

THE EPOCH TIMES

ARTS & CULTURE

Together Again: A Rare Spanish Prodigal Son Series

An exhibition of restored Murillo paintings at the National Gallery of Ireland

LORRAINE FERRIER

Sin, repentance, and forgiveness all play out in the parable of the Prodigal Son, the most illustrated biblical parable in Western art.

In 17th-century Spain, single biblical scenes, such as the reformed son returning home to his forgiving father, were more commonly seen than a series of narrative paintings telling a story. Not until the 1660s did Spanish art see the Prodigal Son story illustrated in its entirety when celebrated artist Bartolomé Esteban Murillo painted an ambitious series of six narrative paintings.

Those six paintings were restored between 2012 and 2018. And—for the first time in 30 years—the series can now be seen together in the exhibition “Murillo: Prodigal Son Restored” at the National Gallery of Ireland. The exhibition was curated by Aoife Brady, who is the gallery’s curator of Spanish and Italian art, and paintings curator Muirne Lydon, who led the restoration efforts.

Included in the exhibition are insights into Murillo’s process of painting that were revealed during the paintings’ restoration. In addition, European artworks that inspired Murillo’s Prodigal Son series, such as etchings by French artist Jacques Callot and an engraving by German Renaissance master Albrecht Dürer, are also on display.

The exhibition ends on Jan. 10, 2021, after which it will embark on an international tour that begins at the Meadows Museum in Dallas, Texas, the date of which is yet to be confirmed.

The Best Artist in Seville
Seville-born Murillo (1617–1682) lived and worked in Seville for over 40 years until his death. Despite never leaving Spain and seldom leaving Seville, he had access to other European cultures. Murillo’s Seville was a thriving merchant city frequented by foreign traders, many of whom became his patrons.

Interestingly, Murillo’s fame escalated during a time of tragedy, when Seville was hit by a plague and famine. Most of Murillo’s fellow artists, such as the Spanish painter Francisco de Zurbarán, fled Seville to the court of Madrid. Because Murillo’s patrons were mostly foreigners whose lives and livelihoods were largely unaffected by the disease, he kept working in the city, making him the preeminent painter of Seville.

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“The Prodigal Son Receiving His Portion,” 1660s, by Bartolomé Esteban Murillo. Oil on canvas; 41 1/8 inches by 53 inches. Presented by Sir Alfred and Lady Beit, 1987; Beit Collection.



“The Departure of the Prodigal Son,” 1660s, by Bartolomé Esteban Murillo. Oil on canvas; 41 1/8 inches by 53 inches. Presented by Sir Alfred and Lady Beit, 1987; Beit Collection.



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THE EPOCH TIMES
TRUTH AND TRADITION

A High 5 for Amateurs: The Arts, Joy, and Love

JEFF MINICK

If a thing is worth doing, it is worth doing badly." G.K. Chesterton, master of the aphorism, wrote those words in 1910 in "What's Wrong With the World."

Some readers interpret Chesterton's adage as encouraging shoddy work or mediocre performance, but this analysis misses the mark by a long shot. In the chapter in which this sentence appears, Chesterton is defending the amateur against the professional, advocating specifically for the rearing of children by amateurs—in this case, mothers—as opposed to professionals like our modern day care workers.

"Amateur" derives from the Latin word "amare," to love, and an amateur is anyone who does something—plays the guitar, picks up a brush and puts paint on a canvas, and yes, raises a child—for love rather than for money.

Ours is a culture of experts and professionals. Such people tell us how to defeat a virus, how to save our marriages, how to educate our children, and how, in fact, to do nearly everything under the sun.

In a culture so heavily reliant on experts, is there any room left for amateurs? Do we still have a reason to do worthwhile things "badly"?

Let's take a look.

In a culture so heavily reliant on experts, is there any room left for amateurs?

Amateur Versus Professional

You wake one morning cold and clammy, and with pressure in the left side of your chest. Would you 1) walk to your friend's house next door—she works for the city's planning department—have her take your pulse and temperature, and ask for her medical opinion, or 2) walk to your friend's house and ask her to drive you the Urgent Care Center?

Most of us would surely opt for choice No. 2. Professionals of all kinds are vital for our health and even our survival. None of us wants Alex the taxidermist to remove our appendix or Barbara the accountant to say "Open wide" and yank out an aching molar with a pair of pliers.

On the other hand, we often leave to the "professionals" tasks we might better do ourselves. Our founders, for example, designed our country to be run by its citizens, not by professional politicians or bureaucrats. The pandemic that forced the closure of schools has made teachers out of many parents, and a number of them have discovered that they enjoy instructing their children at home. A 30-something woman of my acquaintance had the money to hire an interior decorator to remake her former house into an Airbnb, but decided to

tackle the job herself and did a fantastic job of selecting paints and furniture for her enterprise.

When we amateurs act out of love and commitment, we can deliver amazing results.

The Arts and the Amateur

All too often, we live as spectators rather than as participants in the game of life. At concerts we listen to professional singers or musicians, and on television we watch athletes playing sports, experts repairing old houses, or chefs creating fabulous dishes.

Taken in moderation, such entertainments are harmless. They can whisk us away from the stress of our daily lives, furnish some excitement, and occasionally even stir our passions.

But are we missing something?

Let's pay a brief visit to the small, fictitious town of Liberty Hill, North Carolina. It's a Saturday afternoon in July of 1893, and your neighbor, Sam Moxley, a barber by trade, is suited up in his uniform and whistling his way down the street for a game at the local baseball diamond. Next door you can hear Dorothy Gillet playing ragtime on the piano for her ladies' club. Across the way "Big Mike" Cox, who works as a blacksmith, is entertaining his children with stories and jokes. Two houses away farther down the street, Emmaline Johnson has set up her easel on her porch and is painting a watercolor of her friend Jincy while Emmaline's husband, Patrick, is carving a basswood statue of a soldier for his grandson's upcoming birthday. As you rock in your chair on your front porch, you can smell the perfume of the baking apple pies of culinary artist extraordinaire Elsa Dyson.

An overly idyllic portrait perhaps? Maybe. But the point is that before we created mass entertainment, amateurs largely amused themselves, blending joy with satisfaction while doing the things they loved and sharing their talents with others.

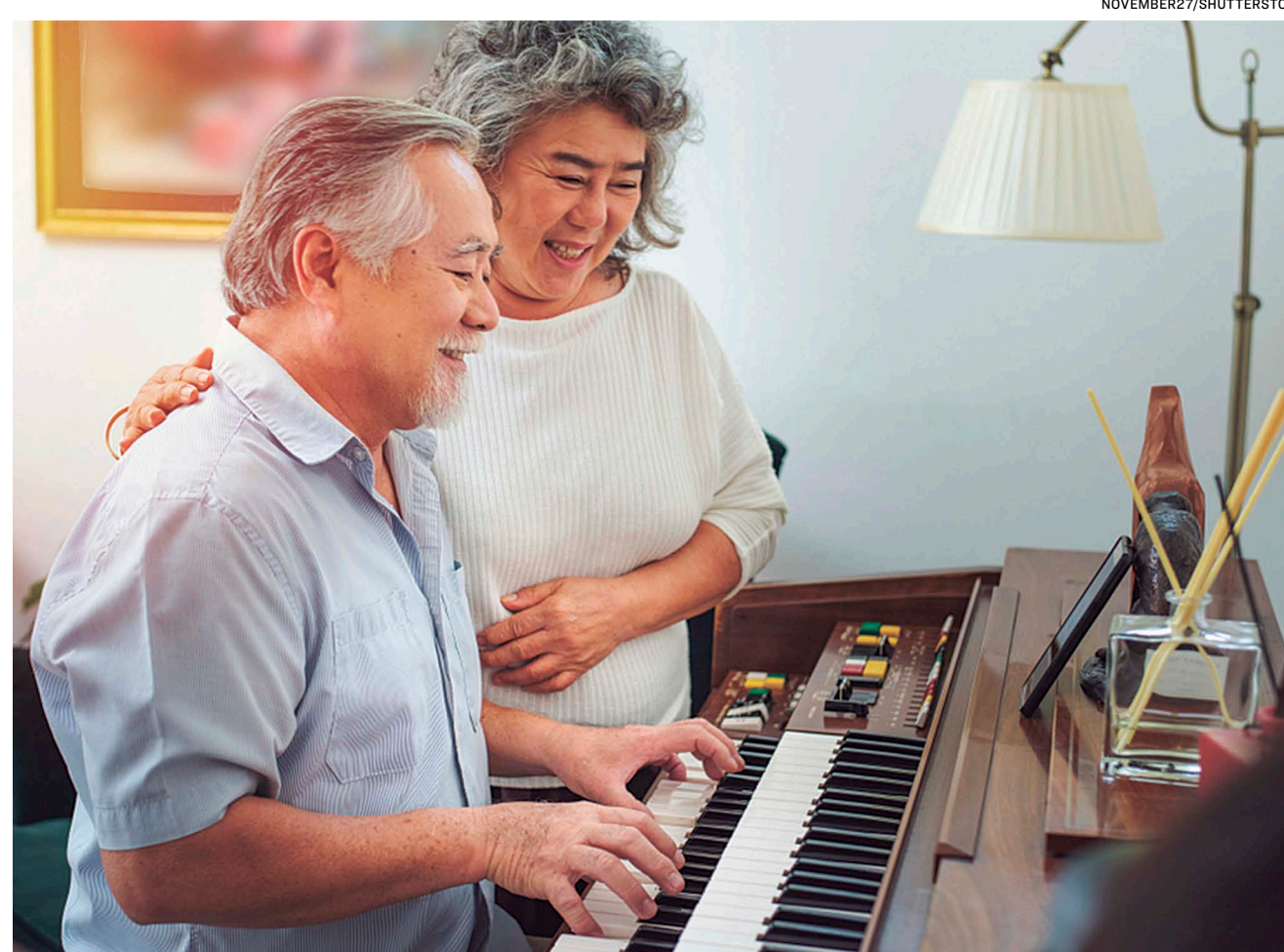
Lagniappe (That Extra Something)

These same bonuses and benefits can accrue to today's amateur artists.

Painting a landscape, acting in a community theater, singing Bach's "Messiah" with a chorale, just as it did for our ancestors, an engagement with one of the arts can make us healthier, happier, and even more intelligent.

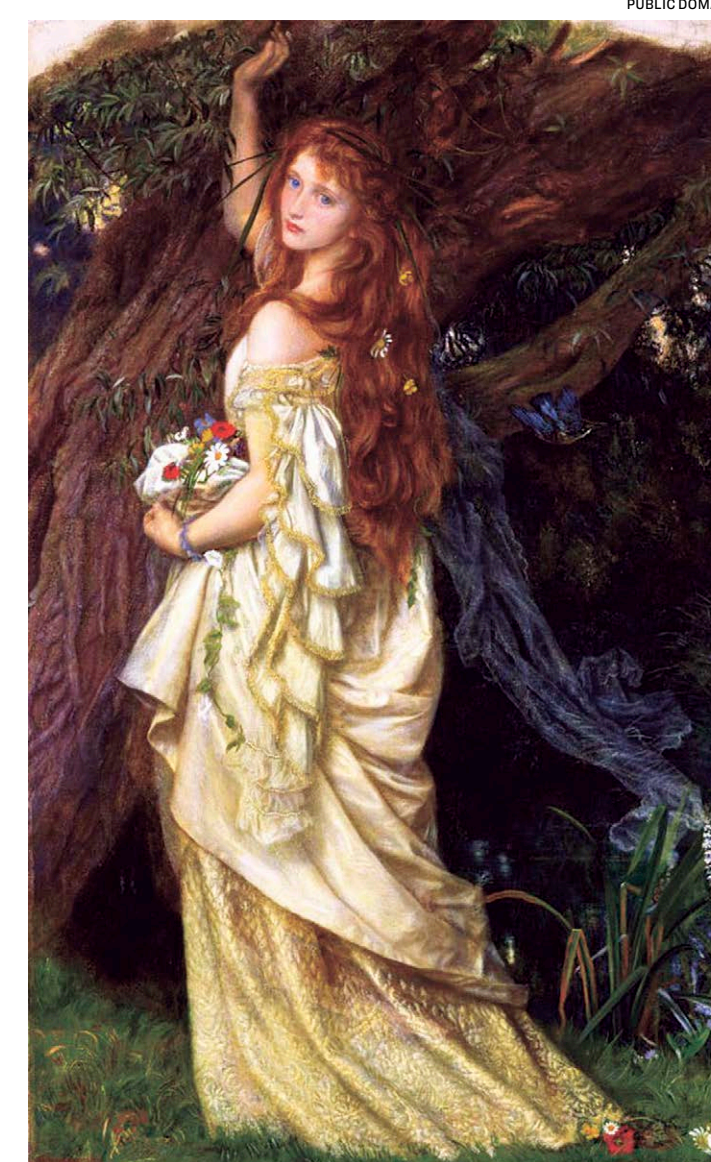
Many amateurs find immersion in creative activities rejuvenating, like taking a vacation, but while at home. Painting seascapes, for example, can sweep us away, however momentarily, from the budget crisis in the office or the stresses of daily life. Winston Churchill, who found relief from his political duties in his watercolors, might serve as a grand example of this phenomenon.

Art also provides swing sets and sliding boards for adults. Where I live in Virginia, I see many people riding motorcycles, fishing, hiking, and canoeing, all for pleasure, but I also know men and women who find their fun in writing and playing music, directing plays,



You don't have to be an expert. Do what you love.

Learning some of Shakespeare's lines can keep your mind sharp. "Ophelia," circa 1865, by Arthur Hughes. Oil on canvas. Purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment; gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 1952. Toledo Museum of Art.



and teaching youngsters everything from dance to drawing. The arts return to the playground, where we can let our imagination and talent run wild.

And just as playing games like chess help keep our minds sharp, so too do the arts. The banker who plays Mozart on her piano for half an hour in the evenings, the carpenter who sits on his porch at dusk picking his guitar, even the shy woman who in the privacy of her home reads and acts out the part of Ophelia in Shakespeare's "Hamlet," all are exercising their mental faculties.

Unexpected Pleasures

In 2004, I required the students in my Advanced Placement English Literature class to write a sonnet. To assuage the pained moans that greeted my announcement, I promised to write a sonnet as well.

And I fell in love.

For several years after writing that sonnet, I found immense—and intense—gratification in composing poetry. Here every word counted, here were rules of meter, rhyme, and length, and I loved that I could carry phrases and lines in my head for days at a time, always tinkering away to make them clearer or to flow better. Though my verse eventually gave way to other writing, I fondly remember the relief and happiness poetry brought me in those days.

Another example: When I was 11, my father, a physician, gave me a "Visible Man" for Christmas, a plastic model displaying our organs and vessels. These pieces needed painting, and I will remember sitting with my dad at a card table in the living room with the parts spread before us. Dad did much of the painting, and found there

such enjoyment that he began painting on canvases, watercolors first and then moving into oils. What began at that card table became for him a lifelong avocation. Passion is a watchword for the amateur.

Come On in, the Water's Fine!

Long ago in an interview, writer Ray Bradbury was asked whether writing was painful for him. I had long heard of writers who told how they bled through their fingers, or how tough writing was, and I was surprised when Bradbury replied to the effect, "It should be fun. If it's not fun, why do it?"

G.K. Chesterton appears to reinforce Bradbury with this well-known quip: "Angels can fly because they take themselves lightly."

Taking ourselves lightly, having fun—these should serve as part of the credo

of amateur artists. As stated above, our creations, the hobbies we pursue, should bring us joy, release us from stress, toward a deeper understanding of the self, and a sense of play and creation.

When I was a boy, a neighbor used to sing Italian opera at the top of his lungs while riding his lawn mower, and my brother and I would snicker at him.

But that man had it right.

For the amateur, cultivation of the arts, even atop a mower, grows a garden in the soul.

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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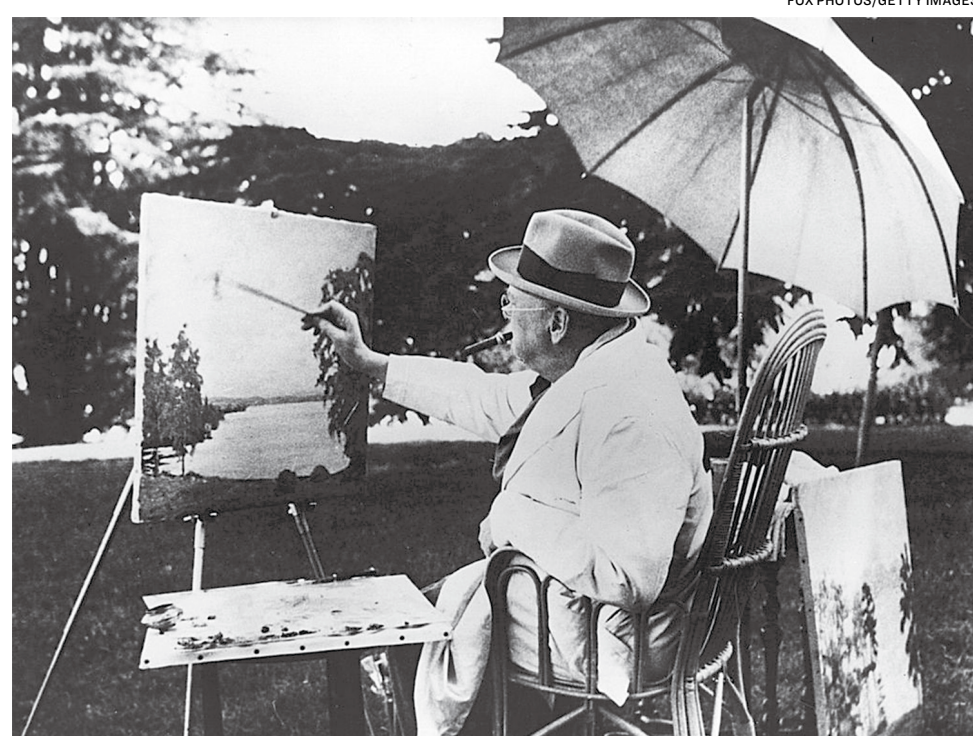
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Winston Churchill painting beside Lake Geneva.

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"The Prodigal Son Feasting," 1660s, by Bartolomé Esteban Murillo. Oil on canvas; 41 1/8 inches by 53 3/8 inches. Presented by Sir Alfred and Lady Beit, 1987; Beit Collection.



"The Prodigal Son Driven Out," 1660s, by Bartolomé Esteban Murillo. Oil on canvas; 41 1/8 inches by 53 inches. Presented by Sir Alfred and Lady Beit, 1987; Beit Collection.

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"The Prodigal Son Feeding Swine," 1660s, by Bartolomé Esteban Murillo. Oil on canvas; 41 1/8 inches by 53 inches. Presented by Sir Alfred and Lady Beit, 1987; Beit Collection.



"The Return of the Prodigal Son," 1660s, by Bartolomé Esteban Murillo. Oil on canvas; 41 1/8 inches by 53 inches. Presented by Sir Alfred and Lady Beit, 1987; Beit Collection.

FINE ARTS

Together Again: A Rare Spanish Prodigal Son Series

An exhibition of restored Murillo paintings at the National Gallery of Ireland

Continued from Page 1

The Prodigal Son Parable

The Prodigal Son parable is a classic story of redemption. One day, the youngest of two brothers approached his father for an advance on his inheritance. Not long after he'd been given his portion of the family fortune, the young man gathered his belongings and left home for a far-off land. In the new country, he embraced a life of debauchery, spending until he became destitute. Famine soon came to the country, and without any money, the poor young man had to find work to survive. He hired himself out as a swine herder, and it's there in the field that he began to repent. He even became envious of the pigs' food because he had nothing. He thought back to his father: Even his father's servants were fed well. He decided to return home and humbly confess his foolishness.

Once home, the son is greeted by his father who runs out to meet him with much joy. The son admitted that he'd sinned against heaven and had not honored his father. And he requested to be treated as one of his father's servants. But the jubilant father ordered his servants to dress his son in finery and that the fattest calf should be prepared for a feast, all in celebration of his son's return. His son had been lost but had found his way back home.

When the elder son returned from working in the fields, he became enraged with jealousy when he heard about the celebration. He confronted his father as to why, as a loyal and hardworking son, he had never been rewarded in this way. The father simply tells his son that they have always been together and all that is the father's is also the son's.

A Few Firsts for Spanish Art

Murillo's depiction of the entire Prodigal Son parable was pioneering for Spanish narra-

tive painting. Not only was it the first painting cycle of the story in Spain, but two of the scenes had never before been seen in Spanish art. These are depicted in "The Prodigal Son Feasting" and "The Prodigal Son Driven Out." This is because local Sevillians "valued the decorous and restrained over the overt and exuberant," Brady explained in the exhibition catalog. For Spanish sensibilities, those scenes would have been considered unseemly and uncouth.

There's no evidence of the series ever having been displayed publicly, and the patron of the paintings is unknown, although there are various speculations. Because of the local sensibilities and the licentious nature of the aforementioned two scenes, scholars have speculated that the patron may have been foreign.

Other experts believe the patron must have been connected to Seville as the series is steeped in local references. According to the Irish Arts Review, some experts be-

lieve that Sevillian nobleman Don Miguel de Mañara, Murillo's friend and patron, may have commissioned the series based on his own life. As a young man, Mañara had led a life of debauchery which he later repented, dedicating his life to austerity and constructing a charitable hospital in Seville that Murillo decorated.

Set in 17th-century Seville, Murillo's paintings give viewers a distinctly Spanish biblical story. For instance, the leather chairs in "The Prodigal Son Receiving his Portion" and the bowls and jugs in the feasting scene show distinctive Spanish metalwork. Even the pigs that Murillo's prodigal son feeds are native Black Iberian pigs, still bred in Spain for the traditional cured ham: jamón ibérico.

Murillo had no native art of the parable to guide him. According to Brady, he took inspiration from Spanish theater: Lope de Vega's 1604 play "El Hijo de Pródigo" and José de Valdivielso's 1622 play of the parable. And during Murillo's lifetime, the National

Library of Spain acquired a large and important collection of European artwork, especially Northern Renaissance art. The work of two artists in particular influenced Murillo's Prodigal Son series: an engraving by German master Albrecht Dürer and a set of 10 etchings by French artist Jacques Callot.

"Despite never leaving Spain, he was an international, outward-looking artist, capable of recasting stories from different traditions and art forms into a native context," Brady said in the exhibition catalog.

Murillo made his own additions and interpretations of the parable. The exhibition catalog gives several examples. For instance, he depicted the prodigal son's mother and sister in the first two scenes, as the son receives his inheritance, and in the scene of his departure; the mother and sister are not mentioned in the biblical tale.

In "The Prodigal Son Feasting," the son's moral decline looks almost tame: "Prevailing values of decorum in 17th-century Spain led Murillo to lend an unusual air of modesty to a scene described as 'wild' in the biblical text," explains the exhibition catalog. Other European paintings of the subject, particularly of the Dutch and Flemish schools, embraced more wild scenes.

Murillo depicted the moment when the prodigal son realizes his fall from grace

in the painting "The Prodigal Son Driven Out." In the painting, the son is being expelled from a brothel; there's no description of this in the biblical text. The catalog also mentions that the addition of the procuress, the old lady in the background, is exceptional in Western art. "Her presence may refer to the young man's desengaño—the turning point in the narrative in which the sinner is disillusioned by material and carnal pleasures and awoken to the error of his ways, which immediately precedes repentance," according to the exhibition catalog.

The last scene in Murillo's series of paintings, "The Return of the Prodigal Son," deviates from the biblical story; it doesn't show the scene of the brother's resentment.

Murillo's 'The Return of the Prodigal Son' Returns

Murillo's Prodigal Son series is one of only two narrative cycles he painted, and the only cycle still in its entirety. How this rare Spanish artwork reached Ireland is another remarkable story and a testament to its prestige and beloved appeal throughout time.

Today, we're fortunate to observe the full series of Murillo's narrative paintings due to the incredible efforts of the Earl of Dudley. In 1867, the Englishman bought five of Murillo's

Prodigal Son paintings from Spanish politician and businessman José de Salamanca y Mayol. The earl then set his heart on acquiring the sixth and final painting to complete the series: "The Return of the Prodigal Son."

For the first time in 30 years, the series of six paintings can now be seen together.

Having been owned by a succession of illustrious Spanish collectors, Murillo's "The Return of the Prodigal Son" has a celebrated past. The painting's last Spanish owner was Queen Isabella II of Spain and her consort, who gifted the painting to Pope Pius IX in 1856.

After a series of negotiations with the Vatican, the earl finally fulfilled his wish: In 1871, he paid a remarkable price to reunite Murillo's cycle, exchanging two Italian Renaissance paintings—Fra Angelico's painting "Virgin in Glory With Saints Dominic and Catherine of Alexandria," and a Bonifazio di Pitati painting of the holy family—and 2,000 gold Napoleons to reunite "The

Return of the Prodigal Son" with the other five paintings.

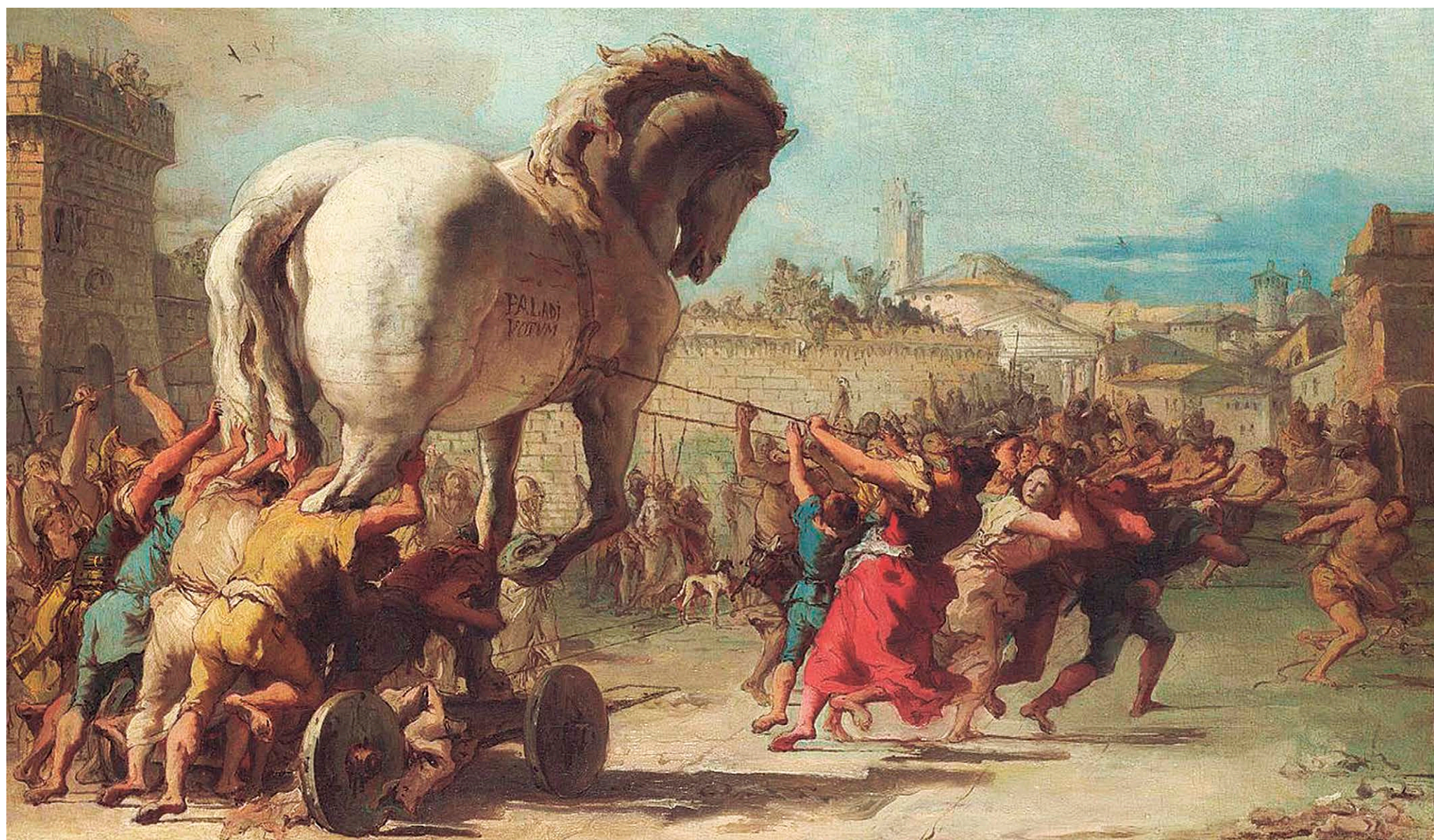
The Beit Collection

In 1896, gold and diamond magnate Alfred Beit bought the series. His nephew, Sir Alfred Lane Beit, who inherited the series sometime later, remodeled rooms to accommodate the paintings in his Kensington Palace Gardens mansion in London and later in Russborough House, County Wicklow, Ireland.

The Beit family cherished the series. Even after they'd gifted the paintings to the National Gallery of Ireland in 1987, along with priceless masterpieces by the likes of Johannes Vermeer and Diego Velázquez, it was only Murillo's Prodigal Son series that the Beits stipulated be returned to their home, Russborough House, each summer until 2002.

Now, more than 350 years after the series was painted, Murillo's impactful, visual storytelling of his Prodigal Son cycle of paintings still charms viewers. In these paintings, Murillo demonstrates the power of both the parable and visual storytelling, emphasizing the tale's universal relevance regardless of creed, time, and place.

To find out more and to see the "Murillo: Prodigal Son Restored" exhibition online, visit NationalGallery.ie



"The Procession of the Trojan Horse in Troy," circa 1760, by Giovanni Tiepolo. Oil on canvas, 15.3 inches by 26.3 inches. National Gallery in London.

REACHING WITHIN: WHAT TRADITIONAL ART OFFERS THE HEART

Facing the Fate of the Trojan Horse: 'The Procession of the Trojan Horse in Troy'

ERIC BESS

Sometimes, things appear too good to be true. The dangerous and harmful can be masked by promises of beauty and pleasure.

I've been thinking a lot lately about promises of worldly utopia and how these promises have historically led to bloodshed. Ideologies such as these often give their adherents a sense of superiority grounded in a moral absolutism that refuses any opposing viewpoints, and in so doing, enemies are created out of those who would otherwise be friends.

Why do we continuously accept ideologies that lead to violence and harm? Is it simply because they seem good on the surface? Thinking about accepting things that initially seem good but turn out to be detrimental leads me to the epic story of the Trojan Horse.

Troy Seals Its Fate

In Book II of Virgil's "Aeneid," Aeneas sorrowfully tells the story of Troy's fall from a Trojan's perspective. Troy and Greece had been at war for some time. The Greeks were losing but came up with a plan to try to shift the war in their favor.

The Greek soldiers decided to build a massive wooden horse in which they could hide and, at the perfect opportunity, strike the Trojans. They left the horse at the gated entrance of Troy, and the Trojans were dumbfounded at the wooden horse's seemingly random appearance.

The Trojans found a young Greek, Sinon, with the horse when they went to investigate. Sinon told them that the Greeks fled after a failed sacrifice.

The Trojans asked Sinon the meaning of the horse, and he told them that it was an offering to the goddess Minerva. If the Trojans harmed the horse, Minerva would harm them, and if they brought the horse into their city, Minerva would bless them.

The Trojan priest, Laocoon, warned the Trojans that it was a trick and threw his spear at the horse in protest. Two giant serpents rose from the sea and engulfed Laocoon and his two sons. The Trojans took it as a sign from Minerva, and they wheeled the large horse through their gates and into their city.

That night, while all of the Trojans were resting, Sinon opened the belly of the wooden horse to let out the hiding Greeks, and they spent the night unleashing havoc on the unsuspecting city.

The Movement in Tiepolo's Composition

The Italian 18th-century painter and printmaker Giovanni Tiepolo organized a high-energy but balanced composition as a study titled "The Procession of the Trojan Horse in Troy" for a painting that is now lost. The left side of the composition is heavier than the right because of the size of the wooden horse. The size and contrast of the horse make it the focal point of the composition.

The figures at the bottom left of the composition help push the horse into the city, and the figures toward the bottom right help pull the horse in. The pushing and pulling of the figures causes their bodies to be angled diagonally, and figures composed diagonally appear to have more energy than figures that are composed horizontally or vertically.

Though the left side of the composition is heavier than the right side, the composition maintains balance because there is a sense of movement occurring from left to right.

This movement from left to right is a gestalt-type design element, in which the whole of the composition has greater impact than the sum of its parts. In other words, our minds are impacted by the impression of movement that the whole composition gives us instead of a sense of imbalance that could be suggested by the heavier left side.

Facing the Fate of the Trojan Horse

Unfortunately, it's much more difficult to look at our lives as a whole in the same way Gestalt psychology suggests we see a composition. We seem to be more likely to compartmentalize aspects of ourselves that we particularly like or dislike, and we thus analyze ourselves in parts instead of as a whole.

For instance, we may analyze our finances, or our health, or our relationships, our education, our spirituality, and so on, with the idea that if the part is improved, maybe the whole will be too.

But who are we holistically? It may be impossible to see ourselves as a whole since it's difficult for us to remember every aspect of our past and we don't know our future. Does this make us more susceptible to taking on harmful beliefs and practices that we otherwise would not? Does this make us more likely to accept "Trojan horses" into our own lives?

The unfortunate truth about a Trojan horse is that none of us know it's a Trojan horse until it's too late. We sometimes accept things—objects, ideas, people—into

our lives that seem good, beneficial, fun, exciting, and so on, and only later do we find that these things are not as we initially thought.

Those of us who express our sincere concerns about the potential dangerous consequences of accepting certain objects, ideas, and people into our lives sometimes find ourselves experiencing a backlash we weren't expecting. Perhaps even when we can see evil in our midst, as Laocoon did, anger—his throwing the spear—is not a wise reaction. It may lead to further harm and unexpected consequences.

To me, the Trojan horse is the epitome of unexpected harm, but it is also fated. Could the Trojans have avoided this fate? At one point in Virgil's epic poem, Venus tells Aeneas that the fall of Troy is the will of the gods.

We may not be able to control fate itself, and attempts to do so may easily be co-opted by mindsets of manipulation, greed, jealousy, and so on. And these mindsets become pathways for harm to enter our lives and the lives of those around us.

What we can do is control how we respond to what happens in our lives. And this is what I get from Tiepolo's composition: balance. Tiepolo painted what was fated to happen: The citizens of Troy bring in the horse that will be their demise, and there's no stopping it. The weighted left side will soon enough be the weighted right side, and the pendulum swings as it will.

Tiepolo painted this event with so much movement that we're unable to see the painting without expecting the inevitable. All of the citizens, by way of their own efforts, push and pull the inevitable in. Everyone, despite whether they're on the right or left side of the horse, has a hand in Troy's demise.

We've had an eventful 2020 to say the least. Maybe, because of a lack of balance in our approach to living, none of us are innocent: Maybe we all are complicit in these events as they unfold for better or for worse.

We don't know what the future holds. But maybe, if we don't lash out in anger at what appears to be our fate, if we instead question ourselves on how we're inclined to respond to our circumstances and take a balanced, that is, calm and rational approach to what may seem inevitable, maybe fate will spare us the harm of having Trojan horses in our own lives.

The unfortunate truth about a Trojan horse is that none of us know it's a Trojan horse until it's too late.

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.

LITERATURE

The Great Detective Fought the Anarchists

BENJAMIN WELTON

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859–1930) was never a fan of his most popular creation, the so-called great detective Sherlock Holmes. As much as readers loved the adventures of the supersleuth and his biographer, Dr. Watson, Doyle preferred writing historical romances like "The White Company" (1891) and "Rodney Stone" (1896) rather than detective stories.

Doyle's disdain for Holmes ran so deep that he killed off the character in December 1893 with the publication of "The Final Problem." The story features the apocalyptic duel between Holmes and the "Napoleon of crime," Professor James Moriarty. Moriarty, the criminal supervillain of the Holmes canon, manages to wrestle Holmes to the bottom of Switzerland's Reichenbach Falls, thereby ending the career of literature's greatest detective.

Fans call the period between the publication of "The Final Problem" and "The Adventure of the Empty House" the Great Hiatus. The sadness over the loss of Sherlock Holmes was supposedly so great that Londoners took to wearing black armbands as a sign of public mourning. Doyle eventually gave in to public pressure by not only publishing the standalone novel "The Hound of the Baskervilles" (1902), which is widely considered the supreme Holmes novel, but ultimately restarting the Holmes stories with 1903's "The Adventure of the Empty House."

The Holmes that returned was different, however. My book, "Hands Dabbled in Blood" (Thought Catalog, 2014), goes more in depth about the reasons for these changes, but suffice it to say that the world had changed significantly between 1893 and 1903. Prior to his plunge in Switzerland, the 19th-century Holmes typically worked cases featuring sunbaked Anglo colonists recently returned from India or South Africa, wayward Englishmen, or the criminal class of Londoners drawn to the imperial metropole.

In the first Holmes novel, "A Study in Scarlet" (1887), Dr. Watson characterized Holmes's London as "that great cesspool into which all the loungers and idlers of the Empire are irresistibly drained." By 1903, Doyle began casting a wider and more international net for his villains.

A Different Kind of Criminal

During what I call the Post-Reichenbach Falls era (1903–1928), the Holmes stories explicitly dealt with political issues such as the naval rivalry between Britain and Germany, the influx of foreigners into the United Kingdom, and the rise of anarchist violence on the Continent and in the United States. Immigrant anarchists and German spies became the most common villains in the latter Holmes stories.

In "The Adventure of the Six Napoleons" (1904), Holmes and Dr. Watson do battle with an Italian anarchist who is described in the most unflattering ways. Called "an alert, sharp-featured simian man with thick eyebrows and ... the lower part of the face like the muzzle of a baboon," the Italian anarchist is guilty of the unusual crime of stealing and smashing busts of Emperor Napoleon. The descriptions of the anarchist reek of the criminological pseudoscience of Cesare Lombroso (1835–1909), who believed that criminality was biological and related to atavism.

Doyle, a follower of scientific trends, likely agreed with some of Lombroso's theories. Doyle was also a student of history, as an Italian anarchist would undoubtedly share the Jacobin disdain for Napoleon, whom the far-left has long blamed for tempering the ideals of the French Revolution.

Another story, "The Adventure of the Red Circle" (1911), features a shadowy group of Italian criminals known as the Red Circle. The Red Circle is described as part revolutionary sect and part extortion racket like the Black Hand group that was then terrorizing Italian immigrant communities in the United States.

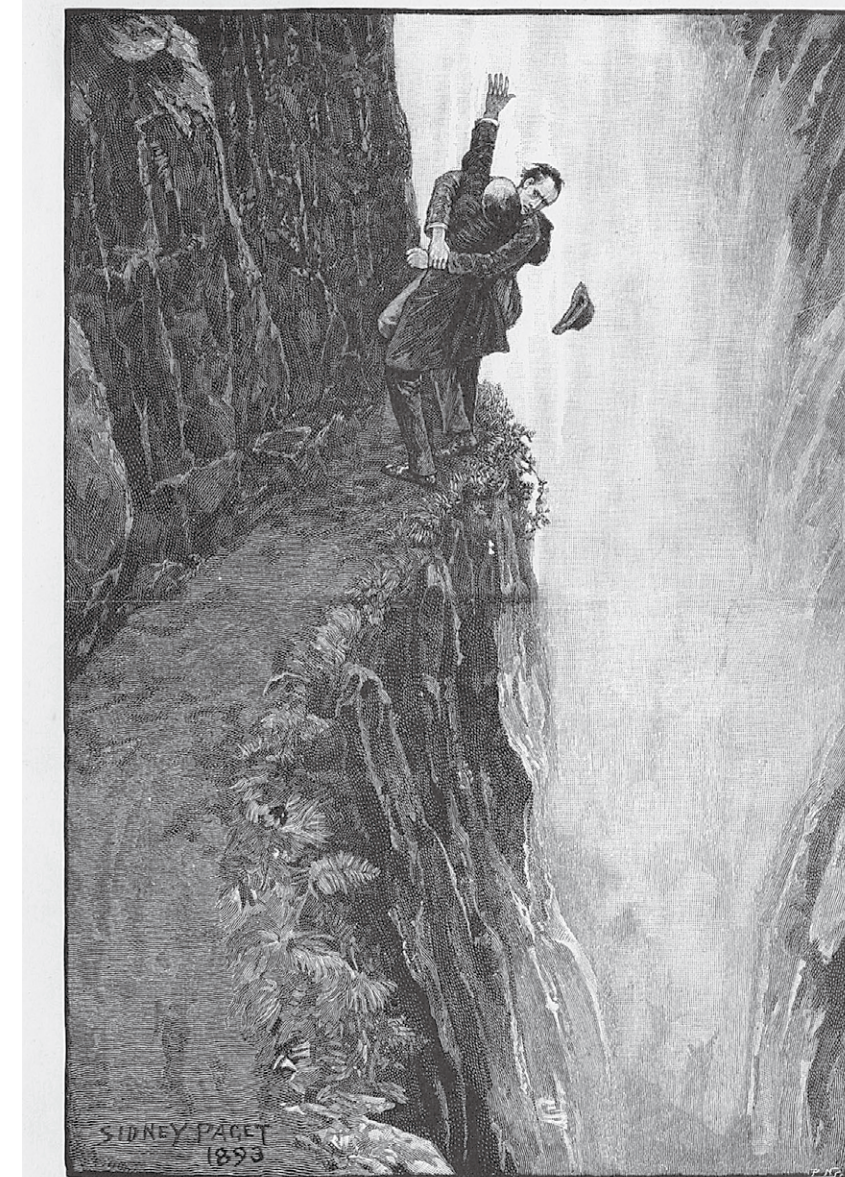
The American flavor of "The Adventure of the Red Circle" is so strong that it features a private detective named Leverton, a member of the same Pinkerton agency that protected President Abraham Lincoln during the U.S. Civil War and engaged in the labor wars of the 19th century on the side of businesses and managers.

Political radicals even make an appearance in the final Holmes novel, "The Valley of Fear" (1915). Set mostly in the coal mines of Pennsylvania, "The Valley of Fear" is a thinly veiled retelling of Pinkerton detective James McParland's real takedown of the deadly Irish labor union, the Molly Maguires.

In his later years, Sherlock Holmes thwarted criminals who posed a threat against society. The preeminent detective's statue near Baker Street in London.

The sadness over the loss of Sherlock Holmes was supposedly so great that Londoners took to wearing black armbands as a sign of public mourning.

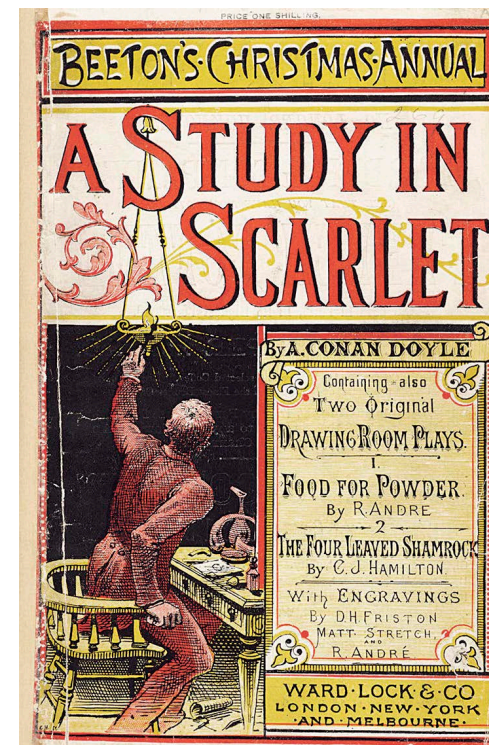
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THE DEATH OF SHERLOCK HOLMES.



MASSIMO TODARO/SHUTTERSTOCK



The cover illustration of "Beeton's Christmas Annual" magazine, 1887, featuring Arthur Conan Doyle's "A Study in Scarlet." Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.



Arthur Conan Doyle, Sherlock Holmes's creator, in 1914.

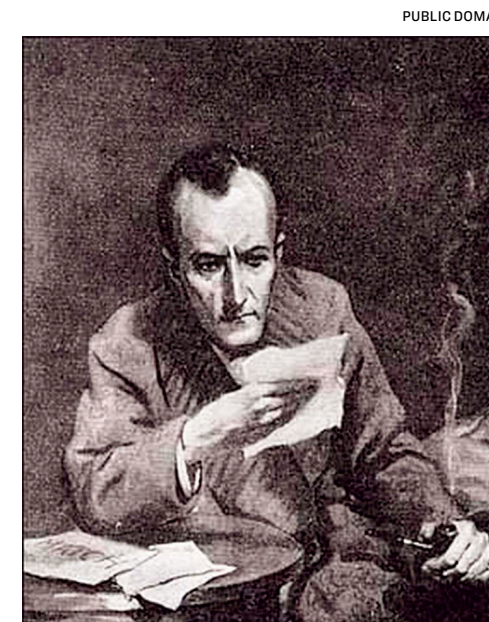


Illustration by H. M. Brock for "The Adventure of the Red Circle," 1911, by Arthur Conan Doyle, in The Strand Magazine.

Holmes and Moriarty struggle at the Reichenbach Falls, a drawing by Sidney Paget from "The Final Problem," 1893, by Arthur Conan Doyle, which appeared in The Strand Magazine.

Old West Tale of Resistance to Tyranny

IAN KANE

A large band of bandits, led by a man named Calvera (Eli Wallach), has been plaguing a small Mexican village for years. They've parasitically attached themselves to the remote place, taking what they want but leaving the farmers just enough to survive and grow new crops—just so they can return and reap their ill-gotten gains again.

Determined to finally shake off their tormentors, a small contingent of men from the village travel to another settlement to seek help. When they arrive, they encounter a mysterious drifter named Chris Adams (Yul Brynner). After they inform him of their plight, Chris agrees to back them up. However, he's only one man—but not for long.

The film emphasizes comradery and resistance in the face of tyranny, no matter what the odds.

A fellow drifter, Vin Tanner (Steve McQueen), signs up to help out, after losing all of his money in a local gambling bid.

Chris's old buddy Harry Luck (Brad Dexter) shows up, as does Lee (Robert Vaughn), knife-fight-

er Britt (James Coburn), half-Irish, half-Mexican Bernardo O'Reilly (Charles Bronson), and firebrand Chico (Horst Buchholz).

Each man has his own motivation for joining the group; for instance, Chico is a young man who is out to prove himself, while Bernardo is a veteran gunfighter who has fallen on hard times and needs the meager \$20 that Chris is offering.

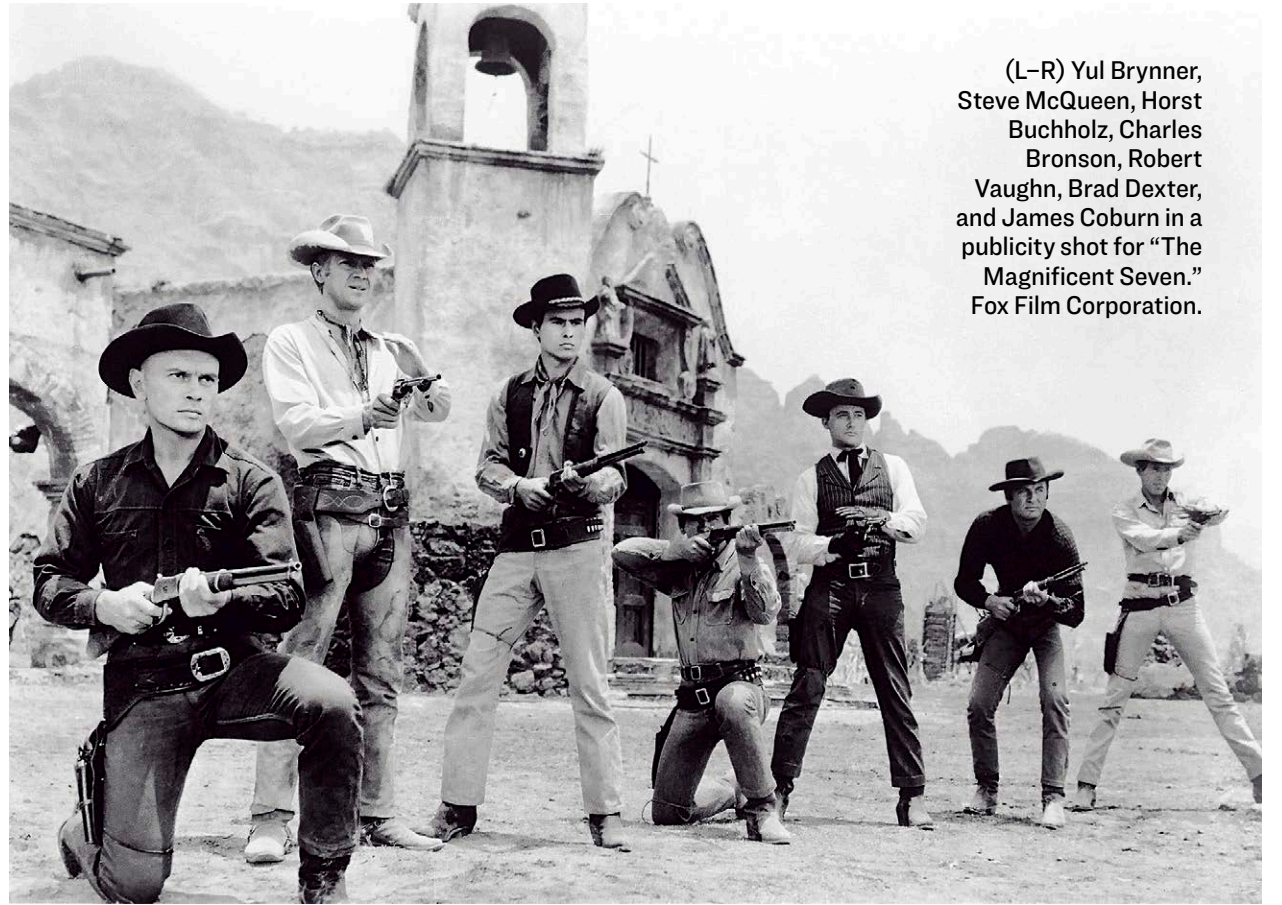
When they arrive at the village, they find the locals willing to fight for their turf. The seven gunfighters commence to training the villagers and also set up defensive fortifications. Everyone settles in and awaits the return of the bad guys.

That day eventually comes—Calvera and his band of raiders ride back into the tiny settlement. Only this time, he is surprised to find Chris and his posse waiting for them. The lead bandit senses that the seven defenders are a major threat and tactfully retreats back to his base. However, Chico managed to infiltrate the bandits and is able to relay information to Chris and the village leaders.

Somehow, the bandits manage to sneak into the village and set up an ambush for Chris and his men. Surprisingly, instead of killing them, the bandits' leader merely orders the seven men to lay down their guns. Calvera tells them to leave the village and never return. Chris and his men reluctantly abide by the bandit leader's terms.

Eventually, Chris and his men return to the village and force the bandits into a showdown—with the innocent villagers caught in the middle. But who will survive and who won't?

Director John Sturges does enough



(L-R) Yul Brynner, Steve McQueen, Horst Buchholz, Charles Bronson, Robert Vaughn, Brad Dexter, and James Coburn in a publicity shot for "The Magnificent Seven." Fox Film Corporation.



(L-R) Steve McQueen, Yul Brynner, and Charles Bronson.



One by one gunmen join the cause. Steve McQueen (L) and Yul Brynner in "The Magnificent Seven."

to make his version—a remake of 1954's epic "Seven Samurai" directed by Akira Kurosawa—its own unique animal.

The film's classic score, by brilliant composer Elmer Bernstein, fits the Old West visuals very capably. And performance-wise, Brynner is fantastic as the black-clad, mysterious gunslinger whose face reveals much more than his few words let on. McQueen is equally fascinating as Brynner's right-hand man. The only complaint I have is that Bronson's character wasn't given more screentime—

but with such a star-studded ensemble, it's understandable for the sake of the film's runtime.

"The Magnificent Seven" is an uplifting classic that shows not only the resilience of common people but also the unexpected kindness of strangers. It's an empowering film that emphasizes comradery and resistance in the face of tyranny, no matter what the odds.

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

'The Magnificent Seven'

Director
John Sturges

Starring
Yul Brynner, Steve McQueen, Charles Bronson

Running Time
2 hours, 8 minutes

Not Rated

Release Date
Oct. 12, 1960 (USA)

★★★★☆

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