

THE EPOCH TIMES

ARTS & CULTURE

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An emblem of doubt: Hamlet. American actor Edwin Booth, circa 1870, in his signature role as Hamlet.



TRADITIONAL CULTURE

The Cost of Doubt

‘Hamlet’ and the role of doubt in the destruction of Western values

KENNETH LAFAVE

What was once a giant but is now a dwarf?

The answer awaits in the drama we could least do without, as English-writer Anthony Burgess once referenced “Hamlet.”

Something fell around the year 1600, the year “Hamlet” was written, something so colossal that William Shakespeare saw it fall and knew the origin of its collapse. He limned it in the story of a tragic prince of Denmark, and while the tale was fiction, the tragedy was not.

‘Hamlet’ in a Nutshell

To summarize the famous story, “Hamlet”

tells of young prince Hamlet who encounters what seems to be the ghostly shade of his recently departed father, the elder Hamlet. The ghost tells young Hamlet that, contrary to reports of his natural demise, he had in fact been poisoned by his brother, young Hamlet’s uncle Claudius. This resonates with the fact that within two months of the elder Hamlet’s death, Claudius has wedded his widow: young Hamlet’s mother, Gertrude.

Hamlet is outraged and vows vengeance. Then, almost immediately, he dulls the edge of his vow. Rather than confront Claudius with the charge of murder, Hamlet will put on an “antic disposition,” a feigned madness, the better to coax the

Because of Hamlet’s refusal to believe, an entire regime was lost.

truth out of the new king and his incestuous queen. Doubt has made its grand entrance and will not exit until blood flows.

The first victim is Hamlet’s relationship with Ophelia, daughter of Polonius, the buffoonish adviser to the king. At first meeting with Ophelia, Hamlet pronounces, “Doubt that the sun doth move, but doubt not that I love you.” When he knows that Claudius and Polonius are spying on him, he pretends to stop loving Ophelia and pushes her away. This indeed convinces the spying pair that Hamlet is mad, but at enormous cost. A shocked Ophelia begins her descent into actual madness.

Continued on Page 4



Ying and Yang by Sandra Kuck

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CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Back to the Future: A Review of the 'Childcraft' Books

JEFF MINICK

The small North Carolina town in which I lived from ages 5 to 12 had no public library. A book mobile did visit our street, at least during the summers, and the arrival of that van brought moms and kids streaming from their houses and yards, excited to board this library on wheels and take home a few books.

The town's drugstore carried a variety of comic books and magazines, and there too I managed to find refreshment that slaked my thirst for the printed word. Here were "Archie," the character Sgt. Rock, and other comics, but my favorites were "Classics Illustrated," what today might be called graphic books. The "Classics Illustrated" series introduced me to such masterpieces as "Romeo and Juliet," "Call of the Wild," and "The Red Badge of Courage."

Mr. Weatherwax, the pharmacist, allowed me to sit on the floor by the window in the magazine section. There I read to my heart's content and often paid the 12 cents for one of the classic comics.

And then there were the books in our home: the World Book Encyclopedia and the 14-volume "Childcraft" series, of which I today possess the first 12 books.

Whether my parents purchased these sets through some offer in the mail or from some college kid peddling them door-to-door during summer vacation, I don't know, but these constituted the literary goldmine of my childhood and adolescence. They introduced me to a wider world. They brought hours and hours, days and days, of reading pleasure, and they no doubt help explain my lifelong love of literature and history.

Visits to Long Ago

First published in 1934, the "Childcraft" books have undergone extensive revisions over the years. The tattered set in my possession, for instance, has a publishing date of 1949.

Leafing through some of these books while writing this article roused astonishing childhood memories. In Volume 2, for example, "Storytelling and Other Poems," I vividly recollect reading such verse as Rosemary and Stephen Vincent Benét's "Daniel Boone," Alfred Noyes's "The Highwayman" with its illustration of a tragic heroine strapped to a bedpost by soldiers seeking to arrest her beloved, "Grandpa Dropped His Glasses" by Leroy Jackson about a man whose purple-stained spectacles change his vision of the world, and Mildred Meigs's wonderful "Pirate Don Durk of Dowdee."

Volume 5, "Life in Many Lands," contains perhaps my favorite boyhood story in the entire set, "Locked In." Featured here are two girls, Garnet and Citronella, who become so engrossed in their reading in their local library that they find themselves alone and locked in for the night. Though they are eventually rescued before night's end, this story enthralled me. To my 10-year-old book-starved self, there seemed no greater adventure in the whole world than to be imprisoned overnight in rooms filled with stories and poetry.

Pictures From the Past

The illustrations throughout these "Childcraft" volumes, particularly in the first three, which are aimed at the younger set, depict an innocence, joy, and sense of adventure and fun in children. As I recently paged through Volume 2—my West Virginia son borrowed Volume 1 months ago with its many nursery rhymes to read to his little ones—I see happy children playing in the snow, celebrating holidays, and forging their way through difficulties. We also see boys and girls getting into mischief, as in Eugene Field's "Jest 'Fore Christmas," where a rambunctious kid puts aside his misbehavior before Santa pays a visit:



"Most all the time, the whole year round there ain't no flies on me, But jest 'fore Christmas I'm as good as I kin be!"

Many of these pictures have remained in my memory, perhaps in part because I read some of these poems and stories to my own children, but mostly, I think, because they are vivid, reassuring, and sweet, and so appealed to my boyhood self.

Manuals for Parenting and Family Life

One fascinating aspect of this set, which understandably escaped me as a child, is that the editors devoted Volumes 8 through 12 as guides for parents in the rearing and education of their children. Volume 8, for instance, titled "Creative Play and Hobbies," contains such chapters as "Making the Most of Your Home," "Planning a Party," "Drawing and Painting," and "Cooking Up Fun." Other volumes include "The Growing Child," "Guidance for Development," "Ways of Learning," and "Guide and Index." The two missing volumes from my set, I believe, featured music and art.

That the editors of "Childcraft" devoted well over 1,000 pages of this set to child development, school, play, physical health, and mental well-being is... well, stunning. They gathered dozens of experts to write these articles. In her piece "Games for Indoors and Outdoors," for example, Caroline Horowitz, who'd written many popular books on children and play, spent 31 pages explaining the rules to dozens of games ranging from Old Maid and Tiddlywinks to Prisoner's Base and Blind Man's Bluff.

Gone Away

Yet my edition of "Childcraft" would never fly in today's culture.

Though the set includes "Volume 5: Life in Many Lands," minorities in these volumes are not only underrepresented but also almost invisible. The children portrayed in the illustrations are almost all Caucasian, and most of the stories focus on either Americans or Europeans.

Some of the historical figures depicted in "Volume 6: Great Men and Famous Deeds" might also raise hackles these days, with its positive views of such Americans as the Pilgrims, Daniel Boone, Robert E. Lee, and George Washington.

PD-US

Subjects once deemed admirable and normal have become verboten.

And though the World Book publishers apparently still put out the "Childcraft" set, now titled "Childcraft: How and Why Collection," the books now aim for an international audience and focus on such subjects as science and nature. In the publisher's blurb on this latest set, we read, "Give your young learner the books that inspired you as a child." That comment brought a wry smile from me. From what I could gather, the newest edition is as distant from what I read as a child as the earth is from the sun.

And the Point Is?

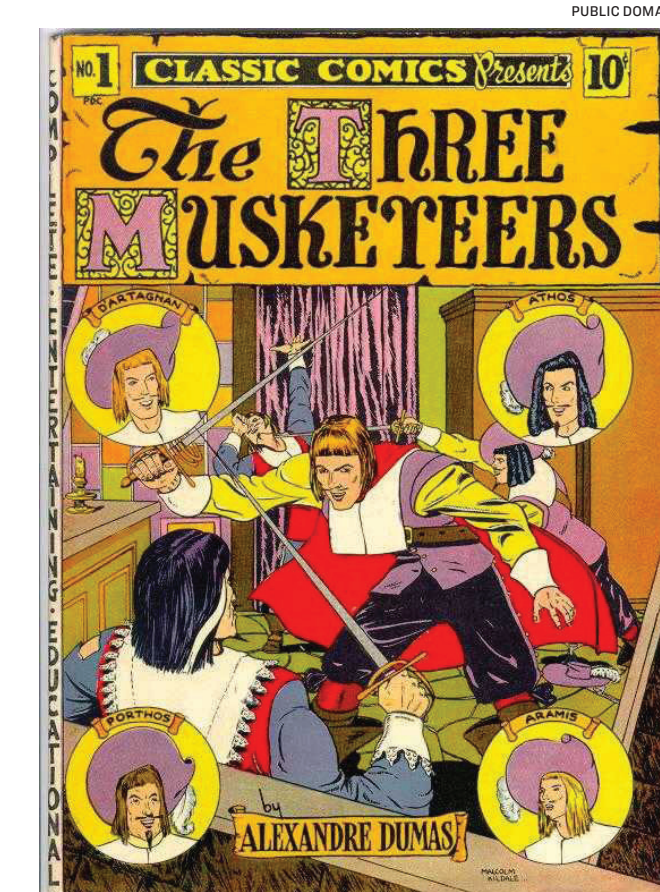
By now, readers may be asking themselves why a set of out-of-print books deserves a review.

The answer is simple. These volumes remind us of this great truth: The home is the cradle and the bastion of our culture and our civilization.

The ancestral editors of "Childcraft" understood that truth, which explains their selections of poetry and prose, the beauty of the art in each of these books, and their extended advice to parents and teachers. They recognized that the family and the home are the heart of civilization.

The old "Childcraft" books may be gone—you can still find them for sale online if you search—but the stories and poems contained in those books, the histories and biographies, are still available to us. They are sitting on the shelves of bookstores, secondhand shops, and libraries, and will speak to us if we are willing to search them out and listen to them. Truth, beauty, and goodness still breathe and live in their words.

Oddly enough, then, if we want to safeguard the future of our civilization and culture, we must begin by going backward. If we wish a different future, we must turn away from the path we have followed for so many years and seek out and listen to the wisdom from the past.



The first run of the comic book series "Classics Illustrated" was from 1941 to 1969.

And we can begin that reversal with our children. We can bring the good old books—the nursery rhymes and fairy tales, the poetry and the classic stories—back to the place they belong: home.

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 his blog.

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In the mousetrap scene, Hamlet discerns guilt from his uncle's expression when actors reenact the murder of Hamlet's father.

TRADITIONAL CULTURE

The Cost of Doubt

'Hamlet' and the role of doubt in the destruction of Western values

Continued from Page 1

Hamlet arranges for a play to be performed that mimics the murder of his father. When Claudius reacts violently, Hamlet believes that he has his proof. But when he discovers Claudius alone in prayer, he hesitates, thinking that killing someone at prayer may send the deceased to heaven—and what kind of revenge would that be?

In the very next scene, Hamlet kills someone he thinks to be the king, though the person is hidden behind a tapestry. It turns out to be the hapless Polonius, eavesdropping on Hamlet's conversation with his mother.

Disaster accelerates. Ophelia drowns herself. Her brother, Laertes, returns from France and plots with Claudius to murder Hamlet with a poisoned foil in a staged duel. Mishap after mishap results in the entire Dan-

ish court dead: Claudius, Laertes, Gertrude, and Hamlet.

Enter Fortinbras, king of Norway, to claim the Danish throne.

What brought about this enervating doubt that destroyed a kingdom? Just after encountering the ghost, Hamlet says to his friend, Horatio, "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio/Than are dreamt of in our philosophy." (The weakened change to "your" philosophy came after the First Folio.) Tradition has it that Hamlet and Horatio were fellow students at Wittenberg. What "philosophy" might they have encountered?

The Cost of Doubt

Our everyday understanding of the era might want to answer, "the scholasticism of Aquinas," but it more likely would have been the Pyrrhonism of Sextus Empiricus. All but unknown today, Empiricus was a Greek philosopher of the second century A.D. who drew upon the work of the earlier Greek philosopher Pyrrho, a younger contemporary of Aristotle's.

Pyrrho had advanced a kind of skepticism open to widely spaced interpretations, of which Empiricus's was the most extreme. Nothing, wrote Empiricus, could be known to be true. Even such a thing as sound "does not exist," Empiricus wrote in "Against the Musicians." Just because vibrations in the air are experienced as what we call "sound" does not demonstrate that "sound" has independent existential status. He was serious. And so were his followers. We can prove nothing; therefore, we know nothing.

Empiricus's work might have slipped into obscurity save that it was published in Latin translation in the 1500s, precisely at the moment Europe was wrestling with the Reformation. The latter's rejection of religious truths previously held to be absolute found philosophical support in the notion that truth itself is a lie. The universities were flooded with radical doubt, and by the time of the first production of "Hamlet" in 1601, it was common.

Once fundamental truths were known, it was possible to use logic to deduce other truths.

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's the author of three books, including "Experiencing Film Music" (2017, Rowman & Littlefield).

René Descartes, famed for bringing radical doubt into Western consciousness, was a latecomer to the party. His famous statement "I think, therefore I am" (1637) was a failed attempt to overcome doubt by finding one thing irrefutable. But he was too late. Reason, once the all-embracing grasp of reality, was by now a mere logical gatekeeper, in charge of making sure the terms of a syllogism were properly distributed.

What We Know Is True Does Not Require Proof

The strange thing is this: Empiricus had a good point. Nothing of any importance can be logically proven. But while for Empiricus this meant that nothing can be known, it really means that what we do know does not require proof.

Prior to the collapse of reason, it was understood that logical proof was but one small part of reason, consisting of deduction from premises already known to be true. The premises were not themselves provable. And these premises were the important things: the existence of entities, the persistence of time, the nature of a human, the geometry of space, and so on. It was the role of human investigation to know what these things were.

For individuals, this meant that discerning the true from the false was a matter of attuned judgment. One did not "deduce" the truth; one obtained it through investigation. Once fundamental truths were known, it was possible to use logic to deduce other truths. It was an observable premise, for example, that men and women draw their natures from their biological roles. From this, one may deduce societal paths for men and women. It was clearly true that some objects are beautiful and others ugly, and that this is not mere random "choice." From this, one could deduce principles that informed the beautiful. It was obvious that tyranny produced starvation and oppression. From this, one might formulate more successful forms of governance.

A Path Leading to Destruction

Today, these premises would be pushed away as "unprovable" (as indeed they are). The idea that men can be women and women men, the notion that no essential difference exists between beauty and ugliness, the belief that tyranny has its place as an enforcer of "equity"—all these premises are treated seriously, and yet all of them are patently false. Can it be so proven? Of course not. Does that legitimize the premises? In current terms, it does, because the claims of identity politics have been substituted for truth. Reason, investigation, logic—all are swept aside, and power put in their place because nothing can be "proven." It's hard to fight back when the last 400-plus years of Western thought have heavily favored a demand for proof where none is possible.

Hamlet saw the power of the court rising against him and acted too late to oppose it. Had he been less circumspect and more self-certain, he might have killed Claudius early on, saving many lives and fortifying Denmark against Norway. Could Hamlet prove that his uncle killed his father? No. Did he know that his uncle killed his father? That knowledge was available to him, but because he couldn't prove it, he refused to believe it. Because of his refusal, an entire regime was lost.

We need not prove that the Western values of liberty, individual sovereignty and responsibility, observance of the laws of nature, and the traditions handed down over millennia are true. They are true without us. To doubt them is arrogance, and to indulge their opposition as having parity because we can't "prove" our case is to tip a foil with poison and turn it against ourselves.

Let's not be like Hamlet. Instead, we should emulate Fortinbras. When Hamlet first sees Fortinbras leading an army, he knows he is witnessing greatness and delivers these words in his final soliloquy:

"Rightly to be great
Is not to stir without great argument
But greatly to find quarrel in a straw
When honour's at the stake."



If Hamlet had killed his uncle when he had the chance, he could have prevented disaster for his kingdom. A 1844 sketch by Eugène Delacroix.



A painting of a peony and a butterfly from an album of flower and bird paintings, by Taki Katei. Ink and color on silk; 10 inches by 12 inches. Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Harold B. Bilsky, 1975. Metropolitan Museum of Art.

LEADING BY EXAMPLE

How Japanese Artist Taki Katei Stayed True to Tradition

Great artists converse with our hearts without uttering a word. They animate the greatest and most tragic moments in life, from battlefields that appear gut wrenchingly real to divine jubiliations that make our souls sing. But seldom do we celebrate the way these artists lived in the world: the values they lived by, how they overcame challenges, or how they treated their fellow man. Yet these stories are as inspiring as the artworks these artists made.

LORRAINE FERRIER

Japanese artist Taki Katei (1830–1901) lived in one of the most fascinating periods of Japanese history: when Japan was just opening up to the West. During that time, many artists integrated Western art elements into their works, but Taki stayed true to the traditions of Japanese art.

He grew up in a time when Japan's art was rich with traditions. Artists borrowed particularly from the traditions of classical Chinese painting, but they also followed the tradition of studying from life: people, animals, and plants.

Taki started learning these traditions when he was just 6 years old. At 20, he traveled to Nagasaki to be closer to Chinese culture. At that time, Nagasaki was the only port open in Japan, and trade was restricted to the Netherlands, Korea, and China. Here, Taki could mix with Chinese artists and literati who taught him about their culture firsthand.

Then, for 15 years, he traveled in Japan learning traditional art practices and building a portfolio of works and a good reputation as an artist. In 1866, he set up an art school at his home in Tokyo to pass on traditional Japanese art.

Japanese paintings, just as in Chinese classical art, used nature to portray meaning.

By 1868, Japan was in turmoil. The Tokugawa shogun "great general" of the Edo period (1603–1867) was overthrown, ending Japan's feudal system. Japan's emperor replaced the shogun, becoming the supreme ruler, and reigned as the Meiji emperor of "enlightened rule."

Thus began a time of immense transition for Japan, as the country opened itself up to the world, and tradition largely came second to Westernization. Japan welcomed steam locomotives and Western styles of architecture and dress, for example.

The government opened museums and art galleries, and encouraged artists to integrate elements of Western art into their works.

Taki, however, stayed true to his traditional culture and art practice. He belonged to the Japan Art Association, a group of artists who sought to uphold and promote the established form of Japanese painting.

Japanese paintings, just as in Chinese classical art, used nature to portray meaning. For instance, the peony brimming with its multiple layers of dense petals represents wealth and prosperity, and a deer represents longevity. Deer are seen as sacred messengers in the Shinto belief system. According to legend, a kami (deity) rode on the back of a deer at Kasugataisha shrine in Nara, southern Japan.

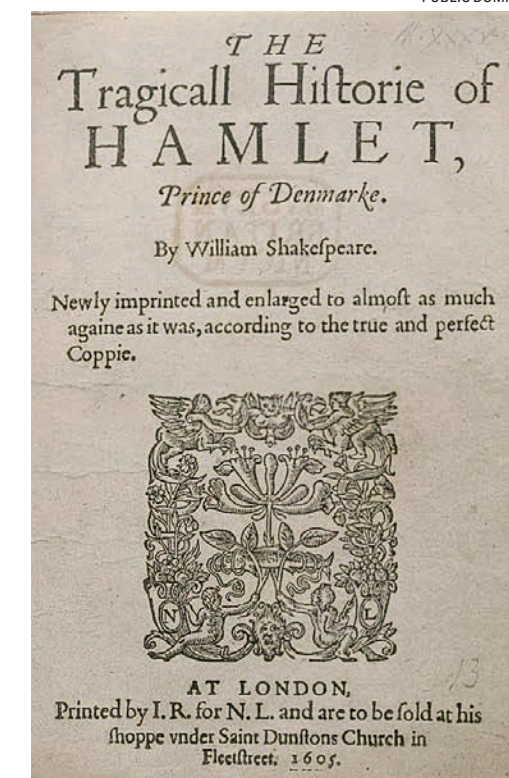
Taki and his students used this language of East Asian art—a language conveyed not by the written or spoken word, but by the language of symbolism. Taki honored this tradition throughout his life.

ARCHIVE PHOTOS/GETTY IMAGES



Potent symbolism: In the gravediggers' scene, Hamlet philosophizes to Yorick's skull. It is his philosophizing doubt that actually leads to death.

PUBLIC DOMAIN



The title page of the 1605 printing of "Hamlet," in which Shakespeare showed the destructive force of radical doubt.

ALL PHOTOS BY KIRSTY GRIFFIN/LIONSGATE/ROADSIDE ATTRACTIONS

TRADITIONAL CULTURE

Can One Avoid Fate? Part 1

What did the ancients believe?

JAMES SALE

One of the most important components of our life as human beings is the feeling and the knowing that we have a purpose.

As cultural commentator David Brooks observes in his book "The Road to Character," "A mature person possesses a settled unity of purpose." But whether a sense of purpose is needed for maturity or not, philosopher Richard Smoley comments in his "Inner Christianity" that "Nearly everyone feels it at some point or another: Each of us has the sense, however faint, that there is some unique purpose for which we have been called into being and which no one else can fill." Aside from anything else, this feeling that there is a purpose is characteristic of "high well-being," as author Gail Sheehy said.

And as soon as we start thinking about it, we realize that if there is a purpose to our lives, then also there is a sense of "fate" or "destiny." The purpose leads us to a fate whereby we achieve something or, perhaps more importantly, become somebody in the sense of being more than we once were, as in the acorn has become the oak tree, and not somehow been blasted, withered, or wasted away—its potential lost.

When individuals have this strong sense of purpose, it often seems to them that other people and events somehow cooperate in helping them achieve their purpose, which becomes their fate. These cooperative events and people appearing in one's life have a synchronistic element. In other words, they are not linear or logical but seem to spring out of nowhere, and yet they seem to coincide with our need just at the right time.

Scholar David McNally notes in "Even Eagles Need a Push" that synchronicity accompanies the committed person—and purpose and commitment, of course, go hand in glove. Carl Jung, the great psychologist, defined synchronicity as "circumstances that appear meaningfully related yet lack a causal connection."

Back to the Ancients

But we don't really need modern psychology to tell us about fate, because the ancients themselves were heavily preoccupied with the topic. For example, writing about the ancient Egyptians, Canadian Egyptologist Donald B. Redford said that "there were three forces (or deities) associated with one's fate." The three Egyptian deities are matched in Norse mythology with the three Norns or Nornir at the Well of Urd, and this corresponds closely with the three Greek Fates or Moerae.

Why three? Well, one reason must be the fact that time itself has three dimensions: past, present, and future. The web of fate, therefore, must be woven from (1) some antecedent point to (2) the present and then (3) spun into a future, which the individual does not know but believes in.

One account of fate in Greek mythology holds that the king of the Gods, Zeus, mated with the Titaness Themis (meaning "justice"), who was the goddess of fixed order. With her, he produced the Fates, the seasons, good order, and justice and peace. This suggests that Zeus himself was above fate and that his will was fate.

However, another strong tradition suggests otherwise. According to classicist Robert Graves in "The Greek Myths," the Pythian priestess once confessed to an oracle that Zeus himself was subject to the Fates because they were not his children but parthenogenetic daughters of the Great Goddess Necessity, against whom not even the gods could contend. The Great Goddess Necessity is also called "The Strong Fate."

This view is born out in the greatest lit-



The three Greek Fates, who spin, draw out, and cut the thread of life. An engraving, 1558–59, by Giorgio Ghisi after Giulio Romano. Purchase: Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1917; the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

erature of the Greeks, the "Iliad." In it, for example, we find that despite his great love for his son Sarpedon, Zeus cannot reverse his son's fate, which is to die at the hands of Patroclus. Zeus, then, is more an executor of fate rather than its source.

That said, the Greek myths attest in plenty to divine and human efforts to change, alter, or reverse fate. Zeuse himself, forewarned that the child of Thetis the nymph would be greater than his father, neatly sidesteps copulating with her and so avoids his own defeat.

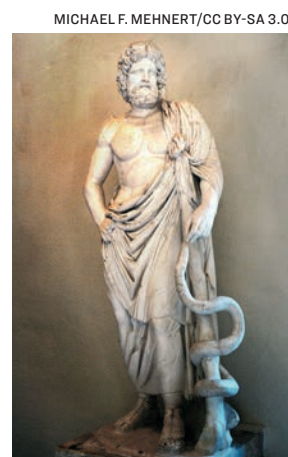
In fact, this particular maneuver leads to Thetis's giving birth to Achilles, the famous warrior at Troy who seems to have been given a choice by the three Fates: a long life of ease and obscurity or a young death and immortal glory? We know which he chose, but was it the right choice? In the companion epic, "The Odyssey," we find the shade of Achilles bemoaning his fate, as he tells Odysseus: "I'd rather serve as another man's laborer, as a poor peasant without land, and be alive on Earth, than be lord of all the lifeless dead." He realized his fate, but there seems to be a sting in its tail.

Apollo, the god of prophecy, was deeply indebted to King Admetus. So Apollo gets the Fates drunk and extracts from them the promise that if anyone would die on Admetus's behalf, Admetus might continue to live; in other words, to delay Admetus's fate—delay his fate, but not stop or change it.

Indeed, one may work around the Fates as Perseus did in getting them to reveal the whereabouts of Medusa so that he might fulfill his own destiny and slayer her. But to actively seek to stop fate has dire consequences. Perhaps the most dramatic example in Greek mythology would be of Asclepius, the physician. He raised Hippolytus from the dead for the goddess Artemis, but Hades and the three Fates were so scandalized by this breach of cosmic etiquette that they demanded Zeus kill Asclepius with a thunderbolt. It is not the fate of humans in Greek mythology to come back from the dead! But if the Asclepius story is the most immediately dramatic example, it is not the most famous.

The most famous example of an individual in Greek mythology seeking to avoid fate

Greek myths attest in plenty to divine and human efforts to change, alter, or reverse fate.



The physician Asclepius rose Hippolytus from the dead, and for this act the Fates demanded his death. Museum of Epidaurus Theater.

is surely Oedipus. The oracle in this case said that this child would kill his father and wed his mother. His parents attempted to prevent this, as did Oedipus himself. Here, unwittingly, all their actions conspired to fulfill the prophecy.

How the story of Oedipus fascinates us! This is partly because (unlike the demigod heroes such Herakles, Theseus, Orpheus, Perseus, and so on) he is just an ordinary man. He did not have superhuman powers but, like us, wrestled with fate in a world of gods and monsters. His humanity makes his struggles all the more relevant, insightful, and intense as we see ourselves in him.

In Part 2 of this article, I am going to look at Oedipus's attempt to escape his fate, and also compare it to another famous example of someone defying their fate, but from another literary tradition: namely, the story of Jonah. In the case of Jonah, God gave him an express mission—a synonym for purpose, really—and Jonah deliberately defied it. Deliberately? Unwittingly? Let's explore what these two stories tell us in more detail in Part 2.

James Sale has had over 50 books published, most recently "Mapping Motivation for Top Performing Teams" (Routledge, 2021). He has been nominated for the 2022 poetry Pushcart Prize, 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 EnglishCantos.home.blog



The Nornir trio from Norse mythology coincides with the three Greek Fates. Illustrated in 1882 by Ludwig Burger.

In one myth, even Zeus cannot change the fate of his son Sarpedon, whose death is depicted on a piece of pottery, circa 400 B.C.



The aftermath of Pearl Harbor: The devastation of the nuclear-bombed city of Hiroshima, Japan, in Peter Webber's "Emperor."



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

The Aftermath of Pearl Harbor

MARK JACKSON

Imagine if the president of the United States was considered by the U.S. citizenry to be a living god—an actual god walking the earth. The very concept boggles the mind. But so it was with Emperor Hirohito of Japan; his deification reflected the ancient heritage of emperors considered to be as divine as they were human. This was not only an Eastern tradition. The same was true with Western kings and queens although the legacy weakened over time.

History

The film: It's the end of World War II; atomic mushroom clouds hover over Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Japan breaks down. American politicians demand to know whether the Japanese "god" Hirohito (Takataro Kataoka), instigated Pearl Harbor. Someone has to get to the bottom of it. The poetically rendered "Emperor" tells this story.

We meet U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Bonner Fellers (Matthew Fox), a Japanese expert. His boss, supreme commander of the occupying forces, Gen. Douglas MacArthur (Tommy Lee Jones)—he of the general's hat, aviator shades, and overly elongated corn cob pipe—hands Fellers the job.

The decision that Fellers has to make is whether or not Emperor Hirohito should be hanged as a war criminal. Fellers is acutely aware of the necessity of handling the case with kid gloves, since one false move or hasty decision incriminating the emperor could spark an uprising, not to mention a huge, lengthy, expensive occupation. He's given ten days to figure it all out. Ten.

Two Problems for the Protagonist

Two not-so-minor monkey wrenches are thrown into the delicate mix. One is Fellers's

This is a fascinating period costume account, a riveting portrayal, and a wonderful history lesson.

'Emperor'

Director: Peter Webber

Starring: Tommy Lee Jones, Matthew Fox, Kaori Momoi, Eriko Hatsune, Isao Natsuyagi

Running Time: 1 hour, 45 minutes

MPAA Rating: PG-13

Release Date: March 8, 2013 (U.S. release)

★ ★ ★ ★ ★



Gen. Kajima (Toshiyuki Nishida, L) and Brig. Gen. Bonner Fellers (Matthew Fox). Kajima believed the Japanese would win a war with the United States if that ever were to happen.

affair of the heart with a Japanese exchange student (Eriko Hatsune) he had attended college with. She'd left him suddenly, without so much as a goodbye note. Ultimately, she affected his military decisions significantly: He'd steered bombing missions away from her home.

The second is Gen. Richter (Colin Moy), a brown-nosing, dog-eat-dog rival who is intent on sabotaging Fellers's work. Embodying America's thirst for avenging Pearl Harbor, Richter is intent on seeing Hirohito hanged.

Fellers, assisted by a Japanese interpreter and driver he initially treats badly, sets about questioning top-ranking Japanese war criminals and surreptitiously trying to find his true love. Throughout this ticking-bomb ordeal, Fellers's humanity ripens and blossoms, enabling him to reach the staggering decision that led to the present-day relationship that America and Japan have with each other.

History Lesson

This is a fascinating period-costume account, a riveting portrayal, and a wonderful history lesson. The names of Pearl Harbor, Gen. MacArthur, and Hiroshima float about in most Americans' subconscious, but many have never heard the story or witnessed the drama underlying its resolution.

The cinematography is wonderful as it captures the atmospheres of green bamboo, meticulous Japanese gardens, and bombed-out metropolises. It depicts the custom of sitting on the floor drinking sake, and sons bowing all the way down to the ground in greeting as aspects of Japanese culture.

There are also fascinating conversations concerning Japan's complete devotion to one set of values, and how, when the pacifistic emperor tells his people that they must "endure the unendurable," seven million soldiers unquestioningly lay down their weapons in accordance with his divine will.

Very moving are the scenes of Fellers demanding, from fierce Japanese sentinels, a face-to-face with Prince Fumimaro Konoe (Masatoshi Nakamura). Konoe says, "You

incinerated two of our cities, turning our children into shadows on the walls." He gives no conclusive evidence as to the emperor's guilt.

Struggling to comprehend the Japanese mindset, Fellers remembers asking Aya's uncle, Gen. Kajima (Toshiyuki Nishida), for help with a paper he was writing about Japanese soldiers. Kajima said that if the United States and Japan went to war, the Japanese would win because of the Japanese soldiers' sense of duty to the emperor.

With time running out, Fellers sets up an interview with Teizaburo Sekiya (Isao Natsuyagi), a member of the Privy Council. Sekiya, like Konoe, does not give any evidence to exonerate the emperor. He instead recites a tanka poem that the emperor wrote, in all its Japanese solemn and operatic grandeur. He bows. It is reiterated that if one understands devotion, loyalty, and obedience, one understands the ancient warrior code of Japan.

We learn of how the emperor lived a hermetic life. How he stood up to the militarists. How he had only his word.

Look the Emperor in the Eye

Due to the conjectural nature of the emperor's innocence, MacArthur wants to meet for tea, wants to look him in the eye and see what kind of a man he is. As MacArthur says, "I've never met an emperor before. Let alone a god."

There are rules of engagement when meeting a god, such as do not touch the emperor, do not look him in the eye, always stand to his left, don't take a photo opportunity, and so on.

The hugely self-confident MacArthur did not behave himself accordingly. The simple, heartbreakingly honest conversation between a god and a man, where Emperor Hirohito offers himself to be punished, rather than Japan, is stunning. No less stunning is MacArthur, stating that he has no intention of punishing Japan or Hirohito and that he only wants to discuss Japan's reconstruction.

To see exactly how America and Japan transcended their grievances, have a look at this fine film.



Gen. Douglas MacArthur (Tommy Lee Jones, L) assigns to Brig. Gen. Bonner Fellers (Matthew Fox) the difficult task of assessing whether the emperor should be tried as a war criminal.



Statesman Teizaburo Sekiya (Isao Natsuyagi) recites a tanka poem written by the emperor.



Bonner Fellers (Matthew Fox) and Aya Shimada (Eriko Hatsune), who is a love interest that is not based on history.



Tommy Lee Jones (C) as Gen. Douglas MacArthur.

REACHING WITHIN: WHAT TRADITIONAL ART OFFERS THE HEART

'A Christmas Carol' and Overcoming Devilish Greed

ERIC BESS

We've all met people who are greedy and who never seem to have enough, even when they have plenty. Some of us may be haunted by a desire to have more: more money, more time, more affection, more fame, and so on.

It is sometimes difficult to remember that we come into this world with nothing, and we leave with nothing. Maybe "A Christmas Carol" by Charles Dickens and an illustration by Arthur Rackham can remind us of the importance of overcoming our greed.

Charles Dickens's 'A Christmas Carol'

In Charles Dickens's "A Christmas Carol," Ebenezer Scrooge is known for his mean-spirited and miserly ways. Even on Christmas Eve, he refuses to share not only his wealth with a charity but also the Christmas spirit with his nephew. Instead, he keeps his heart colder than the Christmas winter.

On the night of Christmas Eve, however, as Scrooge sits alone in his cold apartment, he is visited by the ghost of his dead business partner, Jacob Marley. In the afterlife, Marley is now punished for his greed and must wander the earth weighed down by heavy chains. He wishes to help Scrooge avoid this same fate and tells Scrooge that he will be visited by three ghosts.

The Ghost of Christmas Past is the first to visit Scrooge. The ghost reminds him of his humble beginnings and shows him his past as a schoolboy and an apprentice. The ghost also shows the end of his engagement with the love of his life, Belle, because of his overwhelming greed for money. Scrooge is left ashamed of himself.

Next, the Ghost of Christmas Present arrives and takes Scrooge through London so he can see how everyone else experiences Christmas. Scrooge gets to see the poor circumstances of his clerk, Bob Cratchit. The Cratchit family eats a sparse meal for Christmas, and the youngest son, Tiny Tim, suffers from extreme illness. The ghost also takes Scrooge to his nephew's home to see his family celebrating Christmas without him, and Scrooge is overwhelmed by emotion.

Finally, the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come shows Scrooge a mysterious man's death. Scrooge overhears people complaining about the dead man's greed and anger. Two businessmen discuss the dead miser, and one says, "Old Scratch has got his own at last, hey?" "Old Scratch" is a pseudonym for the Devil. Scrooge is taken to a graveyard where he sees that he is the one who has died.

Overwhelmed, Scrooge begs for forgiveness. He doesn't want to die, nor does he want to be remembered as a greedy and coldhearted old businessman. He vows to change his ways, to give amply, and to treat people with kindness.

He suddenly awakes on Christmas Day. Filled with the joyful abundance of the Christmas spirit, he provides the Cratchit family with food and visits his nephew's house. For the rest of his life, he joyfully celebrates the kindness and charity of Christmas throughout London.

'Old Scratch Has Got His Own at Last, Hey?'

Arthur Rackham was a 19th-century English painter who illustrated Charles Dickens's "A Christmas Carol." In one of his illustra-



"A Transpontine Cockney," 1934, a self-portrait by Arthur Rackham. From Derek Hudson's book "Arthur Rackham: His Life and Work."

tions, called "Old Scratch has got his own at last, hey?" Rackham interprets and depicts a scene from the vision revealed to Scrooge by the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come.

The composition is overwhelmed by two large figures: Scrooge and the Devil. The figure to the left is Scrooge. He looks frightfully at the Devil in front of him. His whole suit, layered in wrinkles, seems to shiver and quake in the presence of the Devil. He also tightly clenches two money bags, one in each hand.

The Devil slightly leans in toward Scrooge and makes a come-hither motion with his hand. In his other hand, he holds a hook-like tool that he uses to capture his victims. He is depicted as half animal, and his tail slithers up and wraps around his wrist as if even he himself is held captive by his evil desires.

Below Scrooge and the Devil are the two businessmen who talk at Scrooge's mock funeral. They are dressed in long coats and top hats. They communicate and shake each other's hand. We can presume, based on the title of the illustration, that one is telling the other, "Old Scratch has got his own at last, hey?"

Devilish Greed

Dickens's story and Rackham's illustration may give us insight into the nature of the Devil and of greed. As previously mentioned, "Old Scratch" refers to the Devil and "his own" refers to Scrooge. So, Rackham's illustration depicts the Devil taking Scrooge as his property.

However, the businessman's phrase and the title of the painting suggest that the Devil cannot take just anyone, but only his own. That is, the Devil can take only those who are like him. And what makes Scrooge like the Devil? Surely, it must be greed.

Greed and fear often correlate with one another, for the greedy person is often afraid of losing or not having enough of something. Their fear drives them to obtain and hoard more; otherwise, they most likely would not be greedy. At first glance, it looks like Scrooge is afraid of the Devil, and he might indeed be so. But, upon closer examination, you might think he is afraid of giving up the money bags he holds so tightly in his hands.

Even in the face of death and the threat of the Devil's tortures, Scrooge can't let go of his money. His body quivers as he turns the money bags away while the Devil approaches. This overwhelming and all-consuming greed is what makes Scrooge like the Devil.

And the Devil is greedy as well. In the Christian tradition, the Devil was greedy for power, which caused him to be cast out of heaven. In hell, the Devil is greedy for souls and uses his hook-like tool to imprison those who share in his greed. Even the Devil's tail, as if it has a mind of its own, wraps around his wrist like a prisoner's shackle. It is as if the tail, the lowest most animal part of a being consummate with greed, recognizes greed and seeks to imprison it.

Is it the case, then, that it is not simply the Devil that accosts and imprisons those like him, but it is instead greed itself that imprisons those who practice it, including the Devil himself?

This Christmas, it is unlikely that we will have ghosts visit us to help us deal with and overcome our greed. So how might we escape its shackles? Scrooge's experiences reminded him to be kind, generous, and considerate of those around him. Maybe, this Christmas and beyond, we can remember Scrooge and try to do the same.

Have you ever seen a work of art that you thought was beautiful but had no idea what it meant? In our series "Reaching Within: What Traditional Art Offers the Heart," we interpret the classical visual arts in ways that may be morally insightful for us today. We try to approach each work of art to see how our historical creations might inspire within us our own innate goodness.

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

Dickens's story and Rackham's illustration may give us insight into the nature of the Devil and of greed.

"Old Scratch has got his own at last, hey?" 1915, by Arthur Rackham. Illustration.



BOOK REVIEW

A Feel-Good Read Laced With Grace

ANITA L. SHERMAN

The Grand Idea: A voyage on the Galaxy, a private yacht, is a billionaire's brainchild to bring together brilliant minds to change the world.

Now, 10 desperate souls are adrift in a lifeboat somewhere off the coast of West Africa. The yacht they had been on has sunk. Sharks

are spotted along an endless horizon. It's been three days and no rescue teams are looking for them. They are alone, frightened, and fatigued. Their influence and wealth mean little when they are faced with brute survival.

Then a young man appears floating in the waves. He is pulled in, pristine and unmarked. This new member claims to be God.

For some, their despair turns to cruel disbelief. For others, this divine intervention is an answer to their prayers.

A Compelling Mystery

Finding spiritual meaning in life is a driving theme for author Mitch Albom, who has penned such novels as "The Five People You Meet in Heaven," "The Next Person You Meet in Heaven," and "The First Phone Call From Heaven."

Finding spiritual meaning in life is a driving theme for author Mitch Albom.

In "The Stranger in the Lifeboat," which is an overall quick read broken into crisp, fast-paced chapters, Albom immediately takes his readers onboard this buoyant orange rubber boat, sitting among the anxious survivors and perhaps with the Lord himself.

It's hard not to feel like you're swaying to the sea's rhythm as you read about each passenger's fate narrated by Benji, a lonely young man with a penchant for journalism. His notebook is discovered, tucked neatly in a waterproof pouch, a year later when the empty lifeboat washes up on the island of Montserrat. Now it's up to the chief inspector, Jarty LeFleur, to piece together the puzzle of what happened.

There are more questions than answers. What happened to cause the Galaxy to sink? Was there foul play involved? Were there any



Shen Yun Performing Arts cellist Yuchien Yuan.

PERFORMING ARTS

Shen Yun: Bringing Forth Sounds of the Celestial Empire

An interview with Shen Yun Performing Arts cellist Yuchien Yuan



Water Sleeves, a classical Chinese dance from a Shen Yun performance.

The Epoch Times is a proud sponsor of Shen Yun Performing Arts. For more information please visit ShenYunPerformingArts.org

CATHERINE YANG

When Yuchien Yuan speaks of music and the cello, the virtuoso is filled with calm and gratitude. Music is what has been with her all her life.

"I love the sound of it—the vibrant lower registers, the range. It's so beautiful that my orchestra colleagues often say, jokingly, of course, 'Oh, I wish I had learned the cello instead,'" Yuan said.

"In our modern world so jam-packed with noise, the sound of the cello still makes you stop and listen, Yuan mused. "When I play, I really get into it. Actually, there have been times when I was depressed—but then I play, and I feel like even if I have nothing in my life, if I have the cello, I'm OK."

Yuan sees not only her musical talent but also the presence of music in her life itself, as a great gift God has given to her. "When I'm playing music, I get the chance to take off my mask, the mask I'm wearing in this human society, and to show who I am, my true self. In cello performance, I can show people the truth, kindness, and generosity. Music is not just a job or a craft, but a gift I'd like to share with the whole world."

She added: "Through music, I have the chance to meet and communicate with audiences of different backgrounds from around the world and share my feelings and insights of arts and culture with them, as well as bring some beauty into the world."

To date, the consummate artist has played in many performances at the world's top venues for years with New York-based Shen Yun Performing Arts, as part of the orchestra that tours with the dance companies. She has been around the world and performed on the greatest stages.

"The energy of every performance is tremendous. Everyone is surrounded in a field of pure energy, and there are no messy, stray thoughts. The busyness and chaos of daily life completely disappears. It fades away, and there is nothing but the music," Yuan said. "I feel like, actually, I get more out of it than the audience."

What Music Can Do

"Art is the pursuit of beauty," Yuan said. "I think art is a very powerful medium, or means. It is like a language in that you can let people

clearly understand what you want to express, but it also expresses what is indescribable."

"There are things that cannot be described or experienced through words, but art can present these things. As an artist, one must constantly improve and perfect one's skills and abilities. The purpose is to show that which cannot be expressed in words," Yuan said.

"Beautiful things that are beyond the mundane—things invisible and intangible—and share that with others in this complex world, so as to add something to their lives which is a little more pure and sincere."

"To add more beauty, pure beauty, in our chaotic world, I think that our lives—and spirits—would all be elevated too," she said. "I think that's a wonderful thing an artist can do for society."

Yuan has performed in more than 1,400 shows on five continents with Shen Yun, the world-famous dance and music company that has made it its mission to revive 5,000 years of China's divinely inspired culture, once nearly destroyed by the Chinese Communist Party. Ancient China was known as the Celestial Empire, a place where human beings and the divine coexisted.

In the orchestra, Yuan's role is, through sound, to bring to life the scenes on stage: celestial palaces, heavenly realms, grand imperial courts from China's storied dynasties, and the vast and varied landscapes of some 50 ethnic groups across China.

China's traditional culture contains, in its essence, themes like the Confucian virtues of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and fidelity, and the idea of harmony between heaven, earth, and humankind. It's a culture brimming with philosophy and literature, and is deeply profound. The music of Shen Yun needs such depth as well.

The Sound of the Celestial Empire

Shen Yun's orchestra is unlike any other in the sense that it has as permanent members of the ensemble instruments like the pipa (Chinese lute) and erhu (a bowed, two-stringed instrument). Chinese sounds and melodies are blended seamlessly into an otherwise Western orchestra, and the musicians harmonize East and West perfectly.

"It's not only about imitating the tone of Chinese instruments, but to capture the essence of different Chinese ethnic styles, including Mongolian, Yi, Tibetan, Miao, Dai,

and other ethnic minorities in China," she said. "You have to know their culture and musical characteristics, and know what each piece of music wants to present. It's not just the superficial joy, anger, sorrow, but the source of those emotions."

Yuan gave an example a 2019 storytelling dance about Qing Dynasty Emperor Kangxi, the longest-reigning emperor in Chinese history, remembered for the peace and security of his reign. Knowing about the period and about his life, she understood that it was a period of prosperity, and how the characters in the court must have felt, and thus could bring these layers into her musical performance.

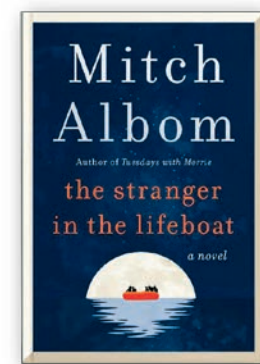
"After so many years of preparing like this, I've also broadened my knowledge of the humanities a lot," Yuan said. She remarked that this was yet another aspect brought into her life through her cello that she is grateful for.

In learning about the figures of the past, she's also experienced much about how the ancients lived, and feels there is much that modern society could learn. "Things like their morality, their spiritual values, and the mutual respect prevalent in the culture. This and many other things—it really is a good cultural heritage and worthy of re-discovering."

Shen Yun's Upcoming Performances

Charleston	South Carolina	Dec. 18-19
San Jose	California	Dec. 22-27
Hartford	Connecticut	Dec. 26
San Diego	California	Dec. 28-29
Fort Lauderdale	Florida	Dec. 28-30
Berkeley	California	Dec. 30
Costa Mesa	California	Jan. 1, 2022
Milwaukee	Wisconsin	Dec. 31- Jan. 2, 2022
Raleigh	North Carolina	Dec. 31- Jan. 1, 2022
Jacksonville/Orange Park	Florida	Jan. 1-2, 2022
San Francisco	California	Jan. 2-9, 2022
Greensboro	South Carolina	Jan. 4-5, 2022
Miami	Florida	Jan. 4-5, 2022
Savannah	Georgia	Jan. 5-6, 2022
Baltimore	Maryland	Jan. 7-9, 2022
Atlanta	Georgia	Jan. 7-8, 2022
Austin	Texas	Jan. 7-9, 2022

For additional performance dates, please visit ShenYun.com/tickets



'The Stranger in the Lifeboat'

Author Mitch Albom

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REWIND, REVIEW, AND RE-RATE

A Thought-Provoking World War II Drama

IAN KANE

Many World War II films from the 1940s and '50s—at least those set in the overseas theaters of war—follow a pattern: focusing on external events with little insight into what the main characters are thinking and feeling. With his “Walk in the Sun,” director Lewis Milestone (“All Quiet on the Western Front,” “Of Mice and Men”) offers up a different kind of war movie.

Released in 1945, just after World War II ended, the focus is on one of the many U.S. Army platoons charged with the initial amphibious assault on Italy (the 1943 Allied Invasion of Italy).

The opening scenes include an unusual tapestry of filmmaking styles. It begins with each of the platoon’s main characters being introduced via turning pages of a storybook, with brief descriptions of them delivered through excellent narration supplied by Burgess Meredith.

Next, we’re thrust with the platoon into a Higgins boat (the iconic landing craft seen at the beginning of “Saving Private Ryan”) as the men approach the Salerno beach in the early morning darkness.

The men engage in all kinds of banter—the type you’d expect from men of differing slices of American life. Some talk about being back home, while others wonder what will happen once they hit the beaches. Still others distance themselves from the possibility of death by discussing where on their

bodies they’d prefer to get hit by enemy fire in order to receive a Purple Heart.

This realistic dialogue is at odds with the spontaneous, jarring interjections of baritone ballads, as well as the unusual stillness of the boat ride through supposedly choppy seas.

The beach landing itself is rather uneventful and, as the men dig in to await further orders, they banter back and forth some more. This time, however, much of their talk and other interactions give us insights into not only the wishes, fears, dreams, and idiosyncrasies of each of the characters but also hints as to their morale and place in the overall pecking order.

For example, since their young lieutenant got part of his face blown off by an enemy shell back on their Higgins boat, a senior NCO named Sgt. Eddie Porter (Herbert Rudley) is tasked with leading the beach assault. However, although he acts confidently in front of the men, he frequently pulls the quietly cool, calm, and collected Sgt. Bill Tyne (Dana Andrews) to the side in order to ask for advice.

As the men remain under cover on the beach, they try to anticipate where enemy counterattacks will come from—mainly in the form of lightning-fast air-to-ground strafing runs by enemy planes, bombings, or blistering torrents of bullets by dug-in machine gun nests.

As the platoon makes its way off of the beach, some of the characters meet their ends during the various threats arrayed against them.

The men move inland in order to carry out their next objective, which is to assault and occupy a German-held farmhouse on the fringes of Salerno, and the tension steadily ratchets up. Due to the sense of inevitable combat, the first cracks appear in Sgt. Porter’s sanity. Will he be able to conquer his fears and lead his men to accomplish their objective?

What Would I Do?

As a military veteran myself, I really enjoyed the realistic banter among the men,



ALL PHOTOS BY TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX

‘A Walk in the Sun’ greatly humanizes the men and gives the film some unique what-would-I-do-in-their-shoes moments.

‘A Walk in the Sun’

Director: Lewis Milestone
Starring: Dana Andrews, Richard Conte, George Tyne
Not Rated
Running Time: 1 hour, 57 minutes
Release Date: Dec. 3, 1945

★★★★★

which ranged from making fun of each other to waxing philosophical, as well as opening up about their trepidations. The film paints these soldiers with multidimensional brushes, as opposed to a one-size-fits-all approach. This greatly humanizes the men and gives the film some unique what-would-I-do-in-their-shoes moments.

The ensemble cast is truly impressive and includes Richard Conte, George Tyne, John Ireland, Lloyd Bridges, Sterling Holloway, Norman Lloyd, and Herbert Rudley. The aforementioned leading man Dana Andrews steals most of the scenes he’s in, even when he’s not talking. He fits his “cool as a cucumber” role perfectly, although he does get some great expository dialogue as well.

Overall, “A Walk in the Sun” is a unique World War II film that is both thought-provoking and compelling to watch from scene to scene. Its interest is maintained more through dialogue than from the barrels of soldiers’ rifles.

Ian Kane is an U.S. Army veteran, author, filmmaker, and actor. He is dedicated to the development and production of innovative, thought-provoking, character-driven films and books of the highest quality. To learn more, visit DreamFlightEnt.com

▲ In “A Walk in the Sun,” we learn about the men in a U.S. platoon making its way across the Italian countryside during World War II.



Sgt. Bill Tyne (Dana Andrews) is the unacknowledged leader of the platoon.

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