

THE EPOCH TIMES

ARTS & CULTURE

KEAN COLLECTION/GETTY IMAGES



Reading has been a part of American family life since our founding. Etching from the mid-1800s.

LITERATURE

Sages, Saints, and Surprises: Some Writing That Shaped America

JEFF MINICK

Since the 18th century, the printed word has influenced the course of American history.

From the founding of the United States, its literacy rates were higher than the countries of Europe. In his article “The Spread of Education Before Compulsion,” Edwin West of the Foundation for Economic Education writes that by 1800, literacy among white American males had reached almost 90 percent. In 1828, the United States sported 50 universities and 600 newspapers and journals. As West tells us, one writer reported that year, “With us a newspaper is the fare of almost every meal in almost every family.”

Consequently, certain books and peri-

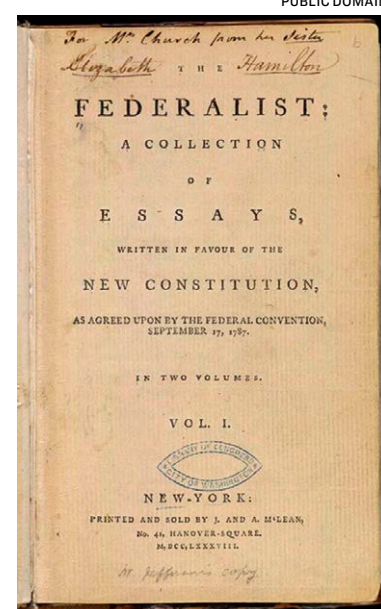
In 1828, the United States sported 50 universities and 600 newspapers and journals.

odicals played important parts in shaping our nation. The King James Bible, for example, was not only the central text for most Protestant churches—and remains so for many today—but its prose and poetry, read at home and in church, and quoted during sermons, also heavily impacted our language. It influenced the style, vocabulary, and prose rhythms of writers as varied as Herman Melville, Abraham Lincoln, and Ernest Hemingway.

Many other books are central to the story of our nation. Originally published as a series of anonymous articles by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, “The Federalist Papers” continues to be read and debated by today’s constitutional scholars.

Continued on Page 4

PUBLIC DOMAIN



The title page of the first edition of “The Federalist: A Collection of Essays, Written in Favour of the New Constitution, as Agreed Upon by the Federal Convention, September 17, 1787.” In Two Volumes. (1st ed.), 1788, by Publius, a pseudonym for Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison. Rare Books and Special Collections Division of the Library of Congress.

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Ballerina Anna Pavlova performed 'The Dying Swan' about 4,000 times.

A portrait of Anna Pavlova in a photographic reproduction, in an engraved medallion by the 17th-century English artist William Faithorne.

CRAFTSMANSHIP

Reviving 'The Dying Swan,' Ballerina Anna Pavlova's Costume

'Conservation in the City' at the Museum of London

LORRAINE FERRIER

While under lockdown, staff at the Museum of London decided to edit a series of videos documenting the restoration of a rarely displayed item in the museum's fashion and textile archive: legendary ballerina Anna Pavlova's swan costume. Pavlova was believed to have worn the costume around 1910 for a performance of "The Dying Swan."

The stunning costume consists of a cream-colored silk, boned bodice adorned with green glass gems and goose feathers, and a cotton tutu made from a mass of tulle and sequins that together imitate a majestic swan and its incredible plumage. When performing, Pavlova would have worn a diamanté headdress of green glass gems trimmed with feathers.

Pavlova's swan costume would have been one of many. According to a dancer who worked with Pavlova, a fresh swan costume was made for each performance run. Pavlova performed "The Dying Swan" about 4,000 times.

The costume is rarely on display due to the garment's delicate nature and environmentally sensitive details, including the silk material and goose feathers, the museum wrote in an email.

The footage of the restoration was shot for the museum's "Conservation in the City" series, just before the costume was sent to New York for the exhibition "Ballerina: Fashion's Modern Muse" at the Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology.

The first two episodes in the five-part "Conservation in the City" series can now be viewed on the Museum of London website, and a new episode will be released each month.

In the first video, the museum's textile conservator Emily Austin explains how she first checks the condition of the garment. At the beginning of the restoration, she estimates that the job would be completed in over 100 hours due to the complexity of the garment and its many different materials. Time and dust has dimmed the once white costume. The garment has lost its shape, and the elastic on the shoulders is gone. Austin will strengthen and realign some of the goose feathers and maybe infill them. The tulle-silk skirt is understandably worn, and over time small tears have appeared throughout the tutu, mainly on the edges, undoubtedly taking the strain of Pavlova's expressive dying-swan song.

In the second video, Austin explains how she uses a fine rabbit-hair brush

to remove the layers of dust. She then uses a museum vacuum topped with netting to remove the more stubborn surface grime. Austin then assesses the tulle damage more closely, patching up tears with hair-thin polyester thread that has been dyed to color match the material. She places a piece of netting behind each tear and then attaches the patch to the tulle by using a simple running stitch. The repair can hardly be seen, and ditto for the thread shown in the camera shot.

What is clear is the amount of patience and attention to detail that is needed for the job. We'll have to wait for the third episode to see what happens next.

How 'The Dying Swan' Came to Be
"The Dying Swan" is arguably Pavlova's most famous solo piece. Russian ballet dancer and choreographer Michael Fokine created the piece at her request in 1905. She had just been accepted as a ballerina in the Imperial Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg, Russia, and was required to perform a solo piece at a gala concert given by the theater's artists.

Fokine knew of Pavlova's love for swans. (She would later have swans on a large pond at her London home, so she could closely imitate them in her ballet.) Fokine also knew that Pavlova enjoyed British poet Alfred Tennyson's poem "The Dying Swan," in which the poet wonderfully describes the swan song—the beautiful melody the swan sings as it approaches death.

EILEEN COSTA/THE MUSEUM AT FIT



Anna Pavlova's costume for "The Dying Swan" was featured in the exhibition "Ballerina: Fashion's Modern Muse," at the Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York, which ran from Feb. 11 to April 18, 2020.

I.
The plain was grassy, wild and bare,
Wide, wild, and open to the air,
Which had built up everywhere
An under-roof of doleful gray.
With an inner voice the river ran,
Adown it floated a dying swan,
And loudly did lament.
It was the middle of the day.
Ever the weary wind went on,
And took the reed-tops as it went.

II.
Some blue peaks in the distance rose,
And white against the cold-white sky,
Shone out their crowning snows.
One willow over the river wept,
And shook the wave as the wind did sigh;
Above in the wind was the swallow,
Chasing itself at its own wild will,
And far thro' the marsh green and still
The tangled water-courses slept,
Shot over with purple, and green, and yellow.

III.
The wild swan's death-hymn took the soul
Of that waste place with joy
Hidden in sorrow: at first to the ear
The warble was low, and full and clear;
And floating about the under-sky,
Prevailing in weakness, the coronach stole
Sometimes afar, and sometimes anear;
But anon her awful jubilant voice,
With a music strange and manifold,
Flow'd forth on a carol free and bold;
As when a mighty people rejoice
With shawms, and with cymbals, and harps of gold,
And the tumult of their acclaim is roll'd
Thro' the open gates of the city afar,
To the shepherd who watcheth the evening star.
And the creeping mosses and clambering weeds,
And the willow-branches hoar and dank,
And the wavy swell of the sighing reeds,
And the wave-worn horns of the echoing bank,
And the silvery marsh-flowers that throng
The desolate creeks and pools among,
Were flooded over with eddying song.

Pavlova's performance of 'The Dying Swan,' with her expressive movements, influenced how ballerinas performed Tchaikovsky's 'Swan Lake.'



Anna Pavlova's ballet dress, 20th century. A dancer who worked with Pavlova recalled how she would have the swan tutu remade by her wardrobe mistress, Madame Manya, before each new run of performances.

RYAN MCCREARY/NO-ND-2.0



Russian ballerina Anna Pavlova kept swans on a large pond at her London home, so she could emulate them in her ballet.

Tennyson's poem inspired Fokine's dance. He choreographed the piece to "The Swan," the 13th movement of "The Carnival of the Animals," by French composer Camille Saint-Saëns. The movement was originally scored for a solo cello accompanied by two pianos.

Russian dance critic André Levinson described Pavlova's performance of "The Dying Swan":

"Arms folded, on tiptoe, she dreamily and slowly circles the stage. By even, gliding motions of the hands, returning to the background from whence she emerged, she seems to strive toward the horizon, as though a moment more and she will fly—exploring the confines of space with her soul.

The tension gradually relaxes and she sinks to earth, arms waving faintly as in pain. Then faltering with irregular steps toward the edge of the stage—leg bones quiver like the strings of a harp—by one swift forward-gliding motion of the right foot to earth, she sinks on the left knee—the aerial creature struggling against earthly bonds; and there, transfixed by pain, she dies."

Poignantly, on her deathbed in 1931, Pavlova's last words were "Get my swan costume ready."

To find out more about the Museum of London's conservation of Anna Pavlova's swan costume, see <http://ept.ms/TheDyingSwanCostumeVideo>

What People Are Saying



I read The Epoch Times daily. I still like hard papers [...] and I still like to grab that paper in my hand, but I get more printed versions of stories than ever before. You guys have done an amazing job, and really—I think there's such a void in media, especially newspapers. They slant so solidly one way that there are very few papers that I can really feel that I can rely on, and The Epoch Times is one.

SEAN HANNITY
Talk show host



I congratulate you and The Epoch Times for the work you are doing, especially with regard to keeping the menace of the communist threat in front of us.

DR. SEBASTIAN GORKA
Military and intelligence analyst and former deputy assistant to the president



I rely on The Epoch Times newspaper for factual and unbiased news coverage.

LARRY ELDER
Best-selling author, attorney, and talk show host



The Epoch Times is a great place where you can understand traditional values in a way and in a tone and through content that is accessible. It's smart.

CARRIE SHEFFIELD
Columnist and broadcaster



It's our favorite paper. It's the first one we read. Thank you so much for your reporting of the news.

PAUL GOSAR
U.S. representative for Arizona

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Some books change a culture. 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' contributed mightily to the awareness that slavery was an evil institution. The title-page illustration by Hammatt Billings for 'Uncle Tom's Cabin.' First Edition: Boston, John P. Jewett & Company, 1852.

LITERATURE

Sages, Saints, and Surprises Some Writing That Shaped America

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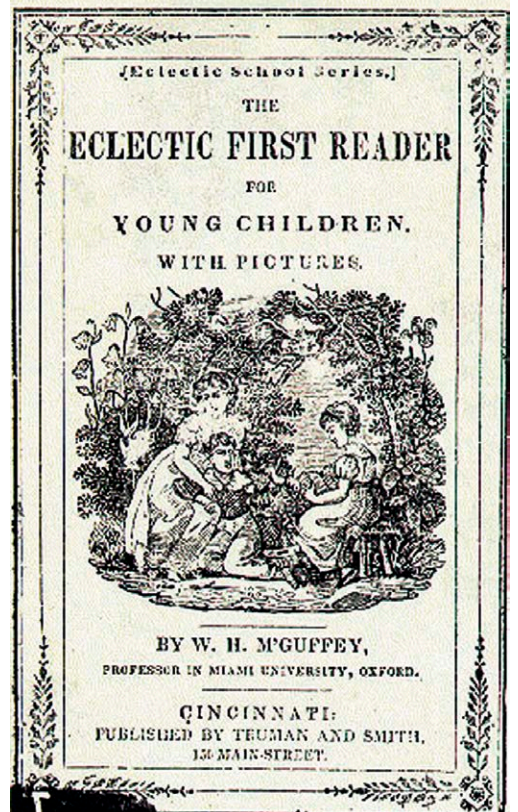
Some literary works resulted in social change, like Jacob Riis's "How the Other Half Lives," an exposé of the late 19th-century slums in Manhattan's Lower East Side, or Upton Sinclair's novel "The Jungle," which turned a bright light on the unsanitary practices of the Chicago meatpacking industry and brought about government safety regulations in food production.

Other books have influenced our culture in more subtle ways. Harper Lee's "To Kill a Mockingbird," with its portrayal of the heroic attorney Atticus Finch, surely has led many a young person into the practice of law.

"Alcoholics Anonymous," also known to members of AA as "The Big Book," is the core document of the organization that has helped millions of people around the world overcome their addiction to drink.

And Dr. Benjamin Spock's 1946 "The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care" changed the way many Americans raised their children.

Let's take some time to look at a few other books crucial to our history in more depth.



William Holmes McGuffey.

The cover of "The Eclectic First Reader," 1841, by William Holmes McGuffey, Truman and Smith Publishing.

When we read the books that helped shape our culture, we don't just deepen our love and understanding of our country. We deepen our love and understanding of one another.

deserves that recognition for his advocacy of free enterprise and for his intellectual adventurousness. An inventor, a writer, a publisher, a believer in volunteerism—he helped found fire departments and public libraries—Franklin stands as the quintessential self-made American.

In his "Autobiography," which remains eminently readable and which I used to assign to my American history students, Franklin tells the story of his impoverished youth, demonstrates his belief in self-responsibility, gives us his rules for self-improvement that helped him achieve his success, and describes his many forays into the fields of science, commerce, writing, and public life.

More than any other person in our history, Franklin is responsible for delineating and shaping the idea of the American Dream. Work hard, live virtuously, and look for opportunity, Franklin tells us in his "Autobiography," and you will find success in this country.

An American Saint

On meeting Harriet Beecher Stowe, Abraham Lincoln is reported to have said, "So you're the little woman who wrote the book that made this great war."

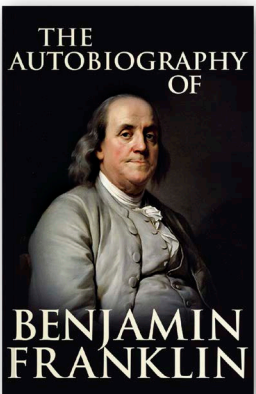
This "great war" was, of course, the American Civil War, and the book was "Uncle Tom's Cabin," an 1852 novel about slavery in the South that sold more than 300,000 copies in the first year of its publication. The story converted many Northerners into abolitionists and enraged many in the South who owned slaves.

In "Uncle Tom," Stowe created a Christian hero of saintly proportions, a man who even on his deathbed forgave those who had beaten him. His example led both other slaves and some of the white slaveholders in the novel to convert to Christianity, and in the case of the latter, to free their slaves.

Remarkably, "Uncle Tom" is now a pejorative for black men who are deemed servile to whites or who are seen as having betrayed black culture, leaving a casual observer to wonder whether those delivering this insult have ever read and understood this book.

Educating America

One of Harriet Beecher Stowe's dear friends was William Holmes McGuffey, the son of Scots immigrants who became



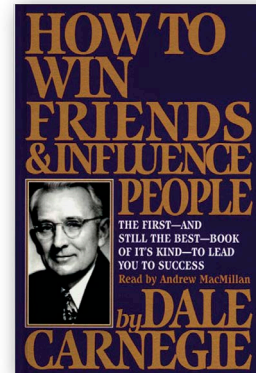
Benjamin Franklin has been called the "first American."

a schoolteacher. At the recommendation of Stowe, a small publishing house in Cincinnati hired McGuffey to produce a series of textbooks to help elementary school children learn to read.

And so were born the "McGuffey Readers."

Eventually, there were four of these "Readers." The first book used phonics and word repetition to teach reading, and the other three provided students with a series of stories, poems, and passages from Scripture, including in the volumes for more advanced students passages by luminaries like Shakespeare and Daniel Webster. From 1836 to 1960, about 120 million of these books were sold to schools and individuals. The "Readers" popularized Shakespeare's plays in the United States, and Henry Ford was so enamored of these texts, which he called one of the great influences on his childhood, that he had McGuffey's boyhood cabin moved to his Dearborn, Michigan, museum of American history.

"McGuffey's Readers" are still in print and remain popular among homeschoolers. My wife and I owned a set of these and used them to supplement our home-educated children's phonics and advanced reading.



One of the most influential books in 20th-century America.

Self-Help

We Americans constantly seek to better ourselves. We read diet and exercise books, guides for home improvement and fashion, and manuals on everything ranging from the improvement of our spiritual life to fighting old age.

The granddaddy of these courses in self-improvement was a man who grew up in poverty, became a failed traveling salesman, began teaching courses in public speaking, and eventually gained students in that subject from across the nation.

This man was Dale Carnegie, and the book he wrote based on his observations and experiences, "How to Win Friends and Influence People," has since its publication in 1937 sold well over 30 million copies.

In an article I wrote for The Epoch Times in January, I looked at how some of Carnegie's ideas might bring us together as a nation in our present time of turmoil. If nothing else, practicing his ideas might help us heal personal relationships broken or stressed by political and cultural disagreements.

The wild success of "How to Win Friends and Influence People" led other writers, hundreds of them, to venture into the realm of "self-help books." Some books in this genre sitting on my shelves are Charles Murray's "The Curmudgeon's Guide to Getting Ahead," Jordan Peterson's "12 Rules for Life," and Brené Brown's "Daring Greatly." Whether they know it or not, these authors and their books are the literary descendants of Dale Carnegie.

Culinary Delights

At my elbow is a fat volume, 1,132 pages, of recipes and tips on the culinary arts. According to comments on the jacket, the New York Public Library designated this tome as "one of the 150 most important and influential books of the twentieth century."

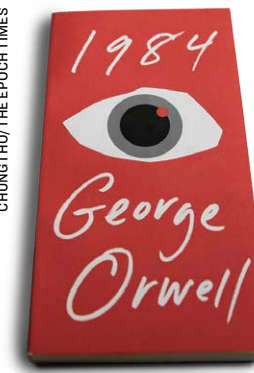
Self-published in 1931 by Irma Rombauer and her daughter Marion, "The Joy of Cooking" soon became a bestseller and America's most-beloved cookbook. Rombauer's engaging style and simple recipes appealed in particular to the middle class. Today this cookbook has gone through nine editions, with Rombauer's grandson and his wife having added many more recipes to the collection.

"The Joy of Cooking" helped shape the American diet and influenced the culinary revolution we've seen in this country in the last 50 years. Julia Child, author of "Mastering the Art of French Cooking," and in her time a famed television chef, praised "Mrs. Joy's" book as having taught her many of the basics of cooking.

Books, Battles, and Common Ground

Despite our engagement with social media and the huge number of websites and blogs on the internet, we as a people continue to be writers and readers of books. In 2019, Americans wrote and published over 300,000 new titles. Though some readers prefer e-books these days, nevertheless more than 750 million print books were sold in 2020 in the United States.

The current divisions in our country have also given rise to a battle of the books. Authors from various political persuasions attack or defend our culture and our laws with their books. And not all of what draws the interest of the public comes from new books. This past year's pandemic mandates, riots, and presidential election, for example, found many Americans picking up a copy of George Orwell's novel about

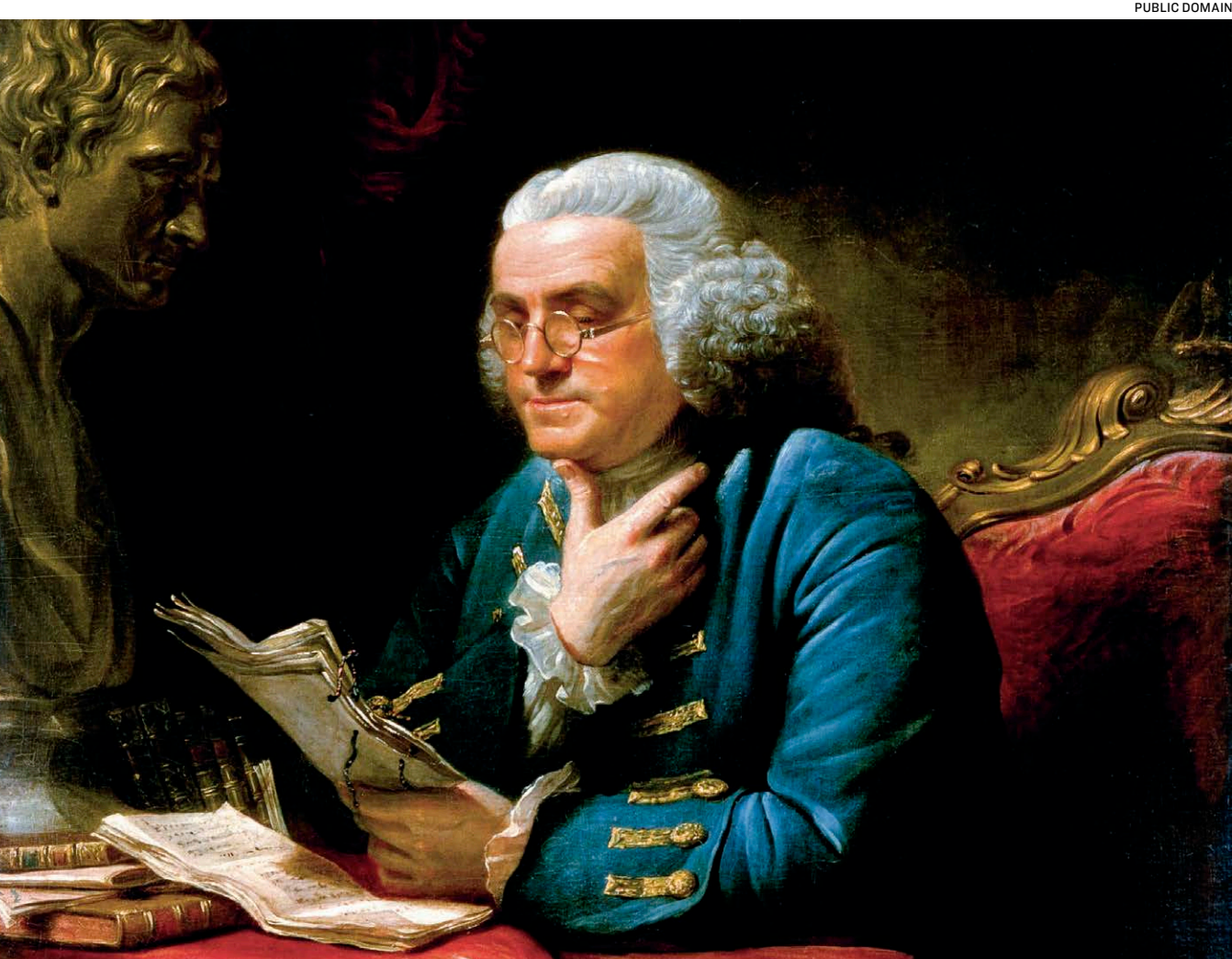


A copy of George Orwell's novel "1984."

totalitarianism, "1984."

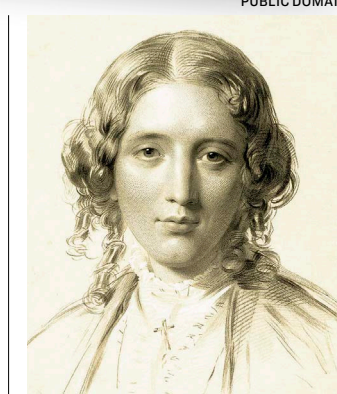
Yet even in our bitter and fractured times, surely some books can act as glue binding us together. The books reviewed above, for example, continue to appeal to audiences of all backgrounds, and books similar to these—diet and health books, self-help books of all kinds, novels—are open to all readers. Autobiographies like Booker T. Washington's "Up From Slavery" or Ulysses Grant's "Personal Memoirs" give us insights into the struggles of earlier Americans, no matter what our class or race. Children's books like Margaret Wise Brown's "Goodnight Moon," Don Freeman's "Corduroy," and E.B. White's "Charlotte's Web" are also part of this shared cultural heritage.

When we read the books that helped shape our culture—and there are scores of them—we don't just deepen our love and understanding of our country. We deepen our love and understanding of one another.



Benjamin Franklin stands as the quintessential self-made American. A portrait of Benjamin Franklin in London, 1767, by David Martin.

More than 750 million print books were sold in 2020 in the United States.



A portrait of Harriet Beecher Stowe, circa 1855, by Francis Holl after a painting by George Richmond. National Portrait Gallery.

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. He is the author of two novels, "Amanda Bell" and "Dust On Their Wings," and two works of non-fiction, "Learning As I Go" and "Movies Make The Man." Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, Va. See JeffMinick.com to follow his blog.

DANCE

Artist Profile: Shen Yun Principal Dancer Michelle Lian's Magic Within the Movements

CATHERINE YANG

Michelle Lian is a natural dancer. When she was younger, she thought dancing was fun and picked it up, trying on a few different styles. When she thinks back, she says that classical Chinese dance has been with her for a very long time. When she lost interest in other forms, she went back to classical Chinese dance.

Eventually, Lian focused all her time and energy on developing fully in classical Chinese dance, perfecting the moves and pursuing refinement of the art in her career, all while retaining the joy of it.

But gradually, day by day, she started to glimpse something behind each movement she performed. "The more I dance, the more I discover that there was deeper meaning inside," Lian said in an interview. She's been a dancer in practicum with Shen Yun Performing Arts since 2014.

This premier classical Chinese dance company, based in New York, has in the past dozen years been responsible for the revitalization of this art form and thus the traditional culture it embodies. Formed in the very foundation of this ancient system of dance, in every movement and gesture, is something that Lian gradually realized is worth treasuring:

"It's a very vast, very grand thing. It's very deep. Once you know a move, it's not just about how you do it, not just how your hand goes this way and your foot goes that way, and you position your head there. It's not just like that. It's a much more holistic thing."

When people see Shen Yun dancers on stage, sometimes all in perfect unison while still in motion, the precision of that hand gesture, that placement of the foot, and the position of the head is impressive. But what sticks with audiences is what they often describe as an indescribable, but uplifting, feeling.

Magical
On stage, together with the dancers she so

Michelle Lian won the 2018 NTD International Classical Chinese Dance Competition.



Michelle Lian won the Junior Division Gold Award in the 2016 NTD International Classical Chinese Dance Competition.



While dancing, you need to expand your heart.

Michelle Lian, dancer

positive." "And it helps when you don't think too much about yourself. While dancing, you need to expand your heart," she said. It helps to practice that magnanimity of spirit in everyday life, too.

"We expect each other to have the will to improve. Not just in dance but also morally. I think we expect each other to do that every single day," she said. "We don't expect other people to change suddenly, but we always watch for the sparkle each day."

admired, "it's very magical," Lian said. Not just the movements but also the energy of the group has to be in sync to achieve that effect.

"You can actually feel the energy of everyone. You feel like everyone is in sync with everybody else. You can actually feel their breathing and heartbeat, and then your footsteps just connect together. Maybe that's why we have such impressive energy when we dance, as the audience says," she said.

Back when Lian was only a member of the audience, her only reaction was to marvel at how beautiful the dances were. Now that she knows these artists personally—as individuals, professionals, and friends—she sees their performances in a different light.

"It's actually even more touching, at times, because you know how hard they've worked," she said. "After you know their difficulties, their happiness, the things they go through to achieve something like that, and they present something that is very pure and righteous, it's quite touching. You know how hard it is to achieve that."

Her fellow dancers in the company have been great artists and mentors not just in dance but also in life, Lian added, because of the holistic view they have of their craft.

For instance, Lian explained, what she tries to bring to the audience is something "clean and bright and

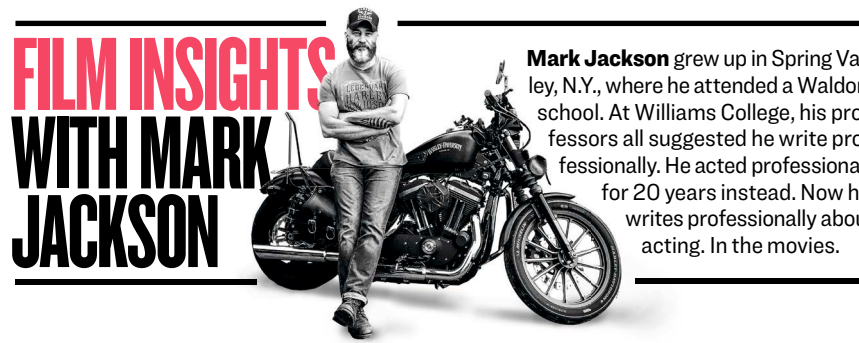
A Vessel for Art

Classical Chinese dance is famously expressive, and Shen Yun's dances always include several storytelling pieces. So as a dancer, Lian had to learn to act.

"I did 'The Butterfly Lovers,' and it was quite interesting because in that piece, I have to be a girl and pretend to be a guy at the same time—in one piece," she said. It was quite the challenge for her first dramatic role. "If I had to do it again, I'll probably do it a little differently this time," she said with a laugh.

"[With acting], you have to adjust your emotions ... in order to be realistic you need to layer emotions, and you need to adjust the proportions to make something better," Lian said. Dancers of this caliber work on perfecting what the average dancer wouldn't even realize is within their control—like the tone of an interaction with another dancer, or the whole atmosphere of the stage.

To do this, Lian seeks a pure state of mind. "It's always easier to absorb and present when the canvas is cleaner," she said. Classical Chinese dance is about the feelings behind each movement, Lian stressed, and to convey that bright, clean, and pure energy to the audience, she has to possess it herself. It seems that ego would only get in the way. It's worth noting that Shen Yun translates into something like "the beauty of divine beings dancing," and audiences tend to find it apt. "Whether you're portraying a positive character or a negative character, it's always easier when you don't have too much of your 'self,'" she said.



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.

'Minari': Korean Immigrants Succeed in America by Enduring Like Water Celery

MARK JACKSON

"Minari" did for the 2021 Academy Awards what the pop song "Gangnam Style" did for music in 2012; it gave notice to America that Korea can come over here and throw down an artistic gauntlet on our own turf. Not only can Korea play in our movie and music playgrounds, but it can also score big.

Coming to America, Korean Version

It's the 1980s. Jacob Yi (Steven Yeun), his wife, Monica (Yeri Han), and their son David (Alan Kim), and daughter Anne (Noel Kate Cho) arrive from California to put down roots in the Arkansas outback.

Jacob, by trade, inspects baby chickens at a poultry farm (more like a chicken Auschwitz, replete with smoke billowing from heaps of incinerated baby roosters who are of no monetary use to human society). He determines their sex; his wife



'Minari'

Director
Lee Isaac Chung

Starring
Steven Yeun, Yeri Han, Alan S. Kim, Noel Kate Cho, Yuh-jung Youn, Will Patton

Rated
PG-13

Running Time
1 hour, 55 minutes

Release Date
Feb. 12, 2021 (USA)

★★★★★

(Left) David (Alan S. Kim, L) learns from his grandmother (Yuh-jung Youn) about where the minari plant likes to grow.

(Below) Son David (Alan S. Kim, L) and his father, Jacob (Steven Yeun), figure out the best place to dig a well.



also does this.

Jacob understandably hates this job and intends to use the family's new stretch of 50 acres to grow the kinds of vegetables that local Korean-Americans have a hard time getting their hands on.

It's a good plan; he's put in the research and informs Monica that if things go as planned, "In three years we can quit chicken sexing." Monica, however, is appalled at their living conditions. They gave up a supportive Korean community and regular work in California to live in a double-wide trailer in tornado land.

She despises the wheels on it, and labels the entire situation as existing in "this hill-billy place." One can palpably access the Edward Hopper-like loneliness of America as experienced through her foreign sensibilities.

To give Monica a helping hand, they invite her mom, Soonja (played by Korean screen legend Yuh-jung Youn who won for best supporting actress), to come live with them, in traditional Asian style. She arrives bearing gifts: deer antler broth, anchovies, gochugaru (chili peppers), and that for which the movie is named—the minari plant. Minari ("water celery") is a leafy green vegetable that is used in Korean cooking; it's sort of an edible weed that grows near water.

Generation Gap

Little David initially doesn't like grandma. She doesn't bake cookies like a normal grandmother, and she swears too much. He's averse to having to sleep in the same room with her because she "smells like Korea," but she immediately captures the audience's heart with her mixture of irreverent elder wisdom, mischief, and humor. Monica: "I'm sorry you have to see how our life is now." Soonja: "Are you crying again? Why? Because the house has wheels? It's fun!"

Grandson David is a chronic bed-wetter, and grandma teases him about it. She also makes terrible-tasting Korean herbal tea for his heart condition. (He has a small hole in his heart.) David flushes the tea down the toilet and then gets practical-joke revenge on grandma's making fun of his bed-wetting: He wees in the cup instead, and when grandma's distracted with watching professional wrestling on TV ("Somebody will get killed!"), David replaces her tea-cup with his pee-cup. He gets the intended reaction, but grandma also appreciates a good practical joke, and eventually they become fast friends.

Tribulations

So David's got a heart defect, mom's lonely, frustrated, and angry, dad is harried and put-upon, and grandma is frail. They have no choice but to bear these crosses. However, friendly neighbor Paul (Will Patton), who offers to work for Jacob, dispensing many prayers, exorcisms, blessings, and speaking in tongues—likes to bear an actual life-sized wooden cross up and down the backwoods dirt roads on Sunday. That's his form of church.

There's perhaps a nod to Robert Redford's "The Milagro Beanfield War," where the main character, Joe Mondragon, steals forbidden government water to irrigate his crops. Jacob, pooh-poohing the advice of a local water dowser about how to find water—finding that much too witchy—tells son David that Koreans will use their heads and scientific deduction to not have to pay for superstitious water divining. When the well he deduces eventually runs dry, Jacob ends up using the family trailer water to irrigate crops.

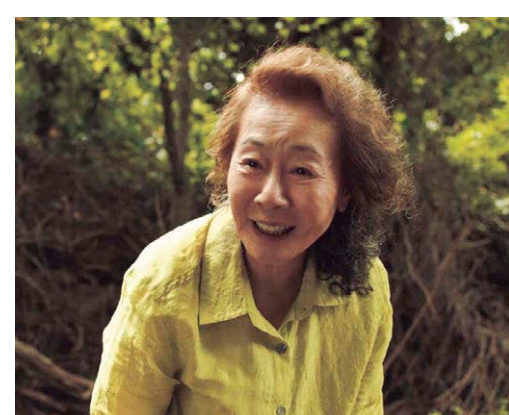
Monica tells her mom, "He thinks I don't know." They soon have no shower or cooking water. Speaking of water, three of the

ALL PHOTOS BY A24

(Far left) "Minari" is about a Korean immigrant family: (L-R) Jacob (Steven Yeun), David (Alan S. Kim), Soonja (Yuh-jung Youn), Monica (Yeri Han), and Anne (Noel Cho).

(Above left) (L-R) Jacob (Steven Yeun), David (Alan S. Kim), Anne (Noel Cho), and Monica (Yeri Han) arriving in Arkansas.

(Left) (L-R) Jacob (Steven Yeun), David (Alan S. Kim), Anne (Noel Cho), and Monica (Yeri Han) explore their new home and farm.



Yuh-jung Youn won for best supporting actress in her role as the family's grandmother.

Chinese five elements theory of wood, fire, earth, metal, and water are well-represented in the film—their ability to nurture and also to destroy the plans of humans.

Overall

"Minari" is timely: The Yis' white neighbors are quite nice. Sometimes, though, largely due to the harmless naiveté of children, the occasional ignorant comment or assumption crops up, such as: "Why's your face so flat?" "It's not." "Wanna sleep over at my house?"

One cute instance is a little girl in church who approaches the Yis' daughter, Anne, and tries to "speak her language," asking Anne if she can let her know if she gets a word right. She speaks some gibberish of the "ching-chong" type and eventually hits on an actual Korean word. When informed of its meaning, the delighted child says, "That's so cool!"

'Minari' was up for six Oscars and won one at the 93rd Academy Awards.

So basically, while Jacob and Monica fight constantly throughout the film about whether Jacob is putting the farm before the family, much of how their life ends up running its course is dictated by fate, and as mentioned, the elements have much to do with this. In a sense, the film's characters are bystanders in their own story. The only real cultural assimilation we see is the family going to church, and hard-headed Jacob finally coming around to the rural Arkansas cultural method of locating water.

The minari plant is obviously significantly symbolic. The essence of its character is that it endures hardship well. And so this would fundamentally be a lesson about going with the flow, since nature ultimately decides things, as well as the ability to endure, forbear, and stay the course in life.

The Golden Globe Awards disqualified "Minari" from the best drama category, due to its having too much spoken Korean. But it's kind of a tough call: Most of the cast is Korean, and yes, it's mostly in Korean with subtitles, so it was treated as a foreign language film, yet its director, Lee Isaac Chung, is Korean-American. It was produced by American companies (and Brad Pitt), takes place in Arkansas, and basically explores the American immigrants' problem of how to assimilate while holding on to one's roots. In any case, I'm thankful that it won something major.

"Minari" was up for six Oscars, and won, as mentioned, best supporting actress at the 93rd Academy Awards. I recommend watching the movie, and then Yuh-jung Youn's charming, endearing Oscar speech.

BEHOLD THE BEAUTY

An Angel's Woe

'Heaven Cries' by Spanish painter Montse Jara

LORRAINE FERRIER

In the pastel painting "Heaven Cries," Spanish painter Montse Jara depicts an adorable young angel in heaven. He's deep in thought, but he's not contemplating play. His face is forlorn, and a couple of tears escape him. His left hand gestures toward the earth below as he timidly points his index finger gently down in condemnation. His tears are for us.

Traditionally, angels have symbolized the protection of human beings. In particular, Roman Catholics view angels as intermediaries between God and men, Jara said in an email.

She explains that this messenger of God is denouncing the time in which we live: "He observes, from above, how the human being destroys himself and his surroundings." Jara sees our time "as a time of selfishness, where there is no empathy be-

tween people, and where nature is threatened by the decisions of men."

Jara has emphasized the angel's woe by using a cold color palette for the background. Rather than showing the lightness of heaven, she depicts the heaviness of the angel's turmoil.

Jara won a Conté à Paris Award at the 5th Biennial International Pastel Painting Competition 2020 for "Heaven Cries."

Currently, Jara is focusing on creating realistic figure paintings with a touch of fantasy. She particularly enjoys painting children, as she says that their expressions help her convey tenderness and sincerity. And, although children can be a challenge to paint, she loves re-creating their delicate tones and figures.

To find out more about Montse Jara's paintings, visit [Facebook.com/MontseJaraChaves](https://www.facebook.com/MontseJaraChaves)



"Heaven Cries," 2017, by Montse Jara. Pastel on paper glued to board; 30.7 inches by 25.9 inches.

REACHING WITHIN: WHAT TRADITIONAL ART OFFERS THE HEART

The Weight of Addiction: Titian's 'Sisyphus'

ERIC BESS

Sometimes we find ourselves addicted to substances, emotions, and ways of thinking that keep us far from experiencing any semblance of inner peace.

I came across a painting by Titian of Sisyphus that made me reflect on the nature of our addictions.

Sisyphus Twice Cheats Death

In Greek legend, Sisyphus was the sly and deceitful king of Corinth. He helped Corinth prosper commercially, but he often refused to show guests to his city the decency and hospitality required by Zeus. He would even kill his guests to prove that he was a king to be feared.

Zeus was disappointed in Sisyphus's cruelty. Interestingly enough, Zeus was further angered when Sisyphus told the river god Asopus where Zeus had taken the river god's kidnapped daughter.

Revealing the god's secrets went a step too far, and Zeus decided it was time to punish Sisyphus. In one version of the story, Zeus asked Thanatos, the personification of death, to chain Sisyphus in the underworld.

Thanatos captured Sisyphus and prepared to chain him up when Sisyphus asked Thanatos to demonstrate how the chains worked. Thanatos agreed to show him, and Sisyphus quickly chained Thanatos instead. Sisyphus successfully escaped death.

With Thanatos chained up, mortals no longer died. It took Ares, the god of war, to restore the balance between life and death. Ares also trapped Sisyphus and returned him to Thanatos to receive his punishment for the second time. But before he was returned, Sisyphus was already planning his second escape from death.

Upon his death, Sisyphus asked his wife not to provide him with the usual sacri-

fices and offerings required for a husband's death. Then, in the underworld, he pleaded with the kindhearted Persephone, the wife of Hades, to let him go back to his wife and instruct her on the proper burial procedure. Sisyphus's plan worked, and he was again among the living with no intention of returning to the underworld.

Intervening himself, Zeus made sure that Sisyphus would not escape the next time he entered the underworld. Sisyphus was made to suffer for eternity by forever pushing a boulder uphill, only to have it fall back down to the bottom of the hill after reaching the summit.

Titian's 'Sisyphus'

In the mid-16th century, the Italian Renaissance painter Titian painted his rendition of Sisyphus's punishment for Mary of Hungary, then queen of Hungary and Bohemia.

The Prado Museum website reveals that Mary of Hungary had many images from Greek legends on the walls of the Great Room in the Palace of Binche, indicating "the coherence of an iconographic program whose main idea was to emphasize the misery and endless punishment of those who rise up against the gods."

In his painting "Sisyphus," Titian depicted Sisyphus walking up a jagged incline. He is covered with a meager cloth, and he does not push the boulder to the top of the hill but carries it on his shoulders and head, causing his shoulders and head to lean forward under its weight.

The frame of the composition also imposes itself on Sisyphus's body. The top of the boulder and his feet come right to the edge of the composition's top and bottom, further giving a sense of Sisyphus's suffocating fate.

The environment is hellish. Weird creatures occupy the bottom left of the composition, and fire and smoke fill the background. A snake appears to threaten Sisyphus's feet as if the threat forces him



A self-portrait, circa 1562, by Titian. Titian is considered the most important artist of the 16th-century Venetian school.

"Sisyphus," 1548–1549, by Titian. Oil on canvas, 93.3 inches by 85 inches. Prado Museum, Madrid, Spain.

to hurry to the top of the hill.

The Weight of Our Addictions

Three things immediately stand out to me in this painting: the fact that Sisyphus is carrying the boulder instead of pushing it, the snake that threatens him from below, and the imposing nature of the composition's edges. Let's look at each element to see what moral insight they might provide.

When I see Sisyphus carrying the boulder instead of pushing it, I immediately think of our addictions. Our addictions often start as small interests or desires, and with time, they become something outside of our control.

For instance, what may start as drinking for fun may turn into the burden of alcoholism, or occasional bets on sports may somehow evolve into a home's foreclosure. Our addictions can also be subtle: A prideful thought or furtive glance that induces satisfying feelings can, over time, become feelings that we crave, as though we are actually addicted.

Like Sisyphus having to ascend the hill repeatedly, we try to overcome our addictions repeatedly. We push ourselves to the limit in an attempt to let go and be free of them, but we relapse, or we find that the addiction is deeper than we initially thought. We then find ourselves carrying a boulder uphill again.

The boulder not only causes Sisyphus's head and shoulders to contort under its weight, but it also prevents light from reaching his head and chest, representative of his heart and mind. The weight we carry from our addictions can consume our hearts and minds, obscuring light and preventing it from entering our lives.

What might the snake at Sisyphus's heel represent? Along with everything else, the snake is only there as part of Sisyphus's punishment. Threatening his heel, the snake prevents him from ever resting, from ever finding peace.

Finally, what might Sisyphus's position in relation to the edges of the composition represent? The edges almost serve as a prison that amplifies Sisyphus's lack of freedom.

Not only does the weight of the boulder press on his head and shoulders, but the top edge of the composition seems to add its own weight, a weight so heavy that Sisyphus doesn't seem like he could stand up straight if he wanted to.

Italian Renaissance painter Titian painted his rendition of Sisyphus's punishment for Mary of Hungary, then queen of Hungary and Bohemia.

The four edges of the composition encapsulate everything depicted. To me, they represent the environment's effect on Sisyphus. It's not just the boulder's weight that Sisyphus must continuously carry, but he must also constantly confront the restrictions placed on him by the environment, and these restrictions seem to further prevent him from experiencing true freedom.

Sisyphus was condemned to suffer for eternity, but what about us? How might we identify the true sources of our addictions? Is there a way out of the addictions that may frame our lives? How might we find peace from the heavy burdens we may carry?

The traditional arts often contain spiritual representations and symbols the meanings of which can be lost to our modern minds. In our series "Reaching Within: What Traditional Art Offers the Heart," we interpret visual arts in ways that may be morally insightful for us today. We do not assume to provide absolute answers to questions generations have wrestled with, but hope that our questions will inspire a reflective journey toward our becoming more authentic, compassionate, and courageous human beings.

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

MUSIC

No Place Like Home: Edvard Grieg and Musical Nationalism

MICHAEL KUREK

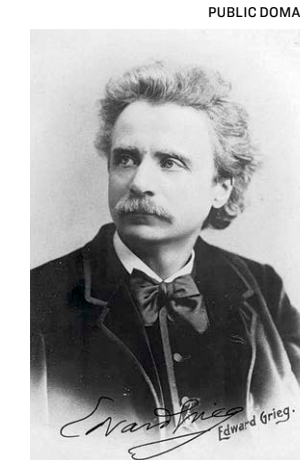
There are certain classical composers so closely identified with their country that it feels impossible not to talk about the two in the same breath. It might not matter so much with other composers. Frédéric Chopin was born and raised in Poland but worked as a composer in France. Handel was German but wrote some of his masterworks in England.

However, Aaron Copland is strongly associated with the United States, especially in works like "Appalachian Spring" and "Rodeo." His "American sound" became definitive for composers like Leonard Bernstein and film composers like John Williams (for example, in his score for "Saving Private Ryan").

At least musically, Grieg helped put Norway on the map, and his countrymen honor him for it to this day.

Composer Edvard Grieg (1843–1907) was distinctly Norwegian and even helped define and promote a Norwegian identity, both for Norwegians and in the eyes of the rest of the world. In orchestral works like his "Four Norwegian Dances" and "Peer Gynt," he used actual Norwegian folksong melodies and also original melodies written in Norwegian folk style, baptizing them with classical music status worldwide. This made him a kind of favorite son and a point of great pride for that nation, with a population about the same as Colorado's and a geographic size about that of New Mexico. You might say that, at least musically, Grieg helped put Norway on the map, and his countrymen honor him for it to this day.

This all seemed natural and a matter of course when I was a music major in college. I was happy for them! Every country deserves heroes they can take pride in, after all. But nowadays, so-called musical nationalism is taught in a very different way in university music departments, with a definite negative connotation. Cancel culture has not come after Grieg personally, to my knowledge. He neither owned slaves



Self-portrait, circa 1862, by Edvard Grieg. Grieg is considered the most important artist of the 19th-century Norwegian school.

The 1970 film "Song of Norway" was based on composer Edvard Grieg's life and filmed in Norway, where he lived. The soundtrack is Grieg's music with added lyrics.

nor oppressed any ethnic group. Or did he?

Healthy Pride

Was bringing the folk music of the common people to the concert halls of high art a kind of cultural appropriation or exploitation of one class by another? The Norwegians certainly did not feel that way at the time, in part because people simply did not think of folk and classical music styles in such an adversarial way then. And in Europe generally, classical music belongs to all people in a way that it does not seem to in the United States.

Grieg was their homegrown boy made good, from the village of Bergen. He did them proud, just as Abraham Lincoln with his log-cabin roots made the people of the Midwest frontiers proud. Grieg made his whole nation proud.

But that again is a problem, nowadays. With every field of academe preaching the gospels of globalism and decolonization, musicology has been no exception. Such

scholarship seems utterly unable to make a commonsense distinction between healthy pride and wicked pridefulness, between satisfaction in one's identity and cynical accusations of xenophobia, chauvinism, bigotry, or racism. If I wear the colors of my school and root for my school's football team, does that mean I think the students in my school are a master race, compared to students in other schools, or that I wish to terminate the existence of other schools? Of course not.

Coming Home

However, asserting that a wrong idea is wrong, as I have just done, does not make a complete argument. Why is it right to have national pride or school pride, or for Norwegians to feel pride in the music of Grieg? The "theology of place" or of home provides an answer to that question. According to Leonard Hjalmarsen's theology of place, this is because spiritually we do feel that we have an ultimate

WHAT GOOD IS POETRY?

A Paradox and a Secret: 'Nothing Gold Can Stay' by Robert Frost

SEAN FITZPATRICK

Nature's first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leaf's a flower;
But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf.
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay.

There is nothing like a paradox to entice the mind to discover a suggested secret. Such paradoxes and such secrets lie at the heart of many good poems, and "Nothing Gold Can Stay" by Robert Frost stands among them, with paradoxes that are alluring and a secret that is sobering.

Paradox 1

The color green isn't gold (or is the reference to the treasurable quality of both the bright green of springtime and the bright precious metal?). Like the prized commodity and its connotations, this first golden green of Nature is certainly hard to hold or difficult to keep, with a fleeting, flashing verdure that is here one day and gone the next.

Paradox 2

A leaf isn't a flower (or is it a comparison to the delicate, radiant, flower-like beauty of the first unfolding leaves?). Provocative as it is, what is clear is that there is something exquisite being denoted—some beauty that flashes forth even as it vanishes, lasting no longer than even an hour for all intents and purposes.

Paradox 3

A leaf doesn't transform into a leaf (isn't there, however, a qualitative difference between a leaf when it is new and when it is old?). But it is in that brief hour of a season that leaves subside to simply leaves; that is, the lustrous, unfurling, lush, verdant green of spring collapses into the hardy, sunbaked, and customary green of summer. So it goes every year, even as the old legend goes that Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden only an hour before they fell.

Paradox 4

Dawn doesn't go down to day (or does it?). If one judges by the apparent passage of the sun, it climbs every day from dawn's eastern horizon up to the zenith. But though the sun rises and ascends in the daytime sky, the precious light of dawn loses something as it gains the blinding brilliance of high noon. There is subsidence here as well—a going down, a loss, a falling away from the bright blush of a beginning to the broad fact of the way things are.

Paradox 5

Gold does stay, in fact. It's one of the more enduring elements (but isn't there a "golden" character that is passing, like the "golden ages" of the past?). Despite the endurance of gold itself, nothing "gold" can stay, from luminous leaves, to rosy-fingered dawn, to our own fresh and sweet innocence. All is seasonal and subsides. All is destined to fall. All that lives must die. Everything loses its luster. And though

springtime is a period bursting and glistening with associations of hope and joy, it also bears a cast of sadness: the sober reminder that the glory and unpolluted purity of leaves, grass, blossoms, birds, and young souls will all be eventually sullied and sunken. Early stages are golden, but that precious quality is all too brief. Which, as a final paradox, is what makes it so absolutely wonderful.

Robert Frost's brilliant poem is beautiful specifically because it is short, participating through its brevity in the mystery it both marvels at and mourns over. And its message or meditation is one that belongs in every heart as life is lived and the seasons pass, rejoicing over the newness of things and reflecting on the dulling matters of course that wear on everything under the sun.

Time is both precious and short, and but for the wisdom of such nuggets of golden poetry, many might fail in the challenge to recall and realize how much we have lost, how much we have, and how much we stand to miss.

The series "What Good Is Poetry?" looks at poems that, once memorized, bestow a gift: an antidote to the cynicism of our age.

Sean Fitzpatrick serves on the faculty of Gregory the Great Academy, a boarding school in Elmhurst, Pa., where he teaches humanities. His writings on education, literature, and culture have appeared in a number of journals including Crisis Magazine, Catholic Exchange, and the Imaginative Conservative.

home—heaven—and deep inside we long to get there. It is like the magnetic north that our interior compass needle points us to.

We can observe our own feelings of not feeling that we belong anywhere in particular at certain seasons of our life, when we either have been alienated from our home or have been transient as young adults and have not yet, for whatever reason, been able to "put down roots."

Modern man is particularly susceptible to this sense of rootlessness and can feel mentally disoriented without a physical sense of security. I feel a bit adrift every time I take the highway across several states, and every exit has the same fast food chains, restaurant chains, and gas-line brands, and the landscape looks as if it could be anywhere.

Global communications can also tend to erase distinct cultural differences, distinctive spoken dialects, and a sense of belonging to a home base.

To take satisfaction in our hometown, our national music, our regional cuisine, or our home sports team is a healthy and positive way of symbolizing that we do have a heavenly home, and we are on a journey to arrive there. In no way does our need for such symbols imply that we do not want others to have their own such symbols, or a desire to deny them entry into heaven, or a desire for any harm whatsoever to befall them.

The irony of Grieg's specific musical identity is that it is this very identity that imparts to his work a kind of coherence of language that is unique but at the same time universally appealing, like various ethnic cuisines. We do not need to erase our own identities or put a sushi roll on a slice of pizza to prove that we are people of goodwill. We can (and we used to take it for granted that we could) rejoice in and celebrate everyone's symbols of heaven. Long live Norway!

American composer Michael Kurek is the composer of the Billboard No. 1 classical album "The Sea Knows." The winner of numerous composition awards, including the prestigious Academy Award in Music from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, he has served on the nominations committee of the Recording Academy for the classical Grammy Awards. He is a professor emeritus of composition at Vanderbilt University. For more information and music, visit MichaelKurek.com



Robert Frost in 1941.

There is nothing like a paradox to entice the mind to discover a suggested secret.

For more arts and culture articles, visit TheEpochTimes.com

FILM REVIEW

An Unflinchingly Realistic Look at Dementia

ALL PHOTOS BY SONY PICTURES CLASSICS



'The Father'

Director
Florian Zeller

Starring
Anthony Hopkins, Olivia Colman, Rufus Sewell

Running Time
1 hour, 37 minutes

Rated
PG-13

Release Date
Feb. 26, 2021 (USA)

★★★★★

Anne (Olivia Colman) tries to lovingly care for father, Anthony (Anthony Hopkins), who is declining mentally.



Rufus Sewell (L) and Anthony Hopkins in "The Father."

'The Father' is an incredibly moving story about a once-proud man whose mind is exhibiting signs of dementia.

IAN KANE

There are some basic issues that we all think about from time to time: our own mortality, the meaning of our existence, what happens after death, and so on. But many of us have also thought about the mortality and decline of the elders we are related to and love dearly.

Questions will eventually arise that concern the care of our elderly loved ones, especially those whose minds begin to erode as time passes—much like wind blowing away a pile of sand, one grain at a time.

"The Father" is an incredibly moving story about a once-proud man whose mind is exhibiting signs of dementia. Thankfully, this film doesn't contain clichéd filmmaking tropes when it comes to deeply emotional subject matter such as this. You won't see any hazy flashbacks, disorienting camera pans, other vertigo-inducing camera trickery, or overly saturated vignettes. Instead, the unsettling moments come from the gradual loss of one person's grasp of reality.

The film opens with an ever-dutiful

daughter, Anne (Olivia Colman), paying her father, Anthony (Anthony Hopkins), a visit at his upscale London flat. From the place's furnishings, we can see that Anthony has had a life of prestige and importance.

Indeed, as he and his daughter trade quips, we glean that Anthony still has stubborn pride. We also learn that Anne is his primary caregiver. During these opening scenes, we see that although Anthony has some memory lapses, his condition doesn't seem too extreme.

Anne has met a man named Paul (Rufus Sewell), with whom she plans to move away to Paris. Anthony seems surprised by the news, but Anne assures him that she has already discussed the matter with him.

It is also revealed that they've tried out multiple caregivers for Anthony, but due to the difficulty of handling his stubbornness and mental condition, none have lasted very long. It doesn't help that he keeps telling Anne that the caregivers steal valuable items from him (events that take place only in his altered imagination).

Desperate to find someone who can handle the job, Anne brings in a potential caregiver, Laura (Imogen Poots), to meet Anthony.

Here, we see flashes of Anthony's ingratiating charm as he flirts with Laura and even breaks out into dance—telling her that he used to be a famous tap dancer. But as soon as he's delighted Laura, he turns around and becomes hurtful and offensive toward her, embarrassing Anne in the process.

Due to her concern for Anthony's rapidly declining state, Anne decides to move her father into the apartment she shares with Paul. Paul isn't too pleased with the situation and is unkind to Anthony, especially after downing copious amounts of wine.

Paul feels as though he and Anne should shove Anthony into a care center so that they can move on with their lives together. He backs up his spitefulness by reminding Anne that Anthony's doctor has recommended putting him into a facility.

Although increasingly saddened by her father's failing state, Anne remains resolute in her conviction to keep Anthony out of a care facility. It seems as though she would view backing out on Anthony as a betrayal (and probably her own failure). But as Anthony becomes increasingly difficult to manage, will her patience and dedication be able to withstand the

mounting pressure?

One of the things that's incredible about this film is how it never quite settles into a comfortable cadence. Although it has some slower moments of beautifully structured dialogue between its phenomenal cast, the film—through Anthony's mind—shows random characters appearing at the same locations or different ones, at different times, to interact with him. The whole effect gives one a sense of extreme unease because you never really know what's going to happen next.

There are plenty of films about aging, as well as ones about people losing their minds. However, I've never seen a film as well-acted and unflinchingly realistic as this one, as well as thought-provoking. In the end, I hope "The Father" inspires people to appreciate their lives (and health) a little more, and also have gratitude for all of the good times they have with their loved ones while they're still here, both physically and mentally.

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

Virtue of the Brush in a Time of Chaos

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order must be restored."
- "The four books" by Zhu Xi

亂極當治



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