

THE EPOCH TIMES

# ARTS & CULTURE

THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART



Sculptor Antonio Canova created the greatest neoclassical sculptures of his time. An exhibition at the National Gallery of Art explores how he developed his works in clay, plaster, and marble. "Terpsichore Lyran (Muse of Lyric Poetry)," circa 1814–1816, by Antonio Canova. Marble; 69 7/8 inches by 30 3/4 inches by 24 inches. Leonard C. Hanna Jr. Fund 1968, The Cleveland Museum of Art.

FINE ART

## Antonio Canova

MASTER OF MARBLE, LOVER OF CLAY

The 'Canova: Sketching in Clay' exhibition at the National Gallery of Art

LORRAINE FERRIER

Many of us can imagine how an artist composes a picture on paper, but how a sculptor converts a lump of stone into a sculpture of beauty remains one of life's enigmas. We can see or read the steps in the sculpting process, but the sculptor's skill still enchants us.

An upcoming exhibition at the National

Gallery of Art in Washington may help shed light on the age-old mystique of creating sculptures. Opening on June 11, "Canova: Sketching in Clay" explores the importance of clay in neoclassical sculptor Antonio Canova's artistic process. Only around 60 of his terracotta (fired clay) models now survive—more than 30 of which will be on display, along with some of the sculptor's plaster casts and finished marbles. It's the first time in over 50 years that Canova's

terracottas have taken center stage in an exhibition. Together, these exhibits show the evolution of a sculptural masterpiece from its initial conception through its gestation and birth.

According to the ancient Roman writer Pliny, sculptors began creating clay models to make stone carvings during the reign of Alexander the Great.

*Continued on Page 4*





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### HISTORY

## Words Were Her Weapon: ‘The Incomparable Hannah More’

JEFF MINICK

While researching his book “Amazing Grace: William Wilberforce and the Heroic Campaign to End Slavery,” writer and radio host Eric Metaxas encountered one of Wilberforce’s staunchest allies and good friends, Hannah More (1745–1833).

In a later book, “Seven Women: And the Secret of Their Greatness,” Metaxas revisits More and describes her in glowing terms. She stands as “nothing less than the most influential woman of her time” who was “a bestselling playwright and author, whose works at the time outsold Jane Austen’s ten to one, and a woman of such boundless wit and charm that everyone wished to be in her society.”

She was a member of the London literati, a staunch evangelical Christian, a tireless activist with a conservative bent who helped end slavery, turned back the tides of the French Revolution that were lapping at the English shores, and labored to bring basic education to England’s poor.

Like many of us, Metaxas had never before heard of this luminous figure. Of his ignorance, he writes: “It was as though I had discovered a gurgling Bernini fountain in the midst of a desert. When I came to fathom the crucial role she played in the history of abolition and the so-called Reformation of Manners, I was positively disturbed at the outrageous ellipsis.”

So, let’s meet the woman whom Metaxas calls “the incomparable Hannah More.”

#### A Life in Brief

Hannah More was the fourth of five daughters of the schoolmaster Jacob More and his wife, Mary Grace. Though the family struggled financially, living in a small house in the countryside near Bristol, the parents bestowed on each daughter the gift of an education.

Hannah was the most precocious of her siblings. By the age of 4, she was reading and writing. At age 13, she joined her oldest sister, Mary, in the girls’ school the older girl ran in Bristol. By 16, Hannah was teaching at the school and had written her first play for the students there.

Five years later, she became betrothed to William Turner, a landowner of means living in Bristol. It was an engagement that lasted six years. After Turner broke off the date set for a wedding for the third time, More ended their courtship. As was the custom at the time, Turner then endowed her with an annuity—in this case, 200 pounds—which completely changed More’s circumstances. Later the two became friends, and for his part, for the rest of his life, Turner regretted his failure to wed More.

Giving up her teaching post, More headed for London, where by dint of her effervescent personality and literary gifts she was soon part of the cultural life of the city. The famed actor and producer David Garrick made one of her plays a hit, and Garrick and his wife, Eva, became More’s lifelong friends. That relationship opened doors to other well-known writers, which in one case brings a smile. Hannah More and the sometimes irascible Samuel Johnson, more than 30 years her senior, became so close to each other that some friends feared they might slip away and be married.

These acquaintances led her into other circles. Over the next 40 years, More joined William Wilberforce to battle the slave trade and to reform English morals. In addition, her polemical talents served as a barricade against the revolutionary ideas of France and English radical Thomas Paine, and she founded a series of Sunday schools, which offered a basic education to the poor.

In her long life, More earned more than 30,000 pounds from her writing, making her one of that age’s most successful authors. Of that sum, she gave away large amounts to the poor and to charities.



Hannah More worked with William Wilberforce to abolish the slave trade in England. Portrait of William Wilberforce, 1794, by Anton Hickel. Wilberforce House, Hull City Council.

#### Working With Wilberforce

In “Seven Women,” Metaxas notes that in 1785 William Wilberforce wrote in his diary: “God Almighty has set before me two Great Objects, the suppression of the Slave Trade and the Reformation of Manners.” Two years later, he met More, and as Metaxas tells us: “How Wilberforce came to be the champion of abolition—and how he was able to succeed in ending the slave trade in Great Britain in 1807, after twenty years of battling—had everything to do with Hannah More.”

More, Wilberforce, and other abolitionists realized that to end the slave trade meant awakening others to its horrors and injustices. In her best-known poem, “Slavery,” which she wrote in haste in 1788 so as to coincide with an antislavery bill introduced by Wilberforce in Parliament, and in other subsequent writings, she helped put a human face on this institution, leading both the elites and the common people to see that slaves were human beings with children. Here in the last few lines of “Slavery,” we find More’s often-repeated message:

And Thou! great source of Nature and of Grace,  
Who of one blood didst form the human race,  
Look down in mercy in thy chosen time,  
With equal eye on Afric’s suffering clime:  
Disperse her shades of intellectual night,  
Repeat thy high behest—Let there be light!  
Bring each benighted soul, great God, to Thee,  
And with thy wide Salvation make them free!

#### A 19th-Century Miss Manners

Like Wilberforce, More was repulsed by the degenerate culture of late 18th-century England. It was common knowledge, for instance, that the Prince of Wales, who later became King George IV, was a dissolute rake who gambled himself time and again into debt and made a hobby of philandering. Many in the upper class behaved little better.

Realizing even more than 200 years ago that “politics was downstream from culture” and that no legislation would change society, More fought to reverse the culture of her day through her writing, with her efforts aimed at the elites who set the example for the rest of the country. For years, she authored works like “Thoughts on the Importance of the Manners of the Great to General Society” (1788) and “Hints Towards Forming the Character of a Young Princess” (1805), which was directed not only at the young Princess Charlotte but also at the upper class.

Perhaps her best-known “conduct” book was her 1799 “Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education.” Here she argued for the education of women with the idea of complementarity in mind, that is, improvements in

education would make women better wives and mothers who might serve as examples of morality to society.

Finally, with the encouragement of Wilberforce, More and other evangelical leaders founded schools that met on Sundays, the one day of the week when the working-class children and adolescents were free to receive a rudimentary education. By the middle of the 19th century, these schools were common everywhere in England.

Such works and tracts penned by More helped create the deeper piety and middle-class morality that arose in the Victorian era.

#### The Anti-Revolutionist

Equally important was More’s stance against the revolution in France, and the related ideas that were spreading throughout Europe. In England, Tom Paine’s radical tracts and his “Rights of Man” stoked the fires of this revolutionary fervor, and several of her friends urged More to write in opposition.

The result was extraordinary. In a short time, More produced the pamphlet “Village Politics,” which was “Addressed to All the Mechanics, Journey-men, and Day-Labourers, in Great Britain.” This conversation between a blacksmith, Jack Anvil, and a mason, Tom Hod, gripped the public’s attention. Hundreds of thousands of copies were sold and read by upper classes and lower classes alike. Here is a sampling of this 17-page dialogue:

“Tom. No, no, I want a new constitution.

Jack: Indeed! Why I thought thou hadst been a desperate healthy fellow. Send for the doctor then.

Tom. I’m not sick; I want Liberty and Equality, and the Rights of Man.

Jack. Oh now I understand thee. What thou art a leveller and a republican, I warrant.

Tom. I’m a friend to the people. I want a reform.

Jack. Then the shortest way is to mend thyself.

Tom. But I want a general reform.

Jack. Then let every one mend one.”

The industrious More followed this pamphlet up with 140 more, which were

**The tracts penned by More helped create the deeper piety and middle class morality in Victorian England.**



**‘THE COMPLETE HANNAH MORE, VOL. 1’**

By William Maz  
Hannah More  
Greater Heritage  
Oct. 2021  
Paperback  
112 pages



Considered the most influential woman of her time, Hannah More used wit and charm to support her causes. Portrait of Hannah More, 1821, by Henry William Pickersgill.

distributed in the millions. Of her impassioned efforts, Metaxas writes: “That the violence and revolution did not leap across the Channel and rout the British way of life is in large part once again due to the pen of Hannah More.”

When presenting Winston Churchill with honorary American citizenship, President John F. Kennedy, borrowing words from journalist Edward R. Murrow, said of Churchill: “He mobilized the English language and sent it into battle.”

In her battles against slavery, poverty, a libertine culture, and revolution,

Hannah More mobilized those same weapons.

Jeff Minick has four children and a growing platoon of grandchildren. For 20 years, he taught history, literature, and Latin to seminars of homeschooling students in Asheville, N.C. He is the author of two novels, “Amanda Bell” and “Dust On Their Wings,” and two works of nonfiction, “Learning As I Go” and “Movies Make The Man.” Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, Va.

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THE EPOCH TIMES



FINE ART

## Antonio Canova

MASTER OF MARBLE, LOVER OF CLAY



“Head of the Penitent Magdalene,” circa 1794–1809, by Antonio Canova. Plaster with pointing marks; 17 11/16 inches by 15 3/4 inches by 16 1/8 inches. Museum Gysotheca Antonio Canova, Possagno, Italy.



“Penitent Magdalene,” 1791, by Antonio Canova. Terracotta; 5 7/8 inches by 5 1/8 inches by 5 11/16 inches. Civic Museums, Bassano del Grappa, Veneto, Italy.

Continued from Page 1

Early in his career, Canova became known for reviving the ancient Greek heritage of sculpture. Some at the time even called him the modern Phidias (circa 480–430 B.C.). Canova would have been flattered by the comparison to the ancient Greek sculptor, as he believed that “the works of Phidias are truly flesh and blood, like beautiful nature itself,” according to Jane Martineau and Andrew Robinson in their book “The Glory of Venice: Art in the Eighteenth Century.” In the late 18th century, Canova first worked in Venice but he made his name in Rome, becoming the greatest neoclassical sculptor of his time. He had invitations from many European heads of state to go work for them, but he stayed firmly on Roman soil, where he felt most inspired.

**In Praise of Clay**

Sculptors made models in wax, clay, or plaster. Few of Canova's wax models have survived. He preferred clay to plaster presumably because plaster was less forgiving to work with, notes the exhibition book.

We can't see Canova at work, but his clay models give us a unique peek into his artistic process. In the 19th century, workshop assistants created the finished sculptures from their masters' models. Normally, each assistant would special-

ize in one aspect of the process. However, Canova's workshop differed. According to the exhibition book, Canova insisted that his assistants knew how to carve as well as model. He believed “it was necessary for a young man to learn how to use the hammer and the chisel if he really wanted to become a great sculptor.”

Canova's assistants made his plaster casts and marble masterpieces, but only the master's hands kneaded, shaped, and carved each of his clay models.

In 1768, esteemed art historian and archaeologist Johann Joachim Winckelmann wrote: “Modeling in clay for the sculptor is like drawing on paper for the painter. And as the juice from the first pressing of grapes makes the best wine, so the genius of an artist is displayed in all its naturalness and truth in works in soft material or on paper,” according to the exhibition book.

Much like an artist sketched ideas onto paper, Canova molded his initial ideas into clay. He used these clay models, called “bozzetto,” to roughly work out compositions. It's important to remember that these models acted as tools for the sculptor—he made them in minutes.

In the exhibition, we can see a series of such models in varying states depending on what Canova wanted to explore and express in these studies. For instance, in some of his terracottas featuring “Adam and Eve Mourning the Dead Abel,” Canova seems to have just been working out

the figures' general positions and expressions. Somehow Canova evokes a sense of anguish through the shape of the figures. In his “Penitent Magdalene” terracotta, we can see how he pinched the clay with his fingers, immortalizing his fingerprints, and how he left track marks as he dragged his wooden modeling tool across the clay. Canova quickly marked out Mary's facial features, indicating the direction of her gaze as she opened her arms in remorse.

Once Canova decided on his composition, he'd make a detailed clay model



“Piety,” 1783, by Antonio Canova. Terracotta; 15 3/16 inches by 4 1/2 inches by 3 15/16 inches. Private collection.



“Doge Paolo Renier,” 1779, by Antonio Canova. Terracotta; 31 1/2 inches by 21 1/4 inches by 8 11/16 inches. Bottacin Museum, Civic Museums, Padua, Italy.



“Study of a Boy,” circa 1790–1800, by Antonio Canova. Terracotta; 15 3/8 inches by 14 15/16 inches by 6 5/16 inches. Museum Gysotheca Antonio Canova, Possagno, Italy.

called a “modello” to show to patrons, and often a larger model that his assistants used to cast in plaster to make the final marble sculpture. Experts consider Canova's terracotta modelli “Pope Clement XIV” and “Piety” to be his greatest surviving examples. Both will feature in the exhibition. In “Piety,” Canova rendered a woman heavily draped from head to toe; the fabric barely skims her body as she bows her head. Experts believe that Canova's modello of Pope Clement XIV seated on a throne and wearing his papal finery may have been a presentation piece. According to the exhibition book, Canova painted the plaster model white to show his patron how the finished marble would look. Even though Canova had seen hints of color pigments on ancient Roman sculptures excavated in Rome, the long-held belief that classical sculptures were pure white reigned supreme.

Canova also made clay studies of certain details, such as the head, hair, or facial features. Experts believe that he copied the facial features from life. Early in his career, in Venice, he created a delightful terracotta portrait of Doge Paolo Renier, a Venetian statesman. It was never realized in marble, but traces of white paint can be seen on the piece hinting at what it may have looked like if it had been made. Renier wears the distinctive “corno ducule” hat indicating his position as the Doge of Venice. Canova rendered Renier's character. He looks approachable, and there's a slight curl to his lips hinting at a smile. Somehow, Canova made the terracotta head appear luminous, with elastic-like skin and small wrinkles under the eyes and at the corners of the eyes that naturally happen when one smiles.

Canova's terracotta “Study of a Boy,” made some 10 years after Renier's portrait, will also show exhibition visitors Canova's exquisite detailing. For instance, in the piece we can see how he carefully rendered each of the boy's fine curls. Cracks fracture the youth's otherwise unblemished face, demonstrating the fragility of the terracotta medium. Most of Canova's terracotta heads have not survived due to the medium's fragility and also because once his assistants had cast the piece in plaster the terracotta became redundant.

**Pointing to Marble Masterpieces**

Canova's assistants cast these modelli in plaster and then, to make the finished marble, they copied the plaster casts using a technique called pointing.

According to “The Oxford Companion of Art,” pointing works on the principle that three fixed points can be used to pinpoint another point in relation to them. In the first century, ancient Roman sculptors used a primitive version of pointing to copy Greek statues. In Hellenistic times, stonemasons used a plumb line and frame. In the Renaissance, artists developed several methods for copying models. But not until the early 19th century was a pointing machine invented such as that which Canova's assistants would have used. The machines consisted of a frame that had movable arms with adjustable measuring rods to measure the depth of each point that needed to be drilled. We can see how the pointing machine works on a statue from St. John's Cathedral, in the Netherlands. Three sturdy rods act as the fixed points, while a thinner rod points to the tip of the nose, reflecting the measurement needed to be carved in the marble.

In the exhibition, we can see small crosses on the previously mentioned “Pope Clement XIV” plaster modello, which may have also been guides for pointing although no pointing marks were made in the plaster. We can, how-

ever, see myriad pointing marks on the plaster “Head of the Penitent Magdalene,” which Canova's assistants made to accurately transfer his design and carve into marble.

We can see that Mary holds her head higher in the plaster “Head of the Penitent Magdalene” modello than in the terracotta “Penitent Magdalene” bozzetto previously mentioned.

A grand example of Canova's artistic process—from creating his bozzetto to his finely finished, highly polished marble—can be seen in the exhibition via his portrait of Napoleon's mother, in the work “Madame Mère (Letizia Ramolino Bonaparte).” Canova looked to his ancient peers for inspiration for the seated piece, modeling Bonaparte's pose in the second-century marble statue known as the “Capitoline Agrippina.” In Canova's terracotta bozzetto for the piece, Bonaparte sits on a throne; her arms seem to rest on the throne's arms as she turns her head and gazes out over her shoulder. She's not at ease nor does she have a commanding presence. In Canova's terracotta modello, he relaxed her pose. She rests one arm on the throne's back and gazes forward. In the plaster modello used to point the design into marble, he adjusted her pose again. Her arm still rests loosely on the back of the throne, but he turned her head and her whole body to the side, making her engaging and commanding to the viewer. In the final marble piece, which experts

laud as the greatest of Canova's portraits, we can see how the sculptor and his assistants animated Bonaparte in stone.

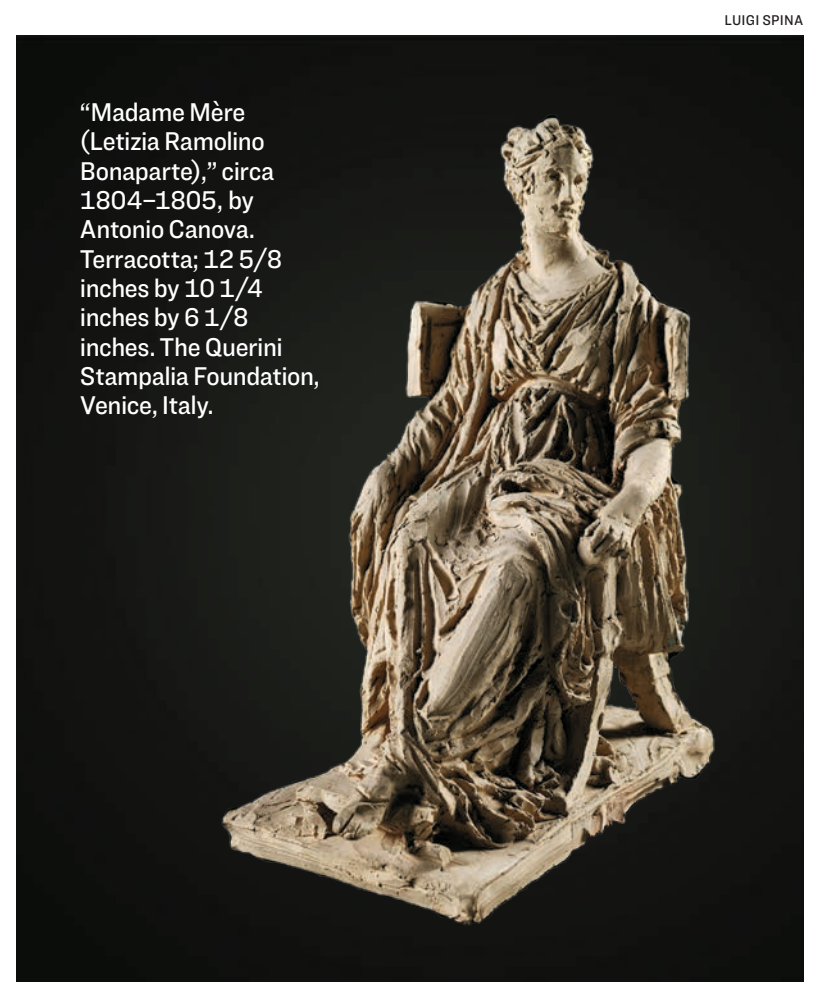
Even though each of his marbles were made by many hands, Canova always supervised the process, and the final carving hand was his. He always finished the figure's flesh, head, and facial features, shaping the cold, hard marble into warm, soft flesh. Canova's secretary Melchior Missirini wrote: “One could always see him investing a passion for the object ... with tears, with happiness, and with general convulsions of his body.” Lastly, an assistant cleaned and polished the marble, and sometimes Canova applied a tint to the finished piece.

Viewers were encouraged to see Canova's sculptures by torchlight, as experts at the time believed the ancients once did. Canova took care to illuminate specific parts of his works. “The polish throws upon the parts which are lighted so great brilliancy as frequently to make invisible the most laborious diligence,” Winckelmann wrote. According to the website of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, the Duke of Bedford noted Canova's piece “The Three Graces” for “the morbidez—that look of living softness given to the surface of the marble, which appears as if it would yield to the touch.”

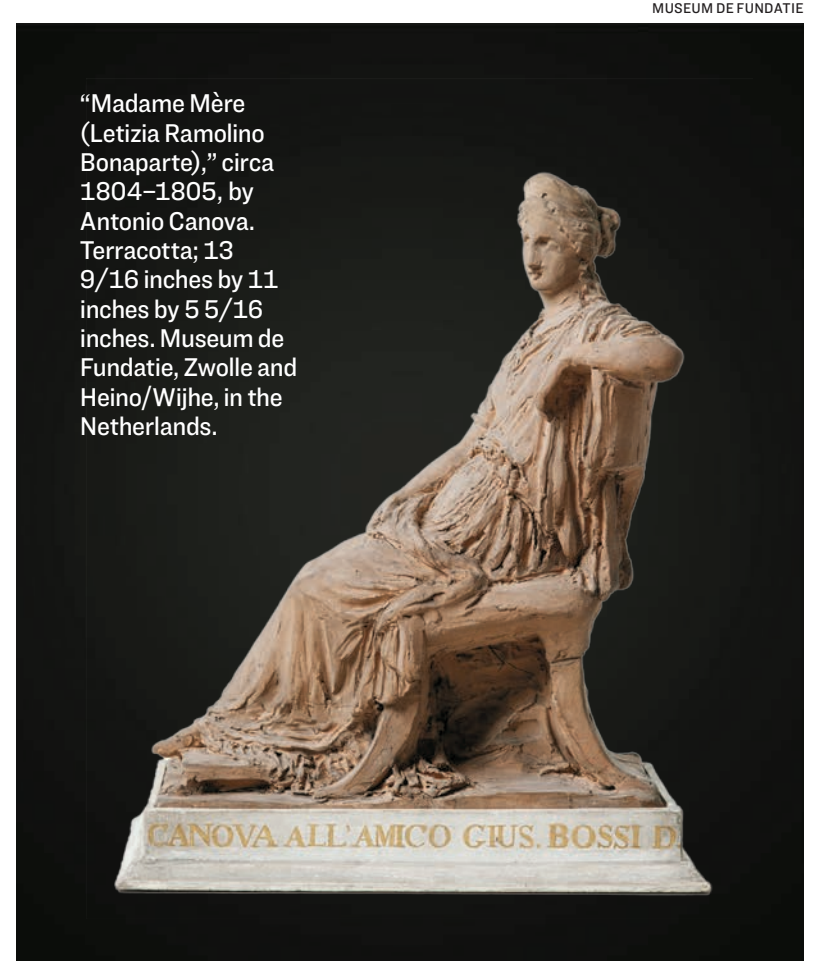
Through Canova's clay works, we can get a greater sense of the sculpting process. It won't dispel the mystique of sculpting, but perhaps we can see what Winckelmann meant when he wrote: “And as the juice from the first pressing of grapes makes the best wine, so the genius of an artist is displayed in all its naturalness and truth in works in soft material.”

*“The Canova: Sketching in Clay” exhibition at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, opens on June 11 and runs through Oct. 9. The exhibition will then open on Nov. 19 at the Arts Institute of Chicago, through March 18, 2024. To find out more, visit [NGA.gov](http://NGA.gov)*

*The exhibition is curated by the National Gallery of Art's senior curator of European and American art, C.D. Dickerson III, and the Art Institute of Chicago's Searle curator, painting and sculpture of Europe, Emerson Bowyer.*



“Madame Mère (Letizia Ramolino Bonaparte),” circa 1804–1805, by Antonio Canova. Terracotta; 12 5/8 inches by 10 1/4 inches by 6 1/8 inches. The Querini Stampalia Foundation, Venice, Italy.



“Madame Mère (Letizia Ramolino Bonaparte),” circa 1804–1805, by Antonio Canova. Terracotta; 13 9/16 inches by 11 inches by 5 5/16 inches. Museum de Fundatie, Zwolle and Heino/Wijhe, in the Netherlands.



“Madame Mère (Letizia Ramolino Bonaparte),” circa 1805, by Antonio Canova. Plaster; 26 3/8 inches by 24 inches by 13 3/4 inches. Museum Gysotheca Antonio Canova, Possagno, Italy.



“Madame Mère (Letizia Ramolino Bonaparte),” 1805/1807, by Antonio Canova. Marble; 57 7/8 inches by 57 9/16 inches by 30 5/16 inches. The Devonshire Collections, Chatsworth, in England.

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The action in "The Bucharest Legacy" takes place in Bucharest, Romania. A scene at sunset at the Bucharest Library.

## BOOK REVIEW

# Plenty of Action in Post-Cold War Thriller

Plenty of action and complex plot in this post-Cold War spy thriller

## DUSTIN BASS

In his follow-up to his incredible debut, "The Bucharest Dossier," William Maz takes the reader on an adventure back to Bucharest a few years after the dismantling of the USSR, the fall of communism, and Romania's Christmas Revolution.

"The Bucharest Legacy: The Rise of the Oligarchs" is the second in the series, of which, it appears, there might be a third. Bill Hefflin, the analyst-turned-spy-turned-retired-billionaire, is ushered back into the world of espionage. There are familiar faces from the debut novel, but for the most part, it's a new set of players. Bucharest plays the primary setting with New York City tossed in, but it is the capital city of Romania where Maz exhibits his deftness for detail.

## The Cold War Is Over

Cold War spy novels offer a strange sense of nostalgic romanticism. It was an era wherein

the lines between the good guys (the West) and bad guys (USSR) never blurred, at least not in fiction. But that era is over at the opening of Maz's second novel set in 1993, and the romanticism has gone with it.

Maz began his spy series at the tail end of the Cold War (December 1989) and created a bit of tough sledding for himself in the genre of spy novels because the 1990s are somewhat of a dead space for espionage, at least the romantic kind. That dead space, of course, ended when the Global War on Terror erupted in the early 2000s, though the modern era of espionage is far from romantic.

But the book is still based in Eastern Europe, which lends itself to a sense of Cold War nostalgia, even more since only the names (like the Securitate and the KGB) have changed. The criminal underworld and the intelligence agencies also maintain their familiar roles in this spy novel.

Even though it's fiction, Maz's novel demonstrates clearly how communism had

RAZVAN DRAGOMIRESCU/SHUTTERSTOCK

crumbled into a perverse form of capitalism, resulting in the rise of the oligarchs. From a historical perspective, it is an informative read on how Romania, and many of the former states of the USSR, moved from a communist economy to a capitalist one. As Maz, who was born in Bucharest, makes clear, the losers of each system were typically the same.

When it comes to the oligarchs, they are hardly seen and more rarely heard. They remain in the background as a retired Hefflin, still young and still capable, encounters a ghost of sorts. A dead man has somehow come calling, and the protagonist finds himself at the center of a mole hunt. Tempted by wealth and sex, Hefflin moves throughout the storyline seemingly impervious to the temptations, and for good reasons.

## Mole Hunt and Personal Journey

The hunt leads Hefflin to encounter a number of interesting individuals, from agents to underworld bosses to arms dealers. While he works to unravel the mystery that has intelligence agencies and a lot of powerful people placing a target on his back, it is the secondary narrative—a familial search—that comes into focus and nearly takes precedence. Maz eventually weaves the two together, specifically at the climax.

In the debut novel, Maz used the same plot device: connecting a familial search with a mission. The difference between the two, however, is that the initial work had an elusive and very intriguing love interest. It helped move the story along. In "The Bucharest Legacy," the plot device struggles to do so.

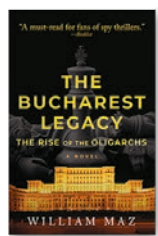
"The Bucharest Legacy" has an incredibly elaborate plot with a lot of moving parts. There is plenty of action in the novel, and the story starts off with a bang (literally) and a very intriguing scenario. Maz's overall plot, which begins with a defection, launches the story forward. The author does a nice job of slowly but surely connecting all the dots and tying up all the loose ends.

Though most of the ends are tied up in the action, there are a few left to dialogue. Using dialogue to tie up loose ends is workable, but there is always the risk of making the resolution too simple. Maz does this a couple of times and, indeed, the resolutions do feel too simple. There are also several action sequences that are resolved too easily to feel authentic.

The bar was set high for the sequel of "The Bucharest Dossier," which was such a fantastic piece of work. "The Bucharest Legacy: The Rise of the Oligarchs" is an enjoyable and easy read with good action sequences. Maz, as he proved in his debut, has a gift for detail. But as mentioned, some of the resolutions feel too easy, especially for a complex plot. It may have been that the book needed another 50 to 100 pages in order to work out the promised complexity.

Dustin Bass is an author and co-host of *The Sons of History* podcast.

The novel has an incredibly elaborate plot with lots of moving parts.



**THE BUCHAREST LEGACY: THE RISE OF THE OLIGARCHS**  
By William Maz  
Oceanview Publishing  
June 20, 2023  
Hardcover  
368 pages

## BOOK RECOMMENDATION

# Finding the Lost in the Land of Enchantment

## ANITA L. SHERMAN

Known as the "Land of Enchantment," New Mexico is a large state, ranking fifth among the 50 in total area, and boasting a range of landscapes from deserts to deep canyons, raging rivers, dense forests, and mountains.

As readers will quickly learn from SAR (Search and Rescue) Field Coordinator Marc Levesque in his book "Gila Lost and Found: Search and Rescue in New Mexico," this lush state can also be the "Land of Entrapment" for those unfortunate enough to become lost, stranded, or injured when exploring areas in the southwest corner of the state: the Bootheel that includes the Gila National Forest and the Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument.

Tourists flock to the area for hiking, biking, climbing, hunting, or rafting, whether for the day or planned backcountry camping. Many are experienced and prepared. Others are inexperienced and woefully unprepared. Regardless of the category of explorer, and depending on their good or bad decisions, Mother Nature can get the upper hand when the weather suddenly changes, bringing snow instead of sunshine or turning a dry arroyo river bed into a river of debris from a flash flood.

## Some Haven't Returned

Search and rescue teams are often called to locate the lost and bring calm to an often-chaotic situation upon during bad weather, hopefully before the victim or victims expire.

According to Levesque, deaths haven't happened often but they have occurred on his watch, and such tragedies leave everyone involved deeply saddened.

Levesque, who is not a native to the state but has lived there for several decades, has his roots in the Northeast with hiking and climbing expertise garnered from treks in New Hampshire, home to the challenging and exhilarating terrain of the White Mountains.

When he and his wife decided to make New Mexico their home, they came with an appetite for search and rescue volunteer work that quickly blossomed into a full-time career.

Levesque is an apt storyteller. His narratives are told in dramatic fashion, keeping readers on the edge of their seats wondering whether his teams will locate the missing hikers or the two teenage girls perched on a mountain ledge or the older gentleman hiking with two goats as pack animals.

He also includes some history, like the true story of George and Joseph Cox, ages 5 and 7, who went missing in the woods of Pennsylvania in 1856. Sadly, they were not found after thousands scoured the area for two weeks. Curiously, a local man's series of dreams eventually led to the discovery of their bodies.

Thanks to the efforts of the hundreds of SAR volunteers, most cases have happy endings.



Search and Rescue volunteers must often look for lost hikers in difficult terrain.

Teams use a variety of resources including state-of-the-art tracking technology, not to mention their own creativity putting themselves in the hiker's shoes. These volunteers, while unpaid, are highly trained and certified in a variety of different areas of expertise.

## Tackling the Terrain

Readers will learn a great deal from Levesque's insightful experiences. What is particularly enlightening is the amount of coordination that is required, often involving local, state, and federal agencies. With New Mexico's proximity to the Mexican border, the Border Patrol is often called in to assist with helicopters. K-9 teams and mounted

units are also employed. Rescue missions are meticulously planned and organized but can be hampered by over-eager volunteers. They sometimes turn out to help find a local person of note but will inadvertently trample over vital footprints or become lost themselves.

For Levesque, the safety of his rescue teams is paramount. He spends a good amount of time making sure that roads are accessible, paths are well marked and cleared, and communication is in good order: Knowing the territory is critical. His years of experience have made him wilderness-wise. He puts

that wisdom to full use when gearing up for a rescue mission.

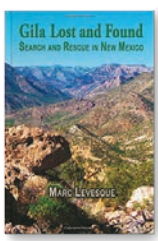
As with law enforcement officers, firefighters, and emergency medical technicians, search and rescue personnel fall under that category of unsung heroes. These are the folks whose untiring work can make a difference and save lives. It's informative and compelling to learn the complexities of what it takes in mind, body, and spirit to help, in most cases, strangers survive and live to tell the tales of their adventures. Gratefulness is an understatement.

While this book focuses on the rugged terrain of southwest New Mexico, its principles can be applied to any wilderness area.

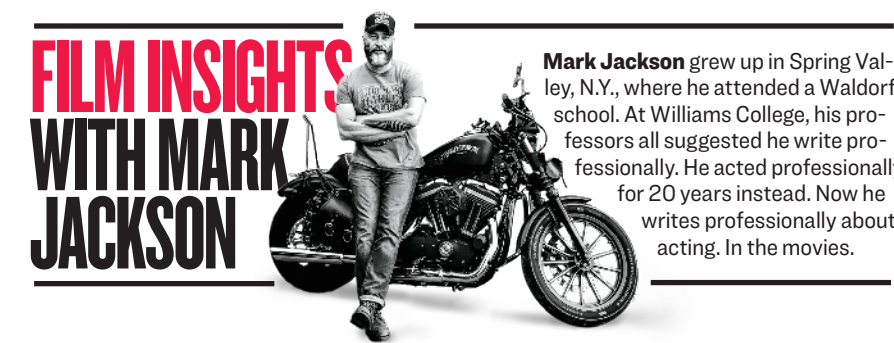
In addition to touching stories of personal rescues throughout his career, Levesque offers lots of survival tips should you happen to find yourself lost. He also includes a comprehensive checklist of items you should have before venturing out.

Whether you are an avid backpacker or armchair adventurer, you will find poignant perspective and appreciation in these rescue accounts.

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](mailto:anitajustwrite@gmail.com)



**'GILA LOST AND FOUND: SEARCH AND RESCUE IN NEW MEXICO'**  
By Marc Levesque  
Red Planet Press  
April 8, 2021  
Paperback  
222 pages



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.

# Gardening as a Metaphor for Redemption

## MARK JACKSON

Writer-director Paul Schrader serves up yet another antihero plagued by a troubled, violent past in "Master Gardener." Narvel Roth (Joel Edgerton) is a former neo-Nazi, now in witness protection, who works as the head gardener on the enormous Southern estate of the to-the-plantation-born domineering heiress Norma Haverhill (Sigourney Weaver).

It should be said at the outset that, based on that premise, some might immediately want to designate this film as more foisting of the Hollywood leftist agenda—more racial divide-and-conquer Marxist-type propaganda. That's certainly a possibility. But the purification and redemption themes would appear to overpower such speculation. It seems to be much more of a good-always-wins-in-the-end message.

Back to Narvel Roth: A man dedicated to his craft, with an encyclopedic knowledge of horticultural history, Narvel oversees the "curated botany" of Norma's Gracewood Gardens. She respects Narvel's mastery, defers to his opinions, and he in turn is very honest with her. But secretly, he's providing extorted, unsavory favors in exchange for her being complicit in keeping his former identity, as Shakespeare would say, "in the deep bosom of the ocean buried."

Norma saddles Narvel with a new job. Her biracial grandniece, Maya (Quintessa Swindell) who recently lost her mother, will be joining the ranks.

Maya has dropped out of school and started running with a bad crowd. Norma describes Maya as being of "mixed blood." Her choice of words speaks volumes about her thinly veiled disapproval, and her invitation to Maya to work at the manor is far more of a self-aggrandizing act of saviorism than generosity. Narvel will be

so kind as to expand his duties to take Maya on as a new gardening apprentice.

## Truth Will Out

Addressing his small group of apprentices, Narvel is quietly passionate. He explains loam, the best planting soil, urging his students to bury their noses in it and infuse their nostrils with the rich scent. Take a wild guess as to how the young, rebellious Maya's relationship to the older, taciturn, wise, brutally handsome, in-charge, fatherly, master gardener evolves? What driftless, fatherless girl wouldn't develop a yearning for such a man?

And how would he, a man who hates himself for past, sordid, genocidal sins as well as the current "dirty deeds done dirt cheap" that he needs to perform weekly to keep his situation—how would he respond to the attention of a comely member of the "mongrel race" that he'd once obsessed about exterminating? He, a changed man who gave up his familial militia to the Feds, and who would like nothing more than to be able to atone?

But the past has a way of working its way to the surface like a persistent weed. How might Maya react were she to catch a glimpse of the white supremacy tattoo-fest of lightning-bolt SS symbols, swastikas, and skulls that cover Narvel's body?

At one point, Norma, spying on Narvel visiting young Maya's cabin late at night, jumps to conclusions about his visit. It could merely be the case that Maya got beat up by her drug-dealer friends and Narvel is tending to her wounds. Are Norma's assumptions correct?

## The Zen of Gardening

Most of the movie follows the Narvel-Maya relationship as it evolves from teacher-



Narvel Roth (Joel Edgerton) and Maya (Quintessa Swindell) are teacher and apprentice, among other things, in "Master Gardener."

Edgerton's charisma produces a beguiling portrayal of a solitary man seeking atonement.

## 'Master Gardener'

**Director**  
Paul Schrader  
**Starring**  
Joel Edgerton, Sigourney Weaver, Quintessa Swindell  
**Running Time**  
1 hour, 51 minutes  
**MPAA Rating**  
R  
**Release Date**  
May 19, 2023  
★ ★ ★ ★ ☆

pupil, to father-daughter, to potentially something more. There's an intuited, kindred-spirit connection that they feel, part of which are the pasts they're both attempting to outrun. Schrader plays around with our expectations, taking things in some unpredictable directions.

Edgerton's charisma produces a beguiling portrayal of a solitary man seeking atonement, via current-day scenes and unsettling flashbacks. In today's social media-generated, knee-jerk judgment hysteria, though, some viewers may recoil at the film's premise to the point that they're unable to accept the titular character's inner change of heart, hung up as they will be by the extremes of his past (and tattoos).

But this is just the kind of cognitive dissonance that Schrader would clearly like people to experience, where the audience has to wrestle with uncomfortable themes. It's in this relationship that Schrader's provocateur reputation is most apparent. However, the story is delicately told, with disarming and captivating tenderness.

The Zen quality of gardening, with its constant battle to control the anarchy of nature, is the perfect metaphor for Narvel's attempt to keep his old identity weeded out and his new one blossoming. And over all hangs the healing power and soul purification of nature.

Ultimately, though, "Master Gardener" is about the futility of trying to maintain strict order and isolation in life. Narvel's journey from violence to redemption must embrace the chaos that is Maya. It's a great concept. If only the movie's tempo didn't move at the pace of a garden snail on a rutabaga leaf.

"Master Gardener" will have a limited run in theaters.

## FILM REVIEW

# This 17th-Century Artist Remains a Mystery

## MICHAEL CLARK

Other than possibly Rembrandt, none of the painters to produce art during the 17th-century Dutch Golden Age is as well-respected and revered by experts and collectors as Johannes Vermeer.

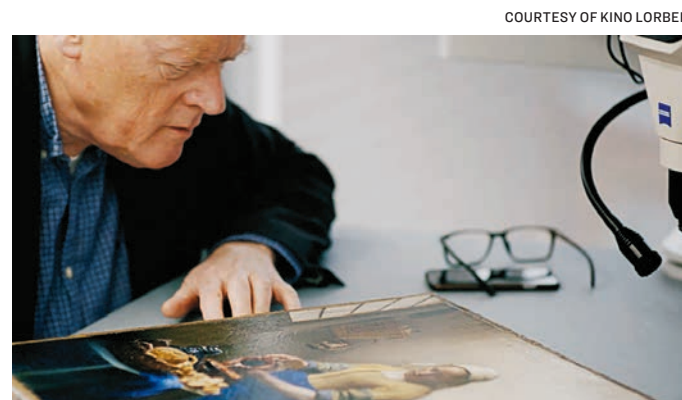
Depending on the source, Vermeer created just 40 works between 1654 and 1670. Of those, six are presumed lost or destroyed, and at least one is, again depending on the source, incorrectly attributed.

Director Suzanne Raes devotes roughly a third of the running time of the new documentary "Close to Vermeer" to a debate regarding the authenticity of a single painting: "Girl With a Flute."

This often contentious debate between U.S. and Dutch curators is the last in a series of meetings leading up to the main event: a 2023 Vermeer exhibition taking place at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. This exhibition (in theory) is historic as it will feature the highest number of Vermeer works ever under one roof. The trick is in convincing two galleries in the United States and another in Germany to lend a total of 10 works to the exhibition.

Heading up the Dutch contingency is Dr. Gregor J.M. Weber, the art director at the Rijksmuseum, whose obsession with Vermeer began as a teen and has only grown more intense with the passage of time. With his imposing gait, shaved head, and black horn-rimmed glasses, Weber is a hybrid (both physically and in temperament) of Dr. Evil from the "Austin Powers" flicks, Gru from the "Despicable Me" franchise, and Col. Klink from the TV series "Hogan's Heroes."

Tenacious and driven, Weber is also somewhat lacking in people skills and the subtler



Dr. Gregor J.M. Weber, the art director at the Rijksmuseum, examines the Vermeer painting titled "The Milkmaid," in the documentary "Close to Vermeer."

The exhibition features the highest number of Vermeer works ever under one roof.

## 'Close to Vermeer'

**Director**  
Suzanne Raes  
**Starring**  
Documentary  
**Running Time**  
1 hour, 18 minutes  
**MPAA Rating**  
Not Rated  
**Release Date**  
May 26, 2023  
★ ★ ★ ★ ☆

points of art world finesse and dealmaking. Regardless of his results, Weber's presence in the film adds elements of unintended humor and a level of "personality" not generally associated with many often brittle and staid documentaries of this ilk.

Weber, however, performs a great service by demonstrating a device that has divided Vermeer devotees for centuries: the camera obscura. With origins dating back to 500 B.C., the 17th-century obscuras were rectangular boxes with triangular tent-like tops and a front lens that projected images to a 45-degree mirror in the back. The mirror would then project captured images onto surfaces (canvases in particular) where artists could trace, or fill in the images with paint. Many contend that this is the reason why Vermeer's paintings bear an almost photographic, realistic look.

It's never been proven with any certainty that Vermeer employed obscura, but in the 2013 film "Tim's Vermeer," inventor Tim Jenison spent four months and a great deal of money, using tools available only in the 17th century, and an obscura to reproduce an astonishingly accurate copy of Vermeer's impossibly detailed painting "The Music Lesson."

## The Technicians

Another facet of the film that is both highly entertaining and informative is the time spent in the company of various technicians examining, via X-rays and microscopes, a handful of paintings that go far in debunking the obscura theory. These exercises also aid and sometimes further confound experts trying to determine attribution. A passage regarding the origin of a single bolt of canvas

used in two different works is particularly illuminating.

The arguable highlights of the movie, at least from a human interest angle, are the sections featuring U.S. artist Jonathan Janson. Regarded by practically everyone as the foremost Vermeer expert, Janson brings welcomed emotional heft to the film. Especially moving are the instances where he sees some of the paintings in person for the first time.

Janson also discusses plans for a new book about the shameless merchandising of Vermeer and, in particular, the selling of "Girl With a Pearl Earring," which he regards as crass and in bad taste.

The 2023 exhibition, which started in February and ends in June, sold out in near-record time. Those wanting a virtual tour can visit the Rijksmuseum website.

The fascination and obsession with Vermeer show no signs of letting up. Like far too many artists before and after him, he died young (43) while leaving his wife and 11 children penniless. Adding to the legend and mystique was Vermeer's complete lack of keeping journals, letters, or diaries. Unlike Rembrandt, who made close to 80 self-portraits, Vermeer did only one that is confirmed, "The Allegory of Painting," where he is seen only from behind.

Vermeer is and will forever remain an enigma and an anomaly to the art world. Whether by design or not, he left us with just the work, charging us to complete an impossible-to-solve portrait of the man.

The film is presented in Dutch and English with English subtitles.

"Close to Vermeer" opened on May 26 at the Quad Cinema in New York City with release nationally to follow.

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

MAGNOLIA PICTURES



## POPCORN AND INSPIRATION

# Gratitude for Youth and Respect for Age

Aging isn't dying, merely the evening of life

## RUDOLPH LAMBERT FERNANDEZ

Ernest Thompson always had New Hampshire in his blood. He poured his blood, sweat, and tears, and a lot else, into writing the stage play of a lifetime, "On Golden Pond." He then wrote the screenplay for the movie. He was 28 when he wrote his play, and his film won acclaim soon after: 10 Oscar nominations (3 wins, including Best Screenplay), 6 Golden Globe nominations (3 wins, including Best Screenplay). A tale about aging that's also about growing up is rare enough; rarer still is it to be told by one so young, and so well.

Bitter and judgmental, Norman (Henry Fonda) is about to turn 80. He and his incurably cheerful wife, Ethel (Katharine Hepburn), turn up annually at their cottage on lake "Golden Pond" in New England. Their partly estranged daughter, Chelsea (Jane Fonda), visits with her fiancé Bill (Dabney Coleman), and his 13-year-old son, Billy (Doug McKeon).

An excited Ethel and a reluctant Norman agree to babysit Billy for a month as Chelsea and Bill tour Europe. Norman is ready to be his disagreeable self, and Billy is ready with all the resentment he can muster. But as they bond, including over Norman's pastime of fishing, Norman learns some home truths about aging as Billy learns about growing up.

### Great Screen Characters

The Fondas and Hepburn are marvelous, and if Norman's grumpiness is overdone in parts, he's still an utterly believable character.

Like the aged who are often considered to be lacking excitement or energy or promise, Thompson's screenplay, for the same assumed reasons, almost never became a film. No big studio would finance it. Yet Jane saw pure gold and got her company, IPC Films, to produce it. It duly won her father, Henry, his first and only performance Oscar; he died months later.

Director Mark Rydell uses the camera to conjure images of life growing and aging: loons or diver birds on the water's surface, wildflowers, budding blueberry bushes, tiny and tall trees, little leaves rustling. He depicts death too: a long-dead loon turns up in a fishing net. He uses reflection as a metaphor for introspection in real life, especially the sun's reflection on the lake. Dave Grusin's gorgeous score does the rest.

Norman and Ethel have opposing worldviews. She sees warmth and welcome in their forlorn cottage; he sees no such thing. She anticipates the joy of picking berries; he sees a mess. She draws happiness just from moving her piece on a checkers board; he's sniping at the slightest provocation, and often without any at all. She looks at him, not with contempt but with compassion.

Ethel tells Billy not to let Norman's yelling upset him; he's yelling at life, not Billy. To a flummoxed Billy, she explains that Norman is like an old lion who has to remind himself that he can still roar. She says softly, "You have to look hard at a person and remember that he's doing the best he can; he's just trying to find his way ... like you."

Young as he is, this resonates with Billy,



Norman (Henry Fonda) and Ethel (Katharine Hepburn) have a cottage, in the 1981 film "On Golden Pond."

who, unsure of himself at first, prefers being cool rather than considerate. One invigorating sequence has him riding solo in Norman's speedboat, wind in his hair, huge grin on his face, savoring the sensation of the boat doing what it's told as his small hands steer its wheel. Here, the boat's a symbol of the young. Those game enough to do a backflip from a diving board into the water have spy bodies lending them power that the aged miss.

Billy revels in the thrill of being able to go where he wants, at the speed he chooses, just for the heck of it. The boat plows straight ahead, skids above the waves, and then swivels in wild, sweeping turns. The camera catches him pumping his fists in the air, feeling alive.

Yet there are also times when the camera catches him, with Norman, sensing that the vigor of youth, no matter how terrific, is also temporary. He develops a new gratitude for his youth, and a new respect for age.

### Different Perspectives

Norman, for his part, realizes that experience isn't just about being older but about learning while you grow, becoming wiser not just more knowledgeable. It's about seeing and hearing with inner eyes and ears, even when real ones falter. In a funny aside on his blind narcissism, he's shown reading the classifieds with a magnifying glass, even with his glasses on.

His fears keep him from seeing people for what they are and fuel a suspicion around their motives. Watching the ice

thaw between him and the boy is like watching the leaves change color in autumn—slowly, surely, sublimely.

Norman can't stop talking about death and dying, and Ethel can't get enough of life and living. Once, she admits that he's "the sweetest man in the world, but I'm the only one who knows it!"

Watching the New England sunlight scatter like floating gold coins on the lake, it's easier to see how some people are like that: shards, whose shine can be spotted from only one peculiar angle. The sunlight is lost in an instant, except to someone like Ethel who sees that glint steadily, and loves it for what it is.

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

### 'On Golden Pond'

**Director**  
Mark Rydell

**Starring**  
Henry Fonda,  
Katharine Hepburn,  
Jane Fonda

**Running Time**  
1 hour, 49 minutes

**MPAA Rating**  
PG

**Release Date**  
Dec. 4, 1981

★★★★★

TRUTH and TRADITION

In Our Own Words

## From the Desk of Our Puzzle Master



“I've benefited greatly from the many relationships and friendships formed making the puzzle pages better and better with each passing year.

**Tom Houston**  
Puzzle Master



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Dear Epoch VIP (and Puzzler!),

Thank you for subscribing to The Epoch Times and for supporting our journey of providing the world with truthful, uncensored journalism as well as analysis of world events, especially in China.

My journey with The Epoch Times actually began in 2009 when I discovered the publication's outstanding coverage of events in China, something of which I had studied for over 30 years principally as a linguist and China analyst. The Epoch Times' coverage was unique and included many aspects and facets of Chinese life under the Chinese Communist Party that were either not covered or were entirely avoided by the mainstream press. After reading this coverage, I felt compelled to "climb aboard" and support The Epoch Times on its journey toward truthful reporting that would not be beholden to any kind of censorship, whether it's from a government or commercial entity.

After discussions with the editor-in-chief on what the newspaper actually most needed and what I personally could do to support the paper, I published my first puzzle page on Jan. 4, 2010—over 12 years ago. Since then, my Epoch Times journey has been eventful, to say the least. I have learned and grown a great deal, and so has our puzzle page! It's grown from a single page of puzzles in a 16-page edition to two pages of puzzles (and a half page on the Wednesday "For Kids Only" page) in what is now a 52-page paper!

Along the way, hundreds of puzzlers have reached out through our [feedback@epochtimes.com](mailto:feedback@epochtimes.com) email to comment on the puzzles, send me pictures of their unique solutions, ask questions, point out my mistakes (I've made many!), pass along a compliment or constructive criticism and offer to help. I've benefited greatly from the many relationships and friendships formed making the puzzle pages better

and better with each passing year.

Thank you, readers! We wouldn't be where we are today without you! **Each and every one of you who has subscribed, advertised, or who has sent in encouraging words, constructive comments, or ideas has helped to make The Epoch Times what it is today.**

A number of Epoch Times readers (and puzzle fans) actually contribute to our puzzle pages! "Coder Chang" developed a "4 Numbers" puzzle tool (4Nums.com) that we have been using since January 2018. Our skydiving chess master, Michael Gibbs, began donating "Chess Challenges" to The Epoch Times over two years ago. Liz Ball, an accomplished puzzle developer whose work has appeared in more than 300 publications (HiddenPicturePuzzles.com) began donating her popular "Hidden Picture" puzzles to The Epoch Times' kids page over a year ago.

We sincerely appreciate these puzzles, and for me, they are a kind reminder of the community that has built up around this newspaper.

**In short, seeing people genuinely moved by The Epoch Times' commitment to journalism and truthful reporting of events, often glossed over or "slanted" by other media outlets, has been a heartwarming experience for me.**

I hope that your journey with The Epoch Times will be as educational, satisfying, and fulfilling as mine has been. And, please, always feel free to drop us a line at [feedback@epochtimes.com](mailto:feedback@epochtimes.com). We appreciate your insight, and who knows—I could always use a few more hands in the puzzle workshop.

*In truth and tradition,*

Tom Houston  
The Epoch Times

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