

THE EPOCH TIMES

ARTS & CULTURE

PD-US



ARTS

In Beauty, Solace

De profundis: art, grief, and consolation

JEFF MINICK

"De profundis clamavi ad te, Domine" opens Psalm 130 (Psalm 129 in the older numbering system): "Out of the depths I have cried to you, O Lord." Whether or not we embrace a religious faith is immaterial in our comprehension of these words. People of all ages, races, and faiths have found themselves dragged into terrible

depths by some personal catastrophe, often involving the death of a loved one.

In their grief, some of the afflicted do indeed seek solace in God. Other distressed souls search for comfort in their friends and family. Some go to counselors or join grief support groups. The lonely and the desperate may turn for their relief to alcohol or drugs. One Roman politician and writer, Boethius (circa 477–524), who was

imprisoned and later executed, engaged in an examination of Hellenistic thought to ease his mind and explain to himself his dire circumstances, and so left the world his masterpiece, "The Consolation of Philosophy."

And some of these walking wounded find solace and hope in the arts.

Salvation and Beauty

A number of musicians—Bach, Handel, Mozart, Leonard Bernstein, and others—have set Psalm 130 to music, but their compositions only scratch the surface of the art that can provide consolation to human beings in agony.

Continued on Page 4

When we suffer loss, the beauty of art may console us.

"Mrs. James Guthrie," circa 1864 to 1865, by Sir Frederic Leighton. Oil on canvas; 83 inches by 54.5 inches. Yale Center for British Art, in New Haven, Conn.

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LITERATURE

'Adventures of Huckleberry Finn' and the Kingship of Humanity

SEAN FITZPATRICK

NOTICE
Persons attempting to find a motive in the narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a moral in it will be banished; persons attempting to find a plot in it will be shot.

BY ORDER OF THE AUTHOR

This warning famously graces the opening page of Mark Twain's "Adventures of Huckleberry Finn," setting readers up for a narrative of gritty humor and grinning irony. Since Mr. Twain did not order readers away from attempting to find a theme, we propose that though this American epic is full of pariahs, vagabonds, and rascallions, it is also a story about kings.

In the whole catalog of conjured heroes from Homer to Hemingway, not one is quite as kingly as Huckleberry Finn. And there never was such a king, either.

Huck has royal poise, a regal demeanor, as he presides in straightforward fashion over his empire of mud and water.

It is not the kingdom, remember, that makes the king—it is the inspired soul that assumes a kingly view and vantage. Huck's soul is as perceptive and receptive as a king's, and at the same time, his soul resonates with our own on a primal level.

This is the very thing that reminds us that we—all of us, like Huck—are called to be kings. We are kings with Huckleberry Finn in the most elemental and existential sense as inheritors of the earth and caretakers of those amenities and subjects within our borders.

Humanity's Sovereignty

We are all kings, for as Huck points out regarding kings, "everything belongs to them," and we, too, have been given the wealth of the world to command. Ancient myths and histories attest to the ancient kingship of our race. Even nursery rhymes such as R.L. Stevenson's "Happy Thought" concur:

The world is so full of a number of things,
I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings.

The question of kingship is one of the reasons that "Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" is important for the common reader, for it explores the kingship of the common man. We are all overseers of a vast realm of sunsets and seas, of trees and towns, and all the things placed within our power of knowledge and action. The world is our oyster. If our spirits are attentive and appreciative enough, we are kings indeed.

Huckleberry Finn demonstrates this truth in his adventures, reminding us of what we all ought to know full well, but are often forgetful of: We are all empowered with the grace to observe, experience, and appreciate the rich goodness of creation, while reckoning the works of man true or false, right or wrong, lawful or unlawful.

Such reckonings demand a type of wisdom—wisdom that Huck has, if he has nothing else. But what else should a king really possess other than wisdom?

Wisdom is perhaps the first characteristic that comes to mind as proper for a king—the wisdom of "Sollermun," as Huck and his friend Jim call him. Huckleberry has a natural intelligence, which is very different from Tom Sawyer's imagination. That is to say, Huck sees things as they are, with a power that goes beyond mere sight. In short, Huck has vision.

As T.S. Eliot says of his fellow Missourian in his introduction to an edition, "[Huckleberry Finn] sees the real world; and he does not judge it—he allows it to judge itself." And Jim approves: "Did ole King Sollermun do anything less with dat chile dat he 'uz gwyne to chop in two?" Is there anyone among us today who could be so wise as to allow the world to settle itself?

Huckleberry is too prudent and too solicitous to get in the way of such universal laws and natural processions. He pulses with love of the land, authority over the waters, and consideration for his fellows. Nowhere else can you find a sunrise described with such admiration and attention as by his clumsy eloquence. Nowhere else can you learn the terror of a river than from one who fearlessly stems its whirling eddies with a corncob pipe between his teeth. Nowhere can you find



Mark Twain's novel gives us a kingly character: Huckleberry Finn. The "Adventures of Huckleberry Finn," 1884, by Mark Twain.



Eh bien, je suis feu le Dauphin!

(L-R) Huck, the Lost Dauphin (as he calls himself), the Duke, and Jim, as illustrated by Achille Sirouy for an early French edition.



ON THE RAFT.

Huckleberry Finn and Jim on the raft, by E.W. Kemble, in the 1884 edition of "Adventures of Huckleberry Finn."

amusement and consideration for the follies and virtues of men and women than from his unsophisticated yet profound musings.

As kings ourselves, we should not shy away or close ourselves off from such mysteries. Huck's majestic quality of witnessing the complexities of life and honestly turning them over in his mind bespeaks a type of ownership over them. He is the perfect blend of monarchical impassivity and child-like interest. If there is any element of tragedy (or comedy, for that matter) in this genre-defying tale, it is that the rafting philosopher-king is supremely unconscious of his scaptered sway.

Discernment in Looking at Men

While Huck appreciates the richness of creation, he knows that man is another thing: He knows fraud when he sees it. A stretch of his odyssey down the Mississippi involves two down-on-their-luck charlatans who brazenly pose

themselves to the savvy youth as no less than a king and a duke. Their thin pantomime is intended to overwhelm the victims of their freeloading, but Huck quickly deciphers that they are low-down humbugs and keeps it to himself. He is too dispassionate to interfere with such deceptions, and too desirous of keeping peace in his domain.

It is not the kingdom that makes the king—it is the inspired soul that assumes a kingly view.

It is only when their scams go so far as "to make a body ashamed of the human race" that Huck interferences, invisibly meting out justice, and casts the riches they intended to steal beyond their grasp. There is only so much hogwash that can be tolerated, and even kings have to "fuss

with the parlyment" from time to time and take care of people and things.

According to the wisdom of this noble river rat, there is little distinction between the prince and the pauper. When it comes to kings, after all, "they just set around. Except maybe when there's a war; then they go to the war. But other times they just lazy around. ..." Huck claims the independence of both the loafer and the lord. "Kings is kings, and you got to make allowances."

He is aware of his surroundings like any street urchin but regards them like any sovereign, like any steward. Huck is a straight-faced observer of truth, enthroned on high even in the wreck of his rags, impervious to the wiles that seduce or the lies that corrupt. Huckleberry Finn beholds the world as the world and acts accordingly.

Can the same be said of us? Are we worthy successors of our crowns, we who seem bent on remaking the world in our own image? Can we claim wis-

dom, with the noise of the media and the milieu of modern culture? Have we lost the steward's connection, the skipper's watchful eye and consequent affection for the world that has been placed in our care? Have we betrayed our kingdom, our kingship?

Let us keep our eyes open and our spirits attentive with Huckleberry's. In considering the role of kingship in this book, we should consider whether we as a people have strayed too far from the river that is our realm. A trek with Huckleberry Finn down the river that is his kingdom is enough to awaken to our royal birth-right as human beings.

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

What Our Readers Say (#30, part 2)



Unbiased news you can trust to tell the truth. During this particular time in history, I want to leave a truthful record of events for my great grandchildren. My plan is a large binder of front page stories from The Epoch Times so they will be able to read and absorb what "really" happened during these troubling times in our history.

CARLENE FORREST



Truly a great newspaper! It's rare that I've been interested in reading a news source cover to cover but with The Epoch Times, that is exactly what I find myself doing. I leave my paper behind after finishing it hoping someone in the coffee shop or library will pick it up and take interest. Truth is a precious commodity and is becoming difficult to find. Thank you for your excellent analysis and in-depth reporting. And of course the online version that keeps me in the know until my hard copy arrives is wonderful. I'm embarrassed to say I used to feel this way about the new york times (yes the absence of capital letters is intentional), but that feeling passed over 20 years ago. Please keep up the great work and continue as the beacon of hope so many of us need! Thank you.

CHUCK DYMET



The Epoch Times, is insightful, entertaining, eloquently written and factual. I always read every word because I really enjoy being current with real news reporting.

JOHN A NELSON

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HUCKLEBERRY FINN.

A drawing of Huckleberry Finn by E.W. Kemble, from the original 1884 edition of the book "Adventures of Huckleberry Finn."



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ARTS

In Beauty, Solace

De profundis: art, grief, and consolation

Continued from Page 1

Writers, painters, sculptors, and musicians have given the world numerous works about death and loss that have brought a respite from sorrow to countless numbers of people over the last three millennia.

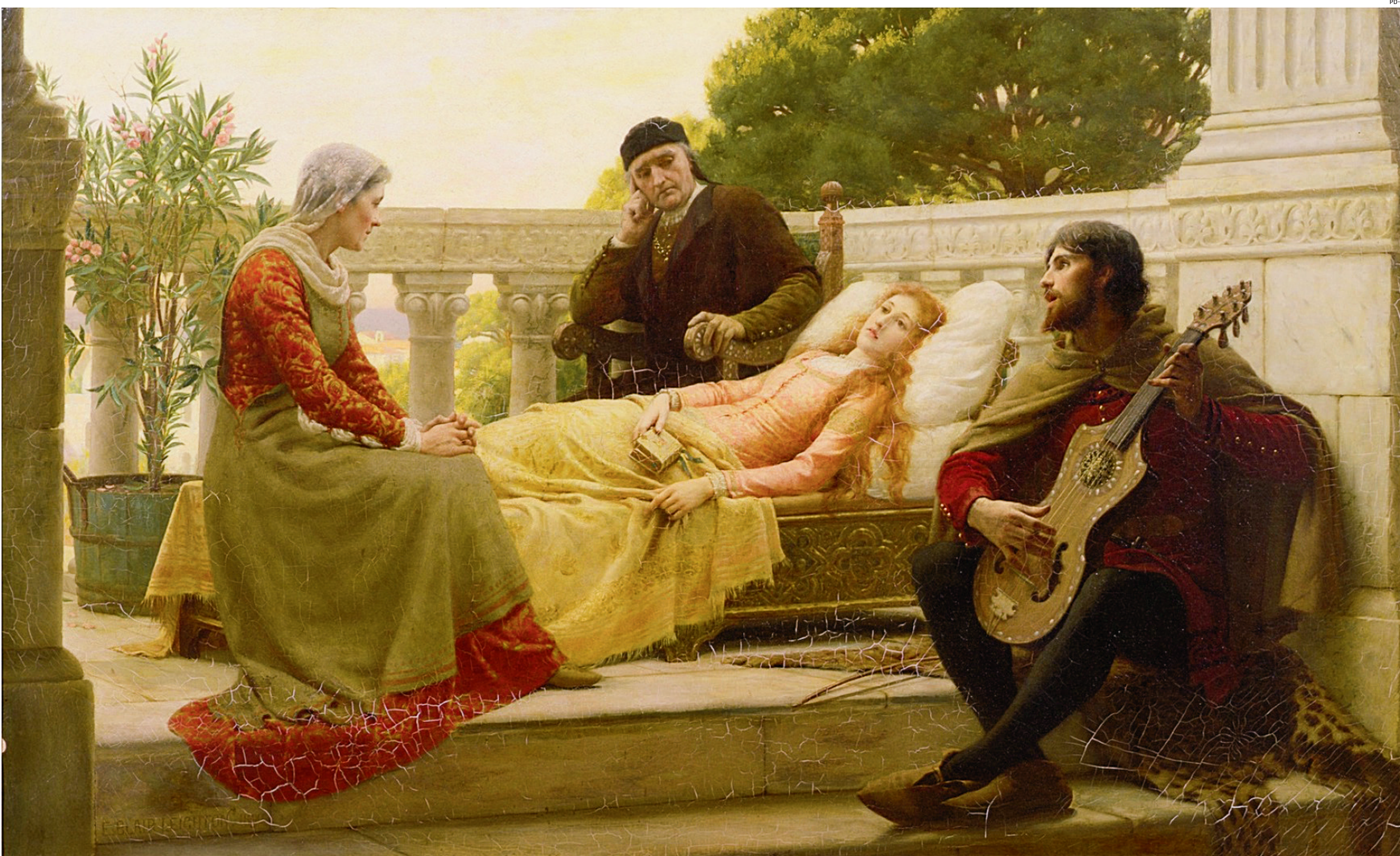
In the preface to his book “On Consolation: Finding Solace in Dark Times,” Michael Ignatieff gives readers a vivid reminder of the comforting power of art when he recounts events from the lockdowns that began in March 2020. In those months of fear, isolation, and loneliness, with a rising death toll from COVID, all manner of artists stepped forward to offer the rest of us encouragement and hope. The Rotterdam orchestra, for example, presented Beethoven’s “Ode to Joy” on Zoom, a Berlin pianist nightly performed sonatas via the internet, and poets and writers from several countries shared their work from their kitchens and living rooms.

These gestures of charity undergird this observation from philosopher Roger Scruton: “Art and music shine a light of meaning on ordinary life, and through them we are able to confront the things that trouble us and to find consolation and peace in their presence.”

Similarly, in Mark Helprin’s novel “A Soldier of the Great War,” an elderly professor of art and aesthetics, Alessandro Giuliani, makes this connection: “To see the beauty of the world is to put your hands on the lines that run uninterrupted through life and through death. Touching them is an act of hope, for perhaps someone on the other side, if there is another side, is touching them, too.”

Taken by Surprise

Often, an unexpected encounter with a work of art can release an emotional response that may startle those who witness it, but which acts as a catharsis for the person so moved. Imagine, for example, a young mother who has lost a child. Months later, she is sitting at a table in the public library looking through The Epoch Times when she turns to the Arts & Culture section, and finds herself staring at a large photograph of Michelangelo’s “Pietà.” There sits Mary on the Rock of Golgotha, holding the body of her crucified son in her lap. Her downcast eyes and the sorrowful solemnity of her face so touches that woman in the library that she begins weeping. The stone that had become her heart during these long,



Writers, painters, sculptors, and musicians have given the world numerous works about death and loss that have brought a respite from sorrow.

dark days is dissolved by her tears.

Those tears would likely baffle other library patrons, but for that woman they not only express her pain but also provide an escape from her long confinement in the prison of grief.

Her reaction is not unfamiliar to me. In my teaching days, I frequently read aloud poems and literary passages to the students. After the death of my wife in 2004, I found that I could no longer get through certain pieces without choking up and so would assign a student to do the reading. Reading aloud the passage from “The Velvet Rabbit,” for example, in which the Skin Horse explains love and what it means to be real, and which I was using as a writing prompt for my seventh graders, left me watery-eyed in front of the class.

In the afterword to my copy of Thornton Wilder’s “Our Town,” which ends with the death of a young wife, the playwright’s nephew and literary executor tells us that this drama moved audiences to tears, even a man like Hollywood mogul Samuel Goldwyn. The reason? Because Wilder had brought to life “the lines that run uninterrupted through life and through death.”

Elegy

Many writers have composed elegies—poems or prose pieces of reflection, typically mourning the dead—as a means of dealing with their own loss and grief or as a vehicle for comforting those around them.

In “On My First Son,” Ben Jonson laments the death of his 7-year-old:

*Farewell, thou child of my right hand,
and joy;
My sin was too much hope of thee,
loved boy.
Seven years thou wert lent to me,
and I thee pay,
Exacted by thy fate, on the just day.
O, could I lose all father now! For why
Will man lament the state he should envy?
To have so soon scap'd world's and flesh's rage,
O, could I lose all misery, yet age?
Rest in soft peace, and, asked, say,
“Here doth lie
Ben Jonson his best piece of poetry.”
For whose sake, henceforth,
all his vows be such,
As what he loves may never like too much.*

Numerous poets also remind the bereaved to seek out and take solace in the joy in life. Inspired by a young Jewish woman who had escaped Nazi Germany but whose mother died during the Holocaust, Mary Elizabeth Frye’s “Do Not Stand at My Grave and Weep” urges the living to remember that the dead remain present in a thousand ways:

*Do not stand at my grave and weep,
I am not there; I do not sleep.
I am a thousand winds that blow,
I am the diamond glints on snow,
I am the sun on ripened grain,
I am the gentle autumn rain.
When you awaken in the morning's hush
I am the swift uplifting rush
Of quiet birds in circling flight.
I am the soft star-shine at night.*

*Do not stand at my grave and cry,
I am not there; I did not die.*

Other works—C.S. Lewis’s “A Grief Observed,” which is a memoir about his wife’s death, the American folk song “Will the Circle Be Unbroken?” as well as the thousands of requiem Masses and elegies set to music by classical composers, and so many more creations—also stand as companions beside those literally walking through the valley of death.

Healing

Of course, the best medicine for grief is time. Over weeks, months, and even years, the awful burden of our sadness lightens and becomes more bearable. The passage of time takes the raw wounds that once left us gutted and grieving, and

transforms them into scars. Music, literature, paintings, and sculptures can aid in this transformation. They are crutches, if you will, that keep us on our feet and give us the strength to keep moving forward. “Beauty will save the world,” Dostoevsky famously wrote. The beauty we find in the arts can help save the rest of us when our hearts are broken by loss.

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 Jeff Minick.com to follow his blog.

Art Worth Visiting: 3 US Spring Exhibitions

LORRAINE FERRIER

Across the country, there are some fascinating spring exhibitions that highlight great European art and craftsmanship—from the Renaissance art of painting on

stone, on show in St. Louis, Missouri, to luxury silver animals on permanent display in Hunstville, Alabama.

Renaissance Gems: Paintings on Stone
For around 150 years, some Renaissance artists

painted on stone as if it were a canvas or panel. It’s a wonderful yet little-known art form.

Over 70 paintings on stone, by 58 artists from worldwide collections, are now on display in the exhibition “Paintings on Stone: Science and the Sacred 1530–1800” at the St. Louis Art Museum. The museum’s curator for European art to 1800, Judith Mann, curated the exhibition, which includes her research into the art and geological information.

Mann’s 15-year quest to find out more about paintings on stone began in 2000, when the museum acquired a stunning “Perseus Rescuing Andromeda” on lapis lazuli. It is included in the exhibition.

Around 1530, Venetian artist Sebastiano del Piombo began the practice when he found a way to prime the stone surface for oil painting. He lived in Rome where artistic competition was fierce. Among his contemporaries were Raphael, Michelangelo, and Leonardo da Vinci. Mann explains, in the exhibition audio guide, that Sebastiano may have experimented with a variety of painting supports, other than traditional canvas or panel, to differentiate his art from that of other artists.

Stone may be a novel painting surface, but artists painted the same subjects as they

would have on traditional canvas and panel: portraits, religious images, and mythological scenes.

The exhibition’s visitors will be able to see how paintings on stone developed. When artists first began painting on stone, they completely covered the surface in paint. But artists toward the end of the 16th century incorporated the stone’s inclusions as part of their compositions. Concentric markings on alabaster became heavenly realms. Blue lapis lazuli became a starry sky. Striations in lined jasper became ocean waves. The only limit was the artist’s imagination.

Artists also used the mystical meanings and physical characteristics of certain stones to strengthen a painting’s meaning. For example, Bartolomé Esteban Murillo rendered his painting “The Nativity” on black obsidian, volcanic glass that the Aztecs in Mexico believed was a conduit to supernatural realms. Another example is the stark gray of slate; it could reaffirm the strong qualities of a soldier that a more delicate stone could not.

Art and geology lovers will revel in this gem of an art.

The “Paintings on Stone: Science and the Sacred 1530–1800” exhibition runs until May 15. To find out more, visit SLAM.org

Little-Known Yet Great:

Italian Women Artists 1500–1800

Italian artist Artemisia Gentileschi may be the best-known 17th-century female painter. The spotlight has lingered on her, most recently at The National Gallery in London’s solo exhibition. But there’s a whole raft of lesser-known female artists whose work is just as great. They too excelled in their time, and, if we ignore its political bias, an exhibition at the Detroit Institute of Arts (DIA), “By Her Hand: Artemisia Gentileschi and Women Artists in Italy, 1500–1800,” tells these artists’ tales. The DIA and the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art in Hartford, Connecticut, collaborated on the exhibition, which shows nearly 60 great Renaissance and Baroque artworks loaned from public and private collections in the United States and Europe. Self-portraits, still-lives, and religious scenes are all featured in a variety of mediums from painting to print.

Among the 17 artists featured are court artist Sofonisba Anguissola (1532–1625), Bolognese portrait painter Lavinia Fontana (1552–1614), Milanese still-life painter Fedele Galizia (1578–1630), Bolognese painter and printmaker Elisabetta Sirani (1638–1665), Italian miniaturist Giovanna Garzoni (1600–1670), as well as works by Venetian pastel artist Rosalba Carriera (1673–1757).

Gentileschi’s work is at the center of the exhibition, and the DIA’s own Gentileschi masterpiece “Judith and Her Maidservant With the Head of Holofernes” features prominently.

The “By Her Hand: Artemisia Gentileschi and Women Artists in Italy, 1500–1800” exhibition runs until May 29. To find out more, visit DIA.org

A Luxury Menagerie: Buccellati’s Animals

The Huntsville Museum of Art in Huntsville, Alabama, holds the world’s largest public collection of Buccellati animal sculptures, all of which were donated by the late Huntsville artist Betty Grisham. Italian luxury jewelers Buccellati began in 1919, when Mario Buccellati opened his first jewelry store in Milan. The world-renowned company continues to create fine jewelry using engraving, Renaissance techniques, and new innovations.

Mario’s son, Gianmaria, invented a silverworking technique called “lavorazione a pelo” (hair-like workmanship), which enables artisans to create realistic works by welding silver filaments of different lengths and thicknesses, one atop the other, to their works. The “hair-like” technique works well for creating fur, skin, scales, and feathers.

Betty Grisham’s collection of Buccellati

animal pieces are on permanent display in the museum’s exhibition “Buccellati: A Silver Menagerie.” There’s almost an ark full of animals on view, including a lion, deep-sea creatures, and a 4-foot flamingo. The museum even commissioned Buccellati to make a piece, a doe and fawn, in honor of Grisham.

Many of the animals are made in 800 sil-

ver, which is 80 percent silver and 20 percent alloy, as welding melts sterling silver. But after 1995, the artisans discovered how to make the animals in pure sterling silver.

“Buccellati: A Silver Menagerie” is on permanent view at the Huntsville Museum of Art. To find out more, visit HSV Museum.org



“The Rest on the Flight into Egypt,” circa 1629–1630, by Jacques Stella. Oil on marble; 13 3/4 inches by 18 1/2 inches. Private collection.

This spring offers art exhibits featuring Renaissance women artists, silver sculptures, and paintings on stone.

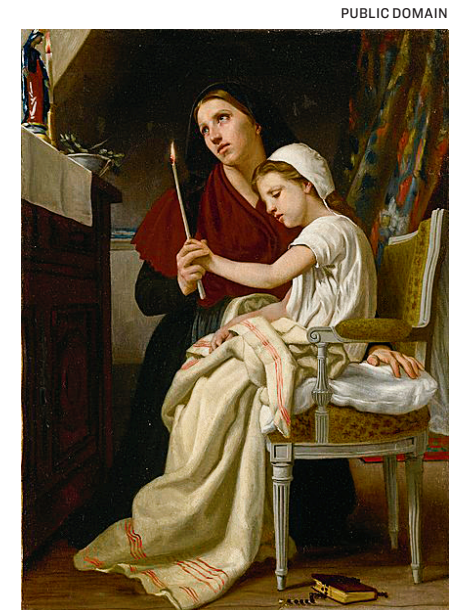


“Judith and Her Maidservant With the Head of Holofernes,” 1523–1525, by Artemisia Gentileschi. Oil on canvas; 73 11/16 inches by 55 7/8 inches. Detroit Institute of Arts.

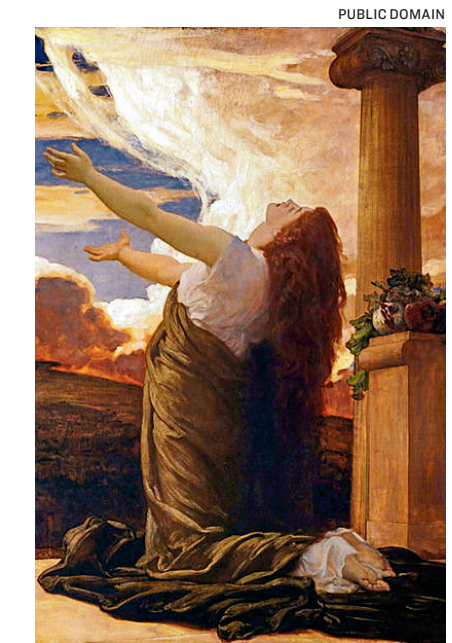


“Doe and Fawn,” 2005, by Gianmaria Buccellati; 925 sterling silver. Doe: 15.5 inches by 1.5 inches by 5.5 inches. Fawn: 8.25 inches by 6.5 inches by 3.5 inches. Museum purchase in honor of Mrs. Betty Grisham; Huntsville Museum of Art.

Unrequited love here soothed by music. Liza was a character in Boccaccio’s “Decameron,” who saw King Pietro of Aragon from a distance, fell in love with him, and became deathly ill. “How Liza Loved the King,” circa 1890, by Edmund Leighton. Oil on canvas; 39 inches by 64.1 inches. Purchased by Burnley Corporation with the assistance of funds from the Edward Stocks Massey Bequest, Townley Park, in Lancashire, England.



Some take consolation in faith. “The Wish,” 1867, by William-Adolphe Bouguereau. Oil on canvas; 22.7 inches by 16.4 inches. Philadelphia Museum of Art.



The loss of love, as in the myth of Clytie, can also lead to despair. “Clytie,” circa 1895–1896, by Sir Frederic Leighton; 61.4 inches by 53.9 inches. Leighton House Museum, London.

THEATER REVIEW

‘The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci’

The production is a look into the consciousness of one of the most imaginative minds in history.

BETTY MOHR

CHICAGO—When it first opened in 1993 at the Goodman Studio Theatre, the show was spectacular, and now—almost three decades later—“The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci” is still a wondrous, ingenious, whimsical, and stunning piece of theater.

Adapted from the Renaissance man’s notebooks by Mary Zimmerman, who also directs the 90-minute show, aspects of the 5,000 pages that he wrote backward (so that they could be read only by using a mirror) come alive on stage. The production isn’t so much a biographical work or a plot-driven drama, but it’s more a look into the consciousness of one of the most imaginative minds in history.

Renaissance Polymath

In “The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci,” we are introduced to the Italian polymath who, because everything fascinated him, never spent a dull moment in boredom. Zimmerman captures the workings of Leonardo’s mind in such an engaging and compelling way that we can’t help but be drawn into his enthralling world. As the play unfolds, we are amazed by his artistic and scientific endeavors, his commentary on an array of natural

wonders, his observations of people, and his intriguing recollections.

Each of the eight-member cast represents Leonardo (1452–1519) at different stages of his life, and various aspects of his wide-ranging interests and personalities. The performers not only are polished actors but also exhibit a sense of grace, balance, and athletic skills that they use to demonstrate ideas from the notebooks. These include Christopher Donahue, the only cast member in the original production; Christiana Clark, Kasey Foster, Adeoye, Cruz Gonzalez-Cadel, John Gregorio, Anthony Irons, and Wai Yim.

Talented Players

Instructions on life from the Italian grand master come to life in the supple actions of the players. Here, there’s a lesson in anatomy with a detailed explanation of arm and height span, and the proportions of a human body are illustrated by two actors in the famous Leonardo sketch “Vitruvian Man.” Furthermore, the elements that Leonardo focuses on seem to pop out of designer Scott Bradley’s file cabinets that line the wall of the stage and suggest the compartments of the artist-scientist’s mind.

Leonardo’s interest in the anatomy of the

Kasey Foster and John Gregorio in “The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci.”

‘The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci’

The Owen at Goodman Theatre
170 N. Dearborn St., Chicago, Ill.

Information:
312-443-3800
or GoodmanTheatre.org

Running Time:
1 hour, 30 minutes

Closes:
March 20, 2022

human body goes even further than just notating dimensions when he dissects a cadaver. He gives a lecture on the science of voice, which, when presented on a blackboard, turns into a harmonious rendition of an old song.

There’s also, as is typical of Zimmerman’s productions, plenty of humor. The scenes in which Leonardo compares painting to sculpture, with a reference to Michelangelo (1475–1564), suggest a bit of jealousy, as when he points out that what his artistic rival does with sculpture is not as significant as what Leonardo himself does with painting. The scene is made more comedic when one of the actors stands in the pose of Michelangelo’s famous “David” marble.

While all the actors play the part of Leonardo, the most compelling is that of Christopher Donahue. The scene of him recalling a childhood memory in which he came upon a falcon, beautifully stylized by Kasey Foster, offers a look into the spiritual side of the artist. And Donahue is especially charming when he describes how Leonardo adopted a 10-year-old boy who stole from him and got into all sorts of trouble but then became his apprentice.

Expert Stagecraft

While “The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci” is a cornucopia of lush, evocative scenes, enhanced by T.J. Gerckens’s lighting, the most ravishing image of all is presented toward the end of the play when Leonardo’s lines of perspective are illustrated in a representation of his legendary painting “Madonna of the Rocks.” As the revival unfolds, there’s appealing original music by Miriam Sturm and Michael Bodeen, who is also the sound designer.

One wonders why Zimmerman never brings up Leonardo’s most popular work, the “Mona Lisa.” Could it be that she thought the painting was so well-known that it would be overkill to bring it into the show?

While the stage artistry is stunning, Zimmerman also brings in Leonardo’s philosophical outlook, which offers an insightful look into the character of the man. By play’s end, we come to understand that Leonardo was concerned with the harmony and proportion of nature, intrigued by the way life transitioned into death, and thought that if one understands something completely, one can’t help but love it.

As an arts writer and movie/theater/opera critic, Betty Mohr has been published in the Chicago Sun-Times, The Chicago Tribune, The Australian, The Dramatist, the SouthtownStar, the Post-Tribune, The Herald News, The Globe and Mail in Toronto, and other publications.

THEATER REVIEW

To Stay or to Go?

The persecution of Jews through the ages

JUDD HOLLANDER

NEW YORK—Is there anywhere in the world that’s truly safe? This is the question at the heart of Joshua Harmon’s drama “Prayer for the French Republic,” a tale that focuses on cultural identity and the reality of how the more things change, the more they stay the same. The play is now at Manhattan Theatre Club’s Off-Broadway City Center Stage I.

In 2016, Marcelle (Betsy Aidem) and Charles (Jeff Seymour) are a Jewish professional couple—he’s a doctor, she’s a psychiatrist—living in France with their grown son Daniel (Yair Ben-Dor) and daughter Elodie (Francis Benhamou). Neither Marcelle nor her brother Patrick (Richard Topol) were particularly religious as children. That changed for Marcelle when she married Charles, whose family arrived in France from Algeria when he was 4 years old.

Remembering a Difficult Past

Daniel is quite open about his Jewish heritage, something that disturbs Marcelle greatly due to the rise in anti-Semitic attacks in France. She and Patrick believe it’s best not to call attention to one’s religion. These feelings at least partly stem from what happened to their family in World War II. Offering an outsider’s perspective on this is Molly (Molly Ranson), a very distant relative from America. Molly’s seemingly uninformed point of view puts her at odds with the very opinionated and manic-depressive Elodie.

As these scenes unfold, so do events that occurred more than 70 years earlier as Marcelle and Patrick’s great-grandparents (Nancy Robinette and Kenneth Tigar) shelter in place during the Nazi occupation. All they can do is wait fearfully for news of family members who have been arrested by the authorities. Linking the sequences together are obser-

vations from Patrick, who serves as the play’s narrator. The play examines the persecution of Jewish people through the ages. Topol’s matter-of-fact delivery as he imparts this information serves to give the subject extra emotional weight.

As racial tensions keep rising, Charles thinks about moving to Israel, perhaps not the safest place in the world, but one that won’t force him to hide who he is. It’s a move Marcelle opposes. She does not want to leave her home, her friends, and the life she has built. Plus, she is also the de facto caregiver for her aged father, Pierre (Pierre Epstein), one of several of her family who survived the Holocaust.

No Easy Answers

The best thing about “Prayer for the French Republic” is that it offers no easy answers (other than a family confrontation scene late in the play that comes off as too pat). The different characters try to balance the idea of leaving a place where they no longer feel welcome with refusing to be driven out of their home because of who they are. In between these two points are issues of family, belief, heritage, survival, and love—all of which must be considered when making any decision.

The question of what’s actually the correct choice and how that choice is measured against prior events is continually debated. Molly notes how “you can fight for what’s right wherever you are, but you have to be alive to do it.” She and Elodie, who delivers a powerful speech on Jewish hatred, both offer some insightful moments. This is rather ironic, as their characters are initially presented as somewhat one-dimensional. In one interaction, in which Elodie rambles from one point to the next while Molly tries to keep up—Molly’s understanding of French isn’t always perfect—is particularly hilarious.

Aidem as Marcelle is the standout of the cast. A touch overbearing when first seen, she is fiercely protective of her family and just wants to find a place where she and the people she loves can be safe. Robinette



(L-R) Nancy Robinette as Irma, Kenneth Tigar as Adolphe, Ari Brand as Lucien, Pierre Epstein as Pierre, Peyton Lusk as Young Pierre, and Richard Topol as Patrick in “Prayer for the French Republic.”

David Cromer’s direction is very strong as he slowly and deliberately increases the story’s underlying tension.

‘Prayer for the French Republic’

Presented by Manhattan Theatre Club
131 W. 55th St., New York City

Tickets:
212-581-1212
or NYCityCenter.org

Running Time:
3 hours, 10 minutes

Closes:
March 27

strikes a powerful note as Irma Salomon. As with Marcelle, the most important thing to her is family, and not knowing their fate is almost more than she can bear. Her determination to understand what happened forces a confrontation with those who don’t want to relive the horrors they’ve seen—or experienced.

Epstein, as Marcelle and Patrick’s 86-year-old father, effectively delivers his own opinion about what the family should do, and also explains why he still goes to work in the family piano store five days a week. Seymour is fine as the more pragmatic Charles, to whom the current situation is normally new for his people. Ben-Dor is nicely appealing as Daniel. His scenes with Ranson have a nice flirtatious touch, with a hint of something deeper.

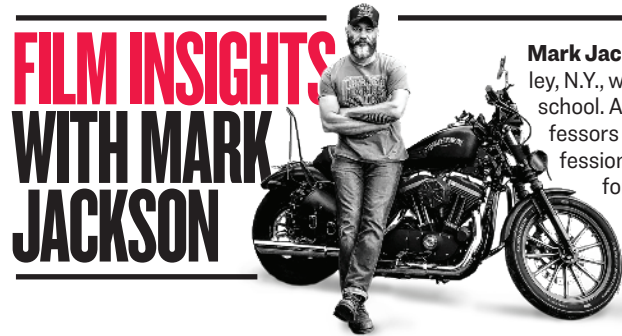
David Cromer’s direction is very strong as he slowly and deliberately increases the story’s underlying tension while the characters grapple with issues they’re not always ready to face. Takeshi Kata’s set is appealing and functional, and never calls attention to itself so as to take away from the story.

With a running time that doesn’t feel long at all, “Prayer for the French Republic” looks at an age-old situation, one that sadly shows no sign of being resolved anytime soon.

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



Brothers Toby Howard (Chris Pine, L) and Tanner Howard (Ben Foster) take to robbing banks, in the Neo-Western “Hell or High Water.”



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.

REWIND, REVIEW, AND RE-RATE

A Neo-Western About Bank-Robbing Robber Banks

MARK JACKSON

Americans enjoy the old Wild West phrase “Runnin’ from the law,” and we like to glorify our dangerous bad boys who run from it, like John Dillinger, Clyde Barrow, Butch Cassidy, and Jesse James.

“My coward ex is runnin’ from the law,” say many 20-something American women, exasperatedly (but also with a hint of pride) of the delinquents they’ve dated. “Coward” usually means there’s a baby involved. The young ladies would take that bad boy back in a heartbeat, though.

It’s particular to the USA to romanticize this brand of dysfunction; the poster boy for the stereotype would be J.D. in “Thelma & Louise” (Brad Pitt) and the quintessential American Western outlaw activity was, of course—bank robbery.

Movie heartthrob Chris Pine plays one such bank-robbing ne’er-do-well in “Hell or High Water,” a Texas slow dance of a what could be described as a post-Occupy Wall Street movement Neo-Western.

In-law Outlaws

The Howard boys are odd-couple brothers: Tanner (Ben Foster) is a shot-his-daddy, went-to-jail, sociopathic drifter; Toby (Pine) is the soulful, handsome devil outlaw with a buried streak of virtue that makes this archetype irresistible to certain women.

The brothers are perpetrating Basic Bank Stickups 101; they’re avoiding the vaults and dye-bomb-protected big-bill packets. Instead, they’re just cleaning out teller cash drawers and leaving telltale patterns and psychological insights for savvy old lawmen to follow.

Tanner provides the hair-raising, seat-of-his-pants embellishments to their bank-heist plans, but despite these boneheaded moves, the bank-heist brother team is not dumb. Toby’s good with a bulldozer, which might account for the complete disappearance of their collection of getaway cars.

Why the Law Gets Broke

Toby’s hidden virtue is that, while his blond, Texan ex-wife hates his heretofore deadbeat guts, and his straight-edge footballer teenage son is hostile, Toby yearns to do the right thing. He’d like to exorcise his own dad’s hand-me-down deadbeat demons, break the poverty cycle, and provide.

He’d like to keep the family’s oil-rich ranch out of Midland Bank’s foreclosure machinations. He doesn’t know how to get it done lawfully, so he intends to pay the bank back with the stolen money it stole from his family. Outlaw poetic justice.

Toby and Tanner are runnin’ from an all-ranger version of the Lone Ranger and Tonto: Marcus Hamilton (Jeff Bridges) and his Comanche-Mexican deputy and sidekick Alberto Parker (Gil Birmingham). These two make up the film’s second odd couple.

Bridges’s Marcus is a homespun-but-acerbic widower sheriff with a dreaded porch-and-rocking-chair retirement looming.

Alberto’s an overly earnest, kindly man and an irresistibly (for Marcus) easy joke target. Marcus just can’t help himself. He must constantly and ruthlessly let the stuffing out of the long-suffering Alberto with nonstop, Tommy Lee Jones-style deadpan (and completely un-P.C.) racial ribbing.

It’s a running gag. At first wince-worthy, it picks up hilarity as the movie shuffles along at Texas-speed, and it dawns on us that these two are really an old married couple, with great, unspoken, manly man affection for each other.

Speaking of which, the Howard boys also have a powerful brotherly love. With bickering. Call “High Water” a rambling, muted, Texan hetero man-love movie.

Since the film moves at the aforementioned Texan pace, it was during the gas station scene in the second third of the movie, when smack-talking Tanner provokes the pistol-waving driver of a muscled-up lime-green Dodge Challenger, that I started feeling “OK, it’s got me now.” Mr. Pistol suddenly realizes that by trying to bully the normally taciturn Toby, he just stepped into the strike zone of a human rattlesnake.

Stellar Performances

Bridges does an “it’s-a-quality-film-so-now-I’m-motivated” version of the over-the-top, Western-twang schtick he’d been adopting for a string of films now (the worst of it pervading “R.I.P.D.” and “Seventh Son,” and the best reserved for “True Grit” and “Crazy Heart”). His portrayal of Marcus is lots of fun.

Foster is a character actor’s character actor. To have witnessed his acting arc from the artsy, schlemiel boyfriend on HBO’s “Six Feet Under” to the tough Navy SEAL of “Lone Survivor” is to understand camera acting shape-shifting.



Heartthrob Chris Pine plays Toby Howard, a ne’er-do-well with a buried streak of virtue.



Tanner Howard (Ben Foster, in the car on the right) picks a fight at a gas station.



Marcus Hamilton (Jeff Bridges, L) and Alberto Parker (Gil Birmingham) are the law after the brothers.

Per the Occupy Wall Street outlook, most ‘99 percenters’ suspected that the true outlaws were the banks themselves.



The movie poster for “Hell or High Water.”
LOREY SEBASTIAN/CBS FILMS

‘Hell or High Water’

Director:
David Mackenzie

Cast:
Jeff Bridges, Chris Pine, Ben Foster, Gil Birmingham, Dale Dickey

Running Time:
1 hour, 42 minutes

MPAA Rating:
R

Release Date:
Aug. 12, 2016

★★★★★

Pine’s the rare kind of handsome that can wear the mustache well—just the ‘stache—without American society’s current knee-jerk snicker reaction to mustaches reminding everyone of ‘70s porn stars. Not easy to pull off. Who are our great mustache wearers? Tom Selleck, of course, and Robert Redford, but most of all—Sam Elliot.

Pine nails the outlaw cowboy look: longish, swept-back hair, sideburns—and the ‘stache. All that plus Paul Newman’s vivid blue eyes (and acting chops), and you’ve got the classic American Western outlaw. Americans love this archetype so much, somebody wrote a doo-wop song about it: “My baby loves the Western movies.”

Keep an eye out for character actress Dale Dickey’s hilarious, tough-as-rawhide diner waitress intimidating the tough lawmen.

State of the Nation

In the 2010s, actual bank robbery was, er, a little outdated. Per the Occupy Wall Street outlook, most “99-percenters” suspected that the true outlaws were the banks themselves. As poignant graffiti shown in a Texas parking lot attests in the film’s opening: “Three tours in Iraq, but no bailout for people like us.”

So while the robbing of banks was very 1800s and Butch-Cassidy-and-Sundance, robbing by banks had become the 2010s “1-percenter” outlook. Ergo, robbing the robber banks made for a post-Occupy worldview Western.

So are the banks really the outlaws? Certainly the tellers and branch managers in Midland, Texas, are not. They’re just small-fry folks trying to eke out a living like anybody else. The 1-percenter upper management types, as depicted here, are a different story, though.

But like that parking lot graffiti forewarned, probably when our returning combat vets consider the living options that banks offer (like homelessness), their low opinion of robber banks may go lower. And if Canada’s current response to the anti-vaccine trucker convoy (freezing bank accounts) is emulated by American politicians in the coming weeks—lower still.

“Hell or High Water” has a lot of gritty, low-rent, beat-down, small-town Americana; lots of cowboy-hatted, conceal-and-carry citizen-arrest zeal; great performances; a killer soundtrack; and a very post-Occupy coda, wherein men speak of peace and redemption. Amen to peace and redemption.

FINE ARTS

Portrait of the Artist as a Family Man

YVONNE MARCOTTE

Many artists paint self-portraits over the course of their careers. We see them as they want to be seen, prominent in society, in rich clothing, perhaps holding a symbol of their importance. In one of his self-portraits, “Brita and Me (self-portrait)” (1895), Swedish artist Carl Larsson (1853–1919) stands, feet spread, on a worn plank floor. He is decked out in a blue suit lined in red and wears an expression of pure joy, for on his shoulders he carries the symbol of his importance—his child.

You can hear the artist’s daughter Brita laugh as she shows her delight to be on her dad’s shoulders, as most children are; she twists her hands in a carefree way that shows complete trust that her father will keep her from falling. While balancing his daughter with one hand, Larsson delicately holds a tiny artist’s brush in the other.

Idyllic Childhood, Not

Larsson was deprived of a loving and caring family growing up. He lived in poverty and was abused by a father who kicked him out, along with his brother and his mother. His mother took her young sons to live in a small room they shared with two other families.

In his autobiographical novel, “Jag,” Larsson wrote that “penury, filth and vice thrived there, leisurely seethed and smoldered, eaten-away and rotten bodies and souls.”

However, early on, his artistic ability was recognized, and he was given art lessons. He moved to Paris when he grew up to learn more and sharpen his skills. There he met his wife, Karin, who specialized in interior design. After they married, the couple returned to Sweden.

It’s clear that his art has its importance in the context of the family.

A Model Family That Modeled

Larsson’s skill as an artist provided his family of eight with a loving and secure home. His children were his favorite models, and he painted them often. He portrayed the children in their activities during the day and on special days throughout the year.

He often did individual portraits of his children. “Esbjorn Doing His Homework” (1910) shows exactly the opposite: Esbjorn is not doing his homework but is thinking of other things as a breeze drifts in from the open window. The young man looks out with a dreamy look, while a mirror reflects an image of his father painting the scene. The portrait of Esbjorn as a baby on his mother’s lap (1900) shows how satisfied he is to grab that funny appendage, his toe. His smiles says it all. He has it and he’s not giving it up.

The portrait of his daughter Lille Matts (1912) shows a little girl bundled in warm red woollens from head to toe. Her expression shows an eagerness to get outside; she is ready to feel the cold on her cheeks.

Christmas is one of the main feast days of the Swedish calendar, and it is a happy time



“Self-Portrait With Brita,” 1895, by Carl Larsson. Watercolor on paper. Gothenburg Museum of Art.

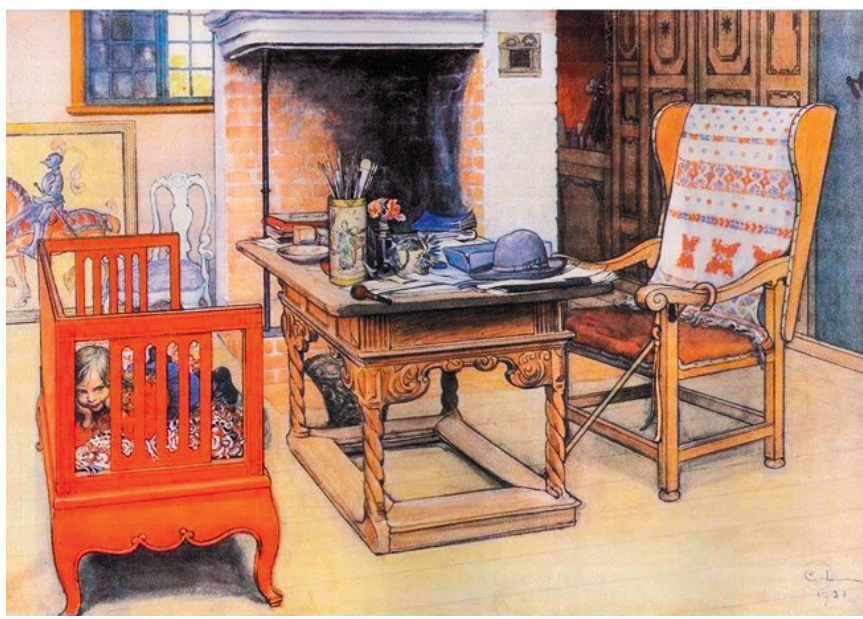
for the Larsson family. Larsson’s watercolor “Christmas Morning” (1894) shows his children playing with their presents. One can almost hear the little one in the foreground dropping stones in a little pail; the older boy behind a Viking sailboat on the left pulls on skates that can be used very soon. A girl on the right leans forward in a chair, her hands carefully running over the smooth pages of her new book. Then there is the thespian standing on the creaking bed, still in bedclothes, giving orders to his soldiers with great gusto; behind him, the child’s smile says it all: she loves her gift. The room smells of pine branches strewn about. Each child enjoys the pleasures of the season in his or her own way.



“Christmas Morning,” 1894, by Carl Larsson. Watercolor on paper. Unknown owner.

Self-Portrait of a Father

Larsson painted several portraits of himself at work. “Self-Portrait With Brita” (1898) shows him with one of his children in his lap as he paints. All we see is the child’s face under a



“Peek-a-Boo,” 1901, by Carl Larsson. Watercolor on paper. Private collection.



“Esbjorn Doing His Homework,” 1910, by Carl Larsson. Watercolor on paper. Private collection.

tousled head of hair, perhaps just up from a nap. The child rests quietly in her father’s lap, and Larsson appears very content to have the little one with him. It’s clear that his art has its importance in the context of the family.

Sometimes Larsson made a self-portrait in which he’s nowhere to be found, but we know he’s there because his daughter sees him just outside the canvas. In his watercolor “Peek-a-Boo” (1901), it’s easy to miss the little one peeking out from a red bench in dad’s room. His cane leans on the opposite chair, and his hat rests over papers on the table. His artist’s paintbrushes are neatly bunched in a tall ceramic jar on the carved desk. We see expectation in the child’s face waiting for the artist, who is also her dad, to reappear.

Another self-portrait (1906) shows the artist squeezing, of all things, the fabric on a harlequin doll. Larsson is telling us what’s important to him. The artist holding a silly doll gives insight into the childlike mind of the painter. Happiness comes from creating a world that children can enjoy.

Lively Watercolors

Although the artist made oil paintings, his

creative juices flowed through his watercolors, and this medium gave him his greatest success. The bright transparency of the medium worked well with his wife’s designs on the walls and doors. German publisher Karl Robert Langewiesche published Larsson’s watercolors and drawings in “Das Haus in der Sonne” (“The House in the Sun”) in 1909. The book became a bestseller with 40,000 copies sold in three months; there have been over 40 print runs since.

The artist’s autobiographical novel, “Jag,” did not reach the fame of other literary works, such as James Joyce’s “Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man,” but this memoir expressed what his family meant to him. His family and home “became the most immediate and lasting part of my life’s work. For these pictures are of course a very genuine expression of my personality, of my deepest feelings, of all my limitless love for my wife and children.”

Often referred to as Sweden’s most beloved artist, Carl Larsson valued his family as much as his work. His children were as much works of creativity as the paintings, watercolors, and prints he produced of them. Larsson died in Falun, Sweden, at the age of 65.

ALL PHOTOS IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

BOOK REVIEW

‘The Great Reset: Joe Biden and the Rise of 21st Century Fascism’

LINDA WIEGENFELD

Not since the book “1984” have I read a book with such powerful warnings against the dangers of a totalitarian society—“The Great Reset: Joe Biden and the Rise of 21st Century Fascism” by Glenn Beck and co-written by Justin Haskins. While Beck is clearly against fascism and wants to end its rise, I believe that he also truly wants to educate the public. The book is filled with incredibly important information written in a way that is easy to understand. I believe that everyone would benefit from reading this book, no matter their political persuasion. Knowledge is power.

The Great Reset

When Beck talks about the Great Reset, he means the radical transformation of society at every level. This highly influential movement that is happening worldwide is about the world’s elite “resetting” the global economy using banks, government programs, and governments.

There is no official Great Reset manual, framework, or agreement that all Great Reset advocates have signed up for. It has been kept purposely vague just how the Great Reset in final form will look. However, in the end, elites will be in charge of society and the global economy. There will be virtually no middle class, only rulers and their slaves. The Great Reset is 21st century fascism in action.

Great Reset advocates have already made inroads. According to Beck, this is a major reason why the world today has become a “fun house mirror distortion,” a world apart from what it was before the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) virus. The book explains why people are being “canceled” over the slightest societal misstep, why social media giants are scrambling to stifle speech at every turn, why large corporations are becoming the champions of “woke” causes, and so many more questions the reader might have. The book is worth reading even for this reason.

The CCP Virus

Elites were offered an excellent opportunity to advance their agenda when the U.S. economy experienced an unprecedented collapse after the CCP virus hit. Beck says, “It is almost certainly the first time in world history that a country as powerful as the United States consciously chose to decimate its own economy.”

Think about how insightful that statement is. It shows you the quality of Beck’s writing. He says that after the lockdowns, the steps which followed to supposedly “relieve the damage” just decimated the economy further and made people more dependent on central government.

Climate Change

The elites can’t justify building an entirely new economy based on economic damage and societal fears linked to a temporary

crisis like the pandemic, so they merely renewed an emphasis on climate change. In the past, it has not been that easy to put forth ideas on climate change (although in recent years it has become more prominent in the news) because no matter how many times those predicting disaster say that “the end is near,” the end never comes. People’s very existence serves as proof against the claim of climate change.

Beck points out that, over time, the elites have developed ways to help advance the theory of climate change. I believe the reader will find this chapter eye-opening in seeing how those promoting the Great Reset, for their own ends, advocate distortion of people’s sincere beliefs. Some readers may be surprised that Beck shows a contrast between the sincere Greta Thunberg and cynical elites who just use climate change for their own scurrilous goals.

Modern Monetary Theory

“How are you going to pay for it?” was always the question in the past that leaders addressed. This is because money and resources are scarce. Countries have a limited supply of wealth, labor, and time.

Today the Great Reset elites are thinking in a different way about money by embracing modern monetary theory (MMT). This theory is that there is no need to worry much about the national debt and deficits, because the government can print and spend as much money as it wants to in order to achieve the goals set by the federal government’s bureaucratic masterminds and political elite.

Take the United States as an example of the use of MMT. The United States, a currency issuer, is in no danger it will ever become insolvent. The federal government

has a monopoly on dollar production (money printing), so it cannot run out of money. If more cash is needed, all the government must do is turn on the printing presses—or more accurately, move numbers around on an electronic spreadsheet.

However, if the United States just prints more money and the amount of goods stay the same, more money will be chasing the same amount of goods. Prices will go up. If inflation starts to get out of control, money needs to be pulled out of the economy either by the government taxing people more or the government spending less. Both have been proven historically extremely difficult to do and require a much less politicized budgetary process.

In other words, there is no free lunch. Elites are gambling with the future on a largely unproven economic theory.

Stakeholder Capitalism

Many readers may have noticed that many large companies have become “woke,” despite the fact that alienating half their customer base is a terrible business strategy. Under the “environmental, social, and governance” score system (ESG), companies no longer make decisions based on



Glenn Beck speaking at the Values Voter Summit in Washington, D.C., in this file photo.

Author Glenn Beck encourages everyone to stand unwaveringly for the truth.

‘The Great Reset: Joe Biden and the Rise of 21st Century Fascism’

Author
Glenn Beck with Justin Haskins

Date
Jan. 11, 2022

Publisher
Forefront Books

Pages
321

Hard cover

For more arts and culture articles, visit [TheEpochTimes.com](https://www.theepochtimes.com)

what the consumer wants. Now, it’s all about what those in power deem society should want. This is the Great Reset score system at work and eerily similar to the social credit system that the CCP has now.

The ESG system presents behaviors that are important to Great Reset power brokers. Energy, water, and land are factors in the environment (E); being “woke,” anti-white, and anti-police are part of the social justice (S) score; women, minorities, and corporate board of directors factor in the governance (G) score.

This model tells which businesses are good and which “scoundrel” companies are interested only in turning a profit, developing new products, and/or hiring more employees. Stakeholder capitalism is not capitalism at all. Stakeholder capitalism exists to serve the collective according to the demands of the ruling class in government, not individual customers and owners.

What We Can Do

Beck is not one to sugarcoat current events. The last chapter of his book says that time is running out. Reversing the Great Reset might be virtually impossible if it becomes fully established. He gives readers some ideas for how to stop the Great Reset before it’s too late to reverse course.

He encourages everyone to stand unwaveringly for the truth, no matter where it takes you. Don’t participate in anything that is a lie. People can become active in local affairs and businesses, since there is more control at the local level. He wants everyone to do their research and learn all they can. Finally, spread the word. He asks that everyone reach out to all, including those with differing social or political beliefs.

Beck encourages all of us to value what we have: “We owe it to ourselves, to those who came before us, and to the generations of Americans not yet born, who will someday remember and thank us for not throwing away our freedoms—and their future.”

The Great Reset affects everyone. There is no hiding. I strongly recommend reading this book.

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

BOOK REVIEW

Taking Hitler Down: Heroes and Villains Brought to Life

DUSTIN BASS

A question that has probably been posed to everyone at some point in time is “If you could go back in time and stop an event, would you and which event?”

I can assume that many people would say yes, and possibly a sizable percentage of those people would suggest stopping Adolf Hitler from rising to power. This is the task undertaken by Herbert J. Stern and Alan A. Winter in their historical fiction series. “Sins of the Fathers” is the second installment in the series, following “Wolf,” which covered the years 1918–1934. This second book covers 1934 to November 1938.

The series follows the fictitious protagonist Friedrich Richard, Hitler’s most trusted friend and an SS officer. This retelling of arguably the darkest chapter in human history proves that changing history is more difficult than you

would think, especially if done honestly. And an honest attempt is what this book accomplishes. The authors let history play out, while having Richard guide the reader through a maze of dangerous geopolitics.

Richard knows, as do many other well-connected and highly appointed Germans, that Hitler is turning into a monster who will march Germany straight into another world war. The reader follows Richard while he works with countless villains, such as Hitler, Hermann Göring, Heinrich Himmler, and Reinhard Heydrich, as well as those working to stop Hitler: Bernhard Weiss, Wilhelm Canaris, Ludwig Beck, and Erwin von Witzleben.

I call the protagonist “fictitious” strictly because there are so many actual historical figures in the book. The authors do a fine job of ensuring that these actual historical figures are not two-dimensional. They are not mere prop pieces to move the story along

It is historical fiction, but it is highly researched and incredibly detailed.

Even Hitler is kept from being a static figure whose sole focus is destruction. He is provided personality, including traits like loyalty and a sense of humor. (It takes personality to gain the support of the masses.)

Highly Researched Historical Fiction

“Sins of the Fathers” is historical fiction, but it is highly researched and incredibly detailed. The reader follows the distressing moments of history, including the Austrian Anschluss and Kristallnacht. These two moments highlight precisely where Germany and the German-speaking world got caught up in a hypnotic belief in Hitler. In his pursuit of Czechoslovakia, Hitler proves the brilliant political tactician in the Munich Agreement, where he achieved the annexation of the Sudetenland of western Czechoslovakia, despite Czechoslovakia’s large and prepared army. This agreement promised that Great Britain

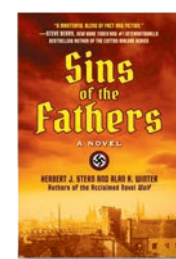
and France would leave Czechoslovakia to fight Germany on its own in the event of a confrontation, which assured Hitler the annexation. Germany would follow up months later by overtaking all of Czechoslovakia.

Regarding the Munich Agreement, Stern and Winter show that a display of strength despite apparent weakness is needed in a leader, which is something Hitler exemplified but British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain did not. This is where the book ends.

A Few Complaints

Where and how the book ends are some of my few complaints about it. Despite Chamberlain’s decision being one of the most pivotal and cataclysmic decisions in world history, the authors spend very little time on it. The “peace for our time” decision is made, and the reader must move to the next book.

I wish there had been a suspenseful buildup as we waited for the decision or the reaction to the decision, or perhaps the immediate global reaction, or even Hitler’s personal reaction. As a moment of such occasion, it is held too briefly by the authors.



In part 2 of this series of historical fiction, the reader is swept up in the current that was a Hitler craze.

‘Sins of the Fathers’

Author
Herbert J. Stern and Alan A. Winter

Publisher
Skyhorse

Date
Feb. 22, 2022

Pages
432

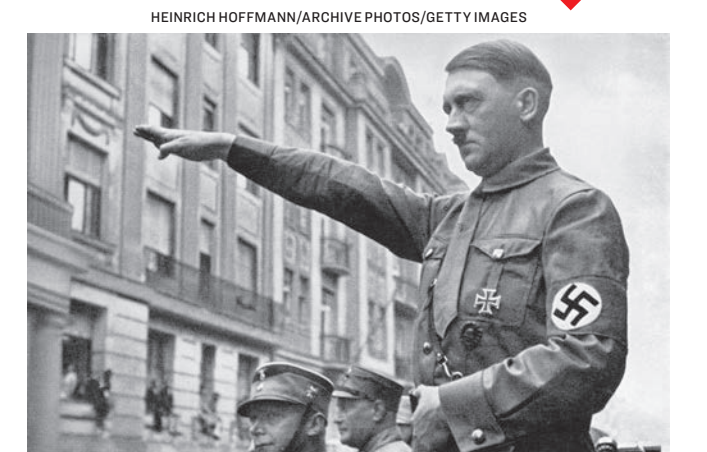
The book is full of dialogue, which I find preferable. It helps move the story along while adding life and intimacy to the characters. The intimacy, however, between the protagonist and his love interest, Carla, often feels contrived. “Sins of the Fathers” at times feels like two novels combined into one. One novel is extensively researched and assembled, and creates a sense of urgency that glues the reader to the pages. The other novel is spotted with poor dialogue, unnecessary fight scenes, and too much first-person self-aggrandizement by the protagonist.

A Fun, Truthful Read

“Sins of the Fathers” does make for a fun read. The reader is swept up in the current that was a Hitler craze. Stern and Winter prove that sometimes those currents are far too strong to stop, even when someone might be in a good position to do something. The dark chapter of world history unfolds again precisely as it did in real life. For this, I say it is an honest book because it proves that while trying to save a nation from a monster, sometimes all we can save is ourselves and perhaps a few friends.

This historical fiction series is a great way to discover the many villains and heroes in 1930s and ‘40s Germany, along with the pivotal moments and decisions that turned the country into a hellish place.

Dustin Bass is the host of Epoch TV’s “About the Book: A Show about New Books With the Authors Who Wrote Them.” He is an author and co-host of “The Sons of History” podcast.



Adolf Hitler (1889–1945) in Munich in the spring of 1932.

HEINRICH HOFFMANN/ARCHIVE PHOTOS/GETTY IMAGES

REWIND, REVIEW, AND RE-RATE

A Rip-Roaring Adventure That's Just Plain Fun

IAN KANE

"The 7th Voyage of Sinbad" (1958) is a great addition to the '50s adventure films—films often rife with creativity and fun (and often goofiness)—that I've been reviewing lately. The film is actually part of a trilogy that also includes "The Golden Voyage of Sinbad" (1973) and "Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger" (1977).

Sinbad (also known as Sinbad the Sailor) is a fictional Middle-Eastern character who has been popular throughout the world for many years. He is a distillation or expression of the expansion of the Abbasid Caliphate in ancient times, most notably the many Arab sailors who explored the world and established trade routes. Therefore, it's not a coincidence that Sinbad's birthplace is Baghdad (once a capital of the Abbasid Caliphate) and that he is often featured as a sailor.

Our grand tale begins with Sinbad (Kerwin Mathews) captaining a ship through foggy seas on his way to Baghdad, where he's about to marry his sweetheart, Princess Parisa (Kathryn Grant). He and his crew are searching for any sign of land because their food stores are running low.

Sinbad and his sailors come across the mysterious island of Colossa, which they initially believe to be uninhabited. It looks like the perfect place to land, grab some grub, and continue on to Baghdad.

The only problem is that the island is not deserted. Instead, it's populated with many bad-tempered beasts that aren't exactly hospitable to pesky, soft, and fleshy little humans.

The starving men make landfall on the island just in time to see a man carrying a golden lamp being chased by a gigantic cyclops. As the sailors engage the monster in combat, the man on the run, a sketchy magician known as Sokurah (Torin Thatcher), unleashes a genie that

This movie's special effects were amazing for its day.



The poster for the 1958 film "The 7th Voyage of Sinbad." PUBLIC DOMAIN

'The 7th Voyage of Sinbad'

Director: Nathan Juran

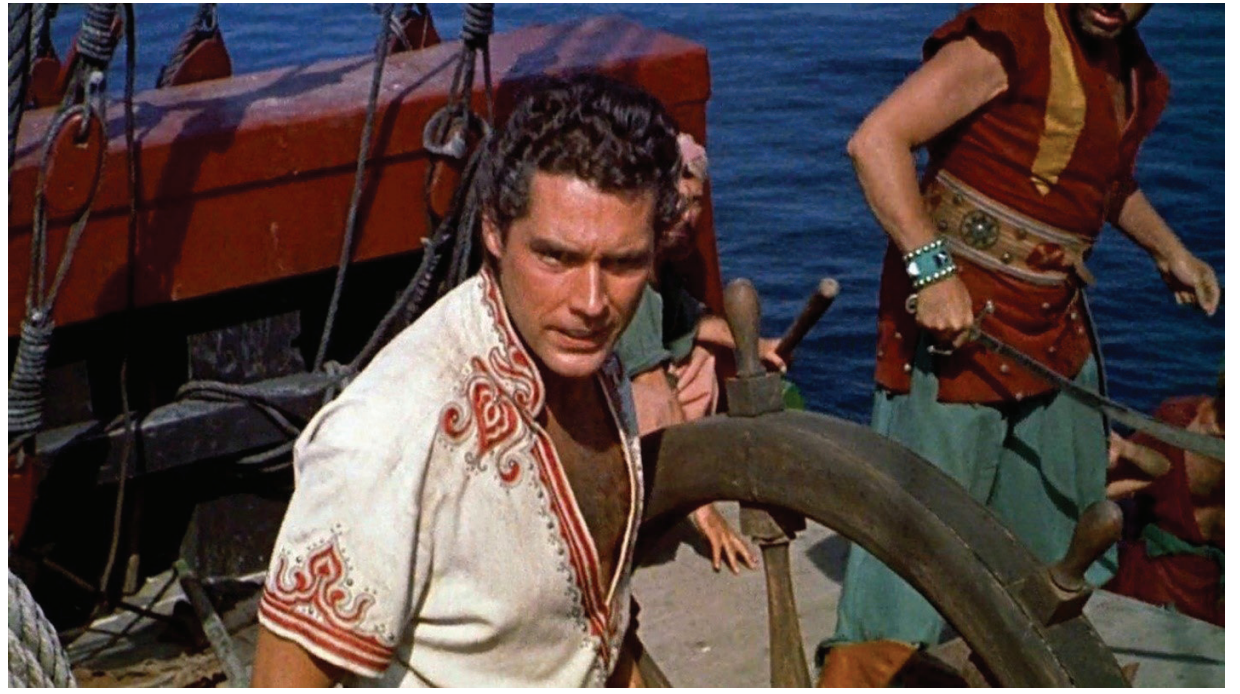
Starring: Kerwin Mathews, Kathryn Grant, Torin Thatcher

Not Rated

Running Time: 1 hour, 28 minutes

Release Date: Dec. 23, 1958

★★★★☆



Kerwin Mathews as Sinbad the Sailor in "The 7th Voyage of Sinbad."

looks like a young boy. The genie proceeds to restrain the cyclops so that the sailors, now with Sokurah in tow, can take their dinghy back to the ship.

However, in all of the splashy chaos, Sokurah loses the lamp, and it falls into the oversized paws of the cyclops. As they cast off for Baghdad, power-hungry Sokurah offers a "king's ransom in jewels" to Sinbad if he will return to the island. But Sinbad refuses the offer. His upcoming wedding is a symbolic gesture that can broker peace between the caliph of Baghdad and the father of Princess Parisa's realm, Chandra.

When the ship returns to Baghdad, Sokurah doesn't waste any time hatching his nefarious plans. The dastardly magician's machinations include manipulating Baghdad and Chandra into war and secretly shrinking the princess down to miniature size while she's asleep.

Thus, when Sinbad seeks out Sokurah, the magician hoodwinks the sea captain by proclaiming that the only way she can be restored to her normal size is by obtaining a piece of eggshell belonging to an enormous, two-headed monster called a Roc. Of course, such eggs only exist back on the island of Colossa.

Amazing Visual Effects

When I began watching this film, I'd forgotten that I'd already seen it as a kid. Although I was born too late to have watched it for the first time on the silver screen, I can see how

it influenced many filmmakers—burgeoning and veteran alike.

This movie's special effects were amazing for its day. Handcrafted effects known as "dynamation," a form of stop-motion model animation, were utilized for this film and for select other films such as "It Came From Beneath the Sea" (1955) and "Jason and the Argonauts" (1963).

Legendary special effects maestro Ray Harryhausen used this new technology to breathe life into the many monstrosities that Sinbad encounters, such as the Roc, a skeleton warrior, and so on. Although these effects may look dated to folks who grew up with CGI effects, they were revolutionary for the time and used for several decades. They allowed filmmakers to give literal form to their cinematic fantasies.

Besides the effects, "The 7th Voyage of Sinbad" is a gripping adventure romp that is just plain fun to watch, even by today's standards. It's relatively fast-paced, packed with action, and has lots of beautifully crafted sets.

The acting is pretty decent, too—if a little stilted in places. One could only imagine how much fun the cast and crew must have had while making this rip-roaring adventure.

I know I enjoyed it, and I hope you do too.

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

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