

What Does Watching the Film “Shadowlands” Bring Up for You?

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Much of getting clear about something and figuring out what to do the world and what people are saying and writing about it and what is going on inside you—physical sensations and thoughts and memories and images in your head—and put words to what you make of all of that, give it articulate meaning, get specific about its significance, what it implies for you, your goals and actions with regard to it and what you think it implies for people collectively.

This contrasts with uncritically taking in what others put in front of you—the media (movies and TV, etc.) and what politicians, journalists, professors, advocates, podcasters, and such insert into the public discourse—and go, “Yes, that sounds good” or “Nah” and leave it at that or offer an off-the-top remark to people around you or on social media or in comments sections of webzines and other outlets.

Especially if the second paragraph above characterizes you more than the first, I’d like to push up against that a little in this writing. This article is an invitation to respond in depth to something.

I streamed a movie recently that prompted responses in me that made a difference in how I see things, including myself, and that have stayed with me, and I think it might do the same for you. It’s “Shadowlands,” a 1993 British based-on-a-true-story drama about the mid-life relationship between the British Oxford and Cambridge academic and popular Christian theologian and writer C.S. Lewis—he’s best known for his children’s *Narnia* stories—and the Jewish-American poet Joy Davidson. The story takes place in Britain in the

1950s. It's directed by the Brit David Attenborough and stars Anthony Hopkins as Lewis and Debra Winger as Davidson.

I found "Shadowlands" a superb film. Hopkins' and Winger's performances, wow. If nothing else comes out of the activity I'm going to suggest, you might see a good movie. But the big thing in this context, I think "Shadowlands" is nutritious food for thought, so to speak, including about mortality, though I don't want to go into themes or possible perspectives more than that because I don't want to channel your engagement with the film. I'll leave it that it seems to me that if you're of the sort drawn to reading this site there's a lot for you to work with here.

You can stream "Shadowlands" on Google Play, Vudu, Amazon Prime, iTunes, Apple TV, and I'm sure other places, and you can buy it inexpensively—you know where to go for that. You can watch it free as a YouTube, though the resolution isn't very sharp on that print and I'm concerned that that will keep you distant from the reality of what is being depicted, including the breathtaking landscapes that dot the film; better to pay the \$3.95, or whatever it is, rental and get the full measure of the "Shadowland" experience.

Here's what I'm thinking: You watch the film and work with it and send me an email at the "contact me" link on this site with your best thinking about the film. Go into some depth, offer more than the opinion spurt so prevalent in this text-and-social-media-conditioned age. Let's say it's at least a paragraph in length. Do that and I'll reply to what you offered.

I realize you may not be up for either watching the film or giving over time to discerning what it prompted in you and sharing that, and that's perfectly fine, you may well have better things to do with your time, but that's the invitation. What's behind making it is my hope that, in a small way, for some people, this exercise will move them toward becoming more of a participant in the meaning-making and public-dialogue-and-debate process rather than

remaining essentially a recipient and yea-or-nay reactor to the pronouncements of others.

I hope this turns out to be an enjoyable and productive time for you. All I know for sure is that I was engaged by “Shadowlands” and respected it as a film and that it prompted thoughts and feelings that matter to me and that the idea of an in-depth response from you and a reply from me had enough weight to get me to write up this article. But that’s me, you do you.

I’ll look to hear from you.