

SIAM

A VOYAGE

BOOK TO MOVIE

The one-hundredth anniversary of the opening of World War I, the ‘war to end all wars’ comes due in 2014. Impersonal archival footage will be seen on news networks. *All Quiet on the Western Front*, a story that ends with a sniper’s bullet will be re-issued with reverence for a lost generation. But what if the canvas of life is larger than we’ve been told and that many of the ‘lost’ are back in embodiment, with new names, new families? What if you suspected, and then knew, you were one of them, and that justice, decency and opportunity outlast the frailty of the human body? Over sixty percent of Americans believe in reincarnation as plausible, though churches can’t accurately explain why.

Siam is about crucial individual choices during World War I from the perspective of soul continuity, unwrapping the still-trapped emotions of the antagonist who survived it and the protagonist who didn’t. The antagonist is far more complicated than a military leader millions love to loathe. He was the World War I Field Marshall Sir Douglas Haig, derided as ‘Butcher’, ‘donkey’, ‘incompetent’, and burdened with a ‘persecution diathesis’. No filmmaker has yet captured the psychological complexity of this important historic figure, who like Patton, walked the tightrope of fame and an even deeper infamy. Two million men died under his command. Fast forward to the present; that soul has re-embodied in the US with renewed opportunity to be tested again in the use of power, on a more modest scale. But the town of Elder is a demanding crucible, and too confining an arena for a soul used to being at the center of the world stage at pivotal times in world history. And in Elder, as mayor, Jim House faces the sharp intellect and strong will of the protagonist, Leon Rose, whose soul was a first-hand witness and victim of the misuse of power a hundred years ago in World War I.

Joseph Campbell would recognize Leon Rose as the wounded hero. Ridley Scott would recognize him as his archetype of the ‘knight’. Mel Gibson, doctrine aside, might see elements of *Braveheart*. Leon Rose is a soul who has intuitively understood the role and guises of the good shepherd for many lifetimes, but there are divine and there are worldly interpretations of every virtue. His test in the present is the same as before World War I: the interpretation of ‘duty’. The common lot: forgetting there is a test. The gradual conscious revelation of what he, with select others, might have done in exile to avert or mitigate World War I, through persistent and holy prayer for Europe, intensifies the weight of accountability, the ‘Ring’ this ‘ringbearer’ carries alone.

Empathy with J.R.R. Tolkien's painful memories of World War I, embedded metaphorically for catharsis in *Lord of the Rings*, led to the question: how is catharsis accomplished for one who didn't survive World War I? The beautiful, forested town of Elder in distant contemporary Oregon becomes the setting for the answer to unfold.

The 'Ring' of accountability, the weight of subconscious memory, becomes vividly and selectively conscious to both protagonist and antagonist, while the rest of Elder sleeps in dreams of football glory. For Leon Rose it leads to his hidden allies, so close yet so separated by a century as to seem like the allure of a Lorelei. Before the outbreak of World War I the heroine, Jenny Northam, understood the high and holy purpose of their exile to Siam. Throughout their many lives as husband and wife they served in the priesthoods and monasteries of many religions, but too often the warrior-priest abandoned home and family for the imperial causes of church and state. The power and patience of this woman as magnet, life after life, underpins the spine within *Siam* as a triumph of the purest kind of romance. "A surprising delight", to quote a reviewer.

Also vital in understanding the book is the potent effect of English choral music as a key to unlocking Leon's subconscious. Remembering his life as Curtis Merlo, a leading boy soprano at age 10 in 1904 London, he perceives the connection with his spiritual potential and the contrast with the unfolding of actual events in that life.

But it's this life in the twenty-first century that matters. The testing has never been so difficult. In the beautiful green crucible of Elder, Jim House and Leon Rose square off for an election in a state of bitterness unexplainable to campaign colleagues. They are confined by the streets of the town and the deadline of election-day in a kind of *High Noon*. Or so it would seem.

The thing to consider carefully about *Siam* as a movie is its scope. Most movies treat death as the end of a plot-line, because each character's frame of reference is restricted to the personality and form currently visible. *Siam* embraces the broader frame of the soul as a book of life containing many chapters of trial and error, where each life is prologue to the next. That there is an end to the need to re-embody, a holy purpose to extended trial and error, and that it must be won individually, moving God's heart to extend Grace, can and will be intuitively sensed by millions of prodigal souls because they're almost ready – readier than they've ever been throughout history.

Kingdom of Heaven and *Gladiator* demonstrated the box office draw, for women as well as men, of the man who defines honor, a man capable of transcending the common interpretation of duty. *Siam* pushes that frontier into new terrain, where a widespread appetite for understanding already exists.