

WEEK 25, 2019

THE EPOCH TIMES
**ARTS &
TRADITION**

RACHAEL MCKENNA



"Aristotle With a Bust of Homer," 1653, by Rembrandt van Rijn. Oil on canvas, 56 1/2 inches by 53 3/4 inches. Purchase, special contributions and funds given or bequeathed by friends of the Museum, 1961.

Rembrandt's Inner Life Alive at The Met

Iconic works on display at 'In Praise of Painting: Dutch Masterpieces'...5

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THE EPOCH TIMES

TRUTH AND TRADITION



Caddie Steve Williams and golf champion Tiger Woods.

FILM REVIEW

Caddies and Their Golfers: The Symbiotic Sport

An endearing and informative golf documentary

IAN KANE

Like many folks out there, I’m not even close to being a lifelong golfer—a few rounds of miniature golf doesn’t quite cut it. So I didn’t really know what to expect going in to see director Jason Baffa’s new film about golf, titled “Loopers: The Caddie’s Long Walk.” Baffa courted comedian Bill Murray for months, in an effort to coax the famous entertainer into narrating the film. Murray finally capitulated, and as a result, audiences are treated to some of the most even-handed—almost meditative—narration I’ve ever had the pleasure of listening to in a documentary. Murray’s presence in the film means that those who aren’t within golfing circles might take a chance on watching the film. After all, he was in the most famous movie about caddie-ship: the 1980s’ “Caddyshack.” He also worked as a caddie during his teens.

The film opens with a scene from the famous Irish golfing locale known as the Ballyunion Golf Club. There, a gutsy-looking Irish caddie is dragging his player through gusty winds and up a steep mound. Murray’s voice hums with warmth in the background: “To acquire a caddie is to have an ally in the battle against the elements, the golf course, and life itself.”

Indeed, Murray explains how his experience as a caddie meant as much to jump-starting his success as his appearing on “Saturday Night Live” or in any of his first film roles.

“To acquire a caddie is to have an ally in the battle against the elements, the golf course, and life itself.”

Bill Murray, in “Loopers: The Caddie’s Long Walk”

It’s More Than Bill Murray However, this film isn’t about Bill Murray. In fact, he is only seen in a handful of brief interview clips. Instead, the documentary takes a serious, dignified tone, detailing how venerable a sport golf now is and explaining its humble beginnings.

An oddly rendered animated sequence takes a swing through history (pun intended) and details how golf emerged out of 15th-century Scotland.

It had been banned several times by King James II, partly because he wanted compulsory military service for the many youths who played golf, and partially because most folks back then considered it a nuisance. Kids would play the game in the streets, which endangered others.

Curiously, the first named golfer was King James IV, at the turn of the 17th century, signaling a shift in the game’s acceptance over time.

The caddying profession didn’t take shape until the 1700s. Referred to as “loopers” or “ball-hawks,” caddies performed their duties in support of their individual players—carrying their bags, giving advice, and so on—while pulling double duty as tour guides when they weren’t on the golf course. In fact,

the caddies of old offered a veritable plethora of knowledge when it came to leisure activities and could, and often would, guide their players toward the best eateries and bars in town, as well as to more illicit dalliances.

Golf didn’t really become an official sporting pursuit or career field until the late 1800s, when Scotsman Thomas Mitchell Morris (referred to affectionately as “Old Tom Morris”) popularized the sport. Not only did he legitimize golf, but he also became the world’s first-ever caddie master.

As Murray’s voice purrs along, we learn how golf was eventually adopted by Americans and learn that caddying positions in the United States were originally held by black men. As time went on and more money began to flow into the sport, caddying increasingly became a white man’s affair.

Who’s Who in Golf

We’re treated to a bevy of interviews with World Golf Hall of Famers such as Tom Watson, Ben Crenshaw, Sir Nick Faldo, and Curtis Strange. But more to the point of the film, we get to hear from professional caddies, including Carl Jackson (Crenshaw), Steve Williams (former caddie to Tiger Woods), Pete Bender, and many others.

Several little-known stories are also revealed, such as one about Mike Kiely, who over his half-century caddie career at the historic Canterbury Golf Club near Cleveland, helped to steer many a caddie to successful lives in the sport, and beyond.

We also learn of Greg Puga, a native of East Los Angeles who got a big break to caddie at Los Angeles’s prestigious Bel-Air Country Club. After qualifying to play as an amateur there, he went on to gain national prominence by winning the U.S. Mid-Amateur Championship at The Homestead in Virginia in 2000. “Loopers: The Caddie’s Long Walk” was shot at many of the iconic golfing locales, such as The Old Course at St. Andrews in Scotland, the Augusta National Golf Club in Georgia, and Pebble Beach Golf Links in California. The cinematography is expertly handled so that you really get a sense of the surreal splendor and beauty of these places.

Toward the end of the film, Murray encapsulates the symbiotic relationship that both the caddie and player have: It’s neither the caddie’s guidance nor the player’s performance that matters the most, but rather a combination of the two, fostered through mutual respect and teamwork.

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

‘Loopers: The Caddie’s Long Walk’

Director Jason Baffa

Starring Bill Murray, Ben Crenshaw, Nick Faldo, Lee Trevino, Tom Watson

Rated PG

Running Time 1 hour, 20 minutes

Release Date June 7

★★★★★



Mark Jackson grew up in Spring Valley, N.Y., where he attended a Waldorf school. At Williams College, his professors all suggested he write professionally. He acted professionally for 20 years instead. Now he writes professionally about acting. In the movies.

‘Dark Phoenix’: The Mutant With the Strongest Superpower Can’t Save the Franchise

MARK JACKSON

I was a little sad to see the Marvel series of 22 movies come to an end. I can’t say the same of “Dark Phoenix,” the final chapter of the “X-Men” tale. Nope. Good riddance.

How many times can you watch Professor Charles Xavier roll his wheelchair out on that guardrail-less metal bridge into that Hayden Planetarium-ish place, where he views people’s CGI thoughts that look like squirts of blue detergent in a giant washing machine? How many times can you watch Michael Fassbender’s Magneto put on the faux Etruscan helmet, float 20 feet in the air, and crush everything that’s made of metal by glaring, straining his neck muscles, gnashing his teeth, and making fists?

Or that indigo-colored German boy with the luxurious hair, devil’s tail, and the ability to apparate (a Harry Potter term) in a cloud of what looks to be squid ink? Maybe that’s also the washing detergent stuff, except black. Same swirly texture.

Anyway, the franchise has long grown stale; we’ve seen all the various character-schticks, and there are no surprises happening. This new story centers on the young Jean Grey (Sophie Turner). She would be the titular Dark Phoenix.

How Jean Got Her Powers

Jean, as a child, got saddled with a massive guilt complex after having involved her vacationing-in-the-station-wagon parents in a

‘Dark Phoenix’

Director Simon Kinberg

Starring James McAvoy, Michael Fassbender, Jennifer Lawrence, Nicholas Hoult, Sophie Turner, Tye Sheridan, Alexandra Shipp, Evan Peters, Kodi-Smit McPhee, Jessica Chastain

Rated PG-13

Running Time 1 hour, 53 minutes

Release Date June 7

★★★★★

head-on collision with a truck, by stubbornly using her mind control to dominate the car radio station.

Then, we fast-forward three decades. The X-Men, whose superpowers are now recognized by the government as assets (instead of outlawed liabilities), are now blasting off in their big X-Men jet to rescue a space shuttle mission gone wrong.

Wait—there’s a solar flare! And it’s attacking the space shuttle! And it also looks like squid ink, or washing machine detergent. But pink, with some sparkly stuff in it ... stars, maybe?

But Jean’s particular superpower apparently can deal with this, so she absorbs this, this Phoenix Force of a solar flare thingy. You can tell because, post-absorption, her face has small lightning storms going on inside it.

That’ll give a person a lot of power, absorbing a solar flare. But apparently it’s a force that has an intelligence of its own, and now Jean sometimes attacks her fellow mutants.

And so the rest of the movie is about government authorities, fellow X-Men, and a race of shape-shifting aliens known as the D’Bari, chasing Jean around, trying variously to rescue her from, or siphon off, her newfound solar potency.

The D’Bari like to take on human forms; they’re so ugly, you can understand this desire. Their fearless leader, Vuk, is played by an eyebrowless Jessica Chastain, looking exactly, and I mean exactly, like Edgar Winter on the album cover of 1972’s “They Only Come Out at Night,” except without the snowy sideburns.

Aaaaand Scene

Will the emotionally unstable Jean be OK?

Will the government, which has decided they got it right the first time—that mutants are dangerous and need to be locked up—relent?

Acting-wise, James McAvoy and Michael Fassbender can’t be faulted. The material is too weak to engage their talents.

The main way in which the film both succeeds and fails is in the depiction of Jean Grey’s powers.

The tradition of higher martial arts considers it quite possible to harness, if not exactly galaxy-sized clouds of cosmic energy, then an amount that can nevertheless boggle the human mind in terms of the advanced abilities it can give rise to, which lie dormant in the human body. That much is apparently true.

Where the film fumbles, though, (again, according to martial arts traditions) is that it portrays the aliens as being wrong, because they accuse Jean of being too weak to handle this power, due to the use of her human emotions.

But Vuk and her alien colleagues are exactly right; a highly advanced martial artist is already approaching superhuman status. The energy level is superhuman. And that kind of energy can only be developed when the student learns to move beyond human emotion, through mastering meditative techniques.

And so when Jean claims she’s all-powerful and superior (with the washing machine detergent and sparkliness all swishing around in her face and stuff) because she is using her human emotions, well, that’s just bad writing, and the X-Men need to go away now and never come back until they figure out what they’re talking about.



Jessica Chastain (L) as an alien, and Sophie Turner as Jane Grey, and a lot of swirling special effects, in “Dark Phoenix.”

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‘LEONARDO DA VINCI’ WAS ‘FASCINATED BY THE PHENOMENA OF LIFE’

Leonardo da Vinci: A Life in Drawing,
an exhibition at Buckingham Palace, London

LORRAINE FERRIER

The art world is in overdrive with events to mark the 500 years since the death of the original “Renaissance man,” Leonardo da Vinci.

One exceptional exhibition, “Leonardo da Vinci: A Life in Drawing,” contains over 200 works from the unrivaled collection of Leonardo’s drawings held by the British Royal Collection Trust. The exhibition is on display through Oct. 13, in The Queen’s Gallery at Buckingham Palace, in London. Leonardo’s interests were wide-ranging: from sculpture to architecture, cartography, engineering, anatomy, geology, and botany. And of course, painting, although he finished only around 20 paintings.

The one thing Leonardo did consistently throughout his lifetime was to draw.

Through his drawings, we can see how he relentlessly pursued inventions and solutions for problems many of us never even dream about. Nowhere can we see this process more clearly than through his drawings, notes, and manuscripts—unless we were to speak to Leonardo himself.

For us, his drawings are his mouthpiece. And oddly enough, the drawings may give us more of an insight into his work than a conversation with the man himself, as many of these images were not meant to be seen publicly. The drawings reveal the behind-the-scenes narrative, as it were, of Leonardo’s masterpieces.

His drawings “allow us to enter one of the greatest minds in history,” says Martin Clayton, exhibition curator and head of prints and drawings at the Royal Collection Trust, in a press release.

‘Fascinated by the Phenomena of Life’

Leonardo’s drawings are the main source of our knowledge about him, Clayton says. Leonardo understood the power of pictures: He believed that visual evidence could accurately and concisely convey knowledge more convincingly than words and academic argument.

Many of his drawings give us insight into his ambitious plans that never came to fruition, like a large equestrian monument; treatises on light, water, and botany; and a scheme to divert the Arno River.

Such ideas live on only through his drawings.

For Clayton, one of the highlights of the exhibition is a detailed drawing showing the internal organs of a woman, drawn



around 1509–10. “It shows Leonardo trying to capture in a single sheet all the different systems that make us alive. He was fascinated by the phenomena of life,” he said, according to an NTD Television report. “The notes on the left [in mirror writing] are not about the drawing. They are setting him further tasks,” he said. “He’s left-handed and wrote in perfect mirror [writing] throughout his life.”

Illuminating New Discoveries

Ultraviolet light highlights two previously unseen works: studies of hands for the “Adoration of the Magi.” On display for the first time, the two works show how Leonardo delicately rendered the hand gestures in preparation for painting his masterpiece.

The studies of hands cannot be seen under normal light; only a few faint outlines suggest the “hidden” hand gestures. The

drawing was executed in metalpoint, and the high copper content of the stylus meant that over time a chemical reaction occurred turning the copper into copper salt, acting as invisible ink for future generations.

Also on public display for the first time is a newly identified sketch of Leonardo drawn by an unidentified assistant. Clayton first discovered the portrait while conducting research for the exhibition. The sketch is on a sheet of paper with a series of studies of horses by Leonardo. The sketch depicts the artist a few years prior to his death.

“In the sketch, he is aged about 65 and appears a little melancholy and world-weary. However, the presence of the portrait alongside studies for another grand equestrian monument shows that Leonardo’s ambitions remained undimmed in later life,” Clayton says, in a press release. The newly discovered sketch was com-

pleted around the same time as the most familiar portrait of Leonardo, which is also on display: the red chalk drawing by his assistant, Francesco Melzi. The latter portrait is thought to have been finished by Leonardo himself. Until recently, this portrait was thought to have been the only surviving portrait of the great artist made during his lifetime.

It was Melzi to whom Leonardo bequeathed thousands of his drawings and dozens of his notebooks. Melzi spent the next 50 years putting them in order.

To find out more about “Leonardo Da Vinci: A Life in Drawing” at The Queen’s Gallery, Buckingham Palace, in London, visit www.RCT.uk

NTD reporter Jane Werrell contributed to this report.



The familiar face of Leonardo da Vinci, by his assistant Francesco Melzi, is on display in “Leonardo da Vinci: A Life in Drawing,” at The Queen’s Gallery, Buckingham Palace.

Through his drawings, we can see how he relentlessly pursued inventions and solutions for problems many of us never even dream about.

A study of a woman’s hands, circa 1490, by Leonardo da Vinci.



Studies of hands for the “Adoration of the Magi,” sheet 1, under natural light and then under ultraviolet light, circa 1481, by Leonardo da Vinci. Metalpoint (faded) on pink prepared paper.



A sketch of Leonardo da Vinci, circa 1517–18, by an assistant of Leonardo.



Martin Clayton, head of prints and drawings at the Royal Collection Trust, studies a sketch of Leonardo in the Print Room at Windsor Castle.

FINE ARTS

Rembrandt’s Inner Life *Alive at The Met*

Iconic works on display at ‘In Praise of Painting: Dutch Masterpieces’

J.H. WHITE

NEW YORK—A few years back, I wrote about one of the royal British portrait painters who often referred to one of his greatest inspirations, 17th-century Dutch maestro Rembrandt van Rijn.

“There are so many artists that go back to the great master,” says Nadine Orenstein, The Metropolitan Museum’s Drue Heinz curator in charge of the department of drawings and prints.

I’m not an artist, but am an admirer of classical works, so I wondered if I could understand why Rembrandt continues to inspire the world’s best painters, even today. I visited The Met’s exhibit “In Praise of Painting: Dutch Masterpieces,” running through Oct. 4, 2020. It was the first time that I had seen a Rembrandt painting in the flesh, so to speak.

‘Aristotle With a Bust of Homer’

The exhibition starts with Rembrandt’s “Aristotle With a Bust of Homer,” “one of the real icons of the museum,” says Adam Eaker in a phone interview. He’s the exhibition curator and assistant curator in the department of European paintings at The Met. When the museum acquired it at auction in 1961, he says, tens of thousands came to see its first installation, setting a record.

“It’s a masterpiece by Rembrandt—this towering figure [of Aristotle]—but it also has very intimate qualities,” Eaker says. “It’s a scene of this man lost in thought.”

In the painting, fourth-century B.C. Greek philosopher Aristotle rests his hand on a bust of the poet Homer, as thoughtfully and caringly as one would place a hand on an aging parent.

Aristotle shows trappings of success and fame, such as a gold chain with a medallion of his pupil Alexander the Great hanging on it.

Centuries before Aristotle, Homer had earned literary immortality with his works the “Iliad” and the “Odyssey.” Perhaps, Rembrandt is suggesting that Aristotle was seeking wisdom from his ancient predecessor for insights into his own life.

“Rembrandt shows us that there’s also an inner life beneath these trappings and a lot of questioning and even self-doubt,” Eaker says.

Rembrandt’s exact perspective is unknown. Maybe Aristotle was weighing his cultural influence against Homer’s. Maybe Aristotle was wondering whether he had left the world and his pupil Alexander the Great with proper instruction and direction, or maybe he was wondering if these external accolades mean anything at all. I could imagine Rembrandt himself pondering these questions about his own legacy.

What is clearly illustrated, however, is that art is not simply a depiction of the subject matter. Art embodies what’s not seen—the creator, the artist.

“I think a Rembrandt is about the sitter, but it’s also always about Rembrandt. It’s always about brushwork, craftsmanship,



By capturing humanity as he truly saw it, Rembrandt helps us see our own humanity.

the artist’s vision,” Eaker says.

Painting Imperfections

Especially with Rembrandt’s works, his paintings show not only his technical skill but also the master’s invisible qualities: his personality, perspective, concerns, and character.

The 17th century was considered the Dutch Golden Age of painting, and while Rembrandt is now one of its central figures, he did break from artistic trends at the time. The title of the exhibition, “In Praise of Painting,” comes from a public lecture in 1641 given by a minor Dutch painter, Philips Angel, who was celebrating the illusionistic qualities of Dutch painting.

One of Eaker’s favorite examples of this illusionistic style, in the exhibition, is Margareta Haverman’s “A Vase of Flowers.” He says, “You see drops of dew on the flowers. You see tiny little ants. The more that you look, the more detail you see.”

The hyperdetailing, and smooth, idealistic lines create an illusionistic quality. Rembrandt didn’t subscribe to this style and used larger, more noticeable, brushstrokes.

The Netherlands was a nation of traders, and the artists, including Rembrandt, were influenced by the Italian Renaissance since that period’s original works, or reprints, did make their way north. Compositional elements can be seen in Rembrandt’s works that mimic painters such as Raphael, for example.

But Rembrandt also broke from the idealism depicted in the Renaissance era and portrayed subjects, including himself, with the imperfections he saw. Since photographs don’t exist of the subjects, it’s impossible to tell if Rembrandt was, in fact, being realistic; but it at least appeared to be his intention.

Rembrandt’s self-portrait is a prime example illustrating his critical, realistic eye. Rembrandt is “building it up to an almost sculptural degree. He is pretty unsparing in conveying the signs of aging in his own face. You see heavy bags under his eyes, wrinkles, his graying curls,” Eaker says.

But the self-portrait suggests more. Rembrandt desired authenticity and honesty; he wasn’t afraid of his flaws. He sought universal truths with his tools of paint and brush. It might be one of the reasons Rembrandt stays relevant today.

By capturing humanity as he truly saw it, Rembrandt helps us see our own humanity. By seeing our good and bad, there’s room for growth. Essentially, Rembrandt’s art becomes a vehicle for inner growth—for the individual he was painting, for the maestro himself, and for us today.

J.H. White is an arts, culture, and men’s fashion journalist living in New York.

“Self-Portrait,” 1660, Rembrandt van Rijn. Oil on canvas. 31 5/8 inches by 26 1/2 inches. Bequest of Benjamin Altman, 1913.

“A Vase of Flowers,” 1716, by Margareta Haverman. Oil on wood. 31 1/4 inches by 23 3/4 inches. Purchase, 1871.

ALL PHOTOS BY THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK

POETRY

The Tide Is Turning for the Arts

Traditional poetry is making a comeback with the Society of Classical Poets



Euterpe is making her appearance through the Society of Classical Poets. “Euterpe, Muse of Poetry,” 1892, by Egide Godfried Guffens.

the sonnet, and the villanelle—and gave themselves over to free verse.

In making such drastic shifts, these modernists and postmodernists lost much of their audience. Other factors had a hand in this demise—shifts in technology, for example, and the explosion of visual entertainment—but in most instances, the poets and artists must share the blame for appealing to a limited number of connoisseurs. In the 1960s, for example, the public preferred the storytelling illustrations of Norman Rockwell to the abstract expressionism of Mark Rothko, the colloquialism and formal style of Robert Frost to the modernism of William Carlos Williams.

The Tide Is Turning

Since the close of the 20th century, the tide of postmodernism has turned somewhat in art and poetry. In regard to painting, here is but one example: Based on a true story, the movie “Local Color” tells of a Russian painter mentoring a young American art student.

This film caused a ruckus in the art world for its defense of representational painting. Employing what might euphemistically be called colorful language, the painter Nikolai Serov is an ardent proponent of artistic form who de-

spises abstractionism and postmodernism.

In poetry, too, a shift back toward tradition and form is taking place. Here in The Epoch Times, we have looked at William Baer and his fine collection of verse, “Formal Salutations,” which contains all manner of forms, rhythms, and rhyme. Baer’s work is particularly important for his portrayal of gritty characters, men and women who have seen better days, and for his love poems, one of which, “The Swimming Pool Float,” will remain with me to the end of my days.

Poems appear daily at The Society of Classical Poets.

But one poet does not a movement make. Time now to visit The Society of Classical Poets (classicalpoets.org).

Here is the mission statement of those who founded the Society:

The Society’s mission is to preserve humankind’s artistic traditions; to reestablish poetry as one of the most widely appreciated forms of literature, communi-

cation, and entertainment; to increase appreciation of centuries of rhyming or metered poetry; to support poets who apply classical techniques in modern poetry through publication and performance opportunities and awards; and to aid in language arts education that imbues high moral fiber and good character.

When we visit this website, we find that the men and women at the Society deliver the goods as promised. There are different contests and challenges, such as “write a square poem,” “compose a poem containing a line from Shakespeare,” and the Friends of the Falun Gong Poetry Contest.

Posted as well on this attractive site are essays on poetry and related matters, announcements regarding upcoming symposiums and events, invitations to poets to submit their work, resources for high school students, and articles and books on how to write poetry.

Best of all, of course, are the poems themselves.

In addition to poems about such topics as love, family, and nature, here we find sonnets about World War I, poems about the Notre Dame fire and the current state of Brexit, and verse by high school students like Victor Tyne

and Wandu Zhu.

These poems appear daily at The Society of Classical Poets. Here, for example, posted on May 18, are the opening lines to T.M. Moore’s “A Poem on Terrorism: Why Not?”

We shake our heads, and wonder, “Why?” aloud each time some speeding truck plows through a crowd, or grinning gunman gloats at blood and breath spilled and extinguished by his date with death; or when some faithless man, supposing life is little more than sex, discards his wife and children, showing not the least remorse; and when some jackboot bears a saint—or worse—we look the other way, or maybe pray and shrug, not knowing what to do or say.

The rest of Moore’s poem examines how we arrive at these “mind-boggling sadnesses,” and how and why we comply with those “who teach that life is meaningless.” In the opening lines of “Mother of Falun Gong,” Gleb Zavlanov, age 19 when he composed these lines, writes:

They said my mother would be back tomorrow,
They said her smile would still shine proudly here,
Her hand brush off the dreadful, bitter sorrow
That manifests itself within a tear,
But twenty years had faded like warm mists
That glide and winnow on a brackish lake
And yet, her awful absence still persists
And strives and strains to make my small heart break.

These and hundreds of other poems written in the centuries-old, classical style may be read on this site.

Robert Frost once famously remarked that writing free verse is like playing tennis without a net.

The poets, editors, and staff at The Society of Classical Poets clearly and wholeheartedly agree with him.

Jeff Minick has four children and a growing platoon of grandchildren. For 20 years, he taught history, literature, and Latin to seminars of homeschooled students in Asheville, North Carolina. Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, Virginia. See Jeff-Minick.com to follow his blog.

THEATER REVIEW

Love Might Just Conquer All

JUDD HOLLANDER

NEW YORK—Who knew there could be so much chemistry between two people brushing their teeth?

A fascinating look at the possibilities that love has to offer (but only if one is prepared to seize the opportunity) is now offered in the simply wonderful Broadway revival of Terrence McNally’s 1987 play, “Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune,” now at the Broadhurst Theatre.

A short-order cook in New York City, Johnny (Michael Shannon) is a relatively recent staff addition at the restaurant where Frankie (Audra McDonald) works as a waitress. After several weeks of growing interest between the two, Johnny asks her out. The date ends at Frankie’s one-room apartment amid some intense passion, and then Johnny announces that he’s ready to begin a life with her—one which includes marriage, children, and everything that comes with it.

Frankie, on the other hand, while hopeful for a second date, has absolutely no intention of considering anything further at this point.

Johnny is nothing if not persistent. His single-minded determination takes the commitment-wary Frankie completely off guard when he refuses to leave her apartment, despite her

insistence.

Yet Johnny’s efforts, which include verbal comebacks and unexpectedly romantic gestures, slowly allow Frankie to realize that her own feelings for him are far deeper than she first thought—especially after an overture that involves the “most beautiful music ever written.”

A not always gentle look at the idea of finding love in the most unexpected of places, “Frankie and Johnny” also points out the dangers of getting to a place in life where one is unable to let one’s guard down with anyone. In an especially interesting twist, it slowly becomes obvious that these two people have far more in common than they first realized—from where they were born and went to school to each having suffered through failed relationships. Of course, even for those meant to be together, a question debated for most of the play, the path to true love never runs smooth.

McNally very smartly flips the action in the second act; so while Johnny was the one going after what he wants when the play begins, it is Frankie who takes control of the narrative after intermission. Her own wants and needs—which include having a Western omelet—force the multisyllabic, Shakespeare-quoting Johnny to

‘Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune’

Broadhurst Theatre
235 W. 44th St.,
New York

Tickets
212-239-6200 or
Telecharge.com

Running Time
2 hours, 20 minutes
(one intermission)

Closes
Aug. 25



Audra McDonald and Michael Shannon in “Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune.”

not merely put her on a pedestal but also be prepared to share everything with her on equal terms.

McDonald is superb as Frankie. A woman who has carried around a lot of pain for a long time, she finds that she simply can’t dismiss Johnny just because it would be the easier thing to do. The actress presents Frankie as a woman slowly coming to believe in not only the possibility of falling in love, but also realizing that it is OK to let someone take care of you from time to time. She leaves no doubt that she will demand just as much from Johnny as he seeks from her.

Shannon is perfect as Johnny. A somewhat brusque fellow, with both a dictionary and a copy of Shakespeare in his locker at work, he is determined to stick with what he is sure is the best

thing that’s ever happened to him. Neither is he about to let Frankie walk away—at least not without a fight. As he says at one point, “My life was happening to me. Now I’m going to make it happen.”

In lesser hands, Johnny’s actions early on might be seen as somewhat creepy today. Fortunately, McDonald’s and Shannon’s performances, combined with the completely flawless direction of Arin Arbus, quickly erase any such possibility. We have no doubt about Johnny’s motives.

The production works on every level. The creative team works seamlessly to bring the story and characters brilliantly to life. Ricardo Hernandez’s set of Frankie’s one-room apartment offers a nice lived-in look, while the efforts of lighting designer Natasha Katz and sound designer Nevin Steinberg add subtle but important depth to the story. Also deserving of mention is the work of intimacy and fight director Claire Warden.

“Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune” (the last part of the title, a reference to a piece of music by composer Claude Debussy) is a touching tale of two lonely people who have a chance to become something more. If you don’t make plans to see this show and find out just what happens on their journey, you’ll miss something very special.

Judd Hollander is a reviewer for Stagebuzz.com and a member of the Drama Desk and the Outer Critics Circle. He can be reached at bnchpeep@aol.com

BOOK REVIEW

Honoring the Oldest Regiment in US History

LINDA WIEGENFELD

Arlington National Cemetery is well-known as the final resting place for fallen U.S. soldiers. Less famous is the elite unit, The Old Guard, which performs the funerals for our military heroes.

The Old Guard is the nickname for the Third U.S. Infantry Regiment, the oldest active-duty infantry unit in the Army. It dates back to 1784, which makes it older than the Constitution.

Senator Tom Cotton, a Republican from Arkansas, has written a book about this regiment in which he served from 2007 to 2008: “Sacred Duty: A Soldier’s Tour at Arlington National Cemetery.”

This first-rate, stirring volume has much to offer the reader by way of highlighting history and its portrayal of excellence and patriotism. These aspects especially moved me.

History Highlights

This book looks at a rarely acknowledged part of American history and is one that should not be overlooked. Cotton traces the history of The Old Guard from its founding era: The colonists distrusted standing armies after fighting with the British in the French and Indian War (1754–1763). Thus, after the British defeat at the Battle of Yorktown (1781) in the Revolutionary War, the Continental Congress essentially disbanded the Continental Army.

Later, though, Congress realized that it had cut too deeply and had left the country unprotected. It created a single regiment of infantry, the Third Infantry, to provide the new nation with a small cadre of professional soldiers.

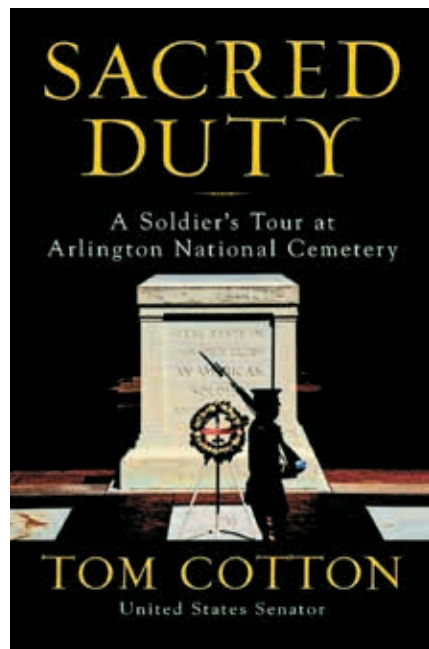
As the nation’s frontier moved westward, so did the Third Infantry. By early 1846, war with Mexico seemed inevitable. The United States had annexed Texas, which Mexico viewed as a breakaway province. When America won the ensuing conflict, Gen. Winfield Scott anointed the regiment with its unique name—The Old Guard—during a victory parade in Mexico City.

The regiment then fought in the Civil War on the Union side, seeing two years of brutal fighting. In fact, the North and the South killed each other on such a massive scale that a farm across the river from the capital became the graveyard for the fallen. That is how our national cemetery began.

The Old Guard also continued to play a supporting role during the world wars. As it had since the Revolutionary War, the Army remained very small during times of peace. Thus, when both world wars required millions of new recruits, trained specifically for those wars, the only troops in active service as the wars approached were The Old Guard; it was often assigned to conduct training or perform essential early missions.

In Modern Times

Since World War II, The Old Guard has served as the official Army Honor Guard and escort



‘Sacred Duty: A Soldier’s Tour at Arlington National Cemetery’

Tom Cotton
William Morrow
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to the president. In that capacity, Third Infantry soldiers are responsible for conducting military ceremonies in the Washington, D.C., area.

The most visible job of The Old Guard today is guarding the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. To many Americans, the Tomb guards represent the entirety of The Old Guard. But this is not true.

The Tomb Platoon is the most specialized job of the regiment. While the majority of Old Guard soldiers train for and perform a variety of funerals and ceremonies, Tomb guards have only that one mission.

Likewise, no Old Guard soldier guards the Tomb except for the Tomb guards. This separateness, along with their fame, creates a mystique about these sentinels and the Tomb as a place of great significance.

Excellence Is in the Details

“Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.” This quote attributed to Aristotle or Will Durant, depending on your source, sums up nicely the philosophy of the soldiers in The Old Guard. In this day and age, it seems that standards in many areas are being lowered. Too often we settle for mediocrity and do not maximize our potential. How refreshing to read a book about strong and disciplined soldiers.

Just as every soldier wants to do right by his battle buddies, The Old Guard wants to give the soldiers’ families a moment of perfection to remember. Cotton goes into detail to illustrate the remarkable effort that The Old Guard puts into making each funeral a superb achievement.

Strong attention is paid to the minutest aspect of the regiment’s assignments, such as exact marching and how one must stand ramrod-still without bending knees or wiggling toes in order to maintain a ceremonial composure for 75 minutes.

Old Guard companies have industrial-quality press machines in their barracks to achieve razor-sharp pant creases. Uniform insignia is measured out to one-sixty-fourth of an inch. To avoid wrinkles, there is no sitting down in uniform between funerals. This is all done to maintain performance level for what is otherwise a repetitive task.

Every Old Guard soldier must pass a battery of tests to be certified to march in ceremonies and to perform funerals in Arlington National Cemetery.

Cotton says that The Old Guard represents to the public what is best in our military, which itself represents what is best in America as a nation.

Patriotism

“Sacred Duty” is most of all a story of patriotism. In politically divided times, the military remains the nation’s most respected institution. On the fields of Arlington, Americans can set aside their differences and watch the honor bestowed on soldiers in precise and exacting ceremonies. The Old Guard’s work shows love and respect for the soldiers who fought for the United States, and also for those they have left behind.

Cotton ends his book by sharing a story told to him by Sergeant Major Dailey. Dailey told Cotton that he had once explained the mission of The Old Guard to a foreign military leader. In response, the leader replied, “Now I know why your soldiers fight so hard. You take better care of your dead than we do of our living.”

Linda Wiegenfeld is a retired teacher with 45 years’ experience teaching children. She would love to see this inspirational book by Tom Cotton adapted for children. She can be reached for comments or suggestions at LWiegenfeld@aol.com



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George Washington confesses to his father, Augustine Washington, in an illustration from a circa 1846 engraving.

arms, admiring his bravery and honesty. “Such an act of heroism in my son is worth more than a thousand trees, though blossomed with silver, and their fruits of purest gold,” he says.

In the book, Weems uses the cherry tree story to illustrate the importance of telling the truth, no matter the consequence. Before he tells the story, he notes that parents have the role of guardian angels. He uses Washington’s father to illustrate the point and how parents should

be responsible for their children’s character and behavior. In one such example, George’s father tells George about how some parents beat their child for every little fault, so much so that the “little terrified creature slips out a lie! just to escape the rod.”

For over 200 years, this story, demonstrating the integrity of our first president, has been passed down through the generations.

The story was published in 1806, seven years after Washington

desired. The American people wanted to hear more about Washington; they knew of his famous public endeavors, but little was known about his private life. Weems delivered this tale, true or not, and the public treasured its moral.

Not only does the tale show Washington’s good character as a child, but it reminds us to value honesty—that honesty really is the best policy. Washington showed these traits in the way that he led, as our forefather and our nation’s “Guardian Angel”: “I hope I shall always possess firmness and virtue enough to maintain (what I consider the most enviable of all titles) the character of an honest man,” George Washington to Alexander Hamilton on Aug. 28, 1788.

ESSENCE OF CHINA



Zhang Pan Upholds His Honor as Upright as Bamboo

JOYCE LO

The ancient Chinese paid high importance to their reputation and moral conduct. As a famous Chinese saying goes, “A gentleman upholds his honor as upright as bamboo,” and he never bends even in the face of death.

Here is the story of one such gentleman.

Zhang Pan was the governor of Jiaozhi, a region in the northern part of Vietnam today, who lived during the Eastern Han Dynasty (A.D. 25–220). Zhang was unjustly imprisoned after being framed by Governor Du Shang of Jingzhou, a region in southern China.

Zhang appealed his sentence, but before his appeal process could play out, the emperor granted a general amnesty and Zhang was released along with all of the other prisoners.

The other prisoners all left, one after another, except for Zhang Pan. Zhang held onto his chains, with no intention of leaving.

The prison warden said to him: “Governor Zhang, the amnesty also applies to you. You are free to go.”

However, Zhang Pan would not budge.

The judge came to visit him to urge him to have his chains unlocked, but Zhang refused.

The judge asked: “The grace of the emperor is immense, and everyone should benefit from it. Why do you refuse?”

Zhang said: “I am innocent and will not leave until my reputation is restored and justice is served.”

With that, he explained to the judge the circumstances around his imprisonment.

“Thieves from Jingzhou were spreading havoc across Jiaozhi, and when I took charge to eliminate them, by killing their leader, they dispersed and returned to Jingzhou. Du Shang, the governor of Jingzhou, was afraid that I would report the case to the emperor and cause him to be reprimanded, so he framed me,” Zhang said.

“I was wronged by Du Shang and imprisoned. There is truth to be clarified, and justice to be done. I did nothing wrong, thus I have no need to be pardoned. If I accept a pardon, I would bear this humiliation for the rest of my life, as a bad governor when alive and an evil spirit after death,” Zhang continued.

Zhang requested that the judge summon Du Shang to face the facts and to set the record straight. “Unless my name is cleared, I would rather be buried here than go free,” Zhang said with determination.

The judge reported the case to the emperor, who ordered Du Shang to appear in court. There, Du Shang admitted his guilt. However, in the end, he was pardoned due to his former merits.

As for Zhang Pan, who was adamant that he would not compromise, he finally walked out of jail with his head held high.

The Unbiased Recommendations of Qi Xi

ZHU LI

Impartiality is an important moral ideal, whereby one refrains from giving preferential treatment to anyone but rather treats everyone fairly and justly. It requires putting aside personal interests and biases, such as feelings for friends and family, negativity toward opponents and even enemies, or prejudice in favor of or against anyone based on background, social standing, or other characteristics.

This theme is portrayed in a story from ancient China about a man named Qi Xi, who was a senior officer of the state of Jin during the Spring and Autumn Period (771–476 B.C.).

One version of the story is found in “Lushi Chunqiu,” an encyclopedic Chinese classic text from around 239 B.C. The classic text is also known as “The Annals of Lu Buwei.” Lu was the prime minister of the state of Qin at the time.

Qi Xi, also called Qi Huangyang (620–545 B.C.), was a selfless, broad-minded person who handled matters in a fair and just manner.

As the story goes, when Qi Xi recommended candidates for public service, his only desire was to have the best person appointed, regardless of any personal relationship he had with that individual.

One day, Duke Ping of Jin asked Qi Xi: “Nanyang is without a county magistrate. Who would be suitable for this post?”

Qi Xi replied, “Xie Hu would be suitable.”

The duke was surprised. He asked: “Isn’t Xie Hu your enemy?”

Qi Xi simply said, “Your Highness asked who would be suitable for this position, not who my enemy is.”

“Excellent,” Duke Ping said. He indeed appointed Xie Hu as county magistrate of Nanyang. As it turned out, Xie Hu did an excellent job, and the people all praise him.

Sometime later, Duke Ping again consulted Qi Xi. “The state is without a high-ranking army officer in the capital. Who would be suitable?”

Qi Xi replied, “Qi Wu.”

The duke was again surprised. He asked: “Isn’t Qi Wu your own son?”

Qi Xi said, “Your Highness asked who is suitable, not who my son is.”

“Excellent,” Duke Ping said. He went ahead and appointed Qi Wu to the post. Again, Qi Wu did an excellent job and received praise from everyone.

When Confucius learned of this, he said to his students: “Qi Xi’s selections were indeed excellent! When recommending someone from the outside, he did not avoid his own enemy. When recommending someone from the inside, he did not avoid his own son.”

Only a person of outstanding merit can make such recommendations. Qi Xi, therefore, is someone who is absolutely impartial, unselfish, fair, and just.

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