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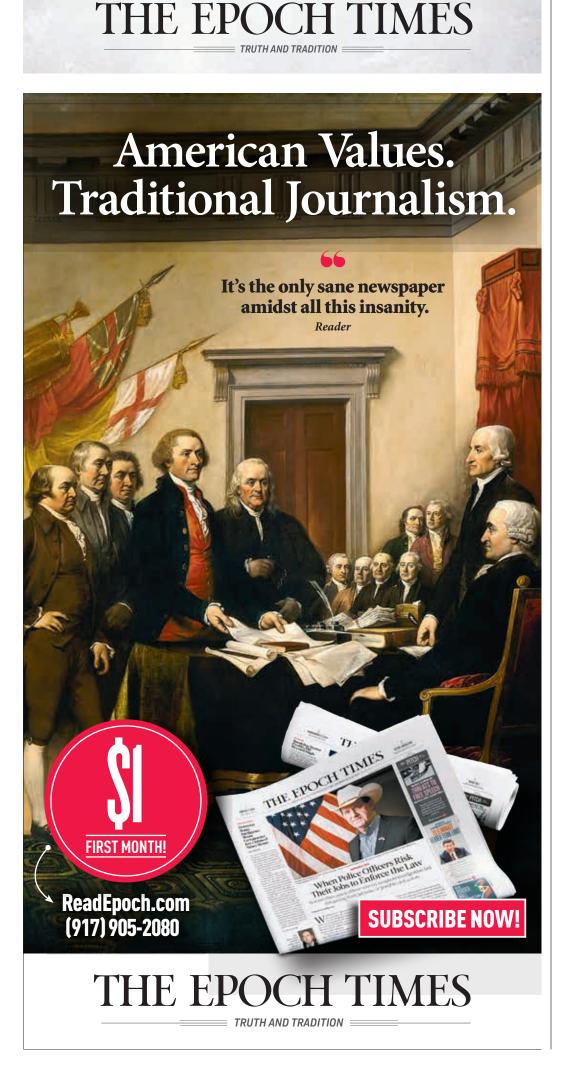


Marie Leszczynska, the queen of France, 1725, by Alexis-Simon Belle. Oil on canvas. National Museum of the Palace of Versailles and the Trianon, Versailles.

The Little-Known Queen

With the Greatest Devotion...4

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LITERATURE

Death, Be Not Proud:



Louisa May Alcott, the author of "Little Women," wrote one of the most heartrending death scenes in all of English literature. In the story, based on her own life, she describes the death of her dear sister Beth.

erend F. Washington Jarvis fools gladly. ton's Roxbury Latin School, career?" she asked Alington. ous existence in North America. During this time, Jarvis delivered a series of addresses to the student body, the best of which were collected in "With Love and Prayers: A Headmaster Speaks to the Next Generation." For a number of years, I taught "With Love and Prayers" to high schoolers and found that both parents and students valued the book for its wisdom, wit, and moral lessons.

In his chapter "The Spiritual Dimension," Jarvis relates this anecdote to the young men in his charge:

The celebrated headmaster of Eton Col-

or over three decades, Rev- by an aggressive mother. He did not suffer

served as headmaster of Bos- "Are you preparing Henry for a political

"Well, for a professional career? "No," he replied.

"For a business career, then?"

"No," he repeated. "Well, in a word, Dr. Alington, what are you here at Eton preparing Henry for?"

"In a word, madam? Death." As Jarvis then points out, the principal mission of Roxbury Latin is to prepare its students for life. "And," he goes on, "the starting point of that preparation is the

reality that life is short and ends in death." These few lines bring much to consider. Do we aim at getting our young people into "good" schools while neglecting to



Sigrid Undset as a girl. The Noble Prize-winning novelist wrote a trilogy called "Kristen Lavransdatter."

Literary Lessons on Death and Dying

instill in them the classical virtues? Do we recognize that "life is short and ends in death"? If so, what outlook on the world should such a truth inculcate?

Before seeking answers to these questions, we must recognize that our ancestors were more familiar with death than we moderns. They lived among the sick and dying in ways we do not, and were forced to deal with circumstances that today are the domain of our health professionals. Victorian poetry, for example, is a thicket of verse about death and dying.

We are more distant from the dying. Low infant mortality rates have thankfully removed many of us from witnessing those tragedies, and though a majority of Americans want to die at home, only 20 percent do so.

Lacking this intimacy with death of earlier generations, we may, if we wish greater familiarity, turn to literature, Victorian or otherwise. Stories and poems can give us intimate portraits of the hope and the despair, the joy and the sorrow, the courage and fear of the dying and those who surround them.

Let's look at four novels in which the characters exit this earth in dramatically different ways. Each of them offers a lesson on death.

'The Death of Ivan Ilyich'

In "The Death of Ivan Ilyich," Leo Tolstoy's novella and perhaps the greatest of all fictional meditations on the debt we owe to nature, Ivan Ilyich lies on his

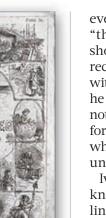
Tolstoy reminds us that even on our deathbed. we may yet clear our conscience.

deathbed wondering whether he has lived a good life.

by Ilya Repin. Oil on canvas. As doubts fill him, and as death creeps



Portrait of Leo Tolstoy, 1887,



The cover of the serial "A Tale of Two Cities" by Charles Dickens. Vol. V,

should have been, this could still be rectified." In his last hours, he is flooded with sorrow and pity for the son and wife he has neglected, and though they cannot understand him when he begs their forgiveness, he dies "knowing that He whose understanding mattered would understand." Ivan Ilyich goes to his grave in peace,

knowing the truth of Katharine Tynan's lines from "The Great Mercy": "Betwixt the saddle and the ground/was mercy sought and mercy found."

Here Tolstoy reminds us that even on our deathbed, we may yet clear our conscience and set right those things that we have done or failed to do.

'Kristin Lavransdatter'

In Sigrid Undset's trilogy of medieval Norway, "Kristin Lavransdatter," we discover the importance of ritual in death. The Christian injunction "To bury the dead" means more than tumbling a corpse into a grave, covering it over with earth, and moving on. During the long death of Kristin's father, Lavrans, the neighbors visit, the priest performs the last rites, a vigil is held after Lavrans breathes his last, and later there is a feast to celebrate his

From Kristin and her kin, we moderns might learn once again how to "bury the dead." More and more, I hear of people and know a few of them who when a loved one dies, conduct no ritual of passage, no funeral, no memorial service. An obituary may appear in the paper, or not, but otherwise the survivors put the deceased into the grave or columbarium without ceremony.

With this practice, we fail to realize that we have cheated ourselves of the comfort of a formal farewell and have tarnished our humanity in the bargain.

'A Tale of Two Cities'

In "A Tale of Two Cities," Charles Dickens puts Sydney Carton, a barrister, an alco-

ever closer, he suddenly realizes that holic, and a cynic, onto the platform of "though his life had not been what it a guillotine after Carton nobly takes the place of another man sentenced to die by execution. Carton's thoughts before the fall of the blade bring him solace: "It is a far, far better thing I do than I have ever done; it is a far, far better rest that I go to than I have ever known."

> From Carton, we receive a lesson in courage when faced with death.

'Little Women'

Of course, as Louisa May Alcott notes in "Little Women," "Seldom except in books do the dying utter memorable words, see visions, or depart with beatified countenances ..."

In describing the passing of young Beth March, whose "end comes as naturally and simply as sleep," Alcott shows her readers that, like Sydney Carton, those who die possess the power to bequeath gifts to the living. Before she slips into the shadows, Beth reads some lines written by her beloved sister Jo. And she realizes that her illness and impending death have caused Jo, her caretaker, to grow and mature, and to take from her lessons in bravery and her "cheerful, uncomplaining spirit in its prison-house of pain.'

Like in these novels, the loved ones with whom I have sat while they closed their eyes and faded away have given me instruction. Perhaps the best of these teachers was my mother, who died from cancer 30 years ago. In her final lesson-perhaps her greatest lesson-she taught me and my brothers and sisters by way of example how to die with grace and courage.

If I find myself in my mother's circumstances, with time to bid goodbye to those I love, and if I possess even half of her strength, I will die a fortunate man.

> Jeff Minick has four children and a growing platoon of grandchildren. For 20 years, he taught history, literature, and Latin to seminars of homeschooling students in Asheville, N.C. Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, Va. See JeffMinick.com to follow his blog.



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"The Chinese Chamber" paintings, 1761, by Marie Leszczynska, Henri-Philippe-Bon Coqueret, Jean-Martial Frédou, Jean-Philippe de La Roche, Jean-Louis Prévost, under the direction of Étienne Jeaurat, Oil on canvas. National Museum of the Palace of Versailles and the Trianon, Versailles.

Marie Leszczynska, the queen of France, and the Dauphin Louis Ferdinand, circa 1730, by Alexis-Simon Belle. Oil on canvas. National Museum of the Palace of Versailles and the Trianon, Versailles.



FINE ARTS

The Little-Known Queen With the Greatest Devotion

Marie Leszczynska and the Palace of Versailles

LORRAINE FERRIER

Loyal and devout, the Polish queen of France, Marie Leszczynska (1703–1768), was the longest reigning queen at Versailles, spending more than 42 years leading France. She made quite an impact–not politically, as she was left out of politics, but on the life of the people.

Leading by example, she was unconditionally devoted to her husband, King Louis XV; her children; and the people of France. She was just as devoted to her faith; Marie attended Mass twice a day and confession once a day.

"By her own good example, she turned a dissolute court into one devoted to religious observance, without detracting from its gaiety or majesty," Charles Jean-François Hénault (1685–1770) wrote in his memoirs. Hénault, the president of the Parliament of Paris, was Marie's adviser and manager.

Every afternoon, after performing her royal duties at the court, Marie would retire to her private apartments, where she kept company with a small circle of family and close confidants, including writers, philosophers, and

The queen's vast apartments consisted of an oratory where she practiced her private devotion, the Green Gallery, the Bath Chamber, the Rest Chamber, and even the Poets' Chamber. The Poets' Chamber was an "extremely small space," where Marie stored her poetry collection, wrote Charles-Philippe d'Albert, the Duke of Luynes, in his memoirs.

The apartments spilled out onto a number of elegant terraces and balconies hung with garlands of flowers. Marie also enjoyed gardens containing lead sculptures and a rockery framing Monseigneur's courtyard, a small spot named after Louis XIV and Marie Thérèse's son.

These private apartments were her sanctuary. It was within these confines that she would read, rest, pray, or work on a needlepoint or painting. Despite the fact that her father, the king of Poland, was dethroned, Marie was educated as a princess, learning languages, dancing, singing, musical instruments, painting, and more. In the Green Gallery, she would draw, paint, play music, and print using her own printing

A selection of 50 paintings, some



Louis XV, the king of France, circa 1728, by an unknown artist. Oil on canvas. National Museum of the Palace of Versailles and the Trianon, Versailles.

art is on display as part of an exhibition at Versailles, "The Taste of Marie Leszczynska: Marie Leszczynska, an Unknown Queen," that opened on April 16 and runs until spring 2020. The exhibition was curated by Gwenola Firmin and Marieboth head curators at the National Museum of the Palace of Versailles and the Trianon, and they were assisted by Vincent Bastien, doctor of art history. Much of the art featured in the exhibition reflects Marie's love for her family, God, and beauty.

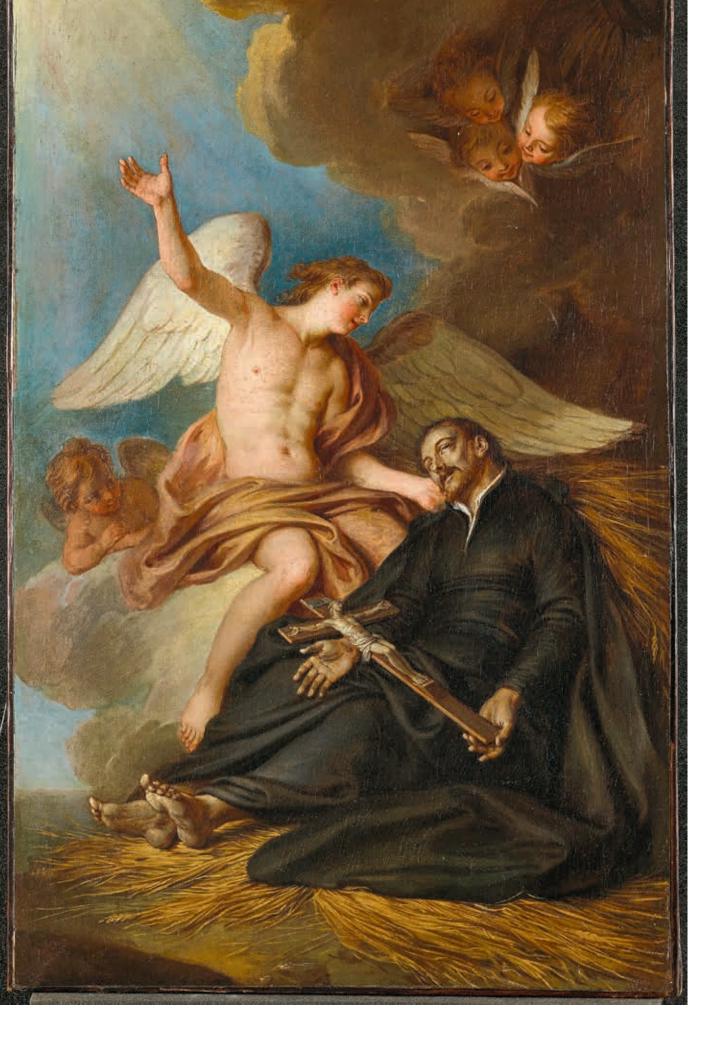
Family Portraits

Many of the paintings throughout Marie's apartments were of her 10 children, all born between 1727 and 1737. When the first boy, the Dauphin Louis Ferdinand, was born, Marie commissioned Alexis-Simon Belle (1674–1734) to paint his portrait. The painting was hung in Marie's Bath Chamber. She was so fond of it that she commissioned Belle again, with his mother. On the table to his but this time to paint her with the right are the king's crown, scepter,

The painting of Marie and her son which is a French type of scepter with

by the queen herself, and other Louis Ferdinand was likely painted just a year after the dauphin's birth. In the painting, Marie is sitting upright and poised, embodying the "elegant spirit" that Madame Campan said Marie had in her youth. Madame Campan was a reader for Marie's younger daughters. Diamonds are woven throughout Ma-Laure de Rochebrune, who are rie's hair, echoing the jewels that are set in what looks like elaborate metallic embroidery on her gold dress. She gently holds her son's hand. The dauphin, still only a babe, mirrors his mother's facial expression with an air of royalty that belies his tender age. Perhaps he knows his fate. The gold crown on the chaise lounge certainly signals what his future will be. He sits on a cloak, fur-lined and with a fleur-de-lis pattern, which he will wear once he is king.

Similar symbols and finery can be seen in the portrait of the dauphin's father, Louis XV (1710–1774), the king of France, painted around 1728 by an unknown artist. Here, King Louis wears the collar of the Order of the Holy Spirit, and the fleur-de-lis cloak that the dauphin sat on in the portrait and Charlemagne's Hand of Justice,



(Left) "The Death of Saint Francis Xavier," 1749, by Charles-Antoine Coypel. Oil on canvas. National Museum of the Palace of Versailles and the Trianon, Versailles.

ALL PHOTOS BY CHRISTOPHE FOUIN/PALACE OF VERSAILLES (RMN-GP

(Below) Marie Leszczynska, the queen of France, 1748, by Jean-Marc Nattier. Oil on canvas. National Museum of the Palace of Versailles and the Trianon, Versailles.





its finial showing the hand of God in a gesture of blessing.

Queen Marie's Practice of Art Marie was not naturally gifted at drawing, according to her friend the Duke of Luynes. But she could paint quite well. She "draws much amusement from it," he wrote.

Jean-Baptiste Oudry (1686–1755) was one of Marie's favorite painters. She copied one of his paintings that her son, the dauphin, had commissioned. On her canvas "A Farm, After Jean-Baptiste Oudry," a serene scene shows a bountiful harvest and hardworking farm hands in a rural landscape. It is thought that waiting, the Comtesse de Noailles, Étienne Jeaurat, one of the king's court painters, assisted her in its execution. Jeaurat mentored the queen

in painting for a period of 15 years. In 1761, Marie and five of the painters who worked on the king's state apartments painted a series of chinoiserie canvases called "The Chinese Chamber." The series is painted from the bird's-eye view as per the Chinese style, with exquisite detailing of the architecture, dress, and landscape. Various scenes are shown, such as a tea ceremony, evangelism by Jesuits, and a fair at Nankin.

Versailles acquired "The Chinese Chamber" paintings in 2018. The paintings had been in the care of the family of the queen's lady-insince the queen bequeathed the paintings to her in 1768.

Many of the paintings throughout Marie's apartments were of her 10 children.

Marie had a strong desire to relieve the suffering of others. She was reported to have said "I have no need

for dresses; the poor do not even have shirts." She supported hospices, clinics, and charitable foundations, dedicating herself to helping those in need. She founded a convent in Versailles for educating poor girls, which was inaugurated after her death.

Saint Francis Xavier and Death

Marie's Christian faith featured strongly in her apartments, in the books she read, and also the art she consumed.

She favored themes and stories about the early Christian martyrs and Jesuits. At the time, Jesuits were actively being expelled from France.

Marie was particularly interested in St. Francis Xavier. The Jesuit had spent time in India and was on route to mainland China in 1552 to evangelize, but before he could do so, he passed away on Sangchuan Island, off the coast of Guangdong. She commissioned "The Death of Saint Francis Xavier," painted in 1749 by Charles-Antoine Coypel (1694-1752), for private devotion.

The dark tones of St. Francis's lifeless body on the earth almost divides the painting in half: The darkness of death is met by the divine light of the angels beckoning and welcoming the Jesuit to heaven.



"A Farm, After Jean-Baptiste Oudry," 1753, by Marie Leszczynska. Oil on canvas. National Museum of the Palace of Versailles and the Trianon, Versailles.

hounded out

Joseph S. Salemi, professor

at New York University

and Hunter College

(Left) Joseph S. Salemi

for the Society of Classi-

Poets David E. Müller,

cal Poets. (Bottom) (L-R)

Reid McGrath, and Daniel

Devine at the symposium.

(Right) Michael Maibach.

One cannot

speak of poetry

and neglect to

David E. Müller, poet

speak of beauty.

speaking at the symposium

of a poetry

workshop.

James Sale speaking at the symposium for the Society of Classical Poets.

The Rebirth of Poetry Is Here

The Society of Classical Poets holds its first symposium

SOCIETY OF CLASSICAL POETS

EW YORK–A growing movement is calling **Anyone with** for the return of meter and rhyme in poetry strongly in a bid to bring the once widely popular art form back to the mainstream. The nonprofit expressed Society of Classical Poets (SCP) held a symposium at the Princeton Club of New York conservative in Manhattan on June 17. views will be "We say that rhyme and meter are the key to

bringing poetry out of the narrow halls of academia and making it a widely loved art form once again," said Evan Mantyk, president of the society, in opening remarks at the symposium. He says that poets using rhyme and meter have been ridiculed by their free-verse peers, who often pigeonhole rhyming poetry as poorly written.

"You cannot categorically label our poetry 'doggerel' and write us off," Mantyk stated



The 'Deadly Enemy of Real Poetry' Leading British poet James Sale questioned the recent announcement of the appointment of Simon Armitage as the UK Poet Laureate in May.

"Simon Armitage said that poets should be writing about climate change. What does that tell you? About the poet, about the nature of the appointment?" he asked.

Sale performs his poetry in London and the South of England, and he has a long history in the poetry field. Stretching back to the 1980s, he has run poetry and writing workshops for young students and adults. He also has organized major poetry events, including Poetry Carnival UK in 1985, which attracted an audience of 4,000 people.

"Who or what is the deadly enemy of real poetry? Like a hydra, it has many heads, many names-postmodernism, for example, communism for another, but the key one is 'progress.' Progress of course does not mean progress; it means regress. It's the 'newspeak' of George Orwell," Sale said.

"We at the SCP want to counter these tendencies, these beliefs in progress, and all their formless ugliness," he continued. We want to re-establish the importance of form, the centrality of the imagination and its ability to bring real beauty into our world. To develop the Muse means an openness to

reality, an ability to live with ambiguity, and what Keats called negative capability."

The Problems With Mainstream Poetry

Professor Joseph S. Salemi, a legend in the formalist community, talked about the problems with mainstream poetry today.

Salemi edits the journal Trinacria, wrote for The Pennsylvania Review, and now writes at the website Expansive Poetry Online. He is a professor at New York University and Hunter College, and is a native New Yorker raised in Queens. "Here are persons presuming to write and publish literature, but who have an imperfect grasp of their own language. It's bad enough that much contemporary poetry since Allen Ginsberg has been 'nihilistic free verse oral diarrhea,' as the poet William Childress describes it. But that its creators can't even put it into coherent English? That's really disgraceful," Salemi stated.

He pointed out the strong liberal bias that has taken over mainstream poetry.

"Anyone with strongly expressed conservative views will be hounded out of a poetry workshop or asked to leave an online discussion group, and his work will be reflexively rejected if he submits it to a mainstream magazine. This is real, this is actual, this is happening right now, today. The world of modernist poetry has turned as politically rigid and uncompromising as the old Soviet Central Committee. As the poet Joseph Charles MacKenzie once very aptly said, 'poetry has become the eunuch of the left." Salemi stated.

The Beauty and Power of Classical Poetry Since its founding in 2012, the Society of Classical Poets has quickly grown, today having millions of online readers every year, members around the world, an annual print journal, multiple yearly contests, a new workshop, and educational materials and resources. Readers and poets themselves find something instantly recognizable and valuable in

well-written and thoughtful classical poetry. "Classical poems raise our sights, deepen our thinking, elevate our thoughts, clarify our purpose, give meaning to events and relationships," said symposium speaker Michael Charles Maibach, managing director of the James Wilson Institute, a law and education nonprofit based in Washington. "A poem in your hand, brief and understandable, can make more sense of this world and our lives than a library of books,"

The symposium also demonstrated how classical poetry gives poets a way to speak clearly and powerfully on pressing events of the day that are meaningful to readers in their communities and throughout the world. Young Indiana-based attorney Adam Sedia read his award-winning poetry exposing the negative effects of communism around

the world. Poignantly, he called attention to

atrocities taking place today under communism, including the forced harvesting of organs from innocent prisoners of conscience. His poem directed at Chinese Communist Party Chairman Xi Jinping included:

Do you not hear them, Chairman Xi? Victims tied for the surgeon's blade, Their final shrieks of agony, Their hearts carved out and iced for trade? Hear them, hear them, Chairman Xi!

Davey Talbot of the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation wrote to the symposium, stating: "Congratulations, Mr. Sedia, on your fine poems ... Their words carry the weight that ten times their number would in prose. How staunchly in contrast these poems

are to Neruda's disgusting homages to Stalin . Bookshop owners in Hong Kong who sold books with content along the lines of Mr. Sedia's have been, for the past decade or so, 'disappeared' to the mainland. It is a horrible fate to be 'disappeared' by the Chinese Communist Party ... I applaud Mr. Sedia and The Society of Classical Poets. Well done and keep on." The symposium was sponsored by the James

Wilson Institute and the National Civic Art

Reading in Bryant Park

Earlier on the day of the symposium, poets Theresa Rodriguez, James Sale, Mark Stone, and James B. Nicola held a reading of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven" and other great American works, as well as their own poetry, for a crowd of listeners and passersby in front of the William Cullen Bryant Memorial in Midtown Manhattan's storied Bryant Park. Nicola read Robert Frost's "The Road Not Taken," Rodriguez read Edna St. Vincent Millay's "What Lips My Lips Have Kissed, and Where, and Why," Stone read "The Arctic Lover" by William Cullen Bryant, and Sale read "Triad" by Adelaide Crapsey.

Sale, the moderator, commented on the Bryant Park event with a quote from Frost's poem: "In doing the reading, '... that has made all the difference'!"





Classical poems raise our sights, deepen our thinking, elevate our thoughts, clarify our purpose, give meaning to events and relationships.

Michael Charles Maibach, managing director of the James Wilson Institute

Young Poets Rising

Young and upcoming poets David E. Müller, Reid McGrath, and Daniel Devine attended

"A positively splendid evening," Müller said. In prepared remarks, Müller shared some of his views on classical poetry:

One cannot speak of poetry and neglect to speak of beauty. It is beauty that elates the soul upon witnessing it, to be found, in part, in poetry with the harmonious marriage between the full majesty of a verse's respective language and the fluidity of its execution. In this respect, we find perhaps the cardinal reason that formalist, or better, classical poetry remains as what can still strike astounding awe into even passive readers. It is awe-inspiring precisely because it is beautiful, and the skill or care to cultivate so exceptional that one can only experience an unparalleled joy in consuming it.

All the same, however, it is certainly possible to have a string of numbers and rhymes and have still no poetry. One could exhibit a poem deprived of any message or meaning and still be praised as a pure exercise of language; or likewise, a verse in broken, clashing, and disordered stanzas, but overflowing still with great intention and great pathos. Yet in both demonstrations, we shall say-we shall confess-there is something lacking. To say that either of the values of meter and rhyme-the foundations of poetry by all reason-are sufficient in and of themselves, is as much a folly as to dismiss them altogether.

This article is republished with permission from the Society of Classical Poets website. **FILM REVIEW**

A Poignant Recounting of an Understated Hero

IAN KANE

his year of 2019 marks the 50th anniversary of the seminal Apollo 11 mission. As such, there is a veritable torrent of film and TV offerings that are covering this milestone of human history, including PBS's "Chasing the Moon" and NEON's "Apollo 11."

The new biography by director David Fairhead ("Spitfire," "Mercury 13"), "Armstrong," humanizes ace astronaut Neil Armstrong and stands in stark contrast to Damien Chazelle's "First Man," which debuted last year. Whereas the latter focused more on the usual family breakup drama that the film industry seems to relish, Fairhead's film pays homage to a man whose life encapsulates the words "humble hero."

It takes a much more personal and humanistic approach to Armstrong's life, fleshing out many of the details both before and after the iconic mission.

The Times, the Sacrifices

Through Harrison Ford's excellent narration, the film recounts the Space Race, which began in the mid-1950s between the United States and the Soviet Union. This Cold War competition—to see who would be the first to achieve spaceflight-was itself preceded by the post-World War II nuclear arms race, a frantic period of missile production that the two rivals engaged in.

There are some similarities between this film and another popular doc piece, director Todd Douglas Miller's "Apollo 11." However, "Armstrong" chronicles the trials and tribulations of the astronauts more succinctly and From Armstrong's humble beginnings as

as well as the personal sacrifices they had **'Armstrong'** to make in order to achieve their exemplary level of competency.

Harrison Ford tersely narrates the film and voices some of Armstrong's own words. The famous astronaut's family members are also given some screen time and reflect on their own experiences with the benchmark space program and with Armstrong.

The film's commentary and analysis is even-handed, never going to lengths to drum up artificial drama between family members to "punch up" the source material. In fact, if anything, it shows what deep regard they had for the man who tried his best to balance both his familial life and his duty to the program. In the end, they seemed at peace with all of their sacrifices.

'Armstrong' can act as a master class in humility, patriotism, and hard work.

A broader picture is also painted. The film explores many of the political strains that led NASA to create the program in the first place, as well as the fact that Armstrong was but one of thousands of folks who collaborated in the gargantuan effort to put a manned spacecraft on the moon. But these are merely framing devices that are referred to from time to time. The real story here is a deeply personal one.

The Real Neil Armstrong

delves into their intense training regimes, a kid growing up in Wapakoneta, Ohio, to It sheds light on an uncommonly modest

David Fairhead

Neil Armstrong (archival footage), Harrison Ford (narration), Mark Armstrong

Running Time 1 hour, 40 minute **Release Date**



Neil Armstrong and some of the personnel who made the iconic moon landing possible, in "Armstrong."

his military service as a combat pilot during the largely forgotten Korean War, we get many insights into his life. All of his experiences as a young man culminated in a cohesive vision that he formed for himself and that explains the motivations leading to his upward trajectory—his mercurial rise

Here again, whereas the biopic "First Man" depicts Armstrong as a rather drab fellow, "Armstrong" counters this by characterizing him much more accurately. Instead of the typical sycophantic inflections that we see in so many biopics these days, here we get a much more earnest recounting of an understated "everyman" hero, and although his eyes were frequently gazing at the stars, his feet were always planted on

"Armstrong," then, is an immersive and educational film that gives a much greater degree of depth than its predecessors.

and gentle spirit who, although he could have parlayed his fame into the stratosphere (pun intended) and beyond, instead decided to live his life in seclusion–eschewing the limelight for solitude.

"Armstrong" can act as a master class in humility, patriotism, and hard work. As one fellow astronaut recollects, "Neil was quiet, and poised, but here he was in command of the moon landing."

Indeed, this documentary is truly remarkable and shows the quiet strength in unpretentiousness. If you don't already admire astronaut Neil Armstrong before watching this film, you most certainly will

And yes, unlike in "First Man," the famous shot of the American flag being planted on the lunar surface is proudly displayed.

Documentary, Turkish

with English subtitles

and Tamara Kotevska

Liubomir Stefanov

1 hour, 27 minutes

Release Date

July 26

Director

Rated

Not Rated

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

Mark Jackson grew up in Spring Valey, N.Y., where he attended a Waldorf school, At Williams College, his prosors all suggested he write proessionally. He acted professionally for 20 years instead. Now he

An Eco-Doc Disguised as a Portrait of an Ancient Beekeeper

MARK JACKSON

he opening drone-shot of "Honeyland" is of an old woman walking in a remote wilderness hinterland. As she walks, a huge jackrabbit is startled and bounds away. It looks a lot like Mexico, but it's actually

Macedonia. The woman, Hatidze Muratova, climbs a long, stony ridge. At the highest outcropping, she rolls away a large but thin stone flake, behind which hang perfect, golden honeycombs.

The fuzzy, buzzing manufacturers of the world's golden sweetness are currently threatened. If they die–we all die. We hear that so often lately. And while most of us don't know the science behind it, one assumes that where there's smoke, there's fire.

"Honeyland"—while appearing on the surface to be about traditional beekeeping, bee balance, and the avoidance of bee endangerment–is really a subtle eco-documentary.

The Beekeeper Bee-whispering is a more apt description of

what Hatidze does. She's sort of an ancient, magical bee-nun, with her perennial headscarf, living in the Macedonian outback in a wee stone hut.

There's more than a passing resemblance between Hatidze and the Wicked Witch of the West, only Hatidze's not mean or green, and her long nose is not the result of Wicked ness but rather the occupational hazard of what's clearly been a lifetime of "rhino-apitoxia." That's my made-up pseudoscientific word for getting bee-stung on the nose a lot.

Hatidze is also a sweetheart: as kind, selfless, and giving as the day is long. As mentioned, she cares for bees, but she also cares for her wizened, little, bedridden, partially blind mom, Nazife.

The two of them are reminiscent of Dr. Seuss's "The 500 Hats of Bartholomew Cubbins," where the king calls upon his wise man, Nadd. Nadd is ancient and wizened. But Nadd's wisdom is not sufficient to satisfy the king. Whereupon the king summons Nadd's dad. Nadd's dad is seriously ancient and wizened. Hatidze and Nazife are Macedonian female versions of Nadd and Nad's dad: They are both simultaneously piteous, noble, wise, and quite comical. Actually, there was also Nadd's dad's dad. (He was the wisest.) Too bad Nazife's mom wasn't still alive. But I digress.

Nazife, who lies eternally in a bundle of blankets upon a bed, notes that she's become a burden to her daughter, since, while she really should die and do Hatidze a big favor, she's just not feeling it. If this were a fairy tale, these two would be referred to as ancient hags, and so it's even more sad and hilarious when Hatidze, feeling depressed about her future, wonders what will become of her when Nazife dies and leaves her all alone.

Hatidze: What will happen to me? What am I supposed to do when you're dead and gone? (Long pause)

Nazife: Get married ...?

Hatidze is a sweetheart: as kind, selfless, and giving as the day is long.

There Goes the Neighborhood

After establishing Hatidze's story and showcasing her antediluvian methodology of beekeeping, with its natural stone and tree hives, its use of a puffing mini bellows filled with goat dung powder (to subdue swarming bee aggression), and her mesmerizing chanting of rhyth-



Hatidze Muratova at work, in "Honeyland."

mic, folksy bee-cantations, where you can literally feel the hypnotic power with which it commands bees-along come the Sams.

The Sams are a nomadic family. They move in with their seven children and slightly despotic (and hugely inept) patriarch, hauling with them a one-family trailer park and many cows. And when he finds out what Hatidze does for a living, Mr. Hussein Sam starts thinking that maybe he'll also affiliate himself with some of the apparent apiary abundance. At first, Hatidze welcomes the company,

playing with the younger children, who are, for the most part, fairly latchkey given their

dad's level of disorganization. Hatidze is happy to teach Hussein about beekeeping, repeating over and over again that one must take only half of each hive's honey and leave the other half for the bees. But Hussein Sam is primarily a survivalist–a self-centered, klutzy opportunist, with nine mouths to feed-and doesn't heed

Hatidze's admonitions about balance. There's a scene of him and his supervisor (basically his honey-pimp) chain-sawing apart one of Hatidze's meticulously tended-to hives, which is housed in a dead tree bridging a small creek. They greedily munch on the pilfered honeycomb like it's watermelon, and steal all of it.

Ultimately, Hussein's all about getting while the getting's good, and sure enough, his bee swarms get too close to hers (swarms are territorial) and end up killing hers.

Which is heartbreaking. Because Hatidze needed every last drop of her hard-cultivated honey to take to the annual marketplace, to peddle her wares, and maybe have a little money left over to splurge on some chestnut brown hair dye, in order to feel a bit pretty. Not to mention caring for Nazife.

Flailing Survival Versus Balanced

Life on earth is about honoring the laws of har-

mony that lead to well-being, abundance, and flow. The recent farming documentary "The

Biggest Little Farm" proved this in spades. But "Honeyland" is not a fictional story about a good woman and an evil man; Hussein Sam's a desperate man-nine mouths to feed is a massive weight of responsibility. His family needs all the money that his Johnnycome-lately attempt to sell honey can bring him, and they needed it yesterday.

And while "Honeyland" is not an inyour-face, "Fracking-is-horrible!" type of eco-doc, it carries the same message. Yes, absolutely, drilling and pumping deadly chemicals hundreds of feet down into shale and ruining the groundwater will sure enough unbalance the environment.

But in this case, all you need to do is get greedy, let your bees get too close to someone else's bees, cause bee genocide, and we know what happens when all the bees die.

It could also be argued, in favor of balance, that if you live in the remote outback, maybe you should think twice about the wisdom of trying to raise seven kids.

Doesn't Seem Like a Documentary

The directors of 'Honeyland," Ljubomir Stefanov and Tamara Kotevska, were commissioned by The Nature Conservation Project (NCP) to create an environmental video in Macedonia.

Stefanov went to research the region and found out that there were some old, traditional wild beekeepers still there. They shot over 400 hours of footage, over the course of three years, with the dramaturgy always clear from the start: They wanted to tell a story about ecological peril, via this particular wild beekeeper.

Then when the Sam family showed up, it became more about the conflict between them and Hatidze, and how that affects the balance of the land–and the directors had their ready-made, serendipitous nemesis.

CATARINA ASTROM

BOOK REVIEW

THE Statues of Central Park

Coffee table book sheds light on art we neglect

JUDD HOLLANDER

ith its 843 acres, New York City's Central Park has long been a mecca for those seeking a moment of tranquility while they temporarily escape the teeming metropolis that surrounds them. However, they often overlook the park's many sculptures, statues, and monuments. Yet as June Eding makes crystal clear in "The Statues of Central Park" each of these works carries its own significance–from commemorating a specific moment in history to saluting an individual whose deeds left an indelible mark.

Written by Eding with photography by Catarina Astrom, this coffee table book lovingly shines a spotlight on the approximately 140 statues located in Central Park. These basically fall into three categories: fictional characters, such as Mother Goose, Peter Pan, and Romeo and Juliet; those who made historical, scientific, or artistic contributions, such as Alexander Hamilton, Frederick Douglass, and Duke Ellington; and those that serve as symbolic reminders in one form or another. Falling into this last category are such statues as "The Falconer" and "Still Hunt," the latter depicting a panther getting ready to pounce on its prey.

Offering far more than simply a map with each statue's location (although a map of the park is provided as well), the book briefly details the history of each of these works. The entries include a generous supply of

interesting trivia, which keeps the book from becoming just another reference guide of facts.

For example, did you know that Central Park's Bethesda Fountain, as it is commonly known (its actual name is "Angel of the Waters"), honors the opening of New York's Croton water system in 1842? Or that the statue of Fred Lebow, founder of the New York City Marathon, is moved from its usual location each year on the day of the marathon and placed near the finish line of the race?

You can also learn about the statue of the Danish author Hans Christian Andersen, the beloved writer of children's books. (The figure has a tiny duckling statue nearby.) Or stop by to see the statue of Balto, a black-and-white Alaskan malamute that was the lead sled dog of a team that delivered life-saving medicine to Nome, Alaska, in 1925. Balto was present at the dedication ceremony for the statue that bears his name.

What really makes the book worth owning is Astrom's wonderful photographs. She takes pains to showcase each of the statues in all their majestic glory, whether shown in sunlight or in shadow.

An added plus is that the photos were taken at different times during the year, which allows readers to see not only the statues but also Central Park in different seasons: from a blooming cherry tree in the background of one picture, to a backdrop of multicolored leaves, or statues covered with snow in others. One section of the book features photographs

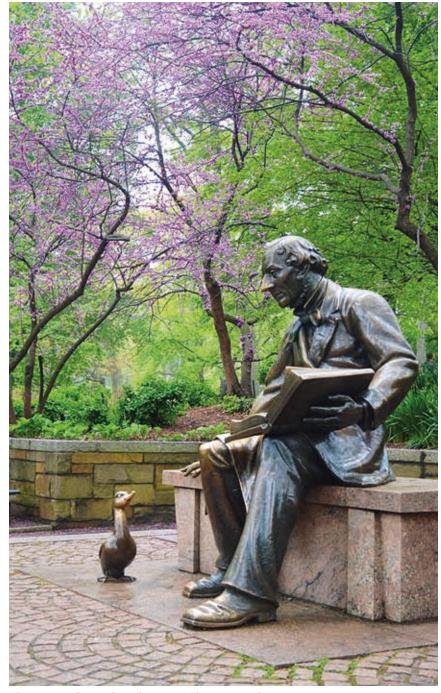
What really makes the book worth owning is Astrom's wonderful photographs.



'The Statues of Central Park'

By June Eding Photography by Catarina Astrom

Hatherleigh Press Ltd. 192 pages, hardcover \$24.95



The statue of Danish author Hans Christian Andersen.

only, with no text to distract from the impact the pictures convey.

In addition to introductory notes by Eding and Astrom, as well as accompanying text by Eding, the book also contains a foreword by Mitchell J. Silver, commissioner of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. It provides an overall history of Central Park and why, since its initial completion in 1873, it has

come to mean so much to so many.

Offering a chance to learn the story of historical figures you may

have long forgotten or never known about in the first place, "The Statues of Central Park" presents a compelling case for why these statues are worth a second, or perhaps a third, look. A few of them may just entice you to learn more about the people and situations they honor.

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 bnchpeop@aol.com

