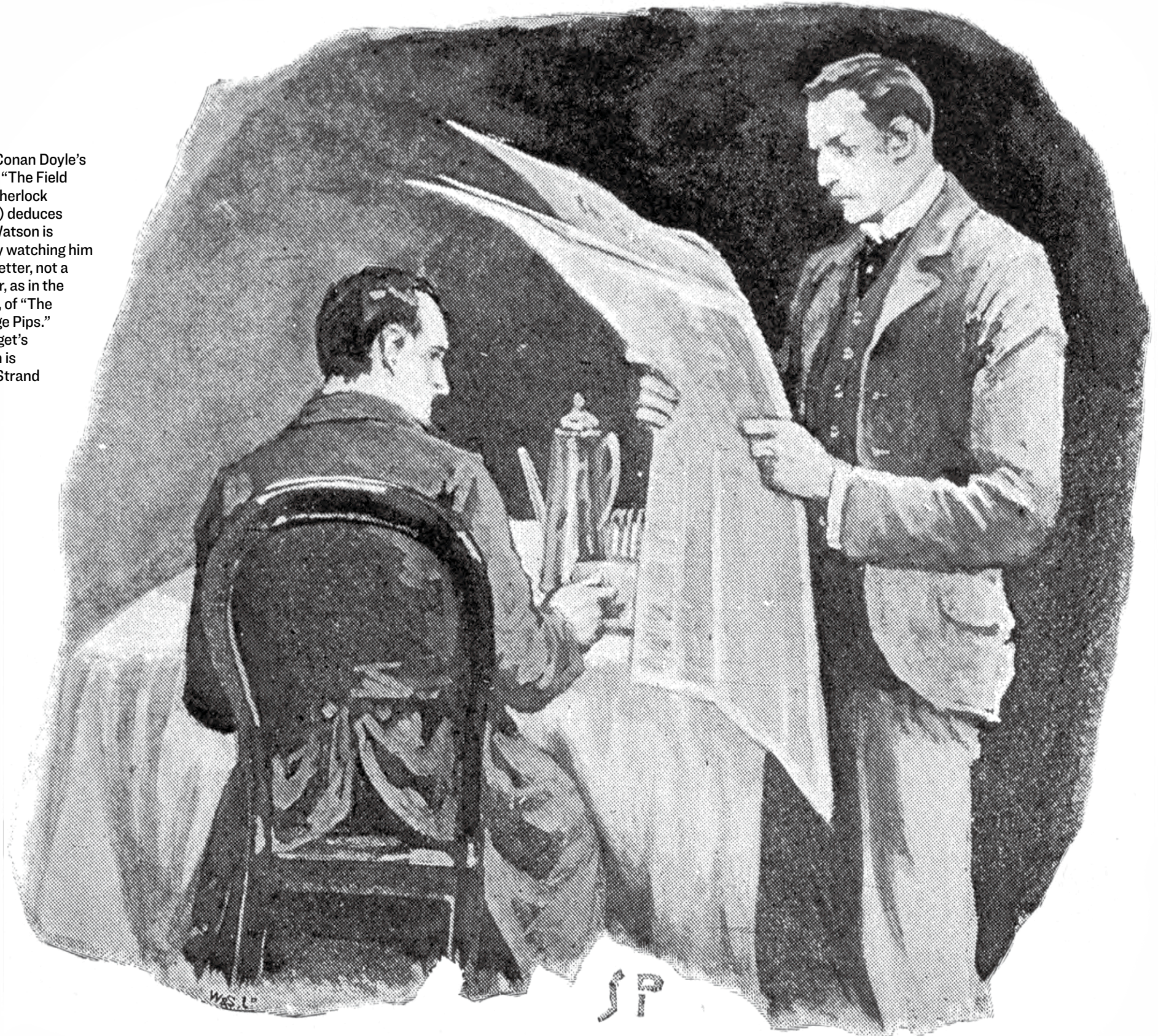


THE EPOCH TIMES

ARTS & CULTURE

PUBLIC DOMAIN

▶ In Arthur Conan Doyle's very short "The Field Bazaar," Sherlock Holmes (L) deduces what Dr. Watson is thinking by watching him reading a letter, not a newspaper, as in the case, here, of "The Five Orange Pips." Sidney Paget's illustration is from *The Strand Magazine*.



LITERATURE

'The Field Bazaar' at 125 Years—Sherlock Holmes and the Importance of Trifles

The mystery of the story and the character

SEAN FITZPATRICK

The towering mystery of Sherlock Holmes is very much alive in the tiny mystery of 'The Field Bazaar.'

In 1886, a struggling 27-year-old physician named Arthur Conan Doyle made a fateful decision that was intended simply to pay the bills, but that would end up enriching the world. He published a novella featuring an eccentric consulting detective by the name of Sherlock Holmes. With "A Study in Scarlet" appearing in Beeton's Christmas Annual in 1887, the stage was set for what would prove one of the greatest archetypal creations in the history of literature.

And yet, it was a creation Doyle would destroy, only to realize later that he had started something too powerful for him to end. And one of the initial white flags that Doyle was forced to wave to appease a disapproving public was a trifle in the form of a charming exchange between Holmes and his friend and colleague, Dr. Watson, titled "The Field Bazaar," published in 1896, 125 years ago this year.

As Mr. Holmes remarked, "there is nothing so important as trifles," and if it is anything, "The Field Bazaar" is a trifle. The towering mystery of Sherlock Holmes, however,

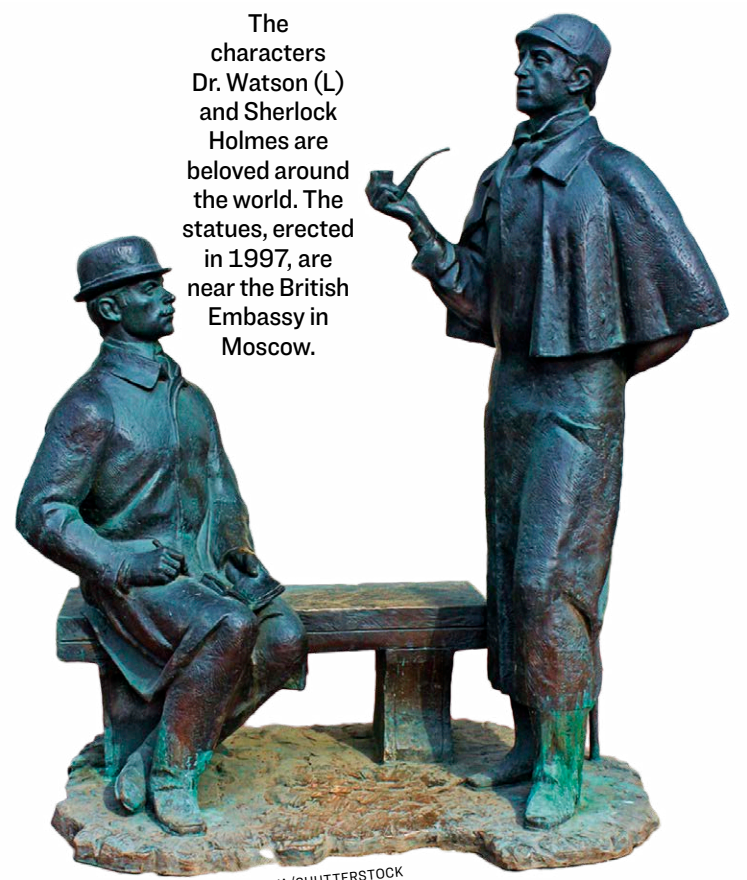
is very much alive in the story's tiny mystery, as it furthers the saga-shifting concept of apocryphal writings—a suspicion that has egged scholars on and enticed the intellects of readers for over a century, and shall, God willing, for centuries to come.

The Bizarre Origin of 'The Field Bazaar'

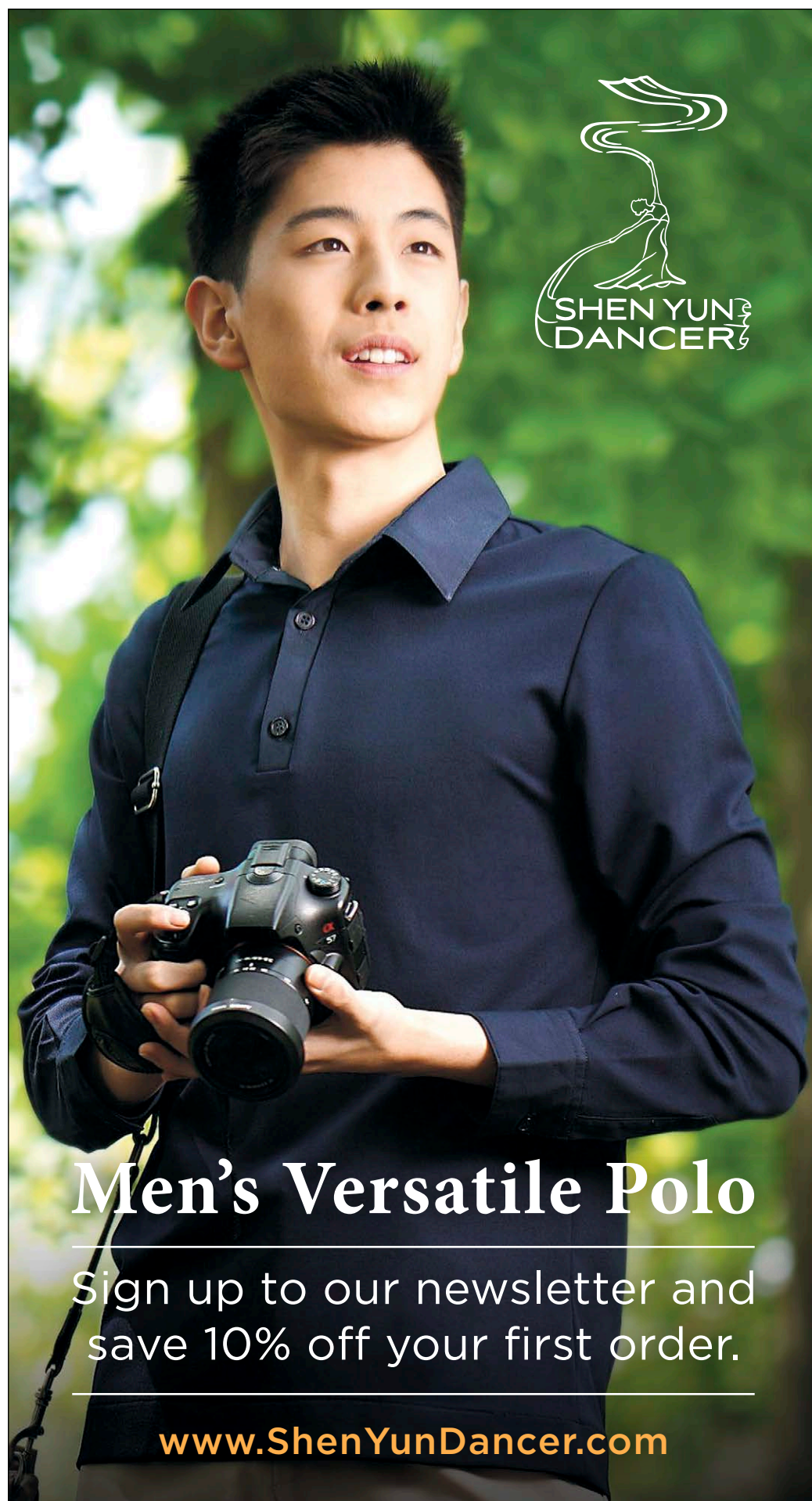
While writing these stories proved successful in covering Doyle's costs of living, Sherlock Holmes himself came with a price—time and energy. "He takes my mind from better things," Doyle wrote before releasing "The Final Problem" in 1893, where he finally disposed of his problem and dispatched Sherlock Holmes for good and all, plunging him to his death beneath Switzerland's Reichenbach Falls in a struggle with his archnemesis, Professor James Moriarty. "Killed Holmes," Doyle wrote tersely in his diary, and his readership was shocked and dismayed, wore mourning bands in public, and shed tears in private over the impossible pages of *The Strand*.

Continued on Page 4

The characters Dr. Watson (L) and Sherlock Holmes are beloved around the world. The statues, erected in 1997, are near the British Embassy in Moscow.



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LITERATURE

Pointing Us in the Right Direction: Good Books About Great Books

JEFF MINICK

Whenever I write for The Epoch Times or other outlets about books, which is frequently, a reader or two will email me asking if I might send them a list of authors and titles worth their while. Most of them are looking for suggestions for their children and grandchildren, seeking to supplement their education with quality literature and histories. A few are autodidacts who, feeling that they are missing some fundamental part of their education, seek books to fill those gaps.

Though my responses are, I am certain, sometimes inadequate, these inquisitive folks have in one sense come to the right guy. "Books about books" constitute one of my favorite genres for reading. In my home library are a dozen or more such books, ranging in size from Nick Hornby's plump "Ten Years in the Tub: A Decade Soaking in Great Books" to Michael Dirda's slim and elegant "Book by Book: Notes on Reading and Life." Roberto Cotroneo makes far fewer recommendations in "Letters to My Son on the Love of Books," but writes beautifully about the power of literature and its effect on our lives.

Somewhere in my collection—messy and scattered from packing and unpacking for an anticipated move that has yet to occur—is Pat Conroy's user-friendly "My Reading Life." Two books—Emma Beare's "501 Must-Read Books" and James Mustich's "1,000 Books to Read Before You Die: A Life-Changing List—stand side by side and are together over 3 inches thick. The public library offers a wealth of such titles, and the internet sports many sites recommending all sorts of literary works.

So let's grab a chair and take a look together at some guides to great literature.

Advice From 3 Bibliophiles

We'll start with Michael Dirda's "Book by Book: Notes on Reading and Life." Dirda, who in 1993 won the Pulitzer Prize for Criticism, divides his book into topical chapters like "The Pleasures of Learning," "Work and Leisure," and "The Books of Love," and fills each of these chapters with quotations, short literary essays, and reviews of many books. As Dirda writes in his Preface, "Over the past fifty years I've spent a lot of time—some might say an inordinate amount of time—in the company of books," and thank heaven he did. His lifetime of reading and writing has enriched our literature. If you like "Book by Book," try another of Dirda's books from my collection, "Readings: Essays and Literary Entertainments," his collection of essays on the joys of books and reading. Novelist Nick Hornby's "Ten Years in the Tub" has introduced me to many authors and books unfamiliar to me. Hornby wrote these long reviews, which reflect his own tastes and eccentricities, for the literary and arts magazine "The Believer." Each review begins with

an impressive list of "Books Read" and another of "Books Bought." Hornby expresses himself with humor and wit, and blends passions other than literature into these reviews, with soccer and music at the top of the list.

If you're looking for a collection that includes modern books and classics, an enormous variety of subjects, and an erudite author who like Dirda and Hornby is an inveterate reader, "1,000 Books to Read Before You Die" should make the top of the list as well. James Mustich used to write the reviews for selected books for his catalog, "A Common Reader," which was cause for celebration every time it arrived in my mail. In "1,000 Books," he displays the talents honed in producing that catalog and creates a treasure house of titles and authors.

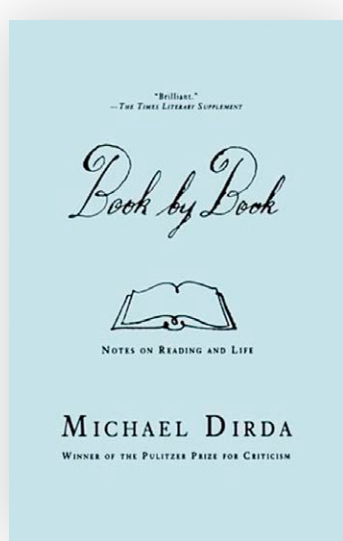
While writing this article, I randomly opened "1,000 Books" and found myself in the "K" section. Here, in alphabetical order by author were Roger Kahn's baseball book, "The Boys of Summer," Madeleine Kamman's "When French Women Cook," and MacKinlay Kantor's Civil War fictional masterpiece, "Andersonville." These entries demonstrate Mustich's broad knowledge of literature and his skill in delivering concise and exquisite reviews. Along with his evaluation of each book, he also offers readers short lists of other related works.

For the Kids

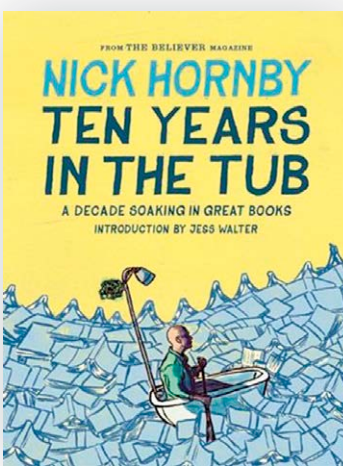
Many excellent books of recommended reading for our young people are available. Given that contemporary children's literature sometimes favors political correctness or consists of propaganda for certain social causes, parents might consider turning to guides that stress either older books or morality in literature. A favorite reference in our family when my kids were young was Gladys Hunt's "Honey for a Child's Heart," Aimed at children age 14 and younger, "Honey for a Child's Heart" has sold more than 250,000

copies over the years, and there's a reason for that success. Hunt is a book enthusiast and an expert on children's literature who offers encouragement to parents along with an outstanding book list by grade. To gain a sense of her literary voice, let's listen to her thoughts from Chapter 1: "Children and books go together in a special way. I can't imagine any pleasure greater than bringing to the uncluttered, supple mind of a child the delight of knowing the many rich things God has given us to enjoy. Parents have this wonderful privilege, and books are their keenest tools."

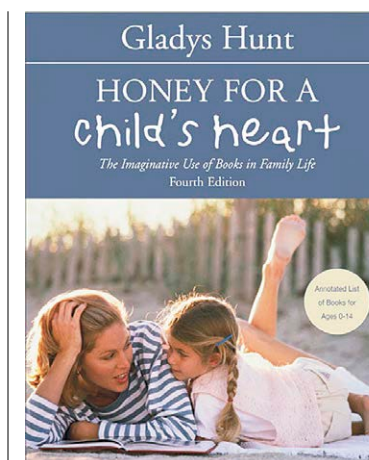
For this same age group, E.D. Hirsch and John Holdren put together "Books to Build On: A Grade-by-Grade Resource Guide for Parents and Teachers." Hirsch, who is known for his advocacy of cultural literacy and as the author of a book by the same name, and who edited the Core-Knowledge Series, gives us in this compendium of book recommendations for math, language arts, history, geography, and more, all by school grade level. Here is good, solid material useful for a home education



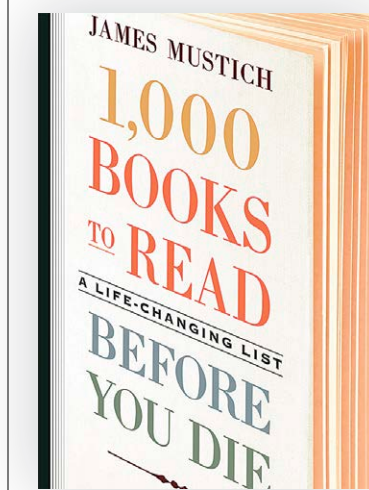
Author Michael Dirda, who wrote "Book by Book" won the 1993 Pulitzer Prize for Criticism.



Nick Hornby writes long reviews and expresses himself with humor and wit.



"Honey for a Child's Heart" suggests books that will instill morality in a child.



James Mustich's book includes modern books and classics, on an enormous variety of subjects.

program or just for enjoyment. Though I can't put my hands on the book, I remember William Kilpatrick's "Why Johnny Can't Tell Right From Wrong" included a fine list of books for younger children and for teenagers, all of them aimed at inculcating morality and virtue in their readers.

'Books about books' constitute one of my favorite genres for reading.

Online Resources

Here, we need to exercise caution. When I Googled "best books for teens," for example, one site that popped up suggested 20 books that teens should read before leaving high school. None of the books were older than 80 years, and nearly all of them were written in the last three decades. When you look over such a list, be vigilant and discerning to see if the recommendations align with your values. Search out online reviews, and read the description of the book, its characters, and its plot before handing it over to your child.

If you're looking for the classics, the "Great Books List" from the Charlemagne Institute offers a fine online compilation of such works. Here, editor Annie Holmquist contacted various classical schools, both private and public, asked what their students were reading, and made a list of the most popular of these books for grades K-12. Some parents and teachers might be taken aback by some of these titles, particularly for the high school grades, and shake their heads, believing that famous works like "The Aeneid" or Sophocles's "Theban Plays" are too difficult for young people today.

Not so. I taught some of the books on the Charlemagne Institute list to classes of homeschoolers, and though some of my students struggled—and probably a few never read the assigned texts—the majority had the ability to understand these classics. An example: To see a list of the books I intended to teach at the end of my career, please go to Asheville-



Looking for a good book? Here are terrific resources for finding terrific books.

leLatin.com/ and click on "Books and Summer Reading."

One excellent list of books for teens may be found online at "Best Classic Books for Teens (141 Books)." Here, as well as classics like "The Odyssey" and "Jane Eyre," we find books by writers like Roald Dahl, T.H. White, and Patricia MacLachlan.

Shared Reading

One of the great joys of reading is a book shared with a friend. Using the resources mentioned above, we can easily organize a book club for ourselves or for our children. Young people find such get-togethers to discuss a shared book an incentive for reading the book in the first place, but they also see them as just plain fun. Several of my grandchildren have participated in these clubs and return home excited by the conversation and their friends.

The same holds true for adults. A book club can serve as a springboard into reading the great classics or sharing some worthwhile contemporary works.

Who's Noah?

In one of the books I looked over while preparing this article—I can't recollect the book—a professor recounted an incident from his classroom. At one point during a discussion, a student raised his hand and asked, "Who's Noah?" This ignorance is not unusual. In my own

classes were students unfamiliar with certain commonplace nursery rhymes. Some had only a vague notion of our Founding and our Constitution, or had little or no knowledge of American figures like John and Abigail Adams, Booker T. Washington, and Theodore Roosevelt.

One mission of The Epoch Times is the celebration and preservation of culture. Sections in the paper like "Arts & Culture," "Life & Tradition," "Home," and "Mind & Body" all include many articles that emphasize handing over the gifts from the past to the present generation. We can all take part in this mission by actively engaging with history, the arts, and the customs of our ancestors; in other words, by reading books.

The guides mentioned here—and these are but a fraction of what is available—point us to titles and authors that can help accomplish that task. All we have to do is pick up these tools and put them to use.

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, "Amara 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 his blog.

What People Are Saying



I read The Epoch Times daily. I still like hard papers [...] and I still like to grab that paper in my hand, but I get more printed versions of stories than ever before. You guys have done an amazing job, and really—I think there's such a void in media, especially newspapers. They slant so solidly one way that there are very few papers that I can really feel that I can rely on, and The Epoch Times is one.

SEAN HANNITY
Talk show host



I congratulate you and The Epoch Times for the work you are doing, especially with regard to keeping the menace of the communist threat in front of us.

DR. SEBASTIAN GORKA
Military and intelligence analyst and former deputy assistant to the president



I rely on The Epoch Times newspaper for factual and unbiased news coverage.

LARRY ELDER
Best-selling author, attorney, and talk show host



The Epoch Times is a great place where you can understand traditional values in a way and in a tone and through content that is accessible. It's smart.

CARRIE SHEFFIELD
Columnist and broadcaster



It's our favorite paper. It's the first one we read. Thank you so much for your reporting of the news.

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LITERATURE

'The Field Bazaar' at 125 Years—Sherlock Holmes and the Importance of Trifles

The mystery of the story and the character

Continued from Page 1

Soon the widespread anguish over Holmes's demise gave way to widespread anger. The rebellion of readers was rumored. In the words of Doyle: "I was amazed at the concern expressed by the public. They say a man is never properly appreciated until he is dead, and the general protest against my summary execution of Holmes taught me how many and how numerous were his friends. 'You Brute!' was the beginning of a letter of remembrance which one lady sent me, and I expect she spoke for others beside herself. ... I fear I was utterly callous myself, and only glad to have a chance of opening out into new fields of imagination."

As Doyle considered the pain of his followers, and also contemplated what would become of 1901's inimitable reminiscence, "The Hound of the Baskervilles," Doyle got his feet wet by offering a tiny Sherlock Holmes story to *The Student*—a publication of his alma mater, the University of Edinburgh—to help with a fundraising bazaar for a new pavilion for the cricket field. The 1896 issue introduces the piece with glowing pride:

"Dr. A. Conan Doyle, another of our graduates, has contributed an original story of the 'Sherlock Holmes' type. We



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

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

all remember the indignation aroused by the death of the redoubtable detective, a few years ago. This is the only 'Sherlock Holmes' story published since then, and we have to offer our best thanks to the writer for his kindness in thus helping us and the Bazaar."

Though Holmes was still dead, for the time being, "The Adventure of the Empty House" of 1903 proved the ultimate conjuring and capitulation as the lead story in what would become the glorious collection of stories known as "The Return of Sherlock Holmes."

The Controversy of "The Field Bazaar"
The sketch recounted by Doyle in "The Field Bazaar" is wonderful, even though it is little more than a thousand words long—but it is not without its detractors. In it, we have the great characters themselves just as they are best known and most beloved: at breakfast with *The Times* and pipes in the sitting room of 221B Baker Street. Sherlock Holmes is up to his old tricks—a term he would certainly repudiate as a logician and no magician.

Using his well-known methods of observation and deduction, Holmes seemingly reads the mind of his frank friend, as Dr. Watson considers whether or not he should assist in an effort by the University of Edinburgh to expand his old

cricket club's field, the very matter that Doyle himself was undertaking in writing the story, giving it a charming self-referential aspect, which is furthered by Holmes's hypothesis that Watson has determined to recount their exchange as his contribution to the bazaar—again, the very thing that Doyle did.

This vignette, which presents an untold interlude before the Reichenbach affair, is immediately familiar and rings with authenticity. Holmes's character is as it ever was, and the doctor of Bradshaw and bowler, too, is both as awestruck and self-possessing as ever. Even so, the devotees of the "sacred writings" have long debated the canonical quality of "The Field Bazaar," with many Sherlockians and Holmesians alike refusing to recognize the piece as worthy of inclusion in the recognized accounts of the career of Sherlock Holmes.

In some ways the tale is too irregular even for some Irregulars, leaving "The Field Bazaar" as one of those contested territories in "The Great Game," keeping company with other disreputables such as the dubious "The Mazarin Stone" and "The Lion's Mane." These latter episodes have endured bristling objections due to their literary quality and glaring inconsistencies with the other published cases, which make them highly suspect as to their authorship and canonical worthiness. While "The Field Bazaar" is not as controversial or outrageous, it tends to be ranked with considerable misgivings.

Of notable mention among the objections to "The Field Bazaar" is Holmes's strangely rude dismissal of Watson's title of "Doctor," even though he did reportedly receive a Doctor of Medicine degree in "A Study in Scarlet." And while there is evidence that Watson played rugby from "The Sussex Vampire," there is nothing to corroborate that he ever played cricket. This latter point may be the true smoking gun (a term actually coined by Doyle in "The Gloria Scott"). In its own small way, "The Field Bazaar" challenges Holmes scholars as they test the authenticity and quality of the various cases, sounding the depths of their knowledge to identify so-called apocryphal writings with an eye that "sees and observes," as Holmes was ever wont to say.

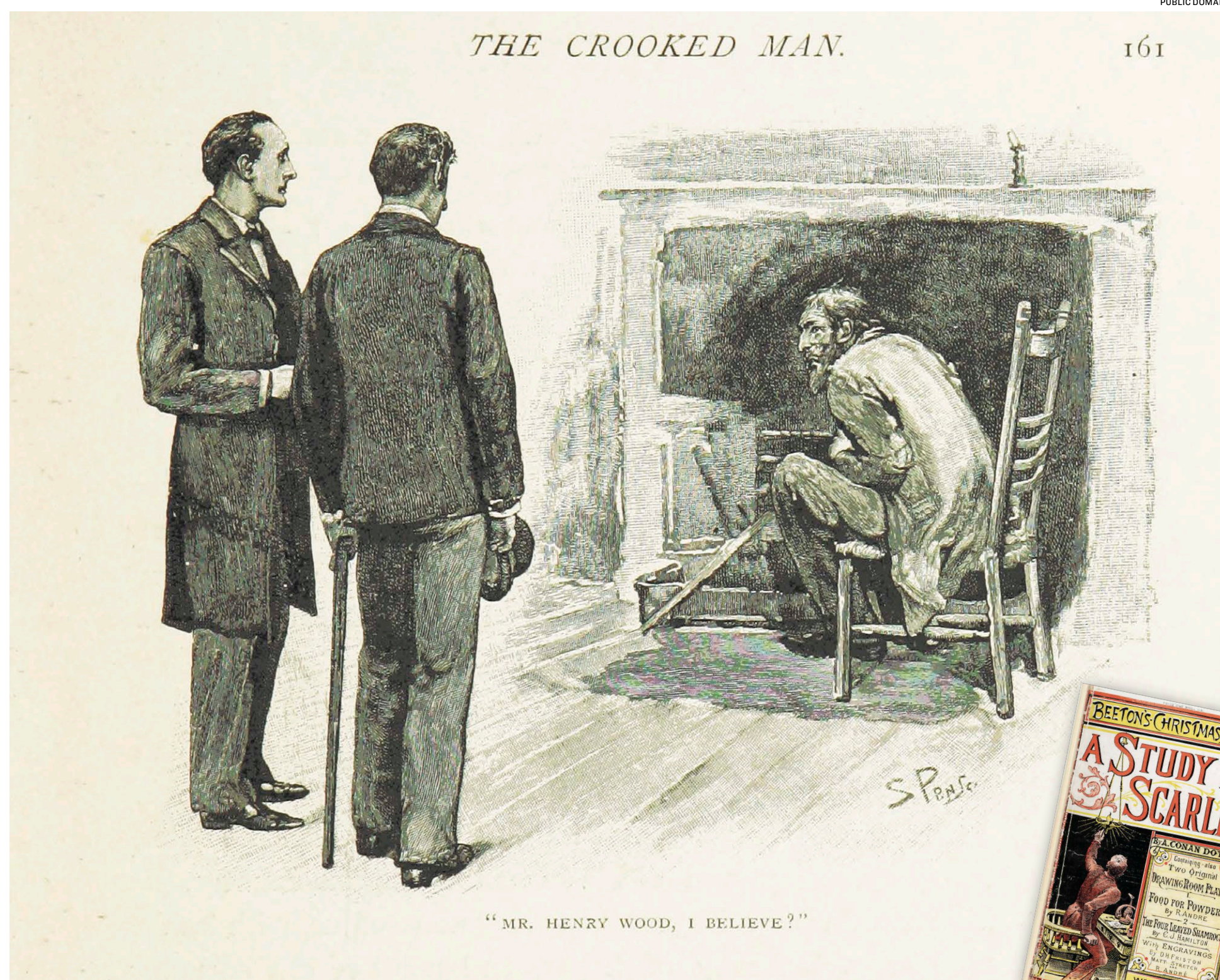
The Mystery of Sherlock Holmes

But the greatest mystery of the Sherlock Holmes stories is, certainly, Sherlock Holmes himself. While the stories of Sherlock Holmes conjure up a solid world with salient iconography—the fireplace, the pipe, the revolver, the violin, the Persian slipper, creeping fog, rushing hansom cabs, stiff corpses, subtle criminals, the outré, the exposé—the endless paradoxes and intricacies of Holmes have given rise to a fascination to crack the case of this extraordinary man, to comb Watson's memoirs for clues uncovering Holmes's history and his inmost character, to systematically eliminate the impossible until the truth, however improbable, remains.

It is not elementary, my dear Watson. (Neither, incidentally, does that immortal sentence exist anywhere in the canon. Holmes's saying the word "Elementary" in closest conjunction to his saying "my dear Watson" appears in "The Adventure of the Crooked Man," where they are separated by 52 words.)

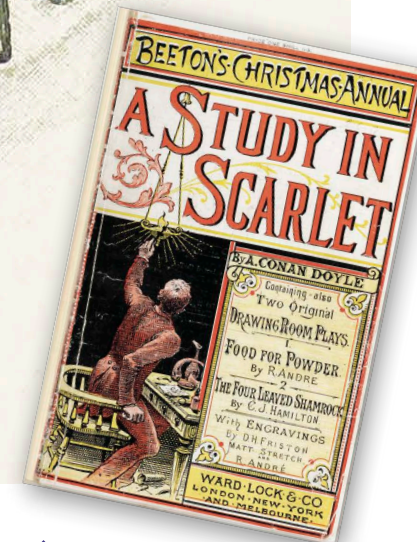
Despite such studies and discoveries, Holmes remains a puzzle of a man, full of contradictions and inconsistencies, a problem in and of himself that cries for solution. He is a dispassionate machine commanding a melodramatic kingdom, scientifically replacing drama with science in the most dramatic fashion—both sluggard and swordsman, a civilized Bohemian, a cold-blooded musician—in short, a romantic rationalist. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle gave the world 60 Sherlock Holmes mysteries, but more importantly, he gave the world the mystery of Sherlock Holmes.

The bizarre duality of Sherlock Holmes is precisely why he is an important acquaintance to both young and old readers of today. Holmes is a symbol of everything we are and everything we



PUBLIC DOMAIN

The closest Sherlock Holmes comes to saying "Elementary, my dear Watson," although he doesn't, is in "The Crooked Man." The British Library.



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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.

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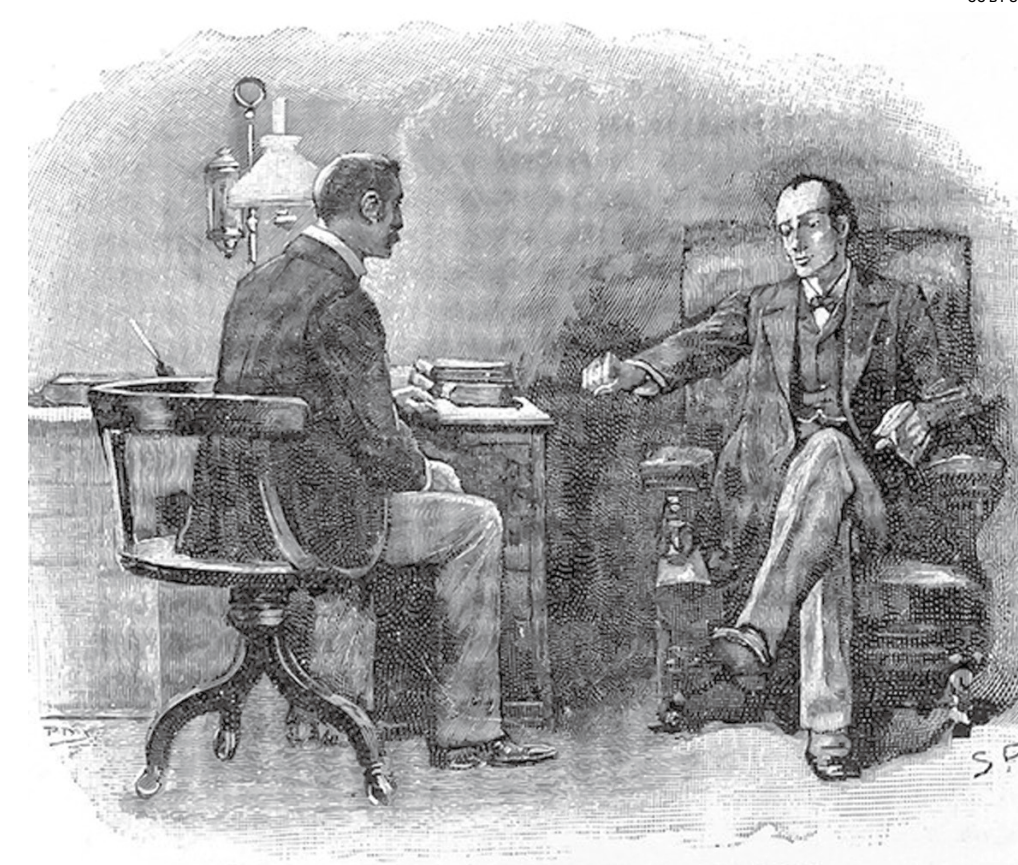
Built in 1897 partly with funds raised by sales of the issue of *The Student* in which Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Field Bazaar" appeared, the Craiglockhart Pavilion in Edinburgh, Scotland, was in 2016 being refurbished.

was to be. He is lofty enough to be an aspiration, and low enough to be credible. He is an emblem of every man's desire to wage war with evil and be a noble righter of wrongs—to be a hero.

As a seemingly posthumous tidbit before revealing to the world that Sherlock Holmes was not dead as presumed, "The Field Bazaar" stands as one of the important trifles—if trifles are, as Sherlock Holmes insisted, important—denoting this literary legacy of irresistible shadows. Only a master detective can dispense such shadows, and it is our footsteps that should echo on those 17 steps and knock at the door, seeking illumination, and responding to the call Watson heard in the darkness: "Come, Watson, come! The game is afoot."

"For Holmes scholars: the Case of the Missing Apostrophe."

Sean Fitzpatrick serves on the faculty of Gregory the Great Academy, a boarding school in Elmhurst, Pa., where he teaches humanities. His writings on education, literature, and culture have appeared in a number of journals including *Crisis Magazine*, *Catholic Exchange*, and *The Imaginative Conservative*.



Holmes and Watson having a chat, very much as they do in "The Field Bazaar." Illustration by Sidney Paget for "The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes." Wellcome Library, London.

BEHOLD THE BEAUTY

'Patient Observer' by Camille Engel

LORRAINE FERRIER

In the painting "Patient Observer," an American barn owl has been captured gracefully stretching out its wing, revealing a fan of gray, white, and brown feathers that could almost disappear into the stone barn wall. The owl gazes out of the painting as if something has caught its attention, making us wonder if we are observing the owl, or if the owl is observing us.

Ordinarily, a painting's title simply reflects the subject matter, but in this case "Patient Observer" can also be applied to the artist, Camille Engel, who must have spent an inordinate amount of time absorbing every nuance of the owl's colors and textures against the abandoned barn.

To capture such details, Engel applies glazes (thin transparent paint washes) to

her oil paintings that instill depth and luminosity as light bounces off the paint below, she states on the Art Renewal Center website. It's a technique called indirect painting, which began during the Northern Renaissance with Flemish masters such as Jan van Eyck.

According to her website, Tennessee-based Engel is captivated by details, and it's due to that passion that she's won many awards. In 2018, she won the International Guild of Realism 13th Annual Juried Exhibition's Best Wildlife Award for "Patient Observer." Last year, the same painting was featured in the 14th International Virtual ARC Salon Exhibition (2019–2020).

To find out more about Camille Engel's paintings, visit Camille-Engel.com



COURTESY OF THE ART RENEWAL CENTER

"Patient Observer," 2018, by Camille Engel. Oil on panel; 30 inches by 30 inches. Engel's painting was featured in the 14th International Virtual ARC Salon Exhibition (2019–2020).



THE DEATH OF SHERLOCK HOLMES.

THEATER

‘Oedipus Rex’ and the Natural Theater

ROBERT COOPERMAN

Sophocles’s “Oedipus Rex” predates us by approximately 2,500 years. By today’s standards, it should have little, if anything, to teach us. After all, it does not speak to the realities of contemporary life. And if we go by today’s “realities,” almost anything cultural or philosophical has the shelf life of a cellphone: We must trade it in every year in order to remain relevant.

The fact is, however, that like the inalienable rights that Thomas Jefferson outlined in the Declaration of Independence, which the founders believed were guaranteed by “Nature’s God,” “Oedipus Rex” has stood the test of time by exemplifying what I am calling “Natural Theater.” This is theater that understands the permanence of human nature and seeks to portray humanity with all its flaws, countered by all its joys, with the ever-present hope of redemption.

Despite a nearly 2,300-year difference, the American experiment looked back to the ancient world for an understanding of what it means to be human. Using this knowledge, the Founders were able to create a government and societal construct unequalled in history. “Oedipus Rex,” then, contains the necessary elements of both the Natural Theater and the American founding, making it a play that should resonate strongly with American audiences.

Natural Theater Versus

Theater of Misery

The Natural Theater celebrates life as worth living. How surprising it is to reflect upon the horrors that Oedipus endures and come to the same conclusion!

One great difference between the Natural Theater and the Theater of Misery (the latter is the common contemporary theater formula that presents unrelenting doom and gloom as the norm of everyday life) is that the Natural Theater shows suffering as being, first, natural to the human condition and, second, redemptive, as opposed to unnatural and decidedly one-sided as in the Theater of Misery.

Natural Theater understands the permanence of human nature and seeks to portray humanity with all its flaws, countered by all its joys, with the ever-present hope of redemption.

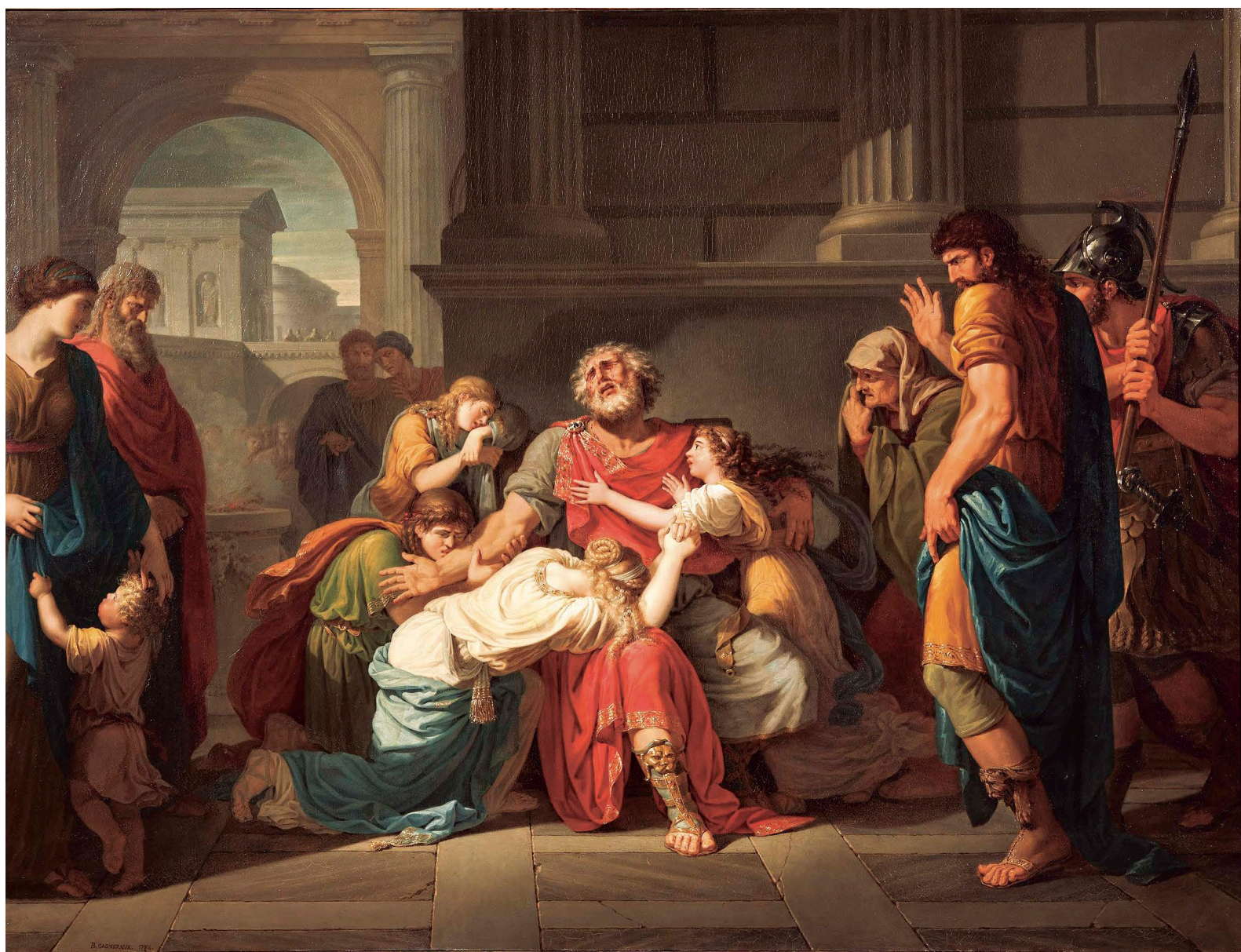
The way in which Oedipus, the man, defines himself shows us the distinction between a Natural Theater hero and a Theater of Misery antihero. Oedipus defines himself with the simple “I am Oedipus” twice: once at the very beginning of the play when he is asserting his fame and prestige, and again at the end of the play when he has discovered his own terrible destiny (“Oedipus the King,” Robert Fagles’s translation). His first boast exemplifies the Theater of Misery: “I am a person of infinite value”; his second proclamation illustrates the Natural Theater’s stance on worthy human character: “I am responsible.”

It is this latter realization that allows us to sympathize with yet still admire Oedipus. Any protagonist who accepts himself or herself as the primary reason for his or her own downfall is at home in Natural Theater.

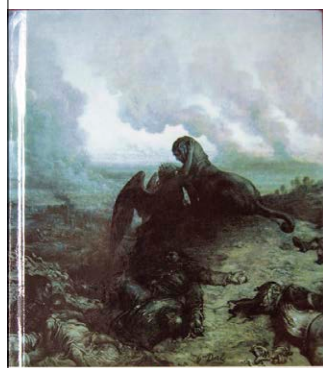
The Founders and Free Will

The question that not only permeates “Oedipus Rex” but also remains a dilemma through the ages is that of destiny versus free will. There is no question as to where the founders, particularly Jefferson, stood on the issue. They were followers of John Locke, who believed that men and women are free in a state of nature and that by way of our inborn reason are able to decide the direction of our lives, unimpeded by government. Our freedom is endowed to us by Nature’s God, but God, like the government envisioned by the founders, neither intrudes nor directly controls, allowing human beings to set upon a course of action and determine our fate. It is government’s job to secure these natural rights.

At first blush, this is not the way “Oedipus Rex” operates. The populace, represented by the chorus, looks to Oedipus (that is, the government) to save it from the plague raging



Louis Bouwmeester as Oedipus in a Dutch production of “Oedipus Rex,” circa 1896. Photo by Albert Greiner.



SOPHOCLES
The Three Theban Plays
Antigone, Oedipus the King, Oedipus at Colonus
Translated by ROBERT FAGLES

Robert Fagles’s translation of “The Three Theban Plays.”

in Thebes. In this respect, the play closely resembles the way many people today, unfortunately, think the government should operate.

Oedipus is shackled by the Oracle’s prophecy, even though he does not realize it at first. Ultimately, he is not able to escape his predetermined fate, and yet he is afforded one act of free will: He decides to blind himself rather than commit suicide when he understands that he is the murderer of Laius, the former king and his father. Thus, he exercises his free choice while acknowledging that which is beyond his control:

“Apollo, friends, Apollo—
He ordained my agonies—these,
my pains on pains!
But the hand that struck my eyes
was mine,
mine alone—no one else—
I did it all myself!”

The chorus challenges this decision: “How can I say you have chosen for the best/ Better to die than be alive and blind.” And Oedipus, as is typical of him, scolds them: “What I did was best—don’t lecture me.”

His ability to choose his destiny—even while accepting the natural order (as exemplified by the Oracle’s prophecy)—becomes a badge of honor in Natural Theater. Imagine a modern-day Oedipus as depicted by a practitioner of the Theater of Misery: He would blame all his misfortune not on God (because God doesn’t exist) but rather on the political machinations of a world mired in hatred, bigotry, and meaninglessness. In that world, Oedipus is the innocent victim irrespective of his crime of murder.

This is, of course, not the world Sophocles is depicting at all. Rather, he is portraying a world order that has temporarily lost its way and must be set back on its natural path, much like our American Founding Fathers encountered when their natural right to liberty was being threatened by the mother country, which had become a hostile and invasive government.

Oedipus’s fate—a combination of the laws of the divine and his own free will—culminates not in hopelessness but in redemption of society’s greater good. With

his destiny fulfilled, the plague upon Thebes ends, and order is restored under the level-headed rule of Creon. With the world righted and the design of the universe confirmed, the play concludes with the chorus both praising Oedipus (“Who could behold his greatness without envy?”) and showing empathy for him (“Count no man as happy till he dies, free of pain at last”).

As is typical of Natural Theater, there is sadness, terror, and struggle (or else, truthfully, would we have theater?). But there is also the sense that the world can be set right, just as Jefferson assumed in the Declaration of Independence when he noted that human beings are naturally entitled to “the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God entitle them.”

The founders of America used their recognition of human frailty as the foundation for our republic, lest we forget James Madison’s assessment in Federalist 51 that if “men were angels, no government would be necessary.” So, too, do the great plays of Natural Theater acknowledge the imperfections of humankind as well as the ability for it to thrive despite those imperfections. This recognition is the gift that Natural Theater bestows upon us, and it is all the more precious when we realize that our founders looked at humanity in a very similar way.

We must, therefore, enshrine “Oedipus Rex” in the canon of Natural Theater. The world in which Socrates wrote looked nothing like the world of our founding and certainly not at all like our contemporary world. Yet we have not been able to cast off the relevance of “Oedipus Rex,” nor should we. It remains a valuable teacher whose lessons cannot be dismissed unless and until humanity somehow breaks the hold that Nature’s God has on it. Don’t expect that to happen anytime soon.

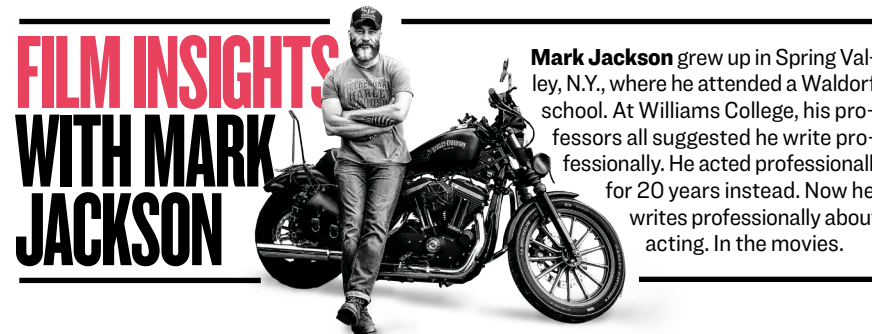
Robert Cooperman is the founder of Stage Right Theatrics, a theater company dedicated to the preservation of the founders’ vision through the arts. Originally from Queens, New York, he now lives in Columbus, Ohio, where he earned his doctorate at The Ohio State University.



Thomas Jefferson included in the Declaration of Independence the idea of inalienable rights.



(Left) (L-R) Matt Damon, Carla Gallo, Scarlett Johansson, Patrick Fugit, Elle Fanning, Maggie Elizabeth Jones, and Colin Ford in “We Bought a Zoo.” (Top right) Benjamin Mee (Matt Damon) is a Southern Californian father who moves his young family to the countryside to renovate and reopen a struggling zoo, assisted by Kelly Foster (Scarlett Johansson). (Above right) Colin Ford (L) and Matt Damon play son and father. (Below) (L-R) Patrick Fugit, Matt Damon, and Scarlett Johansson star in this family favorite.



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

POPCORN AND INSPIRATION

All You Need in Life is 20 Seconds of Insane, Embarrassing Courage

MARK JACKSON

“We Bought a Zoo” (2011) was an instant children’s movie classic based on a true story. Englishman Benjamin Mee is a thrill-seeking adventure columnist for The Guardian newspaper, who’s made a living doing things like hunting killer bees and flying into the eye of hurricanes. He lives in the South of France.

Newspapers eventually didn’t have enough money for his type of extravagant reporting, so Benjamin quit. His wife died from a brain tumor six months prior to the time that this story starts, leaving him to bring up their 7-year-old daughter, Rosie, and rebellious 13-year-old son, Dylan.

Said son is not handling his mom’s death well, and when Dylan’s dark and disturbing drawings of decapitations get him expelled from school, dad Benjamin gives himself over to a whirlwind of change. He goes house hunting. After a long search, his real estate agent shows him a fantastic house in Devon, England. It’s got one major complication, though—it comes with a zoo attached, and Benjamin ends up spending his savings, inheritance, and the money he made from selling his previous home to get it.

That’s all actually from the book. The movie version is set in California; Benjamin Mee is played by Matt Damon, and the real estate agent is played by the hilarious J.B. Smoove.

Ben’s daughter, Rosie, cuter-than-cute (Maggie Elizabeth Jones), twists daddy around her little finger thusly: “You don’t have to take a picture. We’re going to live here.”

The Zoo

The zoo still has a skeleton crew, the backbone of which is the ever-responsible, 27-year-old workaholic Kelly (Scarlett Johansson). She’s initially skeptical of Benjamin’s ability to stay the course once the massive commitment he’s undertaken dawns on him.

Closed for two years, the zoo’s got lions, a tiger, and 48 other species, many endangered. It needs a major overhaul and someone serious about investing the time, effort, and finances to take charge of it, or the animals and remaining staff won’t survive.

It’s a challenge that Benjamin is willing to take on, even though he has only four months to get all the various dilapidated structures up to spec in time for a July open-

‘We Bought a Zoo’

Director
Cameron Crowe

Starring
Matt Damon, Scarlett Johansson, Colin Ford, Maggie Elizabeth Jones, Thomas Haden Church, Patrick Fugit, Elle Fanning, Angus Macfadyen, John Michael Higgins, J.B. Smoove, Peter Riegert

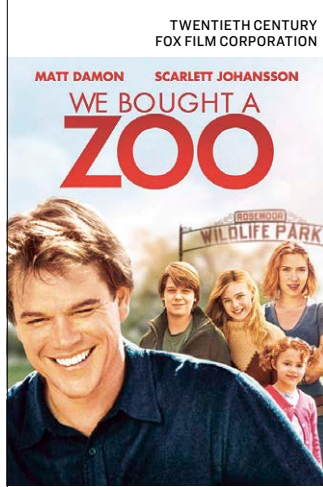
Rated

PG
2 hours, 4 minutes

Release Date

Dec. 23, 2011

★★★★★



A great film for the family: “We Bought a Zoo.”



(Left) Rosie (Maggie Elizabeth Jones) convinces daddy that a zoo is exactly where they should live. (Right) Benjamin Mee (Matt Damon) befriends Spar the tiger in the zoo he now owns.

ing. The Mees soon discover that life is no longer all about “me”(es); they have to put the needs of others first. Multiple animals need constant feeding and medication.

Benjamin’s older, accountant brother (the hysterical Thomas Haden Church) tries to steer his brother clear of the impending financial disaster: “Travel the stages of grief, but stop just before zebras get involved.”

There’s much preparation for the upcoming zoo inspection. Snooty, tape-measure-brandishing state inspector Walter Ferris (John Michael Higgins) is somewhat predictably but also delightfully arch as the villain, who is, naturally, a main source of tension driving the movie. Higgins as Ferris has a ton of fun nitpicking, hair-splitting, and reveling in his power to veto licenses for such small-fry, mom-and-pop zoos.

Cast

It’s a talented A-list cast creating well-defined characters, which meshes nicely with the animal-actor cast, each of which also becomes a well-defined personality.

Damon, 41 at the time, is hugely sympathetic, working through his grief (“If only I could talk to her about getting over her”). His character is, of course, constantly chased by many hopeful women; his refrigerator’s packed to the gills with lasagnas of longing.

The zoo crew includes Kelly’s 13-year-old cousin Lily (Elle Fanning), who waitresses at the zoo restaurant; a mechanical whiz who drinks too much (Angus Macfadyen, Robert the Bruce from “Braveheart”); and a staff guy who’s always got a capuchin monkey on his shoulder (Patrick Fugit from “Almost Famous”).

As mentioned, the animal “actors” are an integral part of the cast: It’s a bit magical to get up close to the regal Bengal tiger “Spar” and hear his wide range of animal speech. Priceless for children is the scene in which Johansson demonstrates how tigers “chuff” instead of roar (like lions), and how they chuff in response, when someone speaks their language.

The dramatic scenes between father and son demonstrate that actors really are a

ALL PHOTOS BY NEAL PRESTON/TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX FILM CORPORATION UNLESS NOTED OTHERWISE





"Ian Usmovets Stopping an Angry Bull," 1849, by Evgraf Semenovitch Sorokin. Far Eastern Art Museum, Khabarovsk, Russia.

Sorokin depicted the Russian folk hero Ian Usmovets—the large muscular figure standing to the right of the composition.

REACHING WITHIN: WHAT TRADITIONAL ART OFFERS THE HEART

The Power of Restraint 'Ian Usmovets Stopping an Angry Bull'

ERIC BESS

Sometimes we have the best intentions and push ourselves into becoming the best version of ourselves. We look in the mirror and say, "Today is the day I take a good look at myself and make the necessary changes in my character to become who I know I can be."

For many of us, we try, but it's not long before we find ourselves slipping back into those character flaws that prevent our improvement.

I came across a painting called "Ian Usmovets Stopping an Angry Bull" by the 19th-century Russian painter Evgraf Semenovitch Sorokin. This painting, for me, is a visual representation of certain aspects of personal improvement.

'Ian Usmovets Stopping an Angry Bull' Sorokin depicted the Russian folk hero Ian Usmovets—the large muscular figure standing to the right of the composition.

As the story goes, Usmovets helped defeat the Pechenegs, thought to be a Turkic people, in 992. The Pechenegs summoned their strongman to challenge any hero of Grand Duke Vladimir.

An old man presented his youngest son, Usmovets, who was angry and ready to fight, to the duke. Usmovets's strength was tested

by the running bull that he grabbed with his bare hands, ripping the skin and flesh of the animal. The Pechenegs fled in defeat.

In the painting, Usmovets's feet are planted into the ground; his upper body leans back, and with a calm rather than an angry face, he tightly clenches the flesh of the bull to restrain it.

The bull lunges forward and is caught mid-flight by Usmovets. The backward movement of Usmovets contrasts with the forward movement of the bull and creates tension in the middle of the composition.

On the ground between Usmovets's legs is the strongman whom the bull appears to have trampled. The red matador cape falls and covers the bull's victim.

The spectators in the background may be the grand duke and the Pechenegs. Some are dressed in elite or military attire, which suggests that this is an event of national pride that the people intentionally came to watch.

The Power of Restraint

Quite often, we try to push ourselves to accomplish our goals. We want to be the best version of ourselves, so we attempt to push ourselves to our limits.

However, with this approach, we may find ourselves tired and stressed from our efforts while gaining little actual improvement. Like the figure on the ground, our

efforts end up in vain; we are trampled by the very things that impede our progress.

And what things impede our improvement? Impulsive desires—those desires that control us instead of us controlling them. For me, the raging bull represents our impulsive desires.

For example, how many times have we decided we were going to live a healthier lifestyle? We may have the initial determination to get started in this endeavor, but the impulse to eat junk food, for example, eventually resurfaces and prevents us from achieving the goal.

What if, instead of pushing ourselves to our limits, we focus first on pulling ourselves back from our impulses, that is, restraining ourselves? Usmovets represents this restraint. His feet are planted into the ground, which suggests inner resolve; and he is restraining the bull with his whole body, which suggests his strength.

Usmovets's whole body is committed to restraining the bull, but his face is calm, which suggests that his mind is clear and quiet despite the raging bull in front of him. He is left unbothered by the tension expressed between him and the bull, and his calm expression makes him seem even more powerful.

This isn't to suggest that our efforts to accomplish our goals are always for naught but only to ask what place calm restraint has in

our achieving the best version of ourselves.

Is it the case that to get closer to our best selves, we must restrain our impulses and possess a calm mind? Does calm restraint provide us with a power we would otherwise lack?

Is it the case that this type of calm restraint will not only benefit our own lives but will also carry over into the lives of others? Able to approach situations calmly and with restraint, will we be able to better consider others in all that we do? Like the spectators in the background, will those around us see and take pride in our improvements?

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 courageous human beings.

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



Gustav Mahler in 1907.

MUSIC

Mahler and Music's Meaning

Mahler's Fifth Symphony

KENNETH LAFAVE

A myth about music, made popular by modern and postmodern 20th-century critics, is that it consists merely of certain frequencies deployed in various rhythms by a range of sources. This positivist view of music holds that music alone, without the aid of words or visuals, cannot refer or point to some experience outside itself. This is averred with nearly self-evident smugness by, for example, Igor Stravinsky in his "Poetics of Music."

Taken literally, this means that a funeral march would do for a wedding celebration, while a sunny scherzo could serve to commemorate a tragedy. It is nonsense even on the face of it.

Like all nonsense, though, it stems from a self-evident truth: Unlike words, music denotes nothing. That is what the modern critic means by "meaning," the indication

of specific physical or mental objects in the manner of verbal signifiers. Music does not fit that definition because its mode of meaning is vastly different.

Felix Mendelssohn knew this. "It's not that music is too imprecise for words, but that it is too precise," he said. To confirm this, one has only to listen to Mendelssohn's F minor String Quartet, composed after the death of his beloved sister. It is grief expressed, to be sure, and grief in its many forms—from confusion and anger to sweet memories to outright sorrow. But it is none of these things generalized; rather, it is precisely the composer's experiences and no one else's. Its communication to us listeners is the very heart of the miracle that is music.

Reflections on a Life

Can a symphony relate a man's entire life, foreshortened to fit a snug time frame? On

Feb. 24, 1901, Gustav Mahler suffered an intestinal hemorrhage and nearly died. He later wrote:

"While I was hovering on the border between life and death, I wondered whether it would not be better to have done with it at once, since everyone must come to that in the end."

Little wonder, then, that Mahler's next symphony opens with a funeral march. Mahler started sketching Symphony No. 5 in the summer of 1901. He had just turned 41, was lucky to be alive, and doubtless felt inclined to meditate on the meaning of a life that had nearly ended mere months before. What better way to address this than in a symphony that opens with death and then proceeds—in reverse chronology—to consider the episodes in the dead man's life, ending in a triumphant finale

BOOK REVIEW

A Great Man From the Greatest Generation

LINDA WIEGENFELD

Tom Brokaw's inspiring book "The Greatest Generation," about those who came of age during the Great Depression and World War II, revealed an American generation who gave so much and asked for so little. They lived in extraordinary, challenging times but managed to build a better world with the shared values of duty, honor, courage, service, and love of family and country. Above all, they accepted responsibility for their choices.

Although "Unbelievable: The Unmasking of Dr. Harrison Miller Moseley" tells its story through the eyes of one man, like Brokaw's book, it reveals an inspiring generation that is sadly soon to be completely gone from this earth.

When Stella Brooks, who wrote this fascinating biography, was looking to obtain a historical marker for two high school stadiums in Fort Worth, Texas, she discovered information about Dr. Harrison Miller Moseley, who happened to live near her. After several interviews, Brooks was surprised to learn that Moseley's past had always been a closed book to his family, friends, and acquaintances. Brooks decided that Moseley's life story needed to be told, and she devoted two years of her own life to do the telling. And what an interesting tale Moseley had to share. The book demonstrates triumph in the face of adversity and that the perpetual victim mindset so often seen today was absent in the past.

The Young Harrison Miller Moseley Moseley was born on the plains of Texas in 1921. At a very young age, he lost his father, and although his mother tried to continue business as usual, she couldn't. All of her children had to help out. Moseley's younger brother Cecil, 5 years old at the time, picked cotton.

One day, a cotton buyer asked Cecil to show him his hands, which were close to bleeding due to the work. Shortly after, Moseley's mother, because of the financial pressures of the Depression, put all three of her children in the Masonic Home and School of Texas. She hoped her sacrifice would give her children a better life.

Orphanages have a dreary reputation in literature, but not this one. The Masons took pride in taking excellent care of widows and orphans, and they referred to all the orphans as "their jewels" and acted accordingly.

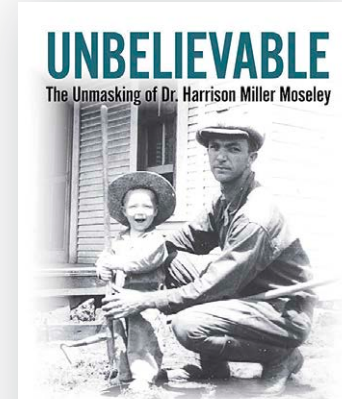
Tom Brady, now 96, and a fellow resident with Moseley at the Masonic Home and School, said in a brief phone interview: "I have so many happy memories of my time in the home, it would be hard for me to choose just one. I lost my father, like Moseley, and I was saved from devastation."

At the home, the boys and girls lived in separate dormitories. Everything was well organized, and the children had assigned tasks. The emphasis was on good habits and sound character. Religious faith was a requirement. Each Sunday, the children went to the school auditorium for Sunday school, and sermons were delivered by the religious heads of varied churches, which gave them an opportunity to hear from their own denominations.

Standing out among Moseley's adventures at the Masonic Home was his time

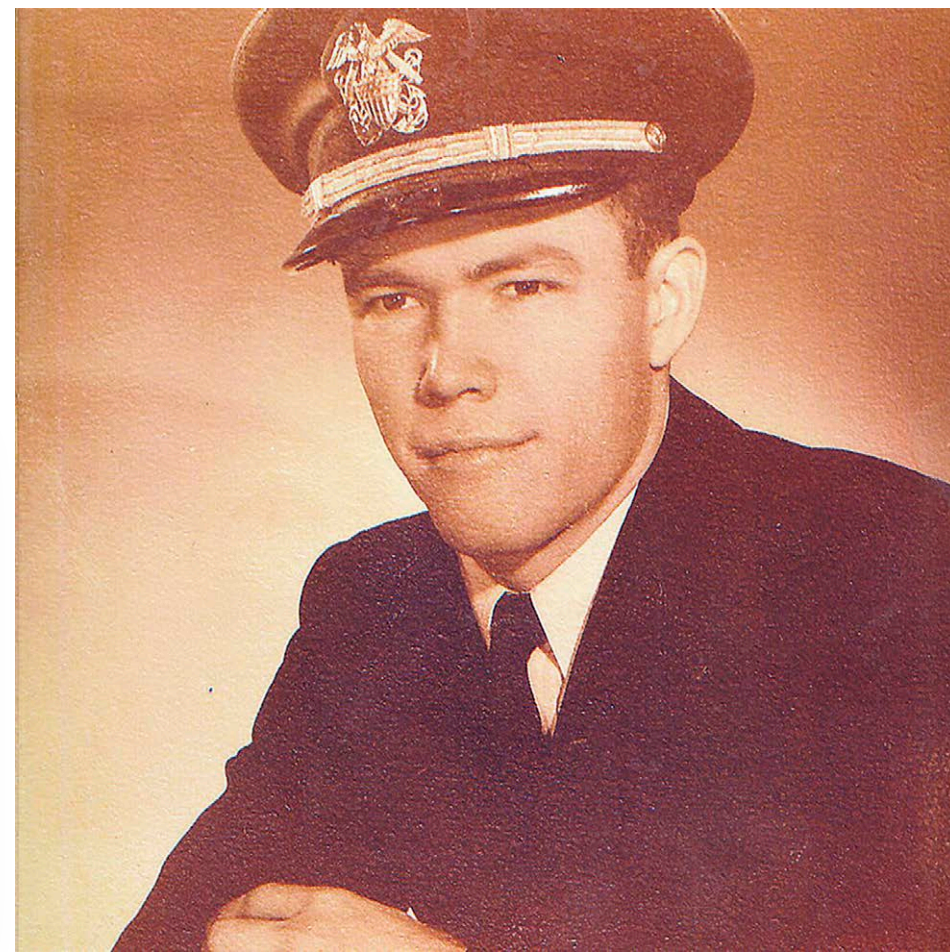
'Unbelievable: The Unmasking of Dr. Harrison Miller Moseley'

Stella Brooks
June 16, 2020
418 pages, paperback



Stella Brooks

Stella Brooks devoted two years of her life to write the biography of Harrison Miller Moseley.



Harrison Miller Moseley in his Navy days.

on the football team. Although the team was regularly outweighed by their opponents by 30 to 50 pounds, the coach, Rusty Russell, used ingenuity in his duties. To complement the team's small size, Coach Russell cooked up the most imaginative plays, and the team reached football glory.

Russell himself had an interesting story. The World War I vet had been blinded during his service, but he promised God that if his eyesight were to be restored, he would make a difference in a child's life. His vision was restored in one eye and he kept his promise.

Despite his amazing triumph as part of this team, Moseley would become part of still a greater group.

College and War

Moseley was the valedictorian of the Masonic Home's class of 1938. He then went to Texas Christian University on a full academic scholarship and eventually became a physics and chemistry major, graduating at the top of his class. He pursued graduate studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

In 1939, less than four months after Miller graduated from the Masonic Home, Nazi Germany invaded Poland. That year, Albert Einstein successfully convinced President Roosevelt that the United States might be in grave danger if Hitler built the most powerful bomb in the world first. The race to see which nation could produce the first atomic bomb thus began.

Nathan Rosen of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, who had been Albert Einstein's collaborator and friend, was called upon to help. Rosen accepted and brought along his brightest student, Moseley. Moseley then found himself working with the upper echelon of the Manhattan Project. He was assigned a job to work directly under Ross Gunn, the technical adviser of the U.S. Naval Research Laboratory and a

member of the federal government's S-1 Uranium Committee.

It wasn't until Moseley heard the news reports of Hiroshima and Nagasaki that he learned his group's research had been a pivotal part of something that had changed the course of the war and world history forever. He downplayed his involvement, saying, "I was just doing my job."

Life After the War

After the war, Moseley finished his doctorate and returned to Fort Worth, where he landed a job teaching at Texas Christian University and remained there until he retired. "Most of the students sitting in the class with this quiet professor had no idea that he had been an A-list player working with the most-read-about men in history on the most important mission in the world," Brooks told me in a short interview.

During his time as a professor, Moseley met his wife. She was a widow with three daughters. "He went from the bachelor living in a small apartment over a garage to a large home with four females, a cat, and a dog," Brooks said.

Moseley had a loving marriage and brought stability to his stepchildren's lives, as the death of their dad had left them in limbo. He was kind and loving, with a mild manner and a positive attitude. Moseley died in 2014.

Brooks's enthralling book gives readers a front-row seat to one of the most significant scientific achievements in modern history. Her descriptions are vivid, and her skillful use of language helps readers form detailed mental pictures. Her book has the potential to become a wholesome family film.

Brooks refers to Moseley's life as unbelievable and inspiring. The readers of her amazing book will certainly agree.

Linda Wiegenfeld is a retired teacher. She can be reached for comments or suggestions at lwiegenfeld@aol.com

that represents the protagonist's blazingly optimistic beginning.

I recommend Claudio Abbado's magnificent rendition of Mahler's Symphony No. 5, from the 2005 Lucerne Festival.

Can a symphony relate a man's entire life, foreshortened to fit a snug time frame?

Symphony No. 5

MOVEMENT 1 'Trauermarsch (In gemessenem Schritt. Streng. Wie ein Kondukt)'

A solo trumpet announces death on a C-sharp minor arpeggio. The orchestra takes up the funeral cry, which leads to a lament intoned by the strings. At length, the trumpet, with its distinctive triplet figure, reasserts itself, and again the song of lamentation ensues, varied this time and

lengthened into something more personal than mere ritual.

MOVEMENT 2 'Stürmisch bewegt, mit grösster Vehemenz' Looking back on the protagonist's life, we hear in the opening bars the tortuous defeat and stormy rage that dominated the last years of his life. And then, a surprise: The strings intone a variant of the lament from the first movement. Near the end, the brass latch onto a subject that becomes a triumphant chorale, known in English as "How Brightly Shines the Morning Star," in pure, clear D major.

MOVEMENT 3 'Scherzo (Kräftig, nicht zu schnell)'

The scherzo, in bright and confident D major, is a folksy "ländler" or country dance, dominated by a solo obbligato horn in F that is one of the great bravura parts for that instrument. Mahler tosses around many related themes in masterful counterpoint. The protagonist is at the peak of his life, and even the thought of death is distant.

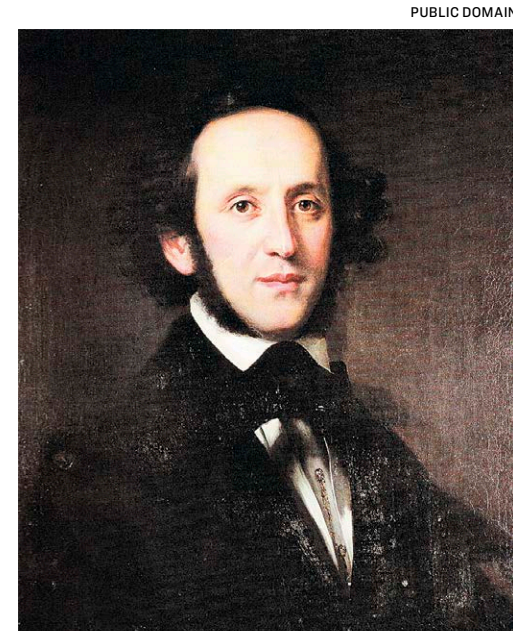
MOVEMENT 4 'Adagietto (Sehr langsam)' A relatively brief intermezzo, the famous

Adagietto for strings and harp is a tender, romantic moment in the protagonist's life. He has found love and intimacy.

MOVEMENT 5 'Rondo-Finale (Allegro-Allegro giocoso. Frisch)'

The horn, instrument of joy in the scherzo, announces at the start the optimistic blossoming of the protagonist's life. Mahler displays the polyphonic knowledge he had recently acquired in his study of J.S. Bach. The Adagietto theme is recalled, a portend of the protagonist's love life. At the very end, we hear "How Brightly Shines the Morning Star" from the second movement, the logic of its earlier appearance now made clear: It is the young protagonist's assertion of newfound power in the world. The symphony ends with the protagonist on the cusp of his youth, unaware of the tragedy that will befall him.

Former music critic for the Arizona Republic and The Kansas City Star, Kenneth LaFave recently earned a doctorate in philosophy, art, and critical thought from the European Graduate School. He is the author of three books, including "Experiencing Film Music" (2017, Rowman & Littlefield).



A portrait of Felix Mendelssohn, 1846, by the German painter Eduard Magnus. Berlin State Library.

POPCORN AND INSPIRATION

Keeping One's Compassion in a Time of Genocide

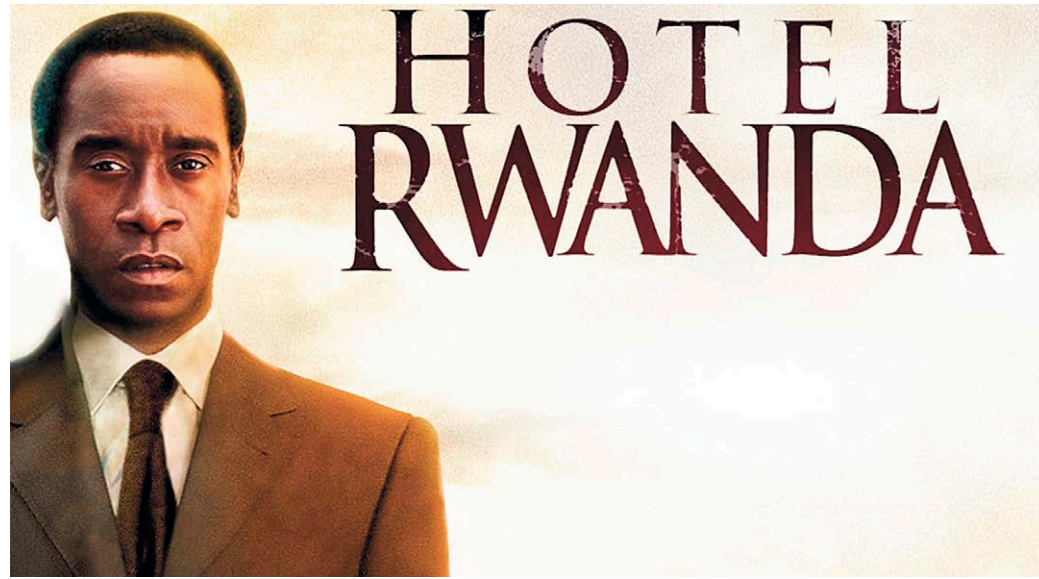
IAN KANE

I recently watched a tourism video that focused on the capital of Rwanda, a beautiful city called Kigali. One of the things that stood out to me was how immaculate it is—it reminded me of a quaint Japanese town. I knew about the 1994 genocide but had never seen director Terry George's "Hotel Rwanda," and felt a bit guilty about knowing so little about what went down in the tiny, land-locked country. The film not only shows what occurred back then, but it also manages to humanize many who were involved in that tumultuous period of the country's history.

The film mainly focuses on Paul Rusesabagina (Don Cheadle), who manages the four-star Hôtel Des Mille Collines located in Kigali. From the outset of the film, Paul is portrayed as a wheeler-dealer who makes associations with some very influential people. And many of those relationships come in handy as the film progresses.

We hear on the radio that Rwanda's president at the time, Juvénal Habyarimana, an ethnic Hutu, is killed when the plane he is traveling in explodes. Habyarimana's death compels the extremists of his tribe to publicly blame the Tutsi, whom they refer to as despicable cockroaches. As the country further destabilizes, the United Nations intervenes but is soon rendered relatively worthless as it becomes paralyzed in bureaucratic red tape.

Paul is a Hutu man who is married to a Tutsi woman, Tatiana (Sophie Okonedo), so



Don Cheadle stars in "Hotel Rwanda."

the stage is already set for high drama. As the Hutu extremists commence to commit genocide on the Tutsi people, Paul manages to utilize the many favors he is owed to house over 1,200 Tutsi refugees. At first, this mainly consists of families, but later in the film he also takes in children who have been orphaned as a result of the conflict. In doing so, he risks his own life.

However, as the chaos intensifies, Paul's relationships with other main characters become frayed, especially when the hotel begins to run out of both money and resources, two things Paul used to garner support for his cause (along with bottles of pricey single malt Scotch).

The film definitely doesn't flinch—the tragedy that people can inflict on one another is well-documented—but it doesn't dwell on the misery for too long. There are also many examples of human selflessness, kindness, and compassion.

Director George doesn't paint his characters as absolutes but rather, in many cases, as multidimensional people with their own hang-ups and idiosyncrasies.

Soon, all of the white people who were staying at the hotel are evacuated and we see how the society is stratified along racial lines. But what is remarkable to see is how loyal Paul is to his fellow countrymen (and women), no matter their tribal affiliation.

George has a knack for rousing drama and there are several scenes that can only be described as close calls, such as when Paul's family is being evacuated via a U.N. convoy and is ambushed by a Hutu militia group. But due to the excellent performances by Cheadle, Okonedo, and the rest of the supporting cast, these scenes never feel emotionally manipulative.

The tragedy that people can inflict on one another is well-documented, but the film doesn't dwell on the misery for too long.

Also, the movie isn't as brutal as I thought it would be, with the violence playing out on-screen happening for reasons that are clearly explained, rather than sensationalizing wanton genocide.

"Hotel Rwanda" has an important message to get out, one that tells of a now little-remembered event in world history. It's also an ultimately uplifting movie that we can all learn from, no matter what tribe we find ourselves in. My only regret is that I didn't see it sooner.

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



Selflessness and kindness are highlighted in this film, based on a true story.



General Bizimungu (Fana Mokoena, L) negotiates with Paul Rusesabagina (Don Cheadle), who is trying to save lives.

'Hotel Rwanda'

Director

Terry George

Starring

Don Cheadle, Sophie Okonedo, Joaquin Phoenix

Running Time

2 hours, 1 minute

Rated

PG-13

Release Date

Feb. 4, 2005 (USA)

★★★★★

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