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Treasuring the Flora of Our Great Nation

A touring art exhibition captures the rare and the commonplace... 4

Week 21, 2019 THE EPOCH TIMES

'The Biggest Little Farm'

Heartwarming, Modern Garden of Eden

MARK JACKSON

hat a feel-good story! Where do I begin? It's an autobiographical documentary by a creative couple (he's a cinematographer, and she's a pastry chef with a food blog) who up and decide they wanna be farmers. How hard could farming be? Especially farming on land north of Los Angeles that's long been drained of nutrients?

You forgive the front-loading of its cutesy treacle because it's immediately apparent that this will be a fabulous teaching piece for children. And then you forgive it some more, because you realize it'll teach everyone, especially the gloom-doomers who say planet Earth is toast. This little doc will effectively paradigm-shift your current planetary eco-depression. It will answer a myriad questions you didn't even know you had about the earth's ability to bounce back from barrenness with alacrity.

The Chesters have a grizzled, human "spirit-guide" elder named Alan, who teaches the neophyte farmers about biodiversity, farming, and how to live your bliss, even if it involves back-breaking work.

They've also got a blue-eyed, black dog named Todd-a "spirit animal" if I ever saw one. It's actually Todd's nonstop barking that gets the Chesters booted out of their Santa Monica apartment. That's the kind of thing that kicks off a Hero's Journey to find one's bliss. John and Molly heed the call. According to the six-fold path of Buddhism, I'd say Todd is probably one of John's ancestors, back in dog form, to guide him. Todd's definitely got some otherworldly mojo.

We first get to know the 30-something (may-

Director John Chester

Running Time 1 hour, 31 minutes

Release Date

when they're living in Santa Monica. They're about to get the heck out of Dodge and go try and live in perfect harmony with nature, as they put it. Which is all a bit too hippiedippy, crunchy, and precious (the animation exacerbates this problem), but then they go rescue Todd from a shelter, and in turn (according to Molly), Todd rescues them back, and things start to get more interesting. John and Molly are in constant contact

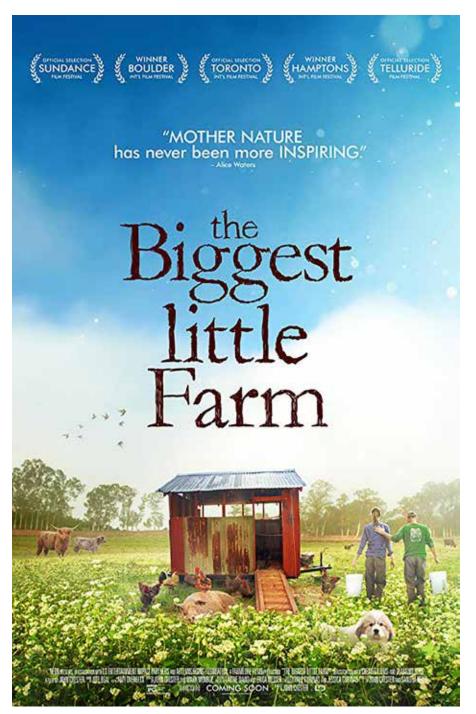
be 40-something?) John and Molly Chester

with the perennially sunglassed agricultural Yoda, Alan York, who, while less crunchy and more blue collar, is a veritable fount of fabulous, functional, farmer facts.

The Chesters run into hardship right off the bat with the major drought that's plagued California for a good while now. That's year one. The year after, Alan tells them they need to go full-on, whole-hog, "complicated." As he says, "Diversity, diversity!" Alan's also apparently into some serious farm feng shui. The aerial view of the farm will eventually reveal that Alan is the most artistic of them all. Molly likes the diversity concept because it means a lot of fun cooking projects.

But what does diversity mean in terms of farming? Well, they start with a gigundous sow named "Ugly Betty." They feel this name is politically incorrect and rename her "Emma." That's so nice. But apparently Ugly Betty's boyfriend thought she was pretty dang good-lookin', because after an extended birthing scene (like something out of a

James Herriot novel), she drops 17 piglets. Seventeen wee oinkers is already getting pretty complicated. Then add a ton of chickens, black-faced sheep, 75 types of fruit trees, many ducks, and loads of bees. All that, and revive the depleted soil with cover crops. So what does this plethora of flora and



The movie poster for "The Biggest Little Farm."

fauna beget? An immediate plethora of vermin. Root-gnawing gophers, fruit-treeleaf-obliterating snails, poo-invading maggots, peach-marauding birds, and chickenmangling coyotes. What can be done about this munching, masticating mayhem?

Biodiversity means bringing the full-on Garden of Eden. Because there are ironclad laws at work in all of that giant sprawling, crawling, growing, and expanding leafy mess that establish balance. Bring on the raptors (daytime and nighttime versions: hawks and owls), and-boom! The peachpecking bird herd is immediately culled.

They set up night-vision cameras to see who's out there sneaking around nocturnally and setting up shop, and in addition to the coyotes, we see bobcats, badgers, weasels, stoats, and gopher snakes moving in. This is why gophers procreate so explosively-they feed a lot of the predator population.

The other awesome service a gopher provides, with its incessant burrowing, is that it is a rodent version of a soil-aerating machine. The trick is to keep them below the gopher tipping point: before they start gnawing your tree roots

And guess who thinks the fruit-leaf-

Mel Gibson (L)

and Sean Penn

star in "The Professor and

the Madman.

PATRICK REDMOND/VERTICAL ENTERTAINMEN



The takeaway

here is to see

how the land

can go from

uninhabitable

to a Garden of

Eden in seven

short years.

basically

obliterating snails are a very fine delicacy to gobble? Ducks! Put the ducks in the orchard! But what about all those flies, delighting in duck poop and having many, many babies therein? Chickens! Chickens are masters of maggot population control. Mother Nature has an answer for everything, and it's kind of amazing to see the perfection of it all.

But It's Never Perfect for Humans

There is ebb and flow and chaos and order and highs and lows. And throughout, it's a ton of work. We don't actually see John and Molly at work all that much, but as problems compound, it becomes apparent how many things can go wrong, at any time. The weight of the sheer workload tonnage hangs around in your subconscious, and you think: That's so awesome that they do that. I'm so glad

that's not my vision. I need a nap. And in addition to all this, they're shooting a movie. Alan, at some point, enlightens us to the

concept that "a comfortable level of disharmony" is what's realistic. He also says, "It's a simple way of farming. It's just not easy." My theory is that if everything ran smoothly all the time, humans wouldn't have the opportunity to work hard to pay off their karmic debts. But that's maybe getting a bit too esoteric for a movie about Ugly Betty and the

quacking snail-patrol.

The takeaway here is to see how the land can go from basically uninhabitable to a Garden of Eden in seven short years. To the dreamydilettante, starry-eyed, well-meaning Chesters, they must have been seven excruciatingly long years. But then, they really were living their bliss and weren't afraid of the hard work. And there's spiritual growth.

It's an extended meditation. As John observes, "Observation followed by creativity has become our greatest ally." Nothing will put you in the zone like creativity, and the zone is the bliss of life

The film also functions, due to the rude awakening the Chesters allow us to have vicariously, as an instruction manual and mild warning for, say, the dreamy, blond-dreadlocked, weed-smoking, Birkenstock-wearing, 20-somethings who populate Tom Brown Jr.'s Tracker School. They might be contemplating a utopian, back-to-the-land, off-the-grid existence. It gives notice that elbow grease is the key ingredient

"The Biggest Little Farm" might also function as a sort of inconvenient truth to former Vice President Al Gore's movie, "An Inconvenient Truth." As opposed to the dire tone of most eco-docs, the Chesters offer the refreshing concept that it really might not be as dire a situation as we think. Sure, those fracking movies will, and should, stand our collective hair on end, but "The Biggest Little Farm" will restore your hope in Father Sky

One question it definitely doesn't answer,

and Mother Earth.

and it's kind of a doozy that gathers weight as the film progresses, is-where did the money come from? Where'd these two artist types get the wherewithal to buy Apricot Lane Farms with all that land (200 acres in Moorpark, California, with an awesome house on the property), miles of irrigation equipment, heavy-farming machinery, fields of fruit trees, seeds, lots of field staff, and endless chicken replacements due to extensive chicken-slaughter by Wile E. Coyote and his

No matter. John's cinematography training is key here. The movie is visually gorgeous. High-frame-rate cameras capture the cuteness of honeybees with full pollen baskets coming home to the hive. The colors of orangered-purple peaches are vibrant. Drone cameras reveal Alan York's artist feng shui of the

sneaky, bloodthirsty brethren?

"The Biggest Little Farm" introduces us to, and lets us get to know, all the animal players. And in so doing, it allows us to root for them. It's a story about giving the natural habitats that we took away from them-back to them.





(Top Left) Apricot Lane Farms in "The Biggest Little Farm." (Top Right) John and Caya the sheepherder dog. (Bottom Right) John and Emma the pig.

FILM REVIEW

A Unique Story but a Troubled Filming

IAN KANE

any moviegoing folks, as well as the many film critics out there, have waxed melancholic about the lack of originality in modern filmmaking. Indeed, it's easy to imagine a passionate period project drawing considerable buzz and anticipation. The added fact that the stars are Mel Gibson and Sean Penn, two of Hollywood's most notorious bad boys (sporting epic beards), is just the icing on the anticipatory cake.

"The Professor and the Madman" is about as unique as any film in recent memory. It tells of the creation of the Oxford English Dictionary.

Drawing inspiration from Simon Winchester's 1998 book "The Surgeon of Crowthorne: A Tale of Murder, Madness and the Love of Words," Gibson has been shepherding this dream project for two entire decades. The film opens in 1872, where William Chester

Minor (Sean Penn) is in the throes of his undiagnosed schizophrenia. His mind is wracked with fits of paranoid delusions as he traverses the streets of London; apparently he believes that someone is out to assassinate him. In the course of his travels, he shoots and kills an innocent man who is out on a stroll with his wife, Eliza Merrett (Natalie Dormer, "The Tudors"). Soon after committing the crime, the troubled American is captured by the local authorities and sent to the Broadmoor Hospital's lunatic asylum. There, he proves to be a fascinating case for Dr. Richard Brayne (Stephen Dillane, "Spy Games," "Game of Thrones"). Brayne discovers that Minor is no ordinary mur-

derer, but rather a brilliant physician who is experiencing what today we would call bouts of extreme PTSD, due to his service in the American Civil War. Meanwhile, an unusually gifted autodidact and lin-

guist, James Murray (Mel Gibson), is on a mission to create the first-ever Oxford English Dictionary. Murray has recently moved his wife, Ada (Jennifer Ehle, "Zero Dark Thirty," "Little Men"), to Oxford in order to accomplish this massive task, which he estimates could take anywhere from five to seven years to complete. But when his assistants begin to fall behind in their work on the monumental task of assembling an entire dictionary from scratch, a general call is put out for contributors to mail-in word origins. and their definitions. That is when Minor begins to inundate Murray and his crew with thousands upon thousands of valuable entries, which help to develop the dictionary considerably.

Murray, a good-natured man, decides to thank his greatest contributor personally and so travels to see Minor, not knowing the doctor has been locked away in a mental institution for years. Regardless of this missed fact, Murray and Minor strike up an unexpected friendship that forms the backbone of the film. From there, the two fascinating characters embark on an epistolary relationship that drives the dictionary project forward.



'The Professor and the Madman

Director Farhad Safinia

Starring Natalie Dormer Mel Gibson,

Stephen Dillane Rated

Running Time 2 hours, 4 minutes **Release Date** May 10

By comparison, a subplot involving Minor's guilt over the impoverished widow of the man he murdered and his attempts to help her never sparks much in the way of emotional relevance.

The Film's Quality

Actors Gibson and Penn are in fine form here and keenly dramatize an unlikely partnership based on perseverance and a love of words and language. Penn falls into his role as Minor in a convincing

manner. We really get to see a window into mental illness as his character deals with graphic flashbacks that detail the horrors of war. Several memorable scenes involve his connection with a guard at the mental facility. Muncie (Eddie Marsan, "Deadpool 2," "Whiteboy Rick") eventually discovers Minor's capacity for compassion.

Meanwhile, Gibson completely disappears into his portrayal as Murray, a brilliant man obsessed with the most important project of his life. Indeed, as the character disappears into his work, conflicts arise with his wife, Ada. But as the project takes him over and consumes all of his time, she eventually lets James go and has to raise their children, for the most part, on her own.

Overall, the production looks good and seems to be a sincere dramatization of an important period in language history. However, there are tonal missteps here and there and a subtle lack of overall continuity. These slight detriments are probably due to the much-publicized clashes that Gibson and the film's

co-writer and director Farhad Safinia ("Apocalypto") had with Voltage Pictures.

Behind the Scenes

Gibson almost stopped "The Professor and the Madman" from being released at all. The famous Aussie star, under his Icon Productions banner, had been in a protracted legal squabble (until just recently) with Voltage over such things as where the film scenes were to be shot.

While Gibson and Safinia wanted to lend authenticity to the production by filming in Oxford, Voltage apparently decided that it was over budget as it was, and wanted to shoot in more fiscal-friendly locations around Trinity College in Dublin.

Eventually, Gibson and Safinia walked off of the project. As a result, director P.B. Sherman was invented as the film's director and this fictive person also took a co-writing credit, along with Todd Komarnicki (who, confusingly, actually exists). For many people, the legal battles just made them

allure of watching the final product was to see if it actually came together. In that regard, while "The Professor and the Madman" may have a few tonal hick-ups, overall, it's an important film that is both educational and well-crafted.

want to see the film that much more. Part of the

Ian Kane is a filmmaker and author based out of Los Angeles, California. To see more, visit

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ANEWSPAPER THE FOUNDING FATHERS WOULD READ

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TREASURING THEFLORA OF OUR GREAT NATION

A TOURING ART EXHIBITION CAPTURES

THE RARE AND THE COMMONPLACE





"MATILIJA POPPY (ROMNEYA COULTERI)," 2017, Gilly Shaeffer. Watercolor on paper, 73/4 inches by 9 inches.

VISITORS TO THE EXHIBITION WILL SEE NATIVE FLOWERS THEY MAY NEVER SPOT IN THE WILD.



"SHOWY LADY'S SLIPPER (CYPRIPEDIUM REGINAE), 2017, by Linda Powers. Watercolor on vellum, 13 1/2 inches by 10 1/2 inches.



"ROSE MALLOW (HIBISCUS MOCHEUTOS),"

2017, by Karen Kluglein. Watercolor on vellum, 11 1/2 inches by 8 1/2 inches.

"SAGUARO (CARNEGIEA GIGANTEA)," 2017, by Joan McGann. Ink and watercolor on paper, 18 inches by 12 inches.



"YELLOW LADY'S SLIPPER (CYPRIPEDIUM PARVIFLORUM VAR. PUBESCENS)," 2017, by Carol Woodin. Watercolor on vellum over panel, 15 inches by 15 1/2 inches.



"FLOWERING DOGWOOD (CORNUS FLORIDA) FALL AND SPRING," 2015, by Margaret Farr. Watercolor on paper, 23 inches by 17 inches.

OTANICAL ART WORLDWIDE: AMERICA'S FLORA" is an exhibition of 46 botanical illustrations of native American flora. Curated by the American Society of Botanical Artists (ASBA) and the United States Botanical Garden (USBG), the show is part of a worldwide collaboration of botanical artists from 24 other countries across six continents. The aim of the project is to highlight national botanical treasures and connect people with plants through botanical art.

The exhibition ran at USBG in Washington from May 4 to Oct. 15, 2018, and is now part-way through a season-by-season tour. This spring, the show ran at the Missouri Botanical Garden through May 5. The show opens on June 8 for a summer stint at Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum, in Wausau, Wisconsin. The last stop of the tour will be in the fall at the Botanical Research Institute of Texas.

The American botanical artists took four years to capture 240 specimens across the country, including bigleaf maple from the West Coast, bottlebrush buckeye from the Eastern Seaboard, and bloodroot, spanning the Midwest and the East.

The artists captured commonly occurring native flora such as sunflowers, poppies, and violets, and also endangered botanicals such as the lady's slipper orchids, using a variety of media such as gouache, colored pencil, pen and ink, oil paint, traditional watercolor, and etching

Visitors to the exhibition will see native

flowers they may never spot in the wild due to their rarity or remote location. The elusive yellow lady's slipper orchid is

one example. Artist Carol Woodin spent a long time searching for a specimen through a wooded wetland one year, with a hand-drawn map, but the search provided only a few satisfying studies. In the end, she found the right spot. The flower featured in the exhibition was actually drawn from the rock garden atv the New York Botanical Garden, where the flower was in bloom in early May, "tucked in among some ferns, peonies, and Jeffersonia," said Woodin on the ASBA website.

The subject of Joan McGann's artwork is the local and rare saguaro cactus, the state flower of Arizona. The towering saguaro can be found only in a small pocket of the Sonoran Desert in America's Southwest and is therefore protected. The saguaro can reach 40 or 50 feet, and McGann made her observations on a ladder. Artist Margaret Farr fears that we take

dogwood for granted. She made a study of the Virginia state flower, with its familiar delicate white or pink cross-like blossoms lacing along

Whether familiar flora or not, the show allows us a look into the beauty of the natural world of our nation that may be in our very own neighborhoods.

The native flora of the other 24 countries in the worldwide exhibition can also be seen in a digital presentation at the show.

To find out more or to purchase the exhibition



"The Attainment: The Vision of the Holy Grail to Sir Galahad, Sir Bors, and Sir Perceval." Tapestry, 19th century, woven by Morris & Co. Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery.

What Exactly Is the Holy Grail, and Why Has Its Meaning Eluded Us for Centuries?

LEAH TETHER

THE EPOCH TIMES Week 21, 2019

ype "Holy Grail" into Google and ... well, you probably don't need me to finish that sentence. The sheer multiplicity of what any search engine throws up demonstrates that there is no clear consensus as to what the Grail is or was. But that doesn't mean there aren't plenty of people out there claiming to know its history, true meaning, and even where to find it.

Modern authors, perhaps most (in)famously Dan Brown, offer new interpretations and, even when these are clearly and explicitly rooted in little more than imaginative fiction, they get picked up and bandied about as if a new scientific and irrefutable truth has been discovered. The Grail, though, will perhaps always eschew definition. But why?

The first known mention of a Grail ("un graal") is made in a narrative spun by a 12th-century writer of French romance, Chrétien de Troyes, who might reasonably be referred to as the Dan Brown of his day-though some scholars would argue that the quality of Chrétien's writing far exceeds anything Brown has so far produced. Chrétien's Grail is mystical indeed: It is a dish, big and wide enough to take a salmon, that seems capable of delivering food and sustenance To obtain the Grail requires asking a particular question at the Grail Castle. Unfortunately, the exact question ("Whom does the Grail serve?") is

only revealed after the Grail quester, the hapless Perceval, has missed the opportunity to ask it. It seems he is not quite ready, not quite mature enough, for the Grail. But if this dish is the "first" Grail, then why do we now have so many possible Grails? Indeed, it is, at turns, depicted as the chalice of the Last Supper or of the Crucifixion or both, or as a stone containing the elixir of life, or even as the bloodline of Christ. And this list is hardly exhaustive. The reason most likely has to do with the fact

that Chrétien appears to have died before com-

pleting his story, leaving the crucial questions

as to what the Grail is and means tantalizingly

unanswered. And it did not take long for others

to try to answer them for him. Robert de Boron, a poet writing within 20 or so years of Chrétien (circa 1190-1200), seems to have been the first to have associated the Grail with the cup of the Last Supper. In Robert's



"Sir Galahad, the Quest for the Holy Grail," 1870, by Arthur Hughes.

Today, of course, we use the phrase The Holy Grail of...' to describe the practically unobtainable.

prehistory of the object, Joseph of Arimathea took the Grail to the Crucifixion and used it to catch Christ's blood. In the years that followed (1200-1230), anonymous writers of prose romances fixated on the Last Supper's Holy Chalice and made the Grail the subject of a quest by various knights of King Arthur's court. In Germany, by contrast, the knight and poet Wolfram von Eschenbach reimagined the Grail as "Lapsit Exillis," an item more commonly referred to these days as the "Philosopher's Stone."

None of these is anything like Chrétien's Grail, of course, so we can fairly ask: Did medieval audiences have any more of a clue about the nature of the Holy Grail than we do today?

Publishing the Grail

My 2017 book delves into the medieval publishing history of the French romances that contain references to the Grail legend, asking questions about the narratives' compilation into manuscript books. Sometimes, a given text will be bound alongside other types of texts, some of which seemingly have nothing to do with the

So, what sorts of texts do we find accompany ing Grail narratives in medieval books? Can this tell us anything about what medieval audiences knew or understood of the Grail?

The picture is varied, but a broad chronological

trend is possible to spot. Some of the few earliest manuscript books we still have see Grail narratives compiled alone, but a pattern quickly appears for including them into collected volumes. In these cases, Grail narratives can be found alongside historical, religious, or other narrative (or fictional) texts. A picture emerges, therefore, of a Grail just as lacking in clear definition as that of today.

Perhaps the Grail served as a useful tool that could be deployed in all manner of contexts to help communicate the required message, whatever that message may have been. We still see this today, of course, such as when we use the phrase "The Holy Grail of..." to describe the practically unobtainable, but highly desirable prize in just about any area you can think of. There is even a guitar effect-pedal named "holy grail."

Once the prose romances of the 13th century started to appear, though, the Grail took on a proper life of its own. Like a modern soap opera, these romances comprised vast reams of narrative threads, riddled with independent episodes and inconsistencies. They occupied entire books, often enormous and lavishly illustrated, and today these offer evidence that literature about the Grail evaded straightforward understanding and needed to be set apart-physically and figuratively. In other words, Grail literature had a distinctive quality. It was, as we might call it today, a genre in its own right.

In the absence of a clear definition, it is human nature to impose meaning. This is what happens with the Grail today and, according to the evidence of medieval book compilation, it is almost certainly what happened in the Middle

to experiment with all kinds of sounds, so medieval writers and publishers of romance used the Grail as an adaptable and creative instrument for conveying a particular message to their audience, the nature of which could be very different from one book to the next.

Just as modern guitarists use their "holy grail"

Whether the audience always understood that message, of course, is another matter entirely.

Leah Tether is a reader in medieval literature and digital cultures at the University of Bristol in the UK. This article was originally published on The Conversation.

Linguists Found the 'Weirdest Languages,' and English Is One of Them

ADAM SCHEMBRI

Is English "weird"? Many of us might feel this is true when we're trying to explain the complex spelling rules of the language, or the meanings of idioms such as "it's raining cats and dogs" to someone who is learning English. Teaching or learning any language is, however, never an easy task.

But what is a "weird" language anyway? As linguists, we generally aim to be as objective as possible in the study of human language.



make hypotheses about how humans use language and test them against linguistic data. Unlike so-called language police, we believe it is important to avoid where possible making value judgments about language.

Some computational linguists have used data in the World Atlas of Language Structures (WALS) to explore (tongue firmly in cheek) which languages might be considered the "weirdest." This was not just a value judgment: They systematically compared the information on the WALS website for 239 languages from different parts of the world.

Their aim was to find out which languages had the largest number of features that differed most from other languages. In this survey, English came in 33rd position out of 239 languages. So it definitely has more

atypical features than over 80 percent of the other languages in the survey. Critics have, however, claimed the sur-

vey was too biased as it used only a few features of the world's many languages. Indeed, there are aspects of English that are not unusual compared to many other languages, such as its dominant subject-verb-object word order. But let's look here at two features of English that might in fact be unusual.

English Sounds Strange English probably sounds a little strange to

many speakers of other languages. According to WALS, the average number of distinctive speech sounds in the world's languages is about 25 to 30-known as "phonemes." Pirahã, an indigenous language spoken in the Amazon region of Brazil, has an unusually small set of phonemes. It has eight consonants, and just three vowels: /i/, /a/, and /o/. In contrast, Taa (also known as !Xóõ) is a language in southern Africa that has more than 100 phonemes, including many different types of click sounds.

Sign languages, such as British Sign Language or American Sign Language, do not use sounds at all. Signs are, instead, composed out of combinations of handshapes, movements of the hands, and locations on or near the body

English has more phonemes than many languages, with around 44, depending on which variety of English you speak. It has an unusually large set of vowel sounds-there are around 11. According to WALS, most spoken languages have only between five and six vowel sounds. This is part of the reason that English spelling is fiendishly complicated, because it has inherited five letters for vowels from the Roman alphabet and speakers have to make them work for more than twice that

English has some comparatively unusual consonant sounds as well. Two sounds, those represented by the "th" in "bath" and "bathe" respectively, are found in fewer than 10 percent of the languages surveyed in WALS. In fact, these two sounds are generally among the last sounds acquired by children, with some adult varieties of English not using them

The Question of Questions

English grammar is also sometimes unusual.

English uses varying word orders to distinguish between questions and statements, meaning that the subject of the sentence precedes the verb in statements. Take the phrase "life is a box of chocolates," for example. Here, the order is subject ("life") followed by the verb ("is"). In the question, "is life a box of chocolates?" the order of these elements is reversed.

In a WALS survey of 955 languages, fewer than 2 percent of languages in the sample used English-like differences in sentence structure for questions. Over 50 percent of the languages added a question particle to differentiate a question from a statement.

In Japanese, for example, you add the question particle "ka" to a statement to turn it into a question. The second most common strategy in WALS was to change the intonation pattern, such as changing a falling intonation pattern (for a statement) to a rising one (for a question). In contrast, Chalcatongo Mixtec (an indigenous language of Mexico) is a highly atypical language because it does not use any grammatical strategy to distinguish between

questions and statements.

That said, it is impossible to conclusively make the argument that English is, or isn't, "weird" because all the data needed to make this judgment is not available. As several thousand languages have not yet been included in WALS, this means WALS can only be used to compare English with a small proportion of the estimated 7,000 languages in the world today. More language documentation is ultimately needed to give a better understanding of the world's amazing linguistic diversity.

Adam Schembri is a reader in linguistics in the department of English language and linguistics at the University of Birmingham in the UK. This article was first published

The Guarneri 'Il Cannone' Comes to Columbus, Ohio

The Midwest hosts Paganini's famous violin

Guarneri del

Gesù's instru

rare; only 135

ments are

are known

to exist.

LORRAINE FERRIER

It could be something out of "Mission Impossible." Only under armed guard, chaperoned by a conservator, and kept in a protected temperature- and humidity-controlled custommade case can the celebrated 1743 Guarneri del Gesù "Il Cannone" leave its specially made room at the Palazzo Doria-Tursi in Genoa,

To host such a celebrity must be both a dream come true and a logistical nightmare. Needless to say, this beauty rarely travels.

Yet, the famous violin of the great Italian violinist Niccolò Paganini (1782–1840) is now briefly on display in the exhibition "Paganini in Columbus" at the Columbus Museum of Art in Ohio, until May 19.

A Rare US Play Date

"Il Cannone" comes to the Midwest for the first time, and is only the fifth time the violin has traveled to the United States. The first time was in 1982, when Salvatore Accardo played all 24 of Paganini's caprices on "Il Cannone" at Carnegie Hall in New York.

In 1994, when "Il Cannone" was on display at The Metropolitan Museum of Art exhibition "The Violin Masterpieces of Guarneri del Gesù," its visit commemorated 250 years since Guarneri's death. In 1999, Eugene Fodor played "Il Cannone" at the Herbst Theatre in San Francisco.

The last time the violin came stateside was in 2003, when Regina Carter played the violin at New York's Lincoln Center.

The Columbus visit is the result of years of arrangements, and a long-term collaboration between the cities of Genoa and Columbus, International, a cultural exchange program

The Italians see "Il Cannone" as a cultural emissary. Part of the agreement to loan their national treasure is to promote Italian culture, in particular, that of Genoa; it's the city that Paganini was born in and that he bequeathed "Il Cannone" to, for it to be "preserved for eternity."

On May 15, the Columbus Symphony coning, scheduled to play the iconic violin in a concert dedicated to honoring Italian composers. The concert is to be attended by an Italian entourage headed by the mayor of Genoa, Marco Bucci.

Normally a musician would have time to acclimatize not only to their instrument but also to the orchestra. Due to the unique circumstances and security restrictions surrounding "Il Cannone," Frankel will have had only a few hours to rehearse at the Columbus Museum of Art. The violin is to be moved from once a year, "Il Cannone" comes out on Oct. the museum to the theater only on the day of 12 to be played as the prize of the prestigious the performance at the Ohio Theatre.

Frankel was humbled to be chosen to play the Italian national treasure: "It will be a welcome challenge to unlock this amazing instrument's mysteries albeit in a short time span," she wrote in an email before the performance. "I'm so lucky to have the chance."

Preservation Versus Being Played The price "Il Cannone" pays for being priceless

is the perpetual balance between its conservation and being played. As a consequence, the violin is rarely heard publicly, but often seen. Alone, confined to its glass cabinet at the only 135 are known to exist, including one Palazzo Doria-Tursi where it's on permanent cello. In contrast, 650 Stradivari exist, accord-

as part of the Greater Columbus Sister Cities display, it exhibits its maker Guarneri's exemplary craftsmanship. But this beauty was made to be heard, not merely seen. This is actually a requirement in order to be defined as a

musical instrument, rather than a work of art. Remarkably, at around 275 years old, "Il Cannone" is in good condition, with all its original varnish and main body intact. Paganini never used a chin rest, nor did his contemporaries. He preferred to rest his chin certmaster Joanna Frankel is, as of this writ-directly on the tailpiece, and it's here that the varnish has tarnished somewhat

> Michigan-born Bruce Carlson is the conservator tasked to look after "Il Cannone" at the Palazzo Doria-Tursi since 2000. He explains in an interview on the Premio Paganini website that the reason the violin is in such good condition is that it hasn't been played much since Paganini's time.

In order to protect it, the violin is purposely

played rarely, but with regularity; Mario Tra-

bucco is the main violinist to do so. And then international Premio Paganini competition. Outside of these, the requirements to play "Il Cannone" are strict, and for good reason. Carlson explains that the instrument should be respected. It is part of the Italian "cultural heritage and cannot be misused in an egotisti-

Why Is 'Il Cannone' So Treasured?

cal or self-serving way," he said.

The Guarneri line and those of Amati and Stradivari are considered the greatest violin makers of all time.

Guarneri del Gesù's instruments are rare;







ing to the Christie's website.

Guarneri del Gesù came from a family of luthiers. His grandfather, Andrea Guarneri (1626–1698), was an apprentice of Nicolò Amati (1596–1684), as was Antonio Stradivari (circa 1644–1737). Both Stradivari and Guarneri learned the luthier tradition in Amati's workshop in Cremona, Italy, at the same time.

Paganini's "Il Cannone" was made in 1743 by Bartolomeo Giuseppe Guarneri (1698-1744), who is more commonly known as "Guarneri del Gesù."

Guarneri labeled each violin he made with a Roman cross and the initials "I.H.S.," which

It's only the fifth time the violin has traveled to the **United States.**

means "Iesu Hominum Salvator," a Christian a mystery. The general consensus, although inscription that translates to "Jesus, Savior of" unsubstantiated, is that he was gifted the mankind." It was this inscription that gained him the nickname "del Gesù," "of Jesus."

Guarneri del Gesù's violins differ from his father's due to the full arch in the violin body, composed for how he could play: His 24 cathe longer waist, and the longer f-holes that taper, producing a strong violin, meaning the sound is loud and rich and almost earthy in its tonal range. That sound is why Paganini called his violin "Il Cannone," or "The Canon."

'Il Cannone' in Paganini's Hands How Paganini came to own "Il Cannone" is virtuosity can be heard again and again.

violin in Livorno by a wealthy French patron. Paganini's hands were incredibly flexible

and his fingers could extend their reach. He prices, composed in 1817, are some of the most technically challenging pieces for the violin. In the hands of a virtuoso violinist such as Paganini, "Il Cannone" is truly elevated to the realms of the sublime, as pure harmony is born from the marriage of fine craftsmanship and fine musicianship. One hopes this

Even in Director Daniel Fish's Fish-ified 'Oklahoma!' the Music Prevails

JANI ALLAN

EW YORK-The coolest new show on Broadway is the revival of a 1943 musical. Social media mavens have hashtagged this production #SexyOklahoma. This, despite traditionalists who think the Rodgers and Hammerstein Organization should be ashamed for "giving permission to produce this gimmicky travesty.

> I sat next to a couple of boys who didn't look old enough to cut up their own meat. I ventured to ask them what the appeal of the current incarnation of "Oklahoma!" is.

> "It's, like, so politically correct and politically relevant in every way. And, like, the music is

Politically relevant is, of course, code for hatred of everything that America stands for.

"Oklahoma!" was the first collaboration of Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II, and it catapulted the pair to prominence. The duo went on to write many of Broadway's most famous mid-century musicals. Since it opened in 1943, "Oklahoma!" has been performed countless times all over the world. The movie adaptation in 1955 won an Academy Award.

The Fish-y Production

In his Broadway debut, director Daniel Fish has taken on a musical that brought joy and a sense of pride and identity to an American nation that, 75 years ago, was at war with foreign powers. Fish has reconceived a work whose hallmark is optimism; he wishes to transmogrify it into a mirror for our age of doubt and anxiety.

The American way, according to the Book of Political Correctness, is that long-standing American legacies such as patriotism and tradition must be exhumed and re-examined with beady-eyed skepticism, if not downright disgust. (Aunt Eller, after all, makes her corn bread not from scratch but out of a box! Onstage!)

The production takes place under a blaze of glaring house lights that designer Scott Zielinski keeps on most of the time. When we are required to be disturbed, the dialogue occurs in Stygian Set designer Laura

Jellinek has nailed blond plywood panels to the theater's walls and the floor of the thrust stage. The seven-member orchestra sits in a shallow pit cut out of the

floor. It's an Ikea-type set. The walls feature serried ranks of shotguns. There's chili cooking in red slow cookers on the refectory tables that parenthe size the stage. The ceiling beams are bedecked with dollar-store bunting.

The cast members are licorice allsorts-all sizes, shapes, and colors-wearing denim (Terese Wadden did the costumes) and cowboy boots.

All this is part of the Fish-ified deconstruction: to strip everything down, to dismantle the Americana, and show us rag-mop reality. The cerebral remastering is intent on showing us that the bright golden haze on the meadow Curly sings about was delusional. Worse, it was probably based on white privilege.

More Fish Bait

"Oklahoma!" which Rodgers and Hammerstein adapted from Lynn Riggs's 1931 play "Green Grow the Lilacs" revolves around two love triangles. In one, a cowboy and a farmhand vie for the affections of a farmer's daughter. In the other, a cowboy and a Persian traveling salesman are both



Curly (Damon Daunno) serenades an unimpressed Laurey (Rebecca Naomi Jones) in Daniel Fish's reconceived "Oklahoma!"

The adorable Ado Annie (Ali Stroker) and Ali Hakim (Will Brill)

Circle in the Square 1633 Broadway New York

Tickets 1-800-Broadway or OklahomaBroadway.

Running Time 2 hours, 45 minutes (one intermission) Open Run

and the town's good-time girl. The action takes place in Oklahoma Territory, just before official statehood.

Now, just when I was thinking that Fish scarcely changed a word of Oscar Hammerstein II's original book and lyrics and perhaps this wasn't an act of plunder, but of reclamation, I was slapped in the face with a wet fish, as it were.

In the central romantic triangle, among the lovers Laurey (Rebecca Naomi Jones) and Curly (Damon Daunno), and the outsider Jud (Patrick Vaill), Fish presents us with a plot twist that departs dramatically from the original script.

I won't divulge this blasphemous liberty taken here, but the lines between sex and violence, already blurred in this gun-toting universe, are now redrawn to reflect Fish's political ideology. It is obviously designed to cast Curly and the other pioneering folk in a klieg light that is not only deeply unpleasant but also clearly shows their hatred for outsiders, the appalling way they treat women, and how they eschew justice for kangaroo courts,

But the Remaining Lyricism Prevails

The play opens and closes with "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'." At the end of the musical, Curly and Laurey are married, Jud is dead, and the whole cast is singing "Everything's goin' my way." The theatrical actions that unfold between those joyful moments of dawning light one could describe as Daniel Fish trying his darndest to dislodge, if not entirely dismantle, the American myth.

Yet the show's lyricism is what works beautifully. Damon Daunno's Curly, for example, shines when he is allowed to sing a ballad more slowly and melodically

The star of the show is an adorable, dimpled, blond beauty, Ali Stroker, who plays Ado Annie.

involved with Ado Annie, one of Laurey's friends Her voice has a rare sweetness, and her comic time ing is perfection

Physically, Ali Stroker may be in a wheelchair, but handicapped she isn't. She rides her wheelchair as though she was riding herd on a pony. She has so much charisma that she could sell it by the pound. When she belts out "I Cain't Say No." there is no heart left uncaptured in the theater.

Director Daniel Fish has reconceived a work whose hallmark is optimism; he wishes to transmogrify it into a mirror for our age of doubt and anxiety.

There are those who complain bitterly that this "vulgarized" version of "Oklahoma!" was designed for kids who have never heard of the old-fashioned "Oklahoma!" and ticket buyers who hate musicals in general. Whatever. This "Oklahoma!" is a boxoffice phenomenon

Sometimes cynicism is an inoculation that just doesn't take: The cast got a standing ovation. It may not have been Fish's intention, but I think he has introduced a whole new audience to the joys of mid-century musicals.

Frankly, I put it down to the music. No matter what Fish's political message may have been, in the end it was the music that captivated theatergoers. As the boys said: "Like, the music is amazing!"

Jani Allan is a South African journalist, columnist, writer, and broadcaster.

JAMES SALE

In this multipart series, "Finding the True Self," we will discuss nine types of personalities and their flaws, and show how Odysseus, through his adventures, overcame them to find his way back

ODYSSEUS AND THE ENNEAGRAM

FINDING THE

TRUE SELF Part 5

The Sin

of Fear

ln

encountering

enemies

in life, the

Eight are

especially

terrifying.

Six and the

n modern psychology, we have books like "Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway," which are international best-sellers and which focus on the idea that fear is the fundamen tal issue besetting human nature. The fear response clouds our judgment in so many areas of our lives, and when it does, we abandon our rationality, that is, our being Homo sapiens–wise, rational creatures.

On his journeys, Odysseus has encountered Sloth (the Lotus-Eaters). Lust (the Cyclops), and Gluttony (the Aeolians)three of the so-called seven deadly sins. But as we remarked in our first article in this series, the Enneagram includes nine deadly sins. And now on his voyage, Odysseus encounters one of the two extra sins that are not included in the typical list of seven: the sin of Fear.

Actually, this sin is thought by some to be even more primary, or basic, than the seven that are frequently commented on. So before considering Odysseus's encounter with the Laestrygonians, or number Six on the Enneagram, let's briefly consider why there are nine deadly sins.

This is a controversial area, but one theory reported by Richard Rohr in his book "The Enneagram: A Christian Perspective" is that ideas similar to the Enneagram are to be found in the work of Evagrius Ponticus, a Christian mystic who lived in fourth-century Alexandria. Evagrius identified eight "deadly thoughts," plus an overarching thought he called "love of self." This made nine sins, and Evagrius wrote about "remedies" to these thoughts.

Odysseus and his companions suffer from the man-eating giants, the Laestrygonians. Mural from the first century B.C. from Villa Esquillino in Rome. Vatican Library.

On top, then, of the normal seven deadly sins of Anger, Pride, Envy, Avarice, Gluttony, Lust, and Sloth were added Fear and Deceit. Also, just as seven is a mystical number, so is nine, which is a trinity of trinities. And, at the end of the day, the Enneagram works, so nine

A Visit to the Laestrygonians

After six full days of rowing, on the seventh day Odysseus and his crew find the island of the Laestrygonians, representatives, as each encounter is, of the worst aspect of that type of personality.

As a reminder, the Sixes' basic desire is to be supportive and supported. At their best, they are committed, loyal, self-sacrificing team players; at their worst, they are suspicious, paranoid, and centers of deep negativity.

As Odysseus and his crew approach Laestrygonia, they see a "craggy fort" and a land where shepherds seem inordinately active and productive. Odysseus comments that here "a man who never sleeps could rake in double wages." That surely should give us pause for thought, for what men never sleep? And what

happens if we don't sleep? There is a fine, expansive harbor, but the passage in is "cramped" or restricted Through it, 11 of Odysseus's 12 ships pass, while he decides to moor his ship outside, well clear of the "harbor's jaw." This proves a prescient move.

Three scouts are landed and sent ahead to find, Odysseus hopes, men like himself who "live on bread." Living on bread is a sign of human society, indeed. of human community. We should be feel ing uneasy here because the name of the Laestrygonians means "gathering raw skin," which is a long way from baking bread.

The scouts meet the "strapping daughter" of the king of the Laestrygonians, Antiphanes. According to Michael Goldberg in his book "Travels with Odysseus," this name means "opposed to recognition," or as another translation puts it, "unspeakable." This is not just about being difficult to pronounce. In the first instance, being opposed to recognition suggests someone hiding, lurking in the depths to conceal who they are really are; and in the second, "unspeakable," we have the sense of "utterly evil," or something so bad it is not even to be

spoken of. And so it proves. On entering a "sumptuous palace," the scouts meet the queen, "huge as a nountain crag who filled them all with horror"; she calls her husband, Antiphanes, and he immediately tears one of the scouts to pieces in preparation to devour nim. No warning–just straight attack.

The other two scouts make a run for it as the king howls through the town, and hundreds of Laestrygonians swarm to join him and attack the ships in their harbor. They are giants; they throw huge rocks at the ships, shattering and destroying them, and then spear the sunken crew members as if they were fish and take them home to eat. The Laestrygonians, like the Cyclops, are

cannibals. All 11 ships and crew are lost. Fortunately, Odysseus, whose boat had not committed to going inside their harbor or terrain, cuts loose and escapes. But what a disaster, and how much worse than the encounter with Polyphemus!

Cyclops and Laestrygonians, **Eights and Sixes**

Goldberg makes the point that some critics in the past have felt that this episode in the narrative is a weak repetition or reprise of the earlier Cyclops story: Both feature giant, cannibalistic monsters, which attack Odysseus and his men

But as Goldberg demonstrates, nothing could be further from the truth: The Eight and the Six, while seemingly similar, are worlds apart, as critical aspects of the Laestrygonian story show.

It would be true to say that in encountering enemies in life, the Six and the Eight are especially terrifying. While both the Nine and the Seven contain deadly traps for the unwary, their methodologies are passive-aggressive or indirectly aggressive, whereas the Eight and the Six can come straight at you-ag-

gressive aggression, as it were! Here we note too that the Laestrygonians are offspring descended from two parents, the gods Gaia and Poseidon.

Yes, Poseidon, that problematic god (for Odvsseus) who also fathered the Cyclops, and who is now seeking to avenge his injured son, Polyphe mus, whom Odysseus blinded. This partly explains why it is easy to confuse a Six and an Eight: They have a common ancestor. Moreover, we are now back to Odysseus having to deal with the terrible power of the depths of the sea, perhaps his own subconscious.

Michael Goldberg's "Travels With

WITH

ODYSSEUS

NCOMMON WISDOM FROM

HOMER'S ODYSSEY

MICHAEL J. GOLDBERG

The importance of pointing out the similarities, though, lies in the fact that we often confuse one personality type for another, and in doing so, of course, mistake the actual motivation of the person, and thereby probably adopt an ineffective way of dealing with him or her.

And why not fight and outwit the Laestrygonians, as he did Polyphemus? This comes down to the essential nature of the Six personality type. For notice the differences from the Cyclops.

First, their hyperactivity: a compulsive need to be productive, even enduring the absence of sleep. Second, their collectivity and structure: They work as a team and have a king. Third, to join them is "restricted" and difficult. (Many Sixes find their homes in secret organizations!) Fourth, their attack is manic annihilation, bordering on a paranoid fear response

Each one of these four points contrasts vividly with the Cyclops. Why, Polyphemus almost seems rational in his leisurely decision to eat Odysseus last because Odysseus gave him wine.

One key thing to understand about the difference between the two is that Eights are somatically confident; that is to say, they are entirely confident in the strength of their bodies, which is why Polyphemus can fall asleep with

his enemies all around him. Bodies are However, the Six places confidence

not in his body but in his mind; and of course, the mind, or reasoning, is never secure. It goes round and round in circles, since logic, without a foundational or axiomatic first principle, cannot justify itself.

The Six can never be certain of whether someone is a friend or enemy, and so the strategy is to strike first before the other does. Keep in mind too at this point that the king's name, "opposed to recognition," also points toward an inability to discern what or who someone is, for a lack of recognition means the failure to name them

Dealing With Fear

Goldberg suggests that the Six is projecting outward his or her own inner hostilities to the world, and with their, as he calls it, "self-invalidating mindset" there is no fighting against them, for they cannot, will not, change their minds or thinking.

In dealing, then, with the Laestrygonians, a number of points emerge: First, to establish the safe "anchorage" outside their port of call. To wholly identify with

their mind-set, to

fear, is fatal.

Second, one needs courage, which is always the antidote to fear, and in this case, it is about nam ing-or removing the invisibility–of what is going on. Bad Sixes thrive in shadows but cannot stand any

activities And finally, if there is no shift in perspective, no acknowledge ment of who you are, no positional shades of gray (only black

light thrown on their

and white), then leave and don't look back. There is no good to be achieved by staying; it would not be courage, but recklessness to stay and fight.

And, if you are a Six, then you need to engineer some important changes of perspective: primarily, to trust yourself and not abrogate all authority to external others, whoever they be. Also, remember the story of Jesus when he asked the demons for their name. As soon as they gave it ("Legion"), their power over the possessed man was shattered. Thus, the Six needs to look directly at his own fears, and name them, for staying within a realm of the "unspeakable" means he can never escape from his own internal

Finally, a simple thing to practice, as a Six, is giving compliments and recognition-again, making visible the real and the good–which they tend not to do. With one ship left, Odysseus, devastated, sails away. And so he comes to the land of the Five, where the witch Circe dwells

James Sale is a poet and businessman whose company, Motivational Maps Ltd., operates in 14 countries. James will be appearing in New York to do talks and poetry readings for The Society of Classical Poets on June 17, 2019, at Bryant Park and The Princeton Club. To meet James and for more information, go to http://bit.ly/Poetry_and_Culture



Engraving by Jan Sadeler and Raphael Sadeler I after a design by Maarten De Vos. Pitts Theology Library, Emory University.

THEATER REVIEW Surviving Someone Else's Shameful Secret

DIANA BARTH

NEW YORK-Actress Maddie Corman had it all-a nice husband of over 20 years; a lovely home in Dobbs Ferry, New York; three great kids; all the necessities; and a lot of luxury–until one morning, as she was driving to Brooklyn around 5 a.m. to film a stint in a forgettable TV show, her cellphone rang.

It was her 15-year-old daughter on the point of hysterics, scream ing: "Mommy, they're taking Daddy's computer away!' Completely unbeknown to

Maddie, the computer contained films of child pornography. It was the beginning of a downward spiral for Maddie. Her wonderful world was dissolving.

What follows in this one-woman show is a true tale of stress and dealing with hard changes. Her husband, director Jace Alexanare stretched. They must give up their wonderful home and move

to a less glamorous site. Jace must be listed as a sex of-

Ultimately, a therapy organization is brought into the picture. It's located in Arizona and seems like a kind of spa. It obviously requires big bucks, so not everybody can afford it. Luckily, Jace can.

It's a tribute to Maddie Corman: A lesser soul might have caved.

It's designed to treat addicts. And the compulsion to view child porn is an addiction. First, Jace goes there on his own. Later, Maddie joins him, der, is losing work, and finances and is astonished at how eyeopening the experience is. She learns things, about both herself

and her husband, that she'd never known. And, if anything, the experience appears to strengthen the bonds of her relationship with her husband

At any rate, the couple is still together. Maddie also bonds with some

of the other wives at the center. They have nothing in common with her. Yet they have everything in common with her. Back in New York, Maddie suffers at the possibility of being snubbed by her colleagues. Does anybody know? Yes, everybody knows. It's in the newspapers. Yet, people are basically kind. Some tactfully ignore her; others offer advice: "You should leave him," one offers. "You've got to stay and tough it out," another

It's a tribute to Maddie Corman. A lesser soul might have caved, but instead she uses the experience to turn it into creative

Corman, an attractive figure

on stage, slender and lithe, performs easily. Undoubtedly, she has worked closely with director Kristin Hanggi. Set by Jo Winiarski and lighting by Jamie Roderick enhance the production. It's well worth seeing for a real-

life depiction of a brave woman. Diana Barth writes for various theatrical publications and for New Millennium. She mau

be contacted at diabarth99@

'Accidentally Brave'

DR2 Theatre 103 E. 15th St., New York **Tickets** 800-745-3000, or Ticketmaster.com **Running Time** 1 hour, 30 minutes (no intermission)



Evagrius Ponticus, a Christian mystic, who identified more sins than seven.

Circe's deep knowledge

and sacred wisdom tames and subdues nature. Today

we call this knowledge science.

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The sorceress Circe represents Odysseus's encounter with a Five type personality. "Circé," 1875, by Jean Jules Badin, Private Ownership

ODYSSEUS AND THE ENNEAGRAM

FINDING THE TRUE SELF Part 6

The Sin of Avarice

JAMES SALE

In this multipart series, "Finding the True Self," we will discuss nine types of personalities and their flaws, and show how Odysseus, through his adventures, overcame them to find his way back home.

We have been retelling the story of the great adventurer Odysseus, as he attempts to escape from the ruins of Troy–a symbolic destruction of the self–and return to his home. There he will be finally reconciled with his true self-his soulas represented by his beautiful and faithful wife, Penelope

The journey to find one's true self is long and arduous, fraught with dangers. For Odvsseus, we know that has meant a 10-year war at Troy itself, as the old self was broken down and destroyed, followed by another 10 years of attempting to get back to Ithaca, to home. To return to the beginning, then, means we are not the same as when we started out.

Odysseus must let his old illusions die if he is to become who he truly is meant to be. The Enneagram is a way of tracking his progress, as each obstacle he encounters is one facet of the journey to his true self.

Odysseus has just encountered the personality type Six in the Laestrygonians, where he has had many illusions about himself shattered: Eleven out of twelve ships and all their crews were lost, and Odysseus himself in the last ship is running scared-terrified-as they sail off within an inch of total destruction.

He has had shattered the idea that he is a great warrior and general! How more thoroughly defeated could he have been, aside from losing his own life?

Where Odysseus goes next is to meet the type Five, the sage. As a reminder, this is the wise person who has insight and understanding, and whose basic self-image is "I see through"; in other words, the kind of person who is not fooled by appearances or superficialities, but who always seeks a deeper level of

knowledge. But intellectual quests can also lead to the deadly sin of

avarice: the hoarding of information and expertise, because Fives have a desperate fear that there is not enough to go round, and so what they do have needs to be conserved rather than shared.

A New Kind of Danger

Odysseus now meets the type Five, the wise person, who in this case is a wise womanone renowned throughout the ages-called Circe. Of course, another name for a "wise woman" is a witch (though Circe is actually an immortal goddess), and this term denotes what, perhaps, the word "wise" does not: namely, witches are dangerous and must be approached in the right way.

Notice here, at type Five, however, that the specific peril is feminine, and this is the first time (though it will not be the last!) this has occurred. This shift in gender perspective is interesting because the perils Odysseus has been through before have prominently featured outright and savage physical destruction, which is very masculine; here the danger is more psychological, more nuanced, and more emotionally charged.

As before at Six, Odysseus is cautious, not committing everything to one chance or one maneuver. So it is that his loyal lieutenant Eurylochus leads a party of 22 men to where the "smoke" appears to originate. Smoke derives from fire, and fire is always a symbol of transformation; it is also a sign of civilization, which is something we know that Odysseus desperately seeks.

Astonishingly, as the men approach the palace of Circe, they encounter wild animals-wolves and lions-which instead of attacking them, fawn around them like faithful

dogs. All the animals are bewitched by Circe, whose deep knowledge and sacred wisdom tames and subdues nature. Today we call

> this knowledge science. The crew hears Circe singing with her "spellbinding voice" and finds her weaving an "enchanted web." We too find science's spawn, technology, spellbinding and enchanting, often regardless of what its consequences may be. Who, for example,

 Circe and one of Odysseus's transformed men. Athenian pelike (ceramic container), circa 5th century B.C. Staatliche Kunstammlungen Dresden.



This antidote, then, is about fluidity, flex-

ibility, and the ability to change as circum-

stances change, and not to get stuck in any

one rut. Or again, as Goldberg observes, not

to be "pig-headed." Ah! Stuck and stubborn

Fives become avaricious pigs (metaphori-

cally) when they start to hoard their knowl-

because they believe there is not enough to go

round; and also fearful that their own power

will be diluted if others possess the expertise

that they hold. But this hoarding of expertise,

as well as being avaricious, also can have the

unintended effect that comes from endless

accumulation. Just as financially the richest

misers can-like Howard Hughes-live in

appalling squalor despite their wealth, so

the "stuck" Five, for all their knowledge and

insight, can lead an impoverished lifestyle:

Attraction," where all emotional and social

comforts are stripped away and only the bare

necessities remain as her unbalanced focus

But approached in the right way, as Odys-

seus now approaches Circe forearmed by the

wisdom of the messenger god Hermes, Circe

and her magic can become a life-enhancing

Circe fails to enchant Odysseus and ex-

consumes her life

source of power.

Think of Glenn Close's character in "Fatal

edge and know-how, frightened to share

Circe's feast and so became pigs.

like the men who accepted, without question,

Circe changing Odysseus's men to swine from the series Ovid's "Metamorphoses."

10 years ago could have foreseen the negative

aspects of that spellbinding and enchanting

Eurylochus-and accept her offer of food and

drink, not knowing that the drink is laced

with "wicked drugs." As soon as they finish

they are transformed into pigs, which she

mon fodder. Their tragedy is that although

they are in pigs' bodies, their minds retain

Terrified, Eurylochus runs back to Odys-

seus to tell the dreadful news. And en route

to rescue his men, Odysseus is intercepted by

the god Hermes, who gives him some advice

Hermes provides the male counterpart-or

the yang, if you will—to the female witchcraft

of Circe, or the yin. We see this most particu-

larly in the herb moly, which Hermes picks to

Moly has a "black root" but its flower is

"white as milk." As Michael J. Goldberg

comments, white and black are opposites,

just as in the "famous circular Tai Ji symbol"

where the opposition of yin to yang reflects

a "constantly changing balance and together

their human functions.

and some practical help.

counteract Circe's magic.

make a whole.'

Dealing With Fives

herds into her pigsty to feed acorns and com-

feasting, Circe strikes her wand and by magic

system—or web—we know as Facebook?

The men all go into the palace-except

and Circe," 1786, Angelica Kauffmann

Odysseus, known to the Romans as Ulysses, and Circe. "Ulysses

claims in fascinated surprise: "You have a mind in you no magic can enchant." The herb moly has protected Odysseus. He will not become "stuck" like a pig; instead, Circe will share her secret knowledge with him that will set him on the right course for the next stage of his journey. Remember, moly is black and white, so not "either-or" but "both-and." This kind of creative thinking, perspective, or approach is what can truly empower and free a Five. Following Hermes's advice, Odysseus

consents to make love to Circe, providing she swears a binding oath to the immortal gods not to harm him, or "unman" him when he is stripped naked. This she does, and so he sheathes his sword and mixes in "the magic work of love," which as Circe observes, "we'll breed deep trust between us." Fives can be loners, locked inside their own

heads. But trusting others (the right others, of course) can lead to amazing and fruitful results. How different, perhaps, from the results he had trusting his fair-weather friend," Aeolus, at type Seven.

A New Beginning

In this way, Odysseus frees his crew as his relationship with Circe blossoms. They spend a year feasting and enjoying themselves with all the delights of Circe's palace, but then, after a year, the longing to return home returns and Odysseus seeks Circe's permission

And here the Five type shows its true mettle: She gives Odysseus precise and exact details of what he must do if he is ever to entertain a hope of getting back. The knowledge she supplies is of a deep and profound nature, and not only that, it is entirely surprising, for the way back for Odysseus is not straight forward but via a vital detour whereby he must encounter the very depths of his being.

Circe instructs him to visit hell and come back alive again with the information he needs. Indeed, the journey of every great hero and heroine involves what the Greeks called "katabasis" or the descent into hell. Hell is an emotional state that involves a "going down."

After all the twists and turns, the stratagems, and the wisdom of his mind, at last Odysseus must face his own reality at a deeper level. This is the type Four, where envy is the typical vice, and where, along with visiting hell, Odysseus gets to hear the Sirens' call.

James Sale is a poet and businessman whose company, Motivational Maps Ltd., operates in 14 countries. James will be appearing in New York to do talks and poetry readings for The Society of Classical Poets on June 17, 2019, at Bryant Park and The Princeton Club. To meet James and for more information, go to http://bit.ly/Poetry_and_Culture

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BOOK REVIEW

Making Decisions Using a Spiritual Foundation

LINDA WIEGENFELD

ccording to Emily Freeman, author of "The Next Right Thing," it is estimated that adults make over 35,000 decisions every day. Many of these are mindless; we aren't actually even aware of having an option. Even when we elect not to choose, that is still a choice. What we forget, she says, is that choices not only shape outcomes but they also shape the person making them. Decisions reveal character and also help to create character.

What if the way we make decisions is as important as the decisions we make? What if we were able to make choices based on a spiritual foundation? What if we didn't have to live with indecision, which can be the result of unmade

Freeman has a unique answer to decision making. Her focus is on the person rather than the decision to be made.

She doesn't tell the reader what to decide; she advocates living in the moment and deciding what your next right step should be rather than trying to figure out exactly the wheres, whos, whys, and so on. The latter approach is overwhelming.

Freeman's way clears the decision-making chaos and adds a spiritual element to daily life.

Each of the book's 24 chapters gives new insight into how to turn decision making into a simple, soulful practice. The chapters are similar to Freeman's podcast, written in a gentle way that imitates her soothing voice.

Each chapter offers a short reflection, a suggested action, and a prayer to help you create a little more "space for your soul to breathe." While her approach is from a religious viewpoint, it is not at all preachy and should resonate with any reader.

Don't rush through this book; savor it bit by bit.

Practical Strategies for Decision Making

Freeman advocates becoming a soul minimalist. She expands on a quote by author Joshua Becker, "Minimalism is not that you should own nothing, but that nothing should own you," to say that this quote also applies to soul clutter.

Too much noise is coming into our lives, and we need time for daily reflection to shut out some of this chatter: Take a few minutes each day to quiet

the outside noises and reflect in order to discover your unique vision for happiness. Picture a higher power walking with you in this task, issuing a kind invitation to release the burden of heavy decisions.

Naming Things

Freeman says that allowing things to remain unnamed and unacknowledged definitely impacts how a decision is made. She points out that a name is powerful. Names mean things; they carry weight, importance, and intimacy. To know a person's name is to know something of them.

Names are powerful for other things as well. When we don't name exactly what we are deciding on, our minds become clouded over with generalities and a vague sense of anxiety.

Remember: Naming is not the same as explaining. It is just a process to open our minds.

Second Chances Reveal the Child Within

Freeman says that sometimes a particular set of circumstances cause a person to become a beginner, such as a new job, a divorce, a birth, and so on. We may invite these changes, but we often don't give ourselves permission to be new within. Instead, we want to rush ahead to mastery.

She recommends that we replace our shame with laughter and our doubts with love. We can begin again with the joy of the child within all of us.

Make a Life Energy List

Freeman does not favor making a pro-con list. Instead, she prefers making a life energy list. To do this, she suggests going back in the recent past and thinking about what was life draining and what was life giving. Using this information in the future, you can make a decision with actual information from life rather than frantic speculation.

She offers so many other workable tips that I believe reading "The Next Right Thing" may be your next right decision.

Linda Wiegenfeld is a retired teacher with 45 years' experience teaching children. She can be reached for comments or suggestions at LWiegenfeld@aol.com



Emily Freeman, author of "The Next Right Thing: A Simple, Soulful Practice for Making Life Decisions."

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