

WEEK 40, 2020

THE EPOCH TIMES

ARTS & CULTURE

JAMESTOWN-YORKTOWN FOUNDATION



Young visitors enjoy the Powhatan Indian Village, which is based on archaeological findings, at the Jamestown Settlement.

JAMESTOWN-YORKTOWN FOUNDATION

JAMESTOWN REDISCOVERY



Inside the Jamestown Settlement museum.



Archaeologist Mary Anna Hartley works on the Memorial Church site.

The Alpha of America
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BOOK REVIEW

A GUIDE TO A Patriotic Tour OF Washington

LORRAINE FERRIER

When life is chaotic, we often return home for respite. We may look to our family, faith, and community for personal guidance and seek out comfort in places familiar to us. We revisit these home comforts to anchor ourselves in the values important to us and to remind ourselves of our heritage.

But what can we do when our nation seems divided and chaotic?

Citizens of the United States could look to the ideals that America's forefathers founded the republic on, the values inherent to America's greatness, such as beauty, goodness, and truth.

Reading books such as “Classical Architecture and Monuments of Washington, D.C.: A History & Guide” by Michael Curtis can remind us of the values that America's Founding Fathers lived by and how they looked to ancient Greece, in particular, in the hope of building a great nation of virtue.

Curtis writes in the preface that the aim of the book is to teach the principles of art and political philosophy as they were understood by America's founders. He focuses on the “ancient antecedents of our political philosophies, stylistic precedents of our architectural forms, and of the Founders' classical vision.” He also explains the significance of designing the District of Columbia in the classical tradition.

In addition, Curtis gives examples of how progressive modernism destroys the traditions that America's founders fought for so fiercely and literally set in architectural stone, and why it's important to hold true to the founders' vision.

The US Capitol: The Founders' Vision

The book is divided into nine classical heritage tours that were originally devised for the National Civic Art Society to “extend the Founders' aesthetic vision and to teach the founding principles.”

Curtis has written the book in such a way that it can be enjoyed as a standalone text, not just as a guidebook. However, this is not a definitive guide to Washington; Curtis never says it is. Yet he imparts an incredible amount of fascinating information, presented with patriotic passion, so that it's a book you'll refer to again and again.

Whether you're taking one of the tours in Washington or from your armchair, in order to understand the city, Curtis says, you need to understand the founders' vision. The same applies when wanting to understand the nation.

In a short “Preparation” section,

Curtis suggests that tour participants should have a working knowledge of the Constitution (including the Bill of Rights) and that it would be useful to bring a copy of the Declaration of Independence to easily refer to the purpose, plan, art, and architecture of the city. For convenience, an abridged version of the Declaration is in the appendix.

“You will notice that buildings that are true to the nation's founding principles are beautiful, celebratory or solemn, [and] appropriate to humanity.”

Michael Curtis, author

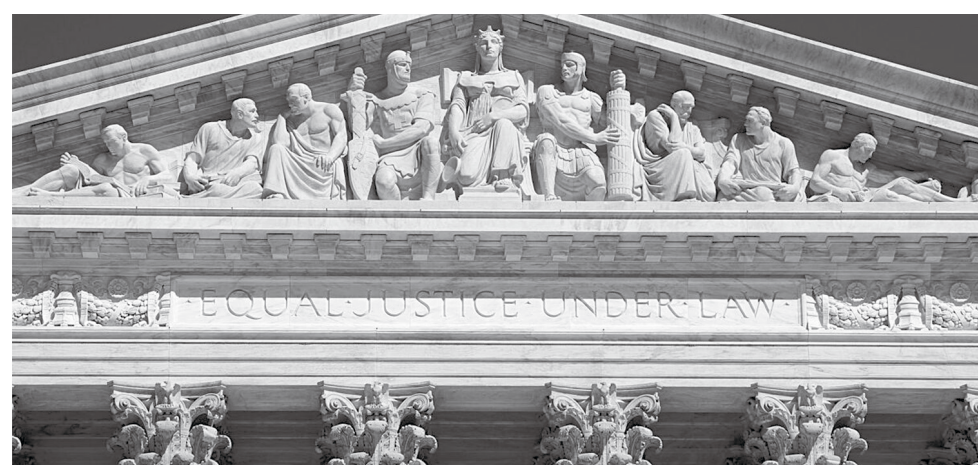
Classical on Purpose

The book gives good insight into why beauty matters in our built environments, and it may make you look differently at the buildings and public spaces in your area.

Curtis makes an astute generalization in “Tour VII: Decline of Purpose.” He says: “You will notice that buildings that are true to the nation's founding principles are beautiful, celebratory or solemn, appropriate to humanity, fitting the vicissitudes requisite of the citizen; then you will notice that buildings true to the tenets of scientific progressivism confront humanity with opposition, that they are scaled to the state, not to the citizen.”

Interestingly, Curtis shows the importance of how a building's design can inform and inspire its occupants. For instance, the U.S. Supreme Court is based on a Roman basilica. To enter the court building, visitors must first ascend a number of steps, which are flanked at the top by statues of “The Authority of Law” and “The Contemplation of Justice.” They then walk between high columns on top of which is a pediment with sculptural reliefs depicting liberty, order, authority, and the like. He says, “We are meant to feel the majesty of Law and we do.”

Curtis wonders if “government employees in progressive buildings feel that patriotic pride we citizens feel in ‘classical’ buildings such as the National Archives, the Lincoln Memorial, [and] the Federalist Triangle.” In contrast, there's the modernist Lyndon Baines Johnson Department of Education Building with its uniform rectangular windows that stretch across the vast



A pediment on the U.S. Supreme Court building with sculptural reliefs pertaining to law and order. Below the reliefs is the inscription “Equal justice under law.”



The Jefferson Memorial at dusk. Made of white Imperial Danby marble from Vermont, the memorial is inspired by the Roman Pantheon.

building. Curtis believes that if the education building was full of “noble statuary, civic inscriptions, and naturalistic architectural details,” then it would be all the better for education.

‘The Statue: Virtue in Human Form’ In the book, Curtis reminds us of the important purpose of civic statuary based on ancient principles. For instance, in “Tour IV: The Liberty Stroll,” under a heading called “The Statue: Virtue in Human Form,” he shows how statues are not mere monuments to men of the past; they are markers of exemplary attributes of man that we can all espouse.

He also reminds us of the difference between sculptures and statues: “A statue is an ideal of a man made real, it is a thing different from sculpture, which might contain any idea large, small or insipid of anything or non-thing or non-sense.” In the same passage, he goes on to say that the statue maker “creates the idea of a man from what the conscious soul understands of the many facets of God active in the universe.”

In “Tour V: Honoring Heroes,” Curtis draws our attention to the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial, which, unfortunately, does not honor the Civil Rights leader. The statue's pose is unwelcoming, almost hostile. And despite King's being a Christian minister, the memorial makes no reference to God. When you realize that King's statue was designed by Lei Yixin of China, then it makes sense: Yixin was trained to make Communist Party statuary that exudes dictatorship and is devoid of divinity because the Chinese regime is atheist.

The essence of King's statue is far from what King and the founders believed in. Thomas Jefferson's words come to mind, which Curtis quotes, as inscribed on a frieze on the Jefferson Memorial: “I have sworn upon the altar of God eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man.”

In another inscription on the memorial, which quotes Jefferson in a letter to George Washington: “God who gave us life gave us liberty. Can the liberties of a nation be secure when we have removed a conviction that these liberties are a gift from God?” Memorial inscriptions such as these remind us of the nation's values of faith and virtue.



The design of the U.S. Supreme Court is based on a Roman basilica.

The Importance of Knowing Our Civilization

A nation's history will always be relevant to its people. Because lessons from history are not emotionally charged with the politics or passions of the day, they should enable us to take a step back and see solutions more clearly. Therefore, history presents us with examples of how to be better and how to mediate chaos.

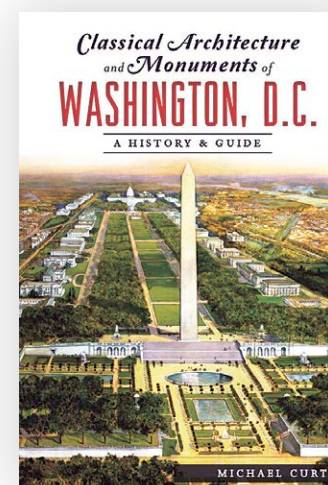
In “Tour II: Capitol Hill,” under the heading “The Problem of Governance,” Curtis quotes a prophetic George Orwell, who said: “The most effective way to destroy people is to deny and obliterate their own understanding of their own history.”

In the tour, Curtis explains how U.S. law, in particular, protects citizens. For example, he quotes English scholar Alcuin of York who in the eighth century warned: “Those people who say ‘the

voice of the people is the voice of God’ should be ignored, because the riotous crowd is almost always crazy.”

In a later passage, Curtis goes on to say that America's forefathers understood people's propensity to error. So to safeguard the country from the tyranny that can come from democracy or monarchy, they created three branches of government—the executive, legislative, and judicial—each branch chastening the other, and this chastening, this contemplation, this cooling, this delay have prevented us from tearing one another apart.”

“Classical Architecture and Monuments of Washington, D.C.: A History & Guide” is an absolute gem of a book for all who treasure America—its founding and future. The book should be required reading for school students and for prospective U.S. citizens.



Michael Curtis's book reminds us of the values that America's Founding Fathers lived by and how those virtues influenced the building of a great nation.

“Classical Architecture and Monuments of Washington, D.C.: A History & Guide”

Michael Curtis
The History Press
240 pages; paperback

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JAMESTOWN REDISCOVERY



The museum displays artifacts taken from the Jamestown site.



Masked visitors explore a dug-out canoe at the Jamestown Settlement, which has reopened after the shutdown.



Visitors inside the triangular wooden palisade of the re-created 1610-14 James Fort, at the Jamestown Settlement. The re-creation showcases wattle-and-daub structures topped with thatched roofs.

TRADITIONAL CULTURE

The Alpha of America

Jamestown and the Beginning of Our Story

JEFF MINICK

JAMESTOWN, Virginia—“Jamestown,” says Dave Givens, director of archaeology at this historic site, “is the alpha of American history, and Yorktown is the omega.” Givens, whom I interviewed on a recent visit to America’s first English colony, meant that Jamestown was the first permanent English settlement in the New World, and that nearby Yorktown, where American and French forces defeated the army of Lord Cornwallis, was the battle that established our republic.

Like everyone I met at Jamestown this rainy day in early September, Givens was passionate about American history. He was enthusiastic and polite, willing to share his time with me—we talked for 90 minutes—and dedicated to spreading the word about why Americans should visit this site.

Shared Cultures

For over a century, archaeologists have explored Jamestown. Givens and his colleagues have themselves spent untold hours digging into the soil here, unearthing the secrets of the English settlers and Native Americans who

Particularly striking were the exhibits showing the cultural interactions between the Native Americans, the English settlers, and the enslaved Africans.

bartered goods and fought vicious wars against each other, and whose blended cultures can be found in the artifacts they left behind.

Here is just one example of this mixing of cultures. When the Romans ruled England for 400 years, they brought sandstone to the British Isles. Centuries later, the British used some of that sandstone as ballast for their ships. The Powhatan tribe surrounding Jamestown took segments of that ballast and turned them into nutting stones, small rocks useful for cracking nuts.

Archaearium

The museum that Dave Givens and his predecessors have created, the Nathalie P. & Alan M. Voorhees Archaearium, displays only a small fraction of the more than 3,000,000 artifacts taken from the earth of this settlement: armor, swords, parts of other weapons, jewelry, broken bits of pottery and clay pipes, and a myriad of other objects. Here, for example, I saw a piece of slate on which some unknown colonials had scratched drawings and words: a tree, a man in 17th-century dress, four heraldic lions, numbers, and “Abraham.” Here, too, are the skeletons discovered

during various excavations: one a possible victim of murder as determined by modern forensics; the remains of JR10463, now almost certainly identified as Bartholomew Gosnold, who was instrumental in establishing the colony; and a teenager, named Jane by her discoverers, who in the 1609-10 “Starving Time” was likely cannibalized after her death.

As I wander through this museum, the outdoor remnants of colonial buildings, and the working archaeological sites, the privation suffered by these people and their courage and grit in the face of adversity roused my sympathy and amazement.

During the Starving Time, for example, when the Powhatan besieged the tiny fort of this settlement, when disease was rampant—the brackish water of this place killed scores of settlers over the years—and when the English colonists were reduced to eating rats and dogs, only 60 of 250 settlers survived.

Digging Up Our Democracy

To better understand what Givens and his associates do, I highly recommend a remarkable newly released book, “Church & State: The Archaeology of

JAMESTOWN-YORKTOWN FOUNDATION



Life-sized replicas of the three ships—Susan Constant, Godspeed, and Discovery—on which the colonists crossed the Atlantic, at the Jamestown Settlement.

the Foundations of Democracy.” Filled with vivid photographs and reader-friendly explanations, this guide offers an excellent behind-the-scenes tour of Jamestown sites, specifically the church dig begun in 2010, and introduces the archaeologists, historians, scientists, and others who share their expertise to better understand the past.

The days of Indiana Jones are long gone. Today there are teams of experts and a technology that can read what is buried beneath sand and clay, and reveal in a sterile lab the cause of death and even the profession and possible identity of human remains.

“Church & State” takes us into laboratories at the Smithsonian. It introduces us to Dr. Turi King, a geneticist at England’s University of Leicester, who teaches us how DNA analysis and genealogical research may someday reveal the descendants of these colonists.

Givens and his team end “Church & State” by reminding us that “the first representative governing body to be held in America met in the choir” of Memorial Church in Jamestown. “Here the foundations of our nation’s democratic experiment were laid, enshrining the fundamental principle of our government and all democratic governments, that no one is above the law; and finally, the establishment of representative government based on the maxim that governments of free people rely on the consent of the governed.”

Another Take on Jamestown

Only a short distance from Historic Jamestowne (as it was originally spelled) is the Jamestown Settlement museum. Here Tracy Perkins, media relations manager for the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation, which administers both the Jamestown Settlement museum and the American Revolution Museum at Yorktown, greeted me at the front desk.

Perkins spent two hours walking me through the museum, and despite the rain, escorted me to the outdoor living-history exhibits: the Powhatan Indian village, the re-creation of the wattle-and-daub houses of the English settlers, the life-sized replicas of the three ships—Susan Constant, Godspeed, and Discovery—on which the colonists crossed the Atlantic, and the fort, church, and other buildings that are also reproductions of Jamestown’s actual buildings.

Like Dave Givens, Tracy Perkins proved an affable and able guide with a sense of humor and a deep love for Jamestown and history.

With its 30,000 square feet of exhibi-

tion space, the Jamestown Settlement museum was more than a bit overwhelming, particularly as I had allotted only three hours for my visit. Here are displays and exhibits about such figures as John Smith, Pocahontas, and Nathaniel Bacon of “Bacon’s Rebellion” fame, all set around six major themes: Before Jamestown, Three Cultures, Virginia Company of London, Founding of Jamestown, 1619, and Jamestown 1699. Dioramas and short films mixed with historical objects and paintings allow visitors to immerse themselves in the history of this colony.

Particularly striking were the exhibits showing the cultural interactions between the Native Americans, the English settlers, and the enslaved Africans. These exhibits demonstrated, for example, both the similarities in tools and agricultural practices of these peoples as well as their differences, and also demonstrated, as Dave Givens had stressed, the connections in their cultures.

‘Tell People to Come Here’

Now for some general impressions of the afternoon when I stepped from the 21st century into the 17th.

First, everyone in both of these museums, from the cashier at the Jamestown Settlement Café to clerks at the front desk, could not have been kinder and more helpful. (If you eat at the café, I highly recommend the 8-inch pizza, which was laden with vegetables and a delight to the taste buds.) We were all wearing masks, but I saw lots of friendly, smiling eyes.

Because of the ongoing pandemic lockdowns, both of these museums have witnessed an enormous decline in the number of visitors and have seen revenues from admission fees shrink. The day of my visit, for instance, occurred during a week when the museums catered specifically to homeschoolers. While a few families were eating in the cafeteria or wandering through the re-created fort, there were no lines to buy tickets, no bustling crowds inside the museum galleries.

As Tracy explained, not only are there fewer tourists, but the pandemic and distance learning have also kept away the school children who normally visit the museum by the busload.

But more than money is at play here. Both Tracy Perkins and Dave Givens passionately believe that the museums they represent demonstrate to visitors the complexity of history, the nuances of the past so often lost in today’s debates about history and culture. As Givens told me several times during my conversa-

tion with him, “Tell people to come here and see where America started.”

Proud to Be an American

At day’s end, after my long-time friend John and I had eaten a delicious meal at Paul’s Deli & Neighborhood Restaurant and returned to the Griffin Hotel (which is located just across the street from Colonial Williamsburg), John asked, “How are you going to write about everything we saw today?”

Despite 11 pages of handwritten notes and 400 words typed on my computer, the honest answer to John’s question was “I’m not sure I can. I’m not sure I can do Jamestown justice.”

That afternoon had overwhelmed my thoughts and senses in two ways.

First was the sheer amount of information I’d absorbed through talking with my guides and strolling through the museums. John and I had spent a little over five hours in Jamestown, and to experience everything would have required at least an entire day.

Second, and much more importantly, my love for my country—patriotism, if you will—received a much-needed shot in the arm.

Over my lifetime, I have visited many museums in places like Rome and Paris, New York, Boston, and Washington D.C., but none of them had affected me as strongly as Jamestown. Here on this Virginia peninsula begins the history of our country. Here were those long-dead people—white Europeans, black Africans, Native Americans—whose story is our story. Here were people like Tracy, Dave, and all the other visitors to this venerable place who care about that story and who hold their country dear.

Late that afternoon we left Jamestown, but Jamestown didn’t leave me. The alpha of America had revived my pride in our nation and restored my faith in its ideals. That night, for the first time in months, I slipped into sleep in love with my country.

A Note: If you can’t make the trip to Jamestown, and particularly if you are teaching young people, whether at home or in a classroom, I urge you to explore the websites for Historic Jamestowne and the Jamestown Settlement. Here you will find histories, webcasts, lectures, galleries, and many other educational resources.

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.



(Above) Do words cast a spell that creates? Pygmalion, through the words of prayer to a goddess, brings his beloved statue to life. "Pygmalion Praying Venus to Animate His Statue," 1786, by Jean-Baptiste Regnault. Palace of Versailles.

(Right) President John F. Kennedy urged citizens to find the right, rather than partisan, answers to America's problems.



the beginning, was called to name (that is, to spell) the animals and in this way to exercise power over them, for words of power produce real effects.

That original language, then, was true, righteous, creative, and efficacious in effecting what the mind summoned. Today, languages are debased because we are enfeebled; we prefer the lie to the truth. Yet there are still glimmers of its former glory. By repeating certain words, phrases, and sentences to ourselves—which we might call affirmations, mantras, chants, or hymns even—about our beliefs, we either "spell" ourselves for success or ensure our failure.

Our Regression

But what of our initial topic, Progress? If we are progressing, it is hard to see evidence of it. Economist Alan Reynolds, as reported in MoneyWeek, said: "We believe problems that are identified can be solved. This is our modern faith." Here is a further instance of the myth of progress. Reynolds continues: "The truth, however, is more bleak. ... our art and music are getting progressively more stupid and our environment is on the brink of collapse."



The witches in "Macbeth" cast an evil spell to foretell the future; or do they shape it? "Macbeth and the Witches," circa 1830, by Thomas Barker of Bath. Oil on canvas.

FOLGER SHAKESPEARE LIBRARY

we designate to represent sounds in an alphabet. In other words, spelling is a structure and through it meaning comes into being.

The jumble of reality—of seemingly random sounds—starts taking shape, and with taking shape starts pointing to something beyond itself. When somebody points at something, we humans don't look at the finger pointing, but at the object toward which the pointing is done. In other words, we look at an object or reality "out there" that our awareness is being drawn to by the pointing.

This happens, of course, with language, which is like pointing; it is a similar representational act. So what we have to consider is how much more it happened in that original past or past golden age. In a play like "Macbeth," we see magic being used—through a language of spells that three witches invoke through incantation—to create the future; it's a future, in particular, that the character Macbeth wants to believe. But this usage is a simulacrum of the potency of that earlier language whereby the language not only points toward but also summons into existence that which was not.

The Supreme Power of Language

Perhaps the greatest example of the power of language to call into existence is given in John's Gospel. Here we learn that the cosmos itself is "spelled" into existence. The "Word" was in the beginning and through Him all things, it says, were made. Consider too that Adam, in

The anti-progress that is occurring in arts and music—artistic languages that can profoundly put a spell on us—reflect our cultural decline. "While scientific and technical advances over the last two centuries have greatly improved the comfort and length of our lives, they have facilitated no comparable moral progress," says psychoanalyst James Hollis.

The reality is that there is no progress; we are in fact regressing. Progressive philosophies debase language, and the net result of this is to enable politicians to persistently say things "that are not" and remain unchallenged, or unembarrassed even, because there is no language or discourse that has sufficient power anymore to expose what is happening and re-spell us into truth and righteousness.

We have to, therefore, actively renounce progress and abandon it as a concept if we wish to begin to reverse this appalling situation that our culture has found itself in.

Where Regression Leads

In order to regain some form and power in our language and "spelling," we need, instead of talking about progress, to talk about what is right, absolutely right. That would be a start. Should we do this, however, we will certainly meet massive opposition, for the progressive movement has its own progress moguls whose livelihoods depend on their lying fictions.

Referring to Dante's poem "The Divine Comedy," Timothy Radcliffe (in his book "What Is the Point of Being a Christian?") observed that "the icy heart of hell is kept for those who undermined the human community of truth: the liars, the fraudulent, the flatterers, the forgers, and worst of all the traitors." This judgment is as true now as it was in Dante's poem and day.

Wisely, John F. Kennedy advised: "Let us not seek the Republican answer or the Democrat answer, but the right answer. Let us not seek to fix the blame for the past. Let us accept our own responsibility for the future."

Once upon a time, John F. Kennedy was part of the progressive faction, but the progress brigade of today, much farther along on the road of regression, doesn't like this wisdom now. Heck—actually look for the right answer? Stop blaming others for what happened in the past? Take responsibility for one's own contribution to the future? Why, that's all so unfashionable, regressive, and passé!

Instead, the progress brigade will attempt to obscure all that is right by all that is wrong, and language will be its primary means. They will say things like, "What do you mean by right?" or "Who says what is right?" or "Right is just a value judgment" or "It all depends" or "Right is what is right for you." And so it goes on. They are killing society as they undermine that "human community of truth." As they scramble for anarchism and evermore equality, all that this leads to, ultimately, is totalitarianism.

For that is where it finally ends. The spelling doesn't go away because it has been debased and corrupted. Unless we actively resist this contamination of language, these ideological un-truths of progress and the like, we become prey to the liars.

As I quoted Leszek Kolakowski in Part 1, "Mendacity is the soul of Bolshevism." This regression has to be resisted by the "spells" of truth. The spells of truth are harder now to forge than the easy lies, but we take comfort in the knowledge that once forged, they are far more powerful since they echo the original magic of language at the beginning. For lies are by their nature entirely destructive, whereas truth is purely creative.

James Sale is an English businessman whose company, Motivational Maps Ltd., operates in 14 countries. He is the author of over 40 books on management and education from major international publishers including Macmillan, Pearson, and Routledge. As a poet, he won the first prize in The Society of Classical Poets' 2017 competition and spoke in June 2019 at the group's first symposium held at New York's Princeton Club.



(Left) The true story of Sue Brierley (Nicole Kidman) and her adopted son, Saroo Brierley (Sunny Pawar), in "Lion." (Above) Saroo (Dev Patel) searches for his lost family, in "Lion."

'Lion' will most likely go down in history as the patron saint movie of all people who've been lovingly adopted.



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.

POPCORN AND INSPIRATION: FILMS THAT UPLIFT THE SOUL

Get Inspired to Help Homeless Children

MARK JACKSON

I have zero sense of direction. The Waze app is the most important feature on my motorcycle—I absolutely love that woman in my headphones, who tells me where to go. Google Maps was one of the most welcomed pieces of technology in my life.

"Lion" is the true story of a 5-year-old founding Indian boy who gets tragically lost and separated from his village, and who, 25 years later, locates his mother via Google Earth.

In 2016, "Lion" received six Oscar nominations at the 89th Academy Awards, including Best Picture, Best Supporting Actor (Dev Patel), Best Supporting Actress (Nicole Kidman), Best Adapted Screenplay, Best Original Score, and Best Cinematography. You'll want to see this one.

'Lion'

Director
Garth Davis

Starring
Dev Patel, Sunny Pawar, Rooney Mara, Nicole Kidman, David Wenham, Abhishek Bharate, Priyanka Bose

Rated
PG-13

Running Time
1 hour, 58 minutes

Release Date
Jan. 6, 2017 (USA)

★★★★★

The First Story

Little Saroo (Sunny Pawar) is a fearless child. He helps his laborer mother, Kamla (Priyanka Bose), lift rocks in their small mining village, and his older brother Guddu (Abhishek Bharate) lift coal (as in steal) from freight trains.

One night, Saroo convinces Guddu to let him take a train ride with him to a distant worksite. Guddu says no, but Saroo is very determined. However, being only 5, Saroo needs more sleep than both he and Guddu bargained for.

Guddu leaves Saroo temporarily asleep on a train platform bench, but Saroo, in a sleep daze, leaves his bench and falls back asleep on the much more comfortable seat in a nearby train that has its doors open. Little Saroo wakes up thousands of miles from home.

The days-long train ride comes to a stop in Calcutta, where Saroo is unable to speak the local dialect and ends up a street urchin. Having no food, he picks through trash. Finding a spoon, he sits outside restaurants, mimicking people eating soup, with his little spoon. Imaginary food is his only sustenance. These are some of the most profoundly sad scenes in recent movie history.

He narrowly avoids local child-traffickers who kidnap homeless children hanging around the transit system. He also flees from the "kind" woman who lures him with orange soda, detaining him long enough to be cursorily inspected by a slimy local pedophile who basically licks his chops and promises to return later. Eventually Saroo is placed in an orphanage, where he is adopted by a wealthy Australian couple in Tasmania (Nicole Kidman and David Wenham).

The Second Story

The grad-school-age Saroo (Dev Patel) is grown, grateful, and seemingly well-adjusted, and in a good relationship with a

classmate (Rooney Mara).

One day at a party, Saroo wanders into the kitchen of an Indian classmate and finds a piece of indigenous Indian food that awakens a childhood memory, which instantaneously regresses him to age 5.

"I'm lost," he says to his girlfriend. His story pours out at the party to concerned friends, and they tell him about Google Maps. He realizes that he has an unquenchable need to find his family.

Saroo uses Google Earth on his computer, makes many train-speed calculations on paper, draws lots of circles and arrows, and nearly drives himself mad trying to re-create his journey on that long-ago fateful train ride.

In the end, only after he's thrown up his hands in failure do luck and intuition (and perhaps a bit of divine intervention) guide his eyes on the computer screen to the remote area of India containing the village whose name he no longer knows, but whose footpaths he can still walk in his mind. The ensuing mother and child reunion will drain your tear ducts for the next six months.

And not only did he not know the name of his village, but it turns out that he didn't even know his own name. To say his true name would be a spoiler. But it's hiding in plain sight.

"Lion" will most likely go down in history as the patron-saint movie of all people who've been lovingly adopted. It captures the horror, danger, loneliness, and vast existential meaninglessness encountered by lost children in such a powerful way that I remembered that 20 years ago. I used to take part in a program to read bedtime stories to homeless children. It also brought a sense of shame that I stopped going because the agency was so disorganized. There's nothing more heart-wrenching than little homeless children.

To sum up, you've got walking through grass, riding a horse through grass, and sitting amid the grass.



Ingeborg (Vilbjork Malling Agger) and her father, Gunnar Dinesen (Viggo Mortensen), in "Jauja."

REWIND, REVIEW, AND RE-RATE

An Art-House Flick Exclusively for Viggo Mortensen Fans

MARK JACKSON

"Jauja" is an art-house film. What is art-house? Art-house films are sometimes art, sometimes they're pretentious, usually they have subtitles, and often they implore the skull with boredom by attempting to go outside the tried-and-true ("ahem" fun) laws of cinematic storytelling.

As mentioned, "Jauja" is one such art-house film, and a South American Western to boot. It's a little comedic, with a tiny smidgen of drama, a disturbing slaying or two, and a lot of grass for you to literally watch

growing. The actors watch the grass grow too. Very artistic.

The main attraction: megastar Viggo Mortensen of "The Lord of the Rings." He's speaking Danish and Spanish here. So check the subtitles box.

While you're at it, with all those vistas of grass growing, also check the bored-silly box. And since, apparently, the director said (at the Cannes Film Festival) that it doesn't matter whether the audience understands it or not, only whether they enjoy it—maybe don't check the pretentious box on this one. It's nice of him to care about that.

But, well, you know... enjoy? See, for me, checking the bored-silly box automatically creates an "I did not enjoy it" box, which I find I must vehemently check. Maybe you like watching grass grow. What do I know?

Opening with a much-longer-than-"Star Wars" text, we learn that "Jauja" was the name of the former capital of Spanish Peru. It also means "Unattainable Utopia."

Down thereabouts in Patagonia, there was a "Conquest of the Desert," around 1882. The Spaniards and the Danes are warring over some great, green, grassy tracts of land. There's also a genocide of South American Indians happening.

Lanky, bearded, slightly inept Danish captain Dinesen (Mortensen) is working as an engineer with the Argentine army.

His daughter Ingeborg (Vilbjork Malling Agger) is a 15-year-old Scandinavian blonde and comely bit of jailbait, the only female around for miles and miles. She's sought after by a quietly disgusting, older Spanish soldier. (He asks her father if he can take her to the ball.) She eventually hightails it out of there with a handsome young Spanish soldier. Smart girl.

When Dinesen wakes up one fine morning, he rushes around shouting "Ingeborg!" and then decides to head out into Indian country to find her. As Wayne and Garth of "Saturday Night Live" would say, "And ... scene!"

And ... Grass

Mostly. To sum up, you've got walking through grass, riding a horse through grass, and sitting amid the grass. And there's a stream. And some boulders. And even a cave with

★★★★★

'Jauja'

Director
Lisandro Alonso

Starring
Viggo Mortensen, Vilbjork Malling Agger, Diego Roman, Ghita Norby, Mariano Arce

Rated
Unrated

Running Time
1 hour, 49 minutes

Release Date
Oct. 7, 2014, (New York Film Festival)

★★★★★

REACHING WITHIN: WHAT TRADITIONAL ART OFFERS THE HEART

Fueling Our Courage at the Crossroads 'Knight at the Crossroads'



"Knight at the Crossroads," 1882, by Viktor Vasnetsov. Oil on canvas, 65.7 inches by 117.7 inches. Russian Museum.

ERIC BESS

There are those moments in our lives when we are called on to accomplish an overwhelming task. We become nervous, sweaty, shaking messes, but most of the time we try our best to hide our nervousness and complete our task despite our fears.

What do our fears say about us? How might we be courageous when we are pulled into an overwhelming adventure? I was thinking about these questions as I read the story of Ilya Muromets.

Ilya Muromets

Ilya Muromets was a great hero in Russian folk tales. He was a Russian bogatyr, which is similar to a knight. He went on many adventures and was fearless in his service to those around him.

Legend has it that Ilya was born crippled. He was unable to

walk until he was 33 years old. It was then that a group of men entered his home, told him he'd become a bogatyr, and gave him an elixir made of honey. The elixir enabled him to walk, and he began his journey as a knight of and for Russia.

Toward the end of his life, after many adventures, he decided to ride his horse through the land he loved. On his journey, he came to a three-way crossroad. The first way led to death, the second to marriage, and the third to wealth.

Fearlessly, Ilya took the first way. He came upon a palace occupied by robbers, where he fought and defeated them all. He then returned to the crossroads and changed the sign so fellow travelers would know that the first path was now safe.

Ilya then built a cathedral, spent the rest of his life as a monk, and died with his right hand making the sign of the cross.

**Viktor Vasnetsov's
'Knight at the Crossroads'**



"Ilya Muromets," 1914, by Viktor Vasnetsov.

Viktor Vasnetsov (1848–1926) was a Russian painter, designer, and architect. Many of his paintings focused on Russian folklore and mythology. He carefully tried to bring life to

what may be apocryphal tales as if they were real events, and his paintings were very popular in Russia.

In "Knight at the Crossroads," Vasnetsov interpreted the

story of Ilya, who was a monk, although much of his life is shrouded in mystery. Vasnetsov encouraged our eyes to move throughout the composition. We start with the primary focal point on Ilya in full armor sitting on his horse. He also has a shield, a quiver of arrows, and a long spear. The spear points at the skull on the ground.

Above the bones on the ground is the secondary focal point, an engraved rock that reads: "If you go straight ahead, there will be no life; there is no way forward for he who travels past, walks past, or flies past."

The land surrounding Ilya is indeed barren, and the sun appears to set on our hero; the only life there—besides Ilya and his horse—is crows. A crow in flight, finally, points its beak back at Ilya, so we can move throughout the composition again.

'Taking the Path Less Traveled' Vasnetsov depicted the mo-

ment Ilya makes a decision to take the path less traveled. Ilya willingly takes the difficult path. The sign at the beginning of his journey assures him that he won't return alive and death surrounds him, but Ilya remains unfazed.

What fuels this type of courage? In order to uncover insight into this question, it is also necessary to ask another: Why would Ilya willingly take a path that guarantees death?

He could be a thrill seeker, simply curious, or a skeptic, for these personality types would also, theoretically, take this difficult road, all for different reasons.

It's what Ilya does after he takes the doomed path and defeats the robbers that informs us why he may have taken the path in the first place: He returns to the sign at the crossroads and changes it to let fellow travelers know that the once-doomed path is now safe. Ilya is interested in the safety of his land's people.

Maybe the sun in the painting isn't setting on Ilya, but on those robbers who would have caused Ilya's fellow countrymen harm. Ilya doesn't attempt this dangerous quest and adventure for his own honor; he endures it for others.

The land surrounding Ilya is indeed barren, and the sun appears to set upon our hero: the only life there—besides Ilya and his horse—are crows.

Sacrificing himself for the sake of others makes Ilya a symbolic representation of the ethical, and as the ethical he is compositionally positioned higher than the skulls and bones, the representation of that which plagues his land.

Ilya's spear points down at the skulls and bones not as if that's his fate but as if that is the consequence for those who would selfishly harm others. In the end, the truly ethical is always elevated above and defeats what is selfishly harmful.

To answer our aforementioned questions: I think Ilya willingly takes the doomed path because he wants all areas of his land to be safe for its inhabitants, so it is therefore selflessness that fuels his courage.

Our ability to own selflessness seems to coincide with our sense of spirituality. I leave, then, with this question: How might we access our own selflessness and fuel a courage that brings safety and peace to our communities?

Art has an incredible ability to point to what can't be seen so that we may ask "What does this mean for me and for everyone who sees it?" "How has it influenced the past and how might it influence the future?" "What does it suggest about the human experience?" These are some of the questions I explore in my series "Reaching Within: What Traditional Art Offers the Heart."

Eric Bess is a practicing representational artist.

BOOK REVIEW: 'CHARTER SCHOOLS AND THEIR ENEMIES'

A Closer Look at Charter Schools

LINDA WIEGENFELD

Despite having worked for 45 years in the public school system exclusively, I believe strongly in school choice. It's not that I think public schools are inferior to other solutions, but I realize that one size does not fit all, especially in today's rapidly changing world.

Alternative schools are not just chosen for academic excellence, but also for their religious emphasis, strict behavioral standards and expectations, their ability to meet pupils' needs or promote traditional values, and so on.

At 90, black intellectual Thomas Sowell weighed in on the matter of school choice with his book "Charter Schools and Their Enemies." It's about one type of alternative public school that has become increasingly popular: the charter school.

In exchange for being freed from some of the regulations of public schools, charter schools receive government funding only so long as their students' educational outcomes meet various educational criteria. Charter schools, like all public schools, are tuition-free.

Sowell, who has written extensively on race and politics in the United States, believes in charter schools. He favors the idea that low-income parents can choose where their children go to school, just as high-income parents can. He wonders out loud why people are surprised when children in poor black and Hispanic neighborhoods are able to excel when they attend good schools.

Sowell's book is more than just a conventional book. He includes many pages of documentation, charts, and references to meticulously lay out the facts about the success of charter schools and about the critics who seek to destroy them.

Compelling Examples

Sowell feels that we have not been looking at the data correctly when comparing students of charter schools with traditional public schools. All the arguments in his book are really compelling, especially when he compares schools that are similar.

Readers will find it hard to ignore when Sowell focuses his attention on New York schools. He examines cases

where the charter school and the traditional public school have one or more classes at the same grade level in the same building and where there is a similar ethnic composition of students.

Traditional public school students are assigned. Parents have to nominate their children for a spot in the charter schools, and children are then chosen through a lottery. This guarantees that charter schools are not able to pick only the best students.

An enormous amount of money would be lost by the traditional public school system if the number of charter schools were not restricted.

However, charter schools clearly have an advantage since a parent's interest and encouragement in a child's education can greatly affect the child's attitude toward school. Interestingly, though, the students who fail to win the lottery and have to continue at their traditional public schools never perform as well as their charter school counterparts.

To compare the two groups, Sowell used two tests given annually by the New York State Education Department to both public charter school students and students in traditional public schools. These were officially designated as the English Language Arts test and the Mathematics test. In school year 2017–2018, the charter school students considerably outperformed most of the traditional public school students in the same building.

Looking at the Opposition

Sowell goes on to say that such compelling data should have meant bipartisan support for charter schools. It hasn't. He spends the majority of the second half of the book chronicling the reasons for this lack of support.

Losing Funds

An enormous amount of money would be lost by the traditional public school system if the number of charter schools

were not restricted. Take New York City alone, where per-pupil expenditures average more than \$20,000 a year. Multiply that by the 50,000-plus students on waiting lists for admission to charter schools in New York City. This is more than a billion dollars! That is just the initial financial loss in one city during one year.

Hurting Unions

Substantial declines in the number of students remaining in traditional public schools would also mean fewer teachers employed in public schools, and correspondingly declining union dues, since most charter school teachers do not belong to a teacher's union.

As a result, officials in charge (often elected through the help of unions) have begun doing more and more to limit charter schools to protect the vested interests of adults in traditional unionized public schools, such as blocking charter schools from getting vacant school buildings or slow-walking applications to set up charter schools.

Exposing Teacher Performance

Schools that educate teachers would likewise be affected negatively because many more students would be able to transfer out of traditional public schools, where degrees in education are important for advancement in a teaching career. In charter schools, education degrees mean far less than a teacher's actual performance in educating students.

Undermining Liberal Ideology

Charter schools on the whole have curriculum that is more traditional and academic than the more liberal policies and curriculum of public schools. Progressives oppose an agenda that runs counter to their ideological agenda. The educational success of these charter schools undermines many theories of "genetic determinism, claims of cultural bias in the tests, assertions that racial 'integration' is necessary for blacks to reach educational parity and presumptions that income differences are among the 'root causes' of educational differences."

Making Children Accountable

Public schools are more likely to utilize nonpunitive disci-

Charter Schools and Their Enemies

Thomas Sowell

▲ "Charter Schools and Their Enemies" by Thomas Sowell.

pline strategies than charter schools to avoid unjustified punishment of minority students. Traditional discipline is often thought as racist because blacks are suspended at higher rates than whites. Charter schools, on the other hand, usually impose firm, consistent discipline. The rationale is that just a small number of disruptive students, who defy teachers with impunity, can ruin the education of many other students who are trying to learn.

The Future

Sowell hopes for the day that charter schools will be independently overseen and not as dependent on politicians. While the hard facts are on the side of the charter schools, the politics at the moment favor the unionized public schools. There is also a fear that future legislation on charter schools might erode their autonomy and end what makes them special.

School choice is particularly important right now, when education is suffering during the pandemic. Remote learning has proven less effective, and yet many public schools remain closed. The result is that many families are looking at alternatives; families no longer feel a personal stake in public education.

If school choice is important to you and your family, I recommend you read this book.

Linda Wiegenfeld is a retired teacher with 45 years' experience teaching children in a working-class neighborhood (many were English Language Learners). She can be reached for comments or suggestions at LWiegenfeld@aol.com

BOOK REVIEW: 'THE WILD AND TWISTED BRANCH'

Surviving Communism Through Courage and Kindness

GEORGE E. KONTIS

"The Wild and Twisted Branch" is a factual account of Stavros Metropoulos, a farmer and businessman who endured the German and Italian occupation of Greece in World War II followed by the Greek Civil War against indigenous communists. The author is the only son of Metropoulos.

From the time he was a youngster, Metropoulos was wise beyond his years, arguing with his father until he was permitted to attend high school. As one of the few in his village who were educated, he operated two successful businesses that supplemented the income of the family farm. Greek farmers were enjoying newfound prosperity under Gen. Ioannis Metaxas—a dictator who received support from the reigning King George. Metaxas decreed that farmers would now receive world prices for their crops. He also dealt with a rising political and economic threat by imprisoning leaders of the communist party, KKE.

In 1941, everything changed when the Germans and Italians invaded. Travel was restricted, and food became scarce. Re-

spected as a village leader, Metropoulos was approached to join a resistance movement. He recruited new members and attended several meetings until resistance leaders explained that the group must now refer to each other as "comrade" and that soon the word "king" would be removed from the dictionary. Metropoulos recognized the use of the word "comrade" and abhorrence of the king as actions only the communists would promote. Metropoulos was overheard voicing concerns that the organization, National Liberation Front (EAM, for the Greek acronym), was being taken over by the communists. Shortly thereafter, he was asked to resign.

The communists took advantage of the German and Italian occupation and became firmly entrenched in every village with their own police, judges, courts, and detention camps, silencing dissent with beatings and executions. The Germans and Italians were so preoccupied with fighting the Allies that they turned a blind eye to communist activities unless they themselves were threatened.

Following his eviction from EAM, Met-



When at the end of World War II the Germans and Italians left Greece, the communists immediately asserted power. This photo was taken in December 1944, two weeks before the Greek Civil War began.

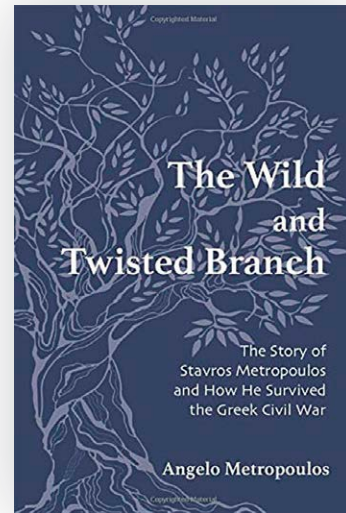
ropoulos made every attempt to find common ground with the communists, but it would always end in betrayal. Metropoulos tells us, "Never trust the word of a communist."

After learning he would soon be tried by their courts and face certain execution, he became a fugitive. At first he sought refuge on a barren mountain, using hunting and survival skills, at which he excelled. He had no money or travel papers but moved about with the help of friends, who provided food and shelter. He always carried at least two German hand grenades, one for the enemy and one for himself.

Practically every survival skill he had learned, every kindness, and each good deed or fair dealing he had done in life would daily play a significant role in keeping him alive.

When the Germans and Italians left abruptly, the political vacuum was quickly filled by the communists. A civil war began between the communists and those loyal Greeks seeking the return of the king. The communist indoctrination was so powerful; family members were pitted against each other in deadly struggles without regard to family ties, logic, reason, or civility.

Still on the run, Metropoulos tried to hide in Athens but the communists were in hot pursuit. Standing on a street corner, with



▲ "The Wild and Twisted Branch" by Angelo Metropoulos.

no food or a place to stay, he was at a loss for what to do next when someone called out to him. It was a doctor who had taken refuge in his home during the 1941 famine.

The doctor invited Metropoulos to stay with him, but Metropoulos refused: "If they find me, they will kill me and they will kill you too, and your family."

The doctor answered: "You once saved my life. ... You are coming with me. Whatever happens to you will happen to me."

In later years, Metropoulos explained: "You see, when you do someone a kindness, at some point in your life you will find that kindness returned." Through it all, Metropoulos never lost his faith, believing a greater power guided his good fortune.

The author, Angelo Metropoulos, used his father's memoirs and interviews to get an accurate accounting of incidents and made several trips to Greece to authenticate facts. He relates the story from Metropoulos's viewpoint, taking it on a straight chronological path from the time just before the Italian and German occupation in World War II through the Greek Civil War until he and his family immigrated to America.

This book is an exciting, action-packed account that many reviewers agree would make a great movie. It is a must-read for history buffs and those who might see these events as a chilling insight into today's world. You will likely stumble over the

lengthy Greek names, but by the end of the book, you'll wish you'd had Metropoulos as a best friend and be firmly convinced the author found the perfect title in "The Wild and Twisted Branch."

Practically every survival skill he had learned, every kindness, and each good deed or fair dealing he had done in life would daily play a significant role in keeping him alive.

George E. Kontis held engineering and senior management positions in companies supporting the defense industry. He was awarded the George M. Chinn award for his contributions to the field of small arms and currently works as a consultant and freelance author.

REWIND, REVIEW, RE-RATE

A Criminally Underrated Noir Thriller

IAN KANE

Out-of-work mining engineer Mike Lambert (Glenn Ford) is going through some hard times and things just got worse. The brakes have partially given out on the commercial truck he's driving, and he struggles with its steering wheel and gears to keep on the winding mountain road.

He manages to steer the truck into a small California town, careening through its streets, only to end up colliding with an old pickup truck, which is parked on one of the main streets. The commercial truck's owner shows up (Mike crashed right outside the trucking company), as does the pickup truck's owner, a miner who demands to be compensated for the damage to his vehicle. Mike graciously pays the man out of his own wages and saunters off to a nearby bar to relieve some of his stress via a few stiff drinks.

Mike finds a stunning blonde, Paula Craig (Janis Carter), behind the bar, who seems a little out of place in the crude, small-town watering hole. Amid some heavy flirting between the two, the local police show up and promptly arrest Mike for his reckless driving, collision, and a few other charges.

During the court's proceedings, the judge gives Mike the option of paying a \$50 fine or spending 10 days in jail. Since Mike can't

afford the fine, he opts to cool his heels in the clink. Miraculously, Paula shows up and pays Mike's fine. From there, she whisks him back to the bar, where he proceeds to get completely hammered.

Paula suddenly gives the bar notice that she's quitting and then manages to get a very drunk Mike to a hotel room down the street. After he wakes up the next morning nursing a terrible hangover, he finds that she paid for his stay and even left him a little spending money.

'Framed' is a surprisingly compact, slow-burn noir picture.

Mike, suspicious of Paula's motives and eager to get back on the right track, throws away the phone number she left for him with the front desk man. He straightens out his hat and tie and proceeds to walk over to the local assay office to look for work. There, he befriends the owner of the pickup truck he crashed into the previous day, a scraggly old codger named Jeff Cunningham (Edgar Buchanan). Jeff just so happens to be working on a hot mining prospect and, remem-



COLUMBIA PICTURES

bering Mike's graciousness from the previous day, offers him a job. Mike immediately accepts.

There's only one obstacle in the way—Jeff must first obtain a loan from a prominent bank in town. After having breakfast with Mike, Jeff goes to have a meeting with the bank's vice president, Steve Price (Barry Sullivan). During their meeting, Paula calls Steve on the phone and tells him not to approve the loan. This, in turn, causes Mike's fortune to sour since Jeff's loan proposal doesn't go through as planned.

Mike, back to square one, decides to look past his suspicions about Paula and shows up at her upper-middle-class home. This time, he doesn't turn away her amorous advances and the two proceed to become romantically involved.

However, behind Mike's back, Paula is having nocturnal meetings with Steve, which involves him picking her up on the same dark street corner every night. Mike eventually finds out about Paula's seeming infidelities and angrily confronts her about his discovery. Paula turns the tables on Mike and assures him that she was merely trying to persuade Steve to approve Jeff's loan so that Mike would be able to cash in on the prospecting deal.

▲ (L-R) Having fallen on hard times, Mike Lambert (Glenn Ford) falls in with two schemers, Paula (Janis Carter) and Steve (Barry Sullivan), in "Framed."

'Framed'

Director
Richard Wallace

Starring
Glenn Ford, Janis Carter, Barry Sullivan

Running Time
1 hour, 22 minutes

Not Rated

Release Date
May 25, 1947 (USA)

★★★★★

But is Paula's guardian angel façade genuine? Does she truly have Mike's interests at heart, or is there a more dastardly plot afoot?

Commendable Acting

Under director Richard Wallace's capable guidance, "Framed" is a surprisingly compact, slow-burn noir picture that gives audiences many different looks. The film starts off as more of a romantic drama than anything else, and then begins to embrace its murky noir moorings during the second and third acts. In fact, the third act delves headfirst into a full-blown tale of shifting allegiances, love and lust, double-crosses, and double-double-crosses. It also involves a ... you guessed it—frame-up.

Casting-wise, Glenn Ford, a rising star at the time, plays the desperate drifter Mike Lambert perfectly. It's always a pleasure to see flawed characters handled in unique ways, and Ford drives the film forward in his depiction of Mike as a bitter-yet-good-hearted, strung-out man trying to get his life in order.

And although I'd heard that Janis Carter possessed some considerable acting chops, seeing her in action was an incredible experience. Her character's opaque motives and shifty countenance had enough nuance to it that I couldn't quite place where her loyalties lie. In fact, I feel as though if I were to look up the term "femme fatale," I wouldn't be surprised to find the actress's face next to the description.

"Framed" is a gripping pot-boiler of a noir flick that, once it gets its engine revving, never lets up on the gas. It contains some plot twists I honestly didn't see coming, as well as some interesting character studies by its more-than-capable cast.

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

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