

AFA UPDATE

A PROJECT OF THE ASATRU FOLK ASSEMBLY

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Contact email: afa@lanset.com

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MOVIES

Movies are one of the more powerful influences shaping our culture. While people don't go to the movie theater to have ideas planted in their heads, messages of all sorts are transmitted nevertheless - social, political, and religious. Sometimes this is not deliberate, but in other cases it is done with careful forethought.

A few years ago I watched an interview with a retired Hollywood producer, whose name I do not recall. With his movie-making years behind him and a future assured with more money than you or I are likely to ever see, he could afford to speak frankly. Yes, he said, he had been a member of the Communist Party. Yes, Hollywood had been riddled by Communists and their fellow travelers; people like Senator Joe McCarthy were essentially right about that. He freely admitted making some movies for the purpose of promoting the Party line - in some cases, the movie was nothing more than context for the few lines of script that carried the specific propaganda message!

The power of film has only grown in our society since this producer's heyday. Wouldn't it be great if Asatru, or traditional European culture generally, had even small percentage of the clout carried by some of the other forces out there?

Matters close to the Germanic heart have been comparatively scarce in the movie scene. For years, we had only *The Vikings*, circa 1959, promoting our Way. Robert E. Howard's *Conan* gave good exposure not only to the future governor of California but also to heroic heathen values. *The Thirteenth Warrior* was added to the list just a few years ago. Finally, the Tolkien movies hit the screen and gave moviegoers an unprecedented dose of the Nordic ethos.

The fruits of these cinematic efforts continue to reverberate through the collective unconscious. Twenty years from now, we'll be hearing from men and women whose lives were changed by seeing *Lord of the Rings* as children.

I think, though, that we must not rely just on these more or less obvious productions to transmit our values. Other movies can help carry the load, even when the subject matter has nothing to do with native Germanic religion or indigenous European history.

Consider the recent naval epic, *Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World*. I've never cared much for sea exploits, but I was entranced! You'd be hard pressed to find better examples of loyalty, courage, duty and sacrifice for an ideal. When Russell Crowe told his crew that, for the course of the coming battle, "This ship is England," shivers ran up and down my spine. The young apprentice officers were the sort of characters one only finds in boy's adventure stories of a century or more ago, before cynicism and a craving for the lowly corrupted Western culture.

As a native Texan, I could hardly pass up *The Alamo*. Unfortunately, a lot of people did pass it up; its box office performance was disappointing. A story of bravery in the face of overwhelming odds is the very stuff of the sagas, so *The Alamo* should have attracted people like us from the start. But there's more: Crockett's flippant remarks even as he knows he is about to die reminds us of the Norse tales, as well - and the Texan revenge at San Jacinto, so sweet to all of us who love Texas, is an ancient theme.

Or, for a completely different kind of film, see *The Big Fish*. This strange little movie teaches us a lot about family bonds, as a man comes to terms with his dying father's tall tales. But the story resonates with themes more familiar in Celtic myth, as we experience supernatural fish, shape changers, a circular concept of time, and the mysterious Lady we first see standing, naked, in the moonlit water. No overt reference is made to the Celtic lands as such; it is all left there, subtly, to sink into our subconscious.

I haven't seen *Troy* yet - that's on the list for this weekend - but even if the critics are right and the scripting is poor, this is still a movie that relates to our themes. Remember, these folk were our Indo-European kin. The setting is a long way from northern Europe, but blood is more important than geography and the tale strikes deep chords in our own hearts. The pursuit of glory is more than vanity; it is a spiritual striving. Deep in the lore of the Indo-Europeans is the affirmation that "undying fame" imparts immortality; that to be honored by one's descendants for all time is a matter of the greatest religious importance. "Only the forgotten are dead."

In short, we rejoice when something like *The Lord of the Rings* comes along., but there remains plenty of other films that sing to our souls. They can inspire adults and children alike. Each of them is a sign of lingering cultural health, a potential resource we can use for our own entertainment as well as for producing the right cultural environment for our families.

IRISH VIKING SETTLEMENT THREATENED

A recently-discovered Viking settlement has been discovered near Waterford, Ireland. It has rested undisturbed since the ninth century, but now it faces a threat greater than Irish warriors: The National Roads Authority wants to build a freeway right over the top of it.

Dr. Pat Wallace, director of the National Museum, has called for a full excavation. Minister for the Environment Martin Cullen had promised to make a decision any day now, so if you care about this you might want to make yourself heard right away.

Minister Cullen's email address is minister@environ.irlgov.ie. You can fax his department at +353-1-8788640 (See your phone book to help you make an international call). As always, be polite, concerned, and emphatic. He won't understand Asatru, but he may understand culture, heritage, the feeling of Americans for their ancestral homeland, etc.

You can find more information on Minister Cullen at http://www.eu2004.ie/templates/presidency_bio.asp?sNavlocator=5,14&list_id=8.

More on this story can be found at <http://www.rte.ie/news/2004/0515/waterford.html>.

UPDATE ON "ODIN LIVES!" RADIO

Odin Lives! Radio remains a "must hear" resource for all of us who follow the Germanic folkway.

For information on programs, times, and how to tune in, go to <http://www.odinlives.org/index.html>.

IMPORTANT DATES

June 9 - Day of Remembrance for Sigurd the Volsung. No Germanic hero outshines Sigmund's noble son. His courage and nobility won him fame shining through the centuries. Recall his glory by listening to Wagner's Ring operas, or by doing something generous, or by slaying one of your own private dragons.

Hail the Holy Ones!

Hail the AFA!

Stephen A. McNallen
Drighthen, Asatru Folk Assembly

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Next update June 4th!