

THE EPOCH TIMES

ARTS & CULTURE

LIEBIGHAUS SCULPTURE COLLECTION



FINE ARTS

Beauty Meets Virtuosity

Baroque and Rococo Ivory Sculpture

The 'Splendid White' exhibition at the Liebieghaus Sculpture Collection in Frankfurt, Germany

LORRAINE FERRIER

In 1962, successful German building contractor Reiner Winkler bought his first ivory artwork, a small 15th-century Gothic panel of the Nativity that was once part of a diptych. And he fell in love with the medium. From that small

French piece, only a few inches tall, Winkler began what would become the world's largest private collection of ivory sculptures.

He focused on collecting works from the golden age of ivory carving: the 17th and 18th centuries. Winkler kept his collection close to him, first displaying the works in a cabinet in his living room along with porcelain and wooden figurines. As his ivory collection grew, he spread the works throughout his home, eventually moving the majority of them to a specially designed room he called "My cabinet of art and curiosities."

But Winkler never intended to keep the ivory works to himself; he frequently invited art experts to see and study the pieces. At the end of his life, he gifted a large part of his collection to the Liebieghaus Sculpture

Collection in Frankfurt, Germany, which has now acquired most of his collection.

More than 200 of Winkler's Baroque and Rococo ivory sculptures are now on display in the Liebieghaus's recently opened "Splendid White" exhibition. Winkler had kept 21 of the works in his private collection up until he died in 2020. These are on public display for the first time in the exhibition, which is curated by Maraike Bückling, the Liebieghaus's head of the Renaissance to neoclassicism collection.

English, French, Italian, German, Spanish, Austrian, Dutch, and Flemish works, as well as two ivory pieces from India and China, are included in the show.

The dynamic ivory sculpture "Fury on a Charging Horse" by the Master of the Furies is one of the highlights of the "Splendid White" exhibition at the Liebieghaus Sculpture Collection in Frankfurt, Germany. The sculpture measures 16 1/8 inches by 18 1/2 inches by 10 1/4 inches and is believed to have been made in Salzburg, Austria.

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LITERATURE

A Boon Granted: Meeting Agnes Repplier

JEFF MINICK

"She was the Jane Austen of the essay. That she is not so recognized is a great—and, one hopes, temporary—loss." So wrote John Lukacs, biographer and university professor, of Agnes Repplier more than 40 years ago when he compared the style and grace of Repplier's prose to that of Austen. Alas, that loss appears to be permanent. Who these days has heard of Agnes Repplier (pronounced Rep-LEER), much less read her work? Not I.

Though I had come across her name in some obscure books, I first met Miss Repplier just a few weeks ago in the library of Christendom College here in Front Royal, Virginia. It's summertime and, with the students having departed, the library is generally as quiet as a tomb.

From time to time, I go there to bask in the stillness and work on my laptop. On this particular occasion, I got up to stretch, wandered around the stacks a bit, and happened to see four volumes bearing the name Repplier. I pulled out Lukacs's "American Austen: The Forgotten Writings of Agnes Repplier," began reading his introduction, and was hooked.

Let me introduce you to this new acquaintance.

Her Early Life

Agnes Repplier (1855–1950) was born in Philadelphia and made that city her home for the rest of her life. She was a strong-willed child, and that child lived on in the adult. She rebutted the attempts by her mother to teach her to read and acquired that skill by teaching herself at age 10.

She was dismissed from two schools for her rebellious behavior, in one case throwing a book on the floor at the feet of her teacher after declaring that it was "stupid."

After leaving that second school, the West Penn Square Seminary for Young Ladies, Repplier entered the most difficult stage of her life. Though her relationship with her mother was often tempestuous, Mrs. Repplier recognized her daughter's gift for words and put her to work writing stories to help the family through the hard times on which they had fallen.

Through her late teens and into her 20s, she managed to bring in small amounts of cash from these stories. After her mother died, she and her sister Mary, a teacher, found themselves caring for their sickly father and their brother, a partial paraplegic.

Of her early stories, Repplier wrote: "They get themselves published somewhere, somehow, and bring in a little money. Otherwise they would have no excuse for being; a depressing circumstance of which I am well aware."

But all of that was about to change.

An Essayist Is Born

In July 1884, Repplier spoke with Father Isaac Hecker, the founder of the Paulist order and publisher of Catholic World magazine. Though he had accepted several of her stories, he found her fiction flat and without any real spark. "I fancy that you know more about books than you do about life," he told her, "that you are more a reader than an observer." He advised her to write an essay on John Ruskin, one of her favorite authors, and as Repplier later reported, "That essay turned my feet into the path which I have trodden laboriously ever since."

For more than 60 years, Repplier entertained and enlightened readers with her essays, publishing more than 400 of them in magazines and newspapers, and collecting them in more than a score of books. Her writing appeared in prestigious publications like The Atlantic, and as Lukacs tells us, "Every man and woman of letters in the English-speaking world learned her name."

Though she enjoyed the company of men, often corresponding with them or entertaining them in her home, Repplier never married. Despite her lectures and

the great pleasure she took from conversation, she remained alone, writing essay after essay until extreme old age forced her to put down her pen.

Her Talents and Gifts

As we become better acquainted with this remarkable writer, we see that Repplier brought together several ingredients that help explain her prowess as an essayist.

The lifelong joy she took from reading, particularly English and French writers, provided gold and silver for her writing. Again and again in her essays, even the nonliterary ones, Repplier brought into play authors and historical figures, some of whom are largely unknown to today's readers. In "Town and Suburb," for instance, she presents us with Cobbett, Blake, Charles I, Dickens, Will Rogers, Walter Lippmann, Browning, and Dr. Johnson, among others.

Equally important was her craftsmanship, developed in part, no doubt, during those years spent in the literary wilderness composing stories. "For every sentence that may be penned or spoken," she once wrote, "the right words exist."



A photograph of Agnes Repplier on March 15, 1910. Library of Congress.

PUBLIC DOMAIN

Here was a writer who wholeheartedly agreed with Mark Twain's dictum: "The difference between the almost right word and the right word is really a large matter—'tis the difference between the lightning-bug and the lightning."

Add to these tools a subtle humor, wide-eyed honesty, and sophistication, and you have Agnes Repplier, essayist extraordinaire.

Wit, Sparkle, Pertinence, and Revelation

In a collection of her online quotations, we find such jewels as these: "Conversation between Adam and Eve must have been difficult at times because they had nobody to talk about," "It is not easy to find happiness in ourselves, and it is not possible to find it elsewhere," and "There are few nuditities so objectionable as the naked truth."

Like her contemporary G.K. Chesterton, now read more for his novels than his essays, Repplier can startle readers by paradox or some barbed witicism.

In "Ennui," for instance, she ends with a comment pertinent to today, one that will make some of us smile and nod in recognition: In it, she mentions "... the sanguine socialist of today, who dreams of preparing for all of us a lifetime of unbroken ennui." In her collection "Points of Friction," writing of the tyranny of a proletariat, she remarks, "It is as revolting to be robbed by a reformer as by a trust."

In reading Repplier, who was a lifelong amateur historian, we also learn a great deal about the past. Though I have some acquaintance with European history, Scanderbeg was a name entirely unfamiliar to me. In "Points of View," Repplier devotes an essay to this hero who was once a captive of the Turks, escaped, and for

decades led the Albanian resistance to Turkish incursions. Her account of this man and the wars, intrigues, and dangers he faced are enlivened by her narrative skills and vivid descriptions. She demonstrates a solid grasp of little-known history along with the ability to bring it to life on the page. It shouldn't surprise us to find that Repplier is today a forgotten literary figure. In comparing her to many essayists today, readers would likely find her style a bit starchy and stiff. Some of her references to books and authors might be confusing as these writers are also not read today. And essays in general, including some of Repplier's, are often topical; they are focused on current events of little interest today to anyone other than historians.

Finally, the general sweep of time itself often washes away the culture of the past. Most Americans still recognize the names of literary celebrities like Ernest Hemingway or F. Scott Fitzgerald, but far

fewer remember bestselling authors like James Jones or Mary McCarthy, much less once well-known journalists and essayists whose words were generally written on sand.

And yet ... and yet ...

I read plenty of essays these days. It's my favorite genre: some of them online, some in books, and a few of them make more than a cursory impression. From Montaigne, father of the modern essay and still in print today, to writers like Joseph Epstein and Alice Thomas Ellis, I've taken valuable knowledge and guidance. Bits and pieces of what they've shared in print have stuck with me, causing me to return from time to time to refresh myself at their wellspring of words.

As for Agnes Repplier, I am pleased to have made her acquaintance. Her grace, style, and subjects take me away from the crudities that so often manifest themselves in our age. Reading her, I feel as if I'm a kid again, listening to the stories and observations of an old maiden aunt. For a while, that gentle, wise, and humorous voice whisks me off to that most foreign place on earth: the past.

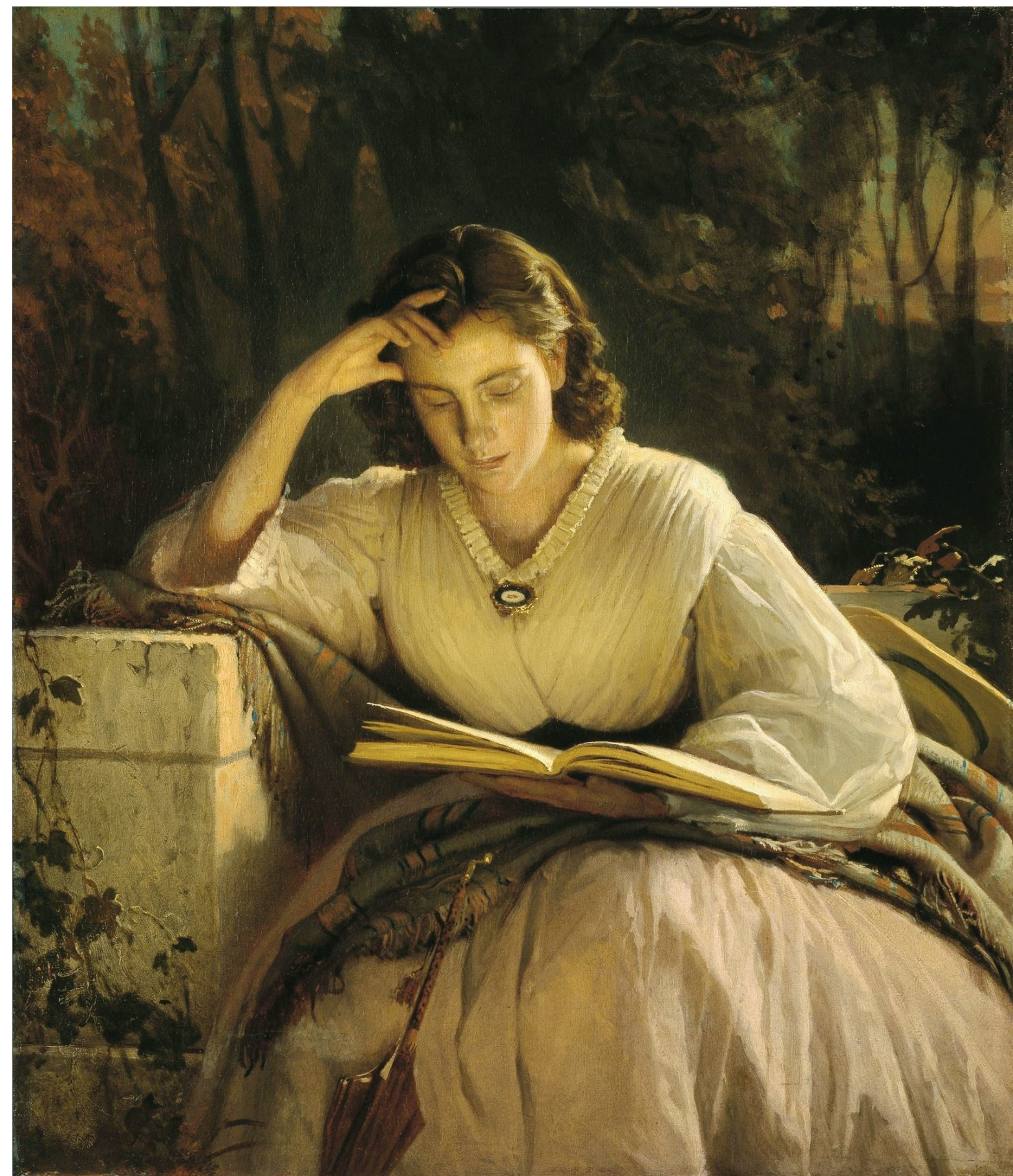
Once Repplier wrote,

"If the unresponsive gods, so often invoked, so seldom complaisant, would grant me one sweet boon, I should ask of them that I might join that little band of authors, who, unknown to the wide careless world, remain from generation to generation the friends of a few fortunate readers."

As one of her friends (I'm sure she has others), I believe her wish came true.

Unless otherwise noted, all the information in this essay about Agnes Repplier's life and writing came from John Lukacs's "American Austen: The Forgotten Writings of Agnes Repplier" and from Agnes Repplier's "Points of View."

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.



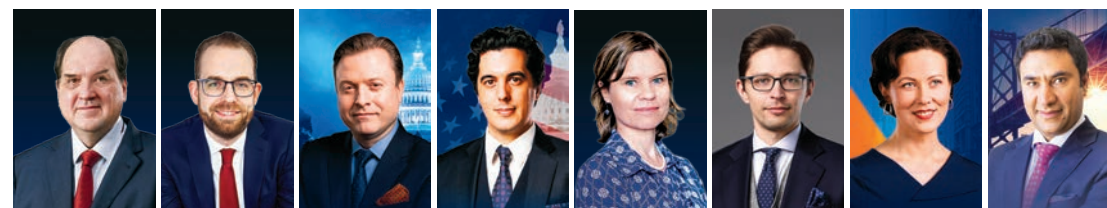
A detail from "Woman Reading," a portrait of Sofia Kramskaya, after 1866, by Ivan Kramskoi. Oil on canvas. Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

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"The Annunciation of Mary," circa 1770–1780, by Jean-Antoine Belleteste (Dieppe, France). Ivory, wood panel, wood frame, tortoiseshell, and black lacquer; 17 3/8 inches by 12 1/4 inches. The Reiner Winkler Ivory Collection, at the Liebieghaus Sculpture Collection in Frankfurt, Germany.

FINE ARTS

Beauty Meets Virtuosity

Baroque and Rococo Ivory Sculpture

The 'Splendid White' exhibition at the Liebieghaus Sculpture Collection in Frankfurt, Germany

Continued from Page 1

The works range from sculptural reliefs, statuettes, groups of figures, and portrait medallions to tankards and ceremonial vessels.

Unbelievable Ivory Carving

A highlight of The Winkler Collection is "Fury on a Charging Horse" carved by an unknown artist known as the

Master of the Furies. Winkler nearly missed out to a rival collector on buying the piece depicting a mythological Fury on horseback. In his memoirs he wrote: "Fortunately, the sculpture in a primitive wooden crate was very dirty and covered with numerous residues of glue. Lord Thomson's representative ... did not warm to it. ... Suddenly I realized with shock that the piece was about to be knocked down—the hammer had

already been raised. I drew attention to myself and got the sculpture."

There's a dynamism and emotional tension throughout the piece that makes viewing it both an uncomfortable and beautiful experience. The Master of the Furies expertly conveyed the screaming Fury's limitless wrath, through its tense muscles and contorted facial features. The Fury's anger almost throws it from the horse, which leaps so furiously over



"Chronos on the Globe," circa 1720, by Matthias Steinel. The work is believed to have been made in Vienna, Austria. The Reiner Winkler Ivory Collection, at the Liebieghaus Sculpture Collection in Frankfurt, Germany.



"The Deposition of Christ," second half of 17th century, artist unknown. Ivory; 21 1/4 inches by 11 3/4 inches. The sculptural relief is believed to have been made in southern Germany, possibly Augsburg.



"Portrait of Charles Marbury," between 1704 and 1720, by David Le Marchand. Ivory; 5 inches by 3 3/4 inches. Made in London. The Reiner Winkler Ivory Collection, at the Liebieghaus Sculpture Collection in Frankfurt, Germany.



"Portrait of Pope Clement XI, Rome," circa 1710, by an unknown artist after a medal by Charles Claude Dubut. Ivory, wooden frame, gilded brass, softwood; 4 inches by 3 3/8 inches. The Reiner Winkler Ivory Collection, at the Liebieghaus Sculpture Collection in Frankfurt, Germany.



"St. Mary Magdalene, Penitent," first half of 17th century, artist unknown. Ivory, partial polychrome: metal powder, gold leaf, various adhesives, and decorative appliques; 6 1/8 inches by around 4 1/8 inches by around 1 inch. The sculptural relief is believed to have been made in southern Germany or Austria. The Reiner Winkler Ivory Collection, at the Liebieghaus Sculpture Collection in Frankfurt, Germany.

blades of grass or perhaps flames.

Throughout this sculpture, we can see why art collectors treasured ivory artworks like they would any rare, precious gems. Ivory's silky-smooth surface, warm bright hue, fine veining, and flawlessness must've won their hearts.

Art collectors often kept ivory sculptures in curiosity cabinets, a tradition that developed in the 15th and 16th centuries, where learned men kept treasures that sparked conversation among their peers. They'd keep exotic, intriguing, and sometimes obscure objects with an emphasis on the natural world, such as shells, coconuts, scientific instruments, and fine snuff boxes decorated with semiprecious stones, to name a few. Some pieces were souvenirs they brought back with them from their European Grand Tour. At court, the highest ranking artists made pieces for these cabinets and were called "cabinet artists."

Carvers enjoyed African ivory's hard yet elastic qualities (due to fine cross-hatching at the molecular level), which meant that they could chisel out fine details without weakening or splintering their work. For instance, they could carve fine facial features such as wrinkles to make idealized portraits more believable.

Some Types of Ivory Art

Ivory carvers created designs that were inspired by other artworks, particularly

paintings and small bronzes.

Baroque artists created idealized portraits depicting the character and social standing of their subjects. Writers and philosophers such as Voltaire and Jean-Jacques Rousseau wore unusual costumes in their portraits. Notable personalities were shown in profile as per the ancient tradition of displaying portraits on coins and medals.

The Vatican often gave portraits of the pope as gifts to princes when they became Catholic. An ivory portrait of Pope

Clement XI could be an example of such a gift, although that hasn't been confirmed. Around 1710, an unknown artist in Rome carved the piece with great skill, nearly filling the whole space, right up to the edge.

David Le Marchand's early 18th-century portrait of Charles Marbury, a man we know little about, shows the same level of skill. He depicted Marbury as a fine gentleman wearing a cloak and a well-groomed wig with each curl tamed to perfection.

Biblical subjects made to bring the viewer closer to God dominate Winkler's collection. Some of those works show scenes from the Old Testament; others show the life of Christ, the saints and their martyrdom, or allegorical works showing the transience of life on earth.

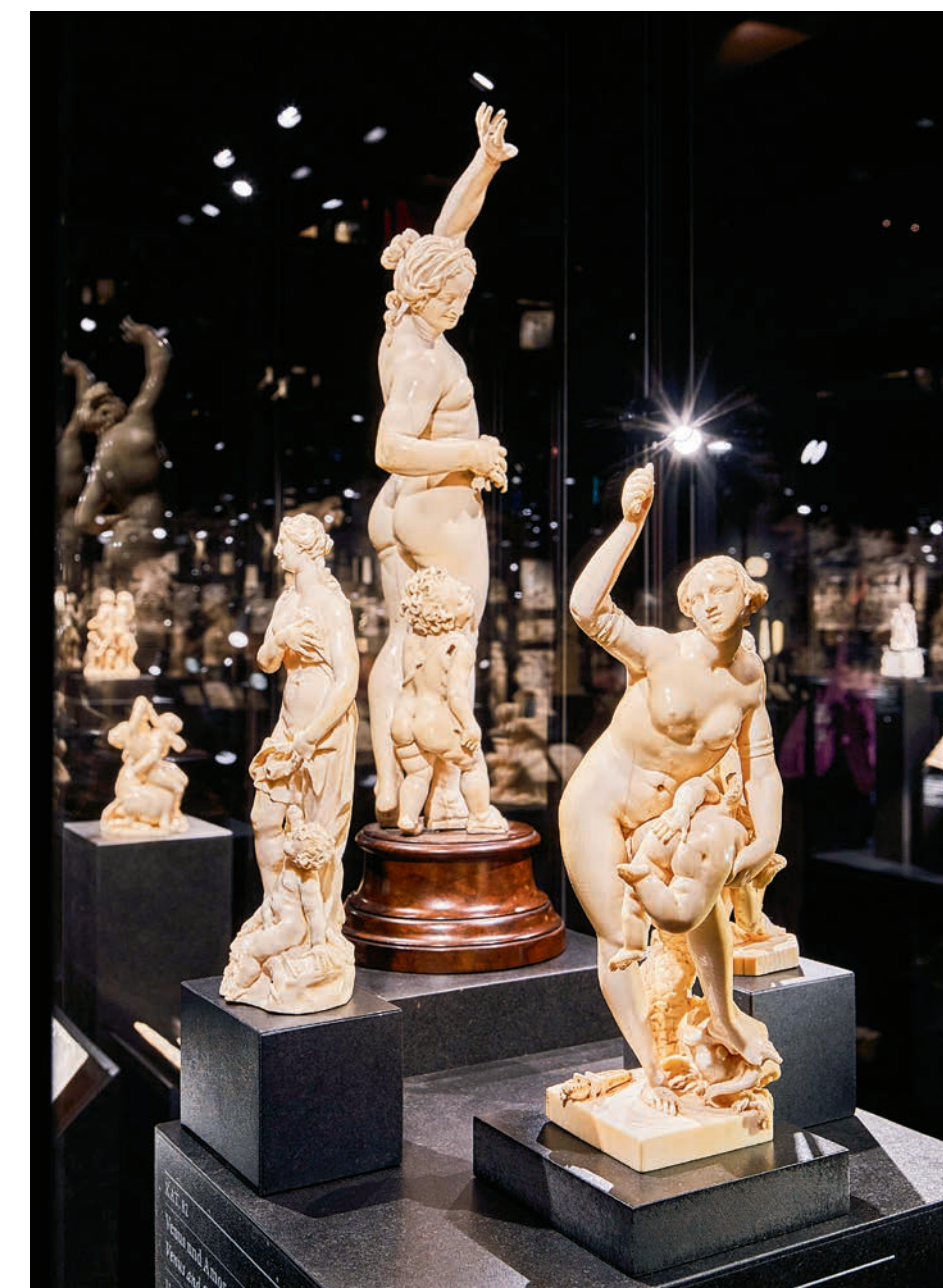
Baroque artists often depicted "Maria Immaculata" (Mary of the Immaculate Conception) atop a globe while crushing a serpent that represents evil and the original sin.

According to the exhibition catalog, the 17th-century ivory sculptural relief "St. Mary Magdalene, Penitent" echoes the composition of small private devotional works often carved in boxwood or pearwood. However, the ivory piece is unusual due to the unknown artist's use of jewelry and colored paint, gold leaf, and metal powder to adorn and honor the divine work.

In the heavenly sculptural relief titled "The Annunciation of Mary," by 18th-century French carver Jean-Antoine Belleteste, the ivory looks solid but as delicate as chalk. Belleteste must have caressed the ivory's surface with his chisel to make such a fine, transcendent work.

The "Splendid White" exhibition provides an outstanding overview of the beauty, virtuosity, and wide variety of Baroque and Rococo ivory art while also highlighting superb small sculptures in general.

Winkler carried on the Renaissance tradition of curiosity cabinets by collecting his own "cabinet of art and curiosities." Now visitors to the the Liebieghaus Sculpture Collection who see his collection can enjoy that tradition too.



Ivory sculptures from The Reiner Winkler Ivory Collection on display in the exhibition "Splendid White," at the Liebieghaus Sculpture Collection in Frankfurt, Germany.

The "Splendid White" exhibition at the Liebieghaus Sculpture Collection in Frankfurt, Germany, runs until Jan. 8, 2023. To find out more, visit Liebieghaus.de

ENTERTAINMENT

Giffords Circus Brings Laughs and Fun to the Whole Family

ANDREW DAVIES

If you are planning a visit to the South of England, may I recommend the amazing, the one and only, Giffords Circus?

I recently caught up with the show on the grounds of Sudeley Castle in Winchcombe, a historic town in the North Cotswolds, which boasts a Neolithic burial chamber called Belas Knap that was built even before the Pyramids.

These days, a much less permanent structure goes up for two weeks every spring, and the Giffords big tent draws bigger crowds. Not surprising, as the performance I saw was astonishing. I haven't laughed, cheered, clapped, and been so totally amazed in a very long time.

A Mexican 'Carpa'

The show's director is Cal McCrystal, whose impressive credentials include The Royal Shakespeare Company, The National Theatre, Sadler's Wells, and Cirque du Soleil. He writes of this show: "We are bringing performers from Mexico over to join the troupe and with them we will create a show full of skill, humour, turmoil and excitement."

An excellent seven-piece mariachi-style circus band accompanies the antics in the ring. The themed show is called "Carpa!" which is Mexican for "tent," but it is also the name of a type of theater.

There were death-defying acrobatics from Los Pachangueros from Cuba, Anna Rastova from Russia, and Randy Forgione Vega from Spain, together with unbelievably complex juggling from half-Mexican Gordon Marquez, and horse-jumping of a different kind from the Donnert family, who are the seventh and eighth generations of circus artists that began performing in Hungary back in 1886.

Ewa Veradi Donnert's quick-change act from stunning gown to stunning gown seemed to defy the laws of physics. But I thought the bravest of the brave was Elena Busnelli of The Jasters, as her fate lies entirely in her partner Giacomo Sterza's hands during their skillful but scary knife-throwing act. Mind you, she also plays the role of "Santa Maria de Guadalupe," so that might offer some protection.

The main star and founding member of the 20-year-old circus is Tweedy the Clown, who performed hilarious antics with his sidekicks, Jose and Dany Santos. Although, the real boss of their crazy proceedings had to be the unforgettable Adriana Duch Cavello, whose full stage name would blow my word count for this story.

A Circus Story

Without giving too much away, the plot



Nell Gifford in Joplin, Mo., circa 2006.

revolves around her attempts to find a match for her two beautiful daughters, Daniela and Isabella Munoz Landestoy of the Havana Circus Company, who like to spend their time dancing high in the air suspended only by their hair.

Will she? Won't she? You will have to go to find out. I can say that today's on-screen comedians do nothing for me, but Tweedy and Co. got me to laugh once again—and again, and again.

Animal welfare concerns, together with the explosion of online entertainment for kids, made it seem like taking the family out to see a visiting troupe of big-top entertainers was becoming, well, something we used to do.

It's Still Going On

Indeed, Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey shut down in 2017 after operating for 146 years, largely due to lawsuits that were brought against it by animal rights groups.

But as the saying goes, "the show must go on." And rather than declining, this performing art form has already adapted and is now amid a 40-year renaissance, with no end in sight.

That new start can be traced back to a bunch of street performers in a small town

she returned to study English at New College, Oxford. Some distraction.

But soon after graduating, she was back under the big top, this time working with the Santus Circus from France, the Circus Roncalli in Germany—which now includes 3D holographic images of horses and elephants—and the Chinese State Circus.

By 2000, she and her husband, Toti Gifford, felt that it was time to realize her dream and start a circus of their own. However, unlike when Cirque du Soleil got its start, there was no Quebec City celebration around to help them with funding.

Instead, they spent every dime they had and bought a second-hand tent, the biggest they could afford. They also built a maroon-and-gold showman's wagon to live in and began advertising for local talent.

Nell Gifford's childhood dream had been to start a circus that performed on village greens.

As the circus grew, so did her search for performers, taking her to Cuba, Russia, and across Europe—from France to Hungary and Romania. But despite its success, Giffords Circus has always been a family project and passion.

Nell once said: "Our costumes are hand-made, our animals are trained by us, our sets are painted in the barns on our farm. We burn the midnight oil to conjure new visions for the show. It's all we do. Circus is our job, our life, our love."

Legacy of Joy

Yet in 2015, Nell was diagnosed with cancer and that same year her marriage to Toti ended. But she kept on working and even appeared in the show with her daughter, Red, on horseback in 2019, not long before she passed away.

Although she was still so young, she left an incredible legacy: her circus that has brought joy to over a million people already. She also put her Oxford degree to good use and published five books about circus life and history.

If you want to know more about Nell and how she dealt with cancer, you can watch a very moving film made about her by Gem Hall at ept.ms/NellGifford.

And her childhood dream lives on as, every summer, Giffords Circus brings people together—on a village, town, or city green somewhere in the South of England—leaving them happy, mesmerized, and wondering, "How did they do that?"

Andrew Davies is a UK-based video producer and writer. His award-winning video on underage sex abuse helped Barnardos children's charity change UK law, while his documentary "Bats, Bows and Bruises: A History of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra," ran for six years on the Sky Arts Channel.

LITERATURE

'An Angel in Disguise': Strength Disguised as Weakness

KATE VIDIMOS

When we think of heroes, we think of strong, brave men like Alexander the Great or Charlemagne. Such men overcome weakness and vice and learn self-control. They face trials that test their worth, and they overcome the desolation and misery of evil.

Yet, in his short story "An Angel in Disguise," T.S. Arthur proves that such virtues are not always found in the strongest or most courageous people. Sometimes the greatest love, bravery, and strength can be found in the weakest among us.

Arthur presents crippled, little Maggie. With her mother dead and her siblings taken from her, Maggie can only lie in bed. Arthur illustrates "the loneliness, the pain, the sorrow that must be on all her coming life." Such a bitter situation might produce anger and ill temper, but she never curses her situation even though none of the neighbors will take her, "a bed-ridden child."

Yet Maggie's innocence, perseverance, and absolute helpless state do affect one neighbor, Mr. Joe Thompson. The energy

in Maggie's frail figure touches and inspires him. He sees, as G.K. Chesterton says in "Moral Education in a Secular World," that "a child is weaker than a man if it comes to a fight or to knowledge of the world; but there is nothing to show that the child is weaker in will or in desire." Despite her physical frailty, Maggie is strong inside and her inner strength shines.

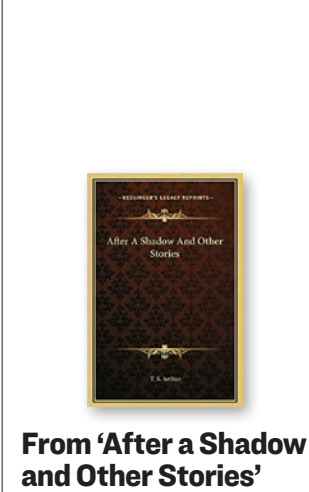
Maggie not only awakens tenderness in Mr. Thompson's heart, but she also softens Mrs. Thompson's angry heart. With a "vinegar-temper," Mrs. Thompson is not "much given to self-denial for others' good." Through a selfish, intemperate, and idle life, Mrs. Thompson has grown sore, cold, and miserable. But as Mr. Thompson brings Maggie home, he carries a light into the darkness of the desolate house.

Maggie's strength to acknowledge her weaknesses and never lose sight of hope inspires Mr. and Mrs. Thompson. Her un-failing kindness and love to both (even though Mrs. Thompson spurns and rejects her) softens their hearts. And, especially, her value as a child melts their hearts. For, Mr. Thompson says, the Savior blessed the children and blessed those who helped them.

Through Maggie's sweetness, Joe gains the courage to stand up against his wife's temper and help her live more joyfully. Through Maggie's light-filled presence, Mrs. Thompson rises out of the dark desolation of her selfish, intemperate life and begins to love and care for Maggie. Mrs. Thompson learns, as Thomas Aquinas says, that "to love is to will the good of the other."

Chesterton perfectly describes the situation in "Heretics": "Only the weak can be brave; and yet again, in practice, only those who can be brave can be trusted, in

Sometimes the greatest love, bravery, and strength can be found in the weakest among us.



From 'After a Shadow and Other Stories'

Author
By T.S. Arthur

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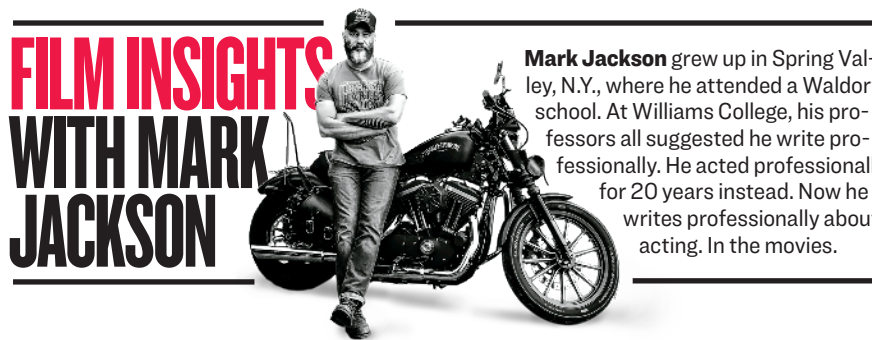
"The Sick Child," 19th century, by Karl Kung.

time of doubt, to be strong." While others around her fall victim to doubt, Maggie rises to the challenge and finds strength and bravery in her weakness. She may be crippled, but she is strong enough to endure her plight and shows this strength to those around her.

Though her body might not have the physical strength of an Alexander the Great or Charlemagne, she matches their will and determination. Like them, Maggie leads others to live better, more loving lives. She bravely faces the trials, sorrows, and pain in her life and, ultimately, proves her worth.

Like Maggie, we can be strong, never letting despair or difficulty break us. When we adopt this loving yet fearless quality, we gain that strength. We can face our trials and, despite our weaknesses, prove our worth.

Kate Vidimos is a 2020 graduate from the liberal arts college at the University of Dallas, where she received her bachelor's degree in English. She plans on pursuing all forms of storytelling (specifically film) and is currently working on finishing and illustrating a children's book.



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

Gen-X Truth Versus Gen-Y Fake Truth

MARK JACKSON

The fairly fun "While We're Young" is about the shifts in integrity and outlook between Generation X and Generation Y regarding filmmaking. More specifically, it's about the truthful documentary versus the faux, faked documentary.

Here's a generational difference: In trad (boomer) rock-climbing of the 1960s and '70s, the rules were (and still are) to figure out the challenges as you go, from the ground up. The original mountaineering ethics championed adventure, courage, facing down fear, and controlling your mind.

In the 1980s, Generation X "hang-doggers" dropped down on climbing ropes from cliff tops to pre-inspect routes and drill bolts, putting safety first. This turned the sport into safe, gymnastic fun. The ability to test and grow one's inner character through danger went missing.

Today's Generation Y often yearns for and pays tribute to a romanticized, 1970s era analog authenticity, while being profoundly, scarily (often hypocritically) in virtuosos command of all things digital (which strangely, goes hand-in-hand with an enhanced, advanced understanding of self-promotion and show business, compliments of growing up with social media). A turntable does give a truer sound than CDs and mp3s. But if you fake your footage, aren't you a liar? Not in this day and age.

2 Couples

"While We're Young" opens with dialogue from Ibsen's "The Master Builder," which is about a middle-aged architect who, while showing off to a young woman, falls off his own scaffolding and dies.

It's an apropos selection because when 40-something documentarian Josh (Ben Stiller) meets 20-something documentarian Jamie (Adam Driver), Josh tries to

show off (he's always wanted a protégé) and is yanked off the scaffolding of his orthodox, dated documentary ethics by Jamie's less-than-scrupulous "whatever" hipster zeitgeist.

Josh and Cornelia (Naomi Watts) are the last no-kids couple of their Generation X peer group. Their best friends just had a kid and are applying peer pressure. Josh and Cornelia are not having it.

Jamie and wife Darby (Amanda Seyfried) are Generation Y Bushwick (Brooklyn) hipsters who attend one of Josh's lectures and proceed to butter him up with a laid-back dinner invite that belies Gen Y's uncanny, precocious grasp of showbiz tactics and schmooze. They're so smooth that Josh never sees it coming—just like he never notices, as they spend more time together, Jamie's ever-present, surreptitious phone-filming.

Josh Buys a Hat

Josh, feeling a tingling of returning youth while hanging out with his new, Bushwickian, Ferris Bueller-like buddy, clichédly appropriates the ubiquitous hipster hat and denies his incipient arthritis.

The irony is thick, as Gen Xers Josh and Cornelia try to stay current and trendy with Gen Y's iEverything gizmos, while Gen Y Jamie and Darby's retro loft manifests their joyful romanticizing of everything Josh and Cornelia joyfully trashed in their attempt to purge themselves of all vestiges of baby-boomer-generation influence.

The hipster kids have a caged chicken, giant vinyl collection, VHS, and the ultimate coveted token of Generation X, Y, and Z wordsmith artists everywhere: a vintage electric typewriter circa the late 1960s. And Darby makes ice cream.

Josh, who's been toiling in obscurity on his own, decade-long documentary project, much like Woody Allen's character in "Crimes and Misdemeanors," is so smitten with the concept of having a protégé, he



SCOTT RUON PRODUCTIONS/A24

Josh (Ben Stiller) and Jamie (Adam Driver), in "While We're Young."

Today's Generation Y often yearns for and pays tribute to a romanticized, 1970s era analog authenticity.

doesn't notice that he's the mark in Jamie's long-con grift of trying to establish contact with Josh's famous father-in-law.

Said father-in-law, Leslie Breitbart (Charles Grodin), is himself an iconic documentary filmmaker. Guess where young Jamie ends up? Sitting beside Leslie at Leslie's New York Film Festival black-tie tribute.

Josh eventually crashes (on rollerblades) this tribute to sweatily confront Jamie's slick con job on him. As well as take issue with Jamie's even slicker, faked-footage documentary that he's finagled Leslie into blessing.

Truth Versus Fun

"While We're Young" is full of fun scenes, and the acting's fine all around. Ben Stiller's the Gen X Woody Allen, Naomi Watts is funny, and Adam Driver's considerable charisma demonstrated back in 2015, when he was fresh off the HBO series "Girls," why he wasn't a mere flash-in-the-pan talent.

Back to the ethics debate: Jamie's faked footage is a lot more fun to watch; it tells the story more engagingly. So why do we need the ethics of truthful, pedantically gathered, bona fide footage? On principle? Does anyone care anymore?

Perhaps the answer to the validity of faked footage can be found in the work of that "ahem" great philosopher and composer Bootsie Collins (former bassist of Funk Brown and the band Parliacment-Funkadelic). In his song "The Pinocchio Theory," he states, profoundly: "Don't fake the funk, or your nose'll grow."

The old guard screams "lies!" The young turks reply, "Whatever!" In 2015, which generation you belonged to, and how you liked your truth served up, was a real question. Now, in the post-truth era of Clown World, we know nobody cares anymore. Least of all the mainstream media. It'll get worse before it gets better. Better hang onto our hats.

'While We're Young'

Director:
Noah Baumbach

Starring:
Ben Stiller, Naomi Watts, Adam Driver, Amanda Seyfried, Adam Horowitz, Charles Grodin

Running Time:
1 hour, 37 minutes

Release Date:
March 27, 2015

Rated
R

★★★★★

POPCORN AND INSPIRATION

Disneynature's Winning Nature Documentary (2015)

MICHAEL CLARK

Are you among the many parents who find it difficult to hit that sweet spot when picking a movie the whole family can enjoy? Your younger preteen still favors animation, while those closer to driving age gravitate toward action and comic book extravaganzas. Your spouse likes older action and crime dramas, and you tend to be drawn toward comedies and romantic dramas.

While there is nothing in the world that could be considered a perfect compromise to this dilemma, "Monkey Kingdom" comes awfully close. Remember the time you took everyone to see "March of the Penguins," and everyone loved it? Think of this as that movie taking place on an island in the Indian Ocean instead of the South Pole.

Although it releases only one movie per year (always close to Earth Day), the Disney offshoot documentary studio, Disney-nature, always delivers the goods. Geared toward children and families, these films can be appreciated, if not thoroughly enjoyed, by anyone. "Monkey Kingdom" is the eighth such production in the series and is arguably the most satisfying of the bunch so far.

As with the other projects, "Monkey Kingdom" is a mix of the IMAX-produced nature flicks from the 1990s and virtually every "National Geographic" TV special. The photography is beyond impeccable, and the narration here by Tina Fey is at once warm, edgy, droll, and clever, lending the story an unexpected but welcomed bite.

Opening the movie with the theme from "The Monkees" TV show also lets us know that this isn't going to be your garden-variety isaid-and-furrow-browed nature documentary.

Only in Sri Lanka

Shot over a span of several years, the film's centerpiece is a band of toque macaque monkeys, a semi-endangered species that exists solely on the southeastern island of Polonnaruwa in Sri Lanka, in the Indian Ocean.

Reddish brown in color, the macaques are much smaller than chimpanzees, and they more resemble lemurs than their simian cousins. Cute as all get-out and eminently camera-friendly, the macaques tend to set up shop in a single location in troops numbering anywhere from 10 to 40 members.

The film has comedy, drama, romance, action, slapstick, thrills, and tragedy.

As monkeys go, the macaques are among the most intelligent in the world. And, as we soon find out, they observe a strict pecking order that could easily be compared to that of any centuries-old human monarchy.

There is an alpha male leader that has the final say in everything, multiple female underlings (referred to here as the "sisterhood"), and a "political guard" consisting of males that act as soldiers. Below this hierarchy is the remainder of the troop, which could rightfully be labeled as peasants.

Although the peasants don't "serve" the royalty as such, they are generally treated as second-class citizens. They eat after the upper class, which sometimes means not at all, and they must remain silent and nonreactive when taking abuse from the top-tier offspring

that can run roughshod without any fear of retribution or reprisal. This might seem cruel, but it's better than the alternative of going solo and facing a plethora of unknown dangers outside the camp.

In a move that initially feels too precious, the filmmakers decide to name a handful of the principal monkeys, which in the long run was a wise choice. The lead character is a plucky peasant dubbed Maya, identified by Fey as the heroine of the story. Maya understands her place, but once she gives birth to son Kip, she realizes that the only way to improve his life is by taking the big chance of branching out into the wild.

Not All Fun and Games

Although most of the film (both the narrative and the visuals) falls squarely into the "adorable" category, a fair amount does not; as a result, the story runs the gamut of emotions and virtually every cinematic genre. There is comedy, drama, romance, action, slapstick, thrills, tragedy, and as much violence as a "G" rating will allow.

Spoiler alert: For concerned parents, there are two monkey deaths depicted but both are handled with the utmost care, with visuals kept to a bare minimum. Even with this thoughtful approach, it's still possible, if not likely, that toddlers will find it upsetting.

It would be recommended to counsel children younger than 7 or 8 prior to and after seeing the film. Including death in a non-animated, Disney-produced, family movie is a huge gamble. But on the upside, it also goes far in providing the story palpable "real-life" legitimacy.

For Mark Linfield and his co-director Alastair Fothergill, "Monkey Kingdom" marks career highs for both on every level.



Group of toque macaque monkeys in Sri Lanka featured in "Monkey Kingdom."

Each has worked on multiple Disney-nature films before, yet nothing they've done up to this point matches "Monkey Kingdom" from educational, artistic, and most importantly, entertainment perspectives.

Originally from Washington, D.C., Michael Clark has provided film content to over 30 print and online media outlets. He co-founded the Atlanta Film Critics Circle in 2017 and is a weekly contributor to the Shamon Burke Show on FloridaManRadio.com. Since 1995, Mr. Clark has written over 4,000 movie reviews and film-related articles. He favors dark comedy, thrillers, and documentaries.

'Monkey Kingdom'

Director:
Mark Linfield, Alastair Fothergill

Running Time:
1 hour, 22 minutes

MPAA Rating:
G

Release Date:
April 17, 2015

★★★★★



TRADITIONAL CULTURE

Our Problem With That Very Real Place, Hell

JAMES SALE

Does hell really exist? Jordan B. Peterson in a recent address to Hillsdale College said that “if you don’t believe in hell, then you haven’t thought about it enough!”

I am reminded of that wonderful moment in Christopher Marlowe’s play “Doctor Faustus” where Faustus asks Mephistopheles why, since he is a devil, he isn’t in hell. Mephistopheles replies,

“Why, this is hell, nor am I out of it: Think’st thou that I, that saw the face of God, And tasted the eternal joys of heaven, Am not tormented with ten thousand hells, In being depriv’d of everlasting bliss?”

One implication of this remark is that hell as a place isn’t somewhere only in the putative afterlife, but is already here on earth; that may or may not be what Jordan B. Peterson meant. But certainly, we can easily see hell all around us whether we consider the obvious—the war in Ukraine and the hell it is unleashing upon its people—or domestically, if we consider the marriage

of Johnny Depp and Amber Heard. Forget who is right or wrong temporarily; just ask how many other less famous people have such tumultuous marriages and relationships that are as destructive as these two? Quite a lot, I think. It’s pure hell.

Hell is already on earth, but we knew that, didn’t we? Is it also in the afterlife, too? Indeed, is there an afterlife? There is plenty of evidence to suggest that there is.

Hell in the Afterlife
From the earliest times, peoples have affirmed hell’s existence. Right now, I have on my desk in front of me the Penguin Classic “Poems of Heaven and Hell From Ancient Mesopotamia” (translated by N.K. Sandars):

“There stands a house under the mountain of the world, a road runs down down, the mountain covers it And no man knows the way. It is a house that binds bad men with ropes and clumps them into a narrow space. It is a house that separates the wicked from the good ...”

The ancient Egyptians, too, certainly believed in hell. Those who fail to gain the paradise of The Field of Rushes find them-

“Torment of St. Anthony,” circa 1515–1520, by Giovanni Girolamo Savoldo. Oil on panel. Putnam Foundation, Timken Museum of Art, San Diego.

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From the earliest times, peoples have affirmed hell’s existence.

selves “subjected to knives and swords and to the fire of hell, often kindled by fire-spitting snakes,” as “The Oxford Essential Guide to Egyptian Mythology” puts it.

And, of course, once we come to the ancient Greeks, we find some of the most potent and memorable accounts of hell in tales of Herakles, Orpheus, and Odysseus, to mention only three.

But we need not list any further mythologies or religions, for as Patrick Harpur in “A Complete Guide to the Soul” more generally observed: “Even if we are not specifically religious we can all still resonate with the notion that there is some part of us which should not be sold, betrayed or lost at any cost.” To be lost! Heck, even the most “compassionate” of religions, Buddhism, has a “hellish” feature: What is reincarnation but an endless cycle of punishment until one escapes the cycle through enlightenment, if one ever does so, for of course one can also reincarnate into a deeper hell!

But secondly, a completely different strand of evidence for the afterlife is that of Near Death Experiences (NDEs), which came to prominence in the 1970s with the work of Raymond Moody. The most compelling book on this topic I have read is “Proof of Heaven: A Neurosurgeon’s Jour-

LITERATURE

A Couple of Kings’ Couplets: How Shakespeare Uses Meter and Rhyme in ‘King Lear’



“Cordelia Championed by the Earl of Kent” from Shakespeare’s “King Lear,” Act I, Scene I, circa 1770s, by unknown artist. Oil on canvas. Yale Center for British Art, Yale University.

GIDEON RAPPAPORT

Because we are incarnate beings, our spirits receive meaning through our bodies and their physical senses. If we don’t see (or hear or taste or smell or feel) it, we don’t believe it. We don’t even get it. To be effective, any work of art must convey meaning in some form.

Poetry too—at least good poetry—must unite the poet’s idea or notion or insight with a form in which it can be effectively conveyed. When that happens, we empathically experience meaning. Looking carefully into our own experience of a passage of good poetry, we can sometimes discern the bones and muscles and tendons that make an effective poetic utterance.

In Shakespeare’s plays, the default form is blank verse, that is, unrhymed iambic pentameter lines (five iambs—ba-BUM—per line). When Shakespeare wants to make a particularly formal point, he has his characters speak in rhymed couplets—every two lines rhyming. The general effect of this form is a sense of order, balance, and stability.

By the power of rhyme, the second line of any couplet gives a sense of completeness and closure to what is expressed in the first line. Building on that expectation, Shakespeare works wonders for our experience of meaning.

Making Sense of ‘King Lear’

Let’s take an example from “King Lear,” the tragedy of a king who tries to impose his arrogant will upon his daughters, his country, nature, and the gods. The English King Lear ends up having to suffer the loss of everything in order to be purged, healed, and made able to love.

Here is the King of France, announcing that he is taking King Lear’s rejected youngest daughter as his queen:

Gods, gods! ’tis strange that from their cold’st neglect My love should kindle to inflam’d respect. Thy dow’rless daughter, King, thrown to my chance, Is queen of us, of ours, and our fair France:



“The Fall of the Rebel Angels,” circa 1554, by Frans Floris I. Oil on panel. Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp, in Antwerp, Belgium.



“Christ’s Descent Into Hell,” 16th century, by a follower of Hieronymus Bosch. Oil on wood. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



“The Harrowing of Hell,” between 1586 and 1638, by Jacob van Swanenburgh. Oil on copper.

ney Into the Afterlife” by Dr. Eben Alexander, whose experience Dr. Moody himself described as “the most astounding [he] had heard in more than four decades of studying this phenomenon. ... The extraordinary circumstances of his illness and his impeccable credentials make it very hard to formulate a mundane explanation for his case.”

Basically, Alexander had bacterial meningitis and seemed to be dead for some eight days. Naturally, what he saw and how he saw it have been disputed, but the fact is, this is not a sole testimony. There are hundreds and thousands of people experiencing these out-of-the-body moments, being technically dead and yet gaining insight or information that seems impossible to acquire through any naturalistic means.

Indeed, The Epoch Times has just published an incredible article about the NDE of Tricia Barker, of whose experiences Dr. Jan Holden remarks: “Any material explanation that’s been attempted doesn’t account for some of the things that happen in NDEs.”

Hell and Our Impudence

Why mention, then, this aspect of mortal existence, a heaven or hell beyond our individual deaths? Because it seems to me that the willpower of the West is weakening: We are all for heaven, we all want that, for we continue to believe that surely heaven is “there.” But hell? No way, that’s not compatible with a loving God, and a “loving” God wouldn’t do this and wouldn’t do that, because—what?—because we know better!

We know better than God what he would or wouldn’t do. We say that it would be unfair to put babies in hell because they

haven’t been baptized; it would be unfair to put pagans in hell because they hadn’t heard of Christianity; it would be unfair to condemn anybody, really, because they had reasons for doing what they were doing and it seemed right to them at the time. And so we generate lists of objections to the afterlife, which are entirely rational in that they are intellectual arguments, but these arguments always ignore the pervasive testimonies of human experiences.

It’s like arguing that the Declaration of



Illuminated manuscript of Lucifer torturing souls in hell from “The Very Rich Hours of the Duke of Berry” circa 1411–1416, by the Limbourg brothers. Tempera on vellum. Condé Museum, in Chantilly, France.

Independence cannot have happened in 1776 because we cannot produce a double-blind experiment to demonstrate it.

And the thing is, it’s not just atheists and secularists who are undermining the concept of hell—they simply mock it. But Christians themselves are getting into the act—the act of undermining not just a Christian belief, but also a belief (as I have outlined) endemic to human societies throughout the ages: that hell exists, that hell is real.

Undermining Reality

The fine theologian Professor Keith Ward, for example, who has written many powerful apologetics for Christianity, argues in his book “Re-Thinking Christianity” for universalism, the belief that everybody gets saved and no one is condemned.

To justify this belief, he invokes various biblical texts. These generally run along these lines: Since God is all-powerful and wills only good, then everyone must conform to his will; ergo, nobody can be culpable because who can resist his will?

But this argument is part of that process by which human reasoning—logical reasoning—again ignores or replaces both revelation and human experience; for whatever else they are, the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim religions are historical religions. They are based on testimonies of what actually happened.

For me personally, the most terrifying line in the Bible that unmistakably demarcates the existence of hell is the almost throwaway remark that Christ makes when he says of Judas Iscariot: “It would have been good for that man if he had not been born” (Matthew 26 v.24). Better that he had not been born?

Does that really sound as if there is no hell, even if the speaker is the Christ of love and mercy? I think not.

All the great traditions from time immemorial have testified to the possibility of losing one’s soul and its dreadful consequences. Here “consequences” is exactly the right word, because it is the avoidance of consequences that is at the root of why the modern world does not wish to accept this unpleasant reality or prospect. I say unpleasant but, of course, as Dorothy L. Sayers observed, “Hell is the enjoyment of your own way forever.”

People who go to hell choose to; it’s what they want. It’s their true heart’s desire, so it’s not as if we have to think about it as something terrible that a vengeful God imposes on us or them. In a sense, we repay ourselves for our own sins; or as a traditional Buddhist aphorism puts it: “You will not be punished for your anger. You’ll be punished by your anger.”

To be clear, then, if you believe in the freedom of the human will and in God, it follows that there is a possibility of human beings turning away from God, eternally away. Hence, the logic of hell.

Actually, the concept of hell is unpopular to the exact degree that freedom of the will is unpopular: Today, we all want to be—what?—victims. In other words, the abolition of the concept of hell is no more, no less, than our attempt to avoid any responsibility for our actions; we wish to assert all our rights, surely, we do, but our responsibilities? Their consequences? There’s the modern rub. We don’t like them!

The Bible quote is from the New American Standard version.

Not all the dukes of wat’rish Burgundy Can buy this unpriz’d precious maid of me.

But them farewells, Cordelia, though unkind:

Thou lovest here, a better where to find.

The King of France is doing a noble, good, and wise thing, and he is doing it formally. Receiving no dowry, he acknowledges and embraces the virtuous daughter of King Lear and formally proclaims her to be his wife and Queen of France. The official proclamation of a royal betrothal is made in the form of majestic rhymed couplets.

What is King Lear’s response? Lear has been acting extremely foolishly and willfully. He has just announced that he is going to divide up his kingdom (always a bad sign to Shakespeare’s audience). After basking in the false flattery of his evil daughters and rejecting the simple honesty of his one virtuous daughter, Cordelia, he disowns her and reduces her dowry to nothing. He is angry. His ego is at war with nature, with truth, with his favorite daughter, and with himself, and he will have to go through almost unbearable suffering to be purged of the sins he is committing here.

But he is a king, who must respond officially to the King of France. Here is what he says:

Thou hast her, France: let her be thine; for we Have no such daughter, nor shall ever see That face of her again. [To Cordelia] Herefore be gone, Without our grace, our love, our benison.

“Benison” means blessing. Lear’s response ought to be formal and stately, as befits a king officially and publicly bestowing his daughter on another king. Instead, because Lear is in a rage, we experience his speech as chaotic, especially compared to the previous lines of France, in part because, technically speaking, he has gone from end-stopped lines to enjambed lines. That means from lines with grammatical phrases that end where the metrical lines end, to lines in which phrases end in the middle of the verse line and new phrases don’t stop at the end of the line but wrap around onto the next. France’s order is followed by Lear’s chaos. The rhymed couplets have been exploded.

But wait. Look at the last words of Lear’s lines: we/see, gone/benison. Couplets! Disguised, mangled, troubled, disordered, but couplets nonetheless. What has Shakespeare done?

He has incarnated the mentalities of the two kings within the very form of the verse. France’s mind is in order and he is saying what is good, right, and noble. To convey



Dramatic opening scene from Shakespeare’s “King Lear,” where Cordelia (standing at the center of the composition) has just been renounced by her father, the king, “King Lear,” Act I, Scene I, 1898, by Edwin Austin Abbey. Oil on canvas. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

that, Shakespeare has him speak in clear, simple, balanced rhymed couplets—lines end-stopped, syntax smooth.

Lear’s mind is at war with itself, and so his speech is at war with itself. He must speak in rhymed couplets because he is a king answering a king. And he does. But his couplets are enjambed, disjointed, conveying the disjointed chaos and self-battling passions within his mind. Rational France speaks in ordered couplets. Raging Lear is at war with harmonious form.

As one’s body may be in perfect health

when one’s mind is filled with fear or anger or frustration, so a king’s rhymed couplets may be superficially present even as their mangled form expresses mental and moral disorder in the speaker.

Gideon Rappaport has a Ph.D. in English and American Literature with specialization in Shakespeare. He has taught literature, writing, and Shakespeare at all levels and works as a theatrical dramatist. He podcasts at AppreciatingShakespeare. BuzzSprout.com

FILM

Top 5 World War II Movies: Of God, Country, Sacrifice, and Freedom

MICHAEL CLARK

As our country gets further away from World War II, the nation's collective memory of its importance to our history becomes more ephemeral with each subsequent generation. Hopefully, the following films, representing the best of World War II films, will be embraced by those who wish to find out about, or to be reminded of, what giving, sacrifice, and patriotism is all about.

'Saving Private Ryan' (1998)

Easily the finest example of historical fiction ever committed to film, screenwriter Robert Rodat and director Steven Spielberg's awe-inspiring epic is everything that modern-day America needs to know about "the Greatest Generation."

Immediately after the D-Day landing at Normandy, Capt. John Miller (Tom Hanks) and seven other soldiers are sent on a mission to find Pvt. James Ryan (Matt Damon) whose three brothers were recently killed in action. The story culminates in the defense of a bridge, which is equally as visceral (if not more so) than the opening salvo.

The winner of five Academy Awards (including Best Director), the film—in the most controversial Oscar ceremony in history—lost the top prize to "Shakespeare in Love," one of, if not the most overrated Best Picture winners in history. To date, "Saving Private Ryan" is just one of only three movies to win the PGA (producers), DGA (directors), Golden Globe, and Best Director Oscar without also winning Best Picture.

'Casablanca' (1942)

Depicting little actual "war," director Michael Curtiz's iconic melodramatic mystery was one of the few movies taking place during World War II that was produced when the war had just started and the outcome unknowable. Based on the unproduced stage play "Everybody Comes to Rick's," it puts equal emphasis on espionage and the toll that events such as these often take on romance.

Humphrey Bogart stars as Rick, whose life as a Moroccan club owner gets turned



(L-R) Tom Hanks, Matt Damon, and Edward Burns in "Saving Private Ryan."

upside down with the arrival of his former lover Ilsa (Ingrid Bergman) and her husband Victor (Paul Henreid), a Czech resistance officer. Alliances and allegiances are tested, and the fate of all involved lies in the hands of Capt. Renault (Claude Rains), a French police officer.

The influence of "Casablanca" cannot be overstated. From the theme song ("As Time Goes By") to the volumes of quotable dialogue and the generations of filmmakers it inspired, it is (almost) without peer.

'Patton' (1970)

The then relatively unknown co-writer Francis Ford Coppola, in tandem with director Franklin J. Schaffner ("Planet of the Apes," "Papillon"), pulled off the mighty feat of crafting an American New Wave quasi-anti-war movie wrapped in traditional Hollywood packaging.

As the title character, George C. Scott (who later refused to accept his Best Actor Oscar) thoroughly committed to the role of a driven and obsessed soldier. He played Patton as one who believed he had reincarnated, spouted profanity while quoting scripture, and was

utterly unflappable in the face of battle.

Credit goes to all involved for not making this a fawning, rose-colored-glasses, lionizing bio-flick. Rather it's a few warts-and-all years in the life of one of the most revered and complicated patriots in American military history. In addition to Scott's, the movie won six more Academy Awards including Screenplay, Director, and Picture.

Director Steven Spielberg's awe-inspiring epic is everything modern-day America needs to know about 'the Greatest Generation.'

'The Bridge on the River Kwai' (1957)

Adapted from the 1952 French novel of the same name by Pierre Boulle (also, the original "credited" screenwriter), director David Lean's landmark epic is one of only a few

movies of its kind ("Stalag 17," "The Great Escape," and "Von Ryan's Express" being the notable others) presented from the perspective of Allied POWs.

Sir Alec Guinness won his only Oscar for playing Col. Nicholson, a by-the-book, stiff-upper-lipped British officer. When ordered by the Japanese army to instruct his men to build a bridge with what was effectively slave labor in order to harm his and other countries' forces, the colonel flatly refused.

After coming up short in a long battle of wills, Nicholson reluctantly succumbs to his handlers, oversees the construction of the bridge, and takes great pride in the end result. What Nicholson hasn't counted on and cannot foresee is the late arrival of his fellow countryman (Jack Hawkins) and an American counterpart (William Holden) determined to upset the apple cart.

'Dunkirk' (2017)

If you've never heard of Dunkirk (in France) or the World War II battle that took place there, don't feel uninformed. It happened almost 18 months before the United States joined the hostilities in earnest, and it was technically a huge setback for the Allied forces, much in the same manner that Apollo 13 was a failed mission to the moon.

What the movie puts across in spades is that eluding defeat (or capture or death) is often more difficult and, yes, sometimes more honorable than achieving victory.

Presenting action from the overlapping and interwoven perspectives of sea, land, and air, the three principal plot lines take place in the space of one hour, one day, and one week—which is designed to and succeeds in disorienting the viewer for the duration.

It remains the shortest (106 minutes) movie of writer and director Christopher Nolan's career. He cleverly worked in a similar narrative style to that which he previously employed to brilliant effect in both "Inception" and "Interstellar."

Originally from Washington, D.C., Michael Clark has provided film content to over 30 print and online media outlets. He co-founded the Atlanta Film Critics Circle in 2017 and is a weekly contributor to the Shannon Burke Show on FloridaManRadio.com. Since 1995, Mr. Clark has written over 4,000 movie reviews and film-related articles. He favors dark comedy, thrillers, and documentaries.



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