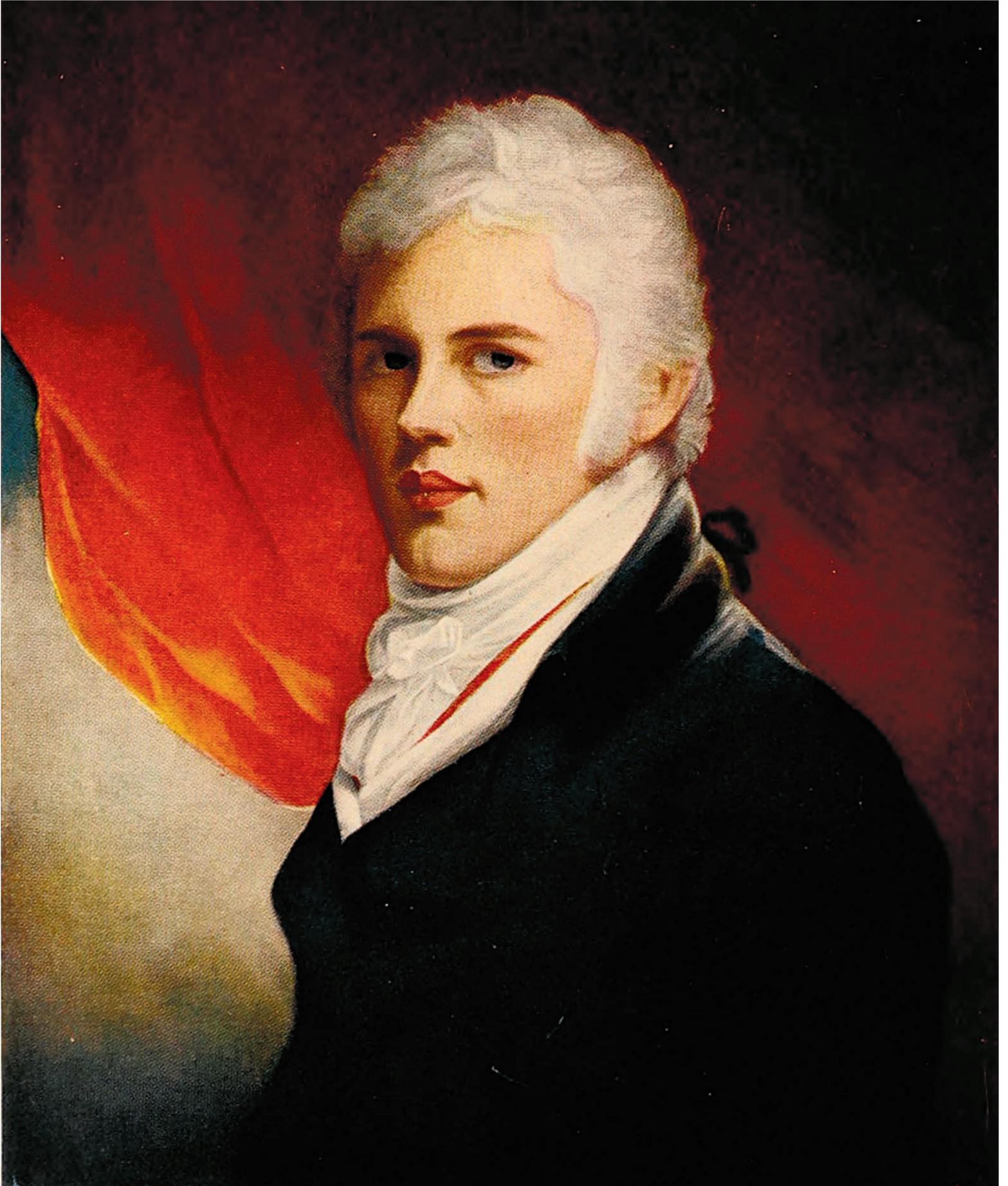


THE EPOCH TIMES

# ARTS & CULTURE

PUBLIC DOMAIN



## FINE ARTS

## Small Is Beautiful

Miniature paintings by Edward Greene Malbone

YVONNE MARCOTTE

Parents often keep a photo of their children in a wallet or purse. Although worn and wrinkled, the photo keeps their children close to them as they go about their daily life. Families in the 18th and 19th centuries had the same wish, and so miniature paintings grew in popularity among prosperous early Americans.

Usually no more than two inches, a miniature was made to be held in the hands of a single viewer to create a sense of intimacy with a loved one when physical proximity was not possible, either for engaged couples or loved ones separated by war. Placed into small frames, the miniatures could be

**Malbone's miniatures provide insight into the sitters' character and spirit in a unique way**

pinned inside a jacket or placed in a pocket for easy access to look at throughout the day.

According to the website of the Weibold Studio, conservators of miniature portraits, the paintings were made to tighten emotional bonds with special people:

Portrait miniatures might have been exchanged by an engaged couple, or worn to remember someone who lived far away, or who had perhaps died. Some even contain a lock of the loved one's hair—either underneath the portrait or displayed on the back intricately woven with seed pearls or golden threads.

Many of the finest American portraitists, such as Gilbert Stuart, popularized the art

form by bringing European miniaturists to the United States to satisfy the prosperous citizens who wished to wear and display these intimate pieces.

### Making It Small

Portrait miniatures developed in the 16th and 17th centuries. The most common technique used a watercolor-based paint on ivory, although some were painted on stretched vellum. Others were created with oils on copper.

At the height of the popularity the miniatures in the mid-1800s, miniaturists in the United States tried to replicate the look of an oil portrait.

*Continued on Page 5*

Miniaturist Edward Green Malbone, circa 1798, self-portrait. Corcoran Gallery of Art.



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POETRY

# 'I Must Go Down to the Seas Again':

The Poet Laureate of Saltwater and Sail

JEFF MINICK

Throughout his long life, John Edward Masefield (1878–1967) wrote a shelf full of novels, stories, essays, plays, and histories. The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography acclaimed his "Gallipoli" as "one of the finest accounts we have of modern warfare," and two of his books for the younger set, "The Midnight Folk" and "The Box of Delights," remain in print and are considered classics of children's literature.

But while he lived, Masefield won his highest accolades for his poetry.

Though he went through long fallow periods where he turned away from composing verse, he nonetheless produced an enormous number of sonnets, narratives, and other poetical works. His "Poems: Complete Edition" ran to over 1,100 pages. From 1930 until his death, he served as Britain's Poet Laureate, holding tenure at that post second only to Alfred Lord Tennyson.

After his death, his ashes were interred in the Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey, where poet Robert Graves in his eulogy praised Masefield's literary powers and described the man as "generous, courageous, unassuming, oversensitive."

'Sea-Fever'

Though he was orphaned as a boy, Masefield came of age reasonably happy in the home of an aunt and uncle, even as they tried to break him of what they viewed as an addiction to reading. After a stint of training for the merchant marine in Liverpool, the teenager set off for Chile on a sailing ship, the *Gilcruix*.

This rough voyage and his own ill-health left Masefield violently sick, and on arrival at port, authorities declared him a DBS, or "distressed British seaman." Sent back to Britain, he embarked on another voyage, but then jumped ship in New York City and lived until 1897 as a wanderer and a worker of odd jobs before returning again to England, this time to seek his fortune as a writer.

Given Masefield's uneasy relationship with the Atlantic, it is perhaps ironic that he first attracted attention as a writer of sea ballads and poems, the genre for which even today he is best remembered. "The sea is not subject to his genius," Joyce Kilmer wrote of him. "It speaks through him."

Perhaps the best known of all his poems, in fact, is "Sea-Fever," published in 1902 in "Salt-Water Ballads," Masefield's first collection of verse.

I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky,  
And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by;  
And the wheel's kick and the wind's song  
And the white sail's shaking,  
And a grey mist on the sea's face,  
And a grey dawn breaking.  
I must go down to the seas again, for the call of the running tide  
Is a wild call and a clear call that may not be denied;  
And all I ask is a windy day with the white clouds flying,  
And the flung spray and the blown spume,  
And the sea-gulls crying.  
I must go down to the seas again, to the vagrant gypsy life,  
To the gull's way and the whale's way where the wind's like a whetted knife;  
And all I ask is a merry yarn from a

laughing fellow-rover,  
And quiet sleep and a sweet dream when the long trick's over.

In these 12 lines we find many of the elements that mark the best of Masefield's writing: the beauties of nature, which captivated him throughout his life; the "vagrant gypsy life," a frequent topic in other poems; and that "merry yarn," of which he was always a fan.

He was a romantic at heart, and this poem is a call to adventure and travel. His wonderfully sharp images like "the wheel's kick," "the white sail's shaking," and "the flung spray" do, as the poem suggests in its first line, take us down to the sea.

Romancing the Past

A second poem about the sea, one also frequently included in anthologies, is "Cargoes." Unlike "Sea-Fever," the focus here is on goods carried aboard ships, from the "quinquireme of Nineveh" to the "dirty British coaster."

Quinquireme of Nineveh from distant Ophir,  
Rowing home to haven in sunny Palestine,  
With a cargo of ivory,  
And apes and peacocks,  
Sandalwood, cedarwood, and sweet white wine.

Stately Spanish galleon coming from the Isthmus,  
Dipping through the Tropics by the palm-green shores,  
With a cargo of diamonds,  
Emeralds, amethysts,  
Topazes, and cinnamon,  
and gold moldores.

Dirty British coaster with a salt-caked smoke stack,  
Butting through the Channel in the mad March days,  
With a cargo of Tyne coal,  
Road-rails, pig-lead,  
Firewood, iron-ware, and cheap tin trays.

In the first two stanzas, Masefield paints the ships, the goods they carry, and the lands to which they travel with exotic colors. A quinquireme, for example, is an ancient Greek or Roman galley with five banks of oars on each side, and moldores are Portuguese gold coins.

These sailing ships and their riches stand in sharp contrast to the coaster, slang for a coastal trading vessel, with its coal, lead, and "cheap tin trays." Here there are no "sunny Palestine" and "palm-green shores," but only the English Channel in March. It seems clear that Masefield's romantic view of the past is again at work, contrasting the glories of sail and the riches of the past with the steam stacks and mundane goods of the present.

Unread but Not Unremembered

According to Britain's Royal Collection Trust, by the time of his death John Masefield's "Collected Poems" had sold over 200,000 copies, an astonishing figure for a book of verse in that or any time. His narrative poems like "The Everlasting Mercy," "Dauber," and "Reynard the Fox" gained him many readers, as did his frequent recourse to nature and the sea, two subjects long dear to the hearts of the English.

In spite of this enormous popularity and output, most of Masefield's poems gather dust these days. His myriad of lines with their rhyme and cadence stands on the other side of the river from modernity's penchant for free verse. Some of his subjects—the vagabond life, the rural poor—and his use of dated slang and vernacular have also lost favor in our modern era.

On my bookshelves, for example, are two textbooks suitable for advanced high school or university literature classes: X.J. Kennedy and Dana Gioia's "Literature" and "Prentice Hall Literature: The English Tradition." The former contains a brief study of "Cargoes," while the latter, somewhat astonishingly given its focus on British writers, makes no mention whatsoever of John Masefield. No, with the exception of literary scholars and some traditionalists, Masefield's poems, like those



In his personal life, Masefield celebrated and relished in the simple joys of living. A portrait of Masefield taken in 1916.

PUBLIC DOMAIN

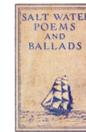


A rough voyage to Chile left John Masefield violently ill and, upon arrival at port, he was declared a DBS, "distressed British seaman."



In his poem "Cargoes," Masefield paints the ships, the goods they carry, and the lands to which they travel, with exotic colors.

ENRIQUE ALAEZ PEREZ/SHUTTERSTOCK



The cover of "Salt Water Poems and Ballads," 1916, by John Masefield.

of so many other poets both then and now, attract little interest in our age of screens and electronic entertainment.

And yet, Masefield's salutes to the sea reproduced above do remain popular, at least as far as poetry goes these days, and if nothing else, many students of literature will come across these verses of the sea. Ask a poet nowadays if he would be happy to know that after a century some lines he had written were still finding readers, and you can bet the bank that he'd answer with a delighted "Of course!"

A Word to the Wise

Perhaps the treasures that Masefield valued most have also fallen out of favor. Though he lived well into the 20th century, his sensibilities in many ways remained Victorian, not only in his writing but also in his personal life. He treasured his wife, his helpmate for 56 years, and their two children, and preferred the open fields and woodlands of the countryside to the brick

and stone of the city streets.

He also celebrated the simple joys of living and delighted, like so many poets, in the ordinary: a sunrise, laughter among friends, the burr and hustle of nature's creatures in a field on a spring day.

In his poem "Biography," Masefield begins:

When I am buried, all my thoughts and acts  
Will be reduced to lists of dates and facts,  
And long before this wandering flesh is rotten  
The dates which made me will be all forgotten ...

The narrator then spends the rest of his long, and sometimes tangled, poem ruminating on all that he has done and witnessed: the voyages made, the streets he has walked, the people he has encountered. "What life is is much to very few," he observes, commenting on our

**Though he was orphaned as a boy, Masefield came of age reasonably happy in the home of an aunt and uncle, even as they tried to break him of what they viewed as an addiction to reading.**

blindness to so many of the mysteries and beauty of the world. But in the final stanza, the observer states a truth often forgotten:

Best trust the happy moments. What they gave  
Makes man less fearful of the certain grave,  
And gives his work compassion and new eyes.  
The days that make us happy make us wise.

"The days that make us happy make us wise." We don't often connect joy with wisdom, but there's a line we might engrave in our hearts and minds.

Jeff Minick lives and writes in Front Royal, Virginia. He is the author of two novels, "Amanda Bell" and "Dust on Their Wings," and two works of nonfiction, "Learning as I Go" and "Movies Make the Man."

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## SACRED ART

# Duccio's Iconic Paintings of Mother and Child

DA YAN

There seems to be something quite universal about the image of a mother and child. For over 3,000 years, from ancient Egypt to Europe and beyond, artists from every culture have shown mothers carrying, protecting, and nourishing their children in a variety of contexts.

Though rendered each according to its own cultural standard, these works of art nevertheless convey the shared human experience of maternal nurture and love, which provides the bond that gives us life and, for all of history, has ensured the continuity of our world and its cultures.

Where this motif became most popular was certainly medieval Europe. From churches to palaces, devotional icons and altarpieces filled the everyday life of Christians, providing lessons about the Christ child and his holy mother.

In fact, many believed that these were more than just pictures; rather, they were the real presence of the divine on earth. Such panels with ground gold in the background were thus placed on altars and shrines, and even carried in religious processions.

## Duccio di Buoninsegna stood out as one of the greatest painters of the Italian Middle Ages.

Initially, most of these paintings followed a standard, iconic formula without much alteration. But toward the 13th and 14th centuries in Italy, some artists became more sensitive to the emotional charge of divine images and began experimenting with the deep feelings embedded in religious painting.

Duccio di Buoninsegna (1255–1319) was one extraordinary example among these artists. Active in the city-state of Siena, he stood out as one of the greatest painters of the Italian Middle Ages. In his works, such as the painting “Madonna and Child With Two Angels” made for a church in Crevole, Italy, we see a tender sensibility in how he chose to visualize the theme of divine compassion.

The Virgin’s face, brightly lit from above, leans intimately toward Christ,



whom she presents to us with her right hand. Her eyes gaze outward, as all her sorrowful emotions are subdued by a reigning peace. Medieval pictures of the mother and child theme often show Mary with an expressive sadness, for she already knows that her son is destined to suffer for the salvation of mankind.

But in Duccio’s case, Mary’s sorrow seems balanced by a higher understanding of the ultimate purpose of Christ’s suffering. So she endures the pain, making almost as much a sacrifice as he did. The Christ child conventionally holds his hand in a gesture of blessing; but here, instead, he reaches up to his mother’s face as if wiping away her tears. This touch of great humanity contrasts and complements well with his steadfast gaze, which evinces a sense of conviction

In this painting by Duccio, the Christ child reaches up to his mother’s face as if wiping away her tears. “Madonna and Child With Two Angels (Crevole Madonna), circa 1283–1284, by Duccio di Buoninsegna. Tempera on panel; 35 inches by 23.6 inches. Museum of the Works of the Cathedral, Siena, Italy.

Central panel of the Maestà, 1308–1311, by Duccio di Buoninsegna. Tempera on panel; 84.2 inches by 14.2 feet. Museum of the Works of the Cathedral, Siena, Italy.

about the mission of his worldly journey.

Duccio’s earlier paintings eventually led to his masterpiece, the “Maestà,” a polyptych completed in 1311 for the high altar of Siena Cathedral. Its large central panel depicts Mary and her child enthroned amid a host of angels and saints. Here, glorified alongside Christ, the Virgin appears majestic, extending her love from her own son to all of mankind.

Thus, Mary’s ultimate gift to the world, as Duccio shows in his paintings, grants us a privileged understanding of the great compassion and selflessness of a mother.

*Da Yan is a doctoral student of European art history. Raised in Shanghai, he lives and works in the Northeastern United States.*



ALL IMAGES IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

## FINE ARTS

# Small Is Beautiful

Continued from Page 1

And, as these portraits’ popularity grew, miniaturists improved their skills, especially in stronger coloring, more detail, sharper focus, and a high finish.

For those wishing to take up the skill, manuals promoted learning to bring out the subject’s luminous flesh as the defining feature of the portrait; it was a painstaking process. “Artists used the most translucent shades of watercolor the painter could achieve, applied in sheer layers to allow the ivory to shine through,” according to the Morgan Library & Museum’s analysis of its collection.

“Highlights in the face were executed by either leaving the ivory bare, or delicately removing painted layers to expose the support. Thus, the pale complexion was rendered in ivory, itself a material of luxury that implied a conflation of precious material with desirable appearance.”

The most popular technique was painting with gouache (an opaque watercolor) on ivory, a challenging task that required meticulous preparation of the ivory and special painting techniques. If an artist were to simply paint directly onto the ivory, the colors would blend together and lose definition. Thinly sliced along the grain, the ivory was cleaned to remove all organic oils and sanded in preparation for miniature painting. Artists used painting techniques such as hatching (short lines overlapping to show gradations in color) and stippling (repeated dots of color) to avoid muddying colors.

Skilled craftsmanship was used on the casework, called a “portrait box,” to present the portrait at its best and complete the commission. “Thin sheets of ivory were attached to pieces of laid paper (finely textured paper) so the artists could manipulate the piece while painting,” according to The Gibbes Museum’s description of casework.

## Miniatures were made to be held in the hands of a single viewer.

“Once finished, the paper was trimmed to fit a case and allow the ivory to fit snugly against the glass, protecting it from dust and moisture. To keep the ivory from shifting, other pieces of paper, often playing cards or scraps, were layered beneath the painting.”

Colored glass was added to some miniature cases to elevate the richness of the object.

### The Artist, Both Admired and Amenable

As the foremost American miniaturist, Edward Greene Malbone was widely admired by both American and British artists, and he made a name for himself as a master of the miniature portrait.

Self-taught, Malbone left his home in Rhode Island to work as a miniaturist alongside painter and friend Washington Allston (1779–1843) in Boston. Allston remarked on Malbone’s amenable disposition and his way of using his artistic skills to bring out the inner goodness in those who posed for him: He had “the happy talent ... of elevating the character without impairing the likeness [of his sitters].”

As his skills grew, Malbone traveled up and down the East Coast gaining popularity. For a time, he honed his skills in England but returned to the United States to work in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1801. Now in great demand, Malbone began his most prolific period of work, completing three miniatures a week.

Malbone’s miniatures provide insight into the sitters’ character and spirit in a unique way. In his portrait of Eliza Izard, for example, he used a hatching technique, with small strokes and a mix of colors. Even though her skin looks smooth, closer study reveals small lines of color layered over one another to create a subtle blush in her cheek.

Several miniature portraits at the Smithsonian American Art Museum provide details about Malbone and his subjects. As word spread among families and friends, the artist’s commissions grew. Susannah Russell was a descen-

ALL IMAGES IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN



Miniature of Henry B. Bounetheau’s aunt, circa 1804, by Edward Greene Malbone. Watercolor on oval ivory; 2 3/4 inches by 2 1/4 inches. Smithsonian American Art Museum.

Miniature of John Corlis, 1795, by Edward Greene Malbone. Watercolor on oval ivory; 2 3/4 inches by 2 1/4 inches. Smithsonian American Art Museum.



Miniature of Susan Poinsett, circa 1801–1802, by Edward Greene Malbone. Watercolor on oval ivory; 2 3/4 inches by 2 1/4 inches. Smithsonian American Art Museum.

Miniature of Mrs. John Corlis (Susannah Condé Russell), 1795, by Edward Greene Malbone. Watercolor on oval ivory; 2 3/4 inches by 2 1/4 inches. Smithsonian American Art Museum.



Miniature of Mr. Lawrence of Boston, 1803, by Edward Greene Malbone. Watercolor on oval ivory; 2 3/4 inches by 2 1/4 inches. Smithsonian American Art Museum.

Miniature of Dr. Elisha Poinsett, circa 1801–1802, by Edward Greene Malbone. Watercolor on oval ivory; 2 3/4 inches by 2 1/4 inches. Smithsonian American Art Museum.



Miniature of Mrs. Joseph Manigault (Charlotte Drayton), circa 1801, by Edward Greene Malbone. Watercolor on oval ivory; 2 3/4 inches by 2 1/4 inches. Smithsonian American Art Museum.

Edward Greene Malbone was widely admired by both American and British artists.

dant of the Condé and Bourbon houses, and counted several French kings in her lineage, including Louis IV.

John Corlis, who had his miniature done in 1795, was a merchant-ship owner based in Providence, Rhode Island. From 1792 to 1810, the fleet traveled between the United States, the Caribbean islands, and Hamburg, Germany.

Joseph Manigault was a plantation owner and a member of the South Carolina legislature. The artist completed a miniature of his wife, Charlotte Drayton.

Malbone painted miniatures of several members of the Poinsett family during his trip to Charleston between 1801 and 1802. He did a miniature of Dr. Elisha Poinsett, who was the father of Joel R. Poinsett, who was a member of the House of Representatives and secretary of war to President Martin Van Buren.

Susan Poinsett was recuperating from a lengthy illness at the time of her portrait, but her recovery was brief and she died two years later. The small portrait shows a wan young woman with sad eyes.

Henry Bounetheau, a leading miniaturist in Charleston, showed his great respect and admiration for Malbone by having him do the portraits of Bounetheau’s own family, including an aunt. It is not clear which of his aunts appears in this miniature.

### By Today’s Standards

Although not as expensive as a full-length portrait, the price for such an emotional connection was not cheap, yet by the 1830s, newspapers carried ads for miniaturists. Often, a portrait painter offered a two-for-one to bring in clients to pose. As the full-size portrait was being done, the miniaturist who partnered with a portrait artist would complete a smaller likeness.

According to Malbone’s account book, he painted a Mr. Lawrence in December 1803 and was paid \$70 for his efforts on Christmas Day. In today’s dollars, commissions for artists to complete an ivory miniature would range between \$450 and \$13,500 with an average of \$1,325. The cost would take in the reputation and skill of the artist, the materials used, and the quality of the casework. The price might go down if multiple family members had their miniatures made, and whether a full-scale portrait would also be ordered.

A historical marker in Savannah, Georgia, offers great praise of his skill: “Today Malbone is acknowledged to be the finest miniaturist his country has yet produced, and among the greatest of all time anywhere.”

### Correction

The Nov. 1 article “The Myth and the Might of Antonio Canova’s Sculptures” included a mistake in the retelling of the myth of Daedalus and Icarus. In the myth, the pair flee to Sicily. In addition, the image of the sculpture “Pauline Borghese Bonaparte as Venus Victorious” was inverted. The figure actually leans on her right side. The Epoch Times regrets the errors.

## ARCHITECTURE

# The Humble Home of a President

Lincoln's homestead in Springfield, Illinois

DEENA BOUKNIGHT

The Greek Revival wood-sided home in Springfield, Illinois, built in 1839 and purchased by Abraham and Mary Lincoln in May 1844, was originally one and a half stories with five rooms and a sleeping loft. However, as Lincoln's legal profession gained respect, he was able to afford a full second story and other renovations.

The home's architectural style was hardly distinct. Yet when Lincoln joined the hotly contested 1860 race to become the nation's 16th president, all eyes were on the home at the corner of Eighth and Jackson streets. So much interest was piqued, in fact, that the then widely read Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper sent an artist to sketch a few rooms. The detailed engravings provided readers nationwide with a glimpse of the eclectic décor in the only home the Lincolns would ever own.

Bedrooms are on the added second floor, with rooms for gathering and entertaining relegated to the first floor. The National Park Service shares that the Lincolns chose furnishings that "reflected the tastes of a prosperous mid-19th-century American family," primarily a blend of revival styles such as Renaissance, Rococo, and Empire.

Lincoln Home Historic Site curator Susan Haake explained in an interview that about 50 artifacts remain in the home, with other antique pieces carefully selected to convey what the Lincolns owned. "They had a big sale before they left for Washington and decided to rent their home while they were away," she said. "Some pieces were sold to locals, some were stored with Mary's family, and the horsehair pieces were housed across the street."

And while historically significant events happened inside the home, including the birth of three sons and the death of one, as well as a presidential nomination and appointment, it was still an everyday dwelling place, to be used and enjoyed as homes are supposed to be.

*A 30-plus-year writer/journalist, Deena C. Bouknight works from her Western North Carolina mountain cottage and has contributed articles on food culture, travel, people, and more to local, regional, national, and international publications. She has written three novels, including the only historical fiction about the East Coast's worst earthquake. Her website is DeenaBouknightWriting.com*



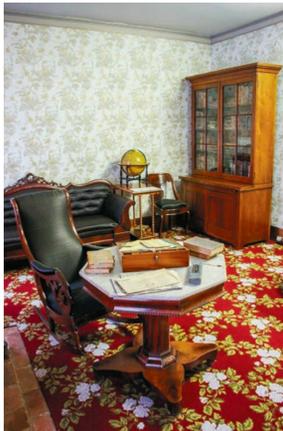
The Lincolns purchased their Greek Revival one-story home in 1844. Twelve years later, in 1856, a full second story was added to become a nearly 3,000-square-foot home. Renovations included Italianate details, such as a low-pitched roof and projecting eaves with large brackets.



Probably the most photographed item in the Lincoln historic home is this slant-top, dark walnut desk with eight open pigeonholes for organizing letters and papers. While a small desk, especially considering Abraham's size, it is where he wrote many political speeches.



Although Victorian and other 19th-century popular décor styles were present in the floral carpet, wallpaper, and window treatments in the front parlor, practicality is evident in the Lincolns' woven horsehair, chosen for durability and ease-of-care, to cover wood-frame seating. The highly detailed Temple Parlor wood stove is a replica of the home's original, which is on display at the Henry Ford Museum of American Innovation in Dearborn, Mich., and served as a functional yet decorative room accessory. The circa 19th-century lithographs of George and Martha Washington hold a place of honor over the hearth.



This corner of the front parlor is arranged today exactly as it was when the Lincolns lived in the home. The side chair and mahogany rocking chair sport the same woven horsehair found on all the upholstered pieces, while the corner étagère (a ladder-type bookshelf) features antique "whatnots," or what we refer to today as knickknacks. Hanging on the wall is a shadow box featuring an artistic arrangement of real hair, another 19th-century commonality.



While the back parlor was first the Lincolns' bedroom, the added second story enabled them to move their bedrooms upstairs and turn their original bedroom into a second parlor. An Empire-style, marble-topped table with scroll legs and casters served as a centerpiece in the room, with more woven horsehair upholstered chairs as main seating.



Abraham's and Mary's bedrooms were separate but right next door to one another. This bed, though not original to the house, is the same size as the one Lincoln slept in. A common question when people tour the historic home is: Did his feet hang off? Most likely they did, is the answer that interpretive National Park Service park rangers often give.



Mary's bedroom was where she not only rested but also sewed. Since closets were typically not part of a 19th-century home's design, armoires housed clothing, and hers was most likely a stately solid wood piece such as the one currently on display in her bedroom. She also had a rocking chair and dressing table. The current wallpaper in her bedroom is a copy of the original that once graced the house.



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.

## Insipid but Charming Rom-Com

Julia and George drawing big box-office bucks

MARK JACKSON

The art and craft of acting is incredibly addictive. It's got lows (extreme discomfort and embarrassment) that make the highs (rapt audiences in the palm of one's hand, weeping at one's drama and hysterical at one's comedy) an absolute flood of endorphins. Master actor John Gielgud didn't call acting "half shame, half glory" for nothing.

And as fun as it can be to work with any highly skilled actor or actress, sometimes you hit a sweet spot with someone who elevates your game, the same as in a romantic relationship. The following actors and actresses absolutely love(d) working together: Alan Rickman and Emma Thompson, Ben Stiller and Owen Wilson, Cillian Murphy and Tom Hardy, George Clooney and Brad Pitt, Bradley Cooper and Jennifer Lawrence, Ryan Gosling and Emma Stone, Ben Affleck and Matt Damon, and Chris Evans and Scarlett Johansson.

And, of course, George Clooney and Julia Roberts. They've been making movies together for more than 20 years now, first in 2001's "Ocean's Eleven," again in "Ocean's Twelve," then "Money Monster," and "Confessions of a Dangerous Mind."

Of course, both of them drip charisma and charm—that's the prerequisite for the job, just as Shaq's 300-pound athletic, goliath self was a prerequisite for being the most dominating center in basketball history. This is the fundamental truth that keeps their new movie, "Ticket to Paradise," afloat.

But the thing is, we as an audience now also have a long relationship with the two of them working together, like that couple we love to have over for dinner and go camping with. Without George and Julia, "Ticket to Paradise" would fall flat on its face with a resounding smack. As of this writing, however, the film has grossed \$33.7 million and amassed another \$85 million at the interna-

tional box office, pushing its worldwide tally to \$119 million, and its Rotten Tomatoes audience rating is currently at 88 percent.

**There's a Thin Line Between Love and Hate**

Naturally, the film begins with the characters of our good friends George and Julia not being able to stand the sight of each other. They hate each other in the specific ways that, according to comedians Sinbad and Chris Rock, only a formerly married couple can. In a fairly funny cross-cutting exposition dump, we realize they each saw their entire past together play out very differently, where each imagines being the hero and the other as the complete idiot.

They got married, and divorced five years later but not before having a daughter, Lily (Kaitlyn Dever), who, at her college graduation, can't even seat them next to each other because they'll fight over their shared armrest.

After graduation, Lily sets off with her former roommate and best friend Wren (Billie Lourd) for a little R 'n' R before attending law school. Off to Bali they go (Dever and Lourd starred together, hilariously, in 2019's "Booksmart"), where Lily promptly falls head over heels in love with a young, handsome seaweed farmer (seaweed farmer!), Gede (Maxime Bouttier).

When the girls were facing danger after their incredibly inept tour boat left them a mile from shore, he happened by and rescued them. Marriage plans happen so fast it'll make your head spin.

It makes parents Georgia (Roberts) and David's (Clooney) heads spin even faster. Dump law school for a lowly seaweed farmer? The insanity! And so they high-tail it to Bali with the intention of lying profusely: They'll do a Trojan horse play of agreeing to the marriage on the surface and then sneaking out in the middle of the night

his abrasive, confrontational style has begun to wear thin and now only appeals to conspiracy-theory-insomniac types. Working the abysmal midnight to 6:00 a.m. time slot, Elvis has clearly lost his mojo, and his lack of enthusiasm is beyond transparent.

**Getting It Together**

Before he starts his next show (which also takes place on his birthday), Elvis is reminded by his program director, Sam (Nadia Farès), that his ratings are in the tank and that he better get it together soon. He's chided and taunted by the 8-to-12 host, Justin (Kevin Dillon), and barely pays attention to the show prep being presented to him by his producer, Mary (Alia Seror-O'Neill).

Minutes before going on air, Mary tells Elvis that a hotly anticipated call-in guest has canceled, causing Elvis to totally lose it. He begins browbeating and berating his caller-screener, Dylan (William Moseley), on his first day answering the phones. As Dylan starts to leave in frustration, Elvis says that it's just a ritual, hazing, and rite of passage that every new employee receives and asks him to come back, which Dylan does.

The show's first caller, using the fake name Gary, is obviously high-strung and agitated. He tells Elvis that he's going to murder him for a multitude of reasons, none of which he immediately reveals. With Elvis about to hang up, the caller shoots a warning shot into a wall, barely missing Elvis's petrified wife and toddler daughter, indicating that he means business. The caller claims he's in the Cooney's home.

**In Good Company**

Bearing much in common with Clint Eastwood's "Play Misty for Me," Oliver Stone's "Talk Radio," Ron Howard's "Ransom" (also starring Gibson), and maybe even a little bit of the first "Scream," "On the Line" shows that it's a living, breathing nightmare for anyone making a living in the public eye. If you're someone like Elvis—gruff, dismissive, controversial, polarizing, famous, and wealthy—regularly attracting nutjobs practically comes with the job description.

With the exception of the first and last



(L-R) Director Ol Parker, Julia Roberts, and George Clooney on set in "Ticket to Paradise."

**George Clooney and Julia Roberts have been making movies together for more than 20 years now.**

**'Ticket to Paradise'**

**Director:**  
Ol Parker

**Starring:**  
George Clooney, Julia Roberts, Kaitlyn Dever, Billie Lourd, Maxime Bouttier, Lucas Bravo

**MPAA Rating:**  
PG-13

**Running Time:**  
1 hour, 44 minutes

**Release Date:**  
Oct. 21, 2022

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

and sabotaging, looting, and sacking the plans. It's the first thing they've agreed on in years. Teamwork!

**The Family That Sabotages Together ...**

Due their own misadventures and residual bitterness, David and Georgia are of course deeply cynical about the institution of marriage, and so the moral dilemma and the ethical questions of causing a young, blissful love relationship to tank fly right out the window. Law school? Seaweed farmer? What's the objection here?

The main question is how will they reconcile their own differences so that they can wreck their kid's attempt to make a similar mistake? The fun lies, of course, in them being hampered by their inability to go more than a few seconds without bickering. They snipe viciously, reopen old wounds, and relitigate ancient arguments. They insist that they hate each other and act like it most of the time, but one also gets the feeling that they enjoy the one-upmanship.

Will George marry the dashing French airline pilot she's dating? Will David be able to let his little girl go? Most importantly: Will the feisty old couple get back together?

Relationships like this are many-layered, and so when the two of them get soused, recall their college teamwork of beating the pants off beer pong opponents, and hit the dance floor to House of Pain's "Jump Around" to their daughter's immense embarrassment, you can see the ending coming a mile off. But then again, you could see it two seconds after the movie started.

"Ticket to Paradise" does an old thing we've seen a million times before, does it pretty well, and with people we like to watch doing it, whom we've seen do it before. It's likely this lack of reinvention that's hauling in box office bucks.

## FILM REVIEW

### Mel Gibson as a Radio Shock Jock Under the Gun

MICHAEL CLARK

For close to a quarter century (1979–2002), Mel Gibson had the Midas touch. He starred in two blockbuster franchises ("Mad Max," "Lethal Weapon"), high-end thrillers ("The Year of Living Dangerously," "Payback," "Ransom"), and multiple war dramas ("Galipoli," "The Patriot," "We Were Soldiers").

The high-water mark of Gibson's critical recognition and industry rewards was "Braveheart" (1995), the historical epic that took in over \$213 million at the global box office and netted him not one but two Oscars.

With "The Passion of the Christ" (2004), the tide began to change. Despite hauling in over \$612 million worldwide, "Passion" sharply divided critics and audiences and received accusations of pushing anti-Semitic content. At one point, "Passion" was both the highest-grossing foreign language and "R" rated movie of all time.

Despite the unqualified popularity of "Passion," it was Gibson's conservative politics and his outspoken opinions regarding the film industry's child trafficking and abuse that fanned the growing anti-Gibson flames. Apart from the stinker "Daddy's Home 2" (2017), no Gibson-starring movie has cracked the \$100 million mark in the last 18 years.

Easily the best thing Gibson has done since "Blood Father" (2016), "On the Line" is the first English-language effort from French director Romuald Boulanger, who also wrote and co-produced, and it is one of the most expertly executed crime thrillers in recent memory.

Gibson takes the lead as Elvis Cooney, an L.A. "shock jock" radio host whose career has been in decline for reasons not (or not needed to be) explained. It could be because

**This movie practically begs for multiple viewings.**



Ratings for his radio call-in show have tanked for host Elvis Cooney (Mel Gibson), in "On the Line."

five minutes, the narrative is presented in real time, with Boulanger messing with the audience's heads in the same manner that "Gary" does with Elvis.

As the narrative progresses, Boulanger keeps upping the ante, tightening the vise grip on our psyche. We know only what Elvis knows; Boulanger has no intention of letting us off hook, much in the same manner as the 1950s' efforts of Alfred Hitchcock.

Without my giving anything whatsoever away, there are at least two endings, maybe more, and unless you're clairvoyant, you won't be able to figure out any of them. Moreover, Boulanger doesn't offer up any time-wasting or misleading red herrings, something this genre does with numbing regularity.

Everything that happens in the last 15 minutes is the fruit of clues being seeded along the way in the first 30, but you'll only be able to put it all together once in hindsight or with a second or third watch. This movie practically begs for multiple viewings.

Is "On the Line" going to resuscitate Gibson's waning career? Probably not. Will it change the minds of his many detractors? No, not even close. It will, however, offer further proof that Gibson loves to work and, on occasion, recapture the spirit of his glory days.

*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 Shamron 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.*

## FINE ARTS

# A Surprising Perspective: Paolo Uccello's 'Madonna With Child'

A long, hard look at Uccello's painting reveals a delight

LORRAINE FERRIER

WARSAW, Poland—Imagine walking into a room full of people all vying for your attention. Each one of them has a unique voice, style, and message just for you. You might listen to the loudest person first, or those closest to you, before visiting the others in the room. After a while, your attention wanes; even if the next person you meet has the best message ever, you're just not listening.

This is how I experience visiting museums, art galleries, or stately homes. Each great artwork, object, or architectural feature grapples for my attention. It's fascinating, but sometimes overwhelming. So to avoid fatigue, I prioritize what I see or even split my visit over several days.

Making appointments to appreciate particular pieces of art is my way of honoring the artists, artisans, or architects who learned and perfected their skills over countless hours, days, years, and often decades.

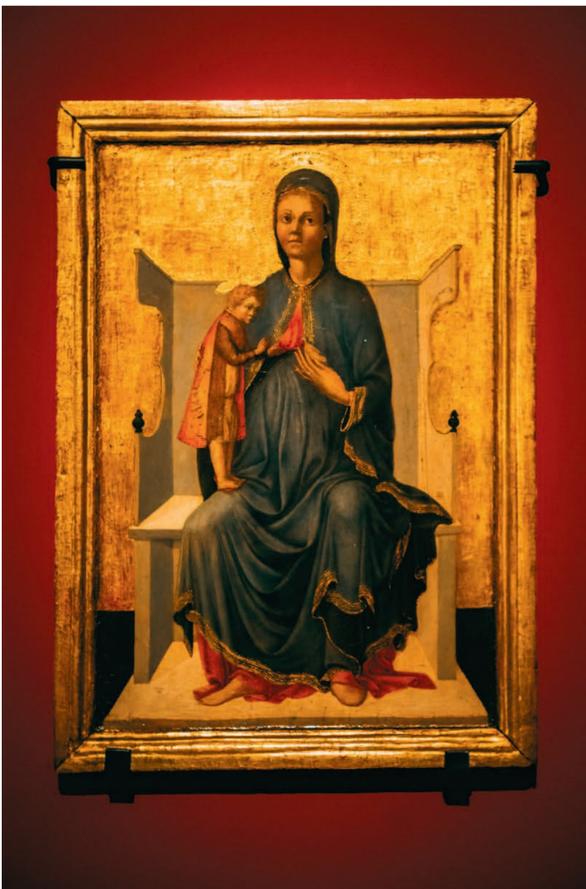
## The Royal Castle

Recently, I visited an art and architectural feast for the senses: The Royal Castle in Warsaw. Besides my tour of the castle itself, I included on my must-see list two portraits by Rembrandt, the temporary exhibition "Botticelli Tells a Story: Paintings of Renaissance Masters From the Collection of Accademia Carrara," a room full of Warsaw cityscapes painted by Venetian artist Bernardo Bellotto, and the "Paolo Uccello—'Madonna With Child'" exhibition, which only just made my list. That was my mistake.

## Uccello gave Mary a pregnant glow and a halo to emphasize the sacred scene.

I'd previously seen Uccello's Gothic-style painting "Madonna With Child" online; its muted colors and Mary's elongated fingers and rather vacant facial expression didn't endear me to the work. But seeing this painting in person, I found myself drawn to it. The colors came to life. It didn't matter that the figures weren't perfect or in proportion; the pure intent of the painting spoke to me on a level I cannot quite comprehend.

In the painting, Uccello depicted the moment that Mary understands her son's fate, and her ultimate sacrifice—that her son must die for our salvation. Childhood innocence and divine providence appear in the painting. Mary faces the viewer, but gazes devoutly up to God. Christ stands on his mother's lap, while cooing at the bird in her hand. He's totally fixated on it. He holds his hands as if he's about to bless the bird, but equally he could be reaching out to hold it, as any child naturally



"Madonna With Child," circa 1430, by Paolo Uccello. The Royal Castle in Warsaw, Poland.

would. Christ's curiosity seems natural for any child, yet Christians know that the bird depicted, traditionally the goldfinch, symbolizes the Passion of Christ.

Uccello gave Mary a pregnant glow and a halo to emphasize the sacred scene. Gazing at Mary's facial expression, I saw her piety. She looks up to God, accepting that her faith comes first, before any earthly matters, including the mother-child bond. It humbled me.

Uccello painted the piece around 1430. Paint layers have flaked away over the centuries to reveal part of the artist's painting process. This can be fully appreciated when the viewer is face-to-face with the work. Uccello had originally depicted a nude Christ, with Mary holding him by placing her hand under his bottom. We can see this previous composition due to the now deteriorated

top layer of paint in that area.

We can also see that Uccello created three-dimensional elements in the painting by using the new mathematical perspective technique. Uccello, like his contemporary Masaccio, pioneered the use of single-point perspective. Notice Christ's foreshortened halo and the simple throne that Mary sits upon.

## Uccello's Perspective

Uccello (1397–1475) mainly created decorative works and religious paintings. He worked in the Quattrocento, when the Gothic style of the Middle Ages gave way to Early Renaissance style.

The 16th-century art historian Giorgio Vasari, in his work "The Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects," gives us an insight into Uccello. Born



A detail of "Madonna With Child," circa 1430, by Paolo Uccello. The Royal Castle in Warsaw, Poland.

Paolo di Dono, he became known as Paolo Uccello ("Paolo of the Birds") due to his love of animals, particularly birds. He couldn't afford to keep pets, so he decorated the family home with his drawings and paintings of all manner of creatures.

Vasari detailed Uccello's genius for investigating and drawing perspective, which seems to have become an unhealthy obsession. Uccello's friend, the sculptor Donatello (who trained with Uccello's master, the sculptor Lorenzo Ghiberti) warned him: "Ah, Paolo, this perspective of thine makes thee abandon the substance for the shadow; these are things that are only useful to men who work at the inlaying of wood, seeing that they fill their borders with chips and shavings, with spirals both round and square, and with other similar things."

But Uccello continued to investigate and perfect complex perspectives to the point that he practically became a hermit. "Oh, what a sweet thing is this perspective!" Uccello said, according to Vasari. Uccello's extensive work in perspective inspired Renaissance treatises by eminent artists such as Albrecht Dürer, Leonardo da Vinci, and Piero della Francesca, according to The Art Story website.

Only by standing in front of Uccello's "Madonna With Child" could I appreciate the inner depth of this piece. The artwork reminded me to give similar works more than a second glance, to take my time to appreciate the artistry and the message conveyed beyond the surface technique. Now that's a sweet perspective.

*The "Paolo Uccello—Madonna With Child" exhibition, at The Royal Castle in Warsaw, Poland, runs until Jan. 8, 2023. To find out more, visit Zamek-Krolewski.pl*

## POPCORN AND INSPIRATION

## A Wholesome Historical Miniseries

TIFFANY BRANNAN

Are you looking for a wholesome alternative to the ever-popular "Bridgerton," something that offers complex family relationships, romantic intrigue, and lavish period costumes without the salacious content? "Wives and Daughters," a four-part British miniseries that aired on the BBC in 1999 (and 2002 in the United States), is an excellent option.

Instead of an original story with a loose historical setting, this tale is an adaptation of the 1864 novel "Wives and Daughters: An Everyday Story" by Elizabeth Gaskell.

Like "Pride and Prejudice" and other Jane Austen works, this series focuses on the endeavors of young women in rural England to navigate the courtship game in search of good marriages and perhaps true love. It begins in the 1820s, but most of the story takes place in the 1830s.

## A Classic Story

This story focuses on Molly Gibson (Justine Waddell; Anna Maguire, as a child), the only child of a country doctor (Bill Paterson), who was widowed when Molly was a young girl. When the beloved daughter has grown into a young woman, her father is disturbed to learn that one of his medical students (Richard Coyle) is infatuated with her, so he sends her to visit neighbors without revealing the reason.

Molly enjoys staying with her hosts: the gruff yet lovable Squire Hamley (Michael Gambon), his sensitive wife (Penelope Wilton), their favored older son, Osborne (Tom Hollander), and the studious younger son, Roger (Anthony Howell). Molly is a great comfort to the parents as they learn of Osborne's failure to pass an exam at Cambridge and wonder about his troubling secretiveness.

Meanwhile, Dr. Gibson grows increasingly fond of attractive widow Hyacinth Kirkpatrick (Francesca Annis), who has worked as a governess since her husband's death years earlier. Molly is devastated when she learns that her father intends to marry Mrs. Kirkpatrick. As soon as they've married, Hyacinth's former sweetness is replaced with narrow-minded vanity, selfishness, and preoccupation with social customs.

Soon, the new Mrs. Gibson's grown daugh-

## Honesty, honor, and loyalty are shown as admirable virtues.

### 'Wives and Daughters'

**Director:** Nicholas Renton

**Starring:** Justine Waddell, Bill Paterson, Francesca Annis, Tom Hollander, Anthony Howell

**MPAA Rating:** TV-PG

**Running Time:** 4 episodes totaling 5 hours, 1 minute

**Release Date:** Dec. 15, 2002 (U.S.)

★ ★ ★ ★ ★



ter, Cynthia (Keeley Hawes), comes to live with them. The beautiful young woman lacks Molly's sincerity, but she soon grows closer to her new stepmother. Molly is sad that she no longer enjoys as much time with her father, and she is secretly dismayed when Cynthia attracts the affection of the local young men, especially Roger Hamley. Meanwhile, Hyacinth and Cynthia seem to share a secret with the mysterious and seemingly sinister Mr. Preston (Iain Glen).

## Historic Beauty

This series was generous with historic details, especially regarding costumes and hairstyles. According to the IMDb website, each of the three leading ladies required over 1,000 costumes and up to 40 hairstyles throughout the four episodes.

ALL PHOTOS BY BBC

A publicity shot from "Wives and Daughters," showing the titular characters in their sumptuous costumes.

## BOOK REVIEW

## A Thorough Introduction to the Ancient Greek Battles

A thorough introduction to the ancient Greek battles and why they were fought

DUSTIN BASS

In his latest work, "The Harvest of War: Marathon, Thermopylae, and Salamis: The Epic Battles That Saved Democracy," ancient Greek historian Stephen P. Kershaw has produced a thorough study of the famous fifth century B.C. battles between the city-states ("poleis") of ancient Greece (or Hellas) and the Persian Empire: the ground battles of Marathon, Thermopylae, and Plataea, and the sea battles of Salamis and Artemisium. He follows this with their individual significance in the Greeks' defense of their democratic freedom.

These specific battles are important to remember for many reasons, including for their inspirational power millennia later. As Henry Wadsworth Longfellow once wrote: "Lives of great men all remind us/ We can make our lives sublime./ And, departing, leave behind us/ Footprints on the sands of time." Kershaw presents these historical footprints as a reminder of what has always been required of people who desire freedom over tyranny.

## Before the Battles

Kershaw introduces the reader to the world of the ancient Persians and the ancient Greeks. He provides insight into the background of Persia, along with its kings, immense wealth, and massive reach. Kershaw shows that this reach went too far and proved too costly when it tried to expand across the Aegean Sea. We are introduced to the reigns of Cambyses, Darius, and eventually Xerxes. However, contrary to our modern views, these kings, Darius specifically, have an appeal to them.

Kershaw details how different the city-states in Hellas were from each other. The author discusses the Spartans and how they ran their polis: their democratic voting method of who could shout the loudest, how their political representation worked, the establishment of their secret police (the "Krypteia"), and how their young boys were educated to produce courageous and obedient soldiers.

The reader also learns how the soldiers fought, what they used in combat, and how rifle the ranks were with potential traitors. It merely proves that little has changed over the millennia when it comes to the power of bribery. From early on in his book, Kershaw also makes it rather clear that propaganda does abound among the ancient works—another modern similarity.

Kershaw spends a substantial amount of time on the Persians. The reason for their invasion of Hellas is made quite clear. Atossa, the queen and wife of Darius, tells him that she wants him to invade Greece so she can have Greek slave girls.

For some of the Greek city-states, the tribute of "earth and water" to the Persians was preferable over war and possible annihilation. As for those who succumbed to Darius's (and later Xerxes's) demands, they were rewarded. Whether from an ancient or a modern perspective, there are worse things than being rewarded for subjugation. Athens provided tribute for a short time until it did an about-face. Sparta never bowed to the Persian power.



PUBLIC DOMAIN

Famous ancient battles between the Greeks and Persians serve as reminders of what has always been required of people who desire freedom over tyranny. "The Heroes of Marathon," 1911, by Georges Antoine Rochegrosse.

## Preserving Democracy

To illustrate how protective the Greeks were of their political freedom, the author uses the story of the Athenian Miltiades. Miltiades was once a king, but became a hero of the Battle of Marathon, which secured Greek freedom from the Persians. The following year, Miltiades requested ships and soldiers to storm a city, another Greek city-state, Paros, for its gold. However, he failed. His failure to take the city was not why he was put on trial by the Athenians. Rather, "their worry, as they looked at their precious and thriving democracy, was that he might still choose to make himself a tyrant, and ultimately that fear, and inter-factional politics, outweighed any gratitude for spectacularly saving the democracy that they now guarded so jealously."

Miltiades narrowly missed the death penalty but was fined a massive sum. His physical injury from the siege of Paros, however, turned into gangrene and killed him before he paid the fine. Miltiades's death is one of many in the book. Kershaw exposes the reader to the battles, the deaths, the betrayals, and the ultimate triumph of the Greeks over the Persians.

As aforementioned, though, there is the issue of propaganda with these stories. But Kershaw utilizes ancient works—such as those of Herodotus, Thucydides, Plato, the Cyrus Cylinder, and Plutarch—along with modern archaeological discoveries to offset this.

With both approaches, he provides clarification for the readers as to what is true, what is provable, and what is left to the reader to decide. Kershaw references the many ancient texts through quotes and paraphrases. He respects his audience enough to allow readers to surmise what is nonsensical, fantastical, and plausible.

He corrects a number of misunderstood moments and items, whether battle conditions or symbolism. This includes issues like

## Stephen Kershaw introduces the reader to the world of the ancient Persians and the ancient Greeks.



**'The Harvest of War: Marathon, Thermopylae, and Salamis: The Epic Battles That Saved Democracy'**

**Author**

Stephen P. Kershaw

**Publisher**

Pegasus Books

**Date**

Oct. 4, 2022

**Hardcover:**

480 pages

the use of the "lambda," a Greek letter, on the Spartan shields; the request to the Ionians to either defy the Persians or at least not fight very hard for them; the real number of the Spartan 300; and the contrast of sanitation conditions and provision shortages or surpluses that the Spartans and the Persians experienced at Thermopylae.

## Beauty Lost in Translation

When translating the ancient texts from the likes of Herodotus or Plato, there has always been the usage of poetic, or at least beautiful, prose. Through the modern translations that Kershaw uses, we lose much of that.

Translators often attempt to make ancient texts so modern that they veer from the objective of accessibility, and incidentally engage in a mode of self-importance. Kershaw's use of hypermodern terms (and terms that likely won't last), like "fake news," doesn't fit with the context or flow of the book; but these are more my preferences than complaints.

There is some new and interesting information that Kershaw provides in his book, but "The Harvest of War" tends to be in line with his "A Brief History of the Roman Empire" and "A Brief Guide to Classical Civilization." For readers who desire an introduction to the Hellas-Persia struggle, this is an ideal book. "The Harvest of War" gives brief but substantial introductions to the many battles, historical figures, and ancient writers and historians.

All in all, "The Harvest of War" provides enough to give the reader the whole story of how the Greeks fought for their democratic way of life, and how their sacrifices reverberate today as the author fittingly discusses in the final chapter.

*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.*

admirable young female character.

Molly Gibson is a perfect example of strong femininity instead of feminism. She never challenges her natural role as a woman, but she does question the unnatural rules of pretentious and hypocritical high society that her stepmother tries to impose on her. She also displays faith-based virtues, which are admirable traits for any person.

She is humble, modest, selfless, generous, honest, forgiving, brave, and extremely loving. She is unafraid to tell her father that she would prefer not to do certain things, but she happily submits herself to anything he expressly wishes, like a dutiful daughter.

She is meekly subservient to her father and stepmother, and she joyfully helps the Hamleys during many tragedies. Perhaps her most admirable behavior is her treatment of her stepmother, a beautiful young woman whom she could easily resent but whom she chooses to embrace and love.

Molly is never proud or self-righteous; however, she isn't a doormat. When she sees that Cynthia is behaving selfishly or insensitively toward the young man she supposedly loves, Molly remonstrates her. This is also a very loving act, since she is keeping Cynthia from becoming self-centered.

Look for this serial on DVD or streaming services to enjoy wholesome entertainment for yourself or to share with your daughters,

granddaughters, nieces, sisters, neighbors, students, and friends.

*Tiffany Brannan is a 21-year-old opera singer, Hollywood historian, interviewer, copywriter, fashion historian, travel writer, and vintage lifestyle enthusiast. In 2016, she and her sister founded the Pure Entertainment Preservation Society, an organization dedicated to reforming the arts by reinstating the Motion Picture Production Code.*



Roger Hamley (Anthony Howell) and Molly Gibson (Justine Waddell), in a scene from "Wives and Daughters."

REWIND, REVIEW, AND RE-RATE

# One of John Ford's Greatest Films

An epic ode to the Wild West

IAN KANE

The year is 1882 and much of the West is still very, very wild.

A quartet of brothers, Wyatt (Henry Fonda), Morgan (Ward Bond), Virgil (Tim Holt), and James Earp (Don Garner) are driving a herd of cattle through Arizona, which they hope to sell in California. The men are scruffy and bearded, all except for the youngest, James, who sports a bit of peach fuzz.

Suddenly, a buckboard appears with two men on it—Old Man Clanton (Walter Brennan) and his oldest son, Ike (Grant Withers). Wyatt notices them and casually rides up to politely greet them. But Old Man Clanton seems more interested in purchasing the Earps' cattle than in exchanging niceties.

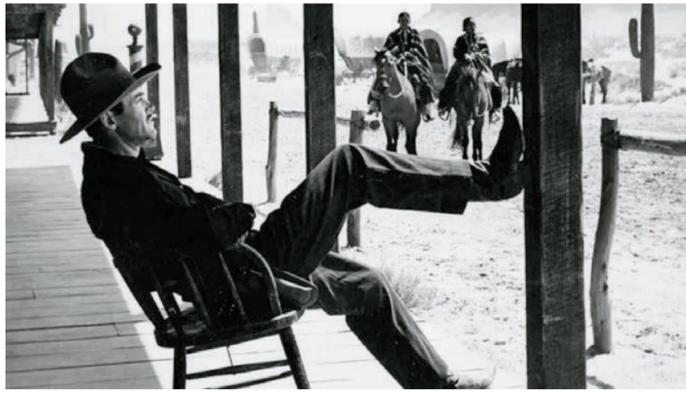
Old Man Clanton tries to offer a relatively measly price by mentioning how "scrawny" the cattle look. When Wyatt flatly refuses the offer, the elder Clanton ups the amount. When that offer is likewise refused, Wyatt tactfully switches the subject and asks the Clantons about the area. He learns that a town called Tombstone is "just over the rise, there," Old Man Clanton says as he points off in the distance. Meanwhile, Ike sits glowering with silent menace the entire time, eyeing Wyatt as if he's sizing him up.

This opening scene is a foreshadowing of the violence to come. In this case, it is legendary director John Ford who retells the epic showdown between the upstanding Earps and the nefarious Clantons in his 1946 American classic, "My Darling Clementine."

There have been many cinematic re-countings of this famous conflict, most notably (at least in my book) 1939's "Frontier Marshal" and 1994's "Wyatt Earp," with Randolph Scott and Kevin Costner playing Wyatt Earp, respectively. However, Ford's version is perhaps the greatest of them all.

As the tale continues, the Earp brothers hunker down later in the evening and set up a campsite. The eldest three decide to ride into town for shaves and beers, leaving James to stay and watch over the cattle.

As the three ride over the rise, they



Wyatt Earp (Henry Fonda) becomes town marshal of Tombstone, in "My Darling Clementine."

find a raucous town. They pass a saloon packed with braying throngs of folks out for a night of mischief. Oddly, a prim and proper barbershop stands out from all of the dust, grime, and tumult. But as the barber is about to begin shaving Wyatt's beard, several bullets strike the mirror in front of them, almost hitting Morgan.

Wyatt rushes after the fleeing barber to discover that a Native American named "Indian Charlie" is drunk and shooting his pistols in all directions. And when the local lawmen cower from the danger of facing down the drunk, the townspeople turn to courageous cowpoke Wyatt to deal with the situation. Thus begins Tombstone's powerful pull of Wyatt into its orbit, and his eventual date with destiny—the famous clash with the Clantons at the O.K. Corral.

### A Film of Greats

It's no wonder that this film is considered one of the greatest Westerns of all time—basically a national treasure. The sumptuous, wide-angle black-and-white cinematography (courtesy of Joseph MacDonald) pairs perfectly with the gorgeous, flat-topped mesas and foothills of Ford's favorite shooting location for Westerns: the sprawling, dust-choked environs of the Monument Valley, located on the Utah-Arizona border.

All of this eye candy is backed up by the film's fascinating dichotomy. As

mentioned, while much of Tombstone is rough-and-tumble and seemingly untamable, there are patches of civilization, such as the upscale barbershop that the Earps first visit. As Wyatt plops himself down in the plush barber chair, the barber tries to ease it back but it almost drops Wyatt onto the floor. The barber explains that it's a fancy chair that just arrived from Chicago, so he hasn't had time to figure out how to operate the machinery yet.

These contrasts are subtle at first but gradually become more apparent as the film unfolds. Part of the magic created by such a subtle approach to building the differences is largely due to Ford's magnificent direction, as well as the superbly nuanced performances by its stellar cast.

The Earps also represent a civilizing force for the area, as if they showed up to tame the savage-beast Tombstone and bring it into modernity as a law-abiding settlement with law-abiding citizens.

### The Cast

Victor Mature plays Doc Holliday, a sophisticated Easterner who happens also to be a tubercular hard-drinker with a sense of justice. Holliday teams up with Wyatt after the latter becomes the town marshal.

Cathy Downs plays the titular Clementine Carter, a schoolmarm who also represents order and dignity. She soon becomes the romantic interest of Wyatt.

Fonda is believable as the scruffy but upstanding masculine force of good in the film, yet he's awkward and vulnerable enough at times to be relatable.

Ford's film is emblematic of the more mature-themed Westerns that would bloom in the late 1940s and early '50s, which were far beyond the reductive good-guys-wear-white-hats era that largely preceded it.

"My Darling Clementine" is a pitch-perfect classic Western that has a bit of everything: rousing drama, taut tension, heartfelt romance, and a slow-burn story line involving righteous vengeance that eventually boils over into a satisfying and thankfully bloodless climax.

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

**The Earps represent a civilizing force for the area.**

### 'My Darling Clementine'

**Director:**  
John Ford

**Starring:**  
Henry Fonda, Linda Darnell, Victor Mature

**Not Rated**

**Running Time:**  
1 hour, 37 minutes

**Release Date:**  
Dec. 3, 1946

★★★★★



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**About:** Epoch Press Group is a full-service printing provider associated with The Epoch Times. It consists of The Epoch Press, Inc. with a 37,000 square-

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