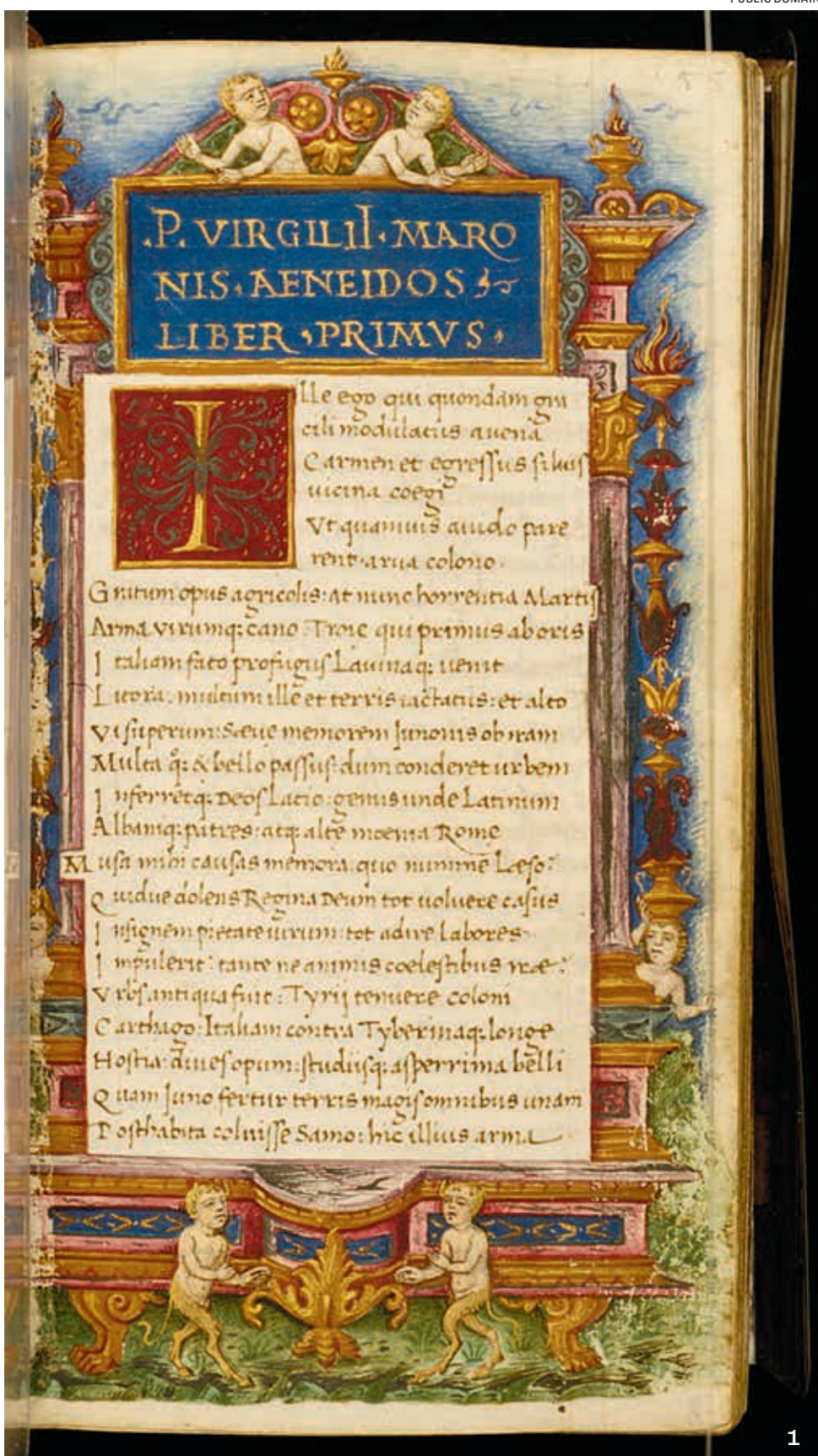
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THE EPOCH TIMES

TRUTH AND TRADITION

ANGELA FENG

Rich with culture and brimming with history, Kyoto is often considered the heart of Japan.

A stroll through the picturesque streets can almost feel like a walk back in time, as one is surrounded by traditional Japanese-style architecture, blossoming foliage, and venerable temples and shrines.

Founded as Heian-kyo in 794, Kyoto was the capital and home to the imperial court for over 1,000 years. Its vibrant artistic scene was profoundly shaped by the presence of the emperor and aristocrats, as well as high-ranking warriors, varied groups of artists, and literati working in the palace. It is also a city dense with sacrality: its deep reverence for the Shinto and Buddhist religions was paramount to the development of its abundant cultural heritage.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art's exhibition titled "Kyoto: Capital of Artistic Imagination" is a celebration of the city's profound cultural history. It places special emphasis on the decorative arts, with over 80 masterpieces of lacquers, ceramics, metalworks, and textiles. A meticulously curated collection of over 50 paintings by masters of various schools is also on display, along with a number of recently acquired contemporary works.

The exhibition is arranged in chronological order, with a different theme for each time period. A walk through the exhibition will feel like a journey through the history of the city: visitors may start with ancient Shinto and Buddhist art, before traveling through medieval and early-modern times, until they finally arrive in modern-day Kyoto.

The presence of the imperial court played a major role in sculpting Kyoto's artistic trends. It is also what ensured the survival and preservation of so many artworks. Because most works were created for the court and the imperial family, they were made from materials of the highest quality. Additionally, most Shinto and Buddhist institutions from this time were established for the same purpose: to protect the capital and imperial family. As a result, many trends and parallels can be seen in their art production.

The influence of the court and Shintoism can be seen in pieces such as "Fujiwara no Kamatari as a Shinto Deity."

Kamatari was a statesman, courtier, and the founder of the powerful Fujiwara clan that dominated Japanese court life from the 10th to the 12th century. As a strong supporter of Shinto, he was one of several historical figures who were deified following their deaths. His divinity is symbolized by the golden mirrors that hang above his figure. In Japanese culture, mirrors are one of the most potent symbols of power, revered as sacred objects representing the gods.

Gain insight into the grueling lives of the fierce samurai through the collection's rare pieces of armor or "yoroi." The armor of Ashikaga Takauji is an exceptional example of medieval yoroi. In use from around the 10th to the 14th century, yoroi was generally worn by warriors on horseback. The breastplate is covered with stenciled leather bearing the image of the powerful Buddhist deity Fudo Myo-o, whose fierce mien and attributes of calmness and inner strength were highly prized by the samurai.

The exhibition also contains a luxurious and elegant Momoyama period surcoat, or "jinbaori." Surcoats were typically worn over armor as protection from rain, wind, and cold. Several features of this garment hint toward Western influence, including the standing collar and the white and red silk crepe ruffles along the sleeve openings. Its unique combination of rare imported luxury fabrics suggests that this surcoat was a gift from a warlord to his loyal samurai.

Tea ceremonies, introduced to Kyoto by Zen Buddhism, aided the city in its spiritual development and inspired

ALL IMAGES BY THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART



"The Rebellions of the Hogen and Heiji Eras," Edo period (1615–1868), 17th century, Rogers Fund, 1957.

CULTURE

KYOTO

Capital of Artistic Imagination

A Journey Through the Cultural History of the Ancient City

numerous art forms. A look at the Edo period tea caddy by Nonomura Ninsai reveals more about this sacred tradition. The small, thin jar was used during ceremonies to hold green tea powder, or matcha. As one of the most revered Japanese potters of all time, Ninsai is known for being the first potter to sign his name to his work. His style, which is typically ornate and refined, set a standard that would define the appearance of Kyoto ceramics from his time on.

Most paintings from ancient Kyoto take the form of hanging scrolls, handscrolls, and folding screens. Their themes vary, from tranquil landscapes to riveting battles, and from glimpses of everyday life to gripping scenes of fabled legends. One particularly significant folding screen depicts battles from the Hogen rebellion across six intricately painted panels. It was made in the 17th century, although the rebellion took place in the 12th. Though it lasted only a few hours, the Hogen rebellion had far-reaching political and social consequences, and marked the beginning of the medieval period.

Regardless of the tides of change that have swept through the world over the years, ancient traditions and art styles are still very much alive in modern-day Kyoto. To demonstrate this, the exhibition includes several works by contemporary artists, including ceramics by Nakamura Takuo, Suzuki Osamu, and Yagi Akira, and glass sculptures by Hiroshi Sugimoto and Kohei Nawa.

Buddhism and Shinto remain an important part of the everyday lives of Japanese people. Most temples, despite being open to tourists, still function regularly and are often frequented by citizens to pray. Shrines are widely visited for important festivals, such as the famous Gion Matsuri, a month-long festival that takes place in July.

Despite losing the position of the capital to Tokyo in 1869, Kyoto still bears a name meaning "Capital City," and remains the best place to explore

The exhibition places special emphasis on the decorative arts, with over 80 masterpieces of lacquers, ceramics, metalworks, and textiles.

traditional Japanese arts. Currently, Kyoto has around 1,600 Buddhist temples and 400 Shinto shrines, making it one of the most well-preserved and historically significant cities in Japan. "Kyoto functions as a living museum of Japanese culture," said curator Monika Bincsik. "The essence of Japanese culture is preserved here."

A Sampling of the Exhibition

'Fujiwara no Kamatari as a Shinto Deity'

Fujiwara no Kamatari (614–699) is one of several historical figures deified in the religious tradition of Shinto. An important statesman and courtier, he founded the powerful Fujiwara clan that dominated Japanese court life from the 10th through the 12th century.

Portrait of Kyuzan Soei

The "chinso," or portrait of a Zen master, is the epitome of Zen culture. Given by a master to a disciple as certification of the latter's attaining enlightenment, the portrait is testimony to the disciple's participation in the lineage of succession of the Buddhist Law as practiced in Zen.

'A Nenbutsu Gathering at Ichiya, Kyoto'

In this scene, people from all walks of life have gathered to hear the charismatic monk Ippen (1239–1289) perform a recitation of the Nenbutsu prayer invoking Amitabha.

Overrobe (uchikake) with bamboo

This rare uchikake is the work of Gion Nankai, a well-known poet and artist of the early Nanga movement. Karakane Koryu, a merchant and literary scholar from present-day Osaka (formerly Naniwa), commissioned this bamboo robe for one of his concubines; it was thereafter treasured as a family heirloom.

'The Rebellions of the Hogen and Heiji Eras'

Progressing from right to left, the screen illustrates a number of legendary fighting scenes as narrated in "The Tale of the Hogen Rebellion."

The rebellion, which occurred in central Kyoto in the summer of 1156, involved a dispute over succession between Emperor Go-Shirakawa and former Emperor Sutoku.

Portrait of Hotei

This portrait by Kano Takanobu (1571–1618) depicts Hotei, a popular figure in the Zen pantheon, who is often shown as a chubby, good-humored monk carrying a large sack. He is believed to have lived in southern China in the late ninth century and was eventually recognized as a manifestation of Miroku, the Buddha of the Future.



Incense box (kogo) with pines and plovers

Like many other tea ceremony incense boxes, this piece could have originally been part of a 12-piece cosmetic set ("junitebako"), where it served as a container for tooth-blackening material.



Surcoat (jinbaori)

Battle surcoats were produced from the Age of Civil War (circa 1467–1603) through the end of the Edo period (1615–1867). This luxurious and elegant Momoyama period jinbaori is of a very rare type; only three similar examples are known.



Armor (yoroi) of Ashikaga Takauji

This is a rare example of a medieval "yoroi," an early Japanese armor worn by warriors on horseback. The yoroi is characterized by a cuirass that wraps around the body and is closed by a separate panel ("waideate") on the right side and by a deep four-sided skirt.

Tea caddy (seitaka)

This small jar was used in tea ceremonies to hold matcha. It was created by Nonomura Ninsai, one of the first Japanese potters to sign his name to his work. This piece is more subdued and less ornate than his usual style; however, even a less showy piece such as this one reveals the sophistication of Ninsai's eye.



'Illustrated Legends of the Kitano Tenjin Shrine'

An ancient Shinto belief that the calamitous forces of nature are animated by tormented human spirits underlies the legendary origin of the Kitano Tenjin shrine. It is dedicated to Sugawara Michizane (845–903), a distinguished scholar and statesman who died in exile after being slandered by enemies at court.

The exhibition closes at The Met on Jan. 26, 2020.

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Kyoto functions as a living museum of Japanese culture.

Monika Bincsik, curator





Errol Flynn (R) as Peter Blood, a man of many virtues, in the 1935 film "Captain Blood."

LITERATURE

Swashbuckler: Lessons in Morality From Peter Blood, the Pirate

JEFF MINICK

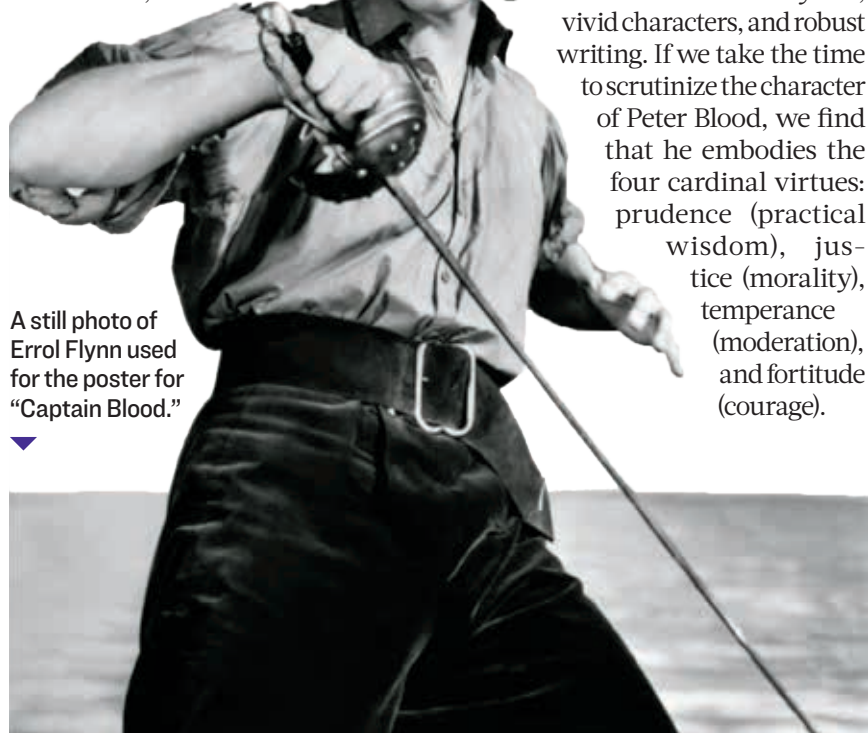
For years, mention of the novel by Rafael Sabatini (1875–1950) about pirates in the Caribbean would pop up in my reading. These writers draped garlands of praise on "Captain Blood," yet I never gave the novel even the courtesy of a glance. From its title alone, I figured this tale of a pirate on the high seas would offer little more than a hackneyed plot, cardboard characters, and overwrought prose. Ignorance and snobbery often walk hand in hand.

At any rate, I was recently browsing my copy of James Mustich's splendid collection of brief reviews, "1,000 Books to Read Before You Die," when up popped this line from his take on "Captain Blood": "The book dares you to put it down. You won't."

That line sent me off to the public library in search of Sabatini. And Mustich was correct. I picked the book up, and I didn't put it down. After all these years, I read "Captain Blood."

No, not read—I plunged through this romantic saga with all sails raised and a strong wind at my back.

Doctor, Slave, Pirate
As good a name for a doctor as a pirate, Peter Blood,



A still photo of Errol Flynn used for the poster for "Captain Blood."

a physician and former soldier of fortune, is unjustly accused of treason during the turbulent reign of England's James II. A kangaroo court finds the innocent Blood guilty of trying to overthrow the king, and he is shipped off as a slave to Barbados, where his medical talents soon win the respect of the all-seeing governor and a modicum of freedom for Blood. He also meets and feels a growing affection for Arabella Bishop, the niece of the nefarious Colonel Bishop, a slave owner with powerful connections.

During an attack by Spanish raiders on the colony, Blood leads a group of fellow slaves aboard the Spanish ship, seizes control of this vessel, turns the guns on the Spanish soldiers and sailors returning to the boat after their night of pillaging and murder on shore, and embarks on a career of piracy.

Blood targets Spanish ships, gains renown among foes and friends for his daring and chivalry, and soon becomes a legend among all who sail the seas in his part of the world.

As the blurb on the back of the book rightly claims, "Captain Blood" is a classic swashbuckler—filled with swordplay and adventure."
But "Captain Blood" deserves a reading for reasons other than its storyline, vivid characters, and robust writing. If we take the time to scrutinize the character of Peter Blood, we find that he embodies the four cardinal virtues: prudence (practical wisdom), justice (morality), temperance (moderation), and fortitude (courage).

Prudence is another of Blood's virtues as a leader. He goes to extraordinary lengths to avoid sacrificing the lives of his men. When they find themselves beset by impossible odds—outnumbered on the sea, unable to escape the guns of a Spanish fort—it is Blood who thinks like a fox, crafts plans to fool the enemy, and leads his men to safety. In addition, "Captain Blood" contains other gifts worthy of contemplation and relevant to our time.

Some among us try to bring down our enemies by inventing labels for them: racist or sexist, fascist, or communist. Blood finds himself falsely smeared as a traitor, but his worst experience with verbal branding occurs when he captures a Spanish ship. He is astounded to find Arabella Bishop onboard, a prisoner of Admiral Don Miguel de Espinosa.

A Man of Virtue
Blood's courage is never in question. Whether confronting false accusations in a courtroom, rushing to the defense of a young girl in danger of violation by a Spanish soldier, or coolly commanding a ship under fire, he stands fast in the face of danger.

In judging others, including his enemies, Blood takes a temperate view, recognizing human foibles and extending mercy even to those who deserve a noose. Several times, for example, he has the opportunity to kill the vengeful and vicious Colonel Bishop, but he foregoes that pleasure, in large part because of his affections for Arabella.

Beset again and again with demands from his crew to take revenge on certain captured enemies, Blood nevertheless weighs the circumstances on the scales of justice. At one point he is tempted to do otherwise, thinking "he would cast out the maudlin ideals by which he had sought to steer a course; put an end to this idiotic struggle to make the best of two worlds."

But morality is bred too deep within Blood's heart, rendering it impossible for him to become "as bowelless, as remorseless, as all those who deserved those names" of thief and pirate.



Olivia de Havilland as Peter Blood's beloved Arabella, and Errol Flynn as Peter Blood in "Captain Blood."

The 1922 dust jacket of Rafael Sabatini's "Captain Blood: His Odyssey." PUBLIC DOMAIN



The 1922 dust jacket of Rafael Sabatini's "Captain Blood: His Odyssey." PUBLIC DOMAIN

A Man for All Times
Some among us try to bring down our enemies by inventing labels for them: racist or sexist, fascist, or communist. Blood finds himself falsely smeared as a traitor, but his worst experience with verbal branding occurs when he captures a Spanish ship. He is astounded to find Arabella Bishop onboard, a prisoner of Admiral Don Miguel de Espinosa.

Because of the twisted truths she has heard about Peter Blood, his beloved Arabella calls Blood "a thief and a pirate." Later, agonizing over this label from the woman he secretly loves, Blood thinks: "She had no charity for him, no mercy. She had summed him up, convicted him and sentenced him in that one phrase." We see this same tactic used daily by our politicians and by some in the media.

Furthermore, Peter Blood is a gentleman, a word that nowadays finds little employment. He is imbued with those qualities we associate with the Founding Fathers, with generals like Robert E. Lee and George Marshall, and with politicians like Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Robert Taft. Blood defends the defenseless, treats women with respect, and grants his defeated foes more dignity than they deserve. Like all gentlemen, he is a man of his word, even when his promises prove costly.

Finally, Peter Blood speaks with a candor missing in our politically correct culture. His is not a brutal or cruel honesty, except to those who deserve a rebuke. Instead, he uses logic, a cool demeanor, and considerable rhetorical skills to make his point. Whether addressing his band of buccaneers or a war council of French naval officers, he speaks what he regards as truth.

"Captain Blood" captures the spirit of the late 17th century, deftly grafts the speech of that time to our own, and tells a grand story. It is historical fiction at its best.

Most important of all, "Captain Blood" reminds us of what we might be and how we might behave. By reading this novel, all of us, young and old, can reacquaint ourselves with heroism, gallantry, and the classical virtues. We may even discover in Peter Blood's tale a sextant and compass to navigate the rough seas of our own lives.

Jeff Minick has four children and a growing platoon of grandchildren. For 20 years, he taught history, literature, and Latin to seminars of homeschooling students in Asheville, N.C. Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, Va. See JeffMinick.com to follow his blog.

Mark Jackson grew up in Spring Valley, N.Y., where he attended a Waldorf school. At Williams College, his professors all suggested he write professionally. He acted professionally for 20 years instead. Now he writes professionally about acting. In the movies.



Superhero Secret Service Agent Man

MARK JACKSON

Let's summarize this action franchise, shall we? In "Olympus Has Fallen" (2013) and "London Has Fallen" (2016), Secret Service agent Mike Banning (Gerard Butler) saved the POTUS (played by Aaron Eckhart) from terrorist attacks.

In the latest installment, agent Banning saves a different POTUS (Morgan Freeman), while the president is out fishing on a lake, from an hellacious attack by drones that look like mini F-117A stealth fighter jets with face-recognition software.

Is it an excellent movie? Heck no. Is it a fun movie? Well, yeah, kinda. It's a highly predictable boy movie, with fun stuff, like, you

'Angel Has Fallen'

Director
Ric Roman Waugh

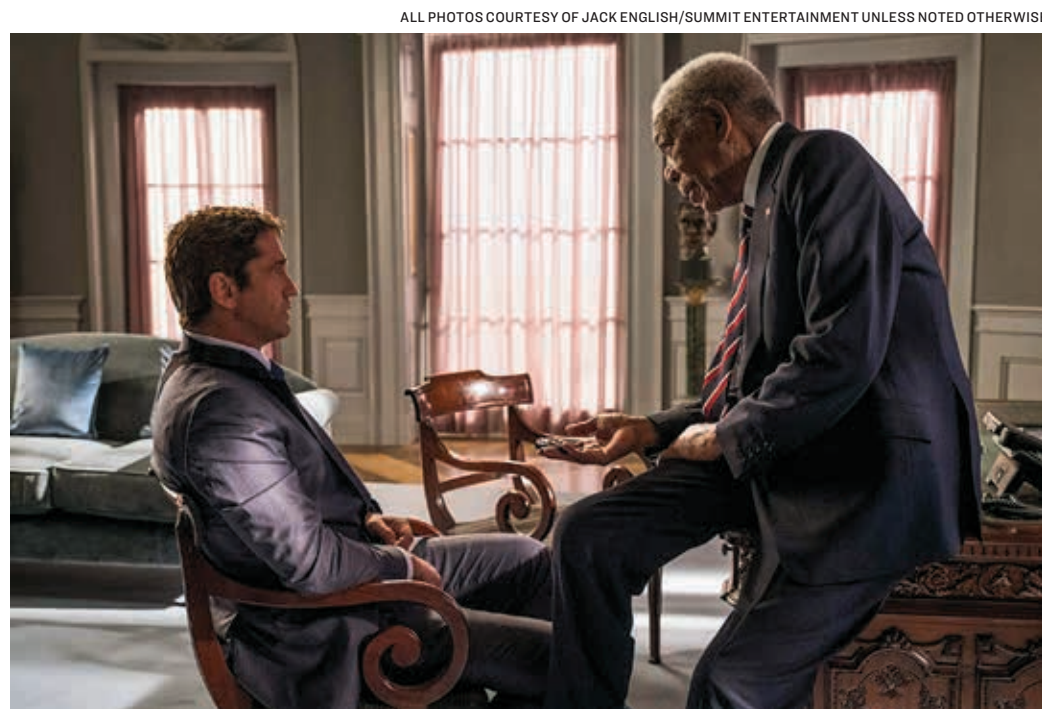
Starring
Gerard Butler, Morgan Freeman, Jada Pinkett Smith, Piper Perabo, Danny Huston

Rated
R

Running Time
2 hours

Release Date
Aug. 23

★ ★ ★ ★



Gerard Butler (L) as a Secret Service agent and Morgan Freeman as the U.S. president, in "Angel Has Fallen."

FILM REVIEW

A Rambling, Preachy Indie Dramedy That Veers Into Absurdity

IAN KANE

Like the many twists and turns that medical transport driver Vic (newcomer Chris Galust) takes over the course of one day, the new indie comedy-drama "Give Me Liberty" drives around in the search of an identity. Directed by Russian-Jewish immigrant Kirill Mikhanovsky, this film is a passion project that wears its heart on its sleeve; heartfelt intentions, however, don't always translate into interesting results.

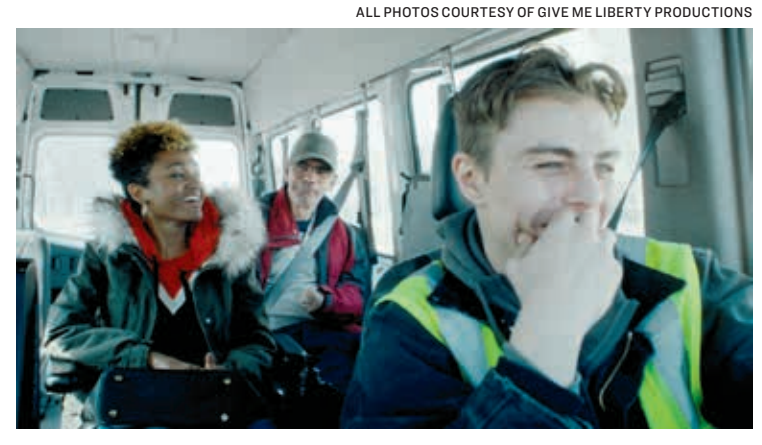
Looking like a fatigued and exasperated young Leonardo DiCaprio, Galust's character makes a critical decision to defy the orders of his superiors and chauffeur a raucous band of senior citizens to a funeral. This touches off a chaotic chain of events that causes him to veer further from his original plan.

But for the audience, what transpires are many drawn-out scenes of Vic driving folks around in his transport van.

A Character Salad
Many indie directors get trapped into trying to showcase lots of personalities, but end up with a disjointed character salad rather than anything intimate or memorable. Here, with such a vast array of characters bouncing in and out, as soon as I begin giving a hoot about someone or another, he vanishes from the film and never returns.

That is, I want to like some of the film's quirky characters, but its bawdy bunch of seniors cracking jokes are entertaining for only so long before they wear out their welcome.

Without a decent amount of character development, no one stands out. On top of that, Galust isn't a particularly fascinating lead. His lines seem almost dialed-in and



Lauren "Lolo" Spencer (L) as a passenger and Chris Galust (R) as a bus driver in "Give Me Liberty."

'Give Me Liberty'

Director
Kirill Mikhanovsky

Starring
Lauren "Lolo" Spencer, Chris Galust, Maxim Stoyanov

Not Rated

Running Time
1 hour, 50 minutes

Release Date
Aug. 23

★ ★ ★ ★

sick, or disabled.

And while a few scenes are heartfelt, particularly at the film's beginning, by the end, everything seems contrived, hackneyed, and almost manipulative because we're being hit on the head over and over by the message "Carpe diem," and in sophomoric and forced ways. This just isn't my idea of fun.

This message is not aided by the film's aimless and rambling pace. Its comedic timing is way off, and sometimes things devolve into slapstick absurdity. Other jokes come off as phony and overdone, and many of these are repeated ad nauseam.

Technically, "Give Me Liberty" is all over the place. Although the film's natural lighting looks nice, the jerky-cam cinematography is jarring. Its fast cutting (splicing together a bunch of quick shots in succession) and there's a lot of that—can only be used a certain number of times before it becomes disorienting.

I get that we're supposed to feel the chaotic, disorderly nature of Vic's life, but the film comes off as jumbled and incoherent with its lengthy, tedious driving scenes and almost spastic surges of dizzying shots.

I really wanted to like "Give Me Liberty," as it seems to have its heart in the right place. However, it's not the charming little indie comedy that I'd hoped it would be. Instead, I couldn't become attached to any of its fleeting characters, and its comically anemic script and incoherent, jumbled pace made "Give Me Liberty" off-putting and regretfully forgettable.

Ian Kane is a filmmaker and author based out of Los Angeles. To see more, visit DreamFlightEnt.com

away and figure it all out before turning himself in to the authorities. More or less.

Why It's Tolerable
Basically, you've got an excellent cast in a B-movie. Nick Nolte, Jada Pinkett Smith, and the excellent portrayal of weaselly characters—Tim Blake Nelson. Then there's the excellent portrayal of seemingly benign but ultimately corrosive characters—Danny Huston.

Huston plays an old war buddy of Banning and is now a military contractor in desperate need of a contract. (It occurred to me that Huston's got the hair and movie resumé to play Jeffrey Epstein when that inevitable movie occurs.)

Smack in the middle of the movie, Banning, looking for help, hunts down his old dad, who's hiding out in West Virginia in a high state of Vietnam-vet paranoia. Dad was a "tunnel rat," you see. Most people are unaware that the tunnel rats were very little dudes, so they could fit down in the subterranean Vietnamese tunnels built by the slight-of-stature Viet Cong. Nick Nolte is 6-foot-1, so that's just stupid, but then, one could not call "Angel Has Fallen" a realistic movie.

Suffice it to say, pops has all sorts of fun stuff rigged; there's tripwires and such in their thar hills. Excellent 'splosions ensue. And Nolte can be hilarious when he feels like it. Dad wasn't there for his son back in the day, but he makes up for it now. It's the same ne'er-do-well-dad-who-makes-good-later-on role that he played in "Warrior."

Lastly
These "Fallen" movies provide violent, boy-pleasing action, funniness, and a high body count but with minimal gore. Not exactly cartoony, but also not Tarantino's Brad Pitt character in "Once Upon a Time in Hollywood" smashing skulls to smithereens: It doesn't have the "I need to now take a shower" factor.

Banning is, of course, a ridiculous one-man wrecking crew prevailing in the face of outrageous odds. He's like a superhero. Maybe that's why this mediocre franchise isn't going away. Everything is superheroes now. "Angel Has Fallen" even has a post-credit-roll scene.

BEHOLD THE BEAUTY

THREE BEAUTIFUL SOUTHERN Magnolia Blooms



A

LORRAINE FERRIER

still-life painting can tell a moving story. The painting may appear to be just an array of everyday objects on a tablecloth, but the objects and composition can be full of both real beauty and meaning. That in itself is a fine art.

Still-life compositions have been in existence since antiquity. Examples can be found in the murals of ancient Egyptian tombs and in ancient Roman homes, such as at Herculaneum and Pompeii. Still-life compositions vanished with the fall of Rome.

In the Renaissance, artists painted still-life compositions in the background of their paintings. It wasn't until the early 16th century, in Northern Europe, that still life emerged as a specific genre of painting. At that time, the Reformation engulfed the region, causing Protestant religious commissions to decline.

A still life picture can convey many stories.

Despite the seemingly simple compositions of everyday objects, a still-life picture can convey many stories. The symbology used can tell moral, spiritual, or political narratives. Of course, a painter's virtuosity in painting and drawing is overtly on show.

Giant Magnolias on a Blue Velvet Cloth

In Martin Johnson Heade's famous painting, simply described as giant magnolias on a blue velvet cloth, three magnolia flowers gently rest on a river of rich blue velvet. The magnolias are from Heade's neighborhood in St. Augustine, Florida, where in 1883 he married and settled.

Magnolia grandiflora, or Southern magnolia, is a North American native that originates from the Southeast.

Heade painted a number of velvet and magnolia still-life paintings. Only one of these has a date, although all are thought to have been painted around the same time: in 1888.

This painting, the giant magnolias on a blue velvet cloth, is thought to be the best still life of his oeuvre.

Heade's painting beautifully depicts the impermanence of life. One young bud is ready to bloom, another is slightly open, and in the foreground the third flower is in full bloom. The three flowers could even be the same flower at different stages of life.

When Heade died in 1904, he was relatively unknown. Now, he's recognized as the only 19th-century American painter to significantly contribute across the genres of landscape, marine, and still life.

According to the National Gallery of Art, no American or European artist, preceding Heade, painted still life like his reclining magnolia paintings.

Giant magnolias on a blue velvet cloth is on display at the National Gallery of Art in Washington. To find out more, visit NGA.gov

▲ Giant magnolias on a blue velvet cloth, circa 1890, by Martin Johnson Heade. Oil on canvas. Gift of The Circle of the National Gallery of Art in Commemoration of its 10th Anniversary.



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