# THE EPOCH TIMES

# ARTS& CULTURE

PUBLIC DOMAIN



TAKING YOU THERE

# Frederic Remington Hurls You Into the Wild West With 'The Rattlesnake'

#### WAYNE A. BARNES

There are eras in American history from the colonial days to the revolution, then Manifest Destiny, stretching our nation to the far sea. First came mountain men, then pioneers and buckskin heroes like Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett, "Wild Bill" Hickok and "Buffalo Bill" Cody, who captured our national imagination. The Civil War erupted and interrupted, but the westward expansion continued in the years that followed. Migration in growing numbers settled the vast territory of the American West. The golden spike completed the transcontinental railroad in 1869, an exclamation point in our nation's history.

exclamation point in our nation's history. Frederic Remington was born in upstate New York in 1861 and reveled in this era like few before him. He was trained in art "The Rattlesnake,"
1905, revised 1908,
by Frederic Remington.
Bronze sculpture. The
Metropolitan Museum
of Art.

at Yale, but he also played football. An artist's eye combined with rough-and-tumble experiences married within his personality. The West called to him. He found work as an illustrator for Harper's Weekly but was also a field correspondent. The public's desire for Western stories was insatiable.

Continued on Page 4

**Unlike Aldous** 

George Orwell,

ends his story

Huxley and

C.S. Lewis

with the

triumph of

good over evil.

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# A Book of Hope in a Bad Season:

# 'That Hideous Strength'

One of 12 Great Books

**JEFF MINICK** 

n a recent article about Sir Walter Scott's "Ivanhoe," I made a New Year's resolution to read old books unfamiliar to me. Having selected Fyodor Dostoyevsky's "The Devils" as my next conquest, I had just commenced that story of Russian radicals when another book, not quite so old but still important, snared my attention and lured me temporarily away.

Let me explain. During the past month, my daily online explorations revealed that for several years George Orwell's dystopian novel "1984" had often made the bestseller lists at Amazon and Barnes and Noble. Readers were also buying Aldous Huxley's "Brave New World," and Penguin had reprinted Sinclair Lewis's "It Can't Happen Here," a novel about fascism swallowing up American democracy.

All these novels are over 70 years old, and it gladdened my heart to see readers turning to these modern classics to get a take on our current politics.

Some online articles also cited C.S. Lewis's "That Hideous Strength" as a novel suited to our unsettled times. Much of Lewis's work is familiar to me. My children and I shared the "Narnia" series; "Mere Christianity" and "The Screwtape Letters" helped me explore my faith; and my all-time favorite, "Till We Have Faces," a retelling of the tale of Cupid and Psyche, I taught to my students.

But I'd never read Lewis's space trilogy, of which "That Hideous Strength" is the capstone.

Inspired by the recommendations and hoping to find some light in our dark times, I checked out the book from the library, temporarily said goodbye to Russia, and began reading.

'That Hideous Strength'

Set in England, "That Hideous Strength is a tale of the struggle between power- Here again are sentiments we hear from hungry utopians who wish to create a some public officials today. totalitarian government and those who to an organization called the National Institute of Coordinated Experiments, or N.I.C.E., innocuous enough in name.

Like some of our organizations and political proposals today, the elites of N.I.C.E. set out to retool society, culture, and even human nature.

Opposing them is a handful of people led by an otherworldly director. Though they seem without resources, cosmic forces including a resurrected Merlin—come to their rescue. N.I.C.E. and those associated with that institution are destroyed, and Britain and the world are saved.

Throughout the book, we find similarities to our own time. Here, for example, a young man being groomed for N.I.C.E. asks Miss Hardcastle, the head of police for the organization, why educated people would ever believe the propaganda heroic Elwin Ransom, who plays a key she has proposed he write for the news-role in "That Hideous Strength." Nonepapers. Her reply drips with contempt: theless, these strange creatures at first

"Why you fool, it's the educated reader who can be gulled. All our difficulty comes from the others. When did you

meet a workman who believes the papers? He takes it for granted that they're all propaganda and skips the leading articles ... He is our problem. We have to recondition him. But the educated public, the people who read the high-brow weeklies, don't need reconditioning. They're all right already. They'll believe anything."

Here, too, we find several key differences that distinguish "That Hideous Strength" from "Brave New World" and "1984."

In the Beginning

The novels by Huxley and Orwell drop the reader into a world where a totalitarian government has already taken power. In "Brave New World," a small group rules the rest of the people for their common good, controlling them by propaganda, "sleep learning," drugs, sex, and entertainment.

The totalitarians in "1984" control their subjects through fear, a widespread system of hidden cameras and microphones, the implementation of "doublethink," and like their equivalents in "Brave New World," by the erasure of the past.

In "That Hideous Strength," we are at the beginning of this drive for total control. Lewis introduces us to a cabal of scientists, police officers, intellectuals, and journalists intent on domination and greedy for power.

When they attempt to recruit Mark Studdock, who is a sociologist, into their ranks, Lord Feverstone shares a part of this vision with him:

"It does really look as if we now have the power to dig ourselves in as a species for a pretty staggering period, to take control of our own destiny. If Science is really given a free hand it can now take over the human race and re-condition it: make man a really efficient animal. If it doesn't—well, we're done."

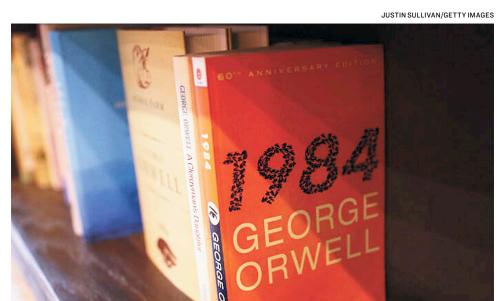
In his "Preface," Lewis describes "That Hideous Strength" as a fairy tale.

Compared to "1984" and "Brave New World," that description is apt. Neither of these two books contains any element of the magical or the supernatural.

In "That Hideous Strength," however, we find heavenly creatures coming to aid human beings, the magician Merlin brought back to life, and interference from interplanetary beings in the affairs of Earth.

At first, the appearances of Merlin, the goddess Venus, the visitors from space, and other such characters put me off a bit. To be fair to the story, I have not read the two earlier volumes—"Out of the Silent Planet" and "Perelandra"—where we meet some of these beings and the seemed intrusions into the story, unnecessary and even false.

And then the scales fell from my eyes, and I understood.



A copy of George Orwell's novel "1984" sits on a bookstore shelf. The 72-year-old dystopian novel has regained popularity in recent years.

**PERELANDRA** 

**Darkness Versus Light** 

As I read more of the story and reflected on the philosophy driving it, I came to see that Lewis is describing the struggle between good and evil. His novel reminds us that we are not striving so much against flesh-and-blood enemies but instead against dark ideas aimed at degrading us, powers intended to diminish our ideals of liberty and individualism.

While some of the characters in "That Hideous Strength" are indeed wicked in and of themselves—Miss Hardcastle, is a sadist less interested in creating a new world order than in personal power most of them are either chasing after power and advancement, or are deluded by grand thoughts of utopia. "The Kingdom of God is to be realized here—in this world," says the fanatical Mr. Straik, and he means that literally.

Most of us forget at times, or else refuse to recognize, the existence of a struggle between good and evil. Those words are unfashionable these days, yet Lewis is telling us that this battle is real. We may be blind to this warfare, in part because of our obsession with material goods, but

behind the scenes the struggle goes on. "Ideas have consequences," philosopher Richard Weaver once wrote. As Lewis demonstrates, those ideas have led men to create gulags and concentration camps, to silence opponents, and to humility as erotic necessities, but I will

destroy the real—good, truth, beauty for the illusions of utopia.

#### Love and Marriage

Finally, unlike his contemporaries Huxley and Orwell, Lewis includes as a secondary theme in "That Hideous Strength," an examination of the meaning of love and its place in marriage. Using the troubled marriage of Jane and Mark Suddock as his vehicle, he explores what one character calls "companionship."

During a conversation with the director, who eventually reveals himself as the heroic Ransom, Jane opens up and speaks with him about her failing marriage. He then offers her some gentle suggestions and ideas.

Jane prides herself on being a modern woman, what we would today call a feminist, and the director's advice seems quaint and old-fashioned. When she says, "I thought it was in their souls that people were equal," the director replies: "That is the last place where they are equal ... Equality guards life; it doesn't make it. It is medicine, not food." And when she speaks of equality in marriage, he says to her: "No one has ever told you that obedience—humility is an erotic necessity. You are putting equality just where it ought not to be."

Hideous Strength," subtitled "A Modern Never had I considered obedience or Fairy-Tale for Grown-

C.S. Lewis's lesser-

known Space Trilogy has

an important tale for our

C.S.LEIVIS

The first edition of "That

as its final installment

A Story for Our Time Many parallels between "That Hideous Strength" and our own age exist: a riot engineered by those in power and the story twisted in the press, the smearing of political opponents, the murder of a man who tries to leave N.I.C.E, the use of blackmail, the religious strains of ideology, and the arrogant emphasis on the self.

ponder those words and Lewis's many other comments on companionship for

a long time.

Like "1984" and "Brave New World Lewis's tale of totalitarianism is a warning to us. "Those who call for Nonsense," says a leader of the resistance near the end of the story, "will find that it comes." Our present Nonsense reveals the truth of her words.

But unlike Huxley and Orwell, Lews ends his story with the triumph of good over evil, and with the restoration of love and hope. After a long absence and a struggle to return to his wife, Mark finally makes his way to St. Anne's Manor, the headquarters of the resistance and where Jane has taken up residence.

There Mark encounters an apparition by a doorway in a wall, "a woman divinely tall, part naked, part wrapped in a flame-colored robe ... It was opening the door for him. He did not dare disobey ("Surely," he thought, "I must have died"), and he went in: found himself in some place of sweet smells and bright fires, with food and wine and a rich bed."

Here in this chamber of warmth, beauty, and light, and not in the cold corridors of power and dominion or in a laboratory, is where we become more fully human.

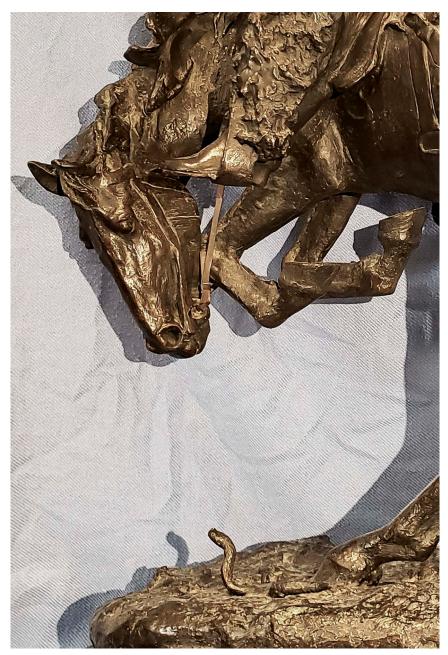
Jeff Minick has four children and a growing platoon of grandchildren. For 20 years, he taught history, literature, and Latin to seminars of homeschooling students in Asheville, N.C. He is the author of two novels, "Amanda Bell" and "Dust On Their Wings," and two works of non-fiction, "Learning As I Go" and "Movies Make The Man." Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, Va. See JeffMinick.com to follow



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The rider is lifted off his saddle, his Colt evolver flung away from his body.

he horse is going out of his mind with fear, but can't take his eyes off it.

"The Rattlesnake," 1905, by Frederic

**TAKING YOU THERE** 

# Frederic Remington Hurls You Into the Wild West With 'The Rattlesnake'

Continued from Page1

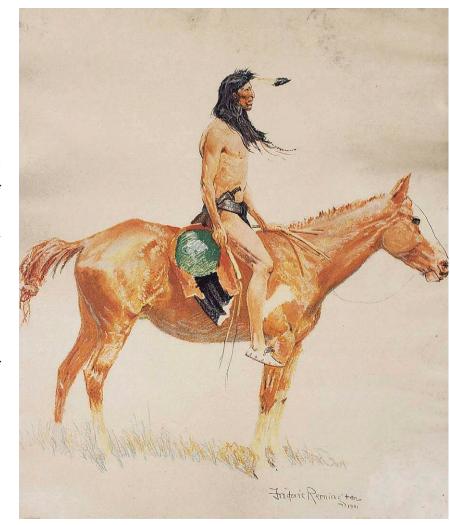
His drawings went from merely accompanying his articles to paintings that gained a level of maturity so that even art critics placed his work on a unique pedestal. Albert Bierstadt was covering massive canvases with "Rocky Mountains" (1863) and "Among the Sierra Nevada Mountains, California" (1868), which played well back East and introduced Europeans to our glorious scenery. In the foreground of almost all of his paintings were miniature settings with daily life among teepees, wagon trains, or pioneer encampments. It was those tiny figures that Remington enlarged and which became the center of his attention. He brought drama and adventure—the action—of the West to East Coast civilization, and they ate it up.

Few noteworthy artists worked both in painting and sculpture. Perhaps Michelangelo is the best known with his painting of the massive ceiling in the Sistine Chapel and his neoclassical sculptures of "David" and "La Pietà." Almost 400 years later, Remington was an artist on his own terms—drawing, painting, sculpting—and all the while, writing about it. This additional dimension gave a play-by-play quality to the many adventures he re-created on canvas: cowboys, trappers, scouts, the Lakota and Navajo Nations, and even up San Juan Hill to chronicle Teddy Roosevelt and his Rough Riders in turn-of-the-century Cuba. Remington's life, and his portrayal of so many scenes displaying true grit, was quite extraordinary.

While his forefathers in art, and even his contemporaries, sculpted impressive images, almost all of them memorialized a moment of stillness—a kiss, a tranquil human form in pose, another merely thinking. Those sculptures remain as still today as the moments they were created. But Remington did something quite different, even audacious. His subjects were not graceful and relaxed, but rather, they were rugged folk, rough and ready.

He prided himself in capturing movement, an often-violent instant, sometimes death-defying, that would be gone in the blink of an eye. That would be almost everyone's eye but Remington's, for he held the image in his mind, later to draw and then mold into clay.

Observers of his sculptures could stand, staring at each piece, feeling the motion and the emotion—of the subject, the angst, the surprise, sometimes the terror and the passion within it. They could feel it, again and again, because Remington took them down this path.



"Cheyenne Scout," 1901, by Frederic Remington. Lithograph; 20 inches by 17 inches.

The agony in the equine is so great that nothing can restrain his turbulent motion.

In 1895, "The Bronco Buster" was his first endeavor at sculpture after 20 years of drawing and painting. With a strong following, the piece was an immediate hit. His popularity surged. Even the Rough Riders gathered to present one to Lieutenant Colonel Teddy Roosevelt.

Remington's lifetime work included more than 3,000 sketches, illustrations, and watercolors, with dozens of oil paintings and 22 sculptures. He also penned two books and over a hundred magazine articles and stories. But in 1909, at the age of only 48, Remington passed away from an infection following an appendectomy. He had been at the peak of his career. The art world and much of society mourned the man who almost singlehandedly shaped how Americans pictured the West.

Meeting a Remington

In the 1990s at an antiques show in San Diego, a friend who knew my propensity regarding art, tugged at my elbow to tell me there was something I simply had to see, and at a reasonable price. Wary of his **Taking You There** admonition, I trekked across the convention hall until I saw it.

When the most exquisite piece of its kind

you have ever seen speaks to you, and the price is manageable, you drive home with with you till the end of your days.

'The Rattlesnake'

After Remington produced "The Bronco Buster," it would be 10 years before he returned to a similar subject. It could have been the very same mount and rider, but the psychological viewpoints are dramatically different.

"The Bronco Buster" portrays a planned action, one the cowboy even looked forward to. In breaking the wildness from a wilderness beast, taming it for work on the ranch, separating cattle or roping a runaway calf, the work is exciting but normal. "The Rattlesnake" is the opposite.

The subject was not a mount and rider going slowly down a slope, or even taking a planned ride on a wild mustang, everyday Western activities. No, this was from a unique incident on the trail that the rider could not anticipate and simply steer his horse around. When the rattlesnake commenced its rattling and the horse had a hissy fit—to the great surprise of the rider—that was the moment Remington captured. There was no photograph to take and review in his studio, and no horse could hold such an impossible pose to model for him. This required detailed knowledge of equine anatomy and was all birthed from memory.

The rider has a slender, sinewy body, with an aquiline nose. A bushy mustache covers most of the lower half of his face. It is thick and wide, but a popular style at the time among chaps-wearing, derring-do cowboys. Holding on for dear life, his upper body careens forward, and he still has to deal with the rattling reptile.

What must have gone through his mind? A broken leg for himself or his steed could have deadly consequences. A snake bite would be even worse, and with no one to come to the rescue.

Let's go down the path with this cowboy and his trusty steed.

In the sounds of nature, animals aren't taught which ones mean danger. Millennia of time tells them when to stay and when to go, when to relax and when to respond, and to do it immediately.

Act, and act quickly! Move! Get away! This was going through the mind of the

Coiling provides the leverage for its Vshaped head to stand erect, several inches above its body—the pose of a viper strike. A forked tongue shoots out and withdraws; then its mouth holds open, baring fangs as deadly as a wolf or bear, with venom to back them up.

Some say the high-speed shaking of the rattle is a defense mechanism, but it is really announcing: "Because you have entered my territory, my safe space, uninvited, I am going to attack you. If you do not withdraw, you will face the consequences of your poor decision, and this is your only warning."

All of this was conveyed instantaneously by the whipping back and forth of the snake's tail, its response to more than half a ton of un-

stoppable, four-legged bulk trampling its way. The rider was unaware of the danger until it was already beneath him. He realized that he was about to be thrown right onto the cause of the trauma. He had to think fast, calm down, and gain control of his mount, even with an overdose of adrenaline speeding to both of their hearts.

In a flash, the horse is bucking up, nearly spilling over. The core of his body whips into a deep curve and his eyes are transfixed by those of the serpent, almost paralyzing him. He is going out of his mind with fear, but can't take his eyes off it.

Neighing begins and then becomes a screaming whinnying the rider has never heard before.

The snake shakes its rattle in a frenzy, unnerving all within earshot to preserve its ground-bound life. A horse's legs are long and fragile: up from his hooves, his pastern, fetlock, and cannon, to his knees, tender open areas within the viper's reach.

The ruckus continues, a visceral reaction, a brash braying, a horrifying whinnying, breath sucked in, nostrils flaring, air whipping in and out through his lungs, stomping, kicking every which way, trying to escape the dread of the here-and-now, the horror of the creature at his feet.

Through all the bucking, almost turning over, the rider is thrown back then violently forward. Head bent down, exasperated, his left hand grasps the base of his horse's mane. His right darts up to hold onto his hat, a re-

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF WAYNE A. BARNE

The saddle horn crushes into his gut and he flings forward again. Erratic jerking slings the belt with his Colt revolver away from his body.

All hell has broken loose in the corpus of the horse, and the rider foresees the worst. The agony in the equine is so great that nothing can restrain his turbulent motion. His forelegs pull up tightly, close to his body, as far from the danger as possible. Gravity brings him hurling back down before he goes, again, immediately skyward. All the while, the viper's fangs and the buzzing, beating, vibrating, dizzying, and gutwrenching sound on the ground has nearly driven the steed insane. Hooves kick up a cloud of dust, sown with the smell of grime

and panic. In this moment of madness, the snake's tail end continues it heart-stopping drumming. Then, without notice, a serpentine shadow

slithers off through the woods. When the danger is finally gone, there is no quick return to calm, so high had been the adrenaline rush for mount and rider. These are moments you relive, that will bring nightmares to both man and beast. And if snakes do dream, this one will curl up in its hole, recalling two enormous hooves crashing down, so close to ending its rattling days in the underbrush.

In the split-second image of the sculpture, we don't know if the viper struck. That was likely Remington's plan—an action shot like no other—no time for hesitation; act now, as fast as you can!

But then what?

I wrote the ending I saw, but we don't know. That is the eternal beauty of the piece.

Some pieces of art move me so that I am compelled to write about them—what they look like, but more often, how I see the scene in its own history. This is what the series "Taking You There" is about.

Wayne A. Barnes was an FBI agent for 29 years working counterintelligence. He had many undercover assignments, including as a member of the Black Panthers. His first spy stories were from debriefing Soviet KGB defectors. He now investigates privately in South Florida.









"Portrait of a Young Woman," 1632, by Rembrandt van Rijn, prior to its conservation (L), and after (R), with a close-up of the woman's lips, also before and after. Oil on panel; 29 1/2 inches by 22 3/4 inches. Samuel H. Kress Collection, 1961, Allentown Art Museum

## Unmistakably Rembrandt: 'Portrait of a Young Woman'

#### LORRAINE FERRIER

An age-old artwork can sometimes distort the truth. This was certainly the case for Rembrandt's "Portrait of a Young Woman" at the Allentown Art Museum, in Pennsylvania. For more than four decades, visitors to the museum viewed the portrait not as a work by Rembrandt but by his workshop.

In the 1970s, art experts mistakenly deattributed the portrait because conservators over the centuries had altered it to such an extent that it was deemed unrecognizable as a Rembrandt original.

Today, the portrait has been restored and is back on display—as a painting by Rembrandt—in the museum's exhibition "Rembrandt Revealed." The exhibition reveals why the portrait was deattributed and how it was reattributed to Rembrandt. The exhibition also gives interesting insights into the process and challenges of art attribution.

#### **Not Rembrandt**

In the early 1920s, art scholars began to question whether the artwork had actually been painted by the Dutch master. In the 1970s, art experts deemed it an important work by the "Workshop of Rembrandt van Rijn."

The painting's lack of clarity in the clothing and jewelry was one of the reasons for the demotion; another was that the lady's head showed "indistinct brushwork."

Conservator Shan Kuang, who restored the painting between 2018 and 2019, said in the museum's member magazine that anyone who saw the portrait prior to its restoration would have viewed the young lady through "a dirty windshield."

Over the centuries, various conservators—with a genuine heart to enhance the portrait and in line with the fashions of their time—varnished the painting to such an extent that it created a thick, dark buildup. For example, restorers in the early 20th century used varnish to hide the texture of the painted surface, as was the taste at the time.

The portrait's numerous varnished layers concealed Rembrandt's characteristic delicate brushstrokes, obscuring the lady's porcelain skin. In addition, conservators had overpainted parts of the portrait, muting details such as her hair ornaments, glistening gold necklace, and the touches of lace on her dress.

#### **Revealing Rembrandt, by Chance**

Kuang's first task, at the Conservation Center of the Institute of Fine Arts, at New York University, was to remove the different layers of overpaint and varnish. She differentiated the various layers, using an electron microscope and digital photography, and carefully removed any added elements. It was during this routine work that Kuang made the exciting discovery: The original brushwork was by Rembrandt's hand.

A fresh analysis of Rembrandt's signature was also carried out. In the past, there had been confusion as to whether the signature was genuine, but the conservation center confirmed it was indeed his.

The restoration was not limited to the portrait. Prior to its restoration, the portrait was displayed in a 19thcentury reproduction of a heavily carved 18th-century gilt frame. A new frame was commissioned to reflect how the portrait may have been displayed in a 17th-century Dutch home. Frame historian and framemaker Timothy Newbery made the eight-sided ebonized pearwood frame in his workshop in Scotland.

Now, visitors to the museum can see the painting truly attributed to Rembrandt and nearer to how the portrait left his studio, nearly 490 years ago.

 ${\it The Allentown Art Museum's exhibition "Rembrandt}$ Revealed" runs until May 2. To find out more, visit AllentownArtMuseum.org





# Truth and Her Twin, Part 2: Mendacium Writ Large

**JAMES SALE** 

e looked in Part 1 at the mythological origins of Truth (Veritas) and Lies (Mendacium). We established that they were like twins: sometimes very difficult to distinguish between one and the other. And we made the point, too, that Mendacium, because she was footless, was immobile and also unbalanced. If we think through what this imagery means—keeping in mind that the myths tell us deep psychological or even spiritual truths—we realize that being footless, being immobile, means that we are not free. The essence of being free is that we are free to move, wherever and whenever we want. If at any point in our lives we cannot move, we cannot truly be said to be free.

At a religious level, for example, Christ said that in knowing the truth, the truth would set us free, and this idea was matched by his healing of the physically infirm—some of whom could not even move. By healing, not just curing their bodies, he set them free. Truth has this remarkable quality: It frees us.

But not just at a spiritual level—this is also true at a political one. If we cannot move, for example, as during a lockdown, a curfew, an embargo, and so on, then we are not free politically. Not to be misunderstood: There may be good reasons for curtailing freedom in a lockdown—such as public health, but nevertheless, the restriction denies one's

This issue, then, is really important. In a way, what I am saying is that the acceptance of Mendacium—Lies or Error—is the precursor to loss of freedom. It is neither necessarily nor immediately apparent that we lose our freedom, but if enough people collectively subscribe to Mendacium, then as sure as night follows day, our freedoms

Camille Paglia

in 2015.

FRONTEIRAS DO PENSAMENTO/CC-SA BY 2.0



(Above left) While truth and lies can look the same, they are like identical twins, who can be very different indeed, as

the painting "The Twins, Kate and Grace Hoare" (1876), by John Everett Millais, suggests. Kate (L) holds a riding crop and her demure sister, a hat. **(Top right)** In healing the lame, Jesus made man-

ifest the dictum that the truth sets one free. "Christ Healing the Lame at the Pool of Bethesda," 1640s, by Pieter van Lint. Oil on panel. Kunsthistorisches Museum.

(Above right) Art inspired by the divine, as it was in the past, can affect us in profound ways. John Habgood, the former Archbishop of York, believed that the fact that art today is divorced from religion might reflect the "trivialization and disorientation of art itself." "Praying Hands," circa 1508, by Albrecht Dürer. Albertina art museum in Vienna, Austria.

> Truth is inside, is internal, and is the only twin who can really stand.

are eroded and we become enslaved by false and lying ideologies.

**Mendacium Rules** 

Today we are assaulted on all sides by just such a lying ideology, Mendacium threatening to undermine all our freedoms. In terms of identifying it, English writer Theodore Dalrymple perhaps caught its very essence when he wrote: "He [Stefan Zweig] would have viewed with horror the cacophony of monomanias—sexual, racial, social, egalitarian—that marks the intellectual life of our societies, each monomaniac demanding legislative restriction on the freedom of others in the name of a supposed greater, collective good."

Notice the strength of feeling in that statement: not people, but monomaniacs demanding what? Our freedom for some "supposed greater, collective good."

And lest we think that the danger can only come from self-evident monomaniacs (and self-confessed communists)—as visible as some of them are, aggressively protesting on our streets—yet the danger of Mendacium can be much subtler. It can be a lie generated by an internal contradiction that is difficult to spot.

Camille Paglia comments, in her book "Sexual Personae," on modern liberalism and its connection to feminism: "Modern liberalism suffers unresolved contradictions. It exalts individualism and freedom and, on its radical wing, condemns social orders as oppressive. On the other hand, it expects government to provide materially for all, a feat manageable only by an expansion of authority and a swollen bureaucracy ... In other words, liberalism defines government as tyrant father but demands that it behaves as nurturant mother ... Feminism has exceeded its proper mission of seeking political equality for women and has ended by rejecting contingency, that is, human limitation by nature or fate."

Isn't this the essence of Mendacium? It's so close to Veritas. Surely, we can all agree that it is right that women should be treated equally with men, but along the way, this "truth" has morphed—via modern liberalism—into a lie. It's a lie that denies "human limitation," which is the actual difference between men

and women, or their nature Modern feminism has also denied fate. We may wish to use another word for this destiny, providence, the Tao. But whatever word we use, we'd realize if we understood it, that outcomes in life never have been, never will be, equal. The striving for equality of outcomes is utopian, futile, and ultimately anti-freedom.

For what does it mean to be free? It means we take self-responsibility, and as a conse-

ation. As Jordan B. Peterson put it, "If there was any excuse to be a Marxist in 1917, there is absolutely and finally no excuse now." The encroachment of Mendacium onto the domain of Veritas often seems to start with small things. In the UK, for example,

quence, we each achieve different results for ourselves. On an individual level this is

obviously true, but we have seen in history

plenty of collective efforts to reverse this situ-

Week 9, 2021 THE EPOCH TIMES

politician and military historian Robert Oulds, in his book "Moralitis," comments on student unions which "ensure freedom from speech through 'no-platforming' and 'safe spaces." Notice the rather witty, "freedom from speech," not "of speech." It almost seems funny until one reflects that we are talking about the young university generation whom we once thought went to college—like we once did—to broaden and expand their minds.

Weren't universities places that had famous debating chambers? No more it seems. Most students today cannot abide an idea that contradicts their uninformed prejudices. Worse, this intolerance is like an insidious cancer, which spreads so that soon the whole body is riddled with it.

Quoting Dalrymple again, we end up with "a society of 'emasculated liars' who are very easy to control."

**Our Way Back to Truth** 

How do we resist this insidious undermining of all that we hold dear? Clearly, there is no easy answer, for if there were, we wouldn't have the problem. But I make two suggestions that seem relevant.

One is honest journalism of the type that The Epoch Times espouses. There has to be resistance to the fake news and social media control that currently now appertains. In a way, this is immediate and frontline stuff.

But the deeper, longer-term stuff is related to the kind of culture we live in and the values it espouses, or claims to espouse, for treguently actions belie espoused values. In particular, I feel that our arts are of primary importance in this battle for the hearts and souls of the people, especially the younger generation. Why is this? Because it is the arts—literature, drama, music, and visual art—that most affect our emotions. In the absence of any pervasive spiritual or religious tradition, our sense of the creative can only derive from these sources.

The trouble is, so much of "art" today is either entirely nihilistic or not art at all! John Habgood (former Archbishop of York) some while ago observed: "The fact that not much art these days seems to be inspired by explicitly religious themes may, however, be a reflection of the trivialization and disorientation of art itself."

The problem is that people no longer believe in anything, including something as basic as form itself. In poetry, we now have "free verse," meaning, usually, poetry with no structure at all. And without form, very little beauty—or truth. What is true of today's poetry is also true of the other art forms. We all know this about the arts but, as with the emperor's new clothes, like to pretend otherwise.

Thus, we need to press for art that rediscovers the myths of old, but for a contemporary generation. The great critic Northrop Frye said: "A myth is designed not to describe a specific situation but to contain it in a way that does not restrict its significance to that one situation. Its truth is inside its structure, not outside."

This is the real twin, Veritas, which compels assent because her truth is inside, is internal, and is the only one that can really stand.

To see Part 1 of "Truth and Her Twin," visit ept.ms/Veritas-1

James Sale has had over 50 books published, most recently, "Mapping Motivation for Top Performing Teams" (Routledge, 2021). He won first prize in The Society of Classical Poets 2017 annual competition, performing in New York in 2019. His most recent poetry collection is "HellWard." For more information about the author, and about his Dante project, visit TheWiderCircle.webs.com



for 20 years instead. Now he vrites professionally about Director

NIKO TAVERNISE/TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX

Darren Aronofsky

'Black Swan'

Starring Natalie Portman Mila Kunis, Winona Ryder Barbara Hershey,

**Running Time** 

Release Date Dec. 17, 2010

4 out of 5 stars for execution 1 star for moral content

NIKO TAVERNISE/TWENTIETH CENTURY FO

**REWIND, REVIEW, AND RE-RATE** 

# Making a Case for Bringing Back Sacredness to Art

#### **MARK JACKSON**

Director Darren Aronofsky resurrected Mickey Rourke's career with "The Wrestler," and worked a similar boon of blessings for Natalie Portman in "Black Swan." She won the Oscar for her performance, and she seemed in 2010 to have blossomed into the Meryl Streep of her generation.

The role of elite ballerina Nina Sayers checked offmany of the things on the list that attract Mr. Oscar—dramatic weight loss, allconsuming immersion in a demanding skill set (ballet), and shape-shifting disappearance into a character. Indeed, her brief transformation at the end, into the actual Black Swan of the title, is as bona fide a shape-shift as one will ever see in cinema—that moment alone was almost worth the price of admission.

#### The Attainment of Perfection

The film is a dark tale of obsession with artistic technique: the ruthless ambition, the sacrifice, the obsessive compulsiveness. It tells of how a dancer manages to capture two out of the three main ingredients that, according to Socrates, constitute great art: truth and beauty. What's missing to a certain extent is goodness.

The plot is straightforward: Mousey, introverted good girl wants and wins lead role, has the technical chops, but would appear to lack the requisite personality to play the entire role, which contains two extremes. She's inherently the white swan—chaste, demure, perfect—but can Nina summon up the Dionysian as well as the Apollonian, and also inhabit the Black Swan believably?

Can an artist embody an extreme range? If not, can the issue be forced; and if so, what's the cost? These are the questions "Black Swan" poses.

Erica Sayers (Barbara Hershey) is the ballet version of the overprotective horrormom in "Carrie," vicariously living dreams of success through her daughter. Thomas Leroy is one of Vincent Cassel's stock-intrade charismatic creeps, this time in the form of a tyrant choreographer.

And Lily (Mila Kunis) is seductive as the dancer with the chaotic, dark fire that Portman's Nina lacks. Kunis's Lily draws Portman's character into her world of hookups in bars, pill-enhanced mood control, and laissez-faire attitude toward practice, ostensibly to become her friend, but we quickly sense a darker, ruthless competitiveness behind her motives.

Nina allows herself to be drawn in since, as one theory goes, to be true in art one should really live it. As Charlie Parker famously said, "If you don't live it, it won't come out your horn." However, a lot of what he lived was heroin addiction, so maybe ... that doesn't apply to ballet as much? Director Aronofsky says otherwise.

Nina's apparent above-and-beyond ambition for gaining recognition for having achieved perfection is underscored throughout the film by self-mutilations that demonstrate the lengths she's willing to go to in order to access her inner Black Swan. Since our shortened attention spans need to be held more and more these days by the shock techniques of the horror genre, there are many in this film.

The dark grays, blues, and blacks make it a somber, heavy film. The self-mutilation is dis-



Lily (Mila Kunis), the dancer with natural Black



(Above) Natalie Portman as the White Swan in her shape-shifting, Oscarwinning performance as obsessive, delusional prima ballerina Nina Sayers in "The Black Swan." (Right) Natalie Portman as the Black Swan.

The secular performance of Nina Savers (Natalie Portman) is never intended to uplift and inspire the audience: she dances entirely for herself.



(Above) Stage-mother Erica Sayers (Barbara Hershey) and her ballerina daughter Nina Sayers (Natalie Portman). (**Left)** Nina Sayers (Natalie Portman) and choreographer Thomas

turbing, and the pall of horror and creepiness hangs over everything. So what's redeeming about "Black Swan," besides the physical beauty of Portman and Kunis and the interesting questions about perfection in art?

#### What's the Payoff?

The issue of artists sacrificing and enduring pain in order to achieve perfection is a welllife-threatening weight gain that Robert De Niro ate himself up to for "Raging Bull."

Any act of creativity leads to a certain amount of obsession, and any creative person knows that the euphoric state of getting something exactly right, and honoring their God-given talent, is their raison d'être.

This ranges from violinists and sitarists

practicing until their fingers bleed, Delta Force operators shooting pistols until their hands bleed, new Harley-Davidson owners staying up till 3 a.m. with the aftermarket parts catalog and obsessing about which exhaust pipes will express their personalities better, or ballerinas dancing until their toes and ankles bleed. They don't call it blood, sweat, and tears for nothing. The pain of obsession is a "hurts so good" kind of pain. Are there any further payoffs for the performer than perfection for perfection's sake? The greatest stage actor of all time, Laurence Olivier, although he was undoubtedly being glib, said that he was never conscious of any motivation to be perfect other than the desire to show off.

The inherent nature of the performing arts is such that they can fuel the human attachment to showing off easier than in painting, sculpting, and poetry. Actors, dancers, and musicians are demonstrating something they've worked hard on in front of a crowd, and there's applause.

But people just simply want to show each other what they accomplished, starting with "Mommy, mommy, lookit-me lookit-me jump off the diving board!" Nina achieves her goal; the audience clearly loves Nina's final performance.

So what's the big deal?

#### Classical Versus 'Method' Acting

We go to see art to experience a degree of perfection, and as a reminder of what high levels of attainment humanity is capable of. However, in the performing arts, and specifically acting, there was a shift that occurred when acting transitioned from classical methods to Konstantin Stanislavsky's vision of emotional authenticity, which one of his students, Lee Strasberg, then turned into the now famous "method acting."

In the past, the outer, perfect form was



king, and the human emotions were left out of it. This was intended to leave the performer as an empty vessel or conduit through which the divine could be channeled. Now, authentic human emotion is paramount; it's far more interesting to our modern tastes. For a fascinating pseudohistorical depiction of how this shift occurred, see Claire Danes's Shakespeare performance in 2004's "Stage Beauty."

We want to see real emotion, not fake. But in the distant past, when art was meant to depict the divine, it was with the intention of uplifting the observer spiritually, and not to impart a sense of satisfaction in baser human emotions such as revenge (that exist throughout Shakespeare's work). In terms of the original use of art, even Shakespeare's secular poetry, beautiful as it is, was a fallen art form. The original theater was church services—wholly in the realm of the sacred.

And so Nina's secular performance is never intended to uplift and inspire the audience. She dances entirely for herself and willingly drops her spiritual level, alof true art," as Aronofsky depicts it.

The question that Aronofsky seems to be posing is whether it is possible to strive for artistic perfection and authenticity for reasons other than an ambitious obsessivecompulsive, narcissistic personality and needing to show off.

#### Back to the Sacred

What of healing? If art didn't have a healing capacity, the field of art therapy wouldn't exist. We know that art can heal, and that healers are not motivated by a need for attention. The dark conclusion of "Black Swan" (which I won't give away) is the logical outcome of art that's trending further and further away from art's origins.

What of goodness? The film shows the dramatic sacrifice that happens when the third ingredient—Socrates's concept of goodness—goes missing.

Can we in modern times reintroduce the sacred into art? This is definitely achievable. Here's a quote taken from the classical Chinese dance website of Shen Yun: "Almost every culture looked toward the divine for inspiration. Art was meant to uplift, bringing joy to both the people who created and experienced it. It is this principle that drives Shen Yun performers and their art."

Professional dancers from around the globe have agreed that Shen Yun attains a level of perfection in dance that is rarely seen. So this positive intention, to display divine images, with the intent to heal through joy and beauty is the key to attaining perfection without the deleterious side effects.

I initially gave "Black Swan" a rating of 4 out of 5 stars. Now I feel like downgrading it to a 3.5 just because it's dark, depressing, scary, and has drugs and gratuitous sex. Wait! I'll let the rating stand for technical aspects, but as I find nowadays that I don't really want to see ballet, one of our last remaining pure art forms, demeaned in that setting anymore, I'll give it two ratings (see above).

Nevertheless, director Darren Aronofsky has actually done an excellent service by showing how art has reached the extreme of a downward, demonic trend. Now that we've reached that extreme, perhaps things will turn around.

**REACHING WITHIN: WHAT TRADITIONAL ART OFFERS THE HEART** 

# Divinely Inspired Endurance: 'The Temptation of St. Anthony'

**ERIC BESS** 

any of us reach a point in our lives where we struggle with becoming the moral person we know we can be. We intend to improve our moral character, but we're bombarded by the heaviest of burdens whenever we try.

Many of us, unable to endure the suffering of this struggle, settle or give up. We tell ourselves that we are who we are, and we relax our efforts to be our best selves. Some of us, however, like St. Anthony, endure the burden and transform into better versions of ourselves.

#### St. Anthony

St. Anthony is considered the father of organized Christian monasticism. At around the age of 20, Anthony devoted himself to an ascetic life of isolation in the mountains. During his time there, he was tormented repeatedly by seductive and devilish visions and creatures.

Sometimes, through instilling fear, the demons appeared as wild beasts in the hope that Anthony that would give up his ascetic practice, give up his love of God. He may have been tempted to take the easy way out. Other times, demons would simply beat him to the point of death.

#### The scene tells of demons' assault on Anthony, Anthony's endurance, and his communication with the divine.

But Anthony's torments weren't always so aggressive. Sometimes, the devil would appear to him as a beautiful woman to tempt lust. Other times, he would conjure riches to tempt Anthony's greed.

On one occasion, the tortured Anthony remained unafraid and steadfast while demons attacked his dwelling. At the extreme

Anthony dealt with these temptations stick to attack Anthony successfully and overcame them through constant prayer and penance. He would later leave his solitude to teach his way of spiritual purity and freedom from temptation.

#### The Isenheim Altarpiece and the **Temptation of St. Anthony**

The Isenheim Altarpiece was created by Niclaus of Haguenau and Mathias Grünewald between 1512 and 1516—around the same time that Raphael was painting at the Vatican—for the Antonite order at the Isenheim monastery. Niclaus of Haguenau created the sculpted portion, and Grünewald painted the panels.

The Isenheim Altarpiece was located in the monastery's hospital, where monks of the Antonite order helped victims of St. Anthony's Fire, an illness common in the

Middle Ages and caused by the fungus ergot in contaminated rye flour. The images of St. Anthony served as inspiration for those who suffered at the hospital.

Two painted panels from the innermost register of the altarpiece illustrate parts of St. Anthony's life. We will look at the right panel, "The Temptation of St. Anthony," which depicts Anthony's torments.

The scene that Grünewald interpreted in his painting is a scene described in the "Vita B. Antonii," which is St. Anthony's biography. The scene tells of demons' assault on Anthony, Anthony's endurance, and his communication with the divine.

Georg Scheja, in his book "The Isenheim Altarpiece," relays to us this scene from Anthony's biography:

"The all-out terrorist attack on Anthony took place at the very start of his career in the desert. It was then that 'the Master' stood aside to watch how His saint comported himself and thereafter endowed him with new strength.

"The entire place swarmed with apparitions of all sorts of wild beasts which pressed him hard. He, however, 'although feeling an ever more frightful pain throughout his body, nevertheless lay there unafraid and still vigilant in spirit.' In that dire moment he suddenly saw Heaven open itself and a ray of light stream down which caused the demons to vanish..."

Christ then says to Anthony:

"Anthony, I was here, but I bided my time and observed your struggle. Because you held your ground and did not give in, so shall I make you a helper-in-need at all times, and it should be that your name will be celebrated in all places.'

"Thereupon Anthony raised himself up and 'so much had he been given new strength that he felt himself to possess more power than that which he had had

#### 'The Temptation of St. Anthony'

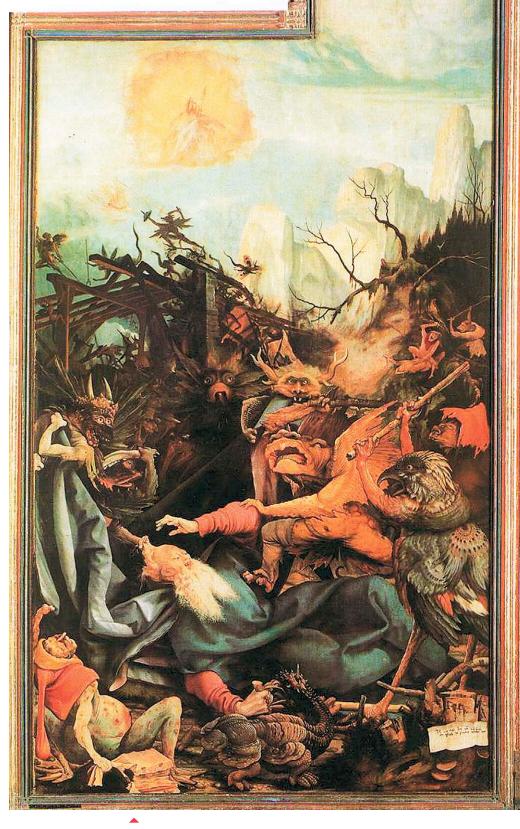
In Grünewald's painting, a calm Anthony is on the ground at the bottom of the composition. He wears a blue cloak over a red shirt, and his white hair and beard reveal

Fantastical demon hybrids confront Anthony on all sides. In front of him, at the right of the composition, a bird-headed of his suffering, he saw heaven open up, demon attacks him with a stick. Behind and a ray of light obliterated the demons. that one, an orange demon also raises a

Behind him, to the left of the composition, one demon with a dragon face and horns pulls at his cloak while another,

which is partially obscured, pulls his hair. At the bottom of the composition, two demons seem to sit idly by. The armadillolike monster turns away from Anthony, while, at the bottom left-hand corner of the composition, the human-like one has a sickly demeanor and suffers from boils on its body. It faces Anthony, but its head looks toward the sky.

Where it looks, however, leads us up toward the top of the composition. As we move up, we see demons in the background watching Anthony's torment. Some are fighting something off in the distance to the right. To the left is Anthony's hut, which the demons have destroyed.



"The Temptation of St. Anthony," circa 1515, by Mathias Grünewald, Oil on panel, 104.3 inches by 55.5 inches. Unterlinden Museum.



In a detail of the painting, an armadillo-like monster turns away from Anthony while a human-like demon faces him, but it looks toward the sky.

In the sky, we can see dark figures battling light ones. And at the very top left of the composition, the heavens open and reveal the Divine One who has come to aid Anthony.

Anthony has a goal, and his goal is to get close to God and God's love. The demons have a plan as well: to make Anthony give up his endeavor. These demons are doomed to fail because Anthony does not endure his torments alone.

first. He must prove that he is worthy in the eyes of the divine before divine aid is granted. This requires that Anthony sit and calmly endure. Despite Anthony's being attacked by an array of demons from all sides, Grünewald depicts him in a calm

state with no expression of pain or worry. Often, many of us who believe in the di-

Do we first need to turn within to confront the darkness that haunts our spirits before heaven shines its light on and destroys that darkness? How much are we willing to endure to truly cultivate love of the divine and fearlessness in the face of evil?

The traditional arts often contain spiritual representations and symbols the meanings of which can be lost to our modern minds. In our series "Reaching Within: What Traditional Art Offers the Heart," we interpret visual arts in ways that may be morally insightful for us today. We do not assume to provide absolute answers to questions generations have wrestled with, but hope that our questions will inspire a reflective journey toward our becoming more authentic, compassionate, and

#### Fearlessly Overcoming Evil

But Anthony must prove his resolve

vine ask to be relieved of problems without actually living our lives according to the divine's moral requirements. Some of us go as far as to ask the divine to bless us with worldly gifts, as if we are in the position to issue orders to the heavens.

But examples like St. Anthony's remind us that there is a moral requirement for divine intervention. Must we first overcome our temptations and prove ourselves worthy before the heavens open up and aid

courageous human beings.

Eric Bess is a practicing representational artist and is a doctoral candidate at the Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts (IDSVA).

**FILM** 

## Doris Day's First Romantic Musical Films

#### **TIFFANY BRANNAN**

St. Valentine's Day is over, but the coming of spring always foretells the coming of love! Nothing pairs better with leftover Valentine candy than classic romantic films. The Golden Era of Hollywood developed some of the most iconic love stories, like "Casablanca" (1942) and "Gone with the Wind" (1939). However, not all classic romances are epic dramas. Some of the most endearing are lighthearted tales of love, music, and laughter.

Such are Doris Day's first two films, "Romance on the High Seas" (1948) and "My Dream Is Yours" (1949). These two Warner Bros. musicals established the pretty blonde and popular singer as a movie star and a Hollywood personality.

In addition to Doris, these films share multiple cast members, including leading man Jack Carson and character actors S.Z. "Cuddles" Sakall, Franklin Pangborn, and John Berkes. The production crew is also comparable, including director Michael Curtiz and associate producer George Amy.

Besides these vital contributors, these movies both have endearing love stories about people finding romance in unexpected situations. Each shows that true love can mean giving up your beloved for his or her ultimate happiness.

#### 'Romance on the High Seas'

Georgia Garrett (Day) is a vivacious nightclub singer who haunts a travel agency, although she can't afford to take the lavish trips she plans. A rare opportunity comes her way when socialite Elvira Kent (Janis Paige) offers her a three-month South American cruise, all expenses paid. The only catch is that she must pretend to be Mrs. Kent during the trip, while the real Elvira stays in New York to monitor the fidelity of her husband, Michael (Don DeFore).

Little does Elvira know that her husband likewise suspects her, so he has hired private detective Peter Virgil (Carson) to shadow her during the cruise. Peter and Georgia soon meet, but their immediate attraction is hindered by the complicated deceptions. Can they discover the truth about each other as they navigate romance on the high seas?

Peter's first reaction to Georgia posing as Elvira is "WOW!" Nevertheless, as he assured Michael, his policy is "Never kiss a client's wife." Similarly, Elvira warns Georgia: "While it's your lips that are being kissed, it's my reputation that's

suffering." However, both mottos are sidelined, if not forgotten, during the cruise. Peter and Georgia both struggle with ethics. Peter wants to fall in love with Georgia, but he wishes she weren't married. Georgia wants to tell Peter that she is single, but she fears he'll resent her deception.

Although they are in love with each other, Peter and "Elvira" admirably fight their attraction because they respect matrimony. Peter eventually sacrifices his own happiness by leaving Rio when Mr. Kent arrives, telling him to go to his wife. Fortunately, the girl he loves isn't really married, so they have a chance for happiness.

This movie shows the romance and glamour of ocean cruises in the late 1940s. With World War II over, people were enjoying leisure travel again. The cruise that Georgia and Peter take goes to South America, stopping in Cuba, Trinidad, and Rio de Janeiro. These tropical destinations are great opportunities for local color and Latin-themed music. For example, the cruise stops long enough in Rio for passengers to stay at a hotel during Carnival time. Yet the ship itself looks luxurious and entertaining enough to entice one to stay onboard for the whole three-month duration.

As Doris sings about falling in love in Cuba, "It's magic"; this could be describing the whole film!

#### 'My Dream Is Yours'

When conceited singer Gary Mitchell (Lee Bowman) refuses to renew his radio program contract, his agent, Doug Blake (Carson), vows to find a new artist to replace him. He discovers Martha Gibson (Day) when she sings along with a record, having been tipped off by her bartender uncle (Edgar Kennedy).

Vivian (Eve Arden), as financier, Doug flies Martha out to Hollywood. The young war widow sadly leaves her young son, Freddie (Duncan Richardson), with her uncle when Doug convinces her to establish her career before sending for the boy.

Using his reluctant business partner,



Doris Day's second film, "My Dream Is Yours," also starred Jack Carson.

opportunities,

her characters

unexpectedly

find romance.

Doris Day's first two

films share multiple cast

and creative members,

including director Michael

Curtiz, pictured here circa



American actress and singer Doris Day in her dressing room on the set of "Romance on the High Seas."

Martha fails to land a contract at her first audition, but she gains Gary Mitch In both films, ell's attention. As Martha develops a she plays a casual romance with Gary, Doug pretends he's upset only because he dislikes perky singer Gary, not because he loves Martha. Meanwhile, they realize that she's been waiting for unsuccessful because she's been singing her big break. the wrong material. Doug insists there is nothing romantic While finding between him and Martha, but he is very jealous when she goes out with Gary

> Mitchell. He thinks Gary is a conceited heel, but he is especially upset to see his protégée dazzled by his treacherous former client. When he questions Martha's feelings for Gary, she insists it is just for laughs. However, that evening, they end up passionately kissing. Gary says that he could help Martha

achieve success, but she won't fire Doug. When Martha replaces drunken Gary on a radio program, Gary feels betrayed. She becomes famous but can't forget Gary, feeling that her success is incomplete without him.

At the same time, Doug loves Martha himself, even loving Freddie as his own son, but he arranges Gary's comeback for Martha's sake. He proves his love by helping her get the man she loves, even though Gary cares only about himself.

This movie shows Hollywood's heyday. Scenes take place in famous, bygone Tinseltown locations like the Brown Derby and the Coco Palms. It also gives a glimpse into the world of radio broadcasting in the late 1940s. A special treat is Freddie's semianimated Easter dream sequence, which includes Bugs Bunny and Tweety performing alongside Doris Day and Jack Carson costumed as giant

Because of the live audience, the visual experience is almost as important as the audio broadcast. The all-female orchestra members wear beautiful matching gowns, and soloist Gary Mitchell wears a striking white dinner jacket. The radio program is called "Hofer's Hour of Enchantment," and the beautiful music sung by Doris Day makes it so.

#### America's Sweetheart

Doris Day has been called America's sweetheart. These two films cemented her Hollywood stardom, endearing her to the public. In both films, she plays a perky singer waiting for her big break. While finding opportunities, her characters unexpectedly find romance.

Similar though the characters are, Doris's progression as a Hollywood performer can be seen in comparing these two films. The role of Georgia Garrett was intended for Betty Hutton, who dropped out because of impending motherhood. Several other actresses were considered for the role before newcomer Doris Day was cast. Since it was her first film, she was billed fourth.

After the success of "Romance on the High Seas," Doris's next film role was built around her previous experiences. Like Martha Gibson, Doris was a popular radio singer and recording artist before becoming a film star, and she also had to leave her son with a relative while pursuing her career. Doris was encour-

aged to imitate Betty Hutton's enthusiastic singing style during her screen test. Just as Martha is unsuccessful until she starts singing tender ballads, Doris shone only when she used her natural, relaxed style.

HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

As you continue celebrating the season of love, watch these two charming romantic musicals! "Romance on the High Seas" and "My Dream Is Yours" are not the most famous love stories from Hollywood's Golden Era, just as Doris Day and Jack Carson aren't classic Hollywood's most iconic couple. However, these simple, sweet love stories are endearing, heartwarming, and illustrative of what love really is. Both stories show that sometimes the best way to prove and win your love is to sacrifice your own

Tiffany Brannan is a 19-year-old opera singer, Hollywood historian, travel writer, film blogger, vintage fashion expert, and ballet writer. In 2016, she and her sister founded the Pure Entertainment Preservation Society, an organization dedicated to reforming the arts by reinstating the Motion Picture Production Code.



Doris Day in the trailer of her film debut, in "Romance on the High Seas."



Comedic actress Betty Hutton (circa 1945) was considered for the lead in "Romance on the High Seas," but the role went to Doris Day. Here Hutton is at Hollywood's Beverly Wilshire.

#### POPCORN AND INSPIRATION

## A Rousing Biopic About a Real American Hero

IAN KANE

here are many heroes who initially don't seem destined for greatness.
This certainly is the case with Alvin York, a real-life American hero who went above and beyond the call of duty during World War I.

York's heroics are retold in director Howard Hawks's fascinating "Sergeant York," a 1941 patriotic war movie. The film opens in the Valley of the Three Forks of the Wolf, nestled in the Cumberland Mountains of Tennessee. The local pastor, Rosier Pile (Walter Brennan), is leading his parish in a powerful Christian hymn titled "When the Roll Is Called Up Yonder."

When the hymn concludes, the pastor begins his sermon, which is interrupted by gunfire that erupts from somewhere outside of the church. York (Gary Cooper) and his fellow booze-swilling cohorts are riding around town and shooting their pistols off in a belligerent bout of drunkenness.

Even while drunk and disorderly, York manages to shoot his initials into a tree right outside of the church, "A V." If there's one thing that good ol' country boy York does well, it's to hit a target with unnatural accuracy.

York's mother (Margaret Wycherly) goes to the settlement's general store (which is coincidently owned by Pastor Pile) to make amends for her son's transgressions, and it is here that we learn the widow's family is destitute. The only thing the Yorks own is a small patch of land.

While there, Mrs. York suggests, in a beautiful Southern drawl, that the pastor have a talk with her older son, Alvin, to tell him that "A little religion wouldn't do him no hurt."

Meanwhile, York and his buddies take to swilling even more booze at the local bar and get so soused that they get into some fisticuffs with other drunken ne'erdo-wells. His younger brother, George (Dickie Moore), marches into the place and tells him that his mother wants him to come home. York returns home with his tail tucked between his legs and makes amends with his stern but fair mother, who greets him at the door with a bucket of cold water in an effort to sober him up.



Gary Cooper in "Sergeant York," in his Oscar-winning performance.



Pastor Rosier Pile (Walter Brennan), also the proprietor of the local general store, talks with his parishioner Mrs. York (Margaret Wycherly), in "Sergeant York."

Trying to make amends, York begins tilling his family's fields. Pastor Pile then travels to the York property and does try to persuade the youth to become a man of faith. But York is stubborn and shrugs off the pastor's endeavors.

Later, while out hunting for foxes with his younger brother and some friends, York falls under the spell of local country girl Gracie Williams (Joan Leslie). Although she is also attracted to him (in a shy manner), she figures that he isn't quite marriage material

because of his family's circumstances.

This motivates York to ditch the booze and set his sights on a larger patch of property called the "bottomland." Unfortunately, while working his tail off to obtain the land, he gets hoodwinked by a conniving wheeler-dealer, Nate Tomkins (Erville Alderson). This causes York to return to the bottle, and in a fit of drunken fury, he sets off to kill Tomkins.

Perhaps through divine intervention, a bolt of lightning strikes him, bending his rifle's barrel and thus rendering it useless. York views this as a wake-up call and he begins attending Pastor Pile's services, much to the solace of his family, who are regular attendees.

York undergoes a total Christian conversion, which compels him to be a better man. He makes amends with local folks, including Tomkins.

However, World War I intrudes and all of the local men must register for the draft. Because of his religious conversion, York has become a pacifist. But Pastor Pile advises York to register anyway, and he reluctantly obliges. When York is selected for Army service, a conundrum arises: Can he serve his country and go to war, while being against killing his fellow man?

#### **Focus on the Hero**

While the first two acts of the film paint a beautiful tapestry of York's upbringing in the backwoods of Tennessee, the final act showcases his extraordinary honor and courage in the face of adversity on the battlefields and in the trenches of the Great War.

For a film set in 1941, "Sergeant York" has an exceptional level of character development that enables it to transcend mere propaganda. Through Hawks's more-thancapable guidance, Cooper is set free

to deliver one of his finest, most compelling performances, buttressed further by Wycherly as his stalwart, ever-supportive mother. The excellent supporting cast carry their own weight without being too obtrusive.

"Sergeant York" is a deeply moving film that should inspire even the most ardent of pessimists out there. Its sincere dedication to unusual heroism, patriotism, and selflessness is something that should be witnessed. Be warned: Bring a handkerchief or box of tissues to wipe away all of those tears.

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

#### 'Sergeant York'

Director

compels him to

be a better

man.

Howard Hawks

Gary Cooper, Walter Brennan,

Margaret Wycherly, Joan Leslie

**Running Time** 2 hours, 14 minutes

Not Rated

Release Date Sept. 27, 1941 (USA)



