WEEK 24, 2019

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Making Pots With Clay, Rope, and Wood... 4

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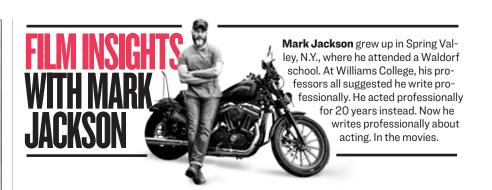
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Journalist Chutima "Oi" Sidasathian (L) and Patima Tungpuchayakul, an agent of the Labour Rights Promotion Network, seeking escaped Thai fisherman slaves, in "Ghost Fleet."

'Ghost Fleet' Why Sushi Can be Bad For Your Spiritual Health

MARK JACKSON

ircraft carrier decks are notoriously the most dangerous of all boat decks: Fighter-jet tailhook arresting cables can snap, whip around faster than the speed of sound, and instantly cut a man in two.

The Alaskan crab boats featured in the hit show "Deadliest Catch" are just as dangerous: There may be fewer ways to die on them than on an aircraft carrier, but the crew members are basically cokedup and sleepless for months at a time.

Thai fishing boats are no joke either, however. In the documentary "Ghost Fleet," we hear of a man who got his hand caught in a pulley–he lost all his fingers. Another man got his neck caught in a rope snaking across the deck-he was immediately decapitated. And also ... one shipmate witnessed the captain stab a boy to death in front of him.

Wait, what?!! Yes. Navy sailors and crab boat personnel go to work out of their own free will-"Ghost Fleet" is about slavery. Thai fishermen are trafficked. Who knew?

Thai fisherslaves do endless, backbreaking work on no sleep, for up to 20 years, unless they die or escape. They're forced to smoke crystal meth to stay awake. They are beaten viciously with dried stingray tails and lead pipes. They are murdered for insubordination. The Alaskan crab boat show should have been titled "The Second-Deadliest Catch."

If you found out your engagement ring carried a blood diamond, you would probably reject it. Now, you might want to think twice about that luscious piece of seared tuna on your fork in that upscale Manhattan restaurant. It's highly likely the fish for the first time in decades. was caught by a Thai fishing slave who hasn't seen

Activist Patima Tungpuchayakul is the star of 'Ghost Fleet.'

The Horror

A young Thai man might go for a stroll one evening, maybe meet a pretty girl, get lured to a hotel room, and boom–he's just been honey-trapped: Goons come out of nowhere, knock him senseless, and now he's trafficked. He wakes up from his concussion at sea. Water, water, everywhere as far as the eye can see. And then the torture of relentless work begins. In "Ghost Fleet," a documentary directed by Shannon Service and Jeffrey Waldron (making their feature debuts), we discover that this current form of slavery involves unlucky young men, predominantly from Thailand, but this form of slavery is now happening all over the world.

How did this come to pass? Supply and demand, naturally-implicating us all, really. As the mainland fishing grounds got fished out, the boats have needed to go farther and farther afield to find fish (and avoid authorities), leading fishing labor to refuse to leave their families for such long periods of time. What to do? The Thai fishing businesses decided to go the slavery route: own humans illegally, not

pay them, discard them when they get injured, and kill them if they rebel. It's very difficult to escape. The boats stay far, far out on the ocean and never come back to land. This is made possible by "motherships" that circle around, uploading fish from the various slave vessels and downloading food. You can't swim to shore from

there; you'd very quickly drown or become shark food. It's a truly fiendish arrangement. And even if slaves do manage to escape, they're usually hunted down and slammed into black jails, run, of course, by fishing corporations and ignored by corrupt police forces in the pockets of said corporations.

The Saints

Thankfully, there's an organization called the La- $\star\star\star\star\star\star$

bour Rights Promotion Network (LPN) looking out for these lost men, and LPN's Patima Tungpuchayakul is the star of "Ghost Fleet" in two respects: She's the proactive protagonist driving the narrative, and she gets the most screen time-as well she should. She tracks leads, follows trails, scouts and sleuths. entering dangerous areas where proverbial angels fear to tread, fueled by great compassion.

The story is told by three activists, actually. In addition to Patima, there are journalist Chutima "Oi" Sidasathian and former slave Tun Lin. All of them have, as their life's mission, the heart to save these trafficked souls. (According to the website, nearly 3,000 have been repatriated to date.) The film accompanies them as they embark on one of their many missions, sailing from Thailand to the seas in and around the Indonesian archipelago, where they hope to provide hope for lost slaves.

By the way, in 2017 Patima Tungpuchayakul was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize

When during the activists' mini-odyssey, they run across escaped slaves from Cambodia, Thailand, and Burma, eking out existences on islands far from their original homelands, who have started new families, the fisherslaves' stories all match. Tales of horror abound.

These portraits of the lost fishermen found are the beating heart of the film. These flinty, haunted, stoic men, with chiseled cheekbones like Apaches and Mongolians, some with missing limbs, most fighting chronic PTSD and depression, are given the chance to speak with their families by phone

The conversations all start off casually, due to the disbelief that such a miracle could be happening to them; and when they hear the voices of long-lost family, they are immediately gripped by the great, pent-up anguish of years of torture and loneliness. It's absolutely heart-rending. Patima weeps tears of grief and sympathy along with them.

Film Would Have Benefited From Bigger Teeth

While it's a visually beautiful film, more rigorous research and whistle-blowing about exactly which Thai fishing companies are engaging in the practice of fish-labor trafficking, and which food companies. globally, are keeping them in business would have been extremely satisfying.

But ultimately, unfortunately, we all need to take this opportunity to look inside ourselves. Who keeps them in business? We do. Some of us like fish more than others. The vegan community will have a field day with this film. As well they should.

Speaking of which, if you see the film, make sure you don't miss the grief-stricken looks of the fish themselves, writhing in agony and gasping for breath on the bloodied decks.

The film recommends not buying fish from Thailand. Just like you want to check the origin of your engagement ring diamond to make sure it's "blood" free, check, also, your fish to ensure it's not been caught by a dehydrated, yellow-eyed, sleep-deprived, desperate, depressed, grief-stricken, traumatized, suicidal, young Indonesian boy or man who has no hope.

Save all sentient beings. It starts with us.

Documentary

Shannon Service, Jeffrey Waldron

Patima Tungpuchayakul, Tun Lin, Chutima "Oi" Sidasathian

Running Time 1 hour, 30 minutes

Release Date

FILM REVIEW

THE EPOCH TIMES Week 24, 2019

A Great Monster Movie Slathered With Heavy-Handed Preachiness

IAN KANE

ack in 2014, director Gareth Edwards kickstarted a new monster-movie franchise with the film "Godzilla." Well, sort of. For those not keeping a tally, the 2014 film was actually a reboot of an even more mind-drubbingly awful flick: 1998's "Godzilla.

Looking to up the ante and go big or go home, the director of "Godzilla: King of the Monsters" makes the film a direct sequel to the 2014 "Godzilla," as well as to "Kong: Skull Island," 2017's reboot of the Vietnam-era setting of the equally popular bigscreen monster known as King Kong.

All of these films are tied together by a shadowy organization called Monarch, which just so hap-

pens to specialize in giant-monster research. The problem is that the Hollywood showcasing of fractured families has seemingly been kicked into overdrive of late, and this film is no different. While there are appearances made by some of the cast and characters from the 2014 film-including monster-researching specialists Ken Watanabe ("The Last Samurai") and Sally Hawkins ("The Shape of Water")—the main focus of this latest film is on a family in crisis.

Meet the Family

The family in question is composed of doctors Mark and Emma Russell (Kyle Chandler and Vera Farmiga) and their introverted daughter Madison (played by "Stranger Things" star Millie Bobby Brown). The trouble began when Madison's older brother died five years earlier, while Godzilla was duking it out with some MUTOs (Massive Unidentified Terrestrial Organisms), in the 2014 film.

The boy's death acted as a catalyst for deeper conflicts between the parents. Mark believes that all of the giant monsters must be exterminated for humanity's survival, while Emma thinks that they can be communicated with through a special sonar device that emulates whale songs. While the estranged couple bickers, they use Madison as a human weapon against one another.

Meanwhile, Monarch has discovered that the giant monsters they've been studying are part of an archaic cavalcade of, well, giant monsters that predate dinosaurs. These big baddies support a Hollow Earther's dream come true, as it's explained by the researchers that these massive creatures can travel from one side of the Earth to the other by navigating a sprawling, inter-Earth





(Top) A monster that needs no introduction, in "Godzilla: King of the Monsters." (Above) Millie Bobby Brown as Madison Russell in the film "Godzilla: King of the Monsters."

'Godzilla: King of the Monsters'

Director Michael Dougherty

Starring Kyle Chandler, Vera Farmiga,

Millie Bobby Brown, Charles Dance

Running Time 2 hours, 12 minutes

Release Date

The Preachiness

What's interesting about "Godzilla: King of the Monsters" is how the Earth's various factions perceive the monsters. For instance, while the governments of the world collectively believe that the creatures should be tracked down to their underground lairs and blown up, Monarch views them not as "monsters" but as mighty Titans that once ruled Earth and were duly worshiped by prehis-

There's another faction consisting of a gaggle of crazed eco-terrorists. Headed up by British ex-Special Forces veteran Colonel Jonah Alan (Charles Dance of "Game of Thrones" fame), this motley crew of unhinged maniacs always seems to be one step ahead of Monarch.

These eco-terrorists see Godzilla and his ilk as a sort of remedy to what they call the "human virus."

Through some rather preachy, quasi-scientific gobbledygook, audiences are treated to heavy-handed lectures about how bad humans are and why we must be exterminated in order to save the planet

Monarch believes Alan to be a war profiteer who sells monster DNA to the highest bidder. However, it is later revealed that the eco-cult's leader is actually a hardcore ideologue who thinks that the creatures must be awoken as quickly as possible in order to

the terrorists' objective: global genocide. Early on in the film, Emma resonates with Alan's nihilistic musings and is onboard with waking the slumbering monsters. In their twisted views, humanity deserves to be punished for its various

"transgressions" against the Earth Alan plans to kidnap Emma and use her newly invented device, which acts as a dog whistle so powerful that it can awaken the biggest and most dreadful of all of the monsters: a three-headed,

lightning-spewing dragon called King Ghidorah. The main bulk of the film focuses on the rush to awaken the ultimate threat, and the counterforce-comprising Mark Russell and an army of Monarch scientists and soldiers—to stop that from

happening

Interspersed between gratuitous heapings of wooden exposition are the giant-monsters' battles, which overall are quite impressive. Some serious monster carnage goes down once the cantankerous beasts get all stompy-stompy over major metropolitan areas, which act as mere set pieces for

orange-fireball-infused mayhem and destruction. Former low-budget horror-filmmaker Michael Dougherty ("Superman Returns," "Krampus") has transitioned into the big leagues with quite a bang, and these scenes are absolutely stunning under his direction. We witness gigantic winged monsters emerging from volcanoes alight with lava, lightning bursts from dragons that level entire cities, and a monster bug-bird overcoming an F-15 jet and snapping its nose clean off. This is the stuff of the wildest fantasies of an overactive mind of a prepubescent. And that's the way a giant-monster

It's just unfortunate that "Godzilla: King of the Monsters" is slathered with so many preachy, antihuman, and anti-family messages. Because somewhere underneath it all is a good monster flick.

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

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THE CENTURIES-OLD FRENCH TRADITION OF

Making Pots With Clay, Rope, and Wood

An interview with 'The French Potter' in New Zealand

LORRAINE FERRIER

The photographs show an almost quintessential French landscape, where a vast expanse of green grass disappears into a distant mountain range. In the foreground, rows and rows of grapevines are all neatly covered in an ocean of white netting. There are even olive trees and what appears to be a traditional French country house, its brown-gray stone softened by roses, lavender, and bay trees, some of which are in pots.

This is the home of Yannick Fourbet, his Kiwi wife Philippa, and their 3-year-old twins, Augustin and Mortimer. They live not in France, but in the foothills of the Pisa mountain range on the South Island of New Zealand, at their Domaine Rewa biodynamic vineyard and olive orchard. Biodynamic farming is an organic method that also takes into account environmental factors such as the rhythms and phases of the sun and moon.

Incidentally, the French-style house was already there when Philippa bought the property. Maybe it was waiting for Fourbet.

Fourbet first met Philippa in 2012 in the South of France, at his pottery studio Le Chêne Vert (The Green Oak), in Anduze. It was love at first sight: "Philippa fell in love with the pots before she fell in love with me, the potter," Fourbet said on the phone.

Philippa and Fourbet met again in 2013, this time in London, when Fourbet invited her to the Royal Horticultural Society Chelsea Flower Show, where he was exhibiting his pots. From then on, they began a longdistance romance, traveling between France and the UK, where Philippa was working in investment banking. And then when Philippa moved to Domaine Rewa, both traveled between France and New Zealand. In 2016, Philippa

joined Fourbet in France. Fourbet says he fell in love with Philippa first, and then he instantly fell in love with New Zealand when he visited Domaine Rewa for the first time.

In 2018, the family settled in New Zealand. The primary reason for the move, Fourbet said, was for a good life for the twins: "We want them to grow up in a rural environment with people with good values, and we think New Zealand is a wonderful country for that."

"We're both Catholic, and we really believe in achieving something on earth and something positive," he said.

Fourbet is starting afresh in New Zealand. His sister has recently bought his share of Le Chêne Vert. Now, he will import traditional

Anduze pots from Le Chêne Vert, into New Zealand.

use for these Biot pots was to store grain; the teardrop design protects the grain from

Le Chêne Vert specializes in Anduze pots, a pot design that dates from 1610 and that was inspired by Italy's Medici vase. Anduze pots are traditionally made from a mold and decorated by

the maker's medallion and a garland. Fourbet also makes pots by using an age-old traditional technique that uses clay, rope, and wood. The technique allows him to make huge pots; the largest he's made has been 772 pounds. Fourbet is limited only by the

At Le Chêne Vert, Fourbet worked

with customers such as Christian Dior and the city of Montpellier, to name a couple. The pottery workshop also supplied Anduze pots for the Trianon garden at the Palace of Versailles. In the 17th century, King Louis XIV's landscape architect, André Le Nôtre, at Versailles was believed to have commissioned Anduze potters to make pots for the Trianon garden, according to Fourbet.

Here, Fourbet tells us how he began making pottery with clay, rope, and wood and what's in store for his new pottery venture in New Zealand: The French Potter.

THE EPOCH TIMES: How did you learn the rope technique of making pottery?

YANNICK FOURBET: I learned to make pots with most of my employees at first, and then slowly but surely, I learned from a man I got to meet who actually showed me how to use the rope technique to make pots. Unfortunately, he is dead now, but his name

was Dilbert Serrs. I met him at a ceramic arts festival in a town near where we were making pots in our workshop in Anduze. It was summertime and it was really hot. He was demonstrating how to make his pots. Everybody was willing to watch, but they never really bothered to find out if he was thirsty or not, so I went and got him some water.

He was really touched by that. I started talking to him, because I was physically closer to him. At the time, I had nine employees in France. I said, "I would like to train my staff in this technique that you're preserving, which is obviously ancestral. Would you be amenable to do that?" And he

said, "Yes, definitely." This is traditionally how our skills were transmitted from one generation to another. In the past, oftentimes people took on the jobs that their friends were doing, or that their grandfathers were doing, and this is how you get a generational buildup of techniques.

I would like to be able to do that here in New Zealand if I can. In years to come, if I can share what Serrs has shared with me, with a young man or young woman who is interested, I will gladly do it.

One of the things that I have noticed from living here now for 18 months or so is that there's one thing that is missing when looking at New Zealand-made crafts: The country has got wonderful natural resources, but they do not add value to their resources





Fourbet's 3-year-old twins, Mortimer (L) and Augustin, hide behind one of his



Yannick Fourbet with his family—wife Philippa and 3-year-old twins, Mortimer (L) and Augustin-in their Domaine Rewa vineyard on New Zealand's South Island.

because they do not transform them. I think what is very important to me is this idea of being able to transform a raw material into a finished product and having an opportunity here to sort of participate in a change and a shift in the New Zealand economy at my level, which is only a small business. I can get clay here in New Zealand, and I can transform it with my skills, thanks to Le Chêne Vert, to actually make a Kiwi

THE EPOCH TIMES: How long has the rope technique for making pots been around? MR. FOURBET: This technique may have existed in the Neolithic era, but

plywood.

it's not proven. I asked the man who taught me where the technique might have come from. He said there used to be a cabinetmaker in a village called Biot in Provence, who showed an interest in making pottery. He used plywood and ropes to shape the pots by coiling the rope around a plywood frame and then by applying clay onto the rope. Most people think that these pots were used to store oil due to its waterdrop shape. I found out recently that this is not true; they were originally made to store grain, and the reason they have this water-drop shape was

pests from getting into the grain. This is the way the ancestors used to make things. Everything they made had a function as well as an aesthetic purpose. If I had to define my work today, I would say it's halfway between art and craftsmanship.

to prevent mice, rats, and all kinds of

THE EPOCH TIMES: It sounds like being a traditional craftsman holds a certain responsibility.

MR. FOURBET: Definitely. It's some kind of a talent. You've got to have a little bit of courage as well because in this day and age, where everything is geared toward technology, you may be led into thinking that doing something with your hands is not necessarily interesting from a

financial perspective.

The only interest

seems to be going

toward making

more and more

money, and we

still never learn:

itself is not an end

I don't want to

sound presumptu-

The money in

pot with rope and

ous, but it's such a satisfaction to realize five or six pots a day and just to clean up my workshop-and this is probably my favorite part: when I look at what I've accomplished at the end of the

THE EPOCH TIMES: How do you make a pot using this rope technique? **MR. FOURBET:** I start by drawing the pot on several sheets of paper so I have the basic shape and an idea of what it's going to look like in real life. Then, I cut a whole set of 12 to 25

day, and it has materialized as a pot.

pieces of plywood that I fix between two discs, along a vertical axis, with one disc on the top and one disc on the bottom, which basically makes

I then coil several lengths of sisal rope around this plywood structure, which gives it rigidity, and on the side of the structure I fix a movable board which adjusts the thickness of the pot against the rope. Then I shape the pot: I apply clay

onto the rope itself and slowly turn the plywood and rope frame, scrubbing off any surplus clay and putting it back on the rope as I go. I then slowly take out the wooden

structure and the ropes during the

drying process; it usually takes a week to remove all the ropes. If the rope is taken out too early, the pot will collapse. So that's an interesting part of my work, and one that allows for reflection and meditation as well. Then, the pot has to dry for about

month to a month and a half. And then I apply either a patina or a glaze. The pot then goes under fire for 72 hours, up to 2,012 degrees Fahrenheit, but in several phases; you can't go to 2,012 degrees Fahrenheit straight Here, I have to be really careful

and make that temperature transi-

tion very slow because, otherwise,

everything breaks down and explodes

The Roman god

Bacchus, hand-

Fourbet on one of

his Anduze pots.

sculpted by

THE EPOCH TIMES: What would you like people to know about your work? MR. FOURBET: We have our own brand of biodynamic wine, and there are wonderful opportunities for my trade in the wine industry, or so it seems, and that is to be able to make

amphoras, clay vessels, in which the Georgians have been making wine for 2,000 years. Where it ticks the box for us is that we're on a biodynamic vineyard and we will be using clay from the vineyard to make the amphoras for our wine. A lot of vintners have approached

me, since they know that I'm settling here, and they've asked me if I will be available to make amphoras for them. I would like to keep The French Potter a one-man workshop, maybe two people, but I don't want to grow big. I'm not here to make millions. I'm here to maybe transmit something that I know and also make a good living, sufficient enough so I can provide for my family, and that's all really.

> To find out more, visit: TheFrenchPotter.co.nz

This interview has been edited for clarity and brevity.



Yannick Fourbet carefully wraps sisal rope around the ply-



Clay is applied directly to the rope in order to shape the pot.



Fourbet embellishes each pot by hand.



An Anduze cup being prepared in Fourbet's workshop in France; it can take a week to slowly remove all the rope.



An Anduze cup by Yannick Fourbet, at the 2013 Royal Horticultural Society Chelsea Flower Show in London.



I'm currently dipping into two volumes of selected letters: Willa Cather's to virtually everyone she corresponded with in her whole life ("The Selected Letters of Willa Cather") and those between Mark Twain and his good friend, author William D. Howells ("Selected Mark Twain-Howells Letters 1872-1910").

The first I sought on purpose to become better acquainted with Miss Cather while reading one of her books; the latter I came by accidentally at a library sale.

Getting to Really Know Them

After spending time with them, imbibing their imagination through their fiction, I often long to know authors themselves. Biographies are a great way to learn some of the facts of their lives, but letters really allow one to get to know them. Biographies, after all, will nearly always betray the bias and interpretation of the biographer. Letters are the raw material, the real deal-unintentional autobiographical entries. Some books just make one wonder: What

kind of person could write a story like that? Flannery O'Connor comes to mind in this category, and I suggest that one simply cannot grasp the fullness of her weird stories without knowing the very un-weird woman who wrote them. J.R.R. Tolkien is another case in point.

There are other authors of whom we can't get enough. When we run out of their books but wish we could spend more time with them, where do we go? To everything else they wrote! Oh, why did Jane Austen not continue writing delightful stories for us instead of dying at age 41? It couldn't be helped, I suppose, and she did write letters, so those will have to do.

They do very well, in fact. I may sit in her parlor and go on holiday with her and hear her complaints and opinions. She becomes my virtual friend by virtue of knowing her more intimately through her letters.

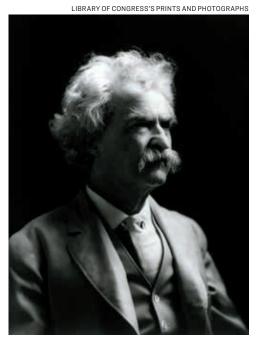
Literary Networking

Not only do I come to think of these long-dead and long-admired writers as my friends, but I have met many of their friends, as well. Imagine my delight on learning that two authors whose works I have enjoyed were friends with each other. Willa Cather and Sigrid Undset met through the publisher Alfred Knopf while Undset took refuge in America during World War II. They even shared an interest in flowering plants and exchanged specimens with one another to add to each other's gardens. It was their friendship that compelled me to seek Cather's "Selected Letters" during my phase of Undset fervor.

Willa Cather introduced me (through her letters) to a friend from her college years, Dorothy Canfield. While they may have had a falling out, I have gotten to know Canfield through reading some of her works, including "Understood Betsy," "Self-Reliance," and "The Home Maker." I also share her interest in the work of Italian educator Maria Montessori, which she made known in America after her travels

through Europe. While becoming better acquainted with Mark Twain, I have enjoyed meeting William Howells by way of their correspondence. I have discovered that among Howells's notable friends and colleagues are Oliver Wendell Holmes, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and even Abraham Lincoln. History and literature surpass the notion of mere academic subjects when we come see these folks as regular people living their lives in an interconnected way. Just as we do.

Networking has never been easier! Meeting crowds of dead people through their letters collapses the obstacles of both space and time.



Dinner Parties I Would Love to Have Attended As enjoyable as it is to read Twain's clever published works, it is pure delight to see that his wit and warmth were not just a studied facade, but were the reciprocal delight of his witty and

Twain himself wished he could bridge the

warm friends in real life

gap of distance between him and good friends. When the house next-door was for sale, he wrote to Howells, in an 1874 letter, "You or Aldrich or both of you must come to Hartford to live. ... You can do your work just as well here as in Cambridge, can't you? Come, will one of you boys buy that house? Now say yes." I'd have said yes, if asked! What fun it must have been to attend a dinner party at the Clemenses' home. (Mark Twain's real surname was Clemens.) Upon his return from a European trip five years later, Twain was clearly impatient to see his friend. When he had no

My Dear Howells: Are you dead – or only sleepeth? We are all well, & send love to you & yours by

word from him a mere five days after his vessel

docked. Twain sent this letter to Mr. Howells:

Yrs Ever

It elicited an immediate reply from Howells, eager to meet. What a happy meeting it must

Keepsakes, Relics, and Primary Sources

It's remarkable to me that so many letters from so many interesting people from so many years ago have been saved from destruction, treasured, and made available for our present enjoyment. Thankfully, decluttering is a recent phenomenon, following upon the other recent phenomenon of buying too much unimportant stuff. Don't expect a future volume of "Selected Letters" from the currently popular decluttering superstar Marie Kondo!

When people save letters, it shows a love and respect for the person who wrote them. There may be a stack of old love letters tied with a ribbon in a trunk in your attic. They contain not only the thoughts and sentiments of the sender but also little slices of history. A letter is a bridge to a moment in the past as well as to a person removed from one's presence. These words were conceived in someone's mind and formed by that person's hand on this

The keepers of these epistles kept a part of the sender in their drawer. For some, the motivation was love–a memento, a relic of the loved

Clemens, also known as Mark Twain.

Meeting

crowds of

through

collapses

the

dead people

their letters

obstacles of

both space

and time.

one. Perhaps they also knew these would be worth saving from a historical point of view. And, thank goodness.

I worry about our future in this respect. Everyone is "going paperless." What are future biographers to use for this peek inside the private lives of today's interesting people? Even if email and text messages could be retrieved, those media don't really lend themselves to the same kind of warm expression as actual letters. Ironically, though electronic media affords us unlimited space to put down our thoughts, we employ them for more abbreviated commu-

nication than was used in tangible letters on

costly paper. Funny, but it doesn't make

In Praise of Paper

me LOL.

Paper used to be a serious commodity. A wellheeled correspondent of earlier days could walk into a stationer's shop and choose from any number of weights, finishes, and sizes of writing paper.

When I see a shop these days devoted to just one obscure product, I am tempted to think, "Mafia money laundering!" How else in the world does a shop selling only socks stay in business? That wasn't the case for stationery shops when people routinely wrote letters. Don't get me wrong; not all this paper was lovely. There was, even then, cheap and miser-

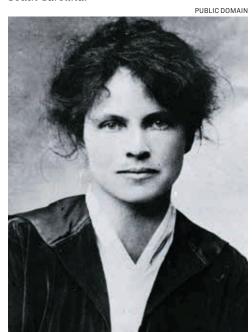
able stuff wrung from forests of massacred trees. But the destruction of those trees could be vindicated by the conveyance of wonderful thoughts and sentiments preserved for posterity. A case in point is this letter, from Cather to Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant in 1913. She began, "Dear Elsie, Damn this paper? Yes, but I got a lot by mistake and I have to use it up on people who know the worst of me. As soon as I really care about people, I begin to give 'em my

worst-always.' You see why I love Willa Cather so? I hope she would have used her lousy paper to write to me, had we met. I would surely have written her back on a paper towel, it being the only paper really easy to come by these days, there not being a stationery shop handy anywhere.

When I recently looked for a simple pad of letter-writing paper, even the gargantuan online everything seller yielded no results. Happily, I found a pad at the grocery store! Of course. That is, after all, where I go when I'm picking up what's needed for entertaining dear friends.

Susannah Pearce has a master's degree in theology and writes from her home in South Carolina.

A bestselling author from the early 20th century, Dorothy Canfield was introduced to me, via letters, by Willa Cather.





It's time to revive the maligned art of traditional poetry. "Six Tuscan Poets," circa 1544, by Giorgio Vasari. (L–R) Marsilio Ficino, Cristoforo Landino, Francesco Petrarca, Giovanni Boccaccio, Dante Alighieri, and Guido Cavalcanti. Minneapolis Institute of Art.

Henry Wadsworth

Longfellow.

Joseph Salemi.

Rhyming Poets Stage Rousing Return

EVAN MANTYK

"What is poetry?" A simple enough question, and if asked in sincerity would most likely be asked by someone under 10 years old. Most people would answer that 10-year-old, "Oh, you know..." and rattle off names or bits of verse from Mother Goose, Dr. Seuss, or Shel Silverstein, or probably with less success to a 10-year-old, Shakespeare, Poe, or Longfellow.

And that, in truth, is poetry to most people. But what qualifies as poetry today looks very different from that answer. Leading poets today, in terms of book sales and in terms of being able to maintain a job in the name of poetry (meaning almost exclusively college English professors), use poetry in a different way. The rhyme, meter (consistent rhythm), and relatively straightforward narrative style of the Mother Goose writer, Shakespeare, and ancient Greek poets like Homer have been replaced by poetry that chiefly conveys its feelings, insights, and observations in a multitude of ways that defy a readily describable order. In the here and now of adults, this is the predominant form of poetry, known as free verse.

The Dual Poetry Universe

Free verse's often heady approach and unbounded mechanics, while speaking to some, very ardent supporters, does not speak to most people today for whatever reason. It could be that the internet, movies, TV, and modern novels have rendered all poetry meaningless. Or it could be that the heady and often indiscernible approach of free verse, without the jingly jangly meter and rhyme, never catches on with people under 10 years old, who then grow up and retain that 10-year-old's definition, which they tell to the 10-year-olds who asks them, cycling on and on. At any rate, for whatever reason, a binary poetry reality has been created: In one reality, free verse reigns supreme; in the other, rhyme and meter never lost their right to rule.

Into this strange, dual poetry universe, I stumbled after graduating from college. I



Li Bai, as depicted in the "Nanling Wushuang Pu" (a collection of 40 illustrations depicting historical figures spanning from the Han to the Song dynasties) by Jin Guliang, Ming Dynasty.

submitted some poems somewhere and went to some poetry readings. Soon I realized that the people, like myself, who were still stuck in the 10-year-old's poetry world were now a dying breed. They were few and far between, they were called marginalizing names like "rhymer" or "McGonagall" (a 19th-century Scottish poet who wrote terribly contorted poetry in order to achieve rhyming), or their verse was called "doggerel," and they were often confronted with poetry contests that specifically prohibited rhyming poetry.

At this point, I was ready to leave poetry behind and continue my life, as most people with English degrees do. It seemed that I was on the wrong side of history. However, something

changed all of that. It was at my first job out of college, a newspaper, where I was talking to another bottomrung reporter like myself. It turned out that he wrote rhyming poetry too and similarly had found the poetry world frustrating. He said something like, "If you started your own website, you could accept traditional poetry. That would be something great I would submit to." Somehow, the gravity of his statement is lost when I recount it from my foggy memory here. It is better when rendered through the lens of classical poetry. Here's how I imagine my friend's request and my response:

"If you could raise the crumbling roof Of rhyme and meter, It would to eyes like mine be proof

> That there's a leader With a place that we can flock to 'Mid the battle. Where the soulless bombs might rock you, Make you rattle,"

So saying, my coworker starts Emitting light, And Heaven's cloudy curtain parts

The gloomy night.

(By the way, this poetry form is called an alexandroid and was invented by the great living poet Jared Carter of Indiana.)

It was here that it suddenly dawned on me that traditional poetry had no desire to be marginalized and swept into the dust bin of history. There was simply a disbanded and disillusioned army of passionate poets and appreciators waiting for the right moment to reconnect and stage

Shortly after my coworker's words, he and I launched a website and called it the Society of Classical Poets (Classical Poets.org). I soon found that, indeed, there is a scattered mass of poets who love traditional poetry and do not love how they are being treated by the ruling poetry

For example, New York University professor Dr. Joseph Salemi said he submitted poems to state poetry competitions all over the nation. These contests are sponsored by the official state poetry societies. In the end, he concluded, "There is absolutely no point at all in submitting formal poetry to any 'mainstream' contest. It will be eliminated in the very first round of readings by stupid student interns."

This development of the binary poetry universe has been long in the making. In 1982, living British poet and composer Humphrey Clucas wrote the following satiric lines to express frustrations similar to those of Dr. Salemi (note that "scan" in the poem refers to using meter) in his poem subtitled "Dear Sir, We only accept modern poems...":

Do not rhyme and do not scan-We've cancelled rules, they're so outdated. Carve the lines up how you can (Lower case, unpunctuated).

Avoid allusions, never quote, No foreign names, and (God!) no gods. We're trying to strike the modern note, A magazine for ignorant sods.

The Mistranslation That Destroyed Rhyme

The phenomenon described in Clucas's poem has been accumulating for over a century since the rise of modernism started breaking poetry's time-honored rules. One major event contributing to the usurping of rhyme and meter was when the modernist Ezra Pound translated the poetry of the great Tang Dynasty poet Li Bai, also known as Li Po, in 1915 and presented it as great poetry.

"Of course it is great poetry," everyone thought (over three decades before communism seized control). It comes from the Golden Age of that great 5,000-year-old civilization of China.

However, in his translation, Pound understandably decided to leave out the rhyme and meter that was contained in the Chinese original in order to focus on its meaning. This (possibly inadvertently, possibly not) had the effect of showing the world that great poetry need not have rhyme and meter. In fact, throughout history, traditional Chinese poetry, including Li Bai's, has had rhyme and meter.

This modernist bait-and-switch by Pound feeds into the larger misconception that unbridled freedom (in poetry's case, free verse) is best suited to our multicultural and globalized world. However, this is not the case!

In fact, the universal principles found in traditions-here expressed in rhyme, meter, and profound appreciation for discernible beautyis what truly connects the world and brings people together.

Since our launching in 2012, the Society of Classical Poets has grown into a nonprofit organization with members across the world, millions of readers each year, daily poetry, an annual journal, and an annual poetry competition that awards thousands of dollars in prizes. This year, it was co-judged by Dr. Salemi.

The First Poetry and Culture Symposium

But all of the society's achievements so far have only been laying the foundation for what is to come. We will hold our first "Poetry and Culture Symposium" at the Princeton Club on June 17 in Manhattan, where Dr. Salemi will speak, as well as leading British poet James Sale, cultural vanguard Michael Maibach, and U.S. World War I Memorial sculptor Sabine Howard.

If you have felt estranged from the world of poetry and the arts in general, or still find a bit of charm in tradition, then this is the perfect opportunity to take a new look and rediscover the foundational art form that underlies nearly all of our literature, and which is still a great pleasure to read for old and young alike.

For poetry, culture, and the arts, this event will be the equivalent of the First Continental Congress that launched the United States of America, except that this time the British, who can claim most of the greatest English-speaking poets, are very much on our side. It is an exciting moment best described, I

think, with some words from the great American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem "A Psalm of Life," which was the first poem I read that really shook me and awakened me to the power of poetry:

Art is long, and Time is fleeting, And our hearts, though stout and brave, Still, like muffled drums, are beating Funeral marches to the grave.

In the world's broad field of battle, In the bivouac of Life, Be not like dumb, driven cattle! Be a hero in the strife!

Trust no Future, howe'er pleasant! Let the dead Past bury its dead! Act—act in the living Present!

Heart within, and God o'erhead!

Evan Mantyk is an English teacher in New York and president of the Society of Classical Poets.

The Society of Classical Poets will hold its

first "Poetry and Culture Symposium" at the Princeton Club on June 17 in Manhattan.

THEATER REVIEW

'Enter Laughing: The Musical'

You exit laughing

DIANA BARTH

EW YORK-Hilarity is currently emanating from the stage of the East Side's York Theatre.

Based on original source material from a semi-autobiographical novel by Carl Reiner, the work, which later became a straight play by Joseph Stein, has metamorphosed into the present musical version. Its book is by Joseph Stein, music and lyrics by Stan Daniels, with additional material by Stuart Ross, who also directs the show.

A young Bronx lad named David Kolowitz (Chris Dwan) yearns desperately to conquer Broadway; he introduces himself with a hearty rendition of "David Kolowitz, the Actor."

David hears of auditions to become a scholarship student at a theatrical school run by Harrison Marlowe (the formidable David Schramm). David's audition is so abominable that Marlowe wants to reject him, even at a paying "scholarship" fee of seven dollars a week.

But Marlowe's love-starved daughter, Angela Marlowe (Farah Alvin in a deliciously overdone performance), intercedes and insists that her father accept "the cute one"-David.

Now cast in a play, David's first rehearsal is so incredible, ahem, that Marlowe takes to drink: He keeps a bottle handy, often hidden in secret places, such as a shelf in the side of the piano. David's first utterance at rehearsal is "Enter laughing." Marlowe, not too patiently, explains that that is a stage direction and not to be spoken aloud.

David, who now calls himself Don Colman, in a nod to famed film star Ronald Colman, demonstrates several versions of what he thinks is an appropriate theatrical laugh. You can take it

As well as being enamored with the theater, David appreciates girls. He has a deeply loyal girlfriend, Wanda (Allie Trimm). But he also has an eye for a secretary, Ms. B (Dana Costello). And why not? She is a stunner and moves divinely. (In fact, almost the entire cast of 11 are skilled actor-dancer-singers.)

David's doting Mother (Alison Fraser) would do anything for her beloved son, but sings out slyly, in "My Son, the Druggist," that he would break her heart if he does not attend pharmacy school and live a conventional life.

Father (Robert Picardo), who goes along with whatever Mother wants, later performs a lively song-and-dance number, paired with David's day-job boss Mr. Forman (Ray DeMattis). As they kick up a storm, the two elders bemoan the un-



gratefulness of youth, who, they claim, only want to do the "Hot Cha Cha."

Rounding out the cast are Raji Ahsan as Pike, who runs the backstage doings at Marlowe's school; Magnes Jarmo as Harry Hamburger, Miss B's generous boss who shares his tuxedo with David; and Joe Veale as David's friend Marvin.

David Schramm as Marlowe performs "The Butler's Song," a bring-down-the-house turn, mentioning David's theoretical connection with glamorous film stars of the 1930s. To aid those viewers whose memories don't reach back that far, the show's printed program contains a glossary of such luminaries as Joan Crawford, Hedy Lamarr, and the luscious Latin beauty Dolores Del Río.

The orchestra, consisting of Phil Reno (piano and music direction), Perry Cavari (drums), and MiChris Dwan as David Kolowitz and Allie Trimm as his steadfast girlfriend. Wanda, in "Enter

Laughing."

chael Kuennen (bass) more than amply supports the performers, as does the terrific choreography by Jennifer Paulson-Lee. Costumes by Tyler M. Holland are on the money, and James Morgan's minimalist scenic design is just right.

Stuart Ross's direction and musical staging are superior, as are all members of the cast, with particular kudos to Chris Dwan for his charming, perceptive, and often athletic presentation of David Kolowitz, also known as Don Colman. His depiction of stage fright is a classic.

If you know theater, this show is a must. If you simply love theater, it's a must. In short, see it.

Diana Barth writes for various arts publications. She may be contacted at diabarth99@gmail.com



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