

# A Festival Of Culture Rot

After Alexis DeToqueville toured America in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, he predicted that the United States would be a great, successful nation. America will be great, he said, because America is good; and the thing that made it good, he said, was the nation's strong attachment to the Christian religion.

I wonder what he would have said if he'd been able, last week, to observe the annual Met Gala.

The gala is a fund-raiser for the Metropolitan Museum of Art—a gathering of celebrities a lot of us have never heard of, all competing to see who can show off the silliest clothes and waste the most money on it. In fact, it's a top-of-the-line freak show.

This year's show-stopper was an actor, Jared Leto, who showed up in a [“diamond-encrusted” bright red Gucci gown](#). If the diamonds were real—we are at liberty to doubt it—he achieved the remarkable feat of making diamonds look cheap.

But the thing that really wowed whoever was watching this was the severed head he carried in his arm, a wax head that was a perfect replica of his own: unless the head on his shoulders was the dummy and he was carrying the real one. Hard to tell, with celebrities. Last year this, er, person won applause by being “Jesus Christ in Gucci”—nothing like a bit of blasphemy and disrespect to earn kudos from the whoopee crowd. He has also won an Oscar for playing a “trans woman” in some stupid movie. “Trans woman” is a euphemism for a mentally ill man who insists he is a woman.

Normal people wonder, “What on earth is the point of carrying a wax head around?” Uh, was he going bowling later, but couldn't find his ball? The owner of my local health food store told me he watched a few minutes of it on TV, but had to

stop. "I couldn't figure out why anyone would ever go out in public looking like that," he said. Some of the celebrities, he added, "looked like you might catch something nasty from them—something you might not be able to get rid of."

Almost too horrible to contemplate is the thought that there might be an audience for this extravaganza. What if there are millions of people out there who think the Met Gala is really cool, and wish they could be part of it? For whom the word "grotesque" has no meaning? Who actually watch these pretentious, trashy movies?

Okay, once upon a time 25 cents would buy you a ticket to the freak show at the Indiana State Fair, and you could marvel at the fat man, the guy with head-to-toe tattoos, the weird lady with the snakes, and the sword-swallower. Morbid curiosity—which I suspect most of us have, to one degree or another—packed them in. Like, "Gee, I see it, but I don't believe it!" The Met Gala is the same thing; it just costs a lot more money. Much of its audience may well be normal people gawking at the weird celebrities, laughing at them, feeling good that they're not them, and maybe shaking their heads in quiet pity.

Maybe the real audience, the audience that thinks it's just too cool for words, is really only very small, numerically, and we are not turning into a nation of creeps. We can always hope, can't we?

If DeToqueville were to tour America today, he would still find many people worshiping God, reading the Bible, praying, performing honest work, raising sane and decent families, loving one another, and trying to be good—because they know what good is, and value it, and aspire to it. Because they know it's infinitely more valuable than dressing up silly and carrying a wax head around to impress other silly people. He might find that the culture-rot crowd occupies only a small place in the nation's life, for all the ink they get.

We might succumb to a curiosity that can't help wondering just how far these alleged celebrities will go; but that doesn't mean that we respect them.

I have discussed these and other topics throughout the week on my blog, <http://leeduigon.com/> . Stop in for a visit; a single click will take you there. You can also find my articles at <http://www.chalcedon.edu/>.

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