WEEK 1, 2022

THE EPOCH TIMES

ARTS & CULTURE

FINE ARTS

The Italian Renaissance: To the Glory of God or Man?

How the epitome of Western art emerged from the Middle Ages

JOHANNA SCHWAIGER

My earliest memories of Italy are of Venice. In such a strange and magical world, I felt like Alice in Wonderland; as a child, I chased pigeons around St. Mark's Square, while my father painted watercolors of the scene.

Later, as part of my art history studies, I traveled frequently from Salzburg, where I studied, to Umbria and Tuscany, learning about the art treasures in churches, monasteries, and museums.

When I finally moved to Florence to study classical sculpture, I lived among famous masterpieces in the very city that is full of stories about the cradle of the Renaissance.

Innovations such as linear perspective, the use of human anatomy, and the understanding of light and shadow made the Italian Renaissance a fascinating phenomenon, culminating in Michelangelo's "Creation of Adam" in the Sistine Chapel in Rome. However, it is not only the innovations that make us marvel at this influx of masterpieces, but something else that is far more extraordinary.

Historians who focus on the Enlightenment era like to interpret the Renaissance as the first shift toward a modern world. The Italian Renaissance, they argued, was a time when the darkness of the Middle Ages—an illiterate society hostile to pleasure—was finally broken by the rediscovery of Greek thought. By exploring material beauty through the human body, artists had stopped focusing on God and started believing in themselves.

This sounds plausible, but it has nothing to do with the Italy that I have come to know and love. Anyone who has spent time in Italy's museums and churches to experience art firsthand knows that this is far from the truth. The vast majority of works before, during, and after the Renaissance were dedicated to faith in God.

The Renaissance Emerged From the Middle Ages

To better understand what sparked a golden age of art, we must first question the account of a lost civilization suddenly reborn in Italy.

Renaissance historian John Monfasani sheds light on the misconception of the Dark Ages that has been further shaped by Hollywood blockbusters such as "The Name of the Rose," "Robin Hood," and "The Da Vinci Code."

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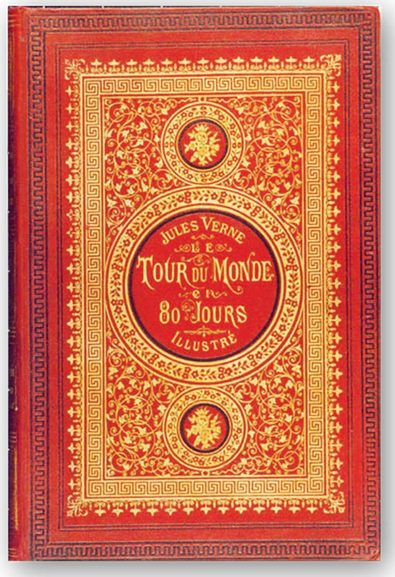
PUBLIC DOMAIN

"Madonna in the Church" was painted by the Flemish artist Jan van Eyck circa 1438–1440, well before the Italian breakthroughs in technique. Oil on oak panel, 12 inches by 5.5 inches. Gemäldegalerie, Berlin.



The French first edition of Jules Verne's "Around the World in Eighty Days." Published on Jan. 30, 1873, by Pierre-Jules Hetzel & Cie, Paris.

LITERATURE

Becoming an Adventurer: A Look at 'Around the World in Eighty Days'

JEFF MINICK

Time to break free of the winter doldrums.

Let's put aside today's headlines and instead travel the world. We'll spend a few days in rural India, pay a quick visit to Singapore, cross the plains and mountains of the American West by rail and on sleds driven by sails, and beat our way across the Atlantic on a steam-driven ship. Along the way we'll rescue a damsel in distress and face bandits, storms, and other dangers, all the while pursued by an intrepid detective for a crime we didn't commit and surviving by means of our wits and grit to win a wager.

And here's the good news: We can achieve all these ambitions without leaving the comfort of home. We can sit on the sofa in the living room with a mug of steaming tea and plenty of opportunities to take a break from such escapades—make a phone call, fix a sandwich, take a stroll around the neighborhood—if we wish to do so.

All we have to do is settle ourselves and break open Jules Verne's classic novel "Around the World in Eighty Days."

The year is 1872, and Phileas Fogg, an English gentleman, has just made a wager with some members of the Reform Club that he can circumscribe the globe in 80 days. Fogg sets out with a servant hired that very morning, Jean Passepartout, a Parisian who boasts such talents as a former gymnast, circus rider, and tightrope walker, as well as serving as a gentleman's gentleman. Passepartout hopes to find "a tranquil life" in Mr. Fogg's employ, yet off they go, dispatched by Mr. Fogg's bet on a global trip that will sweep them and their readers through a torrent of trials and adventures.

The Grandfather of Travel Books

Danger, risk, and the possibility of death are a continual part of this race against the clock. In India, assisted by a British officer and their Parsee guide, Fogg and Passepartout rescue a young widow, Aouda, from suttee, or being burned alive on a pyre with her dead, elderly husband. In Hong Kong, Passepartout falls victim to the schemes of Mr. Fix, the detective who is pursuing Mr. Fogg in the belief that he is a bank robber. Left behind in an opium den, Passepartout eventually rejoins his master, and the four of them, including Fix at times, face other ordeals, including an attack by Sioux warriors on the American plains and a wild and desperate voyage across the Atlantic.

In the Afterword to my edition of "Around the World in Eighty Days" (Penguin Group, 1991, revised and updated translation by Jacqueline Rogers), critic Thurston Clarke mentions some of the novel's faults, but then adds that it "is one of the most influential works of travel literature ever written, setting standards and establishing patterns and themes that are still followed. It decreed that any journey worthy of description had to involve some challenge, some stunt or goal."

Clarke then cites such travel classics as Paul Theroux's "The Old Patagonian Express," Graham Greene's "Journey Without Maps," and Jonathan Raban's "Old Glory: An American Voyage" as derivatives of Verne's novel. "After Verne," Clarke writes, "it was not enough to simply to visit the remote and exotic, a writer had to return with adventures."

A Quintessential Englishman

Passepartout, the beautiful Aouda, and a dozen other characters in Verne's novel are all vividly drawn. We take delight in the antics and thoughts of Passepartout, applauding his ingenuity and courage, and admire Aouda not only for her beauty but also for the abundant gratitude and fierce loyalty she shows to her rescuers. Even the ever-present bulldog of a detective, Mr. Fix, intrigues us by his single-minded, though wrongheaded, devotion to his duty.

But it is the enigmatic Mr. Fogg who truly captures our attention. While the others stay awake worrying in the face of some catastrophe, Fogg sleeps unperturbed through the night. When some enemy or danger confronts them, Fogg weighs the facts and circumstances, looks for solutions, and once his mind is made up as to a course of action, he never wavers in carrying out his plan. No disaster fazes him. Again and again, Verne uses "cool" and "coolly" to describe Fogg's behavior when confronted by adversity.

Keeping a "stiff upper lip," which of course means demonstrating restraint of emotions and keeping one's head in dire situations, was an attribute especially prized by Victorian England. Rudyard Kipling, for example, celebrated this manly virtue in some of his short stories, and his poem "If" might serve as an instruction manual for learning this brand of stoicism. The principles advocated by this verse fit Mr. Fogg to a T.

"Around the World in Eighty Days" immediately became a bestseller. It's amusing to think that a story told by a French novelist may have helped enhance that "stiff upper lip" image so valued by the English, a perception that endured until the 1960s.

The Englishman Gives Away His Heart

Despite Fogg's unreadable face and often chilly personality, readers eventually realize that the lovely Aouda is falling in love with this man who saved her life and who always first considers her comfort and safety in the strange adventures that come their way. Passepartout wishes his master would recognize the lady's affections as he himself does, and yet we have only an inkling here and there of Fogg's feelings toward her.

There's no spoiler alert needed by noting that at the novel's end Fogg and Aouda become engaged. Even a casual reader would likely guess that outcome. What we fail to suspect, however, is that it is Aouda who proposes to Fogg. Here is the scene in which this occurs, as fine a piece of romance as written anywhere. Facing an enormous personal financial catastrophe, Fogg confesses that he can rely on neither friends nor relatives for help. Aouda then replies:

> "I pity you, then, Mr. Fogg, for solitude is a sad thing, with no heart to which to confide your griefs. They say, though, that misery itself, shared by two sympathetic souls, may be borne with patience."
> "They say so, madam."
> "Mr. Fogg," said Aouda, rising, and seizing his hand, "do you wish at once a kinswoman and a friend? Will you have me for your wife?"

Mr. Fogg, at this, rose in his turn. There was an unusual light in his eyes, and a slight trembling of his lips. Mrs. Aouda looked into his face. The sincerity, rectitude, firmness, and sweetness of this soft glance of a noble woman, who could dare all to save him to whom she owed all, at first astonished, then penetrated him. He shut his eyes for an instant, as if to avoid her look. When he opened them again, "I love you!" he said, simply. "Yes, by all that is holiest, I love you, and I am entirely yours."

"Ah!" cried Mrs. Aouda, pressing her hand to her heart.

A Hidden Message

Some moderns believe that such romance is dead. Others may read "Around the World in Eighty Days" and lament that the world no longer offers such chance for adventure and the exotic, that our air travel and electronic communications have shrunk the globe, leaving little room for discovery, daring, or great deeds. Like Miniver Cheevy in Edwin Arlington Robinson's poem by the same name, these moderns dream "of Thebes and Camelot, and Priam's neighbors," and curse what they consider the gray, staid age in which they were born.

Verne's tale may be interpreted as a call to action.

But are these Minivers correct?

Born in 1828 and dying at age 77, Verne didn't write "Around the World in Eighty Days" as some nostalgic trip into the past. The places, means of travel, and events he described were contemporary to his time. Fogg sets his wager in 1872; "Around the World in Eighty Days" was published the following year.

If we keep that idea in mind, here in 2022, we might see "Around the World in Eighty Days" in a different light. Verne's tale may be interpreted as a call to action. It is a reminder that we can choose to view our life as a grand and exciting excursion, a journey from birth to death meant to be experienced to the hilt. Here the challenge is not a race against time around the globe, but to comprehend and revel in the mysteries and possibilities of that world, including those in our own backyard, and to see each day as a gift to be unwrapped and explored.

By regarding life as an adventure, as do the characters in Verne's story, we can make it so.

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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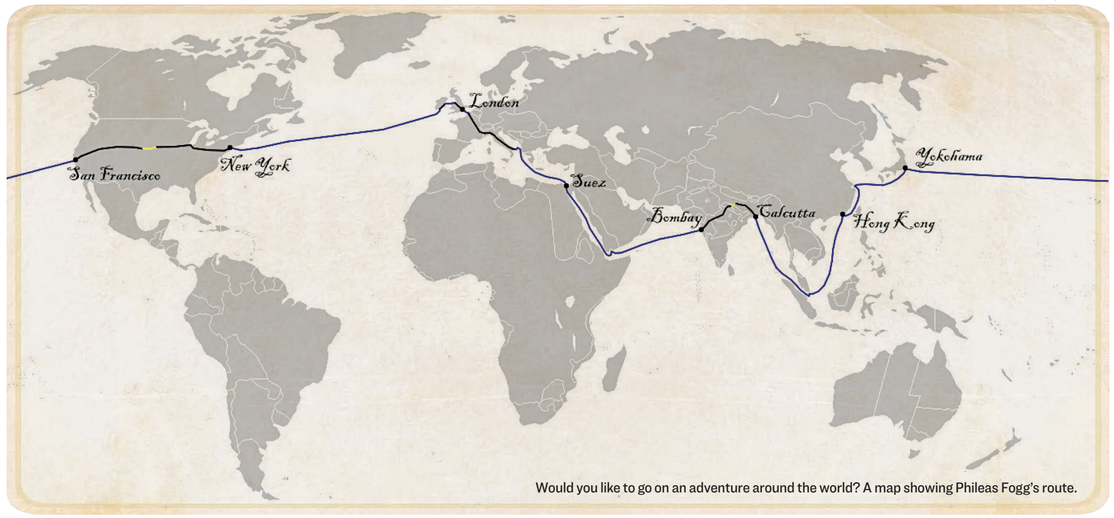
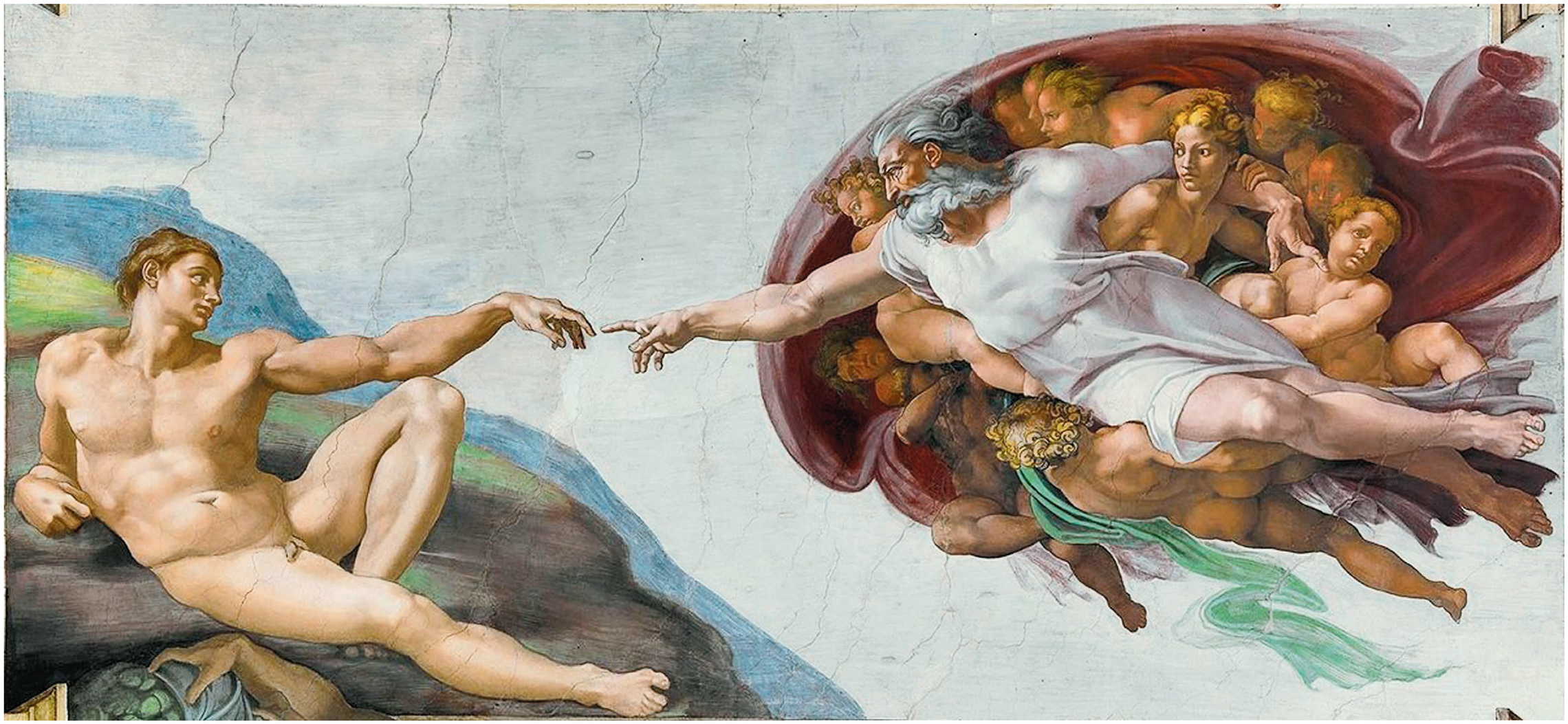


Would you like to go on an adventure around the world? A map showing Phileas Fogg's route.

PUBLIC DOMAIN



Michelangelo's masterwork in the Sistine Chapel may be considered the apex of the Italian Renaissance, but it was not a break from the work of the Middle Ages. "The Creation of Adam," 1508–1512, Vatican.

FINE ARTS

The Italian Renaissance: To the Glory of God or Man?

How the epitome of Western art emerged from the Middle Ages

Continued from ***Page 1***

Most films characterize medieval Europe as a time of violence and backwardness.

Monfasani exposes these misconceptions. In his book review of "The Swerve: How the World Became Modern" by Stephen Greenblatt, Monfasani writes about the factual inaccuracies on which the New York Times bestseller's thesis is built.

"To illustrate the extent of the errors in 'The Swerve,' I will go through Greenblatt's portrait of the Middle Ages point by point. First, it may be true that it is possible for an entire culture to turn away from reading and writing. But that didn't happen in medieval Europe. In fact, the Middle Ages are considered the most book-friendly era in Europe, a time when books—Christian, Greek, and Roman alike—were accorded almost totemic authority. Medieval readers and writers, not only the clergy but also lay culture, were greatly influenced by texts and documents, especially after the 10th century."

Suppose we understand that monasteries in the Middle Ages were not just centers of prayer but for intellectual exchange, creativity, and learning. And we can further suppose that the daily life of people in the Middle Ages was as complex as in any other era, filled with love, hate, faith, doubt, curiosity, and ignorance. In that case, it gives us a more accurate picture.

Looking at medieval art, rich in beauty and showing constant innovation over hundreds of years, it becomes clear that Western civilization was born in medieval Europe.

Historians who focus on the Enlightenment era like to interpret the Renaissance as the first shift toward a modern world.

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PUBLIC DOMAIN

(Left) The "Bamberg Rider" in Bamberg Cathedral shows how far the technical skills of the artists of Middle Ages had advanced. It may have been created as early as 1220.

(Right) "Le Vite de' Piv Eccellenti Pittori Scultori et Architettori," 1568, by Giorgio Vasari. Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1929; Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Influences From the North

Traces of this growth can be found in art throughout the ages. Far north of Italy, we find remarkable depictions of human figures. For example, taking the date from the German art historian Ernst Gombrich, as early as 1220 in Germany's Bamberg Cathedral, the "Bamberg Rider" shows a life-size equestrian statue with excellent proportions, detailed clothing, and horse musculature.

The technique of oil painting originated in the Nordic countries. Its invention is attributed to Jan van Eyck in Bruges, who developed it out of a desire for greater realism. Van Eyck and his Flemish contemporaries in the early 15th century achieved an unprecedented level of depiction for detailed portraits as well as materials such as metal, glass, and various qualities of fabric such as velvet, cotton, and silk. Their art originated in the miniature painting of the late Gothic period.

Rarely are these Flemish artists considered a major influence on the Italian Renaissance. Even the term "Flemish Primitives," used by art historians since the 19th century, seems biased. One look at van Eyck's Ghent Altarpiece, a masterpiece of outstanding quality and rich in symbolism, is anything but "primitive."

So, where does the narrative of the triumph of the Italian Renaissance over the dark Middle Ages come from? To find the answer, we need to look at the source that coined the name "Renaissance."

Giorgio Vasari, the Inventor of the Renaissance

The first art historian of the 16th century, Giorgio Vasari first mentioned the word Rinascimento (Renaissance) in his biographies of artists "Le Vite" ("The Lives"), short for "Le Vite de' Piv Eccellenti Pittori Scultori et Architettori" ("The Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects"). Although his nine volumes provide valuable information about the lives and workings of the greatest masters, his descriptions should always be taken with a grain of salt.

Vasari's account of the birth of the Renaissance, in particular, has been widely questioned. In his prologue, he described everything created after the fall of Rome and before the Renaissance as monstrous, barbaric, and the buildings deformed, which polluted the world. He summarized how the barbarians overthrew Rome and how the newly formed Christian religion, after "a long and bloody struggle," eradicated the ancient faith of the pagans. The rebirth of Greek thought in Italy would eventually have brought the arts to their new, celebrated heights.

Historians and archeologists today know that this is a caricature of events. German art historian Gerd Blum first pointed out Vasari's praise for own era in his book "Giorgio Vasari, the Inventor of the Renaissance."

The British art critic Waldemar Januszczak, in his documentary series "The Renaissance Unchained," has been equally critical of Vasari's account.

Moreover, we know that the Aristotelian and Christian synthesis has flourished since the eighth century and not only since the Renaissance.

Today, we understand that art in Italy reached its peak through a long tradition of crafts rooted in monastic workshops and influenced by many countries and traditions.

What These Renaissance Works Tell Us

Regardless of the influences that initiated the Italian Renaissance, something much greater was happening than the technical achievements that continue to captivate people around the world to this day.

I remember riding my bike through Piazza del Duomo every day during my time in Florence and seeing a tightly packed crowd of tourists mesmerized outside the Gates of Paradise at the Baptistery of San Giovanni (St. John) created between 1425 and 1452.

Lorenzo Ghiberti's gate is the work of art that I return to most often since its magnificence first struck me. Michelangelo once described it as "beautiful enough to be the gateway to paradise." Particularly impressive about this door is the panel depicting the creation of Adam and Eve—Adam in a state of semiconsciousness, rising to God's life-giving touch.

It is works like these that, when viewed, make one stand still in time and realize for a moment the beauty of creation and ourselves as part of something much greater.

Vasari wrote in "Le Vite" Leonardo da Vinci's famous last words: "I have offended God and mankind, for my work has not reached the quality it should have."

Although it is not proven that Leonardo said these words as a dying man, because Vasari ascribed them to him, they became representative of the ambition of a generation of artists who were driven by something greater than themselves to honor God's creation.

Johanna Schwaiger is a sculptor and program director at the New Masters Academy.

KIEV.VICTOR/SHUTTERSTOCK

The Gates of Paradise, a pair of gilded bronze doors designed by sculptor Lorenzo Ghiberti at the north entrance of the Baptistery of St John.

PUBLIC DOMAIN

The 12 interior panels of the Ghent Altarpiece, a masterpiece by Flemish artist Jan van Eyck. The altar was created in 1432, well before the Italian Renaissance. Saint Bavo Cathedral, Ghent, Belgium.

CRAFTSMANSHIP

For the Love of Tyrone Crafted Glass

Bringing world-class glassmaking back to County Tyrone

LORRAINE FERRIER

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF TYRONE CRAFTED GLASS

Tyrone Crafted Glass ship their hand-cut glassware around the world.

It's 1970. In a woodworking class in Dungannon, County Tyrone, Northern Ireland, 11-year-old Jim Regan is eagerly surveying a block of wood in readiness for carving a rabbit. Although enthusiastic, Regan thinks: "What good will this do me?"

Little did young Regan realize then that the skills he learned in carving that rabbit he would use every day in his 35-year career as a glass cutter for Tyrone Crystal.

Regan's glass-cutting career was cut short in 2010 when Tyrone Crystal closed, he said by telephone. But now he and several former Tyrone Crystal glass artisans are all volunteers at Tyrone Crafted Glass, a UK community interest company, or CIC, that's helping to revive glass cutting and glassmaking in the Dungannon area.

Tyrone Crafted Glass chairman Gary Currie and his wife, Ciara, who is a former Tyrone Crystal tour guide, are two of the leading forces behind the revival of glassmaking in County Tyrone.

Currie has always been passionate about glassmaking. Even though he'd never worked in the factory, he grew up in its presence, he said by telephone. When the factory closed, he decided to rent a workshop space to teach himself glassblowing and he met former Tyrone Crystal glassblowers who taught him, too. In time, his workshop became a bit of a hub for glassblowing when he began teaching classes, even though the workshop was off the beaten track.

Tyrone Crafted Glass was founded in January 2020, when six of the glassmaking artisans and enthusiasts decided to apply for funding to preserve the local glassmaking tradition.

For Regan, the chance to cut glass again was more than just an opportunity to practice his craft. It was a chance to reconnect with old friends, make new ones and, perhaps most importantly, to pass on the glass-cutting skills that he was once taught.

The Local Glassmaking Heritage

All kinds of glassware were once made at the Tyrone Crystal factory in Dungannon: wine glasses and tumblers, lampshades and chandeliers, and even commemorative glass and specially commissioned pieces.

The company became world-renowned. John Wayne's son commissioned a crystal replica of his dad's revolver, and Bette Davis was said to have even owned some Tyrone Crystal, Regan said.

Regan joined Tyrone Crystal in 1975, when the company had a young workforce—in age and skill. A Catholic priest, Father Austin Eustace, had founded the company just four years earlier, in 1971. He specifically chose to start a glass factory—a labor-intensive industry—to create jobs in the area, which was experiencing crippling unemployment.

Although glassmaking had been in the area back in the late 18th century, Father Eustace had to look farther afield to find some master glass artisans to train his fledgling factory workers. Austrian glass-blowing instructor Gert Elstner and German glass cutter Hans Gross ended up training the apprentices.

The two had been hiking around England when they saw a newspaper ad asking for master craftsmen to teach their trade. They decided to go to Dungannon for a couple of weeks. Those weeks stretched to years. Elstner was involved in the factory until it closed, and he still lives in the area.

From Apprenticing to Receiving Astonishing Commissions

For the first six months of Regan's five-year glass-cutting apprenticeship, he concentrated solely on cutting a star on the bottom of glasses. Each cut had to be made twice: first on a rough stonecutter and then on a fine stonecutter. After he'd perfected the star design, he spent the next six months mastering glass cutting on the side of the glasses. And so the apprenticeship continued, progressing gradually, step by step until he made more intricate and larger cuts.

Master glass-cutter Jim Regan cuts a glass bowl at the Tyrone Crafted Glass factory in Coalisland near Dungannon, Northern Ireland. Regan is one of many former Tyrone Crystal artisans who volunteer their time to teach others glass-cutting skills.

A small corner of the Tyrone Crafted Glass workshop is a dedicated museum space, where visitors can learn about the local glassmaking heritage.

Around 1980, Tyrone Crystal introduced a diamond cutting machine to the workshop, which streamlined the cutting process. Glass-cutting apprenticeships were reduced from five to three years as the new machines meant that the glass no longer needed to be cut on two different machines.

Besides the standard glassware of wine glasses, tumblers, and lighting, Regan also made special commissions. Recently, he showed Cait Finnegan, the daughter of his former woodworking teacher, Val McCaul, photographs of his crystal commissions. A member of the Vintage Rolls-Royce Club of Northern Ireland commissioned Tyrone Crystal to make an 18-inch replica of the Rolls-Royce Ghost as a prize for the person who traveled the farthest in the classic car. Regan had to scale the piece up from the six-inch model provided. When the customer collected the finished piece, he was so delighted that he decided to keep it for himself.

Finnegan, too, was in awe of the replica. She was even more surprised when she heard how Regan had learned to create such pieces. He told her about the rabbit he'd made in her father's woodworking class. And he explained how the techniques he'd learned making that rabbit so many years ago became the basic foundation for his glass-cutting commissions.

Currie and his team want to preserve these glassmaking skills for the younger generation.

Master glass cutter Jim Regan marks where each cut needs to be made on a wine glass.

Reviving the Centuries-Old Glassmaking Tradition

In a corner of the Tyrone Crafted Glass factory is a small museum dedicated to the local glassmaking heritage. On display are donated Tyrone Crystal pieces and memorabilia, along with McCaul's woodworking tools and some wooden glass molds that he made for the Tyrone Crystal factory in its early years.

Visitors to Tyrone Crafted Glass can have a "glass-cutting experience" where they can cut a simple pattern into a tumbler. In addition, there's also been a three-month apprenticeship for aspiring young glass cutters, which the company plans to expand. In the near future, there will be glass-blowing classes and school visits in the factory.

Ultimately, Currie and his team want to preserve these glassmaking skills for the younger generation. With most glass-cutting apprenticeships taking up to five years to complete, on a full-time basis, he said it is crucial that apprenticeships start as soon as possible.

He warned that with most of the Tyrone Crystal glass artisans at or nearing retirement, finding the right master glass artisans over the next 10 years could be problematic.

"It's a very, very difficult trade to learn to cut glass. It takes you many, many hours of practice. ... I would hope after the first four to five years with Tyrone Crafted Glass that we will then have a number of glass cutters who will qualify, and they will be as good as the master glass cutters who are teaching them. That's our aim," he said.

Tyrone Crafted Glass ships its glass products worldwide.

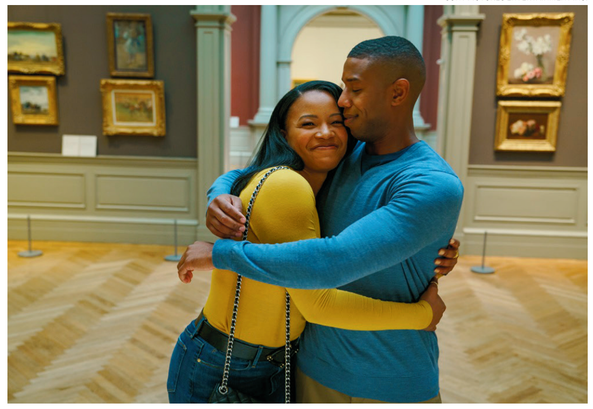
(L–R) Glass cutters Paul McBride and Jim Regan with Tyrone Crystal's glass-blowing instructor Gert Elstner and Tyrone Crafted Glass director Gary Currie at the Tyrone Crafted Glass workshop.

FILM REVIEW

Director Denzel Washington Is All Over the Map

MICHAEL CLARK

SONY PICTURES ENTERTAINMENT INC.



Dana Canedy (Chanté Adams) and Charles Monroe King (Michael B. Jordan), in "A Journal for Jordan."

In his first three features as a director, two-time Oscar-winning actor Denzel Washington chose to explore the often difficult experiences of Black Americans. "Antwone Fisher" (2002) and "The Great Debaters" (2007) were fact-based, and "Fences" (2016) was an adaptation of the 1985 play by August Wilson. All low-budget affairs, each took in practically double its cost at the box office and received favorable reviews. Not huge cash cows, Washington's pet projects still left everyone involved relatively pleased.

At the time of this writing, the budget for Washington's latest project hasn't been made public yet, but based on the look of the final product, it's probably as modest as the others. Coupled with Washington's following and that of leading man Michael B. Jordan (along with the Christmas Day release) almost ensured that it wouldn't lose money.

Washington Backslides

Sporting the unfussy, unadorned, generic sheen of a high-end Hallmark production, "A Journal for Jordan" finds Washington backsliding artistically. This movie lacks his own stylistic stamp and could have been made by anyone. It's also something of a step back for Jordan, who flexed his considerable acting chops by stealing every scene in which he appeared as the antagonist in "Black Panther" and as the title character in the "Rocky"-offshoot "Creed" franchise. (Jordan makes his directorial debut with "Creed III," scheduled for release on Nov. 23, 2022.)

Playing it almost too safe, Washington nonetheless delivers a rare end-of-the-year film that lacks the artsy or meaning-of-life subject matter aimed at capturing industry awards and critical accolades. This could be one of the reasons why it wasn't screened for the press prior to most Top 10 voting deadlines.

Adapted by Virgil Williams ("Mudbound") from the memoir "A Journal for Jordan: A Story of Love and Honor" (itself a collection of letters) by Dana Canedy, the movie takes nearly half of its 131 minutes before tackling anything resembling daring. For some audiences, this won't be a problem and in some ways it is actually a blessing.

Nonlinear Narrative

In theory, the story is uncomplicated by anyone's standards, but Williams and Washington make their and our jobs harder by taking the unadvisable route of presenting the narrative wildly out-of-sequence. Had this been "Memento," "Mulholland Drive," "Citizen Kane," or any number of movies by Quentin Tarantino, this could be justified but, sadly, it is not.

Director Denzel Washington might have bitten off more artistic license than he could chew.

'A Journal for Jordan'

Director:
Denzel Washington

Starring:
Michael B. Jordan, Chante Adams, Jalon Christian, Johnny M. Wu

Running Time:
2 hours, 11 minutes

MPAA Rating:
PG-13

Release Date:
Dec. 25, 2021

★★½☆☆

Opening in 2018, it goes back to 2007, then 1998, then 2001, then 2009, and finally back to 2018; the film isn't as breezy and straightforward as it should have been. Giving away far too much in the opening title sequence alone, the filmmakers rob themselves of considerable thunder for most of the first act, rendering the rest of it anticlimactic. Strip away all of the fancy sleight of hand and time-shift hopscotching and you're left with a boy-meets-girl love story that takes pride in its traditional, old-fashioned approach.

Boy Meets Girl

A stickler for routine and discipline, career Army man Sgt. Charles King (Jordan) is visiting his former commander's (Robert Wisdom) home where he meets that man's daughter Dana (Chanté Adams). Somewhat stunned by his manners (Charles ends all answers to her questions with "ma'am"), she's also impressed that he has a creative side.

A big fan of French pointillist painter Georges Seurat, Charles uses the same style and has created an impressive work for Dana's dad. Ripped with a thousand-watt smile, Charles causes Dana to go weak in the knees but she hides it well. The only thing she finds fault with is his total lack of fashion sense.

A budding investigative journalist who eventually lands a gig at a major U.S. daily newspaper, Dana wants to take it slow. Because she and Charles live far apart, though, she decides to somewhat quicken the pace. Due to deft story compression and narrative shorthand, the courtship of the leads never feels rushed or gets ahead of itself.

An event taking place early on chronologically forces the romance in a direction neither Charles nor Dana anticipated or wanted, and it tosses them a challenge that tests their collective resolve. This is the point where the film hits its emotional high-water mark.

The Filmmakers Take a Neutral Position

Wanting to have a child together, Charles and Dana differ on opinions regarding marriage and service to one's country versus those of family. Whatever narrative and storytelling shortcomings the movie might have (and there are many), the message is clear. In order to preserve the family, individual sacrifices might have to be made, and it is possible for two people deeply in love to disagree on priorities.

It's obvious that Washington had his heart in the right place, but he might have bitten off more artistic license than he could chew. He's a pretty good director who knows how to tell a simple story well, and he shouldn't have tried to make the process more intricate or difficult to navigate than the material demanded. He and Williams should have also eliminated the inclusion of three totally unnecessary racial epithets, which added nothing positive to the story.

What Washington might want to consider for his next project is an adaptation of another Wilson play ("The Piano Lesson"). This may seem like a left-handed slam, but it's actually a compliment. Washington is better at interpreting difficult material than he is doing the simple stuff. He's an actor of complex depth and deep range and should seek out material that is in accordance with his strengths.

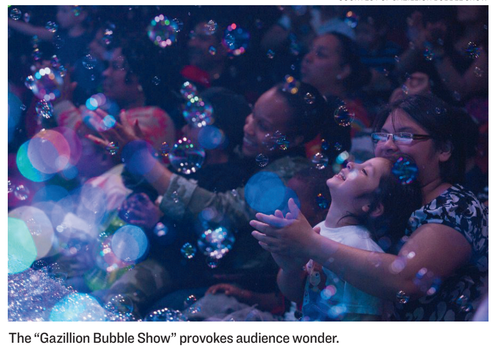
Originally from Washington, D.C., Michael Clark has written for over 30 local and national film industry media outlets and is ranked in the top 10 of the Atlanta media marketplace. He co-founded the Atlanta Film Critics Circle in 2017 and is a regular contributor to the Shannon Burke Show on FloridaManRadio.com. Since 1995, Mr. Clark has written over 4,000 movie reviews and film-related articles.

THEATER REVIEW

Childlike Delight for All Ages

JUDD HOLLANDER

COURTESY OF GAZILLION BUBBLE SHOW



The "Gazillion Bubble Show" provokes audience wonder.

NEW YORK—No matter how old you may be, there's something magical in touching a floating bubble and then feeling it softly burst. Serbian-born bubble artist Deni Yang taps into this inner wonder in the enjoyable and interactive "Gazillion Bubble Show," making a triumphant return to Off-Broadway's New World Stages.

Yang is one of several performers who may host this one-person show. The others, all family members and all acclaimed bubble experts in their own right, are his mother Ana, sister Melody, uncle Jano, and father Fan. Fan initially brought the show to New York in 2007.

The attraction for kids is evident almost as soon as one walks into the theater.

A gazillion is defined as "a very large number or quantity," and, in that regard, the show certainly delivers. The audience gets to experience literal avalanches of bubbles released into their midst. The bubbles are often accompanied by a narrative as they take on the appearance of a snowstorm or an underwater-world fantasy, among other things.

Yang, who first became fascinated by bubbles as a young child, shows his love for the subject to all those in attendance. He proceeds to create everything from simple bubbles of all sizes, to ones with smoke inside them, to bubbles inside of other bubbles. At one point, he actually causes several bubbles to move around each other in a sort of planetary orbit. He's even able to reach in and touch his various creations without breaking them and as he adds onto the objects he has already created.

Yang's efforts call to mind a master craftsman as he uses different tools and techniques, along with the judicious accompaniment of music and sound effects to make each of the bubble displays come vibrantly to life. He's helped by some exquisite lighting that makes it appear as if the bubbles are changing color.

'Gazillion Bubble Show'

New World Stages/Stage 2
340 W. 50th St., New York

Tickets:
212-239-6200 or Telecharge.com

Information:
GazillionBubbleShow.com

Run Time:
1 hour, 5 minutes (no intermission)

Open run

The Yangs currently hold two Guinness Book records for bubbles: for the creation of the world's largest bubble, and for enclosing the largest number of people (181) fully inside a bubble. Deni Yang re-creates this latter feat, albeit on a much smaller scale, with the help of some eager volunteers from the audience.

The "Gazillion Bubble Show" is first and foremost a vehicle for the younger set. Children are amazed at the different bubble creations as they, along with their parents, try to touch them as they float by. The attraction for kids is evident almost as soon as one walks into the theater. Then the audience is treated to different video images of marine life featuring turtles, eels, and other aquatic denizens before the show begins.

The performance finishes with "Bubble Laser FX." It's a segment in which Yang works with beams of light, coupled with appropriate background conditions, to enhance the effects of yet another mountain of bubbles as they envelop the audience.

A treat for young and old alike, the "Gazillion Bubble Show" offers joy and wonderment for all.

Judd Hollander is a reviewer for stagebuzz.com and a member of the Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle.

REACHING WITHIN:
WHAT TRADITIONAL ART OFFERS THE HEART

Between Heaven and Hell: A Moral Ascension

ERIC BESS

ALL PHOTOS IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

People are ascending to heaven or falling down in "Heaven and Hell," circa 1850, by Octave Tassaert. Oil on canvas, 39 3/8 inches by 27 3/8 inches. Cleveland Museum of Art.

Life is filled with many instances every day in which we must make a choice between good and evil. When evil is made to seem good and good evil, it is difficult to know whether we are making the right choices. Suspending us between heaven and hell, such choices require deep, thoughtful consideration.

Heaven and Hell

In the 19th century, a French painter named Octave Tassaert depicted a single woman's suspension between good and evil in his painting "Heaven and Hell." Dressed in green and white, the main female figure—whom we'll call our protagonist—is in the upper-central portion of the composition. She covers her chest with both arms, crosses her legs, and casts a striking glance out at us.

From above, an angel descends to grab the protagonist's waist and pull her up to heaven. The angel points up toward the heavens as if to remind the protagonist to remain steadfast in her righteousness.

Below the protagonist, however, a demon—identified as Satan by the Cleveland Museum of Art's website—attempts to sully the protagonist's purity. A beautiful female figure with flowers in her hair leans against Satan's leg and puts a mirror up to the protagonist's face as if to distract her from heaven and remind her of herself. To the left of Satan, two female figures restrain another female figure who looks at the protagonist with jealous rage.

At the bottom left, the redness of hell glows forth and threatens to swallow a drunken woman with a goblet in her hand, and behind her, an older woman in a black robe appears to be suffering from depression. These two figures sit on top of the three-headed chimeric beast whose serpentlike tail intertwines between some of the figures above.

At the bottom right, a group of figures shrouded in shadow make their descent into hell. Some of them cry and some reach back up to heaven, but it appears to be too late.

Of the group that descends into hell, one figure, however, remains illuminated as he gestures up to heaven. He communicates with the drunkard and the depressed woman, but his message remains unclear. A tail protruding from his backside and the sharp nails and knobby fingers of his pointing hand suggest that he is a demon.

Above the group descending into hell is another group of figures who appear to be preparing to bury a small child. The man to the left rests a pickaxe against a tree stump as the woman next to him carries the lifeless body of a child in her arms.

From here, we are led up above to a woman and small child who are met by an angel in their ascent to heaven. Two angels in the heavens are making their descent, and one gestures toward the mother and child.

In heaven, at the left of the composition, St. Michael holds a book in one hand and the scales of judgment in the other and admits the righteous into heaven.

What Leads Us to Hell

Tassaert's painting opens up several questions concerning the protagonist's moral struggle. What would bring about her descent into hell? How can she ascend instead? What is the significance of the people burying their child or the figure coming out of hell to point to heaven? And why does the protagonist look out at us?

The protagonist, in white and green, appears lifted by an angel and abused by Satan.

The representations of evil seem to be pretty straightforward. Satan, for instance, appears to put his hand up the protagonist's skirt, which suggests the sin of lust. It even suggests just how evil and wicked lust is, considering that it is Satan himself who commits this act.

The female at Satan's leg who holds the mirror up to our protagonist represents the sins of vanity and pride. This female—though depicted as beautiful with flowers in her hair—is but a minion of Satan. This suggests that Satan can conjure beautiful forms and that beauty isn't good in and of itself. Then, is it the case that beauty is merely an attractive container that serves to amplify its contents?

The mirror held by the minion serves the purpose of increasing the protagonist's conceit and self-absorption, but she doesn't look into the mirror. Instead, she looks at us. Why? Is it to connect with us and share with us her struggle? Is it that she sees our struggle and recognizes that it is like her own? Does she look at us to warn us about the sins that surround her?

To the left of Satan is a woman who represents the sin of anger. She clenches her fists and teeth and looks at the protagonist with wide eyes and a furrowed brow. It's unclear why she is so angry at the main figure. We can presume that she too is a part of Satan's league, and that her anger stems from the angel who tries to save the main figure. Or maybe the sin of covetousness is combined with her anger. In other words, she may be angry that the angel does not come to save her as well.

The woman at the bottom who holds the goblet represents the sin of gluttony. Her excessive drinking has made her passive as she sits close to the edge of hell. The serpent head of the chimeric beast looks straight into her face as if it has, in one way or another, tempted her to drink, lulling her to sleep and making her easy prey.

The color black is typically associated with depression or despair, and this suggests something interesting about the older woman with the black shawl for she is also among Satan's fleet. What does this say about depression? Is depression—like anger, lust, vanity, greed, and gluttony—the result of a sinful state of mind?

Artist Octave Tassaert depicted a single woman's suspension between good and evil in his painting 'Heaven and Hell.'

Of course, this is a difficult question, and I don't propose to offer an absolute answer. Many of us suffer from or have suffered from depression for a multitude of reasons. But why might this woman suffer from depression?

The tailed demon who ascends from hell and points to the heavens might be blaspheming heaven to the woman, and it's possible that she has lost faith. She is all alone; without heaven, the woman folds her arms and bows her head in depressing isolation. Here, the lack of faith may be her sin.

Toward Our Ascent

But how might the protagonist ascend? How might she resist Satan's temptations? There might be clues hidden in the body language of those who ascend to heaven.

For instance, the small child who ascends to heaven looks down at the burial scene. Are these two children, the one who is to be buried and the one who ascends, the same person? There is no evidence of a woman dying, however, and so the identity of the woman whom the child accompanies remains unclear. Either way, an angel accepts the child and the woman, who clasps her hands in prayer, into heaven.

The archangel above the child and woman points at them as if those two have a significance to the overall meaning of the painting. The woman clasps her hands in prayer, and typically, faith is a prerequisite for prayer. Of course, most children have not lived long enough to fall victim to temptation and lose their purity. Is Tassaert suggesting that faith and childlike purity are necessary in order to ascend?

The figures who ascend toward the Archangel Michael to be judged also bow their heads in prayer. One figure even throws their hands into the air as if in praise of the divine. Is praising the divine another prerequisite for ascending to heaven?

Finally, we return to the protagonist, who represents chastity as she covers herself from Satan's lustful attempts. She also represents tolerance as she endures the angry onslaught from the woman to the left. The fact that she looks out at us instead of at herself in the mirror suggests that she is modest and compassionate.

It is all too easy to fall victim to Satan's temptations depicted here: lust, pride, anger, gluttony, and faithlessness. Is it the case that we can resist these temptations if we try to maintain our faith, childlike purity, chastity, modesty, compassion, and tolerance? Must we strengthen these things within ourselves if we wish to ascend?

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).

GOLDEN AGE FILMS

'I'll Be Seeing You' From 1944: A New Start for the New Year

TIFFANY BRANNAN

MOVIESTILLSDB

The 1944 hit "I'll Be Seeing You" focuses on looking beyond one's troubles to the future.

SELZNICK INTERNATIONAL PICTURES

The poster for "I'll Be Seeing You."

New Year's Eve is associated with noisy parties and excessive drinking, but the beginning of a new year is a great time for quiet reflection. As we replace our calendars, many take the opportunity to make resolutions about changing our lives in the coming year. Especially in difficult times, the new year offers the hope of better days.

"I'll Be Seeing You" from 1944 is an obscure holiday film that celebrates new beginnings. This movie takes place over Christmas and New Year's Day, but it is about more than these holidays. This World War II era film is a touching romance about two people from very different backgrounds.

The couple have one thing in common: Both are desperately trying to overcome past hardships, which haunt them and make them wonder whether they'll have any chance for future happiness. Brought together by fate, the shell-shocked soldier and wrongly imprisoned female convict give each other the hope they thought they could never find again.

A New Film Company

The first film made by David O. Selznick's production company Vanguard Film, it was directed by William Dieterle and produced by Dore Schary. The story comes from a radio play called "Double Furlough" by Charles Martin.

Selznick initially wanted to name the film "I'll See You Again" after Noel Coward's 1929 song of the same name, which he hoped to use as the theme song. Dore Schary instead suggested the more economical choice of using Sammy Fain and Irving Kahal's 1938 ballad "I'll Be Seeing You," which had become a hit that year because of its wartime relevance.

With that heart-wrenching song as its title and theme, starring Ginger Rogers and Joseph Cotten plus a great supporting cast of Shirley Temple, Spring Byington, and Tom Tully, this film was destined for critical and box office success.

A Dramatic Story

Mary Marshall (Rogers) is going to stay with her aunt (Byington) and uncle (Tully) in their small-town home for Christmas. It's obvious that Mary is haunted by some secret; she also is surprisingly unaware of wartime conditions. She ends up sitting on the train with three servicemen. Two of them are very outgoing and talkative, quickly trying to make friends with their fellow passengers. However, Mary is drawn to the third man, Zachary Morgan (Cotten), a quiet sergeant with stinted speech and an obvious reluctance to discuss his war experiences.

Mary tells Zach that she is a traveling saleslady, and he declares that he is also stopping in Pine Hill, her destination, to spend Christmas with his sister. They part ways at the station, but not before Mary gives Zach permission to call her.

As Mary and Zach reach their respective destinations, we see that each has lied. Mary is not a traveling saleslady on a Christmas holiday, but a convict who has been granted an eight-day furlough in the middle of her six-year sentence. Zach is a shell-shocked soldier who has been given a 10-day furlough from the military hospital so he can try to resume normal life. With no family and no idea of where to go, he made up the story about his sister so that he could stay at the YMCA at Mary's stop.

At first, this double furlough seems more like a punishment than a gift for both, as Mary faces discrimination from her 17-year-old cousin, Barbara (Temple), and Zach is constantly reminded of his compromised reflexes.

Zach loses no time in calling Mary, who invites him over for dinner. He is delighted by the Marshalls' warm hospitality, since he has never had a home of his own. After dinner, Mary accompanies him to a movie. As they discuss the film's war theme afterward, Zach freely recounts some of his battle experiences for the first time.

The couple must face their fears and memories to conquer them and find a new beginning.

PD-US

A portrait photograph of Joseph Cotten in 1942.

PUBLIC DOMAIN

Ginger Rogers, star of "I'll Be Seeing You," in 1949.

However, it's far from smooth sailing for the young couple. Little incidents later in the evening, like a conversation with a shell-shocked World War I veteran, and Zach's inability to hit a lamppost with a rock, send Zach rushing away in a panic. Nevertheless, while he eventually tells his new friend about his medical condition, Mary can't bear to tell him about her secret. As she finds herself falling in love with Zach, she is afraid to tell him about her imprisonment, perhaps losing her last chance at happiness. Can these two troubled souls find a new beginning in the new year together?

Haunted by the Past

This film paints an unflinching portrait of a soldier suffering from the traumas of war. In World War I, they called such soldiers "shell-shocked." In this film, the new term given is "neuropsychiatric." Today, this illness is called "Post Traumatic Stress Disorder," or PTSD. Regardless of what you call it, the scene of Zach's panic attack is intense. The combat is thousands of miles away, but a small stumble is enough to bring his memories flooding back. This sequence is a truly brilliant bit of filmography. Few special effects are used, but the combination of Joseph Cotten's overdubbed voice and the sounds of war that he hears in his head create a disturbingly real glimpse into the traumatic memories that haunt Zachary Morgan.

Mary is also haunted by memories of a traumatic event that changed her life forever. Although her aunt and uncle think their 17-year-old daughter is too young to learn the details of her cousin's crime, Mary decides to tell Barbara why she was sent to prison. As a 21-year-old secretary, she was invited up to her boss's apartment to a party one evening. It turned out that there was no party and that the drunken cad had lecherous intentions. In trying to escape his advances, Mary accidentally pushed him out of his 14th-floor window. Although his death was purely accidental, she was sentenced to six years for manslaughter.

Although very different experiences brought them to this point, Mary and Zach feel the same way about themselves and their futures. Each feels like a fraud and can't understand the other's belief in him or her. It doesn't take much to trigger an onset of war memories for Zach, and Mary is similarly reminded of her troubled past by thoughtless comments from her family and Zach, who has no clue about her background.

As Mary grows fonder of the young sergeant, she is tortured by fears that he will discover her secret. However, as they grow closer, both Mary and Zach realize that they can't escape their past by ignoring it or lying about it. They must face their fears and memories to conquer them and find a new beginning.

New Beginnings in the New Year

This film features a beautiful New Year's Eve scene. In honor of the occasion, Zach invites the Marshalls to a dance being given at the YMCA. The ladies wear beautiful gowns, and the gentlemen who aren't in uniform wear tuxedos. A live big band plays jazz hits, which any 1940s music fan will recognize, including the title song. It looks like a truly wholesome and fun way to ring in the New Year.

As Mrs. Marshall dances with Zach, she expresses her excitement about the holiday: "I don't know how it is, but every year at New Year's, I get so excited and sort of upset."

Zach confesses, "I know what you mean. It's like being in on something big, something important."

"That's it exactly!" she cries, delighted. That new year, likely 1945, was indeed an exciting one. It was a time of new beginnings, a sentiment that the lead characters in this story shared with society at large. The United States, as well as the rest of the world, cherished the hope that the new year would bring victory, peace, and a better world than the one before the war.

However, it also was a time of uncertainty and fear. Zach shares the fear of all veterans returning from the war: Will he be able to find his place in society, in his hometown, and among his friends? He also wonders if he can ever conquer the injuries that his mind and reflexes sustained in the war. Similarly, Mary wonders if she can ever move past her imprisonment and have a normal, happy life with a husband, home, and family.

As we enter 2022, I think we as a country can relate to this film. Like Americans of the World War II era, we are engaged in a struggle that is shaking our nation to its core. We can't help wondering if the world will ever be the same again, and like Zach and Mary, we may find ourselves doubting whether we'll ever be truly happy again.

"I'll Be Seeing You" reminds us to find hope in new beginnings. Like the trials of the past, this too will pass if we embrace honesty, love, and compassion.

Tiffany Brannan is a 20-year-old opera singer, Hollywood history/vintage beauty copywriter, film reviewer, fashion historian, travel writer, and ballet writer. In 2016, she and her sister founded the Pure Entertainment Preservation Society, an organization dedicated to reforming the arts by reinstating the Motion Picture Production Code.

WELL SAID

'Winter Time' by Robert Louis Stevenson

Late lies the wintry sun a-bed,
A frosty, fiery sleepy-head;
Blinks but an hour or two; and then,
A blood-red orange, sets again.

Before the stars have left the skies,
At morning in the dark I rise;
And shivering in my nakedness,
By the cold candle, bathe and dress.

Close by the jolly fire I sit
To warm my frozen bones a bit;
Or with a reindeer-sled, explore
The colder countries round the door.

When to go out, my nurse doth wrap
Me in my comforter and cap;
The cold wind burns my face, and blows
Its frosty pepper up my nose.

Black are my steps on silver sod;
Thick blows my frosty breath abroad;
And tree and house, and hill and lake,
Are frosted like a wedding cake.

EVERETT COLLECTION/SHUTTERSTOCK

"Winter Scene (Horse-Sleigh on the Ice)" between 1790 and 1814, by Andries Vermeulen.

Traditionally, poetry offers us a deeply felt and articulate point of view on our world.

REWIND, REVIEW, AND RE-RATE

Romantic Drama Avoids the Sentimental

IAN KANE

ALL PHOTOS BY PARAMOUNT PICTURES

Is Morris Townsend's (Montgomery Clift) romantic pursuit of Catherine Sloper (Olivia de Havilland) sincere?

Director William Wyler is widely acknowledged to be second only to John Ford in terms of significance. However, I'd almost give him a slight edge since he not only made two of my favorite films of all time—"The Best Years of Our Lives" and "The Big Country"—but he was also known for getting the most out of his actors' performances. Indeed, seeing a Wyler film means that you have to prepare yourself for witnessing a master class in incredibly subtle emotional displays through the minutest of gestures, body posturing, and facial twinges of the actors involved.

Therefore, when I discovered that he'd directed a film with the double-barreled blast of incomparably talented auteurs—Olivia de Havilland and Montgomery Clift—I became as giddy as a little schoolgirl. After watching this near-two-hour romantic drama extravaganza, I can say that it met my expectations and then some.

Based on Henry James's short novel "Washington Square," the film takes place in mid-19th-century New York City. The opening frames set the scene well—with horse-drawn carriages traversing cobblestoned streets and women adorned with bonnets and puffy-sleeved dresses.

Welcome to the wealthy enclave of Washington Square, where Catherine Sloper (de Havilland) lives with her father, wealthy widower Dr. Austin Sloper (Ralph Richardson). Dr. Sloper's sister, Lavinia Penniman (Miriam Hopkins), is visiting and he requests that she stay at his home for a while. He wants her to teach Catherine how to be more socially capable.

"Father would like me to be composed and to join in on the conversations," Catherine aptly states when Lavinia attempts to invite her out to an event. While Dr. Sloper regards his daughter as far less attractive and intelligent than his late wife, Catherine quickly sees that he is behind Lavinia's overtures of socializing.

It soon becomes apparent that Dr. Sloper not only is distant from Catherine but also regularly compares her (in an inferior way) to his late wife—even while in the company of others. This brazen, constant psychological and emotional abuse causes Catherine to withdraw even further and only compounds her social issues.

However, Catherine's woes suddenly take a dramatic turn when she is introduced to the young and handsome Morris Townsend (Montgomery Clift), who doesn't have much in the way of financial security. His aggressive courting, coupled with Lavinia's shrewd matchmaking skills, almost overwhelms her at first. However, due to Morris's relentless pursuit, along with his extraordinary charm, Catherine succumbs to the fire that has been lit within her.

At first, it seems a match made in heaven. Dr. Sloper is impressed by Morris and seems to approve of their burgeoning relationship. However, when Morris makes it clear that he'd like to elope with Catherine (much to her delight), he also warns her that Dr. Sloper may disapprove of the quick marriage since he might consider the young man to be mercenary.

From there, many questions arise: Does Morris genuinely love Catherine, or does he simply want her inheritance? And is Dr. Sloper correct in his condemnation of Morris as a mere social climber? Or is he jealous that someone actually takes an interest in his daughter?

The incandescent performances by de Havilland and Clift elevate the film to a fascinating character study.

'The Heiress'

Director:
William Wyler

Starring:
Olivia de Havilland, Montgomery Clift, Ralph Richardson, Miriam Hopkins

Not Rated

Running Time:
1 hour, 55 minutes

Release Date:
Dec. 28, 1949

★★★★½

A Character Study

"The Heiress" is a very solidly built Wyler entry. It has all the touchstones of the legendary director's filmmaking techniques, including his uncanny talent for extracting everything he can out of his actors.

While romantic dramas aren't necessarily my thing, this film transcends the sappy and sentimental trappings of the genre. The outstanding filmmaking, along with incandescent performances by de Havilland and Clift, elevates it to a fascinating character study with psychological nuances to be considered and decrypted at every turn.

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

Catherine Sloper (Olivia de Havilland) is constantly compared to the late wife of her father, Dr. Austin Sloper (Ralph Richardson).

Two stars shine in "The Heiress": Montgomery Clift and Olivia de Havilland.