

Titanic Post-Design Meeting Dramaturgy Thoughts (November 18, 2024)

Joseph Conrad's essays on the Titanic critique the encroachment of commercialism on sailing practices, particularly the size of the ship and the excess luxurious amenities on board. But he also criticized the U.S. Senate investigation into "Yamsi" (Ismai spelled backwards), his code word for large corporations.

One quote: "For my part I could much sooner believe in an unsinkable ship of 3,000 tons than in one of 40,000 tons. It is one of those things that stand to reason. You can't increase the thickness of scantling and plates indefinitely. And the mere weight of this bigness is an added disadvantage. In reading the reports, the first reflection which occurs to one is that, if that luckless ship had been a couple of hundred feet shorter, she would have probably gone clear of the danger. But then, perhaps, she could not have had a swimming bath and a French café."

He goes on to compare the ship to an indestructible Huntley & Palmer biscuit tin, comparing the size of the biscuit tin to the size of the ship.

<https://www.berfrois.com/2016/07/joseph-conrad-titanic/>

<https://www.oldsaltblog.com/2018/04/joseph-conrad-on-the-titanic-on-experts-icebergs-lifeboats-and-biscuit-tins-2/>



Looking into Conrad got me interested in William Alden Smith, the senator from Michigan who ran the Titanic hearings. This essay lionizes him as a hero and notes specific outcomes including a law about providing lookouts with binoculars: <https://historybecauseitshere.weebly.com/william-alden-smith-michigans-titanic-senator.html>

I also had a separate thought about Géricault's painting *The Raft of the Medusa* (1819). Here's an essay that relates that painting to the Titanic: <https://www.theirisnyc.com/post/the-raft-of-the-medusa-and-its-modern-day-relevance>

