THE EPOCH TIMES

ARTS & CULTURE

PUBLIC DOMAIN

An illustration of Cinderella by German illustrator and painter Alexander Zick (1845–1907).

TRADITIONAL CULTURE

Glass Slippers *and* Fairy Godmothers

A fairy tale for all time

JEFF MINICK

Charles Perrault (1628–1703) was well advanced in years when he built his greatest monument.

For over 30 years, Perrault worked as a public servant, often in the employ of King Louis XIV. He wrote poetry and pamphlets celebrating the Sun King's military victories and accomplishments.

As first commissioner of royal buildings, he appointed his brother, an architect, to complete the work on the Louvre and to build the Paris Observatory. He served as secretary to the newly founded Academy of Inscriptions and Belles-Lettres, helped establish the Academy of Sciences, and held the post of chancellor at the French Academy.

Even before his retirement around age 55 from public service, Perrault was also a prolific writer of verse, often long poems with Christian themes. In addition, he composed a four-volume work defending the art and science of his day as opposed to those who cherished the culture of the ancient Greeks and Romans.

*Continued on **Page 4***

Ying and Yang by Sandra Kuck

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THE EPOCH TIMES

TRADITIONAL CULTURE

A Holiday of Kindness

Sarah Josepha Hale and the establishment of Thanksgiving

A portrait of Sarah Josepha Hale, 1831, by James Lambdin.

KATE VIDIMOS

Every year, during the last Thursday of November, we exclaim: "Happy Thanksgiving!" This wish conveys the hope, fellowship, thankfulness, and kindness of the season.

However, this kind, annual wish was not started during a feast between the Indians and the first Pilgrims, as is typically depicted. The "First Thanksgiving" that is usually celebrated and taught is actually based on a fictional story written in 1895 by Jane G. Austin in her work "Standish of Standish: A Story of the Pilgrims."

The first true Thanksgiving was officially established in 1863, when President Abraham Lincoln declared Thanksgiving as a national holiday. Yet most of the credit for the initiation of this holiday goes to a wonderfully patriotic woman, Sarah Josepha Hale (1788–1879), who is most known for her poem "Mary Had a Little Lamb."

An Attempt to Prevent War

For years, Americans had celebrated days of thanksgiving for different purposes, such as victories during the Revolutionary War, but the United States never had a national day of thanksgiving.

However, with the growing division that would lead to the American Civil War, Sarah Josepha Hale sought to create a holiday that would unify Americans everywhere in a day of thanksgiving. By creating a unifying feeling throughout the whole nation, she hoped that the Americans would be less likely to fight.

From 1846 to 1863, Hale worked to get the country to agree to a national holiday. In his article "The First Thanksgiving," Andrew F. Smith, writing for "Americana: The Journal of American Popular Culture," says: "For seventeen years, she wrote annually to presidents, members of Congress, and every governor of every state and territory, requesting each to proclaim the last Thursday in November as Thanksgiving Day."

Even so, this attempt at unification through a national holiday did not prevent the Civil War and, with the beginning of the war, Hale's attempts halted. Because the Civil War divided North and South, Hale had greater difficulty contacting representatives and leaders. But she resumed her efforts until, finally, she obtained enough votes for a majority to agree.

While the Civil War raged on, Hale wrote President Abraham Lincoln and, as Smith says, "a few months after the North's military victories at Gettysburg and Vicksburg in the summer of 1863, Abraham Lincoln declared the last Thursday in November as Thanksgiving Day, thus establishing a national holiday." Hale finally helped to bring about one of the most American of holidays.

Always Kind

In her poem "Mary Had a Little Lamb," Hale wrote: "And you each gentle animal/ In confidence may bind,/ And make them follow at your call,/ If you are always kind." This is the kindness that Hale sought to cultivate and encourage among all Americans.

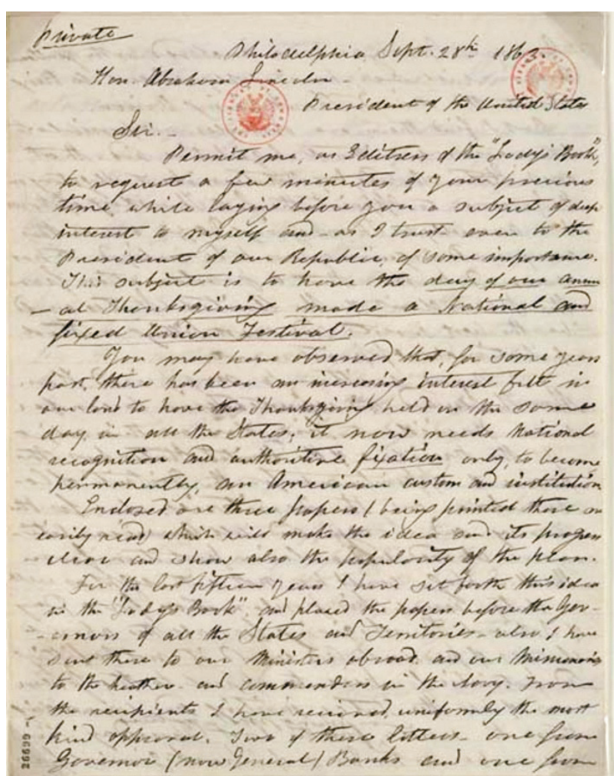
When we adopt kindness, we continue the heritage and traditions that Hale supported and which brought about Thanksgiving. With our kind actions, we can impact our friends, family, and nation in unimaginable ways!

Though the holiday was not able to prevent the schism that divided the North from the South, Hale demonstrated that thankfulness, hope, and kindness are ideals and virtues that are worth encouraging. By endorsing and practicing these virtues, we can reduce—even prevent—strife, war, and death. We can even help to reunify the nation.

As we enter into the Thanksgiving season, let us look at all of our blessings and be grateful for the dedicated and patriotic Sarah Josepha Hale. Through her, we are now able to enjoy wonderful turkey dinners and be thankful for our friends, family, and nation.

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.

The first true Thanksgiving was officially established in 1863.



(Right) The 1863 letter from Sarah Josepha Hale to President Lincoln discussing Thanksgiving Day. Library of Congress.

(Below) "The First Thanksgiving," circa 1912–1915, by Jean Leon Gerome Ferris as described in a story by Jane Austen. Library of Congress.

ALL PHOTO IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

PUBLIC DOMAIN

As scholars have studied the decline of the Roman Empire, editor Roger Kimble has collected essays that offer reasons for the decline of the West. "The Course of Empire: Destruction," 1836, by Thomas Cole. New-York Historical Society.

BOOK REVIEW

Perspectives and Warnings on the Direction of Our Civilization

A wealth of perspectives and warnings on the direction of the West

DUSTIN BASS

Roger Kimball, the editor and publisher of monthly literary review The New Criterion, has assembled a collection of essays on the troubles facing Western civilization. Perhaps "troubles" is too weak of a word, but it seems fitting in regard to the title of the book: "Where Next? Western Civilization at the Crossroads." After reading The New Criterion's 10 essays, that question is glaring: Where next?

This collection of thoughtful prose is a benefit to the reader in that it provides various perspectives regarding the origins of Western civilization, how it has progressed, how it has digressed, and ultimately what will end it or revive it.

Just as historians have dissected the many reasons that the Roman Republic fell, these authors—some are historians themselves—have dissected what has led to the decline of the West. The collection is a testament to the varying degrees to which some of the more informed and brilliant minds agree and disagree on what has led to this decline.

It is also a credit to Kimball that he would include two opposing views on the comparisons between the Roman Empire's decline and that of the West.

When Edward Gibbon wrote his famous narrative, "The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," he was given the gift of historical hindsight to surmise what led to that fall. His work is a timeless examination on how nations—republics specifically—fall apart.

The authors note clearly in all 10 essays that this one is struggling to maintain balance. There are many reasons: decadence, the embrace of differing and at times destructive ideologies, the purposeful misconstruing of democracy and "mob frenzy," an untrustworthy legacy media, mass immigration, the dismissal of assimilation by immigrants and a citizenry that heralds that dismissal, a disconnected and increasingly overbearing government, the ever expanding authority of unelected officials within a representative democracy, an abused middle class, the consistent condemnation of America's history and heroes, and the dismantling of respected institutions.

Though no author states emphatically that this is the end, the reader comes to the conclusion that this hideous compilation of systematic hits can hardly lead to anything else.

Comparisons to Rome and Elsewhere

Authors in the collection make many references and comparisons to the Roman Republic, but they also make other comparisons, like to ancient Greece, but more pointedly, to the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. Comparisons to ancient Rome and Greece may be enlightening, even sobering, for modern readers, but comparisons to communist states are bitter pills to swallow. Yet they must be swallowed all the same.

In his essay, "The Specter of Chinese Civilization," Angelo M. Codevilla writes: "What is now America's ruling culture has been gestating and marking Americans for more than half a century. The effects are all too obvious, and in some senses are worse than what the Soviets inflicted on the Russian people."

All in one essay, America is compared to communist China and Soviet Russia, and—as far-fetched as it may seem—it is fitting because of the "ruling culture" that America has perhaps not embraced but rather simply allowed and often enabled.

As Anthony Daniels states in his essay, "A Popular Form of Monomania": "The disasters of Nazism and Communism did not halt the search for transcendence by means of ideology." And that ideology originates from what James Piereson calls "diversity ideology" in his essay.

It is an ideology led by "activist elites," who now control America's institutions that promote "democratic aspirations and cohesion" in order to "undermine" them, according to James Panero in his essay, "Going Under With the Overclass."

But knowing the results of Nazism and communism, why would any group, elite or otherwise, pursue such ideological ends? In one of the most apt analogies in the collection, Kimball, in his essay, "Highways to Utopia," makes the suggestion that much like King Cyrus the Great of Persia, they do so simply because they can. They do it for past grievances, whether personally affected or not, and whether those grievances have been atoned for or not.

Just as Cyrus, after the Gyndes River swept away one of his white horses, "decided to punish the river by having his slaves cut 360 channels into it, stanching its flow to a trickle," Kimball states, "This we have done to ourselves, applying mental tourniquets to the arteries that fed us from the past."

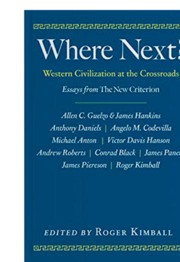
He further quotes from Soren Kierkegaard by writing that this modern spirit "leaves everything standing but cunningly empties it of significance." Kimball's haunting historical references echo questions posed by Codevilla: "Who will oppose them, and with what culture?"

Unhealthy Republic

Kimball's collection gives us a wealth of healthy perspectives about our unhealthy republic and the West in general. Though Black has a more positive outlook than the others, suggesting that "America remains the indispensable country" and will "accelerate through" this "crossroads in the world's affairs," perhaps it is Kimball's suggestive essay title that answers the collection's title question of "Where Next?"

Sir Thomas More coined the term "utopia," which comes from the Greek word "ou-topos" meaning "no place." Perhaps this ongoing struggle is leading exactly nowhere. A more frightful thought—and this seems to be the overarching warning from the essayists—is that wherever our destination, once we arrive, there will be nothing left.

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.



'Where Next?: Western Civilization at the Crossroads'

Author
Edited by Roger Kimball

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MOVIESTILLSDB

Cinderella (Lily James) and her prince (Richard Madden) live happily ever after, in "Cinderella."

TRADITIONAL CULTURE

Glass Slippers *and* Fairy Godmothers

MOVIESTILLSDB

Cinderella attends the royal ball in a pumpkin transformed into a coach, in "Cinderella."

Continued from ***Page 1***

Despite Perrault's engagement in public life, today only historians remember him for these many achievements. The rest of the world knows Charles Perrault as the father of the fairy tale.

In 1697, under the name of his youngest son—he feared criticism from his literary enemies—Perrault published "Tales and Stories of the Past With Morals" ("Histoires ou Contes du Temps Passé"), also known by its subtitle "Tales of Mother Goose" ("Les Contes de Ma Mère l'Oie"). Originally having gathered together eight of these traditional oral stories, Perrault soon added three more to his "Mother Goose" collection.

At the time of his death, the books were selling wildly, purchased by an audience who had heard these stories in their childhood and wished to share them with their own children. Over a century later, between 1842 and 1913, some 230 editions of this collection found readers around the world.

One of these stories was "Cinderella, or the Little Glass Slipper" ("Cendrillon ou la Petite Pantoufle de Verre"). It remains one of the world's most popular and well-known fairy tales.

Charles Perrault, author of "Cinderella, or the Little Glass Slipper," is known today as the father of the fairy tale but had a career early as a public servant under Louis XIV. Portrait of Charles Perrault, circa 1670, by Charles Le Brun.

PUBLIC DOMAIN

> **"Cinderella 'was no less good than beautiful.'"**
>
> *Charles Perrault, author of the most popular version of the tale*

The Standard: Perrault's

Though variations exist, Perrault's version remains the template for Cinderella stories.

Here in his tale are the elements we know so well: the cruel stepmother, the two nasty stepsisters, and the fairy godmother who grants Cinderella's wish to attend the royal ball. With her magic, the fairy godmother transforms a pumpkin into a coach, six mice into splendid horses, a rat into the coachman, and six lizards into footmen. Another touch of her magic wand, and Cinderella's "clothes turned into cloth of gold and silver, all beset with jewels."

And off our heroine goes to the ball, forewarned by her godmother that at the stroke of midnight all her finery, coach, and attendants would lose their magic and become just as they were. As soon as she enters the great hall of the royal palace, the dancing and the music stop, and the crowd falls silent, "so entranced was everyone with the singular beauties of the unknown newcomer." The prince himself becomes so smitten by her beauty and grace that he "ate not a morsel."

In Perrault's telling, Cinderella leaves that ball before midnight, returns the next evening even more finely decked out, and again casts her spell of beauty over the attendees—but loses track of time and barely escapes before her gown and jewels revert to rags. She manages to arrive home with one of her glass slippers, but loses the other in her hasty retreat from the festivities.

The smitten prince decrees that the maiden whose foot fits the slipper will become his bride. Even though she is mocked by her stepsisters, Cinderella asks to try her foot in the slipper. When it fits perfectly, "as if it had been made of wax," she pulls the other slipper from her pocket.

Her fairy godmother makes an appearance, touches her with the wand, and she glitters once more like the beauty at the ball. The stepsisters throw themselves at her feet and beg her forgiveness for their mistreatment. Cinderella embraces them and offers pardon, saying that she "wanted them always to love her."

After marrying the prince, Cinderella, "who was no less good than beautiful," took her sisters into the palace and found two lords for their husbands.

PUBLIC DOMAIN

(Left) "Cinderella at the Kitchen Fire," 1843, by Thomas Sully shows her kind nature even when she's treated badly. Dallas Museum of Art.

(Right) Oliver Herford Illustrated "Cinderella With Her Fairy Godmother," inspired by Perrault's vision. From "Childhood's Favorites and Fairy Stories."

Cinderella Off the Page

Perrault's "Cinderella" has not only appeared in hundreds of different editions, including anthologies, but has also attracted audiences through dance, plays, and film. Just this past October, for instance, choreographer Ben Stevenson directed the Philadelphia Ballet in Sergei Prokofiev's "Cinderella."

The first attempt to put Perrault's story on film was in 1899, a short French movie deemed a failure. Since then, however, a number of movies about the chargirl and her fairy godmother, the most successful of them from Walt Disney Studios, have attracted throngs of theatergoers.

From 1957, for instance, we have this remarkable event. Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II made a musical of "Cinderella" for television. This one-time show—television was then "live"—was watched by more than 107 million people, the largest TV audience in history up to that time, a number that made up 60 percent of the American population.

Though that performance disappeared as soon as it ended, a dress rehearsal was filmed, and viewers can watch that production along with an opening monologue by its star, Julie Andrews, on YouTube.

More recently, director Kenneth Branagh and writer Chris Weitz collaborated on a brilliant, live-action "Cinderella" released in 2015. In their movie, with a few changes of detail, they adhered closely to Perrault's original story.

The cinematography is beautifully done, the costumes lavish, and the actors—particularly Lily James as Cinderella, Richard Madden as the prince, and Cate Blanchett as the stepmother—give outstanding performances. But surely the film's most notable asset is its portrait of love, romance, and virtue.

Branagh and Weitz never forget that they're telling a timeless tale, and so avoid any intrusions of modernity—cynicism, feminism, politics—that might otherwise have marred their story. Several reviewers were struck by the movie's deep sense of moral virtue, including some critics associated with religious publications. As Michael Jameson of The Catholic World Report noted:

"The most refreshing thing about this film is that, at several turns, it portrays a world in which the virtuous choice is the beautiful choice, and the reason for a character's likeability is not her spectacular good looks, but ultimately her pure and virtuous heart, according to fairly traditional standards."

The Moral of This Story Is ...

"I have to tell you a secret that will see you through all the trials that life can offer," says her dying mother to Cinderella in Branagh's film. "Have courage and be kind."

That wise advice runs through the movie, just as Perrault appended a moral to each of his fairy tales. In fact, in the case of "Cinderella," Perrault offered readers two morals to be drawn from the story:

"Moral: Beauty in a woman is a rare treasure that will always be admired. Graciousness, however, is priceless and of even greater value. This is what Cinderella's godmother gave to her when she taught her to behave like a queen. Young women, in the winning of a heart, graciousness is more important than a beautiful hairdo. It is a true gift of the fairies. Without it nothing is possible; with it, one can do anything.

"Another moral: Without doubt it is a great advantage to have intelligence, courage, good breeding, and common sense. These, and similar talents come only from heaven, and it is good to have them. However, even these may fail to bring you success, without the blessing of a godfather or a godmother."

A Message Especially for Us

From both Perrault's story and Branagh's movie, we moderns might draw one more lesson from Cinderella about the value and beauty of innocence. In an age such as ours, when so many people want children to be taught about sexuality as if it were a course in auto mechanics, and when even the definitions of a man and a woman are up for debate, the story of Cinderella can act as a counterweight.

Her story embodies the virtues of purity, a heart unsullied by resentment over her cruel treatment, and a heart that understands and longs for true love.

The cinematic "Cinderella" ends with these words: "And Ella continued to see the world not as it is, but as it could be, if only you believe in courage, and kindness, and occasionally, just a little bit ... of magic."

Our children need that magic.

And so, as Charles Perrault might tell the rest of us, do we all.

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."

PUBLIC DOMAIN

An illustration of the stepsisters in the 1865 edition of the story shows Cinderella attending to them before going to the ball.

PUBLIC DOMAIN

In Sarah Noble Ives's illustration (circa 1912), the prince is entranced by the beautiful lady at his ball.

PUBLIC DOMAIN

A poster for Massenet's opera "Cendrillon," one of the many art forms to tell the story. U.S. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

ALL PHOTOS BY LEROY ANDERSON FOUNDATION UNLESS NOTED OTHERWISE

MUSIC

Leroy Anderson (L) and the Boston Pops Orchestra director, Arthur Fiedler, brought "Sleigh Ride" to delighted audiences.

Leroy Anderson chose to conduct his own music at some of its premieres.

Master of the Light Classic

Leroy Anderson

The composer of 'Sleigh Ride' helped define America's spirit of optimism at mid-century

The composer wrote music in his home in Woodbury, Conn.

NEIL COTIAUX

The United States had led the Allies to victory in World War II, and with the war over, members of "The Greatest Generation" looked forward to getting back to civilian life, making a living, and spending time with their growing families.

Jane Anderson Vercelli looks back on her early years growing up in Connecticut with great fondness. "It was an idyllic time. It was an idyllic childhood," remembers the oldest child of American composer Leroy Anderson.

Born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Leroy Anderson was first taught piano by his mother, and by his father, the trombone. He earned a master of arts in music from Harvard University. When the war ended, Anderson found himself grappling with a postwar housing shortage as a "starving artist" who had a limited number of musical compositions to his name.

Anderson, his wife Eleanor, and Jane moved in with his parents in Cambridge and then to New York City. In 1946, the composer and his family, which now included son Eric, spent the summer in Woodbury, Connecticut, in a cottage owned by other relatives.

There, and during future stays, Jane was enthralled by the countryside, recalling "a quintessential, winding New England road with a brook on one side that later crosses over to the other side in rivulets and fields."

Summer in Connecticut proved incredibly hot, and there was no indoor running water where they were staying. But a farmer told Jane's father about some underground pipes that had earlier brought water from the brook. "So with that, Dad went out and started digging for these pipes," Jane said.

That single decision allowed Leroy Anderson to tap into his innermost thoughts and arguably emerge as America's greatest composer of light orchestral music. "It was an August heat wave and it was so hot that he began to picture winter scenes in his mind while he's doing this digging with the shovel. That is how he got the picture in his mind that goes with 'Sleigh Ride,'" Jane said.

'Giddy Yap, Let's Go'

Anderson may also have been inspired to write the song, at least in part, by his Swedish immigrant parents. "They both loved to go on sleigh rides when they were courting," she said.

Taken by his imagination, Anderson wasted no time in putting together the rudiments of his newest composition, and completed "Sleigh Ride" in February 1948. With a full score finished, replete with sounds from temple blocks representing the clip-clopping of a horse's hooves, bells imitating those around a horse's neck, a slapstick whip, and the blare of a trumpet imitating a horse's whinny, "Sleigh Ride" was set for its debut. It wasn't meant to serve as Christmas music, Anderson said, just a picturesque portrait of wintertime.

That May, the Boston Pops Orchestra, under the direction of maestro Arthur Fiedler, brought to life a delightful piece of music that arose from winter visions on a hot summer day. The less-than-three-minute piece gradually sank into the permanent consciousness of the American public and millions of listeners around the world.

Anderson's talents had first caught the attention of Fiedler in the 1930s while he served as director of the Harvard University Band. But Anderson harbored some self-doubts and questioned whether his real talents were to be found elsewhere. When he was offered a position teaching German and Latin at a private school in Pennsylvania, Fiedler persuaded him to follow his musical passions.

The close relationship between the two led the Boston Pops to debut not only one of Anderson's early works ("Jazz Pizzicato" in 1938) but also the debuts of "Sleigh Ride," "Promenade," "The Syncopated Clock," "Fiddle Faddle," "Serenata," and "Trumpeter's Lullaby," all between 1945 and 1950. Each was a lovingly crafted "light classic" that Anderson would seemingly shake out of his sleeve.

Riding a wave of success, Anderson made the decision to personally conduct the premieres of ensuing works in recording sessions with Decca Records, increasing the reach of his crowd-pleasing pieces into households across the nation. In rapid succession, he scored and conducted recordings that included "Blue Tango," "Belle of the Ball," "Bugler's Holiday," "Forgotten Dreams," "Plink, Plank, Plunk!," and "The Typewriter."

"Blue Tango" and "Serenata" provided a romantic twist among Anderson's works, with "Blue Tango" hitting the top spot on the Billboard chart. It, and other recordings for Decca, drew on the talents of musicians who held "first chair" status in the respective sections of their different orchestras.

In addition to records, "Sleigh Ride" could be heard in symphony halls as well as in major department stores that decked the halls during the holiday season. And something new was added: words by Mitchell Parish, a revered songwriter and lyricist.

The Andrews Sisters—LaVerne, Maxene, and Patty—a wildly popular trio who sang their way into the hearts of servicemen during the 1940s, further sustained the popularity of "Sleigh Ride" with their own recording that could be enjoyed at home or by slipping coins into jukeboxes at diners, bars, and nightclubs.

Parish's lyrics invited listeners to "Just hear those sleigh bells jingling, ring ting tingling, too/ Come on, it's lovely weather for a sleigh ride together with you" as imaginary revelers awaited their destination with a "giddy yap, giddy yap, giddy yap, let's go." Those lyrics have stood the test of time and help introduce "Sleigh Ride" to new, younger listeners each year.

By the early '50s, Anderson stood at the pinnacle of his profession. In June 1952, he conducted the United States Air Force Band in front of the U.S. Capitol in celebration of the band's 10th anniversary, with 10,000 celebrants in attendance. In New York, he frequently served as guest conductor for the Guggenheim Memorial Concerts in Central Park.

A study by the American Symphony Orchestra League in 1953 determined that Anderson's works were the most frequently performed in the country, followed by those of Aaron Copland, a giant of evocative American music.

LYRICSONDEMAND

Mitchell Parish's lyrics invited listeners to "Just hear those sleigh bells jingling, ring ting tingling, too ..."

Changing Times

By 1953, the Anderson family was happily ensconced in a mid-century modernist home in Woodbury, Connecticut, built with earnings from "Blue Tango," which sold more than a million records. The now-famous composer soundproofed his home, worked in comfort, and engaged in woodworking as a hobby.

From the end of World War II until civil rights and the war in Vietnam began to pull the country apart, Americans were largely optimistic. Anderson's instrumentals continued to permeate the airwaves along with those of other talented colleagues, such as "Love Is a Many-Splendored Thing," "Unchained Melody," "Canadian Sunset," "Moonglow and Theme From 'Picnic,'" and "A Summer Place," all of them striking a contented chord with listeners.

But a new generation with new tastes emerged, and so-called middle-of-the-road music lost some of its luster. Changing demographics, the arrival of the transistor radio, and artists like The Beatles and Bob Dylan helped crowd out instrumentals on the radio and in record sales. While the number of radio stations grew rapidly, especially FM stations, programming became narrower and more specialized.

Yet those who believed in instrumentals soldiered on, with composers like Mason Williams ("Classical Gas") and Herb Alpert ("Route 101") giving listeners a newer form of pop-instrumental.

In 1972, the Boston Pops, with Arthur Fiedler again at the helm, paid tribute to Anderson in a nationwide television broadcast that recalled the halcyon days of light classics. Anderson took to the podium and conducted one piece, "The Typewriter." It was, the beloved composer told his wife, "The most important evening of my life."

Anderson died of lung cancer in 1975 at age 66, survived by his wife, daughter, and three sons. His last composition was a short wedding march used at the 1972 wedding of daughter Jane and British architect Peter Vercelli.

In 2003, at the corner of Chatham and Crawford streets, the city of Cambridge dedicated Leroy Anderson Square. At the dedication ceremony, composer and former Pops conductor John Williams paid tribute to an American original. "Leroy Anderson is one of the great American masters of light orchestral music. Though we have performed his works countless times over the years at the Boston Pops, his music remains forever as young and fresh as the very first day on which it was composed," Williams told those assembled.

The Anderson family's mid-century home in Woodbury is now "frozen in time," said Jane. Panels of information, photographs, and other memorabilia are available for viewing by the public. Free outdoor concerts are held periodically.

Thanks to the arrival of the digital age, Anderson's works will not be forgotten. YouTube, Spotify, and other online services offer up his music on demand. And orchestras, marching bands, and vocalists continue to perform it. As of 2021, "Sleigh Ride" remained one of the 10 most popular pieces of "Christmas music" worldwide, according to The American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers.

"Dad never composed music with an expectation about the public's reaction," Jane said. "Once, in the kitchen, he said to me, 'I just did what I wanted to do. It turned out that people liked it.'"

By using the universal language of music to bring people together, Leroy Anderson made the world a better place.

Neil Cotiaux is a freelance journalist whose work has appeared in newspapers, magazines and business journals, mostly in the Midwest and Southeast.

A24

FILM INSIGHTS WITH MARK JACKSON

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.

Possibly Jennifer Lawrence's Best Work Yet

Mechanic James (Brian Tyree Henry) and Army vet Lynsey (Jennifer Lawrence) have a swim in her vacationing customer's pool, in "Causeway."

MARK JACKSON

"Causeway" is a kind of comeback for Jennifer Lawrence, who hit the big screen in the neo-Western "Winter's Bone" in 2010, and rocketed to the type of superstardom that got her the nickname J-Law (like J-Lo, K-Stew, Li-Lo, and so on).

After a run of generally disliked films starting in 2018, which threatened to turn the volume knob way down and possibly permanently squelch her massive success, Lawrence decided to take a self-imposed career break. The big, flashy films like "The Hunger Games" series made it easy to forget how exceptionally skilled J-Law is at being rivetingly quiet.

In "Causeway," a quiet, empathetic drama, theater director Lila Neugebauer makes her feature film debut, honing in on Lawrence's tiny, minimally shifting microexpressions and her aching melancholy. Lawrence has come full circle back to "Winter's Bone," and while it feels like a homecoming, the difference is that you don't have to wonder if you'll see that talented new actress again, but feel the subliminal comfort of a seasoned artist rocking her wheelhouse.

J-Law's Character

Lawrence delivers a stripped-down performance as Lynsey, a sapper (U.S. Army engineer), who is returned to her native New Orleans after sustaining a serious brain injury from an IED (improvised explosive device) explosion in Afghanistan. That, among other things, left a sizeable dose of PTSD in its wake.

Not quite realizing how traumatized she's been by her head injury (or is it denial?), she's hell-bent on rehabbing as quickly as possible so she can to return to active duty—whether it kills her or not. She really doesn't want to be back home living with her mother, Gloria (Linda Emond), with whom she has a strained relationship. However, her doctor (Stephen McKinley Henderson) is dubious about her intended expedited recovery.

So Lynsey finds work scrubbing and chlorinating swimming pools. She also makes an unexpected friend in the laid-back, amiable mechanic James (Brian Tyree Henry), the owner of an autobody shop in the hardscrabble New Orleans neighborhood they both live in. Turns out, Lynsey played against James's sister in high school basketball.

It also turns out that James is equally haunted. The two hang out, share Slurpees in the Louisiana heat, and beers and cigarettes in the evening at swimming pools she's got access to, when the owners are on vacation.

They slowly disclose their respective traumas: She's got the head injury, and James is missing a leg from a car accident, the details of which slowly (and devastatingly) come into focus over the course of the movie.

James is therefore also a wounded outsider, making them fellow travelers in physical and emotional recovery. Henry, last seen as a Cockney-accented assassin named Lemon (who's got a Thomas the Tank Engine obsession) in "Bullet Train," plays James as wearily fatalistic, but with zero self-pity. Henry can fill a role so thoroughly that all he's got to do is sigh and stare at the ceiling, and you can intuit the particulars of at least five pages' worth of unspoken script.

That's It?

That's All Folks. "Causeway" does feature a mildly dramatic confrontation that triggers a last-minute threat to Lynsey and James's blossoming friendship, but it's otherwise no-frills, with more of a gentle, understated rhythm where long-held conflicts marinate ambiguously rather than boil over. It could have been considerably more showy (original Afghanistan scenes didn't make it into the film), but it prefers to cut to the chase—and it works, because "Causeway" is anchored by two seriously gifted performers, and it's enough just to take them in as one would, say, a melancholic Erik Satie "Gymnopédie."

'Causeway' is anchored by two seriously gifted performers, and it's enough just to take them in.

'Causeway'

Director
Lila Neugebauer

Starring
Jennifer Lawrence, Brian Tyree Henry, Linda Emond, Jayne Houdyshell, Stephen McKinley Henderson, Russell Harvard

Running Time
1 hour, 32 minutes

MPAA Rating:
R

Release Date
Nov. 4, 2022 (Apple TV+)

★★★★☆

Refreshingly, nothing about this film plays out as expected. It rejects a simplistic romance. Director Neugebauer perhaps tiptoes a little too much around the stereotypical assumptions of a template for an interracial drama, thus risking a certain inertness, but this is a story of two honest and honorable people, and the two leads give us a treat in displaying human kindness in action.

Lawrence is understatedly brilliant—anxious, reluctantly Pharma-pill-popping, best-foot-forward-but-deeply-conflicted, and admirably unaffected. And ego-effacingly sans makeup throughout. Henry, meanwhile, lends his character's deep sea's worth of stoic sadness the unspoken heft of a sunken Titanic.

Lawrence's performance hopefully marks a return to the kind of real-people-and-real-places naturalism that initially won her acclaim; let it please be a harbinger of works to come. As a movie, "Causeway" might be a tiny bit too understated to garner awards, but it's definitely the second-most—if not the most—important movie she's made to date.

"Causeway" is in selected cinemas and can be streamed via Apple TV+ as of Nov. 4.

REWIND, REVIEW, AND RE-RATE

A Highly Entertaining Swashbuckler

IAN KANE

Over the years, I've become a big fan of Gregory Peck's work. He's a very versatile actor whom I've always associated with dramatic character-driven film roles, such as the gentlemanly out-of-towner James McKay in the magnificent Western "The Big Country (1958)," or the brooding bad-boy-trying-to-go-straight Jimmy Ringo in "The Gunfighter (1950)."

But when I think of comedy, I never really identify films of that nature with Peck. That is, until I recently saw the swashbuckling seaborne adventure yarn "The World in His Arms." Directed by celebrated director Raoul Walsh (the man responsible for introducing John Wayne to the world in 1930's "The Big Trail"), this movie has one of the most hilarious first acts I've ever seen, and Peck's impeccable (pun intended) comedic flourishes are a huge part of it.

The film opens with some great shots of a dark-hulled sailboat cutting through blue, whitecapped seas, while title cards read: "History records that the United States purchased Alaska on March 30, 1867. ... This was the realization of a dream that started many years before, when Captain Jonathan Clark anchored his schooner, the "Pilgrim" of Salem, among a thousand abandoned ships that lay rotting in ... San Francisco 1850."

So sets the stage for Captain Clark (Gregory Peck), known colloquially as "The Boston Man," and his adventures in the still-Russian-owned waters off the coast of Alaska. Clark and his crusty crew frequently sail up the coast, catch seals, and then sail back down to California as quickly as they can (in order to avoid the Russians) so that they can sell their pelts for some pretty good profit.

UNIVERSAL-INTERNATIONAL

Ann Blyth as Countess Marina Selanova and Gregory Peck as Capt. Jonathan Clark sail away together in "The World in His Arms."

'The World in His Arms'

Director
Raoul Walsh

Starring
Gregory Peck, Ann Blyth, Anthony Quinn

Running Time
1 hour, 44 minutes

MPAA Rating:
PG

Release Date
Oct. 9, 1952

★★★★½

Clark and his crew sail into San Francisco's rowdy Barbary Coast, after a particularly lucrative seal haul, and set themselves up in a grand hotel called The Occidental.

Clark organizes a large party for later that evening, and an assortment of interesting characters eventually begin to trickle in. This includes Clark's regular good-time-girl Mamie (Andrea King) and her gaggle of bar girls; Clark's maritime rival Portugee (Anthony Quinn), who's half-crazed; and beautiful Russian Countess Marina Selanova (Ann Blyth).

This film gets more and more serious as the stakes get higher.

Initially, Marina and her retainers had planned for Portugee to sail them to the Russian-Alaskan town of Sitka, where her aristocratic uncle, Gen. Ivan Vorashilov (Sig Ruman), could shelter her from another aristocrat whom she was originally scheduled to marry, Prince Semyon (Carl Esmond).

However, when she learns that Clark has stolen back his original crew from Portugee, she hatches a plan to try and convince Clark to transport her.

Although Clark doesn't like Russians, he's instantly captivated by Marina's beauty, drawn to her like a barnacle to a ship. He takes her out on a night on the town, where his casual, fun-loving American ways strike a chord with her since she's tired of being around stodgy blue bloods, so much so that they fall in love and agree to marry.

However, just before Clark and Marina are about to tie the knot, Prince Semyon sails into port and captures Marina and her retinue. The dastardly prince whisks them away to Alaska and threatens to have Marina's uncle done away with if she doesn't honor their arranged marriage. Thus begins Clark's quest to rescue her.

Rival Hilarity

Although this film gets more and more serious as the stakes get higher, it starts off in a side-splitting manner, with plenty of guffaws coming from Quinn's over-the-top portrayal of oddball sailor Portugee. Peck also proves that he's got the chops and timing down for comedy, as his dry humor and amusing expressions add lots of levity to the chaotic, fast-paced proceedings.

Blyth is believable as a Russian countess, and her romantic orbit with Peck's character seems natural. Fortunately, there's not much romantic play between them; rather, a lot of their chemistry comes from how they look at each other, as well as a hint of naughtiness. This is the 1950s, after all, so what you're going to see is all classy and implied.

Seeing Peck cast against type as a wild, happy-go-lucky adventurer seemed a little odd at first. But once I got hip to his unique brand of comedy (thanks in no small part to the stellar supporting cast), the movie flowed. If I had one regret, it would be that I wished it had been a longer voyage.

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. You can check out his health blog at IanKaneHealthNut.com

ILLUSTRIOUS IDEAS AND ILLUSTRATIONS: THE IMAGERY OF GUSTAV DORE

Satan Rallies His Troops

What Happens When We Neglect to Root Out Sin

ERIC BESS

Gustav Doré was a prolific illustrator of the 19th century. He created images for some of the greatest classical literature of the Western world, including the Bible, "Paradise Lost," and "The Divine Comedy." In this series, we will take a deep dive into the thoughts that inspired Doré and the imagery those thoughts provoked.

After Satan is cast out from heaven for competing with God, he and his army of rebel angels find themselves suffering in hell. It's not long, however, before Satan—despite the inevitability of losing to God—attempts to rally his troops to continue their battle against God and the heavenly angels.

First, Milton says:

"Thither let us tend
From off the tossing of these fiery waves,
There rest, if any rest can harbour there,
And reassembling our afflicted powers,
Consult how we may henceforth most offend
Our enemy, our own loss how repair,
How overcome this dire calamity,
What reinforcement we may gain from hope,
If not what resolution from despair.
Thus Satan talking to his nearest mate
With head uplift above the wave, and eyes
That sparkling blazed…
(Book 1, lines 183–194)."

It Begins Again With One

Gustav Doré interprets this passage in his second illustration for Milton's "Paradise Lost." The dark and smoky scene reveals two rebel angels. The rebel angel closest to us sits on jagged earth that juts from a lake of fire, and the fire illuminates the armor he wears.

This rebel angel looks over his shoulder at what transfixes him: Satan, framed by billowing smoke on both sides, stands on the shore of the fiery lake. He's in the shadows, but his body language—he's positioned above the rebel angel, with raised arms—lets us know that he is communicating with the rebel angel from a place of authority. And the long spear in his hand lets us know that he is not giving up his battle with God.

Milton's description and Doré's illustration reveal that Satan will continue his battle. He's going to rest in hell, compose himself and his army, endure the onslaught of pain, and continue to "offend" God—his enemy. The rebel angel listens intently and receives his leader's message.

One Turns to Many

Milton continues:

"Of that inflamed sea, he stood and called
His legions, angel forms, who lay entranced…
Under amazement of their hideous change.
He called so loud, that all the hollow deep
Of Hell resounded. Princes, Potentates,
Warriors, the flow'r of Heav'n, once yours now lost,
If such astonishment as this can seize
Eternal Spirits: or have ye chos'n this place
After the toil of battle to repose
Your wearied virtue, for the ease you find
To slumber here, as in the vales of Heav'n?
Or in this abject posture have ye sworn
To adore the Conqueror? who now beholds
Cherub and Seraph rolling in the flood
With scattered arms and ensigns, till anon
His swift pursuers from Heav'n gates discern
Th' advantage, and descending tread us down
Thus drooping, or with linked thunderbolts
Transfix us to the bottom of this gulf.
Awake, arise, or be for ever fall'n
They heard, and were abashed, and they sprung…"
(Book 1, lines 300–301, 313–331).

ALL PHOTOS IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

"They heard, and were abashed, and up they sprung" 1866, by Gustav Doré for John Milton's "Paradise Lost."

Doré depicts Satan talking to all of the rebel army instead of just one rebel angel.

Here, Doré depicts Satan talking to all of the rebel army instead of just one angel. The army has moved from the lake of fire to dry earth. The rebel angels are defeated: They are strewn about the composition in poses of angst and resignation.

Doré has again established the hierarchy of the figures. As in the illustration discussed above, he depicts Satan standing tall and proud above the other rebel angels. His pose hasn't changed much: He raises his arms, holds his spear, and communicates with his army. One thing that has changed, however, is the number of rebel angels he addresses.

Satan shames the angels for their resignation and questions their perseverance. He essentially asks: Are you with me or are you with God? The angels are ashamed of themselves, and they ready themselves to continue their opposition to God.

The Danger of Revitalized Evil

Let us continue to consider Milton's and Doré's ideas as they pertain to our inner world and the battles that sometimes occur there. Satan, the exemplar of evil, is cast from heaven, for heaven cannot remain pure with him there. We, too, must cast away from ourselves any evil that may sully our divine natures.

Yet this passage presents us with a deeper concern: What if we don't completely cast away the evil in us? What if we miss something? Milton's passage and Doré's illustration suggest that evil quickly multiplies. It takes only one evil desire—even when weakened—to multiply into many if it has a place of refuge within us. And before we know it, we may find ourselves fighting a war we thought we won.

How can we make sure that we search ourselves thoroughly and safeguard ourselves against evil thoughts and actions?

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For more arts and culture articles, visit TheEpochTimes.com

"Forthwith upright he rears from off the pool/ His mighty stature," 1866, by Gustav Doré for John Milton's "Paradise Lost." Engraving.

BOOK REVIEW

How the CCP Fooled the World

ANITA L. SHERMAN

I saw a recent interview with author Alex Joske and was immediately struck by his professional demeanor and his youth. Turns out he was the youngest-ever analyst at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute and is known for meticulous Chinese-language investigations grounded in authoritative and independently verifiable sources.

In other words, he does what he does well.

His research on Chinese Communist Party (CCP) influence and intelligence efforts has withstood intense scrutiny. As a result, governments and policymakers globally pay attention when this well-versed and insightful scholar publishes his findings.

Highly Respected Researcher

Representing the 8th District of Wisconsin, Congressman Mike Gallagher (R) serves on the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence as well as the House Armed Services Committee. Gallagher follows closely what the CCP is up to. He, among others, has given a strong shout-out for Joske's "Spies and Lies: How China's Greatest Covert Operations Fooled the World."

"When Alex Joske speaks, governments need to listen," as Gallagher is quoted saying on the book's cover.

Joske has made his mark by being ahead of the media and academic pack when it comes to unmasking the story behind the CCP's intelligence and influence apparatus aboard.

Decades ago, Western governments were lulled into a false sense of security when it came to China. China appeared open to reform, eager to explore economic opportunities, exchange cultural ideas, and encourage business collaborations. By remaining patient, China has been cleverly changing attitudes and becoming a master at the influence game.

Joske's cutting-edge exposé takes readers through a myriad of Chinese ministries, many with seemingly innocent intentions, ultimately focusing on China's Ministry of State Security (MSS) and the true nature of its many worldwide operatives. It's a deception game like no other.

In his book, Joske peels back layers of secrecy to reveal how CCP agents have spent nearly a half century manipulating Western leaders' attitudes. And they're not just of members of the U.S. Congress but also businessmen, bankers, think tanks, the FBI, and cultural institutions. Not confined to looking at the United States, Joske, who lives in Canberra, includes an Australian prime minister among the ranks of those masterfully deceived.

A Net of Spies

Joske has garnered the respect and trust of many in his years of research into China's covert world. His body of work includes interviews with defectors and intelligence officers, classified Chinese intelligence documents, as well as original investigations, in addition to unmasking scores of Chinese intelligence officers. The global MSS fronts run the gamut from travel agencies to writers' associations, publishing houses, alumni associations, newspapers, Buddhist retreats, and numerous charities.

What quality is looked for most in recruiting Chinese agents? Joske quotes MSS Vice Minister Yu Fang (also known as Yu Enguang):

"We first look at their political qualities, meaning their beliefs and their belief in communism. What that means now is their loyalty to the Fatherland. This aspect is paramount: Their ideological character must be good."

Joske goes on to cite three core traits for the Party's spies that are detailed in an internal manual for MSS officers: "absolute loyalty to the Party," a willingness to become a "nameless hero," and like the lotus of Buddhism, the ability to "rise through mud unsoiled."

Chinese politician and government adviser Zheng Bijian (now 90) espoused theories of globalism and transparency that emphasized projecting soft power and peace. He coined the term "China's peaceful rise" at a conference in 2003. It was a slogan that stuck in the minds and hearts of leaders worldwide for decades until its underlying intent was revealed. More sinister than sincere, it was actually a cynically created riposte meant to soothe any apprehensions toward China's mounting power.

Readers will recognize many names known in political circles today, like George Soros, who in the early 1980s genuinely thought he was helping to build a civil society with his backing of the China Fund. He quickly discovered (admitting decades later) that managing foreign ideas was not for the faint of heart. At the time, there were few Chinese intellectual reformers. The MSS had its hands in his operation early on, quelling any chance of success.

Joske has no problems naming names, whether known Chinese spies or compromised politicians. His research is detailed and well annotated. His writing style is clear, concise, informative, and highly insightful. The MSS has grown considerably in the last decades, recently building a new spy school in the hills of Beijing, the Cold Spring Base.

For readers, this spy read is no James Bond thriller. "Spies and Lies" takes out the bad guys with direct hits, and it's action-packed and deadly. But the influence game is more sophisticated, and making it happen overnight is not a priority. It's a spy game for sure but without all the glitzy gadgets perhaps, making it even more unsettling and impactful for its masterful subtlety and nuances—and the fact that it has been going on for so long seemingly undetected on a large scale.

For many, it will undoubtedly be an indispensable read.

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. She can be reached at anitajustwrite@gmail.com

HUNG CHUNG CHIH/SHUTTERSTOCK

"Spies and Lies: How China's Greatest Covert Operations Fooled the World" by Alex Joske unmasks the CCP's plan to take over the world.

The author's research on Chinese Communist Party (CCP) influence and intelligence efforts has withstood intense scrutiny.

SPIES AND LIES
ALEX JOSKE

'Spies and Lies: How China's Greatest Covert Operations Fooled the World'

Author
Alex Joske

Publisher
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Paperback
272 pages

COUNTRY MUSIC

From Coal Miner's Daughter to Queen of Country

Country music legend Loretta Lynn always cherished her humble beginnings

REBECCA DAY

Known for her soaring, vibrato-tinged voice and extravagant dresses worn while performing, Loretta Lynn's story is a true rags-to-riches American tale. Her career was lauded with many awards that put her among the greats of country music as she shared songs that blended the past with the present.

Coal Miner's Daughter

Despite her rise to fame, she always remembered her modest roots in Kentucky. Born Loretta Webb in 1932 to parents Ted and Clara Marie, her isolated upbringing in the backwoods of Butcher Holler, Kentucky, meant that she learned the value of self-reliance early on. While her father spent his days making money any way he could, Loretta was at home with her mother experiencing firsthand the quiet strength that homesteading women possessed while caring for their families.

In an interview with American Songwriter Magazine, she spoke of her mother's fingers often bleeding from domestic work:

"In the wintertime, we had these old clotheslines made out of wire. It would be so cold that her fingers would stick to that wire … She'd scrub on washboards all day and her fingers would bleed. But she didn't complain."

Loretta followed up memories of her mother's calloused hands by saying, "My mommy, to me, was beautiful."

When she wasn't in school, her familial duties were wide-ranging. Raised in a family of eight children, she'd help look after her younger siblings. She first realized she had a love of music while singing lullabies as she rocked the babies to sleep.

She helped her mother in their garden as well, sowing seeds before winter and canning blackberries in case their harvest was lean. Years later in an interview, she pointed to the importance of preserving America's self-reliant spirit amid our modern world by "teaching kids to cook and raise a garden and build fires."

Loretta Lynn's modest roots always guided her artistic endeavors and family life.

Loretta Lynn performs during the 16th annual Americana Music Festival and Conference in 2015 in Nashville, Tenn.

TERRY WYATT/GETTY IMAGES FOR AMERICANA MUSIC

A Long Career

Loretta's husband, Oliver Lynn, was the first to recognize her star potential. Early on in their marriage, he gifted her a guitar and a book of popular country songs for her to learn. After performing in various honky-tonks to increase her confidence, Loretta moved her family to Nashville, Tennessee, where Oliver took on a managerial role with her career.

In the 1960s, Loretta scored her first No. 1 hit with "I'm a Honky Tonk Girl." She had the guts to sing about exactly what was on her mind. Her penchant for writing authentic lyrics was further fueled by her close relationship with fellow country singer Patsy Cline, who encouraged and supported her.

Several of Loretta's tunes were bona fide anthems. "You Ain't Woman Enough (To Take My Man)" highlighted her fiery spirit when it came to keeping her sometimes rocky marriage intact. Her song "You're Lookin' at Country" focused on the importance of staying true to her roots, even if her career required her to travel outside of the rolling Kentucky hills she loved to call home.

Her biggest and most enduring hit, "Coal Miner's Daughter," plays like an autobiography and memorializes the close relationship she had with her father. Her lyrics "Daddy loved and raised eight kids on a miner's pay," speak to the affectionate relationship her father had with his children, which influenced how Loretta raised her own family.

The verse "My daddy worked all night in the Van Lear coal mines/ All day long in the field a hoin' corn," illustrated the work ethic that Loretta witnessed from a young age—one she'd carry with her into her own career as a country music star.

In 2004 at 72 years of age, she released an impromptu album titled "Van Lear Rose" that she had been recording with 28-year-old Jack White of the modern rock duo The White Stripes. Her classic country twang paired with White's lone acoustic guitar had both rock and country audiences clamoring over her single "Miss Being Mrs.," a touching tribute to her late husband.

Queen of Country Music

In 1976, Loretta Lynn won Entertainer of the Year at the Academy of Country Music Awards. Her single "Coal Miner's Daughter" was inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame in 1998. Over the years, her accolades garnered more than 60 awards. Due to her pioneering career as a brilliant storyteller, she ultimately became known as the "Queen of Country Music." However, her modest roots always guided her artistic endeavors and family life.

Perhaps the performance that stays with listeners the most is not one of her dressed up and entertaining an audience at an awards show, but one in her later years sporting a casual button-down Western shirt in a cabin in Hurricane Mills, Tennessee, singing the haunting folk song from her youth, "In the Pines." The song's gripping lyrics immediately draw you in, but it is Lynn's soul-stirring performance that effortlessly commands you to stay.

Just weeks before her passing in October, videos show her belting out a tune with 1980s rocker Bret Michaels, proving that her work ethic never waned with age.

Staying true to the unflappable resolve that her coal-mining father instilled in her, when asked in an interview if she'd ever retire, she comedically replied, "Really, I don't know what I'd do with myself if I retire."

Loretta's hit "Coal Miner's Daughter" was one of the many ways she paid tribute to her father's legacy. From her early years in the hollers of Kentucky to her coming-of-age story with "Van Lear Rose" and her powerful reign as Queen of Country, she didn't just honor her father's legacy. Through her hard work, grit, and Kentucky-born-and-bred tenacity, she made a new legacy all her own.

Rebecca Day is an independent musician, freelance writer, and frontwoman of country group, The Crazy Daysies.

It's Not Man or Nature, but Man and Nature

A lesson learned too late by an indulged young man who goes off track

RUDOLPH LAMBERT FERNANDEZ

"Into the Wild" (2007) is one of the most moving cinematic critiques of selfish individualism and haughty naturalism, when practiced at the expense of humanism. Its camera turns outward to magnify the beauty of the natural world, and then inward to salute the equally beautiful world within us. It makes us reflect and realize how tragic it is to find beauty in only one of these worlds.

The film is adapted from the 1996 nonfiction book by Jon Krakauer, loosely based on the travelogue of nomad Christopher McCandless (Emile Hirsch), who, while in his early 20s, trekked alone across America into the Alaskan wilderness.

Fed up with fulfilling his squabbling parents' dreams, he heads off to fulfill his own, leaving behind his bruised parents (William Hurt and Marcia Gay Harden) and baffled sister, Carine (Jena Malone). Carine is narrator for much of the film; Chris narrates the rest.

Chris passes breathtaking American scenery and wildlife. He takes odd jobs but otherwise lives off the wild, hops on freight trains and trucks, hitches rides on freeways, and even kayaks down a stretch of rapids. Station wagons of hippies and hipsters seem more like "home" to him than his own. Roadies and tramps like Jan (Catherine Keener) and Rainey (Brian H. Dierker) seem more like "family" to him than his own.

Addicted to What's New

Chris insists with deafening certainty that "the core of man's spirit comes from new experiences." Turns out, he isn't after life or its fullness; he's after "experience," the newer, the more, and more "radical," the better. Those who hire Chris pay well for his work, yet Chris moves on because things were, as he says, it was "more exciting when I was penniless," and because the "freedom and simple beauty is just too good to pass up."

Carine speaks of Chris's "characteristic immoderation." She's right. He's no different from a junkie, except that wanderlust is his drug. The scenery of his childhood and adolescence can't give him a high any longer; only the Alaskan tundra will do.

She adds that Chris measures himself and others by a rigorous moral code. She's wrong. Chris measures others more rigorously than himself. He detests people being mean to each other, but he is unaware that he's cruel to his family by leaving after a lifetime under their protection.

In his self-righteous rejection of materialism (cash, car, career), Chris forgets that, at every step, he's exploiting someone else's material, whether it's his backpack, sleeping bag, reading glasses, knife, rifle, the bus he hides in, or the pen-pad he uses for his meticulous diary entries.

Chris replaces one form of materialism with another and calls it naturalism. It's the idea of rejecting that hypnotizes him, not rejection itself. He thinks nothing of taking free rides, meals, or a bed in shelters meant for the destitute and not for rich graduates like himself.

But Chris discovers to his shock that solitude isn't our natural state. We might use it to spur the occasional burst of creativity, of introspection, or quiet healing, but we're not meant to be alone. We're meant to give and receive, to love and be loved, to sacrifice, to forgive. And we can do none of these things alone in the woods. That Chris talks to himself is a clue to this truth.

Chris's tragic tale of misanthropy is vital viewing for our age. It reminds climate change activists why they're agitating: It's not to protect nature, but also mankind alongside nature. It reminds human rights activists why they're protesting: It's not to protect rights, but also humanity alongside rights. Man and Nature aren't meant to contradict but to complement each other. Man is part of Nature—a different part, but a critical part nonetheless.

Fine Filmmaking, Fine Cast

Screenwriter-producer-director Sean Penn, cinematographer Eric Gautier, and editor Jay Cassidy excel in close-ups of eyes, lips, and hands. Through sheer precision and timing, they uncover a mood, a fear, a suspicion, a longing, or a regret. The soundtrack is a commentary on misconceived "activist" notions that anything outside of the exhilarating footage on "National Geographic" is lifeless, pointless.

The cast is superb. Hirsch's eyes and smile convey tenderness and virtue. Hal Holbrook as artisan Ron Franz, as well as Keener, and Dierker play compassionate sounding boards. And Malone's voice aches with the agony of a sister who's losing her brother afresh each day, not of a sister who's lost her brother just once in a lifetime.

As his family is forced to come to terms with what they lost, Chris is forced to come to terms with what he finds. The lesson he learns at the end is one of the most powerful captured on film because of all that's come before it.

Figuratively, that dawning of wisdom indicts not his seeking (always a good thing in a young person), but his lack of humility, his presumptuousness, and his cultivated victimhood. Rarely has a young man appeared more misguided in both the difficult choice and the ultimate preference.

Rudolph Lambert Fernandez is an independent writer who writes on pop culture.

PARAMOUNT VANTAGE

Emile Hirsch as Chris McCandless takes odd jobs but otherwise lives off the wild, hops on freight trains and trucks, hitches rides on freeways, and even kayaks down a stretch of rapids in "Into the Wild."

Chris replaces one form of materialism with another and calls it naturalism.

'Into the Wild'

Director
Sean Penn

Starring
Emile Hirsch, William Hurt, Marcia Gay Harden, Jena Malone, Hal Holbrook

Running Time
2 hours, 28 minutes

MPAA Rating:
R

Release Date
Sept. 21, 2007

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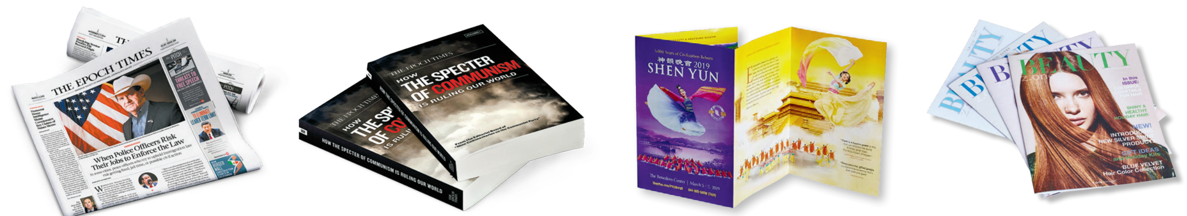

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