

THE EPOCH TIMES LIFE & TRADITION

When it comes to education, Sam Sorbo doesn't pull any punches. She's a tireless advocate for homeschooling.

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The Joys of Marriage

BARBARA DANZA

Back in the day, it was considered a given that when you grew up, you got married and started a family. That was thought to be the best thing to do—even the right thing to do.

Today, in certain segments of society, young people are being discouraged from getting married. Whether it's through talk of "oppression," fear about divorce rates, pessimism about the future, or simply a lack of respect for marriage, such messages do a disservice to individuals and society as a whole.

As my own wedding anniversary approaches, I see, personally, what an enormous blessing my marriage has been to my husband, to me, and to our family. I couldn't be more grateful for my marriage.

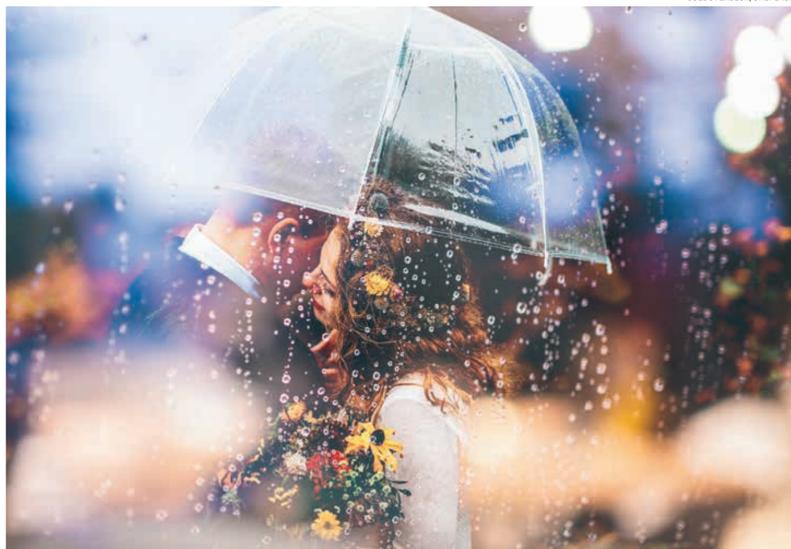
While we thankfully each have the freedom to choose the path in life we take, I'd like to offer some encouragement to those considering marriage. Marriage is a beautiful, challenging, life-giving venture, complete with ups and downs, challenges and failures. It is a worthwhile pursuit that has the potential to enhance life for everyone and lead to some of the richest experiences life has to offer.

Here are some of the best things about marriage.

Settling Down

Some may consider the idea of "settling down" antiquated, but I believe it's something needed by people today more than ever. The peace and security that comes from settling down, committing your life to someone else, and sharing your future is wonderful. Suddenly you both set aside the pursuits of the single life and enjoy an expanded capacity to reach a higher potential—individually and as a new family.

What's more, establishing a home together with your spouse is such a delight. Enjoying the simplest of pleasures like coming home to each other each night, sharing your home with family and friends, and



The deep connection found in marriage can only be forged through dedication, loyalty, compassion, and time.

enjoying a companionship like no other makes each day better.

Improving Oneself

I once heard marriage described as two people handing over their whole lives to each other—each entrusting literally their lives to the other. So, the responsibility that is given to each spouse is enormous and something to be taken seriously.

Remembering this puts day-to-day life in perspective and gives marriage the appropriate gravity it deserves. In the face of little trifles or major challenges, remembering what your spouse has entrusted you with can inform how you handle what's before you. No marriage is without difficulty. Sharing your life with someone else requires a higher level of character. Through every petty argument or monumental struggle, if you look for the lessons you can take away, you'll continually grow.

What's more, you and your spouse will know each other better than anyone else can. Appreciating and encouraging each others' strengths also fosters personal improvement.

You can learn more about yourself married than you ever could on your own. I can say, personally, my husband has helped me to become a better person.

Dividing and Conquering

Life is demanding. It sure is nice to take it all

on as a team.

My husband and I have, over the years, established individual responsibilities that we both happily embrace and that make life much easier. I appreciate him for all that he does and he appreciates me. It's a beautiful thing.

Deep Connection

The connection with your spouse will grow to be like no other.

My husband and I have known each other for more than half of our lives. We know each others' strengths and weaknesses, struggles and successes, dreams and fears, joys and sorrows. We are partners, best friends, and family all wrapped into one. Such a deep connection can only be forged through dedication, loyalty, compassion, and time. As we move through life together, it's such a blessing.

No marriage is without difficulty. Sharing your life with someone else requires a higher level of character.

In It Together

Facing life's ups and downs with someone by your side makes the joys more joyful and the sorrows easier to handle. Whether it is a flat tire, a career accomplishment, the loss of a loved one or the birth of a new baby, you're in it together.

The Birth of a Family

Speaking of new babies, my favorite thing about getting married is that it actually marks the birth of a new family. Our now four-person crew is my life's focus and more wonderful than I could have ever dreamed. Of course, our family extends to both of our extended families. Family is the center of life, and marriage is what makes it flourish.



Busy, Cranky, or Tired? Give Yourself a Break

BARBARA DANZA

For many families, this time of year has a way of being especially busy. We may find ourselves shaving off time from sleep, lowering our standards of nutrition, and running around to meet every deadline and expectation.

Newsflash: this is not sustainable. How about a break?

Before you laugh and laugh and look away, consider for a moment the possibility of taking an actual break. Is it possible? I mean, if your life depended on you and your family taking a day (or two) off—from work, from school, from activities, from obligations—what would you do to make that happen? It's not actually impossible, right? You could do it if you had to.

The thing is, a break can be more beneficial to you, your family, and the responsibilities you're juggling than you might realize.

Think about it—when everyone's harried, cranky,

malnourished, and tired—how well are you really operating in all of the roles you play?

Conversely when, on occasion, you allow yourself to press pause, slow down, think, rest, and recuperate, you fuel your ability to aim for excellence. What's more, taking a break as a family exercises your personal agency to honor your priorities, reconnect, and share valuable time together.

What might a day off look like?

You'll want to make it one that is rejuvenating, joy—



A day trip to the zoo or museum, to see a show, to an amusement park, or whatever lights up your crew may be just the reset you're looking for.

ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK



Perhaps your family would benefit from spending time in nature. Perhaps completely disconnecting from digital devices would give everyone's mind time to calm down and get clear.

ful, and that brings you and your family peace.

Perhaps your children need a day to simply play. Perhaps your family would benefit from spending time in nature. Perhaps completely disconnecting from digital devices would give everyone's mind time to calm down and get clear.

Perhaps part of the day could involve tidying and restocking the kitchen with nutritional options. Perhaps your family would enjoy a trip to the bookstore or library and spend the rest of the day reading.

Perhaps your family needs to let loose and just have fun together. A day trip to the zoo or museum, to see a show, to an amusement park, or whatever lights up your crew may be just the reset you're looking for.

At the end of the day, be sure to wind down well with quiet, soft lighting, gentle music, and relaxation.

Stepping away from the grind can bring many unexpected benefits. You may gain a spark of inspiration, learn something new, feel your body and mind settle down, laugh like you haven't laughed in a long time, or simply experience the type of joy that is most meaningful to you.

Our "hustle" culture makes the idea of a break seem like a foreign concept. Give yourself permission. It's not only OK to take a break—but advantageous to not just yourself and your family, but to your work, your responsibilities, and your productivity.

Go ahead. Give yourself a break.



"Greenwood Lake, Autumn on the Hudson," 1875, Jasper Francis Cropsey.

A Season of Rust and Gold

Waxing poetic about autumn

JEFF MINICK

Autumn, wrote poet and journalist William Cullen Bryant, is "the year's last, loveliest smile," and many of us would agree. Autumn is the season burnished by the vanishing heat of summer and the impending chill of winter. The hillsides glow with their mantles of scarlet and gold, the brisk air invites jackets and sweaters, and the earth after a rainfall becomes pungent with the perfume of fallen leaves.

Given the treasures of this season, we might rightly guess that our poets have spilled a river of ink in addressing its magic.

In an earlier age, when sickle and plow were the tools of so many of our ancestors, poets celebrated autumn as a time of harvest and plenty. Here, for example, is the last stanza of "When the Frost Is on the Punkin" by James Whitcomb Riley, once a popular poet who composed some of his poems in dialect and whose chief claim to fame these days is "Little Orphant Annie."

Then your apples all is gathered, and the ones a feller keeps Is poured around the cellar-floor in red and yellor heaps; And your cider-makin' 's over, and your wimmern-folks is through With their mince and apple-butter, and theyr souse and sausage, too! ... I don't know how to tell it—but of sich a thing could be As the Angels wantin' boardin', and they'd call around on me—I'd want to 'commode 'em—all the whole-indurin' flock— When the frost is on the punkin and the fodder's in the shock.

Riley's lines capture the goodness and blessings of a well-stocked pantry, as do those of Henry Alford's "Come, Ye Thankful People, Come," a hymn still sung in churches today:

Come, ye thankful people, come, Raise the song of harvest home! All is safely gathered in, Ere the winter storms begin; God, our Maker, doth provide For our wants to be supplied; Come to God's own temple, come; Raise the song of harvest home!

Other poets employ autumn as a

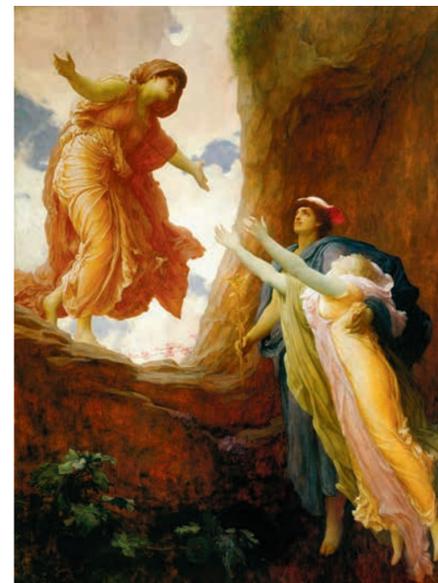
metaphor for aging and death. This comparison harks back to ancient Greece and Rome. In Greek mythology, for example, fall is the season when Demeter, goddess of the harvest, bids a final, glorious farewell to her daughter, Persephone, whose return to her life in Hades for three months ignites Demeter's grief and leads to lifeless winter. Until Persephone's return in the spring, the fields remain barren, the bereft woodlands and heath stripped of their flowers and green leaves.

Shakespeare's Sonnet 73, likely written when the poet was in his early 30s, famously makes this comparison between human death and the receding of the earth into winter:

That time of year thou mayst in me behold When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang Upon those boughs which shake against the cold, Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang. In me thou see'st the twilight of such day As after sunset fadeth in the west; Which by and by black night doth take away, Death's second self, that seals up all in rest. In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire, That on the ashes of his youth doth lie, As the death-bed, whereon it must expire, Consumed with that which it was nourish'd by. This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong, To love that well, which thou must leave ere long.

Here the poet compares "that time of year ... when yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang" to a man in the "twilight of such day/As after sunset fadeth in the west." He also gives us this wonderful image of trees in late autumn: "Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang." Here, too, is the narrator's grateful homage to a beloved, a thank you note in verse for loving strong and well.

And some poets simply celebrate the beauty of the season. In one of his better-known works, "Autumn," John Keats takes his listeners—we should read this one aloud—into the heart of an autumnal countryside:



(Top) "The Return of Persephone," 1891, Sir Frederic Leighton. In Greek mythology, Demeter, goddess of the harvest, bids goodbye to her daughter Persephone, who returns in the spring.

(Middle) James Whitcomb Riley, circa 1913. (Above) A 1937 portrait of Thomas Wolfe by Carl Van Vechten.

"Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness, Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun; Conspiring with him how to load and bless With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run; To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees, And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core; To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells With a sweet kernel; to set budding more, And still more, later flowers for the bees, Until they think warm days will never cease, For Summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells... Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they? Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,— While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day, And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue; Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn Among the river shallows,

borne aloft Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies; And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn; Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft; And gathering swallows twitter in the skies."

"Season of mists," "stubble-plains," "the small gnats mourn," "hedge-crickets sing"—this was a poet with a sharp eye for detail and a love for nature.

American writer Thomas Wolfe, whose prose often reads like poetry, adored autumn, celebrating it many times in his novels, its gaudy dress and its intimations of loss and death. In this passage from "Of Time and the River," Wolfe sings his praises of October:

"October had come again, and that year it was sharp and soon: frost was early, burning the green on the mountain sides to massed brilliant hues of blazing colours, painting the air with sharpness, sorrow and delight—and with October. Sometimes, and often, there was warmth by day, an ancient drowsy light, a golden warmth and pollinated haze in afternoon, but over all the earth there was the premonitory breath of frost, an exultancy for all men who were returning, a haunting sorrow for the buried men and for all those who were gone and would not come again."

Like Thomas Wolfe, we too celebrate this pathway from summer to winter. We drive into the mountains to observe the trees changing color, decorate our porches with pumpkins, heat apple cider on the stove, and listen to brown leaves skittering across the pavement of walkways and parking lots. Few of us are farmers, but we still "raise the song of harvest home" with Thanksgiving Day, and many among us honor the dead on All Souls Day.

And we can, if we wish, spend some time with the words some poets have put to paper, thereby enhancing our joy and pleasure in the season of rust and gold.

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.

NEIL PASRICHA

Reminds Us What Is Truly Important in a Chaotic World

CATHERINE YANG

Spend time with family. Enjoy nature. Read books.

These are ludicrously common-sense tips to help you enjoy life, but when Neil Pasricha voices them from a large stage in front of an audience of hundreds, 60 times a year, he gets thunderous applause.

"You know, the stuff that I'm teaching people is so obvious. But I think when they stand up and give me a standing ovation, it's because I'm helping to remind them what's actually important in life," Pasricha said.

Pasricha broke records with his first TED talk "The 3 A's of Awesome," and now he blogs, writes, and speaks around the world on intentional living. The talk put him in the category of "motivational speaker," which at first he disliked because it felt like a hollow title, but he's since re-evaluated what it is he brings to other people.

"I actually teach people to be happy," Pasricha said. He doesn't conduct studies or surveys, but he's read every positive psychology report he can get his hands on, and works to distill that information into things people can actually do in their day-to-day lives to

improve the way they live.

"It's so obvious when I say read a book, read a book on real paper, you think that's not obvious? But you know how many people do it? No one! Nobody does it!"

It's true—over a quarter of American adults read zero books in the past year, on any medium, and the results haven't improved in the last four years. The typical American reads four books a year, if you count audio books as well.

It helps, perhaps, that Pasricha can cite a score of studies to back up the obvious, the wisdom so well-worn it seems intuitive and just common sense.

"I got off the stage after a speech a few months ago, and a guy, a 50-year-old man, well-dressed executive, runs up to me and says, 'What's wrong with my son?'" Pasricha said.

He asked, and found out the son was high school valedictorian, captain of the football team, and got into Duke University with a full scholarship where he graduated with honors. Then on the first day of his full-time job, he got an email from his boss in a rude tone. He went home, cried in bed, and called his dad saying he couldn't go into work the next day—he was too devastated.



"You Are Awesome: How to Navigate Change, Wrestle With Failure, and Live an Intentional Life" by Neil Pasricha.

"I believe the culprit behind a lot of this low resilience is actually cellphones."

Neil Pasricha

Everyone, at some point, has to deal with failure and even tragedy, but building muscles of resilience can enable a virtuous cycle.

Shocking as it sounds, this is no longer unusual. The story merely solidified a theory Pasricha already had: we are losing the ability to be resilient.

Get Back Up

Pasricha had his own moment of emotional rock bottom—his wife at the time said she no longer loved him and asked for a divorce, and his best friend took his own life; two tragic events that occurred not long after one another.

For the first time in his life, he realized, "I have no ability to handle this."

He lost a lot of weight, he went through a lot of therapy, and he started writing the 1000 Awesome Things blog, just the latest in a long line of websites Pasricha had made, which out of the blue became a hit, leading to his TED talk and his path of intentional living.

"I worked myself slowly out of that hole, but to be honest with you, I recognized in myself someone who had very low resilience," Pasricha said.

In retrospect, it made sense.

"I was raised in the 80s—everybody got a gold star, and everybody got a participation ribbon, and everybody told me I was awesome—and I believed that," Pasricha said.

Then he took a look at his parents' lives, and realized they had experiences and perspectives a world apart.

"I recognized in their stories that resilience actually is a muscle that they had, and I eventually built when I had to, and which we all desperately need today," Pasricha said.

His latest book, "You Are Awesome: How to Navigate Change, Wrestle With Failure, and Live an Intentional Life," is all about resilience.

The fact of the matter is, everyone will at some point deal with failure, and even tragedy, whether it's the death of a loved one or terrible separation. The book, in nine chapters, is a step-by-step guide not just to climb your way out, but to build those muscles of resilience so these habits enable a virtuous cycle.

Value Your Family

When Pasricha gave his TED talk a decade ago, he stopped in the middle of the talk just to introduce his parents.

"I've been told I'm the only person ever in history to [do that]," he said. "And I didn't do that for any other reason than in East Indian culture your parents are such a huge part of your identity. And I just thought, hey I'll never have a better chance to say thank you to them, so I did that."

The book begins with a chapter about Pasricha's mother, and ends with a chapter about his father. They're deeply revealing personal stories. He talks about his mother's arranged marriage with a man she met once, how she gave up her own education for her brothers', and packed up to move to an entirely new country where she didn't speak the language and didn't know a soul, immediately after leaving her family to get married.

Throughout it all, his mother just kept adding a "dot-dot-dot" after any supposed setback. She didn't know anyone ... yet. She changed her story.

Pasricha's father moved to the first country he got an acceptance letter from, and had the mindset of being a lifelong student and teacher. Every situation was an opportunity



LEIA VITA

Neil Pasricha. One of the questions he gets asked the most often is how to be happy.

"The number one value I want society to embrace is re-value your family ... Be near them. Otherwise, this is partly what's driving so much loneliness."

Neil Pasricha

for connection and learning from strangers. From him, Pasricha learned to "never, never stop."

"Those are really, I believe, sort of one-sentence summaries for how my parents lived their lives," Pasricha said.

He admits they kept a lot of their life journals from him; it wasn't until his 20s when he had the idea to sit them down in front of a camera with their permission, and interview them deeply for five hours, that he got the full picture.

"I recommend everyone do this," he said. "I have [the] video on [my] laptop and it's one of my most prized possessions, which actually is a multiple-hour video of my parents. And through that interview process—because we never actually talk to our parents! We talk to our parents, but how often do you ask, 'What was it like moving to this country? How did it feel when you landed here? How did you learn to drive here? What were you scared of? How did you learn to process that fear?'"

"And then it turns out my parents met this woman, this 90-year-old woman next door named Edith who kind of took them in, and taught them how to buy baby stuff because they were having a baby. It was one of these stories of a woman who would have never been discovered," he said.

And this is not by any means limited to something worth knowing only when your parents have moved halfway around the world. Pasricha rattled off studies that indicate how social connection is the leading driver of happiness, and how the happiest societies with the most longevity around the world are those that value family. Yet we don't.

"We have lost our sense of family," Pasricha said. "We now fly somewhere for a good school, fly somewhere else for a great job, and fly somewhere else for a great promotion. You know what happens as a result? We only see each other on Thanksgiving and holidays."

"Live, please, live near your family. Have lunch with your mom. See your sister on Sundays. Make sure your sisters-in-law and brothers-in-law are part of your life," Pasricha said.

"The number one value I want society to embrace is re-value your family—dramatically increase the value of living and seeing your mom and your dad and your sister and your brothers and your sons and your daughters. Be near them. Otherwise, this is partly what's driving so much loneliness."

What's Distracting Us

You really need only to own a smartphone to sooner or later realize it's engineered to drain your energy and attention.

"I believe the culprit behind a lot of this low resilience is actually cellphones," Pasricha said.

"Cellphones are killing us. Cellphones are an addiction we all share today, and they are dramatically spiking our anxiety levels, our depression levels, and our loneliness levels.

"Cellphones, while they give us tremendous problems ... they are productivity killers; when you're on your cellphone, according to McKinsey, you spend 31 percent of your time bookmarking, prioritizing, switching tasks, meaning you don't actually do anything! You're just deciding what to do."

Rough Drafts: We All Need Editors

JEFF MINICK

In the days when I taught literature, history, and Latin to a boatload of homeschoolers, I hired juniors and seniors to grade tests, mark essays, or help with some of the younger students. I also employed one student every year not only to grade essays, but to edit some of my own writing. Sometimes that student and I would read aloud what I had written, looking for mistakes and awkward usage, while at other times she would read silently and alone, writing out suggestions for us to consider together.

On one occasion I was teaching a composition class of seventh- and

eighth graders. Standing beside me was a junior in high school—we'll call her Maggie—who was assisting with the class. I began telling a joke to the students—to this day I can't remember the joke—when suddenly I felt a whack on my shoulder. I looked over at Maggie, who had delivered that whack. She pursed her lips and shook her head. I laughed, and said to the class, "Well, I guess we won't be finishing that story." Later Maggie informed me I had told the joke in her class when she was younger, and she regarded it as inappropriate.

Guess who I hired to help edit the book I was working on?

I figured anyone bold enough to

whack her teacher was bold enough to tell me when a sentence wasn't working or a comma was out of place.

A note I recently received from an editor brought that young woman to mind. The editor, who is as meticulous as a seamstress when it comes to language, made me realize the value of a good critic. Like Maggie, she's not afraid to give me a figurative cuff of correction. Because I know the two of us share the same goal—a solid, accurate, and readable piece of writing—I treasure her comments.

Which brought another thought to mind: Maybe we all need editors—not in matters of writing, but

in matters of living.

Until my wife died 15 years ago, I had such an editor. Sometimes after I had finished talking on the phone with a friend or relative, or to my children, Kris would say, "You had that tone in your voice." I knew the tone she had identified—a little judgmental, a little harsh. The trouble is, I am tone-deaf to that tone, which means that for the years since Kris's death I have undoubtedly hurt or in-



If we are willing to listen and to accept criticism, a good personal editor can offer us tremendous benefits.

sulted others without realizing it.

Anyone who participates in social media understands why many of us might benefit from an editor. That woman who emails the boss what she believes to be a mild critique of a company decision walks into work on Monday and finds her employer stony-faced and glaring at her. She needed an editor. That guy who uses obscenities and snark to attack others in the comments section of a blog needs someone slapping him upside the head every minute or so. Those on dating sites who use 10-year-old pictures on their profiles or who claim to be nonsmokers when in fact they fire up 15 cigarettes a day need an editor.

Rough Drafts Need Editors ... and We're All Rough Drafts

In our daily routine, most of us could use an editor as well. We

wound a friend with something we say and failed to notice the crumpled smile on her face. We make a promise and then break it. We blithely unleash words—"I love you," "It wasn't your fault," "I'll get right on it," "I agree completely"—when in fact, deep down, we believe not a jot of what we've just said.

Of course, most of us have editors inside of us, that small voice warning us to guard our opinions and speech. We are also privy to the wisdom of sages from centuries past, those who admonish us to think before we speak, to count to 100 when angry, to tell the truth whenever possible, to be clear and precise in our speech.

Unfortunately, that interior editor, at least in my case, trots off on a coffee break from time to time, and there I am, sharing some story that

deserves a "Maggie whap," offending someone with a chance word or taking offense at some innocuous comment, creating misunderstanding because of my poor choice of language.

Self-editing is a necessary tool both for our relationships with others. Yet all too often that tool fails us.

Which is why writers have editors and why all of us might gain from a "personal editor."

4 Eyes (and 4 Ears) Can Be Better Than 2

If we are willing to listen and to accept criticism, a good personal editor can offer us tremendous benefits. Just like a magazine editor, a personal editor—a spouse, a parent, a friend—truly hears what we are saying, looks for and points out holes in our logic, and

offers sympathetic criticism. Like the magazine editor who wants to publish a piece as finely written as possible, our personal editor wants us to be as fine a human being as possible.

If we are wise, we listen to that person's comments and advice without taking offense. If we know she has our best interests at heart, if we can drop our defenses and truly hear her, we may receive one of the most valuable gifts of love and friendship.

And we can act as editors to others as well. If our daughter sits down with us, collapses into tears, and tells us she is pregnant, instead of jumping down her throat, we can listen to her, console her, ask questions, and help her face the future. If a friend makes a terrible mistake, disappointing his family and all those around him, we can

Digital screens and their blue light also inhibit melatonin, disrupting sleep on a physical level, and then there's a whole host of psychological ways in which smartphones impact people, including what Pasricha says is comparing our regular lives, the "director's cut," with everybody else's "greatest hits." The implication is anxiety, depression, and the low resilience so many people suffer from.

Rather than the serotonin and oxytocin chemical rewards we get from bonding with loved ones and being in nature, we chase quick hits of dopamine via endless notifications until we numb our pleasure receptors and whittle away at our resilience.

According to some studies, around a third of college students have clinical anxiety, a quarter of the population have a mental illness, and four out of five people are lonely—rates skyrocketing from just a decade or two ago. These spikes not only correlate with the rise of smartphone adoption, but plenty of research on screen addiction shows it's a serious and pressing problem.

"I'll tell you exactly why I know it's a problem—because I am definitely addicted to my cellphone," Pasricha said. "I am so addicted to my cellphone that the only recourse that I have—by the way, my phone is in black and white, I live in airplane mode, that's just how I have to live ... my only recourse is I give my wife my phone and I tell her to hide it from me."

"It's a huge problem. I know it lowers my resilience—if I'm on the phone at night before bed—I shouldn't be, but if I am—then guess what? I sleep terrible. Guess what I want to do in the morning? Jump on my phone. What's my fantasy football score? Did someone reply to my email? How many likes did my Instagram post get?"

"I'm worried about it for my own children. How do we handle failure or even perceive failure?" he said.

"The reason I know it's a problem is because I am suffering from it. I wrote this book for me, and for my kids," Pasricha said. "Add a dot-dot-dot, shift the spotlight, you know. If my wife were to leave me today, or a child will pass away, or my parent's in the hospital or something's happened, I'm going to have to quickly remember to see it as a step; shift the spotlight, tell myself a different story. These are ways I'm going to have to move forward."

In our chaotic world of constant communication, of endless "breaking news" cycles and scare-tactic headlines, reminders become necessary.

One of the things Pasricha gets asked most often is how to be happy.

"People forget that the model we grew up with on happiness is broken—we were taught that great work leads to big success and that leads to happiness," he said. "It turns out the model's backward, we need to be happy first, and then we do great work, and then once we do the great work, the big success follows."

"Once people get that—I teach them how to get it," Pasricha said. He talks them through things like reading 20 pages of fiction, deleting social media, journaling at night instead of being on your phone, and going on nature walks. It sounds simple, and it works—if you do it.

At these talks, Pasricha usually asks for volunteers to stand and make a public commitment to do these things—another study says that voicing that commitment publicly increases our follow-through tremendously—and he constantly gets emails from people who tell them it has worked.

"The umbrella term I use to define my own work is 'intentional living,'" he said. "All I spend my time on is thinking, writing, and speaking on how we can live the best possible 30,000 days of life that we get."

act like good editors, working with him to clean up the messy prose of his dire situation, probing his story with an objectivity tinted by sympathy, and guide him back to the right path.

Good editors strive to make good writing better. Good personal editors strive to make the good people they love better.

If you are fortunate enough to have such an editor in your life, count your blessings.

I sure miss mine.

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.

Sam Sorbo

HER CRUSADE TO EMPOWER PARENTS

CATHERINE YANG

When it comes to education, Sam Sorbo doesn't pull any punches.

She is a homeschooling mother of three and tireless advocate for homeschooling, out on a mission to inspire and empower parents.

But 10 years ago, it was a different story. Despite having studied biomedical engineering at Duke University, having traveled the world and experienced other cultures during her modeling career, and being able to speak five languages fluently, Sorbo felt inadequate to teach her second grader.

She's far from alone in her fears. For a long time now, it's been widely acknowledged that the public education system is failing our students. Parents, teachers, administrators, politicians, and the media all admit this freely, and have done so even more vocally once Common Core was implemented to disastrous effect. Yet, parents are under the illusion they're unable to do anything about it when they actually hold all the cards.

"What is it about a child turning 5 or 6 that automatically invalidates the parent as the child's primary teacher?" Sorbo asked. Parents who see how well she's done with homeschooling tell her oh, but they could never do that.

"These are parents of young kids who are like, 'I can't, I don't know how,'" Sorbo said. "The reason they don't know how is because they've been taught by the school system that they can't do anything that they haven't been formally instructed in, by a teacher at a blackboard."

She's here to challenge those fears.

The 'Substitute' Teacher

When parents sign up for public school, they drop their children off for almost eight hours a day to be taught by someone they'd never met until the day before classes start, but this is normal because this is what we're used to.

Sorbo had dropped her oldest off at pre-school, despite the tears, and she'd dropped her second off at pre-school a few years later, and felt guilty both times. Then she dropped them off at grade school, in the "good" school district where the family had moved to get into. It felt, as it does for most parents, that the child's education was now in the hands of the institution, as it should be.

But in reality, Sorbo was spending several hours a week volunteering at school. There were bake sales and fundraisers and buying markers and crayons for the classroom, being in the classroom as an assistant once a week, teaching art classes, and even cleaning.

And then once the kids were home, there are the hours of homework wrangling, after the children have already spent hours at school sitting in a desk, and are now tired and cranky and still don't understand the math worksheet, spending their precious few hours of quality time with their parents doing school work.

"This is a scam," Sorbo said.

Of course, she didn't realize it at the time. In fact, she spent years making excuses for the school and teachers, even as the evidence piled up.

One day, right by the beach, Sorbo had the horrible epiphany that she was in fact the substitute teacher. When she married her husband Kevin, known for his role in "Hercules" and the star of 50-plus films, she knew that for commitment to work they couldn't be a long-distance relationship, and the couple made the promise to never be apart for longer than two weeks. As a result, the family travels often, and so during the filming of "Soul Surfer," Sorbo was making sure her sons were completing their worksheets before going out to play.

Her son was complaining that the worksheets weren't even important, because the teacher often skipped them, and here she was forcing busy work on her children so the school could check a box and say work was done.

It took yet another event for her to make the decision to try homeschooling.

Her oldest had turned in five book reports by the middle of second grade, and it wasn't until February that Sorbo heard anything about them.

She was helping with clean-up after school



Kevin Sorbo, Sam Sorbo, and their children at the premiere of "Tinker Bell" at the El Capitan Theatre in Hollywood, Calif., on Oct. 19, 2008.

one day when she asked the teacher, "Hey, how are Braeden's book reports?"

"And without batting an eyelash she said, 'Oh, not very good,' which I found shocking, because I never received anything back," Sorbo said. She tapped out often and spoke with the teacher two or three times every week, but this was the first time she'd heard there was a problem.

"So I started to make excuses for her because I liked her, and I wanted to think well of her. And every excuse made her look worse," Sorbo said.

After a lot of difficult deliberation, she decided to try homeschooling for just one semester. Kevin didn't exactly welcome the idea with open arms; he'd had a public school upbringing, and great memories of it. Homeschooling is a vastly countercultural thing for most Americans.

But it was clear the school wasn't getting the job done, so they tried it for a semester.

"I'd love to say that I never looked back, but that would be a lie," Sorbo said.

Little Soldiers

In retrospect, her homeschooling had been a tremendous success, but she still carried that feeling of inadequacy. A year and a half later, she sent her two sons to a private school where their placement tests showed that Sorbo's do-it-yourself education put them two grade levels ahead in some subjects. Unfortunately, that school let her down as well, when she came in for a parent-teacher meeting six weeks later and realized the school was almost entirely focused on training behavior, not excelling in academics.

"[The teacher] regaled me with how well-behaved my child was... he sits quietly, always raises his hands, he doesn't cause problems, he doesn't cause a ruckus, never interrupts," Sorbo said. The teacher even proudly told her she'd sat him next to a rowdier child in hopes that he would have a calming effect, and it worked.

In fact, it was the opposite of what Sorbo wanted to hear. "I'd love to hear that he interrupted, because he's so eager to learn," she said. And not a word about learning, until she asked, how were his academics? "Fine." Just six weeks ago he had loved learning.

"It was actually a wonderful experiment. Because after six weeks, I realized the school couldn't show me anything better than what I was doing. And once I had that realization, everything started to unravel," Sorbo said. "I was convinced then, that not only was I adequate, I was, in fact, uniquely gifted to be the educator for my children," Sorbo said. "That was extraordinarily empowering."

The following Monday, she went back to homeschooling—but it wasn't easy.

"My middle child, who was a math wizard... I put math in front of him and said, 'Let's do this.' And he started to cry and said 'No, Mommy, I can't do it. It's too hard, I can't do it,'" Sorbo said.

"I'll tell you something—my heart broke," Sorbo said. Her son Shane is like her in many ways, she said, they both love math. "They somehow had ruined math for him."

She put it aside, heartbroken, and they worked on other things while they took a week off math. And when they approached it again, she went back to chapters that would have already been taught in school and re-taught it to him.

"And he did it and loved it and it all worked out. But I think that the message is that we are so brainwashed. We put our kids in the system, we do not understand the sacrifice that we are making by doing this," Sorbo said.



(L-R) Shane Sorbo, Braeden Sorbo, and Sam Sorbo in the film "Let There Be Light." Sam Sorbo co-wrote the screenplay.

Even though we know the schools are failing, we can't bring ourselves to action, and Sorbo says this is because we've been trained not to blame the schools.

"We buy into this idea that the school is responsible for educating the children, but that's not actually the case," Sorbo said. "And in court cases, where parents have sued [the schools for not teaching their child to read], parents have lost every lawsuit because ultimately it's the parents' responsibility."

Once Sorbo began homeschooling, she started documenting the journey, and a few years in she published the book "They're Your Kids: A Personal Journey from Self-Doubter to Home School Advocate." The first half sounds the alarm to parents, detailing what they need to wake up to, and the second half is the nuts and bolts of her own experience with plenty of advice for parents considering homeschool.

In it, she illustrates that with the public system, "The bar is really low, and you, with your child, can step over it easily."

Nine-year-olds taking trigonometry, 13-year-olds whizzing through physics—these are common cases amongst homeschoolers, where students typically outperform public students by at least 30 percent.

One of the quotes she leads with is a snippet from a book by Bertrand Russell, who influenced the entire public school movement. Russell quotes a German philosopher in his work, saying, "Education should aim at destroying free will so that after pupils are at deschooling they will be incapable throughout the rest of their lives of thinking or acting otherwise than as their schoolmaster would have wished." It continues, describing the amount of power a government would amass after just a generation or two of "public school." We've borrowed from the Prussian system, which was designed to create little soldiers, ready to obey.

"They are behavior modification centers," she said.

Radicals and Rebels

Sorbo has three teenagers, and often when she tells people this they give her a look of understanding. Three teenagers? Sounds tough, they say.

It's the opposite. "It's fantastic," Sorbo said. "My authority at home is not challenged. I don't have arguments with my children. We have a very even-keeled relationship. They know me, I know them, and we work things out."

After meeting her children, other parents marvel at how well-behaved they are, and Sorbo says this isn't by chance or accident.

Academics aside, she has another big reason you should homeschool: Consider your

relationship with your child.

"We are absolutely sacrificing our relationship with our child. You can't tell me your relationship doesn't suffer," Sorbo said. "If you drop your child off at school every day, and the teacher is telling them things that may or may not agree with the things that you're saying at home, and the teacher has them for seven and a half hours a day. And you have them for, what's left over, three hours? And do you see your child even three hours a day at that point? How can you hope to have the relationship?"

Teenagers have a reputation for disagreeing with their parents, and Sorbo says that's only to be expected if you drop off your kids so that others can deal with them. Kids will also read it as rejection, even if they never voice that.

The problem is compounded: Public school by design doesn't have the children's best developmental interest at heart, and in recent years they have declined. Parents might remember a good experience with public school, and they aren't all wrong. But many schools have since become worse.

In her book, she writes: "They hustle their kids into the wolves' den and wonder why their children return home behaving like wild animals."

Instead of morals, schools also teach moral relativity. "We don't teach morality in schools. How can we hope to have a moral public if we don't teach morality? I don't know," she said. "It's disastrous, what we're accomplishing... what they are teaching in school systems today is tantamount to child abuse."

"And we are so incapable of calling it out and saying 'No, we're going to do something about it.' It's discouraging to me, but that's sort of my crusade now. It's not just homeschooling—we need to revamp our schools, and we need to change the way we think about education," Sorbo said.

Sorbo never thought she was a rebel until just the last few years. She was the anxious straight-A student in high school. She was a calculus tutor in college. Even during her modeling career she was known by the crew as the "good girl."

It wasn't until she stepped into homeschooling advocacy that she realized she could be considered an anti-establishment radical, but in reality, homeschooling is a fast-growing movement. Nearly 2 million students are homeschooled, and the fallout of Common Core has caused many people to research school choice and homeschooling.

It used to be, for instance, thought of as an option for ultra-religious families, and mistakenly thought to hinder socialization. Sorbo is a Christian, but faith had nothing

to do with her decision to homeschool, and one of the schools she had tried and pulled her children out of was a Christian school. Years later, having seen other religious families send their kids to public school or college and return as estranged atheists, she added faith to the growing list of reasons parents should consider.

As for socialization, homeschooled children interact frequently with people of all age groups, rather than being confined to peers of their age in the school system, taught to fear older kids and to bully the younger kids. Sorbo says even in the few years her sons went to public school she saw ageism take its toll, and it took work on her part to undo it.

"I started homeschooling and I loved it. Because it freed me. I was no longer beholden to the institution," she said. Instead of running the library and driving to and from school, and grading papers and teaching art class for other kids, she was able to spend that time with her own. "And not only that, my kids started to get along a lot better. So we had a much more peaceful family dynamic and home."

In taking on the task of teaching morals and core values, she wrote a second education book, "Teach From Love," full of daily devotionals.

"Here's the thing, the reason core values are worthwhile is because they lead to a happier life," Sorbo said. In fact, many great educators throughout the ages have pointed to true happiness as the ultimate goal of education.

"If you are a liar, and you know you're a liar, and every time you look in the mirror, you know you're a liar. And you know that lying is wrong, because we have that innate sense in ourselves, the difference between right and wrong, and you can't trust yourself," she said. "And what happens when you can't trust yourself? The world falls away. What can you do when you're not able to trust the one person you're closest to?"

"We don't think about these things until we rethink what education means, and set those goals for your students. Sorbo says that even after all this time, she is still learning.

"You know, it's still a journey. And I recognize that I'm still the brainwashed one in a sense, because I went through the school system," she said.

Her own education certainly didn't bring true happiness. To reach that, she had to first find her faith. "I grew up with a lot of stress and anxiety about being able to support myself, and so once I had a career that was lucrative enough, I realized, wow, I think I'm actually going to be OK. I'm going to be able

My authority at home is not challenged. I don't have arguments with my children. We have a very even-keeled relationship.

Sam Sorbo

Sam Sorbo and Kevin Sorbo at the 34th annual Great Sports Legends Dinner, a benefit for the Buoniconti Fund to Cure Paralysis, in New York on Oct. 7, 2019.

to make it," Sorbo said. This was in her 20s, and she soon started to question her success.

"I was like, is this it then? Is this the whole meaning of life? So I went on a search, and I discovered God," she said. She found peace from her anxiety, and now she is able to enjoy what she does.

The family travels often, but not always for work. This summer, they took a guided trip through Israel, which was partly filmed for a documentary.

She and her husband work together on films and book projects as well; in recent years a series of faith-based movies, because most people in the film industry don't make these.

"Miracle in East Texas" has been going through the film festival circuit and she plans to bring it to theaters for spring 2020.

Sorbo also runs a radio talk show, which she previously took a break from while producing and promoting their 2017 movie "Let There Be Light," which covers politics and current events.

This month, she and her son Braeden will be at a state policy event in Colorado Springs, because his career as a public speaker is well underway.

"I've got an engineer, an artist, and a public speaker," Sorbo said of her teenagers. Rethinking education has allowed her to rethink higher education as well. With the string of admissions scandals, brand name universities don't mean good grades as much as they signal an expensive degree, and studies have shown that people with Harvard-level academics who don't attend Harvard end up with similarly lucrative careers.

Parents look at what Sorbo is done and they'll tell her, "Wow. But I just don't have the patience."

"And I look at them, and I say, well, maybe God gave you children to teach you patience," Sorbo said. "Maybe patience is something for you to learn."

By the way, she adds, the opposite of patience is anger. We have enough of that in our culture.

Beyond homeschooling, there are myriad options including tutors and hiring a retired teacher who can homeschool or hybrid schools that mix homeschooling with private school, and co-ops where a group of parents take turns educating. Children are our most precious parts of us, Sorbo said, and if we care, there are options. Lots of them.

She is currently working on putting together more materials on homeschooling of a more practical nature, "some materials to make home ed something a bit more tangible and reasonable-looking," she said.



(Top) "Miracle in East Texas," which stars Sam Sorbo and Kevin Sorbo, is currently on the film festival circuit, and due in theaters in spring 2020.

(Bottom) Sam Sorbo and Kevin Sorbo in "Miracle in East Texas."

How Romance Created Clay Bas-Relief Portraiture

Behold the Beauty

LORRAINE FERRIER

"Parting is such sweet sorrow," said Shakespeare's Juliet, expressing in a few short words a romantic sentiment that endures.

In ancient Greece, a Corinthian maiden must have felt such sadness when her loved one was about to leave. According to the ancient Greek writer Pliny the Elder, she traced the shadow of her beloved's face on the wall behind him as he slept. On seeing the outline, her father, the potter Butades of Sicyon, used the outline to build a portrait of his daughter's beloved by pressing clay onto the surface of the wall, creating the first clay model portrait called a bas-relief sculpture.

Joseph Wright's painting "The Corinthian Maid" takes us back to the moment when the young lady delicately traces the outline of her beloved on the wall as he sleeps slumped in a chair. She uses a stylus, normally used for writing on wax tablets. She's unsure when she will see him again and doesn't want to forget him. It's a tender moment. It almost feels as though we, the viewers, are intruding.

She tentatively perches on the edge of his seat, stretching out toward the wall while being careful not to wake him, just as one might stroke the face of a beloved while he or she sleeps. The tension is palpable; you almost want to hold your breath with her.

Ancient Inspiration

Wright was commissioned to paint "The Corinthian Maid" by the pioneering potter Josiah Wedgwood, the founder of the famous Stoke-on-Trent pottery, Wedgwood. Established in 1759, Wedgwood pottery was, and still remains, world-renowned for echoing the shapes, styles, and motifs of the ancients—and for its decorative work using low reliefs.

Everything in Wright's painting was carefully composed to acknowledge the ancient scene and the traditional craft that came long before Wedgwood put his hands to clay.

When Wright painted "The Corinthian Maid," he was well aware of ancient artifacts, having spent nearly two years in Italy, from 1773 to 1775, studying and sketching archaeological sites. He used this firsthand knowledge of the ancient art and architectural sites, along with ancient Greek pottery from Wedgwood's private collection,



(Above) The creation of clay bas-relief portraiture as seen in "The Corinthian Maid," 1782-1784, by Joseph Wright. Oil on canvas. Paul Mellon Collection.

(Below) A cast of relief showing Endymion and his dog, possibly 18th century. Plaster cast. Capitoline Museums, Rome.



PLASTER CAST OF ENDYMION AND HIS DOG, CAPITOLINE MUSEUMS OF ARTS, ROME

to correctly reference the painting.

Wright used a color palette which echoes that of clay. The room is sparsely furnished. On the left, a curtain hides the light source that casts the shadow. Wright used this light source to evoke intimacy.

The young man in Wright's painting is modeled on Endymion. Wright referenced a study he'd made in Rome of a sculptural relief featuring Endymion. The pose Wright chose for the youth is similar to a cast of Endymion at London's Royal Academy of Art from the Capitoline Museums in Rome, although Wright painted the youth's head upright in his painting. In the cast, Endymion also has his staff and dog; the dog

perhaps symbolizes faithfulness.

Legend has it that Endymion was cast into an eternal sleep, although accounts vary as to why. One common account is that the moon goddess Selene, with whom Endymion had 50 children, asked Zeus to put him to sleep so she could enjoy his beauty forever.

Endymion seems a fitting choice for the young Corinthian maiden's love, for her intent seems similar: to remember her beloved in that moment, just like portraiture.

"The Corinthian Maid," by Joseph Wright is on display at the National Gallery of Art in Washington.

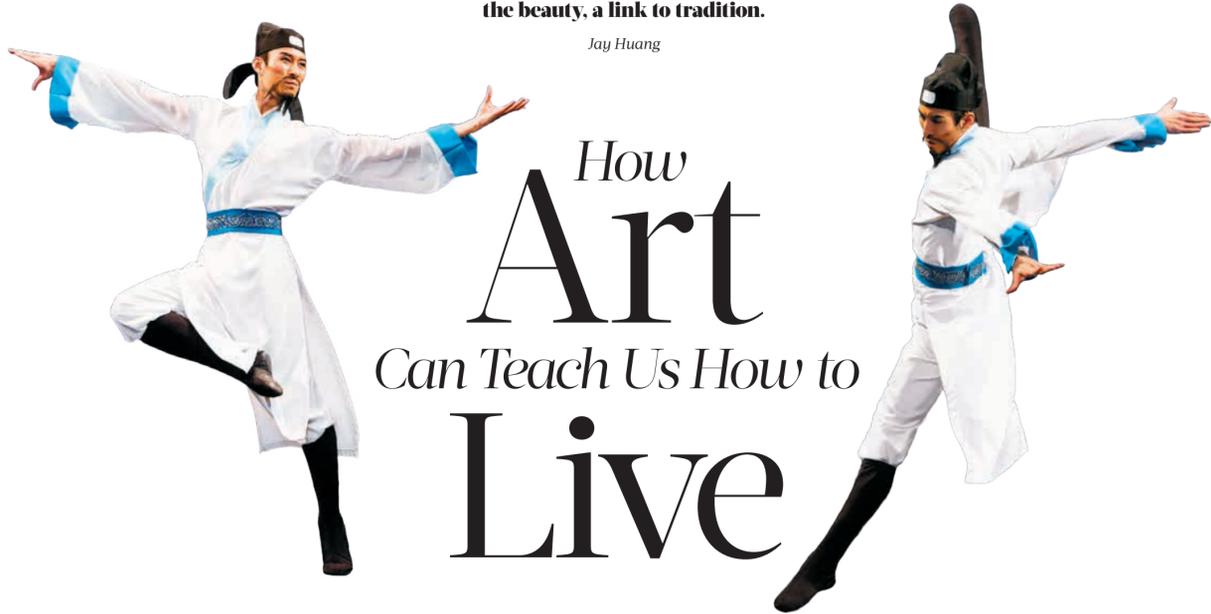
NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART



Jay Huang placed first in the adult male division of New Tang Dynasty Television's 2016 International Classical Chinese Dance Competition.

"I hope that through our performances, people can get in touch with that part of themselves again ... [to] experience the beauty of culture and find, beyond the beauty, a link to tradition."

Jay Huang



How Art Can Teach Us How to Live

An interview with Shen Yun dancer Jay Huang

Deliverance From the Nightmare

Interpreting John Henry Fuseli's 'Nightmare'

ERIC BESS

A nightmare can be an overwhelming experience. It can be so lucid as to be daunting, even horrific and terrifying. It can cause one to wake in a panic, in cold sweats, and with the heart racing; we awaken relieved that it was "only a dream."

John Henry Fuseli, an 18th-century German Romantic painter, attempted to capture the atmosphere of the nightmare in his 1781 painting with that very name. His "The Nightmare" was exhibited at the Royal Academy in London in 1782 and created quite a stir.

According to David Blayney Brown in his book titled "Romanticism":

"The Romantics believed that dreams were a second life, lived on another plane; they connected the dreamer with eternal unities lost to the rational mind, and transcended time by recalling a spirit past or foretelling the future."

Fuseli had depicted a certain type of second life here: a dark, oppressive one. Using his study of classical art and folk literature, Fuseli gave form to the horror of



"The Nightmare," 1781, by Henry Fuseli. Oil on Canvas, 40 inches by 50 inches, Detroit Institute of Arts.

nightmares yet refused to provide a definitive interpretation of this painting.

Interpreting 'The Nightmare' On top of the dreamer's chest sits an impish figure shrouded in shadow. This figure is often referred to as an incubus. In Latin, "incubus" means nightmare and "incubare" means to lie upon, weigh upon, and brood upon. The incubus is a type of demon that weighs upon a dreamer's body and can even cause a sense of oppression and suffocation.

The incubus also tempts the dreamer with sexual advances. According to Walter Stephens in his book "Demon Lovers," some traditions hold that repeated sexual intercourse with an incubus (or its female counterpart, succubus) will result in devastating consequences for the dreamer, including physical illness, mental illness, and death.

The horse in the background is also shrouded in shadow, like the incubus. The shadowy horse may be an addition to the painting as a play on words: mare. The mare

that appears from the shadows at night refers both to night and mare in the word "nightmare." Mare or "mara" also, however, refers to a sleep demon that rides people's chests in Anglo-Saxon and Icelandic traditions.

Surmounting Temptation and Oppression

But what can this painting mean for us today? How might we interpret it in such a way that we turn our gaze inward and look closely at ourselves and who we are as people?

The dreamer is dressed in white and reclining on her bed. Her white dress may represent her purity. Heavy with sleep, her head and upper torso hang off the edge of the bed. With her arm raised overhead and her head cocked restfully to one side, she possesses a somewhat similar pose to images of the sleeping Ariadne.

Ariadne was the daughter of King Minos of Crete. She fell madly in love with Theseus and helped him defeat the Minotaur and escape the labyrinth. Theseus, however, abandoned her on the island as she was sleeping. The god Dionysus awakened her, rescued her, and married her.

In Fuseli's painting, the weight of the incubus presses down on the dreamer's chest, but the white of her dress suggests that

she maintains her purity despite its presence. Her face is the face of a dreamer and not the face of someone who is experiencing either terror or sensuality.

Is it possible that she has, in her dream, overcome the oppression and the sexual temptation inaugurated by the incubus?

If we look at the incubus, it seems almost as if it has lost interest in the dreamer, perhaps because of its lack of success. It has instead stopped attempts to victimize and seduce the woman and has turned its head to look outward.

Does it scan the room in search of a more willing victim, weak enough to succumb to its temptations and oppression? Does it look at us?

How we respond in dreams can say a lot about who we are as people. Our actions and thoughts, even in dreams, may reveal our character. I ask myself upon seeing this painting, "Am I strong enough, is my character solid enough, to resist the temptation and overthrow the oppression of the nightmare? Can I, like Ariadne, be awakened and rescued by God?"

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

CATHERINE YANG

MIDDLETOWN, N.Y.—Despite being one of possibly only a few hundred artists in the world carrying on an ancient art in its pure form—and at a world-class caliber—award-winning Shen Yun Performing Arts principal dancer Jay Huang is unexpectedly humble.

The classical Chinese dance he specializes in is an art form built on foundations 5,000 years old, intertwined with the semi-divine culture of ancient China itself. Famously athletic and strikingly expressive, the art has seen a sort of renaissance in recent years. Schools like Fei Tian Academy of the Arts and Fei Tian College, where Huang trained, are now restoring the full repertoire of styles and movements through a structured methodology.

In 2016, Huang won first place in the adult male division of New Tang Dynasty Television's International Classical Chinese Dance Competition, after receiving an honorable mention in the same competition in 2014.

Huang admits he started dancing only because his brother is a dancer—he wasn't prepared for how much work it would take, at least not initially.

Early on, in the middle of some particularly difficult stretching—the first step to attaining

that impossible flexibility these dancers seem to be born with—the thought of giving up.

Huang had been working every day to improve his flexibility, but despite the work he was putting in, he didn't feel like he was seeing the improvement he wanted. He felt like quitting.

But later, at a recital of his peers, he was inspired and made a decision to commit himself to his goals. Somehow, along the way, he'd likened the process of mastering dance to that of the journey of life.

"Frankly, it's like learning to be a human being," he said. One can't just give up entirely because of a difficult or unpleasant moment. Life requires asking bigger questions, and perhaps weighing one's values.

The flawless flips and sky-high leaps may seem effortless when Huang performs onstage, but they are only made possible through deep dedication and perseverance.

"[Dancing] has changed ... how I view the world and my circumstances," he said. "Just because I make a decision lightly doesn't necessarily mean I'll give up lightly. You learn how to contend with difficulties."

Learning From History

Everything Huang does, as a performer and as an interpreter of this grand culture, hinges on a deep understanding of historical context, he said.

Huang, on top of taking history and culture classes, also spends his free time reading up on ancient literature and legends, like those of the "Romance of the Three Kingdoms," and getting a feel for China's myths and folklore as well.



Shen Yun Performing Arts principal dancer Jay Huang.

"Without that context, how are any of these heroes we portray different from those of any other culture?" he said. "You have to understand their background, how they lived, what their personalities were like—every movement and gesture has character, and should reflect their time and place."

In the style, or rhythm, of movement as taught by Shen Yun, an apparently simple step is far from it. There's a reason the body moves in one direction before the arms do, or that the hips lead the leg movements, he said. Thousands of years of understanding back up these different

technical instructions, in a way that is difficult to articulate but immediately clear when seen in action.

"Classical Chinese dance is really about content," Huang said. One of his favorite things about the art form is its sheer depth. "It externalizes a person's inner world. ... This aspect really allows us to bring alive these characters of the past."

Huang says the age-old stories told through dance have helped him to shape his own character. Often, he said, there will be a character who must make a choice between good and evil. Sometimes these stories hit home, causing Huang to reflect on his own choices, such as whether there is a right or wrong choice in what he is doing.

A day-to-day example, Huang said, is when he is rehearsing by himself and might have the thought to take the easy way out. "Then I have to think, 'Is this [extra effort] really something that's good for me? Which choice reflects my values, and will have a good outcome?'" he said.

Cultivating character is important, he said, because a dancer's own character is on display when he or she performs, even when playing someone else.

"Are you the sort of person who minds the details? Are you a straightforward sort of communicator, or indirect, maybe

a bit snide?" he said. "Your personality will come through when you dance."

Wisdom Through Tradition Shen Yun, a New York-based performing arts company, was formed in 2006 with a mission to revive traditional Chinese culture through music and dance. This is something that is, again, easier to show than to explain, Huang said.

There's a moment on stage, at the very end of each performance, when the curtain lifts and Huang can feel whether the audience is moved or inspired. It's always gratifying.

"We're not just reviving Chinese culture specifically, but really tradition in general," Huang said. "Tradition is something that's lost to people today. But I hope that through our performances, people can get in touch with that part of themselves again ... [to] experience the beauty of culture and find, beyond the beauty, a link to tradition."

That way lies a wealth of virtues, values, and clear ways to treat others—things fundamental to being a human being, Huang said.

The wisdom of traditional culture, expressed through dance, "gets at the heart of what it means to be human," he said, optimistic in his hope that people will be inspired to discover these fundamental truths.

Gifts From the Ancients The Four Temperaments and Our Children

JEFF MINICK

Mary and George are like the proverbial peas in a pod. They enjoy nothing more than a quiet night of reading by the fireplace or sharing a bottle of wine on the deck while the kids romp in the yard. They are generally go-along, get-along folks, savoring tranquility, able to take a stand on an important matter but disliking arguments and raised voices, leading by way of example rather than command, delighting more in a leisurely afternoon at the beach than in some high-powered office party.



COLIN MAYNARD/UNSPLASH

By understanding the four temperaments, parents and grandparents can help children develop their strengths and deal with their weaknesses.

Then there's Grace, their 10-year-old who takes charge of her younger brother and sister like a junior Napoleon. Grace is bright, impatient, and practical. She dislikes schoolgirl drama and can argue with the fierce tenacity of a lawyer—"Why do I have to go to bed so early?" "Why can't I wear these shoes with this dress?" Like some radio commentators and pundits, she believes she's right all the time. When friends come to play, it's Grace who leads the activities, assigns kids to teams, determines whether they should play kickball or perform a play she's written, and makes sure Sammy keeps his hands off the cookies until she's poured milk for everyone.

Mary and George are cool summer breezes; Grace is a whirlwind, issuing orders, making demands, racing through her schoolwork, and questioning authority.

Another scenario: Like his parents, 16-year-old Mark is Congeniality personified, not just at school but wherever he goes. He has hordes of friends, loves parties, noise, and commotion, and leaves laughter in his wake. He's the kid who gets in trouble for talking in class but charms his teachers, the son who tells his father on Wednesday he wants to attend the local community college when he graduates high school and on Thursday mentions joining the Marines.

Jack, his 14-year-old brother, couldn't be more different from the rest of the family. He treasures his solitude. He'd prefer spending an evening at home playing his guitar or watching a movie to loud parties or rock concerts. Unlike Mark, Jack needs time to reflect on decisions, debating like some teenage Hamlet

whether he should spend his gift money from Grandpa on running shoes—he likes cross country because it's a solitary sport—or on art supplies for quiet, timid Sheila, his closest friend in school. With all these differences, parents may be forgiven if on occasion they look at a child, so dramatically unlike themselves, raise an eyebrow, and wonder, "Where on earth did you come from?" The Greeks long ago wondered the same thing. In one of the first attempts to categorize human personalities, Hippocrates and others devised the theory of temperaments. They divided people into four groups—phlegmatic (Mary and Sam), choleric (Grace), sanguine (Mark), and melancholic (Jack). For hundreds of years, Western European thinkers and theologians adhered to this system of classification.

Below are brief descriptions of these four temperaments. **Phlegmatic.** Phlegmatic souls like Mary and George treasure peace and quiet. "Count your blessings for a phlegmatic child!" the Bennetts tell us. "He is a joy—so peaceful, quiet, cooperative, and obedient that you will be forever spoiled." As they also point out, however, the flip side is that phlegmatics often become followers, willing to go with the flow, people pleasers who may lack initiative or the will to defend their opinions.

Choleric. Like Grace in the example above, choleric tend to be

strong-willed and determined. They learn quickly, are always ready to voice their opinions or debate a point, and are persistent in reaching a goal. But as the Bennetts tell us, they can also be "impatient, stubborn, interruptive, quick-tempered, and occasionally lacking in empathy."

Sanguine. Mark and his parents are sanguines. They love the social life, bringing sunshine and high spirits wherever they go. Sanguines are the opposite of melancholics: extroverted, noisy, and easily distracted. Their chief weakness is a tendency toward superficiality: skimming through school assignments, attracted to social media, unable to stay motivated through a difficult chore.

Melancholic. Melancholics like Jack tend toward seriousness, reflection, and solitude. They carefully think through situations, are often shy and sensitive, and are self-reliant. "The weaknesses of this temperament are that he or she can be moody and withdrawn, overly self-conscious, and perfectionist."

What gives value to "The Temperament God Gave Your Kids," and other books and websites ad-

ressing this topic, is the advice by the authors on such issues as reining in the choleric's impatience or teaching the melancholic how to deal with his moods. We can also discover what to do when our own temperaments are so mismatched with those of our children.

So how about it? Is there any value in becoming acquainted with the four temperaments?

Other than what I learned years ago from my study of history, I knew little about the temperaments until a friend slipped me a copy of the Bennetts' book two months ago and asked me to write a review for a magazine. I began reading as a skeptic—to place personality types into four categories, even allowing for blends, seemed too simplistic to me, psychological hocus-pocus. As I read, however, I found myself gaining insights into my grandchildren. Here was an apt description of the one who is strongly choleric, boisterous, always sure of himself. Here was his brother who, like me—I took an online test—qualifies as a blend of melancholic and phlegmatic. Here was the sanguine granddaughter who likes to be the center of attention and loves the performing arts, especially when she is the performer.

And so on down the list.

To know these qualities has led me to a deeper understanding of these young people. I can encourage the choleric grandson to continue to develop his leadership skills through school activities while practicing patience with people and learning how to handle setbacks. I can appreciate his younger brother's thoughtful and quiet ways while introducing him to new activities and social situations whenever possible.

"Understanding temperament," write the Bennetts, "helps us become more loving, forgiving, and helpful to our children." Agreed.

Jeff Minick has four children and a growing pattern 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.

How One Teacher Completely Avoids Using Textbooks

ANNIE HOLMQUIST

A teacher dramatically strumming his guitar, singing a song to giggling high school students, recently graced a Washington Post article by Jay Mathews.

While the guitar serenade is a unique feature of Mark Ingerson's AP history course, the more intriguing thing about his classroom is that it doesn't rely on traditional textbooks. Ingerson, Mathews reports, doesn't believe in them because they offer a firehose of information that students never remember. He keeps a few basic texts on hand, but mostly to satisfy official requirements.

Instead, Ingerson takes a different approach to teaching history. The students learn facts, but in a more interactive way through source material, collaboration, and discussion. Mathews describes the classroom scene:

"This past year teaching AP, he [Ingerson] had each student compile 200 flashcards. They repeatedly paired up to quiz each other. 'I wanted students to know the material so well that if I said "Federalist 10," literally any student could spout off three to four specific ideas that made that document important and could use that in an argument," he said."

Why does he take this unique approach?

"Ingerson knows many teenagers will not master material on their own. Pairing up to review with friends is a popular break in every one of his classes. 'They think it's fun,' he said. 'When students master content and then are able to apply it, it's confidence-producing. It's far more meaningful and lasting than checking how many likes they got on Instagram.'"

In addition to pairing up to quiz one another on material, students in Ingerson's class "analyze polls, maps, economic data, budgets, etc., constantly." They also read primary sources and learn about key aspects of American economics.

Teachers like Ingerson who think outside the box, ditching formulaic approaches to the classroom, always receive accolades from the general public. It's refreshing and offers hope for a way out of the muck and mire that our education system has become.

Not every one of these experimental teachers or methods work. Yet with a passage rate of nearly 95 percent on the AP Government exam, it seems like Ingerson and his methods do. Why?

Here's an idea: Ingerson actually teaches his students in an age-appropriate way, while many other modern classrooms don't.

Here it's helpful to turn to the late Oxford scholar Dorothy Sayers. Sayers unpacks



YURIEV PAVEL/SHUTTERSTOCK

Today's high schools often focus on the accumulation of facts, rather than age-appropriate synthesis.

the three levels of education and the ages at which each should be used in "The Lost Tools of Learning." Factual building blocks are the core of the Grammar stage—what we refer to as elementary school—and are often digested through memory devices like poems and songs. Middle school is called the Dialectic stage and incorporates logic and argumentation into learning. The Rhetoric or Poetic Age is what Sayers labels the high

school years. Sayers describes this stage in the following way:

"The Poetic Age is popularly known as the 'difficult' age. It is self-centered; it yearns to express itself; it rather specializes in being misunderstood; it is restless and tries to achieve independence; and, with good luck and good guidance, it should show the beginnings of creativeness, a reaching-out towards a synthesis of what it already knows, and a deliberate eagerness to know and do some one thing in preference to all others."

Today's schools often overlook the Dialectic and Rhetoric stages, preferring instead to focus on the Grammar stage through the teaching of facts and figures via that plodding medium of a textbook. Ingerson, however, incorporates all three, starting with the fun accumulation of facts via song and flashcards, encouraging debate, and then synthesizing and making connections with the material studied. In this way, he gives students facts, but also challenges them to act their age and learn at a higher level.

Today only 24 percent of 12th-graders are proficient in Civics. Proficiency in U.S. History only registers at 12 percent. Is it possible that students would become more proficient in these crucial subjects if more classrooms behaved like Ingerson's? Should more teachers ditch textbooks and allow students to engage and interact with material at a higher level more respectful of their age and abilities?

Annie Holmquist is an editor of Intellectual Takeout. This article was originally published on Intellectual Takeout.



FOR KIDS ONLY

THE EPOCH TIMES

WEEK 43, 2019



Contrary Winds

Anonymous

Both Tom and Will had equal skill
In making little boats and ships;
They cut a-way a whole half day,
And covered all the floor with chips.

And when the boys had made their toys,
They thought to put them to the test—
To try which boat, when set afloat,
Would sail across a tub the best.

But Will and Tom, each blowing from
A different side, you well may guess,
No boats could go straight on, and so
They tacked about in great distress.

Such heavy gales against their sails
Made both the boats go whirling round;
The sails got wet, the boats upset,
And all the crew on board were drowned.

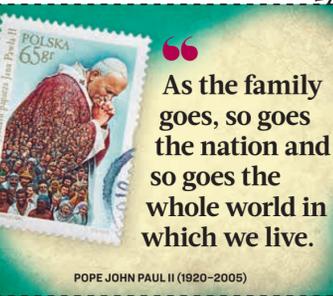


RIMDREAM/SHUTTERSTOCK

HOW DOES BATMAN KNOW WHEN IT'S TIME FOR DINNER?



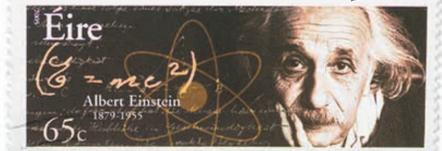
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EINSTEIN MOVES TO THE UNITED STATES

A postage stamp printed in Ireland showing the image of Nobel Prize winner Albert Einstein, circa 2005.



CEWALKER/SHUTTERSTOCK

On Oct. 17, 1933, Albert Einstein moved to the United States with his wife, Elsa, avoiding persecution for their Jewish faith by the Nazis.

Earlier that year, while Einstein was on a visit to the United States, Adolf Hitler had been named chancellor of Germany, where Einstein had lived and worked as a professor at the Berlin Academy of Sciences.

When in March of that year the Einsteins returned to

their cottage in Belgium from visiting the United States, they discovered that it has been raided. Einstein renounced his German citizenship and turned in his passport to the German consulate. That summer, he learned that his name was on a list for assassination.

After a stay in Belgium, Einstein accepted a position at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton and returned to the United States.

By Aidan Danza, age 13

BACKYARD OBSERVATIONS OF BIRD SOCIETY

Birds are some of the most fascinating creatures that grace the earth.

They brighten everyone's day just by going about their daily business.

Looking more closely into what birds are actually saying to each other is even more interesting. Beyond just watching them hop around, you can listen to their "language" and try to understand.



By my observations, each bird species communicates with each other. For example, even when the grackle and the blue jay don't seem to understand each other, they are certainly listening to each other. When a hawk comes around, and a blue jay raises the alarm, the grackles are often the first birds in to chase, taunt, tease, and mob the hawk. From the human standpoint, whenever a hawk is sighted by a bird, we often hear the commotion before we notice what's going on. If a hawk manages to catch and eat one of the birds that is trying to chase it out of the area, the noise gets much louder. It often seems like the grackles and the jays are trying to avenge their fellow's death. From yet another perspective, when the grackles and the jays go off to fight their battle with the hawk, the smaller birds such as the sparrows and mourning doves heed the warning and take off.

On the other hand (or wing) if a cat comes by, quite a different thing happens. When a stalking feline is noticed, the tactic seems to be to hide until the cat passes. Blue jays and grackles stay silent and don't

attack the cat. After the alarm is sounded, all the birds hide or leave and wait for the cat to pass by. The exception is when the cat enters the mockingbird's domain, in which case the mockingbird dive-bombs the cat until it runs away.

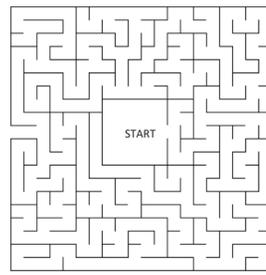
When the predator is vanquished and life returns to normal, the birds have a strict pecking order, and each species has a certain personality.

Mourning doves are the calm bird; they will let any bird feed near them and are happy to share their food. When a flock of grackles or starlings comes along, everyone clears out, because the flock takes up the whole lawn. If one grackle comes, he takes his own feeder and no one denies that it's his. Blue jays chase everyone away, and chickadees take their eating one seed at a time. This means that they go to a feeder, grab a single seed, crack it on a nearby branch, eat it, go back to the feeder ... you get the idea. They have to do this over 200 times per day in order to eat their fill!



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AMAZING ESCAPES!



USE THE FOUR NUMBERS IN THE CORNERS, AND THE OPERANDS (+, -, AND X) to build an equation to get the solution in the middle. There may be more than one "unique" solution but, there may also be "equivalent" solutions. For example: 6 + (7 X 3) + 1 = 28 and 1+ (7 X 3) + 6 = 28

Easy puzzle 1

3	8		
2	7		
+	-	x	÷

Solution For Easy 1
2 x 7 = (8 - 6)

Medium puzzle 1

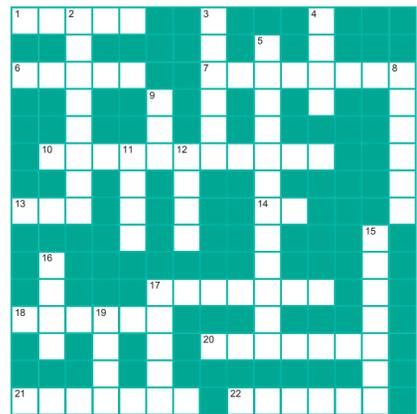
6	11		
2	11		
+	-	x	÷

Solution for Medium 1
9 - 2 = (11 + 1)

Hard puzzle 1

9	23		
5	23		
+	-	x	÷

Solution for Hard 1
9 - 6 + 62 + 62



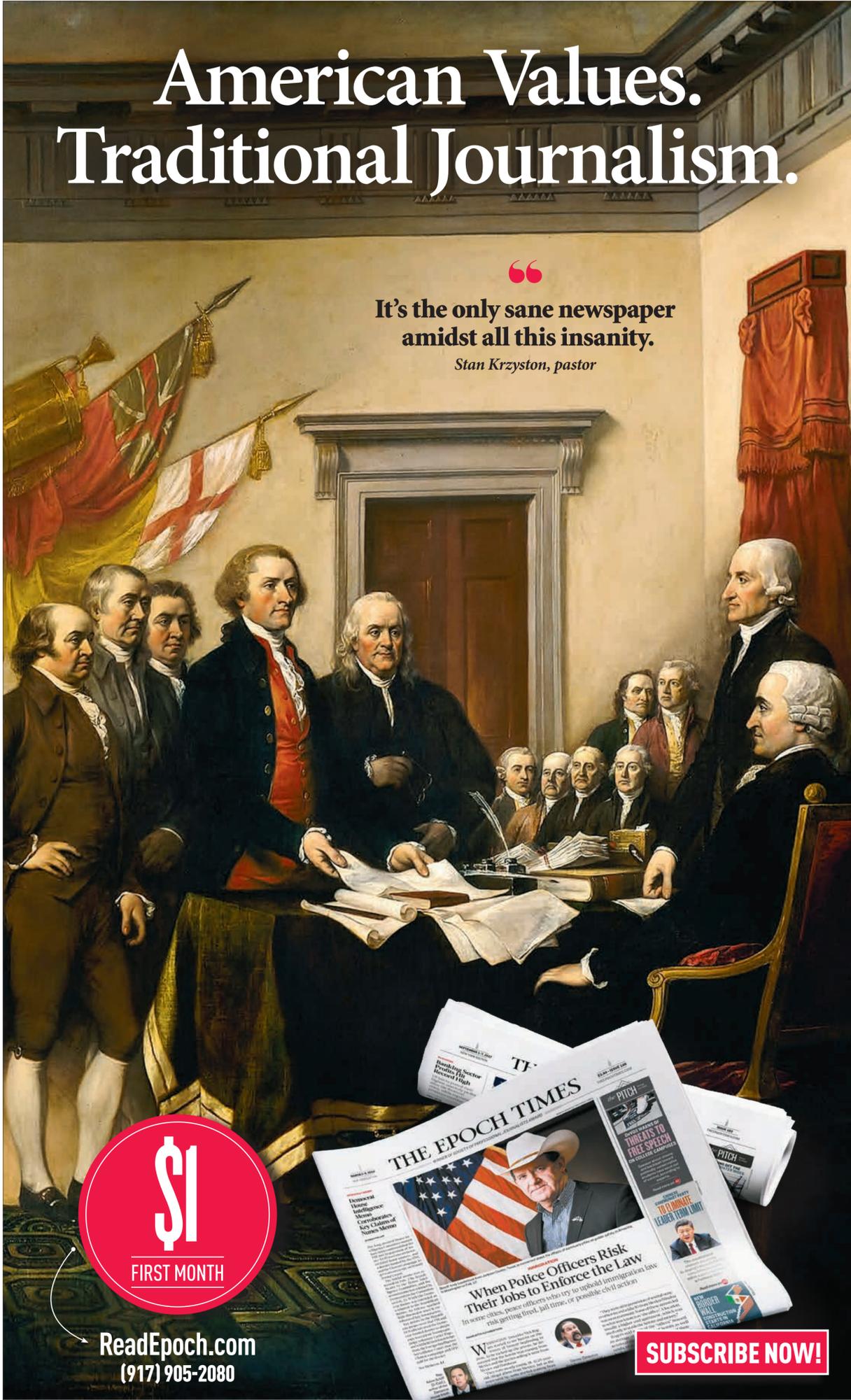
- Down**
- They spin the dreidel (8)
 - mom or dad's dad (6)
 - Friends and neighbors (4)
 - Adoptive parent (12)
 - Sister's son (6)
 - Paw (3)
 - Grandma for some (4)
 - Daddy (4)
 - Descendants (7)
 - "Fortunate" one (4)
 - "I do" lady (5)
 - Double (4)

Across

- "I give up!" (5)
- Extended family (5)
- Alternative to pregnancy (8)
- Frequent spoiler (11)
- Folks (3)
- Short for "mother" (2)
- Sister's nemesis, often (7)
- Brother's nemesis, often (6)
- Encourage (7)
- Wedding planner (7)
- Mom or dad's mom (6)

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Stan Krzyston, pastor



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TRUTH AND TRADITION



The letter "B" from "Beatus," Latin for blessed, copied from the Eadui Psalter, 2018, by Patricia Lovett. Leaf gold on gesso base, gouache on vellum.

CRAFTSMANSHIP

A Medieval and Modern Scribe

Patricia Lovett on beautiful lettering and illumination

LORRAINE FERRIER

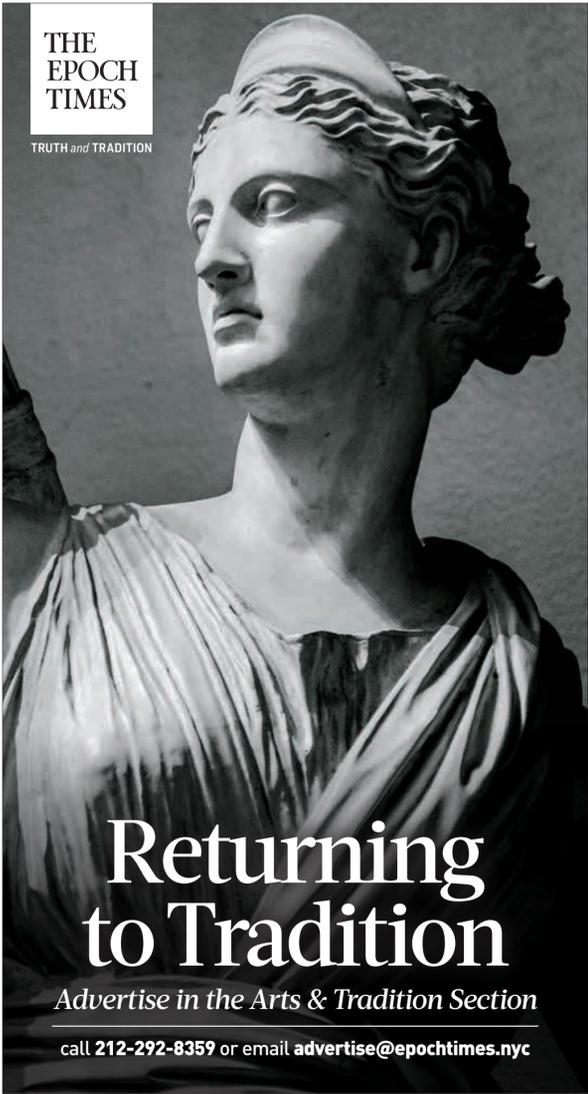
Scribe Patricia Lovett writes calligraphy and paints illuminations at her home studio in Sevenoaks, Kent, England. But she originally learned the art of lettering out of frustration. Lovett studied geography at the university she attended because she wanted to draw maps, then went on to work in business, and then taught in large inner London high

schools, "often with quite difficult kids, and I loved it," she said in a phone interview. All along, she drew lots of maps for publications but couldn't do the lettering for the names, so out of sheer frustration, she decided to go off and learn how to letter. The course wasn't only calligraphy, but also illumination—she had no idea what that was—and heraldry, which she thought was rather outdated. "But from day one, I saw

the color and gold and the painting and I just fell in love with the whole thing," Lovett said. "I feel it's such a privilege to be able to do what I love doing all the time. I work seven days a week, but I don't call it work," she said. Lovett's craft has taken her all over the world, where she has taught and lectured at some of the world's most prestigious institutions, such as Harvard. Her work has appeared on screen, in docu-

mentaries, and in movies. She's written over a dozen books. In 2017, the British Library published her book "The Art and History of Calligraphy." Most recently, she was filmed for a series of short videos on how to make medieval manuscripts as part of the Polonsky project, a joint online venture between the British Library in London and Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Continued on Page 16



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LITERATURE

Red Flags: DOSTOEVSKY'S MESSAGE for Us

JEFF MINICK

Given a choice, most of us are more inclined to read contemporary fiction than the classics. If we are lucky, our high school and college teachers force us to tackle such works as “Hamlet,” “Jane Eyre,” and “Great Expectations,” but once we leave behind our desks and quizzes, we prefer John Grisham to Leo Tolstoy and Danielle Steel to Jane Austen.

This is unfortunate. It's true that the classics, the “old books” as C.S. Lewis called them, demand more of readers than most of today's novels. The heft of Marcel Proust's seven-volume “In Search of Lost Time” or the subtleties of the English class system in George Eliot's “Middlemarch” may intimidate us or put us off.

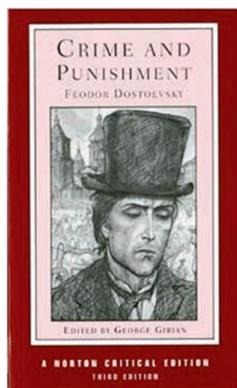
And yet the rewards bestowed by these books and their authors—their artistry, their multidimensional characters, their insights into human nature—make the effort worthwhile. They allow us to mine the depths of a soul, as in Tolstoy's “Anna Karenina,” to gain wisdom regarding love and friendship in novels like Charlotte Brontë's “Jane Eyre,” and to join our ancestors in the mirth delivered by Sancho Panza or Huckleberry Finn.

Perhaps more rarely, a classic can hold up a mirror to modern culture—a looking glass revealing the foibles and dangers of our time—which brings us to Fyodor Dostoevsky's “Crime and Punishment” (Jessie Coulson translation).

Through a Glass Darkly

Though “Crime and Punishment” contains a multitude of characters, Dostoevsky focuses much of our attention on Rodion Raskolnikov, an intellectual living in squalor in czarist Russia, who

kills a pawnbroker and her sister with an ax. These murders occur early in the story, and Raskolnikov spends the rest of the book in frenetic self-examination, questioning his motives and trying to justify his actions. Others become entangled in his wild-eyed paranoia and growing sense of guilt: relatives, friends, police investigators, his landlady, various inhabitants of St. Petersburg, and Sonya Marmeladov, a young woman of deep faith forced into prostitution to support



An edition of “Crime and Punishment” translated by Jessie Coulson.

her impoverished family.

So where in “Crime and Punishment” do we find reflections of our current age?

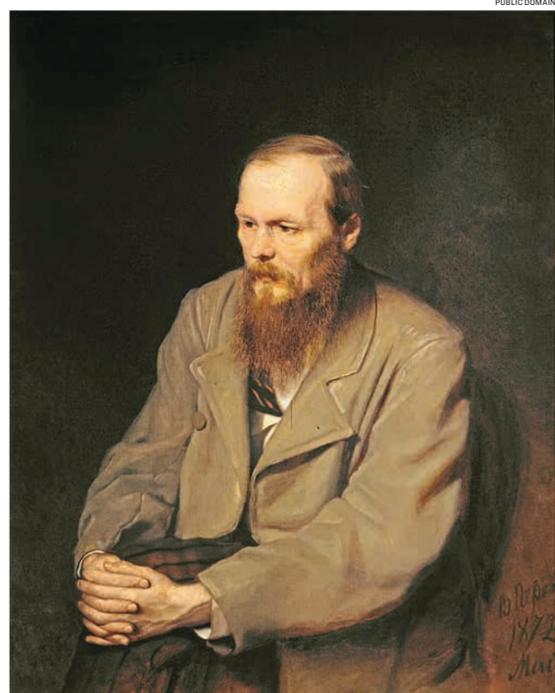
Let's begin with Andrey Semenovitch, “a clerk in some Ministry,” a man respected by his landlady because “he was not a heavy drinker and he paid his rent punctually.” Dostoevsky then adds this description:

“He was one of that countless and multifarious legion of nondescripts, putrescent abortions, and uninformed obstinate fools who instantly and infallibly attach themselves to

the most fashionable current idea, with the immediate effect of vulgarizing it and of turning into a ridiculous caricature any cause they serve, however sincerely.”

Semenovitch could easily fit into that crowd of outraged young people protesting climate change, demanding the removal of a professor, or shouting down a speaker at a university, certain of the justice of their cause but wildly ignorant of its foundations.

In these pages, certain characters mock traditional morality just as people do today. Andrey Semenovitch, for example, at one point raises utilitarianism above all other virtues: “What does honourable mean? I don't understand such expressions as used to define human activities. ‘More honourable,’ ‘nobler’—that's all rubbish, those are absurdities, anti-



Portrait of Feodor Dostoevsky, 1872, by Vasilii Perov. Tretyakov Gallery.

quoted prejudices I reject. Everything that is useful to humanity is honourable. I understand only one word, useful!”

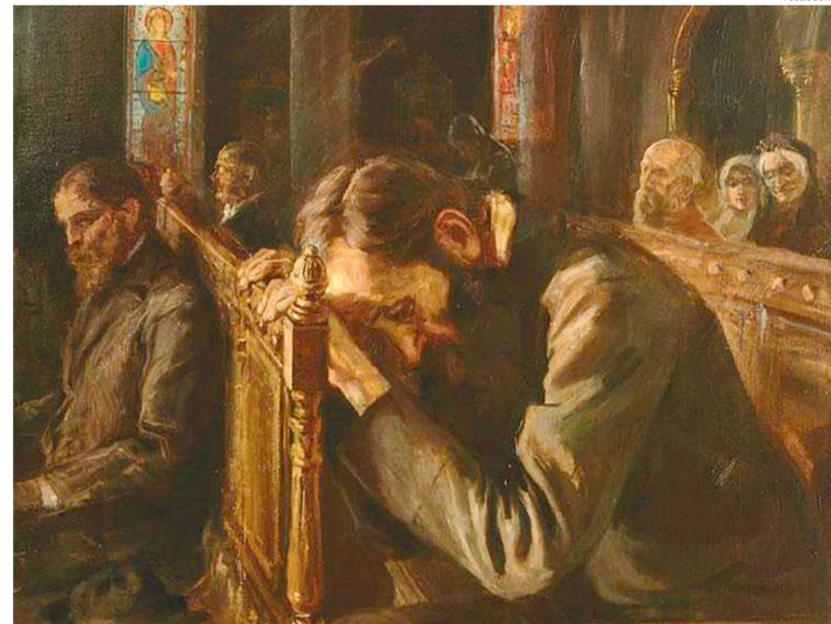
“Crime and Punishment” also provides glimpses of the “Me Generation” long before the advent of selfies. Peter Petrovich Luzhin, a vile man who is engaged for a time to Raskolnikov's sister, tells his listeners early in the story to “...love yourself first of all, for everything in the world is based on personal interest. If you love yourself alone, you will conduct your affairs properly...”

Wars in the Public Square Then and Now

Then, too, there are the elites and the “deplorables.” Like some of our politicians, thinkers, and Silicon Valley billionaires, Raskolnikov, an admirer of Napoleon and others who impose their will on the world, divides humankind into those who “are, generally speaking, by nature staid and conservative, they live in obedience to their destiny, and there is nothing degrading to them,” and a second group who “require, in widely different contexts, the destruction of what exists in the name of better things.”

The character Semenovitch could easily fit into that crowd of outraged young people protesting climate change.

If we ponder those last words—“the destruction of what exists in the name of better things”—we have a motto appropriate to many of today's thinkers, celebrities, politicians, and reporters. Like Raskolnikov, who at one point speaks of raising a “New Jerusalem,” our own “better angels” envision a staircase built from radical changes that will lead to an earthly paradise. They miss the truth behind the words of Pascal: “Man is neither angel nor beast, and it is unfortunately the case that anyone trying to act the angel acts the beast.”



“Slavic Souls” (“Crime and Punishment”), 1900, by Nicolae Vermont. Private Collection.

Like some of the murderers in today's mass shootings or the terrorists who explode bombs in a marketplace, Raskolnikov also regards himself as a rebel, an outsider exempt from moral boundaries. Like them, he feels superior to his victims and looks on his victims with contempt. He kills the pawnbroker not so much for her money but for a principle—she is useless, a parasite, a “louse,” and he can use her money for better causes.

Finally, in “Crime and Punishment” we find the struggle between the forces of religion and secularism, a war that continues to ravage our culture. On one side stands Sonya, the saint of the story, the woman at the well whom Jesus commanded to sin no more, the devout soul who finally frees Raskolnikov from his dark ideology and sets in motion the healing that will render him more fully

human. On the other side are Raskolnikov and some of his acquaintances, unbelievers and scoffers always debating schemes to transform society into paradise and men and women into spirits freed from the constraints of natural law. Sounds familiar, eh?

Will We Listen?

Dostoevsky was more than just a writer of fiction. He was a prophet. He feared that “Holy Russia” might succumb to the philosophical viruses introduced from the West, particularly from England, France, and Germany.

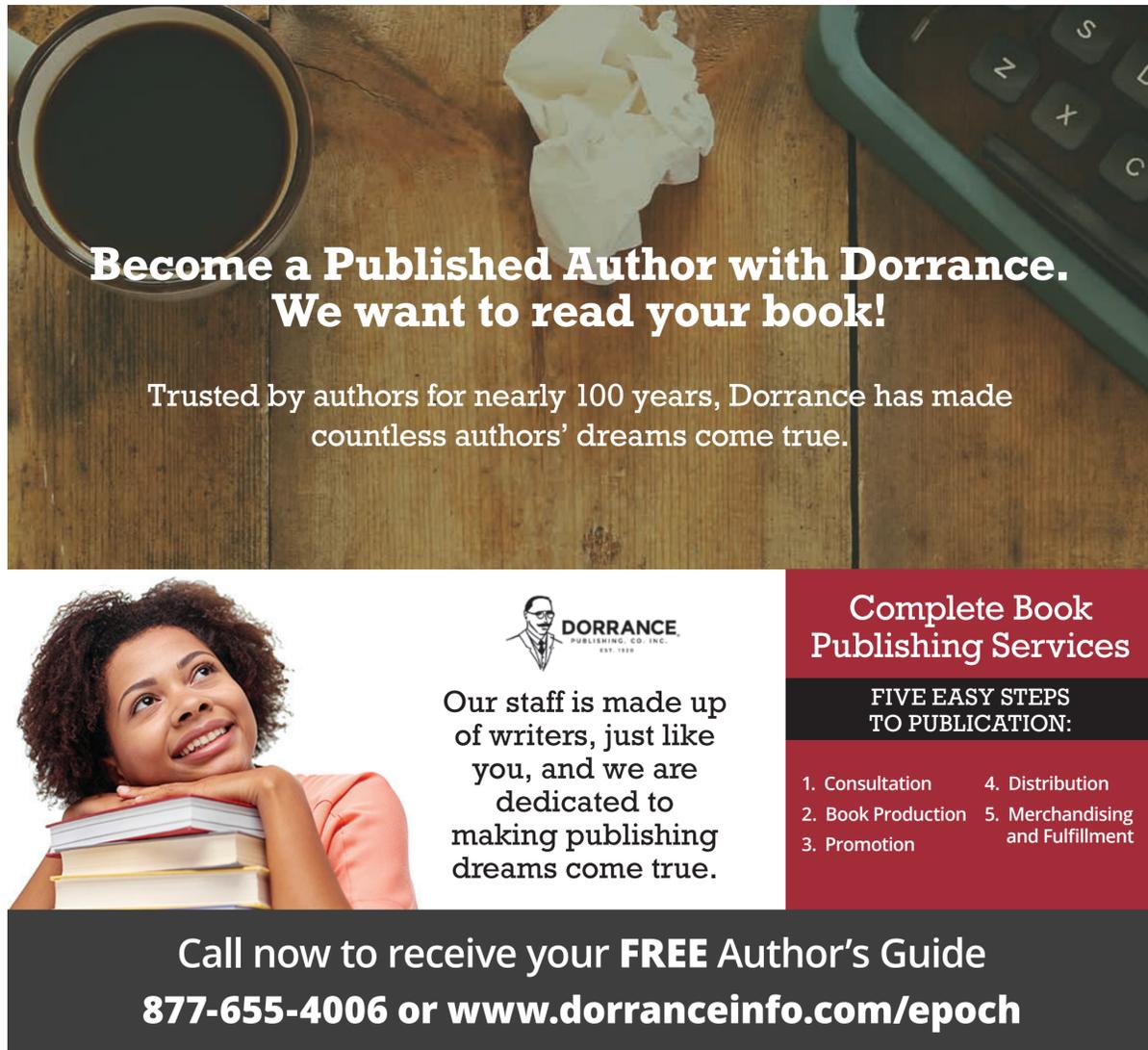
In 1917, that bacillus arrived in the person of Vladimir Lenin, shipped secretly into Russia by the Germans. For the next 70 years, Marxism savaged the Russian people, killing and imprisoning millions, suppressing religion, and attacking tra-

ditional morality, all the while exporting its evil doctrines around the globe.

In our own time, a similar ideological infection threatens to destroy the United States of America. Like much of his work—“The Devils,” “The Brothers Karamazov,” “Notes From the Underground”—Dostoevsky's “Crime and Punishment” fired off a warning to Russia, a signal flare that went unheeded.

He offers us the same warning. The question is: Are we as a people “woke” enough to pay attention?

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.



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Patricia Lovett MBE, a title that stands for Member of the Order of the British Empire, in her workroom on Oct. 6, 2019, having finished writing an extract from Shakespeare's "Henry V" with a quill on vellum. A rough draft for a list of rectors for Chevening Church is in the background.



COURTESY OF PATRICIA LOVETT



"Caterpillar and Butterfly," 2011, by Patricia Lovett. Gouache and real powder gold, painted and written with a quill on vellum.

CRAFTSMANSHIP

A Medieval and Modern Scribe

Patricia Lovett on beautiful lettering and illumination

Continued from Page 13

Lovett works tirelessly to uphold UK heritage and tradition. As well as being part of parliamentary working groups (similar to a congressional caucus), she's currently the chair of the Heritage Crafts Association, which is a UK organization that promotes and supports UK heritage crafts.

In 2013, she was awarded one of the highest national honors: a Queen's honor for services to heritage crafts and calligraphy.

Lovett's love for her craft is infectious. Below, she teaches us about the life of a medieval and modern scribe in terms of manuscripts' significance and about how they were and are made.

The Epoch Times: How has the role of the scribe changed over time?

Patricia Lovett: Obviously the prevalence of people being able to write did change during the centuries as the population became literate, but at one point scribes were crucial.

For example, the Emperor Charlemagne, according to his biographer the scholar Einhard, could read but not write, and so at his bedside, he had writing tablets on which he could practice his letters, which I think is just the most wonderful image. You've got the most powerful man in Europe at the time with his tongue between his lips outlining the letter "a."

If you were a monarch, you would employ scribes, probably like monarchs and presidents today in that they wouldn't be typing their own emails or letters, and any communication would be dictated to an assistant.

Nowadays, most of the writing is done whether digitally, through typewriters, or whatever, so the role of the scribe has changed. People use me only to do things of significance: if someone is getting married and the mother has written a poem, or if someone has a significant anniversary and there are some words for a speech someone is going to say that they'd like recorded, or a friend's birthday and she's always liked this poem.

What I'm working on at the moment, today, is a list of rectors for a church, and that list starts in 1262. They decided that they wanted a new list of rectors. They've

“**I feel it's such a privilege to be able to do what I love doing all the time.**”

Patricia Lovett, scribe

been bequeathed a sum of money by one of their parishioners, and so they have come to me because they want it written out on vellum.

The Epoch Times: What is the actual definition of calligraphy?

Mrs. Lovett: "Calligraphy" is from the Greek "Kaligraphia." "Calli" comes from "kallos" meaning beauty, and "graphein" is to write, as in "geography" or "topography." And so it's some sort of writing or record. A simple definition is beautiful handwriting.

The type of book we all recognize now is called a codex, simply a book made of sheets of paper, vellum, or papyrus, and is almost synonymous with the Christian religion, although we think there were pamphlets and things before. The Greek and Romans used scrolls more but had codices. They had a codex form in a wax tablet, but the turning-pages type of book that we're familiar with very much devel-

oped in the Christian religion.

When books became very important, because this was the word of God being recorded, people wanted to show their devotion and put money into the production of books. They chose the most precious things to use to embellish them: precious metals like gold and silver, and the most precious pigments, such as ultramarine.

Gold, of course, for Christians also has other connotations. The fact that it is yellow, which is the color of the sun, and that the sun rises in the east, which is where European Christians would look to Jerusalem, which has great significance for them, was all bound up with the use of gold, more than with the use of silver. And, of course, silver tarnishes, and they knew this.

The books where gold was added were often very important in religious foundations or in the larger churches. These books would be held high and processed around the church either before or during

the services, and either the sunlight or the candlelight reflecting off the gold would look as though the book itself was being lit from within. Because at that time there was no cognizance of the angle of incidence equals the angle of reflection, which are the laws of light that we know now, it would look as though the word of God in the book was being lit from within, and so that is the illumination part of it.

Technically speaking, "The Book of Kells," a ninth-century manuscript detailing the four Gospels of Jesus, is not an illuminated book. It's a decorated book. Because it doesn't have gold in it, it's not an illuminated book.

What tends to be the general assumption now is that illumination refers to the pictures and the gold. But technically, if there is something shiny that reflects the light, then it's called an illumination. Now those little miniatures in those books, those illuminations, were outlined in a red pigment coming from lead, which in medieval times was called minium. This was used to outline and put the image down onto the paper, because at that time there was no graphite. That came much later.

Although there's evidence of leadpoint in the "Lindisfarne Gospels," generally, securing the image (the outline), before you did anything else in the book was done with minium. Because these little pictures were outlined in minium, they were called miniatures. But not every picture in a book was small, so I would refer

you to pictures in the Bury Bible where some of those pictures are a foot square. That's not miniature in our sense of the term today. They were called miniatures regardless of size. But because most of them were small, the word "miniature" became the word that we now use for small or discreet in size.

The Epoch Times: What's involved in making a medieval manuscript?

Mrs. Lovett: In terms of the pages of the book, they would have been of vellum or parchment. Vellum is calfskin. Parchment is a generic name, but most people take parchment as being sheepskin or goatskin. But neither of those animals produce skins that are as wonderful as calfskin.

There is now only one master vellum maker in the country; his name is Lee Mapley, at William Cowley Parchment Makers. He produces the best vellum I've used.

It's important to note that the production of vellum and parchment is a result of a byproduct of the meat and dairy industry. More male animals are born than can be used for breeding, so they are reared to a certain size, and then they are killed for food. A lot of the skins go to the UK leather industry, but interestingly there are quite a few that go to landfill sites. Only a few skins go to make parchment and vellum.

Making the medieval manuscript starts with vellum and parchment, and then the pages would be cut to the appropriate

“**Either the sunlight or the candlelight reflecting off the gold would look as though the book itself was being lit from within.**”

Patricia Lovett, scribe

size. A number of manuscripts are tiny, not much bigger than a postage stamp, so those would be used for private devotion. Some Bibles in the 12th century are huge—almost coffee table Bibles.

The page would be set out pretty much like how we do it now. I use a set of dividers, which are like compasses with two points (rather than a point and a lead) to mark the lines down the page. Now, I use a pencil, but then they would've used a leadpoint or a silverpoint to mark out the lines.

Quills are wonderful to write with. I do use quills but mainly for shorter texts because of the need to recut them every half page or so. Otherwise, I use metal nibs.

The ink came from oak galls, which is the growth that an oak tree makes when a gall wasp lays its egg on the new growth. These galls are crushed and mixed with water. Then iron salts and adhesive are added, and that provides a very good jet-black ink. But it is corrosive, and there are instances of books where the ink has eaten through the skin.

Some letters are written in red or blue ink. A lot of pigments that were used, particularly for the "Lindisfarne Gospels," were local pigments, as they didn't import much for that manuscript. But later, a number of pigments were imported, including ultramarine, one of the most precious pigments.

Ultramarine is from the semiprecious stone lapis lazuli, which at the time came from northwest Afghanistan, along the Silk Route. The vibrant orange-red in manuscripts is vermilion, which in medieval times was called cinnabar and came from mercury sulfide. Then there was a gold pigment called orpiment, which is an orange-yellow arsenic sulfide mineral. So it was not sensible to lick your brushes!

The Epoch Times: Presumably, you don't use those pigments anymore.

Mrs. Lovett: I have them, and I demonstrate with them. I mean, we were very cavalier in the past, but there are so many health and safety issues—and I think rightly so—that I don't teach painting with pigments anymore.

I must admit, many years ago, I was talking at an international conference of academics interested in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, and I took the lid off a pot of orpiment. I was just sort of holding it to see if I could catch the light to reflect on the crystals to demonstrate that it did have a bit of a glitter, and I thought, "Goodness, if one of these academics sneezed, I could wipe out the whole [of our] knowledge of the Anglo-Saxons."

To find out more about Patricia Lovett's work, visit PatriciaLovett.com

This interview has been edited for clarity and brevity.



i. A gesso layer makes a "cushion" and is applied where the gold is to be attached.



ii. Real gold leaf attached to the gesso is polished (burnished) and catches the light as it is raised from the surface of the skin.



iii. The initial gouache colors are added.



iv. Tones and shades added.



RUSSELL DUNCAN

Soprano Ermonela Jaho and conductor Sir Mark Elder with the London Philharmonic Orchestra perform Puccini's "Le Willis" in November 2018.

ALBUM REVIEW

Puccini's First Opera Reveals His Talent

ROBERT HUGILL

Puccini's first opera, if it is known at all, is known best as the two-act "Le Villi." But, in fact, the original version of the opera was a shorter, one-act piece. Opera Rara restores this valuable rarity to the repertoire as recorded by Sir Mark Elder and the London Philharmonic Orchestra.

The one-act, called "Le Willis," had been written for Edoardo Sonzogno's 1883 competition, the one that Mascagni would win with "Cavalleria Rusticana" in 1889. Puccini was encouraged to enter the competition by his teacher, Amilcare Ponchielli, who put him in contact with the librettist Ferdinando Fontana.

Fontana was key to the opera's rather distinctive form. Eight years older than Puccini and with around a dozen opera libretti to his credit, Fontana had links to the older Scapigliatura Milanese movement. The consciously bohemian movement sought to rejuvenate Italian culture.

Fontana's writings on opera, quoted by Martin Deasy in his invaluable article in the CD booklet, include some, to us, slightly strange theorizing by the Scapigliatura that moves opera from the dramatic toward something more metaphysical: operas that contain orchestral interludes with poems, which would describe rather than enact some of the plot for the audience.

'Le Willis'

This is exactly what we have with "Le Willis": The sung drama consists of the opening scene where Roberto (Arsen Soghomonyan) has to go off to Munich and his beloved Anna (Ermonela Jaho) has had a dream about his abandoning her. In the final scene, the Willis, or supernatural women, are summoned by Anna's father, Guglielmo (Brian Mulligan). And they, including the ghost of Anna, torment Roberto to death in revenge.

The more dramatic middle section—where Roberto is seduced by a courtesan in Mu-

nich, and Anna, abandoned, dies—is covered by the symphonic interlude (a nine-minute piece in the middle). Opera Rara prints Fontana's two poems that went with the music and describe what is happening.

Puccini's Talent

Deasy's article also sheds light on the curious shenanigans surrounding Puccini's opera and the competition. The standard story is that Ponchielli encouraged Puccini to enter the competition, but that Puccini's entry was late, badly written, and failed, despite Ponchielli being on the jury. After a performance of the opera organized by Fontana, it would be picked up by the music publisher Giulio Ricordi, and the rest, as they say, is history.

Deasy points out that Ricordi's knowledge of and interaction with Puccini rather predates the performance of "Le Willis." Deasy suggests that Puccini's failure in the competition

Puccini's operatic talent seems to have sprung forth fully formed.

THEATER REVIEW

A Serious and Not-So-Serious Look at Addiction

JUDD HOLLANDER

NEW YORK—When you're in a downward alcoholic spiral, it's only a matter of time before you hit rock bottom. The real question is just how far you'll fall before trying to pull yourself back up—if you try at all.

The title of Sean Daniels's "The White Chip," now at 59E59 Theaters, refers to the token given to members of Alcoholics Anonymous who are serious about overcoming their addiction.

The work feels nothing like a sanctimonious condemnation.

Steven (Joe Tapper) believes he owes much of his success to his daily alcohol intake. Never comfortable with his Mormon upbringing, and having quite the adversarial relationship with his mother (Finnerty Steeves), Steven realized early on that having a drink made him more relaxed and confident.

While initially adverse to the taste of liquor, Steven describes his first beer as "metal and water mixed together," but he could soon hoist a glass with the best of them. It certainly helped that he attended col-

lege at Florida State University—an institution named, during his tenure there, "the number one party school in America."

Drinking allowed him to talk to girls, have a good time at college, start his own theater company, and eventually schmooze his way into a directing job at one of the most prestigious regional theaters in the country.

There were a few bumps along the way, such as a drunk-driving incident or two, but Steven never thought of himself as having a drinking problem. He's reasoned that if he was actually an alcoholic, almost all of his friends and professional associates were drunks as well.

He also convinced himself that alcohol was part and parcel of his job, as he was expected to hold his own when imbibing with potential donors at social functions.

However, as time goes on, Steven finds himself more and more in need of a drink just to be able to function. It's not long before his drinking, which he believes to have firmly in control, threatens to cost him everything he holds dear. In fact, his drinking causes rifts in his personal life, just when his family needs him the most.

The Humor in It All

While "The White Chip" presents an unflinching look at the insidious power that addiction can hold, it does so with enough humor to



CAROL ROSEGG

The cast of "The White Chip": Joe Tapper as Steven (C), surrounded by Genesis Oliver (L) and Finnerty Steeves (R), who both play multiple roles. The story revolves around an alcoholic drying out.

'The White Chip'

59E59 Theaters
59 E. 59th St.
New York

Running Time
1 hour, 30 minutes
(no intermission)

Closes
Oct. 26

Tickets
646-892-7999
or 59e59.org

make the work feel nothing like a sanctimonious condemnation or a TV movie about the evils of drink.

There's a reason why the press materials bill this play as "A dry comedy about drying out." There's a scene when Steven gets dating advice from an airport bartender (Genesis Oliver), and when he reels off a list of theatrical and literary figures who were drunks. These details help offset the deadly serious elephant in the room that the audience is all too aware of, but that Steven is not willing to face.

Tapper does a great job as Steven. The character slowly but inexorably self-destructs before our eyes. Yet at the same time, he remains likable enough to make us want to see how things turn out for him. Particularly engaging are some of the scenes with

his family, especially the moment he does finally reach out for help to the one person he never thought would be there for him.

Steeves and Oliver do quite well in multiple roles. Steeves is especially effective as the women in Steven's life. Among them is his mother, with their ever-changing relationship becoming one of the central points of the play. Oliver meanwhile gives a quiet dignity to the role of Steven's dad, a man whose own childhood issues shaped his future actions as a parent.

The direction by Sheryl Kaller is tightly focused. The plot unfolds at a leisurely pace during the comedic moments, with the action and the enjoyable overall amiability coming to a screeching halt at the dramatic points.

Rachel Fae Szymanski's lighting nicely alternates between the stark, such as at the various AA meetings Steven attends, and the more subdued during certain times of crisis.

It's not often that one can see a play about an important subject and fully experience its message while being seriously concerned one moment and laughing out loud the next. "The White Chip" does exactly that and is all the better for doing so.

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

was engineered by Ponchielli and Ricordi, as Ricordi already had his eye on Puccini.

It was Deasy who did the editorial work on this piece, unpacking the original "Le Willis" from the manuscript, which Puccini had cannibalized to create "Le Villi."

The opera itself is remarkable, not so much as a piece of operatic drama (its form is far too strange for that), but for the way it clearly sounds like Puccini. His operatic talent seems to have sprung forth fully formed, and in terms of the orchestral writing and the cast of the melodic lines, this is clearly Puccini. The music is full of fingerprints that remind you of later Puccini works.

What Puccini later developed was his dramatic instinct. But only after the failure of Puccini and Fontana's second opera, the neo-Wagnerian "Edgar," would Puccini take interest in and control the dramatic form of his libretti (often to the point of severely annoying his librettists). Puccini was 25 when he wrote "Le Willis," but only when he was 38 in 1896 did he produce his first unqualified dramatic masterpiece, "La Bohème."

The Dramatic Shortcomings of 'Le Willis'

Most characters in "Le Willis" do not get a chance to develop: Only Guglielmo has anything like a solo, with his aria invoking the Willis at the beginning of Part 2. It is here powerfully delivered by Brian Mulligan. Arsen Soghomonyan makes a powerful and robust Roberto, and Ermonela Jaho is touching as the wronged Anna.

As elsewhere, Giulio Ricordi took an active role in the development of Puccini's opera. He specified changes that transformed the one-act "Le Willis" into the two-act "Le Villi" with additional solo arias for both Anna and Roberto. These are included as an appendix on the disc and provide powerful Puccinian solo moments for both Jaho and Soghomonyan (who gets a 10-minute solo scene that effectively transforms the character). These solos point to the Puccini to come.

"Le Willis" will never become a repertoire work, but this admirable disc, in performances that give the opera the finest possible outing, does give us a chance to hear early Puccini.

And the opera's name? Puccini referred to it as "Le Willis" in letters, but it was firmly "Le Villi" when published by Ricordi. Editor Martin Deasy has used the name "Le Willis" for the first version to differentiate it from the second, "Le Villi." In either case, Italians would have pronounced the name the same.

Robert Hugill is a composer, lecturer, journalist, and classical music blogger. He runs the classical music blog Planet Hugill, writes for the Opera Today website, and Opera Today and Opera magazines. He lectures and gives pre-concert talks on opera and classical music in London. As a composer, his disc of songs "Quickening" was issued by Navona Records in 2017.

This article, edited for clarity and length, is reprinted with permission from Planet Hugill.



Will Smith as "Junior," the younger clone of a lethal assassin, in "Gemini Man."



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

Is 'Gemini Man' a Recommendation for Cloned Super-Soldiers?

MARK JACKSON

Henry Brogan (Will Smith) is an aging assassin. He's still cutting-edge lethal, but as is apparently the case with assassins in their twilight years, he's growing a conscience.

He snipes a bad guy on a high-speed train, from two kilometers out, and notices he got distracted by the little girl who was standing near his victim. He thinks he got lucky—could have killed the girl. And this gives him pause.

And so what might an agency do when confronted with a conscience-growing (and thus soon to be ineffective) lethal predator? They'd replace him with a new, improved, upgrade of himself, named Junior. Junior (also Will Smith) is a literal upgrade. He's



'Gemini Man'

Director
Ang Lee

Starring
Will Smith, Mary Elizabeth Winstead, Clive Owen, Benedict Wong, Ralph Brown

Rated
PG-13

Running Time
1 hour, 57 minutes

Release Date
Oct. 11

★★★★★

Mary Elizabeth Winstead and Benedict Wong.

Director Ang Lee (R) and Will Smith on the set of "Gemini Man."



Henry's genetically enhanced clone

Isn't that an exciting premise? The idea's been kicking around for 20 years; they just didn't have the CGI wizardry available yet. Andy Serkis's Gollum changed all that.

So is it realistic? Well... that opening, about a confirmed kill from two kilometers away? Compensating for all the minutia snipers have to adjust for—gravity, wind, and even earth rotation—all in addition to calculating enough lead time to pinpoint a target on a high-speed train? I didn't go to sniper school, but I'm pretty sure such a shot is ridiculously unrealistic.

So, again, are cloned super-soldiers realistic? They've cloned stuff! They cloned that sheep! Named her Dolly, they did. They can clone humans. Probably already done it. But can they also turn down the clone's emotional life, as if it had a genetically accessible volume dial, which could render it 100 percent fearless?

What would we call that? You know. We would call that a terminator. Or a robocop. Let's call Junior a military-grade robo-operator. Let's say it's realistic enough to make for a fun actioner.

Henry's Story

Henry's tired. As characters inevitably say in this kind of story, "I'm getting too old for this." He's looking to go back to Georgia and mellow out on his porch, maybe do a little fishing. But his Spidey, er... Henry-sense, picks up that he's being surveilled.

He suspects the new, pretty grad student (Mary Elizabeth Winstead, actually the best thing about this movie) who's booking fishing boats at the office shack for the local marina.

Now, while Henry's busy getting comfortable, we learn that two decades earlier, one Clay Verris (Clive Owen), who trained Henry, also surreptitiously helped himself to some of Henry's DNA and cloned the aforementioned Junior. Clay raised Junior as his son. Strangely, though this type of storyline involving enhanced super-soldiers always has mass production as its endgame, Junior doesn't get mass-produced. Not in this movie.

Instead, Clay trained terminator-son to outperform Henry in every respect, then waited for signs of aging, for Henry to start losing a step, and for the dreaded conscience to start coming online. He then sent the copy to eliminate the original.

Good Fight Scenes

Since this is a terminator-type movie—that is, detect the terminator, run away from the terminator, fight the terminator, and so on—it's not terribly deep. It's mindless action. But this is Ang Lee we're talking about, one of my favorite directors, and so as shallow as the premise is, it's quite fun.

The gimmick here, much like Richard Linklater's superb gimmick from "Boyhood," where he went back every year, for many years, and actually filmed a young boy growing up, is that we get to see mature, white-beard-stubbed Will Smith roll around with and pummel—and be pummeled by—his computer-generated "Fresh Prince of Bel Air" era self. Which is maybe a bit less fresh.

Fun, right? Pretty much. It's just that the CGI, while adequate, can't come close to conveying the vintage wattage of "Bad Boys" era Will Smith hollering congratulations at Martin Lawrence's hair-raising stunt driv-

ing: "Now that's how you supposed to drive! From now on—that's how you drive!!!"

In fact, speaking of Linklater's "Boyhood," the ideal way this film should have been shot would have been for Ang Lee to develop his supernatural ability of precognition and start shooting Will Smith doing all the Junior scenes in his 20s. And then shelve the project for 20 years and wait until Smith turned 51.

In addition to the CGI, "Gemini Man" was shot with a higher frame rate. (Motion picture film cameras typically shoot 24 frames per second. The higher rate is supposed to prevent that ghostly flicker you see if you avert your eyes from the screen in a darkened room and, thereby, feel more realistic.) This personally does nothing for me. Neither did the 3D in this case.

Anyway, there are two fight scenes. One involves a "Mission Impossible"-style motorcycle chase, with shooting and driving, punching and kicking and driving, and stunt riding using the motorcycle itself as an assault weapon. The bike is also deployed as a martial arts extension of the rider, as in the case of a moto-version of a spinning back kick, using the back wheel instead of the heel. Exxxcellentnt.

In the end, what you get is that you're reminded that human cloning is a thing.

Then there's a Smith-on-Smith Muay Thai and jujitsu fest, staged in a catacomb in Budapest, where they crunch around on skulls and knock each other with femurs and tibiae. Exxxcellentnt.

Heightening the conflict is the construct that, since they're the same person, they have the genetic ability to predict each other's moves. Smith and Ang Lee present this more or less convincingly (although, when you think too much about it, the pseudoscience herewith jettisons nurture from the nature/nurture equation).

All in All

We've been spoiled regarding CG characters ever since Gollum. One instance that matched that standard recently was the pretty little huge-eyed cyborg Alita. But you'd think that with the star power of Smith and Lee, a more scarily convincing facsimile of young Smith could have been produced.

In the end, what you get is that you're reminded that human cloning is a thing, and it's going to happen. According to ancient wisdom, a different god was responsible for the creation of each human race. This was the ancient understanding behind the forbidding of race mixing. The thinking went that a biracial child would not be able to be accepted into the paradise of either of the gods who produced the mother and father of different races, and the child would therefore suffer in limbo.

A cloned human is created by no god, so there is no human soul. But a human body needs a soul to animate it, and nature abhors a vacuum. What kind of entity will creep in there and animate that human clone? Those are likely stories the horror genre will address in the future.

A Missed Opportunity for Witty Social Commentary on Tech Addiction

IAN KANE

Technology is forever pushing forward, for good or for worse. One of the most concerning recent technological “wonders” is software apps that supposedly make our lives better. Big Tech figured out long ago that one of the best ways to track our every move ... er ... I mean to help make our lives more “manageable” is to have so-called digital personal assistants installed on our cellphones. Hence, the explosive rise of AI-powered assistants, such as Siri, Google Now, and Cortana, to name a few.

When I first watched the trailer to the new rom-com film “Jexi,” co-written by filmmakers Jon Lucas and Scott Moore, I had high hopes that we’d see social commentary on this invasive technology. I imagined it tackling questions such as what are the bigger-picture implications for our futures, only couched in a fun, witty comedy. Boy, was I wrong.

The film opens by lightly sketching out the life of Phil (Adam Devine, “Pitch Perfect,” “Workaholics”), whose dream is to become a journalist. Instead, he’s settled for a gig that entails coming up with pop-culture top 10 lists.

Much of Phil’s life revolves around his ubiquitous cellphone, which seems to be a fill-in for friends and certainly for any sort of romantic interest. This is an intriguing premise that many can relate to in our increasingly isolated-from-each-other, modern society.

Soon, Phil meets bicycle store owner Cate (Alexandra Shipp, “X-Men: Apocalypse”), who somehow finds his social ineptitude and

bumbling ways attractive. Cate’s character is very hands-on and has a lot of masculine energy: She’s outdoorsy, buffed out in her tank top, and has a knack for fixing things. Phil becomes so enamored of her that he accidentally breaks his cellphone.

He decides to purchase a replacement phone and chooses one that comes equipped with one of the aforementioned digital assistants pre-installed on it and ready to go. From there, the digital assistant—the titular “Jexi”—begins to gradually insinuate itself into Phil’s life.

Although naggy, domineering, and down-putting, Jexi (voiced by Rose Byrne) insists on improving his life by demanding that he make

Much of Phil’s life revolves around his ubiquitous cellphone.

Adam Devine as Phil, a phone-addicted misfit, in “Jexi.”



CBS FILMS

new friends, eat more healthily, and improve his employment circumstances.

Unfortunately, while this plot sounds halfway interesting on paper, at least from a technology-run-amok perspective, much of Lucas and Moore’s saggy screenplay is propped up by a plethora of crude and sleazy jokes, lots of cursing, and vulgar imagery. For instance, when Phil receives an image from Cate that includes some cleavage, he begins, in return, to snap pictures of his genitalia, much to the insulting disapproval of Jexi. This scene (disturbingly) elicited plenty of guffaws from my fellow moviegoers.

I won’t reveal any spoilers here, but when Jexi feels as though “she” is losing Phil, because his life appears to be changing, things don’t go too well for him. Engage Psycho Chick Mode.

A Missed Opportunity “Jexi” seems like a huge missed opportunity to explore the ways in which modern society worships

our AI “gods” and how increasingly dependent we are becoming on technology to solve even our most trivial issues. GPS assistance is one thing, but the recent explosion of devices and apps that are taking over is something popular media should explore.

Instead, a couple of other disturbing revelations emerge in “Jexi.” Phil plays the typical adorable sucker nice-guy type, which, in an age of pop-culture terms such as “cuck,” “incel,” “beta orbiter,” and “simp,” doesn’t exactly make for a good look at our increasingly embattled masculinity. Indeed, Phil is a poster child for today’s emasculated male.

Another irritating trope in this film is that as a male, Phil can’t become a man without the aid of a shrill, domineering female presence. This not only is a disservice to the women out there who support their men with kindness, compassion, and understanding, but also posits the erroneous philosophy that men can’t be self-sustaining and independently successful.

As a film, “Jexi” is a serious downgrade from anything remotely insightful, engaging, or entertaining.

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

‘Jexi’

Director
Jon Lucas, Scott Moore

Starring
Adam Devine, Alexandra Shipp, Rose Byrne

Running Time
1 hour, 24 minutes

Rated
R

Release Date
Oct. 11



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