

THE EPOCH TIMES LIFE & TRADITION

Beauty, crushes, love, family, body image—for teen girls, these touch on core identity issues.

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Pearls Are Made From Grains

JEFF MINICK

At the Washington Examiner, Julio Rosas examines a recent survey in his article, "Importance of Patriotism, God, and Family Plummets Among Young People: Poll." Rosas opens his article with this brief summary:

"In a new poll conducted by the Wall Street Journal and NBC News, nearly 80% of people aged 55-91 said being patriotic is important to them, while only 42% of millennials and Generation Z, or those aged 18-38, said the same. Thirty percent of millennials and Generation Z said religion was important, compared to the over 75% of baby boomers, with just over 30% of millennials and Generation Z saying it was important to have children."

The one category in the poll where young people outpaced their elders? The importance of self-fulfillment.

If we are among those who believe in the worth of patriotism, faith, and family, our first inclination on viewing these results might be to shake our heads in dismay and wonder what is wrong with Millennials

(those born between 1982 and 1995) and Generation Z (1995 and 2015). Love of country, love of God, love of family, the desire for children: are these not the basic building blocks of civilization? How can so many young people consider them unimportant? What's wrong with them?

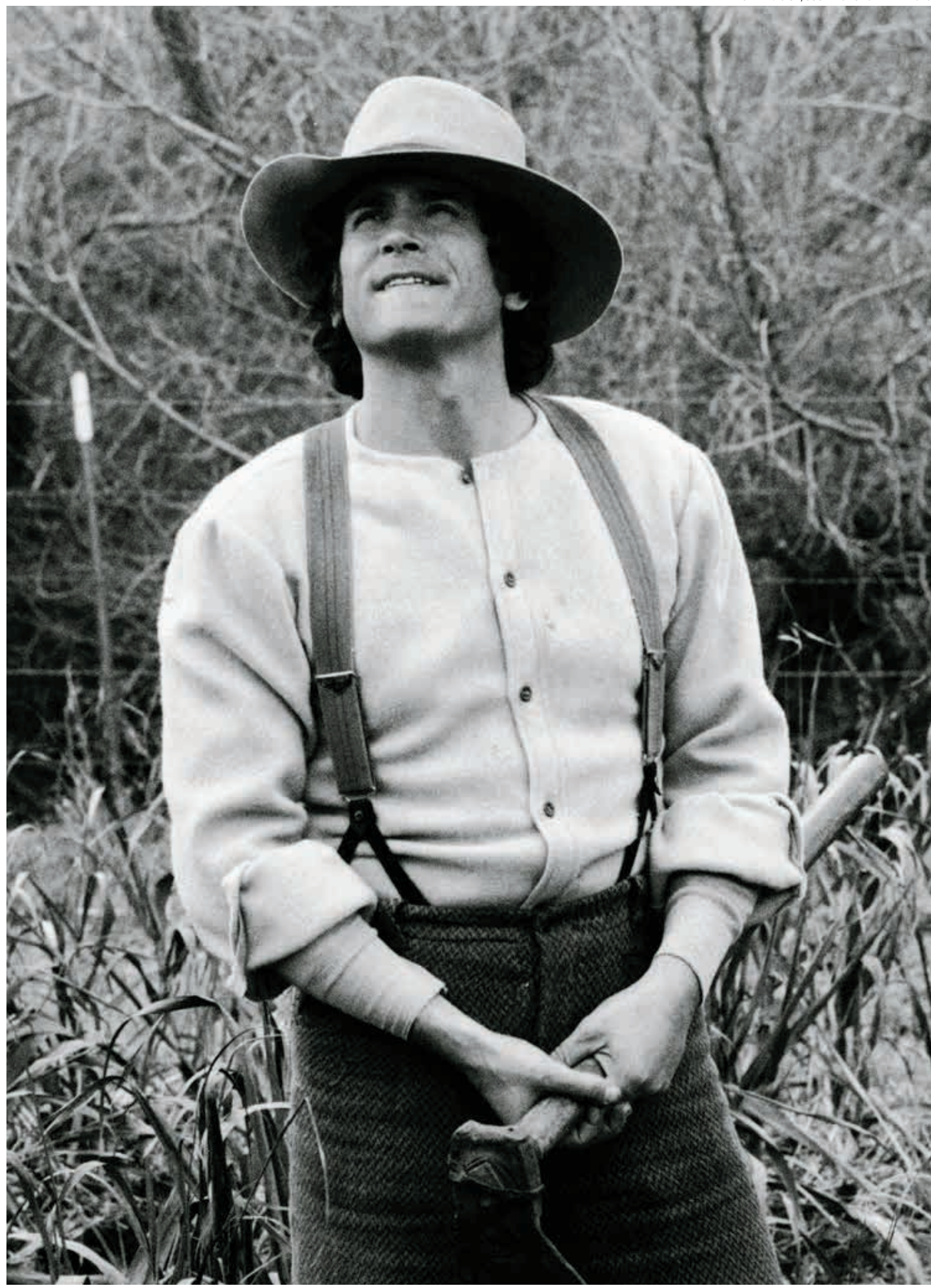
The answer to that last question is simple. We are.

From the time these youngsters were out of diapers, they have inhabited a culture that all too often denigrates American ideals and institutions, religious faith, and the home.

Since the 1960s, the media, many of our educators, and various commentators have demonized American history and American ideals. From these critics and assailants, our country has suffered death by a thousand cuts, so much so that from certain quarters, all we now hear is a barrage of hatred and opprobrium directed at our country.

For just as long, religious believers have suffered similar assaults, mocked for their acknowledgment of a higher power and ridiculed for the traditional beliefs of their faith, particularly those regarding sexuality and abortion. Though we give lip service to a deity—"In God We Trust" remains our national motto—activists, judges, and politicians long ago drove religion and prayer from the classroom and the public square.

The evidence that our culture is no friend of families is abundant. Here's



NBC TELEVISION/COURTESY OF GETTY IMAGES

just one example: Compare the view of family life on television and in the movies from just 40 years ago to the present. Remember shows like "Little House on the Prairie" or "The Wonder Years?" Remember "Christmas Story" or "Father of the Bride?" Now try to think of a television show or a movie from the past decade that offers a positive portrayal of an intact family: a father, a mother, children.

As for the pursuit of self-fulfillment, we indoctrinated these young people

with the line, "I Am Special." We taught our children that the world revolved around them. In too many cases, we neglected to teach them sacrifice, to put others ahead of themselves, to seek to accomplish the good or the great rather than satisfying their own desires.

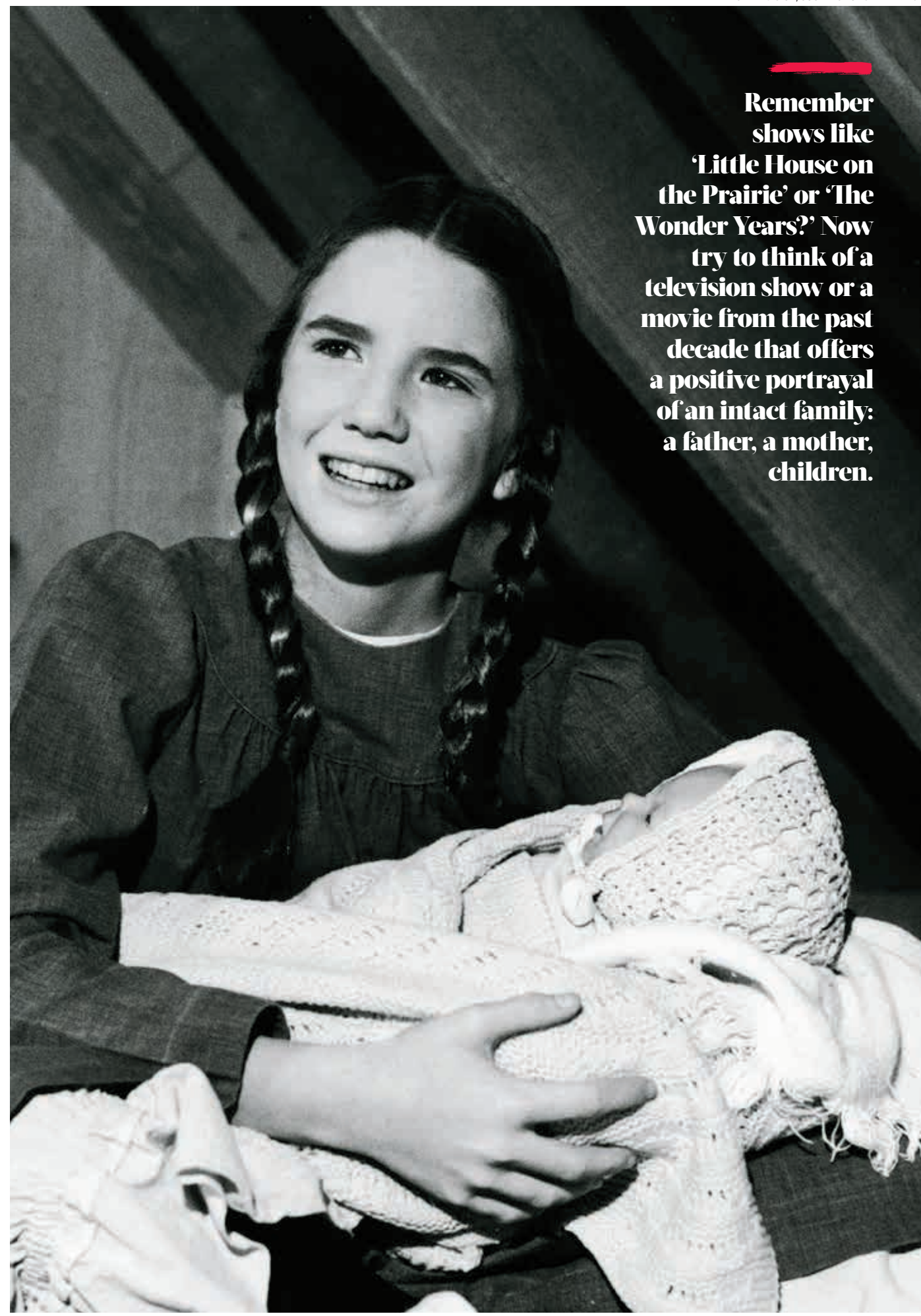
What did we expect our young people would believe?

And unless we reverse course, a greater catastrophe looms in the not too distant future.

The Millennials and Generation Z will be the parents—at least some of them will—the teachers, and the mentors of the next generation. Will they pass on their diminished views of patriotism? Will they lead their children away from religious faith as so many of them were led away? Will they grow healthy families?

I won't be alive to see what transpires, but I have a stake in that future: my children and grandchildren. Eight of my grandchildren were born

of Sand: The Next Generation



Remember shows like 'Little House on the Prairie' or 'The Wonder Years?' Now try to think of a television show or a movie from the past decade that offers a positive portrayal of an intact family: a father, a mother, children.

Movie actor Charlton Heston, who marched with Martin Luther King Jr. and later became a voice for conservatism, made these remarks in 1999 in a speech at Harvard University:

to government for those solutions: we can instill these traditional values in the next generation.

Next, we can educate our children. We can see that they receive not only the education of the classroom, a noble and necessary endeavor, but also that they know the meaning of the Declaration of Independence and why it is one of the world's great documents, that they understand in spite of all its flaws, the United States remains a city on a hill, that countless men and women have given of themselves, even their lives, to honor and protect the principles of liberty.

If we practice a faith, we can deposit that faith in our children, making certain they understand both the letter and the spirit of its laws. Whatever our circumstances—married, divorced, single parent—we can model the meaning of family life.

Finally, when the culture pushes on us, we have the duty to push back. When the government orders us to act against our conscience, when society bids us to accept some new politically correct policy, we can buck up against these dictates. We can do so by living our lives in contradiction to those policies, by condemning them privately, and if we are able and willing to take the heat, publicly.

Disobedience is in our DNA. We feel innate kinship with that disobedient spirit that tossed tea in the Boston Harbor, that sent Thoreau to jail, that refused to sit in the back of the bus, that protested the war in Vietnam. In that same spirit, I am asking you to disavow cultural correctness with massive disobedience of rogue authority, social directives, and onerous laws that weaken personal freedom."

Raise tough-minded children. Educate them. Swim upstream when necessary.

These efforts may seem small or ineffectual, until we remember that a grain of sand slipped beneath the shell of an oyster produces a pearl.

We can be that grain of sand. We can help create those pearls.

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

(Left) American actor Michael Landon (1936–1991) stands in a field in a still from the television series "Little House on the Prairie," circa 1976.

(Above) American actress Melissa Gilbert (as Laura Ingalls) holds a baby doll.

after 2015, and of the others, the oldest is only 14. My own four children are all Millennials, and in no way fit the description of decline described in this survey. They and their spouses all practice a religious faith, love their country, and believe in the value of family and children. Self-fulfillment matters to them, but that concept loses its edge when you've just changed your 10,000th diaper.

If you're a Baby Boomer, a member of Generation X (1965–1980), or a Mil-

lennial, and if you value your country, practice your religion, and still think of the family as the foundation of culture, there are steps you—and I—can take to keep those values alive.

First, we can raise our kids to be tough. We can bestow on them some of the virtues once a part of the American fabric. A belief in truth, a willingness to serve, a love of liberty and its handmaiden responsibility, frugality, hard work, the desire to solve problems rather than looking

You Have the Power to Shape Your Relationships

MICHAEL COURTER

You can't work with someone who won't work with you, right? Or can you?

Marsha comes into my office. She is furious at her husband Roger. She says he is becoming obsessed with his new motorcycle—to the point where he is neglecting her and the kids. She says, "He works all week and goes out every Saturday on that stupid thing with his friends and spends most of Sunday cleaning working on it. How could that motorcycle be so important? I regret ever agreeing to get it! To top it all off, Roger refuses to even talk to me about it. He says I always just get mad, but I can't fix this by myself!"

Is Marsha correct? That you can't work with someone like Roger? Actually, this type of thinking disempowers us in our relationships and renders us victims of the other party's willingness or unwillingness to cooperate with us.

The truth is that you often do have the power to shift your relationships unilaterally.

You often do have the power to shift your relationships unilaterally.

ally. I'm not saying it will be easy. It takes strategic thinking and the ability to tolerate "unfair" situations and determination. However, people often choose to stay stuck in long-term misery instead of temporarily swallowing their pride to create a better situation.

A Relationship Is Like a Tennis Match
Relationships are co-created by the people in them. People act and react to each other, if you change your responses, the other person cannot help but change how they respond to you. Imagine that a relationship is a tennis match. If you hit a drop shot your opponent will charge forward to return it. If you lob it over their head they will have to retreat.

But you protest: "My opponent won't even play. They just let the ball go." As long as you still have contact with someone, you can't help influencing each other.

People respond in relatively predictable ways to our actions toward them. For example, if you show the other person you

are listening and really interested in what they say, they will talk to you more. If you validate them, they feel closer and more trusting. If you scold and criticize someone, they will create distance and put up a wall. If you get angry and yell at them, they might do what you want, but they will also grow resentful or seek revenge. If you ignore them, they will find other people to be close to.

In our example above, Marsha was feeling hurt by the increased time that Roger was spending away from her, and she protested by scolding Roger. Roger responded by creating more distance and refusing to discuss the topic that always seemed to lead to a fight.

Steps You Can Take

How exactly do you move from the being the unwitting sufferer to actively shaping the relationship you want with someone? It depends on how you want to change the relationship. You have to study the dynam-



NOMAD_SOUL/SHUTTERSTOCK

Like in a tennis match, people in a relationship act and react to each other.

ics that are molding your relationship now, decide what you really want, make a plan to create the shift, initiate the plan, evaluate the results, and make modifications as needed. You can use the steps below as a guide.

1. Reflect on the current state of your relationship. Ask yourself the following: What is actually happening between us? How do you feel toward the other person? How do they feel toward you? How do you know that is how they feel? Are there any other possibilities? How do you treat each other?

Don't allow any biases or emotions to filter your perceptions or blind you to the facts. In order to make an effective change, you have to deeply accept where you are. How would they describe the answers to the same questions above? You can ask them if they are willing to answer.

2. Reflect on how you really want the relationship to change. Ask yourself the following: What exactly would I want to be different about the relationship? What exactly would the other person be doing differently if that happened? What would I

be doing differently? How would our feelings toward each other change? How would I know for sure that the change I wanted is actually happening?

3. Devise a strategy. Answer the following questions for yourself. What am I currently doing that is contributing to the problems in the relationship or maintaining the parts I want to change? What makes me continue that behavior, even though it goes against what I want? What actions could I take to start moving the relationship in the direction I have decided I want? The possible ways to do this are unlimited. If you are not sure what to do, do some research, ask the person themselves what they think would work, or get professional help if you need it.

4. Be willing to be the first one to make a change. Often, we are often unwilling to be the party that changes first because we see the situation as unfair and we think the other person should change. We feel like we are giving in. However, this mentality will keep you stuck. You lose your power and influence by holding a passive position and waiting for the other person to initiate. Try and see your changes as your own personal growth, rather than waiting for the other person.

5. If you want to ask for something from the other person, do it in a straightforward and clear way. People often ask for things indirectly or simply by criticizing the other person for not doing it. For example, instead of saying "You never call me!" Say, "I really wish you would call me more, I miss you and feel sad that we aren't closer. I really care about you and our relationship and I feel so good after we talk." Which one of these messages would you rather get? We often make requests indirectly through criticism because we fear the person will reject us, but criticism damages the relationship, pushes the other person away, and makes it less likely that they will give us what we want, or they will only do it to avoid our criticism.

6. Don't be defeated by expectations. If your first attempts don't work, evaluate what happened, make adjustments and try again. You can only be defeated if you give up!

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Jessie Minassian: A Passion for Helping Teen Girls Answer Life's Big Questions

CATHERINE YANG

Jessie Minassian writes books for teen girls, but unlike most authors, sometimes her readers start their encounters with, “Well, my mom/grandma bought me this book.”

“But after the first couple of pages, I was really drawn in by your stories,” they’ll say. “It felt like I was sitting down with you and talking about life.”

One book starts with an anecdote of Minassian as a 14-year-old, about to embark on her grand plan to run away from home. Another book starts with a secret about sexual addiction.

Minassian writes about love, family, relationships, body image, self-worth, shame—all these big, deep issues teenage girls are grappling with, all the while speaking directly to them. It’s rare to find media for teen girls coming from a place of love. Their concerns aren’t trivialized, but neither is the absolute nature of right and wrong.

“I just have such a passion for that age. It’s such an instrumental time in life, when you’re answering some of the big core questions that we don’t really grow out of,” Minassian says.

“If you don’t answer them in your teen years or in your early 20s, they just sort of carry with you through life and grow bigger, and you get more baggage.”

“So my goal is to help them work through those questions in a healthy way, before they become adults and launch out on their own,” she says.

Three Questions

Minassian is a speaker, blogger, and author who has been working with teen girls since 2005.

It began with a Bible study she led with a group of junior high girls.

“They were so full of life and hope for the future, and excitement, but also felt so much pressure and had so many questions. And some of them were struggling with some pretty big issues already, even as young as 12, 13,” Minassian says.

When the opportunity came to write a book for teens with the “Soul Sister” series, she wrote “Respect: How to Get It, How to Give It” and has been addressing teen girls’ questions ever since.

“There were definite themes: A lot of the questions about boys. A lot about beauty and body image,” Minassian says.

Minassian has since identified three core questions underlying all of these issues.

“Am I beautiful? Am I lovable—is there a man who would find me worthy of pursuing? And is there a God who would accept me despite what I’ve done?” she says.

“I think the underlying root of those questions are identity issues. As girls, so much of our identity is wrapped up in the way God has designed us to be beautiful and to be in a relationship, so we’re trying to find out if we have what it takes in those areas.”

The recurring themes have led to her four books: “Backwards Beauty: How to Feel Ugly in 10 Simple Steps,” “Unashamed: Overcoming the Sins No Girl Wants to Talk About,” “Crushed: Why Guys Don’t Have to Make or Break You,” and “Family: How to Love Yours (and Help Them Like You Back).” Minassian also runs the website LifeLoveandGod.com, where she receives more messages daily than she can respond to.

Minassian is writing for an audience who believes in God and believes God has a role in their lives, and likely runs counter to a lot of the degrading media girls today are drowning in. It’s full of good advice even for those unfamiliar with the Bible, which she references conversationally, and those who are will probably glean extra layers of meaning and encouragement.

Validation

The first time Minassian spoke to teen girls, it was a group of 400, and she could just see that they were eager: nobody else was talking about these topics, not from a moral perspective and a female perspective.

“They were just so hungry to talk about things that were specific to them,” Minassian says. That first speech, she remembers with a laugh, was about “five tips for a match made in heaven.”

Many of the girls Minassian has met and corresponded with also come from broken homes; it was more common than she realized.

“They’re tired of pat answers. I feel like some of the things we tell them, like ‘It’s just on the inside that counts,’ it’s like putting a Band-Aid on a greased watermelon—it just doesn’t stick,” she says. “They need more; they need someone to validate what they’re feeling, too, but then also help them grow in maturity in those areas.”

Teen girls get a bad rap for being dramatic; she says.



Minassian speaks at a women's retreat.



So many readers and listeners tell her, ‘Thank you for going first and sharing that first.’

For starters, “I never dismiss what they’re feeling.”

“Drama is sort of core to being a teenager; you have all these big emotions,” she says. “Everything feels really big, and all of the questions they’re having, the implications of those feel very life-altering at that stage.”

“They’re very weighty, like for some of them getting broken up with in a text message is the worst thing that has ever happened to them in their life, right? I mean if you think about where they’re at in life, that might be the worst thing. So yeah, it’s going to feel overwhelming, it’s going to feel like the end of the world at that moment.”

Minassian tries to help guide the thought process, she says, to help girls realize what’s

going on underneath the turbulent emotions. She wants to help them discover and become grounded in their identities.

For example, in “Family,” Minassian brings up the ugly attitude issues that sometimes bubble up—no teen girl is immune, but many of them are aware, and don’t want to be acting this way. Her advice is practical, and step-by-step.

All her life, Minassian has been a gregarious type of person, wanting to draw out everybody’s stories, and for teen girls, she now has a soft spot.

“I genuinely do care about them and care about where they’re at and where they’re headed, so I think that comes fairly naturally,” she says.

Healing

Walking alongside these girls has helped Minassian heal and learn about herself as well.

In preparation for her talks and books, Minassian spent a lot of time poring over the journals she kept in high school and college, really getting into the mindset of the issues she was struggling with at the time.

“Everything from relationships to figuring out, why did I struggle with an eating disorder? As I’ve worked to teach the next generation, I’ve learned a lot about myself in the process,” Minassian says.

A self-described “crushaholic” from second grade onwards, Minassian over time learned the difference between admiration and attraction while writing about relationships. She had never considered why women strive to be beautiful, pouring \$30 billion into this big industry, until she wrote “Beauty Backwards.” The topics seem light to an outsider, but actually represent core identity issues.

“I believe God designed us as women to be the beautiful counterpart to Adam. Because that’s part of our identity, then that is going to be a struggle that we have—because of sin wanting to be more beautiful, or questioning whether we are beautiful because of that,” Minassian says.

Minassian doesn’t dwell on philosophy; her books are full of personal anecdotes: embarrassing moments, things she says to her parents she wished she could take back, secrets she was terrified to admit at the time.

“I always joke, ‘My life is an open book’ and I probably share too many details about my life,” she says. “Someday my kids are going to be like, ‘Mom, you shared all that!’ But I feel like I have a responsibility as someone—God’s been so gracious to forgive me of all the stupid things that I did. And I feel like there’s an element of when you’re forgiven much, it causes you to love much. And I feel like that love is directed at these girls.”

So many readers and listeners tell her, “Thank you for going first and sharing that first.”

“A lot of times, we can learn through other people’s mistakes, and so I try to have enough humility to allow others to do that,” Minassian says. There was only one book where she felt great reservation. She sent in the manuscript and immediately wanted to get it back. The book includes a line that she confesses she could delete.

“I think so many of us are just waiting for someone else to go first. So if that’s my role as an author, then I embrace that gladly.”

Then and Now

As a teen, Minassian was “a pretty good kid on the outside.” She was outgoing, captain of all the sports teams, and loved people. At home, she was the typical temperamental, sassy teenager (who now wishes she could make it up to her parents).

But on the inside, there was plenty she felt she was hiding. “I feel like I dealt with a lot of shame, a lot of embarrassment, a lot of ‘If anyone knew the real me, they would never accept me,’” she says.

“Drama is sort of core to being a teenager; you have all these big emotions. Everything feels really big, and all of the questions they’re having, the implications of those feel very life-altering at that stage.”

Jessie Minassian

When Minassian first spoke to teen girls—400 of them—she could see how eager they were to talk about topics that no one was talking about from a moral, female perspective.

Her faith helped steer her life on an upward course rather than a downward trajectory.

Her mother became a Christian after Minassian was born, and her stepfather became a Christian around the time he and Minassian’s mother married, so they all had the chance to figure it out together. Minassian remembers summer camps and the Christian counselors playing a major grounding role that helped “keep my eyes on the vision that I wanted for my life.”

Minassian realizes teens today probably need grounding even more than before.

“A lot of the things are the same—I think the core questions that we’re trying to answer are the same, but because of the advent of technology, it’s even more difficult to answer those questions correctly because we’re constantly looking for the answers to those questions through how many likes we get,” she says.

“Or, the advent of pornography I think has drastically changed that question that we have, ‘Am I beautiful?’ as women, and has been twisted to mean ‘sexually enticing.’

“The internet and social media are here to stay, but I’ve seen a deep undercurrent of girls who are sick of it, and who are trying to give it up.

“It used to be, when I was a teenager, a guy might try to do something with you on a date and you’d be like ‘you’re crazy,’ but now you might barely even know him and he’s asking for nudes over the phone.

“The crazy thing for me is, I’ve talked to a number of groups of girls, and I’m talking to them about this topic. I ask how many of them have been asked for nudes, and almost every hand goes up. And then the girls who haven’t—what’s really crazy is—what the girls who haven’t say is, ‘I feel jealous, because even though I wouldn’t want to send those pictures, I wonder why aren’t they asking me.’

“That is so telling, just the pressure these girls are facing. There’s always been pressure on teens, but I think the pressure is just crushing in 2019.”

She does have a little bit of dating advice: “I think so much of the heartbreak that I see, especially in teen girls, they’re dating like they’re married. And so when they break up, it really does feel like divorce. ... I feel like we’re just kind of playing with fire if we’re dating at 12, 13, 14 and we’re expecting to keep our hearts whole and our bodies pure.”

Minassian gets inquiries from parents as well, but she often directs them to Parenting Today’s Teens (HeartlightMinistries.org/parenting-todays-teens), because she says she can’t claim to be a parenting expert.

“I’m still in the beginning stages of this journey,” Minassian says.

She has two girls of her own, and they’re not quite teenagers yet. They’re all adventurers, and have spent the summer paddleboarding, hiking, foraging in the forest for berries, and watching the sunset over the lake. Minassian is at a place in her life when she wants simplicity, to be still, and let the lessons in her life sink in and settle.

“Goodness, when I found out we were having a daughter, I said ‘God, I will pour myself out for everyone else’s girls, if you will bring people into their life who will do for them what I’m trying to do for others, because I know that they will not listen to me!’” she says with a laugh. Even if she gets invited to speak all over the country, it’s anyone’s guess whether they’ll still listen to her when the attitude kicks in.

Minassian says if there were anything she could share with all teen girls, it would be the answers to those three core questions.

“I want them to know they are beautiful, because they were designed to be beautiful just by being female. I want them to know that they’re lovable and worthy of pursuit,” she says.

“And I want them to know there’s a God who loves them, despite anything they’ve done, and wants a relationship with them.”

“I think that that would be, if I can communicate those three things to young women, I would say that I did a good job.”



FIZKES/SHUTTERSTOCK

So many readers and listeners tell her, ‘Thank you for going first and sharing that first.’

(Right) As part of her BEAUTIFUL tour, Minassian addressed the issue of beauty by showing girls how to let go of a one-size-fits-all image of perfection—and laughing together at the ridiculous things women do in the name of beauty.

(Right) Questions that arise in the teen years, if unanswered, get bigger as time passes, Minassian says.





"The Suicide of Seneca," 1871, by Manuel Dominguez Sanchez. Oil on Canvas, 106 1/3 inches by 177 1/4 inches. Prado Museum, Spain.

Suffering With Grace: Seneca's Stoicism

ERIC BESS

We all deal with hardship. Irrespective of race, class, or gender, we all suffer. Suffering is a fact of life. It is inevitable. How can we approach suffering with poise and grace? How can we use it to better understand ourselves? The stoicism of the Roman philosopher and statesman Seneca may provide some insight.

Seneca's Life and Philosophy

Seneca, born around the start of the first century, trained at a young age in rhetoric, literature, and stoic philosophy. Stoicism is a philosophy that focuses on virtuous behavior, control of the emotions, and the rational use of the mind.

Seneca's stoicism is grounded in the thought that destructive emotions such as anger and grief should be moderated and removed, that wealth should be used in accordance with virtue, that friendship and kindness are significant, and that hardship should be gracefully accepted instead of avoided. Seneca attempted to live according to these stoic principles whenever he faced hardship.

Hardship provides an opportunity for the practice of virtue and self-mastery. Seneca states:

"We should every night call ourselves to an account: What infirmity have I mastered today? What passions opposed? What temptation resisted? What virtue acquired? Our vices will abort of themselves if they be brought every day to the shirt."

Seneca aimed to abandon vices, resist temptation, embody virtue, and thus, ultimately, be a better person.

In his early career, Seneca was elected as a public official in Rome and granted a seat in the Roman Senate. His success in the Senate due to his oratorical ability, however, eventually made the emperor Caligula jealous, and he ordered Seneca to commit suicide.

Later, convinced that Seneca was already gravely ill, Caligula believed that order, believing the senator would soon die of natural causes.

Within four years, around A.D. 41, Claudius became emperor, and Seneca was still alive. But Claudi-

us's third wife, Messalina, accused Seneca of adultery for political purposes, and he was sentenced to exile on the island of Corsica.

Seneca remained in exile for eight years until Claudius married his own niece Agrippina, who was able to use her influence to have Seneca returned to Rome.

In Rome, Seneca was appointed tutor to Agrippina's son, Nero. Initially, Nero was greatly influenced by Seneca. The first five years of Nero's rule as emperor were considered successful because of Seneca's stoic influence. After that, Nero began to distance himself from his mentor.

In A.D. 59, Nero demanded that his own mother be executed, and Seneca was forced to write a letter justifying the execution to the Senate.

Seneca was accused of other crimes but always adhered to his stoic principles.

Exhausted, Seneca tried twice to retire from his position, but Nero denied his requests both times. At this point, Seneca began to stay away from the Senate and instead studied and lived a quiet life. It is during this time that he created one of his greatest philosophical texts, "Moral Letters to Lucilius," as a rational pursuit of moral perfection.

Nero, however, accused Seneca of being involved in the Pisonian Conspiracy, a conspiracy to assassinate the emperor. While historians doubt that Seneca was involved, Nero sentenced him to death by suicide.

Seneca calmly accepted this sentence and followed the Roman tradition to accept the order to commit suicide. He cut himself, but because he bled slowly, he also took poison and was put into a warm bath to speed up the process.

Seneca endured many hardships throughout his life. He defended himself and his honor when necessary, but he always did so according to his understanding of stoic principles. No matter what, he tried to see life from a moral perspective

and behave accordingly.

Manuel Dominguez Sánchez's 'The Suicide of Seneca'

Manuel Domínguez Sánchez, a 19th-century Spanish painter, depicted the moment of Seneca's death in his painting "The Suicide of Seneca." Sánchez shows Seneca lifeless in the bathtub, with figures surrounding him.

The composition is like the horizontal, classical frieze on the wall behind the figures. One figure leans against the column on the right side of the picture plane, looks at Seneca's lifeless body, and prevents our eyes from leaving the picture plane. A figure on the far left does the same.

Sánchez lets us know that Seneca is the most important figure in this painting. Another figure, closer to the tub and with his fist to his chest, also looks directly at Seneca. The outstretched arm of the figure on the tub nearly points at Seneca. He seems to beg us to not look away so that we may be affected by Seneca's stoic sacrifice.

Even though the figures around Seneca are mourning his death, the majority of them stand tall and motionless like the columns that surround them. Their poses suggest the practice of stoicism: They stand tall and accept the hardship of Seneca's death. This is their way of honoring his life instead of mourning his death.

There is only so much that some of us can endure, however, and one of Seneca's friends weeps at the tub. Seneca's stoicism had a deep influence on the culture of later generations. His thoughts even later helped influence the Italian Renaissance and the return of classical and moral content in French and Spanish art. This painting is an example of his influence. It won first prize at the National Exhibition of Fine Arts in 1871 and embodied the return of classical and moral themes to Spanish history painting.

Seneca's stoicism had a deep influence on the culture of later generations. His thoughts even later helped influence the Italian Renaissance and the return of classical and moral content in French and Spanish art. This painting is an example of his influence. It won first prize at the National Exhibition of Fine Arts in 1871 and embodied the return of classical and moral themes to Spanish history painting.

Regaining Stoic Insights

Seneca endured tremendous suffering. He was exiled by one emperor and condemned to death by two. Fellow senators attempted to defame his character. And he dealt with physical illness so often that his colleagues often thought he was at death's door.

Despite all of this, Seneca wanted to be a good person, and stoicism was his way of accomplishing that.

His stoicism influenced others as well. It started Nero's rule off on the right track, but when Nero discarded stoic principles, he let his emotions and desires determine his actions. Seneca's death is symbolic for the death of stoicism in Nero, who has become associated with tyranny and extravagance, thus bringing suffering to Rome.

How might stoicism help us take responsibility for and endure our own sufferings so that we do not let our emotions determine our actions and cause pain and suffering for ourselves and others? As a simple example, how often do we let a bad day at work affect not only ourselves but also our coworkers and families?

It's easy to get upset and have a bad attitude when things don't go the way we think they should. We are the ones who inevitably feel and experience our own negativity despite our attempts to take it out on others, and we are the ones who spread the negativity of our bad attitudes when we are unable to keep our emotions in check.

Handling hardship with grace and poise may be as simple as accepting hardship as it comes and reflecting on ourselves while we're experiencing it. In stoic fashion, it may be more helpful to check our emotions, resist temptation, and align with our understanding of virtue, as Seneca did.

At the very least, when we endure hardship and deepen our understanding of what it means to suffer, we may come to better understand the suffering of others and lead with compassion instead of unnecessary negativity.

Eric Bess is a practicing representational artist. He is currently a doctoral student at the Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts (IDSVA).

Why So Many College Students Are in Mental Distress, and What Parents Can Do About It

More supervision, less autonomy, and social media influences while growing up could be making college students more prone to anxiety and depression

KERRY MCDONALD

With college classes underway for the fall semester, parents may worry about how their children will navigate campus life, balance academics and social pressures, and find their pathway to a meaningful career.

While parents of college students have long shared these common worries, they now confront new concerns.

The number of college students experiencing mental health issues has soared, with survey findings from the Association for University and College Counseling Center Directors suggesting that 41 percent of college students are anxious and 36 percent are depressed. A 2018 survey by the American College Health Association found that 63 percent of college students reported feeling overwhelming anxiety over the previous year, 42 percent said they felt so depressed it was difficult to function over the previous year, and 12 percent seriously considered suicide.

Add to these findings, data showing that the suicide rate for U.S. teenagers and young adults is the highest on record, and parents are right to be worried.

So what is causing this mental health crisis among college-age young people? There are undoubtedly many contributing factors. Greater awareness of mental health issues and more willingness to seek help are positive steps forward that may drive some of the increase in reporting, but there could be other, less favorable explanations, as well.

Too Much Coddling

Some of the emotional turmoil of college students could be linked to a coddled childhood and adolescence that limits young people from developing the resilience necessary to deal with stress, anxiety, and uncertainty. In their book, "The Coddling of the American Mind: How Good Intentions and Bad Ideas Are Setting Up a Generation for Failure," Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan

Haidt trace some of the increased fragility of today's college students to padded playgrounds, constant adult supervision and structure, more screen time and less authentic, in-person interaction, and an overall emphasis on safety. They write:

"On average, eighteen-year-olds today have spent less time unsupervised and have hit fewer developmental milestones on the path to autonomy (such as getting a job or a driver's license), compared with eighteen-year-olds in previous generations." (p. 160)

More supervision and less autonomy, combined with social media influences, could be making college students more prone to anxiety and depression in young adulthood. According to Lukianoff and Haidt:

"Both depression and anxiety cause changes in cognition, including a tendency to see the world as more dangerous and hostile than it really is." (p. 161)

In other words, the normal stressors of college may be perceived by some of today's students as disproportionately dreadful.

Campus Victim Culture

A key focus of Lukianoff and Haidt's book is that the fragility of today's college students leads them to demand protection and security on campus, including the call for "safe spaces" and "trigger warnings." Discomfort may be confused with harm, leading more college students to report emotional distress. In his new book, "Panic Attack: Young Radicals in the Age of Trump," Robby Soave explores the victim culture on college campuses in greater detail. He says that on some college campuses, the focus on mental health has reached an extreme.

Soave describes a visit to the University of Arizona campus, where signs such as "Breathe in. Breathe out. You got this," and "44% of ASU students report having difficulty managing stress," are ubiquitous and direct students to the college's mental health services. Soave explains:

"People who need help shouldn't be afraid

to drive you forward, you have to envision the most fulfilling possible way to realize your passion. And then you start chipping away. You make a small goal for every day, a slightly more ambitious one for every week, and so on.

Your roadmap is like a diet—make it too constraining and unpleasant, and you won't be able to stick with it. Instead, if you just look at where you are now and incrementally aspire to be a little bit closer to where you want to go, soon you'll find yourself "compounding your interest," i.e. translating small gains into cumulative achievements. In biology, this is called a positive feedback loop; in physics, it's inertia. Simply put, success builds on success, and it's your trajectory, not starting point, that makes all the difference.

Rome wasn't built in a day. Neither is anyone's long-term success.

2. Accept the Lottery of Life
The reason you need to develop perseverance is that you have no control over your luck. Bemoaning suffering just doesn't work. The most catastrophic ideologies, from communism to fascism, revolved around a promise to end suffering in its tracks. But suffering is inevitable. The world is random and chaotic, and regardless of how much time and money you throw at any problem, failure can never be ruled out.

But this does not mean that those who succeed are simply "lucky." By the law of large numbers, over a lifetime each of us will experience equal amounts of good and bad luck. A successful person learns to mitigate their bad luck

and maximally capitalize on their good luck.

To win the marathon of life, you have to learn not to blame yourself for things beyond your control. Judge your decisions based on what you knew at the time. Accept the lottery. I once heard a prayer that has stuck with me for all these years: "Lord, give me the strength to change what I can, the patience to accept what I can't, and the wisdom to know which is which."

When you gain the wisdom to reserve your mental energy for the challenges within your grasp, soon enough, obstacles begin to melt away. This turn for the better isn't the universe finally "favoring" you. Rather, a clearer mind enables better choices and outcomes, leading again to that same positive inertia.

Perception of luck is a catch-22: in order to "have good luck," you first need to reject the concept altogether.

3. Create a System to Withstand the Storm

We know that small steps add up, but we also know that entropy and chaos are inevitable. From time to time, the flames of entropy will consume years' worth of accomplishments in an instant. That's the second law of thermodynamics: tearing down is always easier than building up.

Weathering the storm requires a system. A system is any organized means of accomplishing your goals and living your life. It may be something as simple as a daily ledger where you commit a certain amount of time to studying or working. It could also be a complex algorithm you use to decide what goal to prioritize next.

The system need not be perfect. In fact, it must be fluid enough to be constantly evaluated and re-

instead embrace possibilities. They can find their passion, incubate innovative ideas, and build new enterprises that are personally meaningful and societally valuable. They can see themselves as agents of change in the world rather than victims of it.

It's a scary time for parents of today's college students, as this cohort experiences rising rates of mental illness and a prevailing college culture that emphasizes fragility over self-empowerment. Fortunately, parents can encourage their college-age children to be strong, resilient, and focused on being active change agents and value creators in their own lives.

Kerry McDonald is a senior education fellow at the Foundation for Economic Education and author of "Unschooling: Raising Curious, Well-Educated Children Outside the Conventional Classroom." She lives in Cambridge, Mass., with her husband and four children. This article was originally published on FEE.org



A 2018 survey by the American College Health Association found that 63 percent of college students reported feeling overwhelming anxiety over the previous year.

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The Lessons Scandals Teach

Two ancient Chinese paintings on humility and integrity



"Tao Gu Presents a Poem," by Tang Yin. Hanging scroll, ink and colors on silk, 66 1/2 inches by 40 1/4 inches. National Palace Museum in Taipei, Taiwan.

MIKE CAI

Scandals allure and entice us. While scandalous events are feverishly debated today, the ancient Chinese used such incidents as subjects of art, often to teach moral lessons. These incidents became timeless through art and thereby offered insights into ancient Chinese thought and values that remain relevant to modern-day society.

Continued on Page 16



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POETRY

My Heart Is Like a Singing Bird

EMILY DICKINSON and CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

JEFF MINICK

Both women were born within five days of each other in 1830. Both came from families prominent in their communities.

As young teenagers, both suffered a breakdown and subsequent melancholia. As adults, both became caretakers for family members.

Both suffered at times from ill-health. Both were deeply spiritual. Both remained unmarried.

And both were two of the greatest poets of the 19th century.

Though her verse was little known while she lived, many critics today rank Emily Dickinson (1830-1886) as one of the world's finest English-language poets. Born in Amherst, Massachusetts, a town she rarely left, Dickinson had a happy childhood, especially while attending school. Her father was an attorney with an interest in politics—he served a single term in the House of Representatives—and the townspeople respected the family for their contributions to the community. Emily had a younger sister, Lavinia, and an older brother, Austin.

Across the Atlantic, her contemporary in Great Britain, Christina Rossetti (1830-1894), won acclaim for her verse while she lived. Her father was a political exile from Italy, a poet, and a teacher. Rossetti's mother taught her at home and later, because of the family's straitened financial circumstances, began instructing other students as well. Rossetti had two brothers, Dante Gabriel, a well-known painter and poet, and William, also a writer. Her

sister, Maria, worked for a time as a live-in governess, but like her siblings took up the pen.

As adults, Rossetti and Dickinson lived very different lives. Fewer than a dozen of Dickinson's poems were published during her lifetime, while writers and critics hailed Rossetti as the successor to Elizabeth Barrett Browning. In Amherst, Dickinson gained a reputation for various eccentricities, maintained most of her friendships by correspondence, and became such a recluse in her later years that she rarely spoke to visitors except through a closed door. Rossetti reveled in the company of others and was part of a large circle of friends, including the Pre-Raphaelites, which her brother Dante Gabriel had helped found. She also

Their deep faith also found a voice in their works.

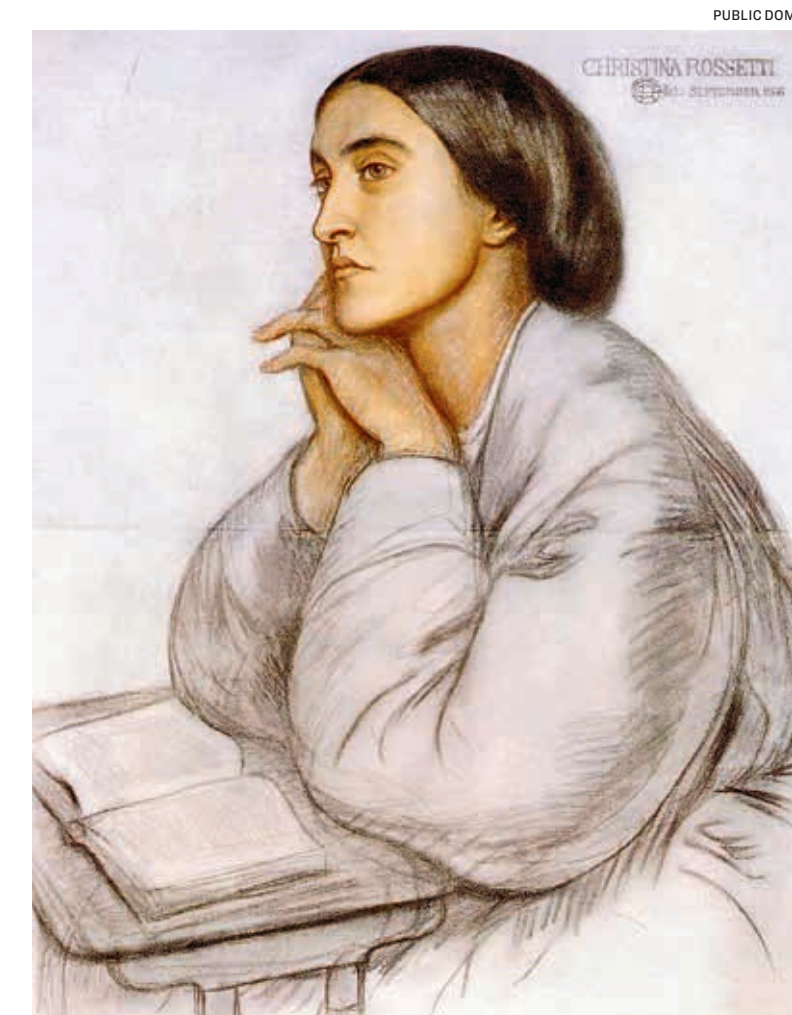
performed charity work, including 11 years as a volunteer worker in a home for former prostitutes.

Despite these differences, we find in these two poets several shared interests. Both had a love for nature and a sharp eye for describing its bounty. Dickinson drew much of her inspiration from the large grounds surrounding her home, resulting in poems like "I Taste a Liquor Never Brewed." Though a child of London, Rossetti spent time as a young girl on her grandfather's cottage 30 miles from the city, developing there a lifelong delight in the natural world.

Their deep faith also found a voice in their works. Rossetti was a practicing Anglo-Catholic whose devotional poetry often reveals a sensual thirst for the Divine. In "Like as the Hart Desireth the Waterbrooks," she writes:



A daguerreotype taken in December 1846 or early 1847; the only authenticated portrait of Emily Dickinson after childhood. Amherst College Archives & Special Collections.



A portrait of Christina Rossetti, September 1866, by her brother Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Andrew Lloyd Webber Collection.

My heart is yearning;
Behold my yearning heart,
And lean low to satisfy,
Its lonely beseeching cry,
For Thou its fullness art...

Because of her self-imposed exile from public life and an aversion to organized religion, Dickinson never attended church as an adult. She would be one of those who today describe themselves as spiritual rather than religious, as demonstrated in "Some Keep the Sabbath Going to Church."

Some keep the Sabbath going to Church –
I keep it, staying at Home –
With a Bobolink for a Chorister –
And an Orchid, for a Dome –

That death was a common topic in the poetry of both women should come as no surprise. With its high infant mortality rates and the inability of the medical community to ward off diseases and infections now eas-

ily treated, the 19th century was no stranger to the hearse and the graveyard. From the maudlin to the austere and profound, much of the verse of that age mourn the loss of loved ones and contemplates the mysteries beyond this world.

Both Dickinson and Rossetti wrote poems in which they envisioned their own demise. In one of her best-known poems, "Remember," Rossetti writes:

Remember me when I am gone away,
Gone far away into the silent land;
When you can no more hold me by the hand,
Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.
Remember me when no more day by day
You tell me of our future that you plan'd:
Only remember me; you understand
It will be late to counsel then or pray.
Yet if you should forget me for a while
And afterwards remember, do not grieve:
For if the darkness and corruption leave
A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,
Better by far you should forget and smile

Than that you should remember and be sad.

Two of Dickinson's poems on death typically find a home in our anthologies of literature. The first, "Because I Could Not Stop for Death," recounts the journey of the poet riding in a carriage with Death toward a graveyard and "Eternity," arriving eventually at a "House that seemed a Swelling of the Ground." In "I Heard a Fly Buzz When I Died," Dickinson addresses the arrival of death at a bedside:

I heard a Fly buzz – when I died –
The Stillness in the Room
Was like the Stillness in the Air –
Between the Heaves of Storm –
The Eyes around – had wrung them dry –
And Breaths were gathering firm
For that last Onset – when the King
Be witnessed – in the Room –
I willed my Keepsakes – Signed away
What portion of me be
Assignable – and then it was

There interposed a Fly –
With Blue – uncertain – stumbling Buzz –
Between the light – and me –
And then the Windows failed – and then
I could not see to see –

In Emily Dickinson and Christina Rossetti, we find kindred spirits: women hard-pressed by familial obligations and interior struggles, two poets who never met but whose written words reveal shared passions.

Christina Rossetti once wrote, "My heart is like a singing bird." Read the verse of these two women, preferably aloud, and you will hear them singing still.

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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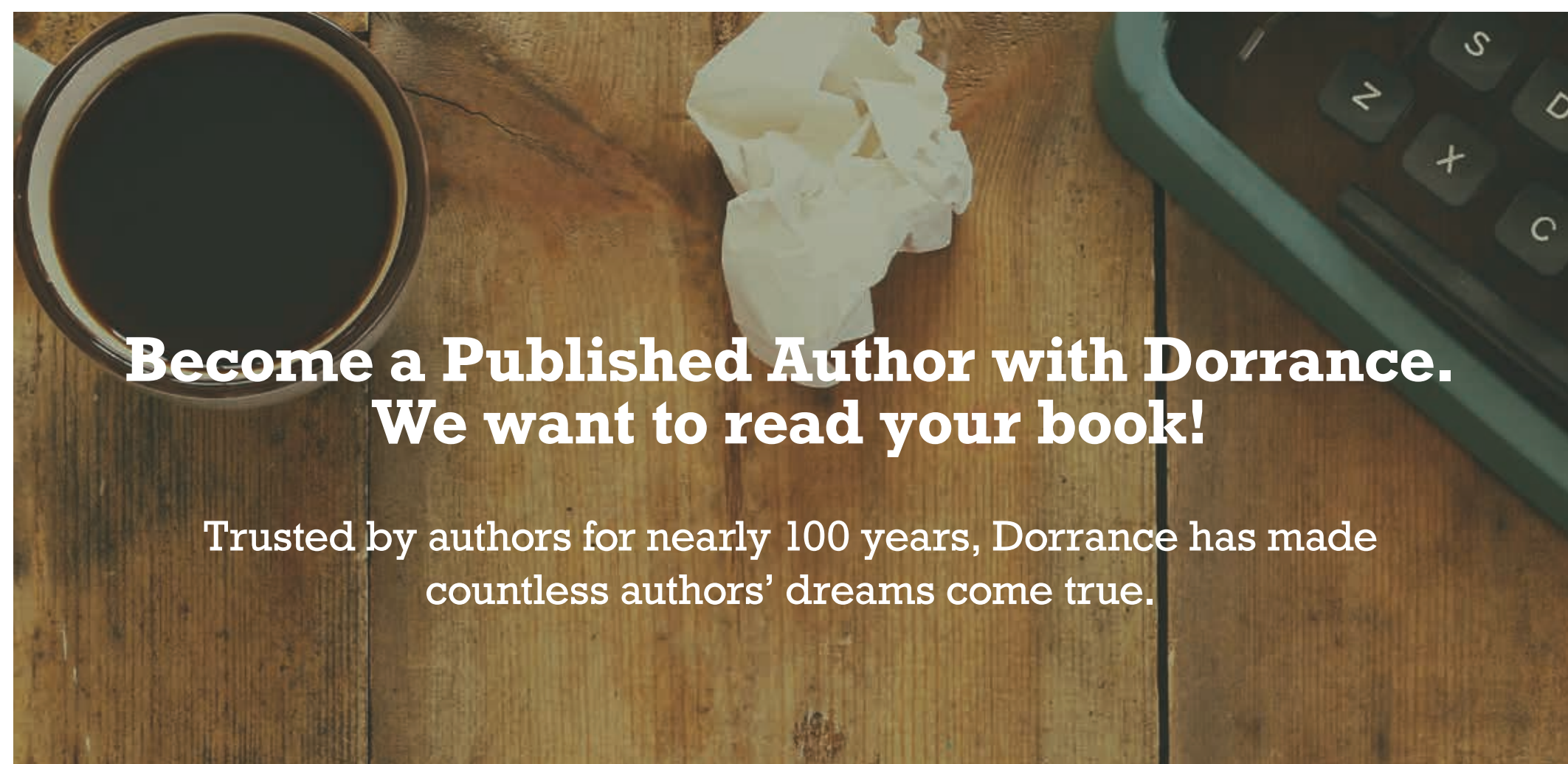
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FINE ARTS

The Lessons Scandals Teach

Two ancient Chinese paintings on humility and integrity

Continued from Page 13

During the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), artists often depicted women as a common motif. Among these artists, Tang Yin (1470–1524) and Qiu Ying (1494–1552), who were two of the Four Great Ming Masters, featured court ladies and courtesans in their works and drew inspiration from past scandals for their themes.

With symbolism and allegories that went beyond mere depiction of the outward beauty of the ladies, Tang Yin and Qiu Ying provided the ancient Chinese with opportunities to reflect on their own characters and their paintings served as reminders to uphold integrity.

A Rendezvous With Humility

Tang Yin's "Tao Gu Presents a Poem" depicts a seemingly innocent encounter between Tao Gu and a courtesan. The setting is when the Song Dynasty (960–1279) was first establishing itself as a central power, and the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms (908–979) were disintegrating.

Tao Gu (903–970) was an official from the Song court and served as a diplomat to the Southern Tang empire (937–975), which was one of the Ten Kingdoms. Coming from the Song court, Tao Gu always assumed an air of arrogance as he faced the Southern Tang ruler Li Houzhu.

Outraged by Tao Gu's insolence, Li Houzhu contrived a scheme to expose Tao Gu's impudent behavior. The ruler sent a famous courtesan, Qin Ruolan, to seduce Tao Gu while he was traveling to the Southern Tang.

Courtesans like Qin Ruolan were essentially female entertainers who were not bound by marriage. As professional hostesses, they were highly educated in areas such as music, dance, and calligraphy, and one of their main roles was to use their talents to alleviate tension between scholars and officials in business settings.

In the painting, both Tao Gu and Qin Ruolan are portrayed in the middle of a tryst in a garden. However, as the story of the event tells us, Tao Gu is unaware of her courtesan status, as Qin Ruolan is disguised as an officer's daughter.

She wears an embroidered blouse and sits with her legs crossed as she elegantly plucks the strings of a pipa, which is a four-stringed, pear-shaped instrument traditionally associated with courtesans.

Artists Tang Yin and Qiu Ying provided the ancient Chinese with opportunities to reflect on their own characters.



A detail from "Tao Gu Presents a Poem," by Tang Yin. Hanging scroll, ink and colors on silk, 66 1/2 inches by 40 1/4 inches. National Palace Museum in Taipei, Taiwan.

At first sight, their encounter is a seemingly decorous one, but a closer look reveals otherwise.

Tao intently gazes at her as he listens to her play, with a brush and some paper beside him.

The story reveals that he, enamored by her beauty and losing himself in the music, composes a poem as a gift for her. Since courtesans were stigmatized by society and did not occupy a high status, his behavior would have been seen as indiscreet and a breach of ancient Chinese etiquette.

Symbols in the Details

Tang Yin subtly portrays the intimacy of the meeting with hints and clues. Behind Qin Ruolan is a painted screen, which sequesters the couple in a secluded space. In the lower left, a child hides behind some garden rocks to eavesdrop on their conversation, indicating the unseemly nature of the situation. A burning candle in between the two further accentuates the secrecy of the rendezvous and suggests that it is nightfall.

In addition, meticulously painted garden motifs are incorporated into the scenery. The couple sits under the shade of a willow tree, the dangling foliage being a symbol for a woman's hair. In the foreground, several plantains sprout from the ground, symbolizing her beauty.

Tang Yin also included some bamboo shoots in right periphery of the painting. While bamboo is associated with the value of integrity, here it is situated away from the main scene, signifying Tao Gu's inappropriate behavior.

The story ends the next day when the Southern Tang ruler, Li Houzhu, hosts a banquet for Tao Gu after he arrives. Again, Tao puts on a façade of condescension and conceit. Li Houzhu then asks Qin Ruolan to come forth and perform a song with lyrics from the poem that Tao had written for her.

Tao, now ridiculed in front of everyone by a courtesan, loses his dignity and feels humiliated. Soon after, his status as an official diminishes.

Thus, in this painting, the importance of the ancient Confucian value of humility is the theme hinted at. Tao Gu felt like he was above everyone in the Southern Tang Kingdom since he came from a more powerful empire. However, acting in a conde-

scending way did not earn him respect, but rather made him appear foolish and led to his downfall in the end.

Confucius said, "Humility is the solid foundation of all virtues." Indeed, the ancient Chinese believed that a Confucian leader should be unassuming, humble, and empathetic, and one who listens to people and is always sensitive to their needs. Only with these qualities could a leader be truly influential and inspirational.

A Portrait of Integrity

Qiu Ying's "Spring Morning in the Han Palace" is a long handscroll depicting court ladies in the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.–A.D. 220) palace. The handscroll opens on the left with the Han palace gates and takes us through opulent architecture and courtyards, with trees and garden rocks interspersed between the buildings. The first few scenes give us a glimpse of palatial life as elegant court ladies engage in various leisurely activities.

At the outskirts of the palace, one lady leans over the rails with her children to watch the fish in the lake. Two peacocks anxiously await their meal as a lady tosses food at them.

Here, court ladies are gathering to form an ensemble and play musical instruments such as the lute and pipa. One lady adjusts and tunes the strings of a zither while a second lady unwraps another zither and is about to join in. To the right, two ladies have some snacks while others appear to be dancing to the music.

The status of the ladies can be differentiated by their hair adornments; the higher-ranking court ladies had fancier coiffures with jade and gold hairpins, while the maids had plainer hairstyles.

Moving further along the handscroll, we see a court lady walk up the stairs while carrying a sheng, which is a Chinese reed instrument made of numerous pipes. Her posture and the manner in which she stumbles up signify the traditional practice of foot binding. To the left, several ladies arrange flowers, while two ladies at the upper left enjoy a novel.

In another scene, the court ladies play a game of weiqi, which is an ancient Chinese board game. To the left, some are preparing a roll of newly woven silk, while directly above, some are weaving an intricate tapestry. Beside them is a mother playing with her two children.



Court artist Mao Yanshou paints the lady Wang Zhaojun in "Spring Morning in the Han Palace" by Qiu Ying. National Palace Museum in Taipei, Taiwan.

A Swindle

So far, these depictions present the harmonious side of court life. But the next scene shows the more competitive aspect of court life. Qiu Ying has actually painted a narrative depicting the concubines of Emperor Yuan of the Han Dynasty.

It was an ancient Chinese custom for the emperor to be presented with portraits of the women at his court before meeting with them so that he could decide whom to choose as a consort.

The scandal depicted involved one particular court lady.

In order to attract the emperor's attention, the court ladies often bribed court artist Mao Yanshou to paint them more beautiful than they actually were. One court lady, Wang Zhaojun, out of her righteous heart, refused to bribe the artist. As revenge, Mao Yanshou depicted her as ugly, with moles on her face.

In the painting, Wang Zhaojun sits in

front of a screen as the artist paints her portrait. The other concubines on the side bicker and gossip among themselves as they watch the painting progress.

One lady jealously peeks around the back of the screen to spy on the scene. Two eunuchs in the foreground converse with each other with smirks on their faces, as they are aware of the bribes and of Mao Yanshou's fraudulence. Eunuchs were castrated men who guarded court women to ensure that they weren't impregnated by anyone but the emperor.

The story goes that upon seeing Mao Yanshou's distorted portrait, Emperor Yuan never visited Wang Zhaojun, and she remained a lady-in-waiting of low status.

One day, the ruler of the Xiongnu empire from the north came to the Han court to seek a friendly relationship through marriage. The emperor, who saw the smaller empire as full of barbarians, chose Wang Zhaojun as the bride, believing that

Qiu Ying has actually painted a narrative depicting the concubines of Emperor Yuan of the Han Dynasty.

Mike Cai is a graduate of the New York Fei Tian Academy of the Arts and the University of California-Berkeley.

she was the least attractive of his ladies. However, only when she was summoned did Emperor Yuan realize that she was actually the most beautiful woman at court. But it was too late; the offer had been made. Enraged by Mao Yanshou's deceit, the emperor ordered the artist to be executed.

This scene in the painting warns against the sins of bribery and emphasizes the significance of the Confucian values of justice and righteousness. By willingly accepting bribes and harming Wang Zhaojun's chances at court, the artist determined his own fate.

Confucius said, "The superior man is aware of righteousness; the inferior man is aware of advantage." Confucian thought emphasizes having the moral acumen to make decisions based on the responsibility to do good rather than being swayed by gain and profit. Only with a virtuous heart can there be beauty in the character.



"Spring Morning in the Han Palace" by Qiu Ying. National Palace Museum in Taipei, Taiwan.



Court ladies play a board game.

MARC BRENNER

THEATER REVIEW

The Insidious Poison of Faithlessness



'Betrayal'

Bernard B. Jacobs Theatre
242 W. 45th St., New YorkTickets
212-239-6200 or Telecharge.comRunning Time
1 hour, 30 minutes
(no intermission)Closes
Dec. 8

The audience sees what basically amounts to a slow and inexorable train wreck these people make of their lives.

(L-R) Charlie Cox, Zawe Ashton, and Tom Hiddleston star in "Betrayal," pictured here in London's Harold Pinter Theatre. The sparseness and muted colors of the set and costumes focus audience attention on the nuances of the characters' relationships.

JUDD HOLLANDER

NEW YORK—By the end of the Broadway revival of Harold Pinter's 1978 play "Betrayal," there are no winners, only survivors. The work has arrived in New York, with the cast intact, after an acclaimed run in London.

As gallery owner Emma (Zawe Ashton) explains to her former lover Jerry (Charlie Cox), her marriage of more than a decade to Robert (Tom Hiddleston) appears to have come to an end. During this marriage, there have been infidelities on both sides, most importantly the married Jerry's seven-year affair with Emma.

Emma and Robert have come completely clean with each other, much to the consternation of Jerry, who is Robert's oldest friend. Jerry wonders how he will be able to face Robert now that the truth

has come out.

With this information as a starting point, the play unfolds in an intricate but nonlinear fashion. It flashes back in time, and then creeps forward a bit before going back even further as the interactions between these three are explored. For "Betrayal" is not only about the eventual collapse of Emma and Robert's marriage. It's about the relationships that Emma, Robert, and Jerry have with one another, and how each is tested in its own way.

While the play mostly explores the Emma and Jerry side of the triangle, it's made perfectly clear that Robert is no angel either. The audience sees what basically amounts to a slow and inexorable train wreck these people make of their lives. And we learn as well of those who become collateral damage: the unseen Judith, Jerry's wife; and the children

from the two marriages.

One of the strongest elements of Jamie Lloyd's direction was the decision to strip down the production and keep all three characters on stage for most of the play, even when all three aren't in a particular scene. Any character not involved in a sequence is positioned so that his or her presence is still clearly felt—as though the third person is always in the thoughts of the other two.

The scenic design by Soutra Gilmore works very well here. Her set, for the most part, consists of only two straight-backed chairs and an occasional prop. The stark lighting design by Jon Clark more than ably sets the mood. The elements all come together perfectly, particularly during the play's final moments.

It is to Pinter's credit that because of the way the narrative unfolds, the audience knows more of what's going on and is able to interpret cer-

tain comments or actions quite differently from that of the characters themselves. This dynamic becomes especially clear during a hilarious scene with Robert and Jerry at lunch, when they express feelings of anger and bewilderment. Eddie Arnold adds some extra comic relief here as a waiter.

Hiddleston comes off as the most sympathetic of the three leads, despite his character's earlier self-proclaimed shortcomings. The pain is clearly etched on his face during an emotionally devastating, physically quiet scene where exactly what this betrayal means comes through in full force.

Cox brings some interesting light-heartedness to the story as Jerry, though completely unintentional from the point of view of the character. Jerry is somewhat dim, either due to his actual blind spots, such as his attempting to claim the moral

high when he has no business doing so, or because he can't fully express himself without revealing something he wants to keep hidden.

Ashton does a quite good job in bringing Emma to life, both as a sensual being and a person who does not want to let herself be defined by the two men. It's also the most difficult role in the play, as Pinter is more interested in explaining what is happening rather than the character's motives.

An excellent study of human failings, this revival of "Betrayal" is nothing less than engrossing. The only true winners are those fortunate enough to see this revival before it concludes its limited run.

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

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