

THE EPOCH TIMES

# ARTS & CULTURE

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## Horror, Heroism, and a Woman Named Heda

*The story of one Czechoslovakian woman who endured the Nazi and Soviet regimes*

JEFF MINICK

The last hundred years have brought humanity the bitter fruits of totalitarian regimes. Soviet Russia, Nazi Germany, Communist China, Cambodia, Cuba, and so many other places have served—and some still serve—as the killing grounds of raw ideology. Dachau, Auschwitz, and the Gulag are names known to most of us, but for every one of these death camps are a thousand more, many known only to the executed and their executioners.

These same regimes murdered not only the flesh but also the souls of those they controlled. They degraded aspiration and human kindness. They replaced love of God, custom, and culture with utter subservience to the state and its warped dogmas. In many instances, for example, ordinary people became spies, reporting neighbors and even family members to the state for what they regarded as treachery or a lack of loyalty.

**Many have endured brutal circumstances and lived to bear witness to totalitarian savagery.**

A body of literature, still growing, has long sounded the warning about these horrendous depredations and the thugs who committed them. Anne Frank, Elie Wiesel, and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn are only three of the writers whose works have recorded massacres, arrests, torture, and the suppression of liberties and rights. Behind them stand many others who endured these brutal circumstances and lived to bear witness to totalitarian savagery.

*Continued on Page 4*



Heda Kovaly is remembered for her journal, "Under a Cruel Star: A Life in Prague 1941-1968."



A monument to Jan Hus in Old Town Square, Prague. During the 1968 Prague revolt, Heda Kovaly passed this statue of the reformer who was executed during the Protestant Reformation. At the base of the statue are the words "Truth Prevails." Kovaly thought: "Truth alone does not prevail. When it clashes with power, truth often loses. It prevails only when people are strong enough to defend it."



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Stalag XVII-B Monument in Andersonville, Ga. Erected by American POWs in 1989 in honor of all Americans held prisoner of war in a German prison camp known as Stalag XVII-B in Krems, Austria, 1943-1945. It's also in memory of all Americans held as POWs in the European theater in World War II.

### BOOK REVIEW

## A Story of Survival From the Great Depression Through World War II

DUSTIN BASS

There is no shortage of books on World War II, due primarily to the fact that there is no shortage of great World War II stories. The story of Harold Frank is one of those great stories.

Mark Hager's book "The Last of the 357th Infantry: Harold Frank's WWII Story of Faith and Courage" is a thorough biography of the common man turned hero. In the author's foreword, he makes clear his intention of discussing Frank's childhood. This was a wise decision as including Frank's upbringing weaves seamlessly into the theme of Frank's story. As Hager wrote, "Enduring hardships, an intense work ethic, family support, and the love of God shaped him to be a combat soldier and the man he is today."

**A Child of the Great Depression**  
Frank was a child of the Great Depression, growing up in a small North Carolina town. Living on a farm and in poverty, he was raised by parents (along with several relatives) who understood the means to survival.

The author takes the reader through the self-help methods of hog slaughtering and cleaning, and making opossum stew and mud turtle soup. As the author writes, "Many days during the 1930s, mud turtle, opossum, and wild birds provided the only meat that kept starvation at bay."

Hager describes a life that no one would want, but he also describes skills that everyone should have. In a way, this book is a how-to guide on survival. Of course, growing plants and vegetables is part of that survival, but the family instilled a bit of necessary savagery in their children. Killing for food was a must, although it is now an art woefully lost on much of modern society. Frank began with a homemade slingshot and then graduated to the rifle. Interestingly, it was the slingshot more than the rifle that proved providential later in Frank's life.

The author utilizes the background of the Great Depression to establish Frank's character, demonstrating that while it was his parents who developed his character traits, it was hardships that calcified them.

**A Theme of Survival**  
Hager follows the theme of survival mentality rather seamlessly. Authors can often move too quickly into the primary topic of the book, which in this case would be the war.

The author does the subject justice by spending a sufficient amount of time on Frank's pre-war years to establish what will come. For fiction genres, it is called character development. Though this book is a biography, the author does a fine job of showing rather than telling.

When Frank joins the Army and then engages in combat shortly after the D-Day invasion on June 6, 1944, his survival skills, proficiency with his rifle (the

Browning Automatic Rifle), and his dependency on his faith and prayer come through clearly.

The story's action sequences are vivid, and the author pays close attention to the detail describing the soldiers' restlessness and constant anxiety. Hager also utilizes the countless hours he spent with Frank to quote commanding officers, fellow soldiers, and Frank himself.

The story of survival climaxes with Frank's capture by German soldiers. His trials and suffering while a POW are unthinkable. Hager goes into horrifying detail about Frank's and other POWs' treatment by German soldiers.

From the overcrowded train ride to being sent to the Stalag IV B war prison, to surviving forced marches, and to escaping prison only to be caught later, "The Last of the 357th Infantry" provides the reader with an in-depth look at how American prisoners were treated by the Nazis. There are also moments of kindness shown by some Germans that demonstrate how humanity can rise, at least slightly, above inhumanity.

### A Chance Meeting

At the end of the book, Hager describes how he met Harold Frank and how their friendship blossomed. Frank had never spoken in detail about his war experiences, even to his wife, though she implored him to.

Perhaps age or simply the right person asking (a fellow veteran) caused Frank to divulge his war story. Truly, it is one worth telling and worth reading.

Hager proves that there are many great stories still to be told. But he also proves something even more important, and that is the relationship that develops from listening and then retelling the story: Hager discusses just how much his life has benefited from meeting and spending time with Frank.

"The Last of the 357th Infantry" is a fascinating story of a man's constant battle for survival. The book is also about the principles of perseverance, courage, faith, and friendship. Readers interested in the Great Depression and World War II as understood from an individual's experience should consider "The Last of the 357th Infantry."

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.



**'The Last of the 357th Infantry: Harold Frank's WWII Story of Faith and Courage'**

Author  
Mark Hager  
Publisher  
Regnery History,  
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Hardcover  
324 pages

### BOOK REVIEW

## Wise Words from a Horse Whisperer

ANITA L. SHERMAN

One of my friends here in Virginia, Shari Goodwin, owns several horses. As a horse-woman of more than 25 years, she has reinvented herself as a business strategist, author, coach, and mentor, using her four-footed friends to show others about learning to trust, having confidence, taking risks, and living more meaningfully.

Several years ago, she purchased a former racehorse, Lemon Squeeze. Perhaps he was slated for a sad future, but she rescued him and he's now one of her stars in the arena. She saw in him what others weren't seeing, and it paid off.

### In Pursuit of Greatness

In Grant Gollither's "Think Like a Horse," there are many similar moments when he sees a horse in the rough but still radiating light. Over the years, he's gotten better and more astute at picking up a horse from a kill pen, sensing the extraordinary life trapped in a cruel fate. He's seldom wrong.

Often working with traumatized or abused horses, he gets them to calm down, accept a saddle and eventually a rider, and does it without the use of force. Over the decades, he has garnered the accolade of "horse whisperer," and his talents have been sought out as a trainer.

The more he's around and works with horses, the more he finds that he's learning as much from them as he is trying to impart. Invaluable lessons about communication, boundaries, trust, fairness, and heart work for horses and, in turn, affect him.

Why not apply all of this horse-sense training to humans?

Today, Fortune 500 executives, celebrities, federal judges, professional coaches, and families flock to Wyoming every year hoping to reap the benefits of his transformational sessions. Gollither is the owner of historic Diamond Cross Ranch in Jackson Hole. Some observe from the other side of the fence, watching him train. Others engage hands-on in the ring. The experience is like no other. Some firms send their management teams multiple times.

Gollither is often told by executives that when they watch him work with the horses (or have a chance to work directly with a horse), they see glimpses of their own leadership style. Perhaps they are too impatient with their team. Perhaps they emphasize the negative too much. Perhaps they are overly critical and their behavior doesn't elicit trust.

One executive took it very personally recognizing that his relationship with his son could be dramatically improved. "As he observed the transformation of the unruly colt, he wondered what it would be like to base his relationship with his son on these principles. To trust first. To praise the good and not be drawn into the drama when things went bad. To remain calm, confident and consistent."

### Heroic Horse Sense

Being a "horse whisperer" is often seen as possessing some magical powers. It was an Irish horseman, Daniel "Horse-Whisperer" Sullivan, in the 19th century, who made a name for himself in England by rehabilitating horses—difficult horses that had become vicious and intractable from trauma or abuse. The term has its origins with him.

Author Grant Gollither has developed potent "horse whispering" skills. He's now using them for a surprising purpose.



DIAMOND CROSS RANCH

There are many lessons to be learned from this unconventional cowboy.

Gollither, while he gladly accepts the reference, hasn't seen anything particularly mysterious about his approach. His lessons are fundamental and ageless, and they work for horses and humans. It's a powerful tool for reinventing relationships; there is so much to be learned and applied to one's daily life.

Gollither has made a legacy of his innate ability to connect with horses—to see beyond their rough edges, matted coats, wild eyes, and laid-back ears—and see a strong, resilient spirit waiting to be tapped, waiting to trust, and choosing to be a cooperative partner.

### Great Reading Experience

In "Think Like a Horse" each chapter is short, crisp, written with an obvious caring heart, and eloquently introduced by a stunning photo and an insightful quote from the likes of Herman Melville, Peter Drucker, and Lao Tzu, among others.

The chapters read easily, each describing an event with a particular horse and how that experience enriched his knowledge of both the horse and himself. Just as he does with his animals, Gollither consistently reinforces his lessons in the book through repetition. It works well as a literary tool—to be reminded of his insightful snippets—be-

cause, no doubt as you are reading, you'll pause and think to yourself: "That makes good sense. I want to remember that."

Respect comes before friendship. Make the right thing easy and the wrong thing difficult, and give them the freedom to choose.

Honor the slightest try and the smallest change.

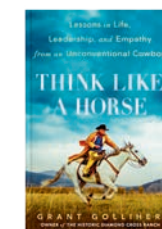
Be slow to take and quick to give. Always quit on a good note. Don't mistake kindness for weakness. Forgiveness is a choice—but not always an easy one.

And the list goes on. Each of these powerful phrases that Gollither has created is the result of learning from and sharing stories about the many horses he has encountered.

Sharing those stories and applying them to humanity is his life's work.

It doesn't matter if you aren't a horse lover. There are many lessons to be learned from this unconventional cowboy who has much to share about how we can better relate to one another.

Anita L. Sherman is an award-winning journalist who has more than 20 years of experience as a writer and editor for local papers and regional publications in Virginia. She now works as a freelance writer and is working on her first novel. She is the mother of three grown children and grandmother to four, and she resides in Warrenton, Va. Anita can be reached at anitajusturite@gmail.com



**'Think Like a Horse: Lessons in Life, Leadership, and Empathy From an Unconventional Cowboy'**

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Grant Gollither  
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The Epoch Times takes a look at the whole story, from

the origins of the chaos to the police's use of force against protesters, in an effort to present an objective view of what truly transpired.

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Czechoslovakian Communist Party activists carry red hammer and sickle flags to a rally in downtown Prague on Feb. 28, 1948. Communists called the rally to prove their victory in the political coup d'état which brought them to power for more than 41 years.

# Horror, Heroism, and a Woman Named Heda

The story of one Czechoslovakian woman who endured the Nazi and Soviet regimes

Continued from Page 1

Among these is Heda Margolius Kovaly (1919–2010).

**A Voice New to Me**  
Late in July, a friend recommended Kovaly's "Under a Cruel Star: A Life in Prague 1941–1968," which her daughter, recently graduated from college, had recommended to her. The library surprised me by owning a copy of this memoir; the book itself stunned me.

I tore through "Under a Cruel Star" in less than two days, reading on breaks from my work and late into the night. In some ways,

it's an easy read. The book is relatively short, Kovaly knows how to keep her story flowing, and there is plenty of suspense, though not the sort we find in the fast-paced thrillers of today.

But the speed with which I read Kovaly had little to do with these incentives. Instead, the message of "Under a Cruel Star" motivated me, a message from the past sent into the present, like a note in a bottle washed ashore by the sea. It gripped me and drove me forward.

**Years of Fear and Terror**

The first page of these reminiscences drops

us straight into the fall of 1942 and Prague's Exposition Hall, where the Nazis had begun the mass deportation of Jews like Kovaly and where the inside of the hall was "like a medieval madhouse." Taken to Lodz in Poland, she and others were thrown into decrepit quarters in a ghetto, where the starving inhabitants lived like animals.

Later Kovaly was assigned work in a brickyard, where after an outburst of complaints from her, which normally might have led to her death, her boss sat her down in a darkened room and said, "Tell me." The man was obviously aware of the meager rations and illnesses of the prisoners, but he listened in silence as she related the many horrors she has witnessed: the deaths, the murders of pregnant girls and elderly men, the gas chambers. At the end of her long, quiet litany of killing and abuse, the boss remained sitting when she left him, his head in his hands. "The man lived in Nazi Germany," she wrote, "and had daily contact with a concentration camp and its inmates, yet he knew nothing. I am quite sure he did not."

After Kovaly and some friends escaped while the Germans were marching their prisoners away from the approaching Russians, and after many close calls, she made her way back to Prague. Here, friend after friend, terrified of discovery, refused her shelter and help. Finally, a member of the underground contacted her, and she was rescued.

But only from the Nazis. Kovaly devotes the rest of her memoir to the swift rise of communism in Czechoslovakia, backed by the Soviet Union, and the apparent end of any hope of freedom. Rudolf, the man she had long loved and whom she married after the war, joined the party and convinced her to do so as well. He was an idealist, believing that communism would deliver peace, prosperity, and human brotherhood. Here, Kovaly records a sentiment that today would likely be

considered politically incorrect:

That I myself did not succumb to the lure of ideology was certainly not because I was smarter than Rudolf but because I was a woman, a being much closer to reality and the basic things of life than he was. ... Rudolf could decide on the basis of statistics—mostly falsified, of course—that under communism people lived a better and happier life. I saw from close-up and with my own eyes that this was not true.

Eventually, even Rudolf had his eyes opened to evil. Capable, hard-working, and an official in the government, he and others were nonetheless arrested under false charges of treason, declared guilty, and hanged. His death removed all the social safety nets for his wife and young son, who moved from place to place while she sought work—to be unemployed was a crime—all the while under the shadow of the lies that the state had broadcast about her husband.

Heda Kovaly ends her chronicle by recounting some events she witnessed in the fall of 1968, when Soviet troops entered Czechoslovakia and brutally suppressed the growing reform movement. With her son living in England, and her second husband on a lecture tour in the United States, she managed to slip out of the occupied country by train and so made her escape.

The book ends with this paragraph: The train did not stop long at the border and, when it began to move, I leaned out the window as far as I could, looking back. The last thing I saw was a Russian soldier, standing guard with a fixed bayonet.

“**It felt like the end of the world.**

Heda Kovaly,  
*Holocaust and Soviet regime survivor*

**It Can Happen Here ... Or Anywhere**

Kovaly wrote: "We had listened with only half an ear when our history teachers discussed torture or the persecution of innocent people. These things could only have happened a long time ago, in the dark ages. When it happened in our time and in a form far worse than we could imagine, it felt like the end of the world."

When I used to teach world and European history to seminars of homeschooling students, they too were often appalled to learn of massacres during the Crusades or executions during the Reformation. Most seemed to think that human beings were incapable of such evil in our modern world, unaware, until I reminded them, that we had just ended the bloodiest century in the history of the human race. I wish now that I had known of "Under a Cruel Star" so that we might have read it together.

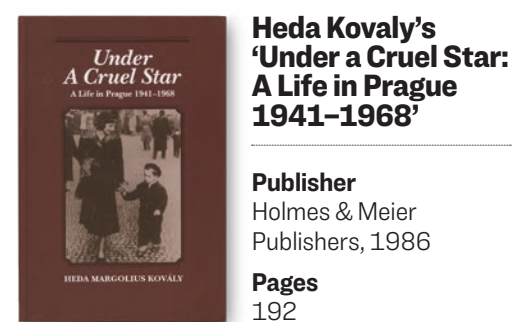
Americans have often said, "It could never happen here." Yet Kovaly offers insights that could easily apply to the United States today. Here are just a few of them:

Of the communists, Kovaly notes: "It is not hard for a totalitarian regime to keep people ignorant. Once you relinquish your freedom for the sake of 'understood necessity' ... you cede your claim to the truth ... you have voluntarily condemned yourself to helplessness." That should strike a chord in the wake of the COVID pandemic, with its heavy-handed lockdowns, its closures of schools and churches, and the lockstep obedience of most of our citizens.

The intrusion of communist ideology into the home and the family changed the way many people thought. "I knew nothing about politics and less about economics. But I began to understand that life had become politics and politics had become



Adolf Hitler (C) at the Prague Castle, on March 15, 1939. German Federal Archive.



**Heda Kovaly's 'Under a Cruel Star: A Life in Prague 1941–1968'**

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Holmes & Meier  
Publishers, 1986

**Pages**  
192

life," Kovaly wrote. There's an apt description of many Americans today, who rank politics over friendship or even family ties.

Twenty years after her husband's execution, Kovaly learned of the fate of his remains. His ashes and those of 13 others were taken for disposal into the countryside. "A few miles out of Prague, the limousine began to skid on the icy road. The agents got out and scattered the ashes under its wheels." In our own country, we have cheapened life as well, with euthanasia and abortion. Some have even used human remains—so far, with the consent of the dead—as compost.

Recounting life under communism, Kovaly stresses the ability of the regime to stifle even ordinary conversation, when an unguarded word might be reported to the authorities. She adds, "Party discipline demanded that we constantly analyze ourselves, our thoughts, our wishes, our inclinations." Many in Western society today feel the chains of these same constraints, fearful of the cancel culture mob or, worse, trouble with the authorities should we say or write something unacceptable.

**Courage Is the Keystone**

During the 1968 Prague revolt, Kovaly passed a statue of Jan Hus, executed during the Protestant Reformation. At the base of the statue are the words "Truth Prevails." She then asks: "Does it? Truth alone does not prevail. When it clashes with power, truth often loses. It prevails only when people are strong enough to defend it."

In spite of its grim trials and horrors, "Under a Cruel Star" is an account of such heroism. When Kovaly demands justice for her husband from the men who helped send him to his death, she behaves with real courage. Some of the friends who assist her in her tribulations under these dictatorships act against their own personal interests, risking imprisonment or death for the sake of charity.

One last message for us from Heda Kovaly: Several times in "Under a Cruel Star," she wishes for an "ordinary, quiet life," but eventually she concludes: "You cannot build a happy private life in a corrupt society any more than you can build a house in a muddy ditch. You have to lay a foundation first."

The foundation she believed in was composed of rights, liberties, and justice. If those are the building stones that we ourselves wish to preserve, we must find within us the strength, grace, and perseverance of Heda Kovaly.

A final note: Heda Kovaly came to the United States, retired as a librarian at the Harvard Law School Library, and returned to the Czech Republic before her death.

*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.*



"The Good Shepherd," 1848, by Thomas Cole. Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art.

**SACRED ART**

## Images of Hope: The Good Shepherd

**ELIZABETH LEV**

By the third century A.D., the Roman Empire had devolved into an amalgamation of jaded peoples, living with constant war and under endless political instability. They numbed their existential anxiety with pleasures and luxuries and explored myriad religions to try to fill the spiritual void of their age. The Roman identity had lost meaning for its many citizens flung across its vast expanse, and unbeknownst to them, the fall of the empire was looming on the horizon.

The Christian community developed during those uncertain times, aggravated by sporadic and vicious persecutions, yet it proclaimed a message of hope and light in the darkness. To embody this hope in visual form, they crafted an innovative icon: that of the Good Shepherd, an image taken from the biblical teachings of Jesus.

**Carrying Our Sins**

Merging Scripture with motifs that were familiar to the very sophisticated viewers in the Roman Empire, the Good Shepherd was the first successful icon of Christianity, with copies found from Britain to Spain to Syria. The most famous version was produced in Rome, however, and it is kept today in the Vatican Museums.

In this work, the Christians transformed a Greco-Roman visual "alphabet," as it were, into a new, joyful lexicon. The Good Shepherd, a figure wearing an exomis (a short one-sleeved tunic) and carrying a sheep over his shoulders, was very familiar to the Hellenized world of the Mediterranean.

The Greeks knew the figure as Hermes, the beloved messenger of the gods, protector of shepherds, and guide for souls to the afterlife, who was often depicted carrying a sheep. The Romans saw the sheep-toting



The most famous version of "The Good Shepherd," circa 300–350, by an unknown artist, in the Catacombs of Domitilla, Vatican Museums.

man as representing the idea of philanthropy: the willingness to take another person's burden, economic or civic, on one's own shoulders.

The Christians built on this message of kindness, putting forth their shepherd who would take on the burden of sin to lead souls to heaven. To emphasize the divine power of their merciful shepherd, they employed the features of the god Apollo for his youthful face.

As the sun god, Apollo became a useful conduit for the Roman people to understand Christ as Light of the World. The image also became an entry point into Scripture as it alludes to passages describing both his incarnation as well as his crucifixion and resurrection.

**The Sheep and the Goats**

One of the earliest of the visual images, painted in 250–275 in the Catacombs of Priscilla in Rome, added a uniquely Christian twist to the iconography, where the shepherd carries not a sweet docile sheep over his shoulders, but a goat.

Satyrs, Greek personifications of rampant lust and intemperance, were represented as half human and half goat. Jesus spoke of judgment as separating the sheep from the goats. Odorous and obnoxious, these unloved creatures found a protector in the Good Shepherd, who came to find those whose weaknesses had led them astray. He offered hope to the lost as well as the faithful.

**The Good, True, and Beautiful**

The Good Shepherd was never intended as an image of recrimination or guilt, nor was it a denunciation of pagan beliefs and practices; it was meant as a harbinger of peace. It evoked pastoral poetry, beloved by the Romans, which lauded the rustic and simple life of the country.

Virgil, the Romans' most celebrated poet, had captured the imagination of an empire with idyllic and mystical experiences recounted by shepherds amid their flocks in his widely read "Eclogues." The genre flourished and spread to the visual arts, as seen in the pastoral friezes from the first-century house of Livia, wife of Emperor Augustus, in Rome.

The Good Shepherd disappeared as the Byzantine Empire gained influence over the old Roman territories, but its memory still endures in Catholic tradition today. Every year, on June 29, the Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul in Rome, new archbishops are bestowed with a stole of white wool, which is draped over their shoulders. This stole is symbolic of their task to assist the pope in carrying the souls of the flock toward salvation.

There was much ugliness in the late empire—with rampant war, disease, poverty, and cruelty—yet the Christians chose to rise above the ubiquitous grime and crime. They called their shepherd "kalos," a Greek word meaning not only "good" but also "true" and "beautiful." That call to beauty could be described as the mandate for the centuries of Christian art to follow. No matter how brutal their circumstances might be, the Good Shepherd invited his followers to put their best face forward and strive to offer hope and peace in a turbulent age, an age not much different from our own.

*Elizabeth Lev is an American-born art historian who teaches, lectures, and guides in Rome.*



One of the earliest visual representations of "The Good Shepherd," with Christ carrying a goat on his shoulders, circa 250–275, by an unknown artist, in the Catacombs of Priscilla in Rome.





A fragment of the "Reuzen-Cyclorama," circa 1853, attributed to decorative painters the Borgmann brothers and painter Heinrich Heyl; 5 feet, 10 inches. The conservation of the cyclorama is made possible by the Bank ten Cate & Cie fund/Rijksmuseum fund.

FINE ARTS

## Before Movies, People Went to See Moving Paintings

The Rijks Museum's 'XXL Paper—Big, Bigger, Biggest!' exhibition

LORRAINE FERRIER

Six rolls of vibrant, exotic-style wallpaper totaling 190 feet, 3 1/2 inches once wowed 19th-century Europeans, but not as wallpaper. When the Rijks Museum's curators began searching their collections of large works on paper for the museum's "XXL Paper—Big, Bigger, Biggest!" exhibition, they discovered that those six rolls were part of one work of moving images, titled the "Reuzen-Cyclorama" (giant cyclorama).

Before movies, people paid to see moving panoramic paintings (called moving cycloramas in some parts of the world). A wooden frame held the long roll of painted paper that was wrapped between two wooden poles, allowing the scenes to be slowly revealed within the frame. Small holes at the top of the paper show how the museum's painting once hung on a wooden frame. Even though the Rijks Museum's painting is huge, it's just one small fragment of the nearly one-mile-long moving cyclorama.

The idea of the cyclorama came from the theater, where huge vertical or horizontal painted backdrops set the scene onstage.

Of the few moving cycloramas that survive today, the majority are in America. (They can be found listed on the International Panorama Council's website.) Subjects of moving cycloramas vary from geographical tours of foreign lands, to historic themes of great battles or world-changing events, to religious themes such as scenes from the life of Christ.

### A Discovery in Motion

In the article "From Wallpaper to Moving Panorama: The Discovery of Fragments of the Cyclorama Reichardt," in the peer-reviewed journal "The Rijks Museum Bulletin," experts describe how they preserved the painting

and how they learned more about its history.

In the article, a distinction is made between panorama paintings and moving cycloramas. The former were historically and geographically accurate, and normally created under the guidance of an academically trained painter. Whereas moving cycloramas could be fantastical and were normally created by craftsmen and stage painters.

Just like painted ceilings or stage backdrops, the cyclorama's audience never saw the moving paintings up close. As opposed to the accurate details in the static panoramic painting, the moving cyclorama didn't need to be perfect; its aim was to give audience members the feeling of being on a boat, a train, or a carriage, and enable them to enjoy the landscapes that went by.

The moving cyclorama took audience members on a journey through landscapes (sometimes imaginary) that they may never have had the chance to visit. A narrator or a guidebook often accompanied the show, as did music and sometimes other entertainers such as magicians and ventriloquists.

Perhaps confusingly, the round buildings that once displayed static panoramic paintings are also called cycloramas. Many of these buildings sprang up across America and Europe, and some still exist.

German publisher Ferdinand Reichardt commissioned three Berlin artists—painter Heinrich Heyl and decorative painters the Borgmann brothers—to paint him a moving cyclorama that takes in the landscapes of the Tyrol region (now a part of northern Italy and northern Austria), the Styria region of southeast Austria, then Switzerland, and Italy.

In the 19th century, hikes and European Grand Tours were popular pastimes. Ads declared that moving cyclorama were a cheap and safe way to "travel" and "go on a hike without the risks of falling off

**The 'Reuzen-Cyclorama' took audiences through 500 miles of scenery condensed into nearly one mile of hand-painted vistas.**

the mountains or being buried under snow," as one advertisement wrote.

The "Reuzen-Cyclorama" took audiences through 500 miles of scenery condensed into nearly one mile of hand-painted vistas. The Rijks Museum holds a mere 190 feet, 3 1/2 inches of the painting. Reichardt's "Reuzen-Cyclorama" toured across the Netherlands, Antwerp in Belgium, and London, where even Queen Victoria watched it.

Experts assume that most of the cyclorama deteriorated over time from the extensive touring. They believe that parts of the painting containing identifiable landmarks, such as Lucerne in Switzerland, and Milan and Lake Como in Italy, may have been reused or stored for protection. The missing segments could be rolled up in storage somewhere, believed to be wallpaper and waiting to be rediscovered once again as moving paintings.

Visitors can surround themselves with 75 feet, 5 1/2 inches of the cyclorama in a specially designed room at the Rijks Museum's "XXL Paper—Big, Bigger, Biggest!" exhibition. The scenic painting is one of the museum's huge paper works on show, many of which have never been displayed before.

The exhibition's large paper works have been produced from around 1500 to today, and include an interesting variety of works from preparatory cartoons for tapestries or stained-glass windows (a practice still used in stained-glass window design today), to a giant paper altarpiece.

Among the exhibition highlights are a woodcut (circa 1535) by Robert Peril, which is nearly 22 feet, 11 5/8 inches tall, of the family tree of Emperor Charles V; and the 18th-century scroll titled "One Hundred Children," by Xu Yanghong. The charming scroll contains 12 scenes of children playing in a Chinese garden. The children's activities exemplify the four gentlemanly accomplishments of music, painting, calligraphy, and the game Go. Viewers would roll out the scroll a scene at a time to contemplate them at their own pace.

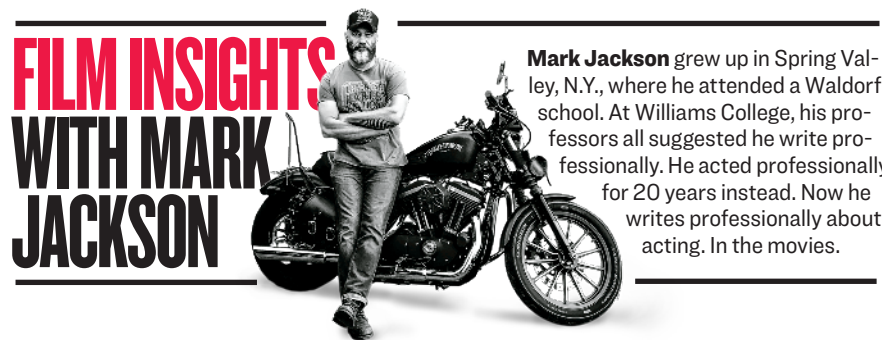
*The "XXL Paper—Big, Bigger, Biggest!" exhibition at the Rijks Museum in Amsterdam runs until Sept. 4. To find out more, visit [RijksMuseum.nl](https://www.rijksmuseum.nl)*



A detail of "One Hundred Children," circa 1700–1799, by Xu Yanghong. Ink on paper; 1 foot, 1/2 inch by 22 feet, 6 1/4 inches. Purchased with the support of Rituals, Rijks Museum, Amsterdam.



Conservators at the Rijks Museum prepare part of the "Reuzen-Cyclorama" for the "XXL Paper—Big, Bigger, Biggest!" exhibition.



**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.

## The Documentary Reminds Us Not to Believe Everything We Read

MARK JACKSON

Most people became aware of Sheryl Crow via her 1993 debut album, "Tuesday Night Music Club" with the hit song "All I Wanna Do." I really became aware of her while watching "Woodstock 1994" on VHS about a year after thinking I should have fled Manhattan and attended the concert.

She was wearing bright yellow pants and singing a slow song, and I remember finding the song boring but her stage presence electrifying. Her huge charisma is closely tied to her signature voice quality, which I've always defined as a blend of the fascinating nonchalance of that kind of prettiest, coolest, beat-of-her-own-drum artsy girl in high school, who nevertheless cheered and baton-twirled (which Sheryl did), combined with an ability to do a James Brown scream, except with an alluring, muted, girly-girl coyness—with vicious musical chops. And guitar-hero moves. Sheryl Crow onstage at Woodstock '94 was the personification of a rock star, although she wasn't one yet.

### Beginnings

Sheryl Suzanne Crow, born on Feb. 11, 1962, in Kennett, Missouri, was, like country music star Shania Twain, immersed in music from a young age. She became an elementary school music teacher in the St. Louis suburb of Fenton, then moved on to do commercial jingle work for McDonald's, and eventually caught a big break and went on tour (with giant, '80s hair almost as big as herself) as Michael Jackson's backup singer for his global "Bad" tour to Tokyo in 1987.

In 1992, she attempted a solo album, which tanked. She started hanging out with a group of Los Angeles musicians who called themselves the "Tuesday Night Music Club." One Tuesday, she went to the library, took out a book of poetry, had her musician

**Sheryl Crow quickly emerged as a polished, jack-of-all-trades.**

group play some music while she recited the poem over it, and thus "All I Wanna Do" was born—a perfect example of mediocre artists borrowing, and great artists stealing. She did call the original author, John O'Brien, and ask permission later.

However, in her first-time-ever TV interview, David Letterman asked her if the song was autobiographical, and, being young, star-struck and nervous, she giggled "Yeah!" This inadvertent moment of not giving credit where credit was due led to a rumor that this was the main reason John O'Brien committed suicide, which was later refuted by the poet's sister, but not before causing some damage to Crow's reputation.

This tragedy, along with a few other controversial incidents, such as the death of her boyfriend Kevin Gilbert, and her publicly battling breast cancer (to get attention? Really?) led to a reputation of her having a tendency to use people. To hear Sheryl Crow herself tell it (and shed tears) is to realize that we shouldn't believe everything we read in the news.

Speaking of using, it's interesting to hear the origins of her early hit "What I Can Do For You," about her manager at the time, Frank DeLio (who was also a mobster), who promised her the world in highly creepy ways.

Crow quickly emerged as a polished, jack-of-all-trades (and master of all of them) singer to become a bona fide rock star.

### Middle Period

Crow's reputation that she used people to get where she got is refuted by the long trail of incredibly hard work that demonstrates, over time, her level of talent as a musician, performer, and producer. And once she hit her stride, it was nonstop composing, producing, hit-making, collaborating, touring, and winning awards.

Interview subjects willingly testify to the facts, and Sheryl Crow has lots of friends to back her up. There's actress Laura Dern (they roomed together briefly), Tuesday Night Music Club member Bill Bottrell, longtime manager/collaborator and friend Scooter Weintraub (who looks like actor Sam Elliott's younger brother), fellow country musician Emmylou Harris, singer-songwriter and producer Brandi Carlile, fellow rock star Keith Richards of the Rolling Stones (who affectionately calls her "little sister") and bemusedly tells of her ability to easily handle the overbearing Mick Jagger onstage), her parents Wendell and Bernice Crow, and many more.

The failed romantic engagements are quickly touched on. Really, bicyclist Lance Armstrong, who bought her a massive diamond engagement ring in the wake of his lying about doping in his relentless bid for greatness in his sport, deserves short shrift. Interestingly, in that little segment, the lyrics "lie to me," from her song "Are

'Sheryl'

Documentary

Director:

Amy Scott

MPAA Rating:

TV-MA

Running Time:

1 hour, 34 minutes

Release Date:

May 6, 2022

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

## A Documentary That Shortchanges Its Subject

MARK JACKSON

I appreciate every kind of music. And while I'm not a diehard country fan, at the height of her career, I was definitely a diehard Shania Twain, the babe, fan. I didn't love that lyric of hers, you know the one: "So you look like Brad Pitt... that don't impress me much." I thought, "Really? How tremendously stuck-up!" But then, you know, I'd see Shania in a Cowboys football jersey and think, "Hmmm! Where can I find a framed poster of this?"

My main takeaway from "Not Just a Girl," a documentary on Twain, was the footage of her, long before all her later beauty-ness, as a little girl with big buck teeth, singing like an angel in one of the many bars her mom used to drag her to, to help pay the bills. And then slightly later, as a teen—still with the Bugs Bunny chompers. Adorable doesn't even begin to describe it.

### Can't Recommend Much Else

In this day and age, the film industry knows very well how to tell and package a cracking good musician story, whether in documentary or biopic form, and so there's really no excuse for "Not Just a Girl" to be such a lukewarm and by-the-numbers documentary. This is one of the most high-profile, premier female artists in the history of modern music we're talking about. This is the chart-topping Canadian country music singer-songwriter who inspired future superstars like Taylor Swift, Avril Lavigne, and any young girl today thumbing her way toward Nashville with a guitar, a sleeping bag, and a big dream.

It's basically just an origins-to-the-present, straight-through narrative, with some run-of-the-mill interviews, video snippets, still photography, and archival footage that skims the surface. Twain presides overall as host, speaking from various couches in

**The film's basically just an origins-to-the-present, straight-through narrative.**

her Swiss mansion, with it all looking overly photoshopped like people on social media who've become addicted to filters and lost touch with reality.

If there's a musician who could be designated as having single-handedly greased the tracks from country to pop music, and "shifted culture," according to Orville Peck, it's Shania, in her 45-year-long career; and so a more realistic, grittier treatment would have been welcome.

Because after all, here's a singer who grew up dirt poor, was basically shoved onstage at the age of 8, had both parents die in a car crash when she was 22, parented her younger siblings, got signed in the early 1990s, and due to unashamed, raw ambition, managed to flatten the fence between country and pop, elevate to superstardom across genres—and then became the highest-selling female artist of her time.

Then, she caught a virulent case of Lyme's disease from a tick bite, which destroyed her voice. Finally, her husband and producer, Mutt Lange, the love of her life, ran off with a younger woman. And then, and then—she makes a comeback. This is not a life to gloss over!

### The Odyssey: Man Takes a Boat Ride Home—The End

"Not Just a Girl" is a bunch of the facts; it takes some doing to make such a potent life look so plastic and cardboard-like. The 56-year-old Twain doesn't really invite us into her history, and the Hallmark card-like, hagiographic feel of the film is ironic, considering Twain was known for her music videos that broke the pop-and-rock monopoly over the MTV-age medium.

It touches on some potentially fascinating talking points, like her creative partnership with her producer ex-husband, and how her feminist lyrics were couched in a traditionally country music-friendly celebration of



You Strong Enough to Be My Man," play in the background.

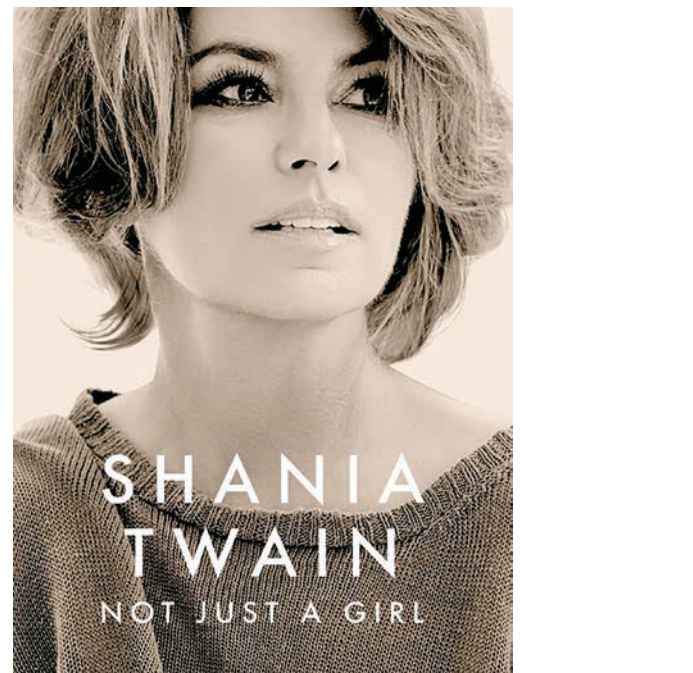
### The End

There are plenty of behind-the-scenes, never-before-seen archival footage of Crow in the studio and on the road, from 20 years' worth of touring.

Sheryl Crow comes off as distinctly Midwestern in her warmth, matter-of-factness, generosity, coolheadedness, and friendliness. With the adoption of two boys, Sheryl managed to have it all, in the modern sense. I've gathered from reading about her career over the years that she suffered from the depression and loneliness of life on the road, but a musical talent this big cannot be denied. It just takes massive will power to make it work. And that's what aspiring musicians and artists everywhere stand to take away from this documentary: that one should make sure one has that level of ability to work like a dog, even when sick and exhausted, before embarking on such a potentially treacherous career path.

Shania Twain demonstrates the same thing in the recent documentary about her that just came out. Musicians, music fans, and casual listeners should watch both. "Sheryl" is far more rewarding, but both demonstrate that in order to succeed in the American music business, same as in show business, you generally need world-class talent, looks, and an insatiable ability to work hard.

*"Sheryl" is currently streaming on Showtime.*



Shania Twain is one of the most high-profile, premier female artists in the history of modern music.

femininity, rather than a defiant, emasculating one (although that Brad Pitt line was borderline). But I don't care if she sings "The future is female" as long as she sings it in the Cowboys jersey. I'm kidding of course. Sort of.

"Not Just a Girl," unlike Shania herself, doesn't appear to be backed by much ambition. It's similar to another such documentary recently released: "Sheryl," about the life and times of equally impressive powerhouse rock star Sheryl Crow. The documentary on Sheryl is superior. There's so much wasted potential in Shania's that I have to say, unfortunately, it don't impress me much. I am glad I watched it; I always enjoy music documentaries, but this one left me feeling shortchanged.

*"Not Just a Girl" premiered on Netflix in both the United States and UK on July 26.*

'Shania Twain: Not Just a Girl'

Documentary

Director:

Joss Crowley

Running Time:

1 hour, 28 minutes

Release Date:

July 26, 2022

★ ★ ★ ★ ★



REACHING WITHIN: WHAT TRADITIONAL ART OFFERS THE HEART

# The Perils of Pride: ‘The Death of Milo of Croton’

ERIC BESS

Have you ever watched someone try to show off and then suffer instant repercussions for their actions? In ancient Greece, pride was sometimes considered dangerous. Myths such as Icarus flying too high to the sun and Narcissus looking at his own reflection served as cautionary tales that revealed the dangers of pride, hubris, and vanity.

Milo of Croton, now popular in fitness circles, was another citizen of ancient Greece whose life story may serve as a warning of the consequences of pride.

## Milo of Croton

Milo was an athletic phenomenon in the sixth century B.C. and was revered for his superhuman strength. Competing into his 40s, he won at least five consecutive Olympic titles, seven titles at the Pythian Games, ten titles at the Isthmian Games, and nine titles at the Nemean Games. These accomplishments are incredible, even by today's standards.

He also used his strength to help his friends. When a neighboring town attacked Croton, Milo led his fellow citizens to victory while dressed like Herakles. In another instance, Milo saved Pythagoras and his followers from a falling roof by using his strength to support the central column until everyone reached safety.

**It was not through hubris but through patient consistency that he gained his strength.**

These are instances in which Milo's strength was used to create positive outcomes around him. Protecting his friends and dispelling danger was definitely a positive outcome for his community. Even the games, as long as the competition remained respectful and friendly, could create a sense of harmony not only within his own community but also between communities.

How did Milo acquire his incredible strength? As legend has it, he saw a newborn calf near his home and decided to pick it up and carry it. He did this every day for four years. But at the end of four years, he was no longer carrying a baby calf but a full-grown bull. His strength adapted to the slow, incremental change in the animal's weight.

There were instances, however, in which Milo allowed his pride to determine how he used his strength. For instance, he would show off his strength by having others try to take a pomegranate from his hand. No one could remove the fruit from his hand, nor could they cause him to damage the fruit by their efforts.

He would stand on a greased iron disk and challenge others to push him off. He would challenge people to bend his fingers, and all were unsuccessful. He would even tie a cord around his head and, by holding his breath, would break the cord with the bulging veins in his forehead.

This type of pride would eventually be his downfall. One day, as Milo was getting on in years and his strength began to diminish, he saw a lone tree stump left partially split with a wedge. Milo wanted to show off his strength by completely splitting the tree apart with his hands. When he tried, however, the wedge fell out. He did not have the strength to split the stump apart; instead, it closed on his hand. Impressed by the tree stump, wild beasts eventually devoured him.

## Bachelier's ‘The Death of Milo of Croton’

French painter Jean Jacques Bachelier painted his own interpretation of Milo's death. The figure of Milo is presented as the focal point. His body is arranged diagonally from the upper left-hand corner to the bottom right-hand corner of the composition, and this diagonal arrangement gives the viewer a greater sense of energy than a horizontal or vertical position would.

Wearing what appears to be a leopard skin, Milo writes in pain as his hand is stuck in the tree stump to the right and two wolves attack him from below. He tightens his free hand into a fist and throws his head back in agony as one of the wolves bites his leg. The natural landscape frames the scene, and a



“The Death of Milo of Croton,” 1761, by Jean Jacques Bachelier. Oil on canvas, 96 inches by 75 inches. National Gallery of Ireland.



A detail of the painting shows the insect on a rock, watching the scene unfold.

small insect at the bottom right of the composition watches the scene unfold.

## Nature Corrects Prideful Destruction

What wisdom might we gather from Milo's story and Bachelier's painting?

First, it's necessary to recognize that Milo acquired his strength by following the natural course of human life. Let us consider that the calf represents nature itself. Every day he picked up his calf and every day his strength adjusted to the weight of the calf, until the calf grew into a bull. Milo became strong insofar as he worked in accordance with the natural course of things.

Milo did not exert a whole lot of effort to acquire his strength; it happened naturally over time. The result would have been different if he had pridefully tried to pick up a bull to show off his strength from the very beginning. That would have been a sure way of injuring himself, for the weight of the bull would have been too much for his initial level of strength. It was not through hubris but through patient consistency that he gained his strength.

As he grew older, however, his strength began to wane. This was the course of nature at work, for maximum strength decreases with age. If Milo had acted in accordance with the natural decline of his strength, he would have recognized his new limitations and left the tree stump alone. Instead, he was not ready to accept the limitations on his strength, and his pride refused to allow him to acknowledge the course of nature.

The story and painting make apparent the point that Milo literally attempts to tear a tree trunk apart as an exhibition of his strength in his older age. The act itself—the ripping apart of an element in nature—is representative of his resistance to following the course of human life.

To me, the negative consequence of rip-

ping apart the tree trunk is not to suggest that it is wrong to alter nature for the well-being of human life. Using nature to build houses, make clothes, eat, and so on, is to follow the natural course of human life. Anything, however, can be taken to an extreme. When pride encourages us to go against the course of nature, as in Milo's case, the natural course of life has a way of balancing that extreme.

While Milo sought to overwhelm nature with his strength, Bachelier painted the opposite: Nature overwhelms Milo. He is depicted as weak, with the tree stump holding him hostage, the sun beating down on his skin, the wolves tearing into his flesh, and the insect watching the whole thing happen. Nature and life abound, and Milo has no way to escape their omnipresence. He is humbled by his prideful attempt, and his many accomplishments are tainted by his embarrassing death.

To me, Milo's story is a cautionary tale. We all have the capacity to test our limits, but we must make sure that our intentions are pure and that our pride doesn't prevent us from following the course of human life and helping others with our efforts. This endeavor requires, however, that we sincerely investigate what “nature” is and what “course” it takes.

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

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



Falun Gong practitioners take part in a parade marking the 30th anniversary of the spiritual discipline's introduction to the public, in New York on May 13, 2022.

BOOK REVIEW

## A Powerful and Thorough Exposé on the Cruelties of the CCP

DUSTIN BASS

The Chinese Communist Party is undoubtedly one of the most ruthless regimes in the world. And with an economy that has accelerated over the past two decades, it has been able to utilize technology, bribery, intimidation, and international espionage to achieve its ends.

In report “The 20-Year Persecution of Falun Gong in China,” the Minghui Group has assembled a disturbing modern-day version of “The Gulag Archipelago,” exposing the cruelties of the Party.

The CCP's ultimate goal is complete control of its citizens, even those outside its borders. Yet practitioners of the Chinese spiritual discipline Falun Gong are not followers of communism. Instead, they follow a path that is summed up by the practice's three principles: truthfulness, compassion, and forbearance.

The 400-plus-page report states that this spiritual path was accepted in China when it first emerged in 1992. By 1999, an estimated 100 million people were practicing, which the CCP viewed as a threat to its totalitarian rule. Under the leadership of Jiang Zemin, the CCP vowed to “annihilate Falun Gong in three months,” with orders to “ruin their reputation, cut them off financially,

and destroy their physical bodies.”

Though three months has turned into more than 20 years, the pursuit of this egregious directive is ongoing. The Minghui Group report goes into extensive detail about the persecution.

### Eyewitness Experiences

Throughout the book, there are countless eyewitness accounts of the methods used by the CCP in its attempts to force practitioners into recanting their faith. These methods include economic retribution, job loss, arrests, imprisonment, brainwashing, forced labor, torture, and even murder. The authors of the study provide details of the experiences of these practitioners—from the practitioners themselves and from their family members and friends.

The details of this cruelty are, as aforementioned, disturbing. The CCP, in its persecution of Falun Gong practitioners, doesn't discriminate regarding whom they target. The report shows that the Party and its various organs pursue, torment, and often “destroy” practitioners regardless of age, sex, or physical or mental health. There are accounts of children as young as 1 year old and of the extremely elderly being arrested.

The world is no stranger to the CCP's extensive efforts to squelch or control religions

LITERATURE

## T.S. Arthur's Short Story: ‘Dressed for a Party’

Beauty is found within

KATE VIDIMOS

Just as a mirror reflects how we see ourselves, so what we wear signals to others how we want them to think about us. Every time we decide on how to dress and what to wear, we choose to either hide behind the superficiality of dress or complement our inner selves by our outward adornments.

In his short story “Dressed for a Party,” T.S. Arthur contemplates the importance of how we dress, especially when others will see us. By using the character of young Alice, who is preparing for a party, the author shows the role that our consciousness plays when we choose what to wear. After Alice dresses, she presents herself to her Aunt Helen.

### Courting Admiration

Adorned in “white, with a superfluity of pink trimming, jewelry and flowers,” Alice truly admires how she looks and feels ready to go to the party: “She thinks the make up splendid—the effect striking.”

However, Aunt Helen wishes to be honest with her. Alice is overdressed. Her dress has too many ribbons, her hair too many flowers, and her neck and arms too much jewelry. Aunt Helen equates Alice's excessive adornment to that of a prima donna

or a May queen. This excess conveys “a sense of vulgarity” and a superficial value. Aunt Helen explains to Alice that if she goes to the party so overdressed, she “will certainly attract all eyes, but ... will not win admiration from a single heart whose regard is worth having.”

The older woman counsels Alice to change her dress from outward extravagance to an appearance that complements and highlights the beauty and intelligence of her mind. Thinking and appreciating are virtues of the “higher class,” she says.

This class of people consists of those “whose minds are clothed in beautiful garments whose loveliest and most precious things are, like jewels, shut within a casket.” Such minds adorn themselves with true thought and appreciation and take into consideration their dress only as a means of revealing their character.

After Aunt Helen critiques Alice's dress, Alice, in great disappointment, replaces her extravagant garment for a simpler one, a few complementary jewels, and a modest hair ornament. She is now a picture of elegance, beauty, and charm.

Though Alice is not entirely happy with her new outfit, she goes to the party. Upon entering, she realizes that her dress is one of the plainest. She stands out because her dress is quite simple compared to the elaborate costumes around her.

in China. Indeed, this has been a feature of the Communist Party in various countries over the centuries. Communism and faith cannot coexist, because communism is the state religion.

There are accounts of the CCP utilizing various forms of torture, from sleep deprivation to force-feeding to rape to beatings. In many cases, those who don't die in these prison camps die shortly after their release or go insane.

### Targeted Through Extrajudicial Means

The report notes that the CCP outlawed labor camps in 2013. Despite their abolishment, these camps have merely been renamed “legal education camps” or “rehabilitation centers.” These camps or centers are used extensively to reeducate citizens through forceful means. As the years progress, so do the number of camps throughout various regions in mainland China.

The use of such camps is an extrajudicial method, that is, without judicial process. Practitioners of the peaceful practice are arrested and imprisoned without due process. The Chinese Constitution and the various laws established in China are ignored.

It can hardly be summed up any better than by a quote from a court proceeding in which the presiding judge stated, “We don't follow the law when it comes to Falun Gong cases.” The due process of law has become null and void for these particular citizens of the communist state, and therefore so does the appeal process.

The CCP has attempted to convince the international community that the detention and cruel treatment, which includes fatal organ harvesting from living people, is the will of the Chinese people. The report discusses the initiative of the Chinese Anti-Cult Association, which is an agency of the CCP, to obtain a million signatures condemning Falun Gong. The initiative obtained 1.5 million signatures. “Obtained” is the operative word, rather than received. The agency accumulated signatures from school children from the country's public education system.

### The International Community

Falun Gong practitioners have been an inspiration to the world and, in particular, the many who suffer religious persecution across the globe. And throughout the world, there has been increased support for this spiritual group in China.

The book reports on various resolutions being passed in numerous countries, such as the United States, Canada, Germany, Australia, and others. World groups like Amnesty International, Freedom House, and the United Nations have demanded the end of this criminal behavior by the Chinese regime. Investigations into these barbarous acts have been conducted by Argentina and Spain, which have resulted in indictments against certain members of the CCP.

In the United States, state legislators and Congress have passed resolutions regarding the CCP and Falun Gong. Former President Donald Trump, former Vice President Mike Pence, and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi have demonstrated support for Falun Gong.

Byword of mouth, flyers, and other means, Falun Gong practitioners are spreading the word about what has happened and is still happening under the Chinese regime.

### Horror and Hope

“The 20-Year Persecution of Falun Gong in China” by the Minghui Group is a work of great import. The facts presented in this extensive report should make Americans and people around the world more than second-guess the reasons why corporations and governments work so handily with the CCP.

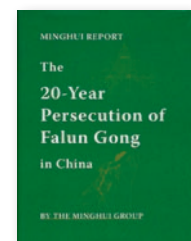
**There are accounts of the CCP's utilizing various forms of torture.**

It's no mystery how cruel and corrupt the Chinese Communist Party is, and this study further proves that. The Minghui Group has thoroughly cited government entities and NGO reports to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the CCP is guilty of heinous acts or, as New Jersey Rep. Chris Smith classifies it, “one of the great horrors.”

As horrific as the stories are in this study, there's much to find hopeful in the report. This is because of the individuals and government entities supporting these spiritual freedom seekers. The international community has given hope to those suffering in China, and their hope is turning into positive gains, even in the mainland.

An important word has been assembled in this 20-year collection, and it's a story that the world should know and continue to respond to until the CCP relents.

*Dustin Bass is the host of EpochTV'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.’*



**‘The 20-Year Persecution of Falun Gong in China’**

**Author**  
The Minghui Group

**Publisher**  
Minghui Pub.

**Date**  
Jan. 1, 2019

**Hardcover**  
437 pages

likely be unwanted and short-lived, and the image of ourselves will be marred by our excessive desire for attention.

If we dress in an elegant, modest, and simple manner that highlights our real value, then we will receive the admiration, love, and attention of those whose opinions and admiration are truly worth obtaining. Good company does not reside in those wearing the newest fashions but is, as Jane Austen says in “Persuasion,” “the company of clever, well-informed people, who have a great deal of conversation.”

By thinking and observing, rather than adorning and pleasing, we can look at ourselves and reflect on our state of mind. We can assess why we dress the way we do and understand how it represents character, purpose, and meaning.

**Alice's beauty and elegance stand in contrast to all of the other overdressed young women.**

*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.*

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## FILM REVIEW

# Director Ron Howard's Inspirational, Languid Survival Drama

MICHAEL CLARK

Ron Howard is one of the rarest persons of his type in the movie business. Very few child actors make the successful transition to teen roles, and even fewer make it to professional adulthood.

Howard went from Opie in "The Andy Griffith Show" to Richie in "Happy Days" seemingly overnight, and in 1977, before his run on the latter show ended, he co-wrote, starred in, and directed his first feature ("Grand Theft Auto").

To date, Howard has directed 28 features and most of them are pretty good, while a handful could rightfully qualify as excellent. His last true live-action winner ("Rush") came out nearly a decade ago, and his only worthwhile films since then are the superb music documentaries "Made in America," "Eight Days a Week," and "Pavarotti."

### A Technical Marvel

Based on the Tham Luang cave rescue that gripped the globe, "Thirteen Lives" is a thematic glove-fit for Howard, and it has many great things going for it.

The production, set, and sound designs are impeccable, as is the editing and cinematography; all of it is Oscar-worthy stuff. Crafting a yarn that is so dank and claustrophobic to look and sound so glorious was no mean feat. Howard surrounded himself with some of the most talented technical people in the film industry.

On June 23, 2018, after practice, a dozen adolescent Thai soccer players and their coach thought that a great way to celebrate one of their birthdays would be to enter a local cave. After descending more than two miles underground, early-season monsoon rain began and quickly flooded their only escape route.

Because of the unrelenting rain and leaks from the mountain above, it took nine full days just to determine their location, by which time an international cadre of over 10,000 people had arrived to offer assistance.

### England to the Rescue

Veteran British divers John Volanthen (Colin Farrell) and Richard Stanton (Viggo Mortensen) were able to swim into the cave far enough to actually see the trapped boys,

and then make their way back to begin working on a way to get them out.

In tandem with fellow divers Chris Jewel (Tom Bateman) and Australian anesthetist Richard Harris (Joel Edgerton), Volanthen and Stanton opted for the plan offering the lowest possibility of failure.

The above events take up most of the movie's first half. While it's informative, it's also something of a languid and static snooze. There's a lot of diver and aquatic "inside baseball" jargon tossed about, which most laypeople won't, or care to, understand.

Had this chunk been trimmed down from, say, 75 to 45 minutes, the urgency and thriller aspects of the production would have increased exponentially.

### No Forced Political Correctness

There are a few critics who've declared "Thirteen Lives" as the latest in a string of "white savior" movies: productions where Caucasian characters come to the rescue of nonwhite people who are incapable of saving themselves. They can think what they like, but the fact remains that five Caucasian men rescued 13 Asian males.

Although the racial makeup of the cast accurately reflects the ethnicities of the real people involved in the ordeal, the filmmakers, perhaps without even trying to do so, gave this largely bogus white savior theory some degree of weight by putting disproportionate emphasis on the foreign white divers instead of those they are saving.

Had more time been spent with the boys and their coach, whose deteriorating physical and mental health is barely addressed, the stakes and the emotional hooks would have been off the chain.

These nitpicking complaints are not wholly without merit and could have been avoided had Oscar-nominated screenwriter William Nicholson ("Shadowlands," "Gladiator"), working from a story by himself and Don Macpherson, made a greater effort to give more than just a handful of other Thai characters some degree of back story, memorable personality, or anything resembling substantial dialogue.

Being mere incidental and interchangeable characters in their own story is probably not how those who were there remember the events.



AMAZON STUDIOS

Girati Sugiyama (L) and Viggo Mortensen in "Thirteen Lives."

**Quality wise, 'Thirteen Lives' falls somewhere above the middle of the pack in Howard's filmography.**

### 'Thirteen Lives'

**Director:**  
Ron Howard

**Starring:**  
Viggo Mortensen, Colin Farrell, Joel Edgerton, Tom Bateman, Paul Gleeson

**Running Time:**  
2 hours, 27 minutes

**MPAA Rating:**  
PG-13

**Release Date:**  
July 29, 2022

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

In addition to practically everyone knowing how it ends going in, the movie (however enthralling, feel-good, and inspirational it is) is the third feature film released in the last four years covering the exact same subject matter.

However, knowing the eventual outcome of the astronauts in Howard's "Apollo 13" didn't hurt its performance, critical reception, or awards-season notices.

### Sunny Side Up

Howard is not a doom-and-gloom kind of director; he prefers light and upbeat. This is not a slam by any means. Making high-quality, commercially appealing, inspirational films isn't as easy as it might appear.

Most people want happy endings and go out of their way to avoid depressing or downbeat movies. The closest Howard has ever gotten to depressing was with "The Missing" (2003), which, not surprisingly, was one of the worst-performing and least well-received movies of his career.

Quality wise, "Thirteen Lives" falls somewhere above the middle of the pack in Howard's filmography. It's not "Apollo 13," but it is his best live-action effort in the last decade. That's nothing to sneeze at.

*Presented in English with frequent subtitles in Thai.*

*"Thirteen Lives" can now be viewed on Amazon Prime.*



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