

THE EPOCH TIMES

ARTS & CULTURE

PUBLIC DOMAIN



Classical poetry is not just written by those long dead. A detail from Gabriel Metsu's painting "Man Writing a Letter," circa 1665. National Gallery of Ireland.

POETRY

What's Writing Classical Poetry All About?

JAMES SALE

Very recently, I hosted a live online poetry event for New York's The Society of Classical Poets (SCP). I introduced six American poets, of whom two were naturalized Americans, one originally from Russia and the other from England. In introducing them and their excellent work, I attempted to say a

little about "classical" poetry in general, since I felt that this was a largely misunderstood concept, and therefore, I needed to provide some context and perspective on it.

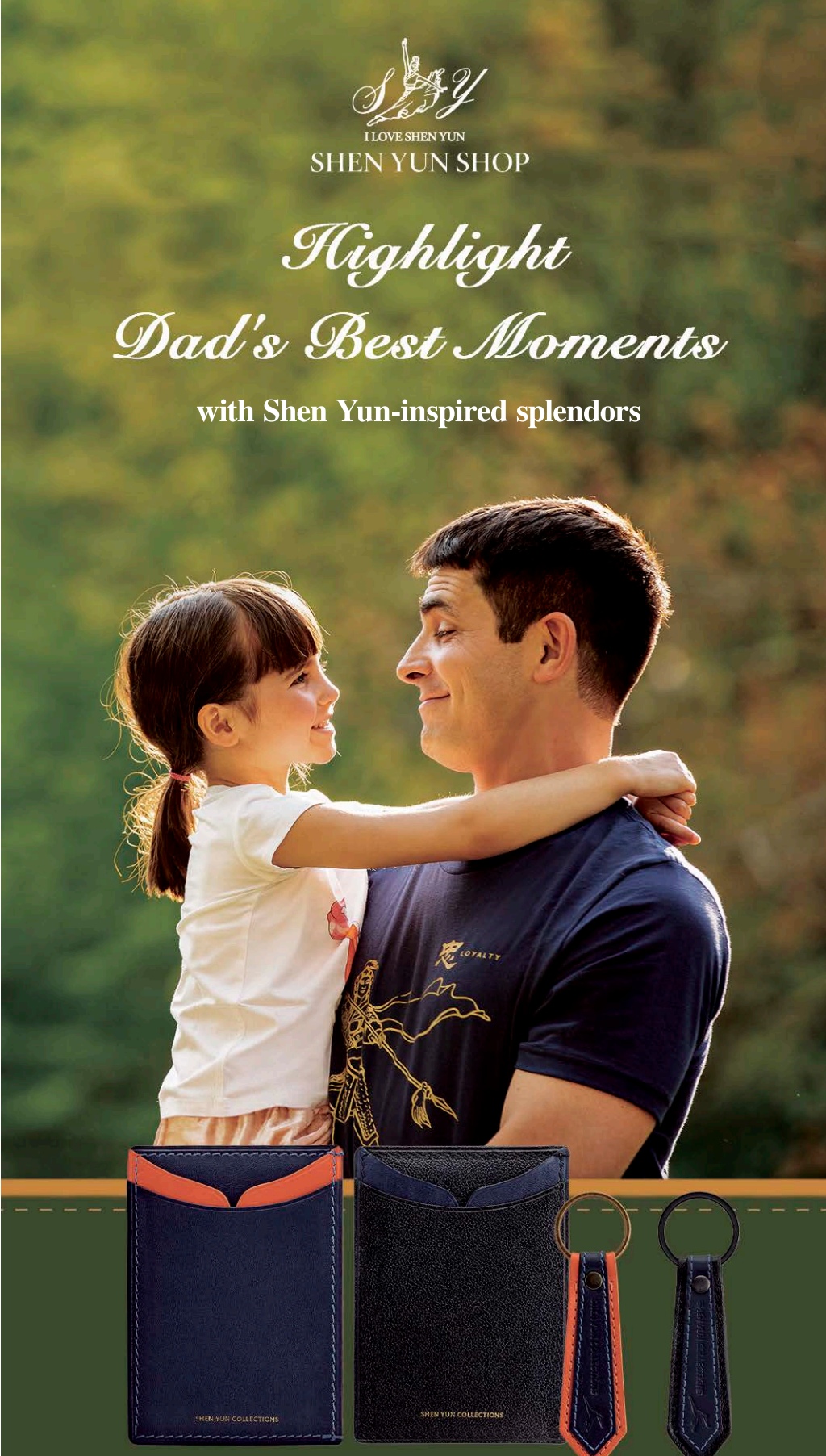
In other words, I had to correct the notion that classical poetry was, at its simplest, only poetry that rhymed; or, at its more sophisticated, that it was poetry about a tribe of remote historical people, dead for thousands of years; or that even—God forbid—it was poetry

that focused on gods and goddesses from pagan worlds that we no longer believed in. Put more simply still: that classical poetry was completely irrelevant to the contemporary world, that rhyming was artificial and superficial, that no one cared about the long-distant dead, and that science meant that talking about gods and goddesses was just childish bibble-babble.

Continued on Page 4

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Fox News Channel anchor Shannon Bream aims to give a voice to the women of the Bible. An illustration of the "Parable of the 10 Virgins," by Eugene Burnand, from his 1908 book "The Parables" published by Berger-Levrault.

BOOK REVIEW

'The Women of the Bible Speak: The Wisdom of 16 Women and Their Lessons for Today'

LINDA WIEGENFELD

According to ListChallenges, for the last 50 years the Bible has been the most read book in the world. The religious see the Bible as a gift from God to better themselves spiritually; the historically minded see this book as a way to explore ancient culture. Still others are drawn to the Bible for its wisdom, as a means for inspiring imperfect humans to find a better way. Finally, the Bible is refreshing to read in today's chaotic world.

In her latest book, "The Women of the Bible Speak: The Wisdom of 16 Women and Their Lessons for Today," Fox News Channel anchor and chief legal correspondent Shannon Bream confronts the idea that women play only a minor role in the Bible, and in so doing, she gives biblical women a voice.

Biographical Sketches

As a common thread, Bream organizes these women into biographical pairs and includes excerpts straight from the Bible. She pairs them in chapters such as "Rachel and Leah—Sisters and Rivals," "Tamar and Ruth—Outsiders," "Deborah and Jael—Women of Valor," "Esther and Rahab—Unexpected Heroes of Faith," and "Mary, the Mother of Jesus and Mary Magdalene—Witnesses to the Gospel."

The last chapter, "Jesus and The Women," demonstrates that there is no room for sexism, class distinctions, or racism in the kingdom of God. On the contrary, the message of salvation is at the center of everything.

Her point in using pairing, she says in her book, is so "that when we hold one life next to the other, we can see things we might not have seen otherwise—ways the women are alike, ways they are different, ways in which one woman's life might speak to another's."

Bream organizes these women into biographical pairs and includes excerpts straight from the Bible.

Strong Women

Following each biographical sketch, Bream presents her own interpretation of the women and their stories. Her sound insights are well thought out, but I found some of her pairings a little forced, and chose to judge each woman on her own.

All the women she writes about are fascinating, but three really stood out for me. Ruth, Esther, and Deborah were strong women with attributes still admired today.

Ruth and Orpah (Moabites, not Jews) together with their Jewish mother-in-law Naomi had all lost their husbands. Naomi planned to return to Judea since the famine there, which caused her to leave, had ended. Her two daughters-in-law begin the journey with her, but Naomi urges them to return to their families. Orpah does so, but Ruth refuses to leave Naomi, telling her that she will stay with her and assimilate to Naomi's homeland. Ruth is remembered for her devotion and loyalty.

Although Esther is a Jew, her story takes place entirely in Persia. King Xerxes divorces his wife when she refuses to obey him, and Esther, hiding her Jewish identity, is chosen as the new queen. Later, the king's new adviser, Haman, wants all the Jews killed. Urged to stop the massacre by her cousin Mordecai, Queen Esther does so but at great personal risk. The Jewish holiday Purim celebrates this story, and Esther will be forever known for her bravery.

Deborah is a role model for the ages. As a judge, her work required more than just the handing down of legal pronouncements. At the time, a judge played a spiritual role as well as a legal one, and most certainly was a position of leadership. Deborah also became a military leader who inspired the Israelites to a mighty victory over their Canaanite oppressors. She's remembered for courage and wisdom.

Study Questions

Each chapter ends with provocative questions to further focus the reader on Bream's points. These questions not only allow the readers deeper understanding of each woman but may also illuminate their own lives.

I explored study questions with my sister, Carol Wiegenfeld, an occupational therapist who has worked with people in many capacities. I welcomed her perspective and believed the interactive experience would be enjoyable. It was.

Although Carol and I have never been that competitive, we discussed the questions in the section "Rachel and Leah—Sisters and Rivals." We answered the questions literally, finding the particular biblical passages online, and made sure to include historical context. We then expanded our discussion to include arranged marriages versus those based on love. We also discussed how the women saw themselves as valuable only if they could have children.

After we finished, I thought of the words of author Robert Heinlein: "A generation which ignores history has no past and no future."

Thank you, Shannon Bream, for making history come alive for today's world.

Linda Wiegenfeld is a retired teacher. She can be reached for comments or suggestions at lwiegenfeld@aol.com

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



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



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



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

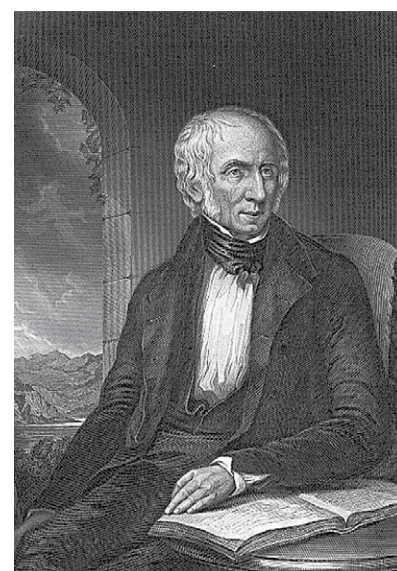
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THE EPOCH TIMES

TRUTH AND TRADITION

WHAT GOOD IS POETRY?

What Good Is Poetry? Wordsworth's 'The Rainbow'



A portrait of William Wordsworth. This is apparently an 1873 reproduction of an 1839 watercolor by Margaret Gillies (1803–1887). The University of Texas at Austin.

SEAN FITZPATRICK

My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky:
So was it when my life began;
So is it now I am a man;
So be it when I shall grow old,
Or let me die!
The Child is father of the Man;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.

The Fox whispered to the Little Prince in Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's time-honored tale, "It is with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye." And the language of the heart that speaks what it sees is poetry.

William Wordsworth speaks this language fluently in his evocative little paean to a life of wonder in "The Rainbow." Written on March 26, 1802, in the Lake District of northern England, the famous Roman-

tic poet gives voice to those urges of pure emotion and heartfelt desires that beauty evokes, which is the child's being and the man's blessing.

Wordsworth alighted on the shining, shimmering rainbow not only to rejoice in the beauty of the natural world but also to reflect on the movements of every person's heart and mind. It is through the heart that we come to know things both initially and fully. In other words, it is the heart that instigates all knowledge and completes it, making it essential.

Part of the awesome power of innocence is to have an unadulterated experience of beauty, and a heart free enough of worldly traces and chains, to leap up in acknowledgement of such wonders as that great band of color that flashes unexpectedly across the sky. Whether beheld as the approach of Iris, or the Nordic Bifröst bridge, or the heavenly Hebrew covenant to Noah, or a leprechaun treasure mark, the rainbow is one of those things that make people pause to remark and gaze at a sudden and rare spectacle, a power which few phenomena command especially since, in the words of Gerard Manley Hopkins's poem "Spring and Fall to a Young Child," "as the heart grows older/ It will come to such sights colder."

But the heart that has not grown cold as it grew old, that still leaps and loves with the warm pulse of youth, will cherish the rainbow and all its ilk with an easy, natural piety—with ardor that comes without labor. And it is this original piety that can teach the heart to keep on leaping with age.

One of the surest stays of sanity and salvation is allowing the Child to father the Man, for the innocence and wonder of the happy whelp to beget what Wordsworth dubbed in another poem "the character of the happy warrior."

Wordsworth's words strike the perfect chord—so was it, so is it, so be it—encompassing the passage of maturity. A man

is called to be many things: a provider, a defender, and a builder, to name but a few. "The Rainbow" points out the mystery that play prepares for work, that what we see and do and feel as children will make us the adults we are and will be: The child fathers the provider by being Robin Hood, the child engenders the defender by being a backyard savage and a cardboard knight, and the child brings about the builder in the sandcastles he raises only to destroy. Even when naughty, the child has begun taking those intrepid steps toward becoming the noble man he has theretofore impishly played the part of. Such is the passage of man, spanning from east to west, even as a rainbow spans the horizon, bringing the bright hope of sun after storm.

The day that our hearts fail to leap up at the beauty of the rainbow, let that be, as Wordsworth cries, the day of our death, the day our heart ceases to leap at all. For a heart that leaps not at the lovely miracles of nature is not, one might go so far as to say, a heart that is worth beating in anyone's breast. And a heart that fails to be moved with that strange stirring of love—"like a babe buried alive," as G.K. Chesterton put it in "The Ballad of the White Horse"—is a heart that has lost not only the delight of wonder but also the determination of wisdom.

The Little Prince remembers and reminds, "The eyes are blind. One must look with the heart..." and it is with those eyes of the heart, speaking in the language of love, that is poetry, in which we can not only behold but also be held.

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*.



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An illustration of Lucifer in the Garden of Eden, by Gustave Doré for Milton's epic poem "Paradise Lost." The poem contains all three of the transcendental qualities: goodness, truth, and beauty.

POETRY

What's Writing Classical Poetry All About?

Continued from Page 1

My starting point was not to demolish all of the false conceptions outlined above, though I could have. For example, I could have cited leading American poets and critics Robert Beum and Karl Shapiro, who say in their book "The Prosody Handbook: A Guide to Poetic Form" that "making a rhyme scheme is in itself a way of affirming a general commitment to order, of implying both the necessity of order to a high degree of civilization and the immediate aesthetic pleasure inherent in it."

We should only consider rhyme as being artificial and superficial when a weak poet cannot handle the technique sufficiently well, so that we notice its poor workmanship. Proust, as paraphrased by Prue Shaw in "Reading Dante," observed of good poets, "The tyranny of rhyme forces the poet to the discovery of his finest lines."

It is argued that classical poetry is about those dead for thousands of years, then so what? What can we learn from history and those who went before? Just about everything, for as Mark Twain observed: "History doesn't repeat itself, but it often rhymes." The patterns of the past help us understand what is going on now. Without such patterns, we would probably be unable to anticipate anything in the future at all.

Finally, as for the gods and goddesses, an elementary acquaintance with Freud, Jung, and other great psychological minds, shows us that in these myths there are profound archetypes—deep insights—for today. But no, I did not engage in that debate. Instead, I wanted to talk about three elements that classical poetry stands for, and I wanted to base this introduction on the three transcendental qualities often associated with Plato: namely, goodness, truth, and beauty.

Real classical poetry—in fact, real poetry period—is always about these three qualities. And, of course, it is important—vital—that we have more of all three in our lives.

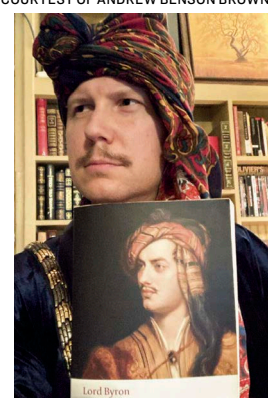
Goodness, Truth, and Beauty

If we have "goodness" in poetry, what does that mean? Does it mean we want a goody-goody two-shoes type of poetry in which only virtue is presented and only good deeds and words are commemorated? Hardly. That's more appropriate for epitaphs on funeral urns!

On the contrary, when we think seriously about goodness, we realize that its most potent manifestations occur when its exact opposites—malevolence and implacable fate—abound. Hence, American psychoanalyst James Hollis observed that "the way to the Self begins with conflict." The

The three transcendental qualities often associated with Plato are, namely, goodness, truth, and beauty.

COURTESY OF ANDREW BENSON BROWN



Andrew Benson Brown dressed as Lord Byron for the Zoom conference.

COURTESY OF SASHA A. PALMER



Sasha A. Palmer.

COURTESY OF SUSAN J. BRYANT



Susan J. Bryant.



Recently, poet and author James Sale introduced a live online poetry event for New York's The Society of Classical Poets. Here he is speaking at the symposium for The Society of Classical Poets in June 2019.

Self is our modern word for soul—and real poetry originates in the soul. Poetry that strives to offer a "conflict-free plateau" or a "sunlit glen without struggle" is not going to be worth much.

An excellent genre of poetry in which we see "goodness" as a central preoccupation—keeping in mind that all three qualities are interconnected—is satire. Satire depends for its force on our understanding of a moral standard—that is goodness—against which the subject stands in stark contrast.

One frequent topic of satire, that is to say a principle of goodness that very few would dispute, is hypocrisy. All peoples, of whatever race or religion or secular viewpoint, acknowledge that hypocrisy is a bad thing. Thus, satirizing it in poetry (Alexander Pope being a master of this form) is a very powerful affirmation of goodness.

The Society of Classical Poets event that I hosted included the Missouri poet Andrew Benson Brown whose satire (of a satirist!) of Lord Byron (titled "How to Be Like Byron") was a masterclass in ridiculing the pretensions of the Byronic "pose." Part of the dark attraction of Byron was, as Lady Caroline Lamb observed after meeting him, that he was "mad, bad, and dangerous to know." Thus, Benson Brown gives some ironical pointers on how just to achieve this:

"But while you're sinning, learn from novels:
There's Rochester—he never grovels.
Onegin has great pistol aim.
Cruel Heathcliff swaggers to acclaim.
Ape Ahab for his hunting skill—
All men need some white whale to kill."

A mock-epic roll call indeed. This seemingly casual run-through of heroic (deranged?) heroes of 19th-century novels, all with Byronic aspects to their character, is deftly done. I especially like "Ape Ahab ..." and the satirical, though ambiguous, claim of "All men" and what they need.

Equally, poetry is about the "true" or truth. And we need to be clear. This is not the same thing as writing about your favorite memes or political convictions; these things come and go. But as Socrates noted: "I soon realized that poets do not compose their poems with real knowledge, but by inborn talent and inspiration, like seers and prophets who also say many things without any understanding of what they say..." Notice that his saying without "real knowledge" almost seems a contradiction

in terms. How can poetry be true without any real knowledge? It can by pointing toward truth.

This kind of poetry—with a bias toward truth—often has startling directness. For example, Shakespeare wrote:

"Imperious Caesar, dead and turned to clay,
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away."
(Hamlet 5.1)

When we read something like this, we cannot help but acknowledge its truth. Somehow it has captured something about the glory and evanescence of humanity with compelling brevity (and according to American psychologist James Hillman, "poetry depends on compression for its impact.") Such poetry pierces the veil of what seems to be and establishes what is.

While Shakespeare's lines point to a truth quite grand, the truth can be mundane too. The ending of Robert Frost's "Mending Wall" is profoundly true to experience: "He says again, 'Good fences make good neighbors.'"

Of the poetry I introduced, Russia-born Sasha A. Palmer's wonderful Shakespearean sonnet "Connected" provides lots of truth as she explored her own situation and the plight of Falun Gong practitioners who have been brutally persecuted in China since 1999. Her final couplet goes:

"... Somehow
I know this: when another victim falls,
Don't ask for whom the bell of freedom tolls."

Finally, we come, perhaps, to the most important quality of all when dealing with poetry: beauty. After all, without it, why do we bother reading at all? It was Oscar Wilde who said, "Beauty is a form of genius—is higher, indeed, than genius, as it needs no explanation."

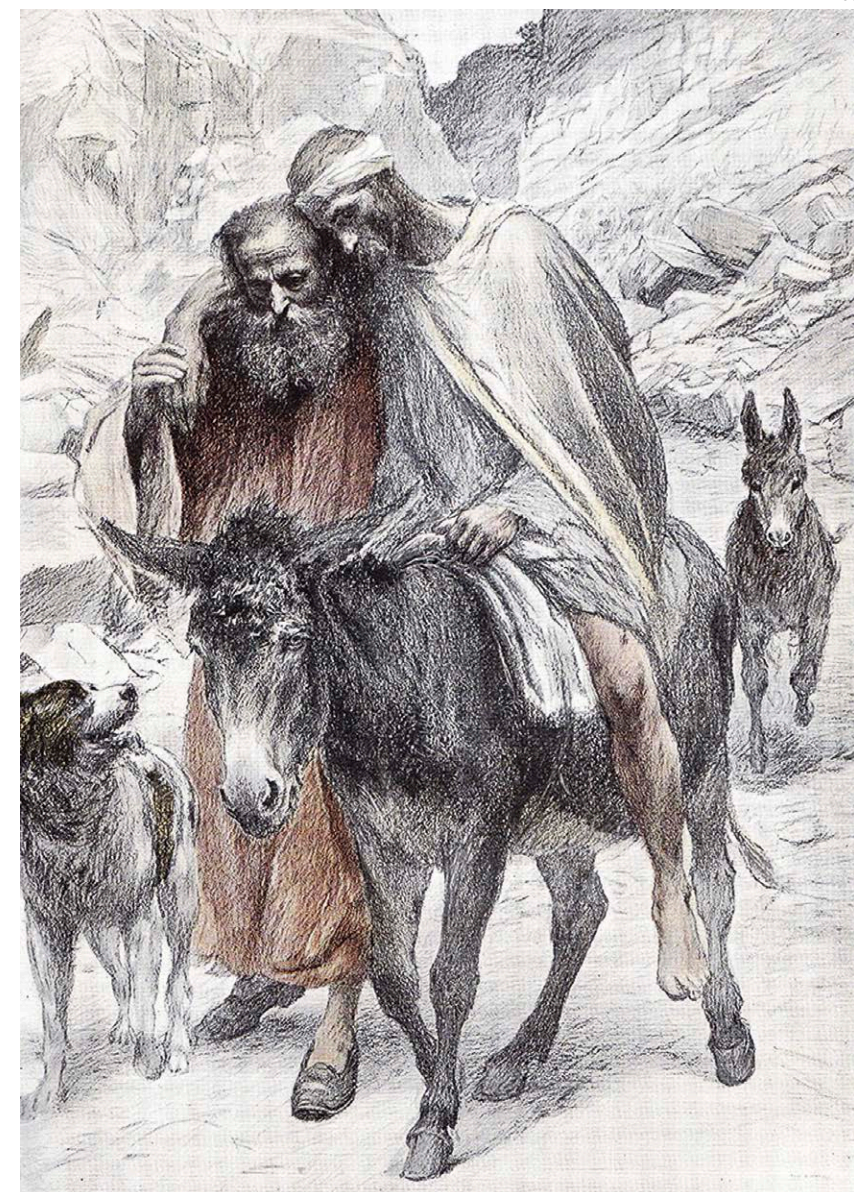
Regarding poetry itself, Edgar Allan Poe observed: "Poetry is the rhythmical creation of beauty in words." There is in all of us a hunger for beauty, an insatiable hunger, for as Plotinus remarked, "Beauty is the first attribute of the soul" and this leads us to joy.

This takes us back to Beum and Shapiro's observation that rhyme provides "immediate aesthetic pleasure" and such pleasure is "inherent in it." Indeed, it's inherent virtually in all word play, which is why children love nursery rhymes; the sound effects, the

PUBLIC DOMAIN



Time reveals the truth and so does classical poetry. "Time Unveiling Truth," 1733, by Jean François de Troy, National Gallery, London.



A good and kind act is portrayed in the parable of the Good Samaritan. "The Good Samaritan," an illustration by Eugène Burnand from his 1908 book "The Parables" published by Berger-Levrault.

PUBLIC DOMAIN

music of poetry is truly delightful. One of my all-time favorite poems is Coleridge's "Kubla Khan." Why? The sheer musicality! I mean take these lines:

"A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw:"

The alliterative "d" of the first line is almost—to repeat a "d"—doggerel, but it's not. On the contrary, the lines build hypnotically, mesmerizing with their beat, their flow, and their beautiful word patterning that ensues. This intricate and delightful patterning of language is precisely what some of the poets I hosted were experimenting with and achieving.

The winning poet from Texas, Susan Jarvis Bryant, for example in a complex form called the Rondeau, has this final stanza:

"I ponder times when life was amplified
with certainty my dreams would never stall—
that joyride of a green and prideful tide,
denied because I do not know it all;
I'm far from young enough."

Aside from the obvious rhyming of amplified/tide, notice the almost unobtrusive but actually very marked internal rhyming of joyride/prideful/tide/denied—all in flow and not leading to that sense of forced rhyming.

Of course, when the poet manages to combine, each in their equal and full intensity, goodness, truth, and beauty together, then a fourth quality emerges—the very highest of all in poetry (and in all the arts). Here our senses are completely overwhelmed, though temporarily, and suspended, for we are in a state of astonishment or awe. I remember this feeling the first time I ever read Milton's "Paradise Lost." At this point,



Poetry should evoke the beauty of music. "The Lute Player," 1596, by Caravaggio. Wildenstein Collection.

we experience the sublime.

English actor and writer Stephen Fry said, "Let us reserve the word 'poetry' for something worth fighting for, an ideal we can strive to live up to." How right he is. The classical poetry that I have outlined strives to do precisely that.

James Sale has had over 50 books pub-

lished, most recently, "Mapping Motivation for Top Performing Teams" (Routledge, 2021). He won first prize in The Society of Classical Poets 2017 annual competition, performing in New York in 2019. His most recent poetry collection is "HellWard." For more information about the author, and about his Dante project, visit TheWiderCircle.webs.com

BEHOLD THE BEAUTY

A Rare 18th-Century Parisian Armchair

LORRAINE FERRIER

Even from afar, an astonishing 18th-century Parisian armchair evokes a sense of majesty and comfortable rest. The rare, sumptuous, crimson-colored brocade-silk armchair, with its seat generously stuffed with swan- and goose-down feathers entices one to rest in its luxury. Even the brass upholstery nails are covered in squares of gold leaf.

The armchair's shape, with its oval seat and gently receding curve of the chair arms is a specific design called a "bergère." These chairs were created to comfortably accommodate 18th-century men and women: the men with their knee-length coats and the women with their voluminous dresses.

Amazingly, although the armchair is over 300 years old, it has not been refurbished or reupholstered, making it an important source of information about late 18th-century French seat furniture, curator Charissa Bremer-David said in a press

release. Bremer-David is a curator in the department of sculpture and decorative arts at the J. Paul Getty Museum.

"Remarkably, this armchair still looks very much as it did when delivered to its first owner in the late 1700s," she said. The armchair, created by prominent French furniture maker Georges Jacob, is the focus of her recently opened exhibition at the Getty Center, titled "Silk & Swan Feathers: A Luxurious 18th-Century Armchair."

In the exhibition, Getty experts reveal more about how the chair was constructed. For instance, joiners used mortise and tenon joints, a traditional technique whereby two pieces of wood are interlocked at right angles. Also on display are 18th-century books that comprehensively illustrate the many aspects of the furniture trade, from upholsterers to joiners.

The exhibition "Silk & Swan Feathers: A Luxurious 18th-Century Armchair" runs until July 31, 2022, at the Getty Center in Los Angeles. To find out more, visit Getty.edu

THE J. PAUL GETTY MUSEUM



Armchair (Bergère), 1770–72 or early 1780s, French, by Georges Jacob. Walnut, painted and varnished, and beech; silk, linen, hemp, and horsehair upholstery with swan- and goose-down feather stuffing; silk trim; iron tacks and gilt-brass nails. 3 feet 3 inches high by 3 feet 1 inch wide by 2 feet 6 inches deep. The J. Paul Getty Museum.

CRAFTSMANSHIP

Hoping to Save Endangered Heritage Crafts in the UK

The Heritage Crafts Association Red List of Endangered Crafts 2021

LORRAINE FERRIER

What does the making of glass eyes, ballet point shoes, and mouth-blown sheet glass have in common? They are three of twenty heritage crafts that have been newly classified as “critically endangered” in the UK, a classification which means that those craft skills could disappear in a generation.

On May 24, a total of 130 “endangered” and “critically endangered” heritage crafts were announced, when an updated version of the 2019 “HCA Red List of Endangered Crafts” was published. The 2021 list is the third edition published by The Heritage Crafts Association (HCA). And this year, The Pilgrims Trust funded the research.

The HCA is an independent UK charity set up by craftspeople and supporters of crafts as a direct response to a perceived lack of recognition and support for traditional craftsmanship in the UK.

“When we were set up in 2009, one of the things that we were so concerned about was to make sure that heritage crafts skills are passed on. They have been passed on through and down the generations to us and we are, our generation, the guardians of these crafts skills,” HCA Chair Patricia Lovett said at the press launch, hosted on Zoom.

Challenges for Heritage Crafts

The research paints a complicated picture of heritage crafts practiced in the UK, which is hard to put into a coherent narrative, HCA operations director Daniel Carpenter said, at the Zoom event.

What is clear is that the research brings a greater awareness of the types of crafts practiced in the UK and the specific challenges that each craft skill faces to survive.

Interestingly, while the pandemic undoubtedly has put many craftspeople under considerable pressure, anecdotal signs suggest that the crisis has accelerated changes in society that could benefit heritage crafts, Carpenter said. For instance, people have been reevaluating the world of work and are looking for more fulfilling ways to earn a living. People are also choosing to support more local businesses. The heritage crafts industry also had to create new sources of revenue due to the UK lockdowns and the loss of traditional sources of income, and so online marketing, such as the number of online tutorials showing crafts, increased. But sadly, the stress of running a business during a pandemic has also meant that some skilled craftspeople decided to take early retirement.

Some challenges are consistent across the board: Certain crafts have skilled makers who are approaching retirement and no one is interested in learning the craft. Additionally, the maker has little time or funding to pass on the craft skills to an apprentice. But

The new Red List is a rich tapestry of heritage crafts practiced in the UK.

(Below) Hat maker Rachel Frost uses a seven-foot-long bow carder to prepare the fibers for her bowed felt hats. In this photograph, Frost is carding a pile of rabbit fur in her yurt studio, in Glasgow, Scotland. (Bottom) Compass making is newly classified as a “critically endangered” craft in the UK. Yorkshire-based B. Cooke & Son Ltd. continues to make compasses by hand.



Kilt makers work together at The Kiltmaking in Edinburgh, Scotland.

the HCA is hopeful that there will be future funding for apprenticeships. The association is currently in talks with the Department for Education and the Institute of Apprenticeships & Technical Education.

The HCA's Endangered Crafts manager, Mary Lewis, who researched and compiled this year's list, emphasized that while some obstacles facing crafts require funding or policy change, change can also come from the craftspeople themselves. “One of the things I've learned while working with makers is that they have the best ideas about how to preserve their crafts. It's for this reason that we make sure we have makers represented at every level in our organization,” she said, also at the press event on Zoom.

The Makers

The new Red List is a rich tapestry of heritage crafts practiced in the UK. “Heritage crafts are not just dusty old handcrafted relics. And this [list] is not a bow to a misty-eyed vision of the past. This is about a wide variety of skilled people working today to create high-quality, beautiful, functional items that add value to our lives,” Lewis said.

The number of people focusing their energies on preserving and protecting these specialist skills is on the increase, she explained. For example, Devon stave basket making was virtually extinct when it was put on the Red List. But Lewis is happy to say that there are now five professional makers, another in training, and some courses on the craft's skill. “These are small gains, but they're significant,” she said.

Some heritage crafts may sound familiar, such as hat making, which is one of the newly endangered crafts. But some of the

niche craft skills within that category are lesser-known. For instance, have you heard of bowed felt hats?

Rachel Frost makes bowed felt hats and uses a seven-foot-long bow to prepare the fibers for felting. She described, on the Zoom event, how a bow is used to separate and fluff the wool fibers: “There's a gut string stretched along its length that when plucked with a wooden pin vibrates, and the vibration picks up the fibers and sends them flying magically across the table to land in a pile on the other end of the table.” The fluffy fibers are then ready for the felting stage, which is done over a wood-burning stove with steam, hot water, and lots and lots of manipulation.

Strikingly, diamond cutting is now critically endangered, with less than 10 skilled diamond cutters in the UK, largely due to competition from overseas diamond cutters, Lewis said.

Kilt making is now classified as an endangered craft. Makers of handsewn kilts are particularly hard hit due to companies producing machine-made kilts. But handsewn kilt makers have come to work together at The Kiltmaking & ScotClans in Edinburgh, Scotland, sometimes for overseas clients. “We've got a very large order from Florida for a huge band, and they're really interested in explaining the story [of how the kilts were made] to their students and the kids in the band. So we're able to actually make 200 handsewn kilts,” kilt maker Amanda Moffet said at the same press launch.

To find out more about *The Heritage Crafts Association* and the *“HCA Red List of Endangered Crafts,”* visit RedList.HeritageCrafts.org.uk



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THE KILTMAKERY & SCOTCLANS

Kilt maker Amanda Moffet hand-sews a kilt at The Kiltmaking.



(Left) Jessica Chastain as the CIA analyst who locates Osama bin Laden, in “Zero Dark Thirty.” (Top right) Osama bin Laden's fortress-compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan. (Above right) Debbie (Jessica Collins), a CIA analyst helping Maya identify al-Qaida suspects.



FILM INSIGHTS WITH MARK JACKSON

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.

POPCORN AND INSPIRATION

The CIA Analyst Who Tracked Down Osama bin Laden

MARK JACKSON

Written and directed by “The Hurt Locker” Oscar winners Mark Boal and Kathryn Bigelow, “Zero Dark Thirty,” the title of their subsequent war film, is military lingo for 12:30 a.m.—the time that SEAL Team Six's stealth attack on Osama bin Laden's hidden lair in Pakistan took place.

Following the 9/11 destruction by terrorist organization al-Qaida that killed 3,000 Americans, newbie CIA agent Maya (Jessica Chastain), along with a committed group of fellow analysts, begins a 12-year, no-stone-unturned, workaholic, investigative siege to track down bin Laden's whereabouts.

Boal and Bigelow's exhaustive slicing and dicing of details ensures that the tale they're telling feels rock solid. Working from declassified files, public records, and interviews, Boal's journalistic background is palpable. But, this being a screenplay, he also ramps up the engaging storytelling aspect. The result is riveting.

That said, reigning agency director Michael Morell wrote to CIA personnel: “The film takes significant artistic license, while portraying itself as being historically accurate. What I want you to know is that ‘Zero Dark Thirty’ is a dramatization, not a realistic portrayal of the facts.” What else would a CIA director say? That's their job.

Spies

The above refers to the film's treatment of how information was squeezed out of al-Qaida detainees at CIA black sites via “enhanced interrogation,” which includes starvation, stress postures, waterboarding, and locking prisoners in tiny cages.

Maya is visibly rattled by the interrogation process, in stark contrast to seasoned, thoroughly desensitized colleague Dan (Jason Clarke), who brings new meaning to the phrase “not afraid to get one's hands dirty.” This is best illustrated when he allows a small caged monkey to grab a scoop of his ice cream cone with its filthy paws, and then absent-mindedly licks it himself.

Maya, however, starts to rethink the whole process, especially when it becomes apparent that one detainee will say whatever he thinks they want to hear, to avoid the pain. She convinces Dan that empathy with the prisoner might actually get better results. Which it ultimately does.

Maya then begins putting together these various puzzle pieces that eventually lead to Abu Ahmed—bin Laden's most-trusted courier. As she begins to home in on her main target, Maya runs into endless setbacks and delays by agency bureaucracy and collegial skepticism, as well as ending

up, herself, on the al-Qaida hit list.

Whether the torture portion of the film is truth or fiction, we civilians may never know. Suffice to say, when it comes to extracting truth in an “enhanced” fashion, one imagines that in war things often need expediting, which brings to mind the phrase “All is fair in love and war.” Also, “where there's smoke there's fire,” and there's a lot of smoke around this particular topic.

Warriors

The climactic SEAL Team Six raid is remarkably high-strung with tension, even though we already know the outcome. If you're not familiar with the story, after watching the movie, I recommend Robert O'Neill's book, “The Operator: Firing the Shots That Killed Osama bin Laden.” While it's an engaging read and O'Neill is quite funny, there still seems to be lingering controversy as to whether or not he fired the actual shots.

Patriots All

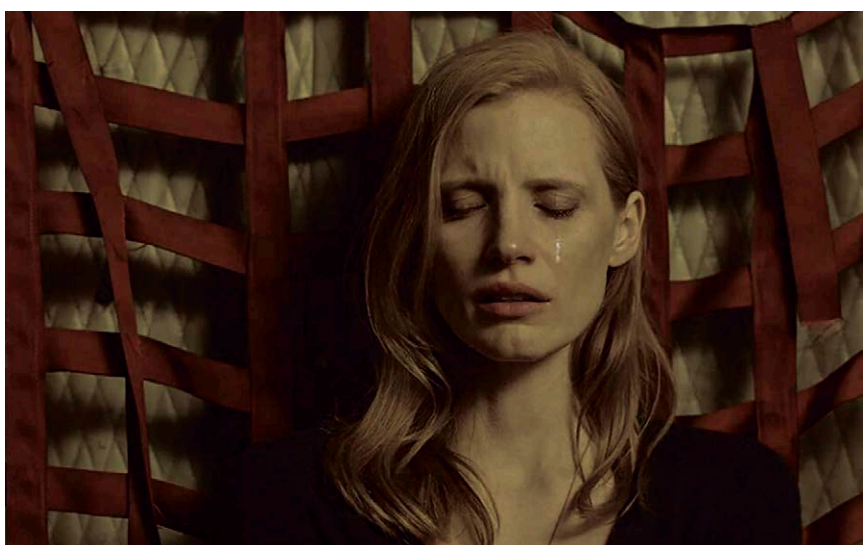
“Zero Dark Thirty” is really best viewed as eye-opening transparency in regard to the inner workings of how the Central Intelligence Agency dealt with one of America's most crippling blows. This is not flashy Hollywood entertainment such as the recent treatment of Tom Clancy's “Without Remorse.” This is memorable cinema, grounded in earnestness, respect, and painstaking integrity by filmmakers who hope to shed light on the matter.

What stands out the most (in addition to Jessica Chastain's brilliant performance) is the portrait of the normally mildly maligned (also often portrayed as supremely sneaky and up to no good) CIA—as a bastion of patriotism. Intelligence gathering is, after all, the head that directs the limbs (the military) to carry out missions. It's conjecture, then, to extrapolate that since spying is in and of itself intensely devious, it therefore attracts a particular kind of colder, more ruthless patriot. After all, the professions of warrior, spy, and assassin are all linked, and all are war-fighting elements. But “Zero Dark Thirty” restores faith that we're all on the same page when it comes to defending our nation.

As for what Chastain pulls off acting-wise, she manages to make Maya—who is exceedingly mule-headed and not an inherently likeable individual—likeable. One gains immediate respect for her talent, integrity, and determination, and her outsized chutzpah is also endearing. When asked by the CIA director (James Gandolfini) who she is (since she piped up in a meeting of clearly much more important people), she replies “I'm the (expletive) who found this place, sir!” The director, charmed, seeks her out at lunch and tells her that she has a flair for the work.

When lightly challenged by a pair of powerful, experienced SEALs, she responds:

Maya (Jessica Chastain) with mixed feelings after her mission succeeds.



(Top) Members of U.S. Navy SEAL Team Six using night vision devices and laser sights in the hunt for Osama bin Laden. (Middle) (L-R) Scott Adkins, Fredric Lehne, and Jason Clarke as CIA agents and patriots. (Above) Admiral Bill McCraven (Christopher Stanley) and Maya (Jessica Chastain). She has been targeted by al-Qaida.

“Listen—I didn't even want to use you guys, with your dip and your Velcro and your gear and your (expletive)! I wanted to drop a bomb. ... He's there. And you're going to kill him for me.” And they immediately find her to be excellent and a little bit adorable.

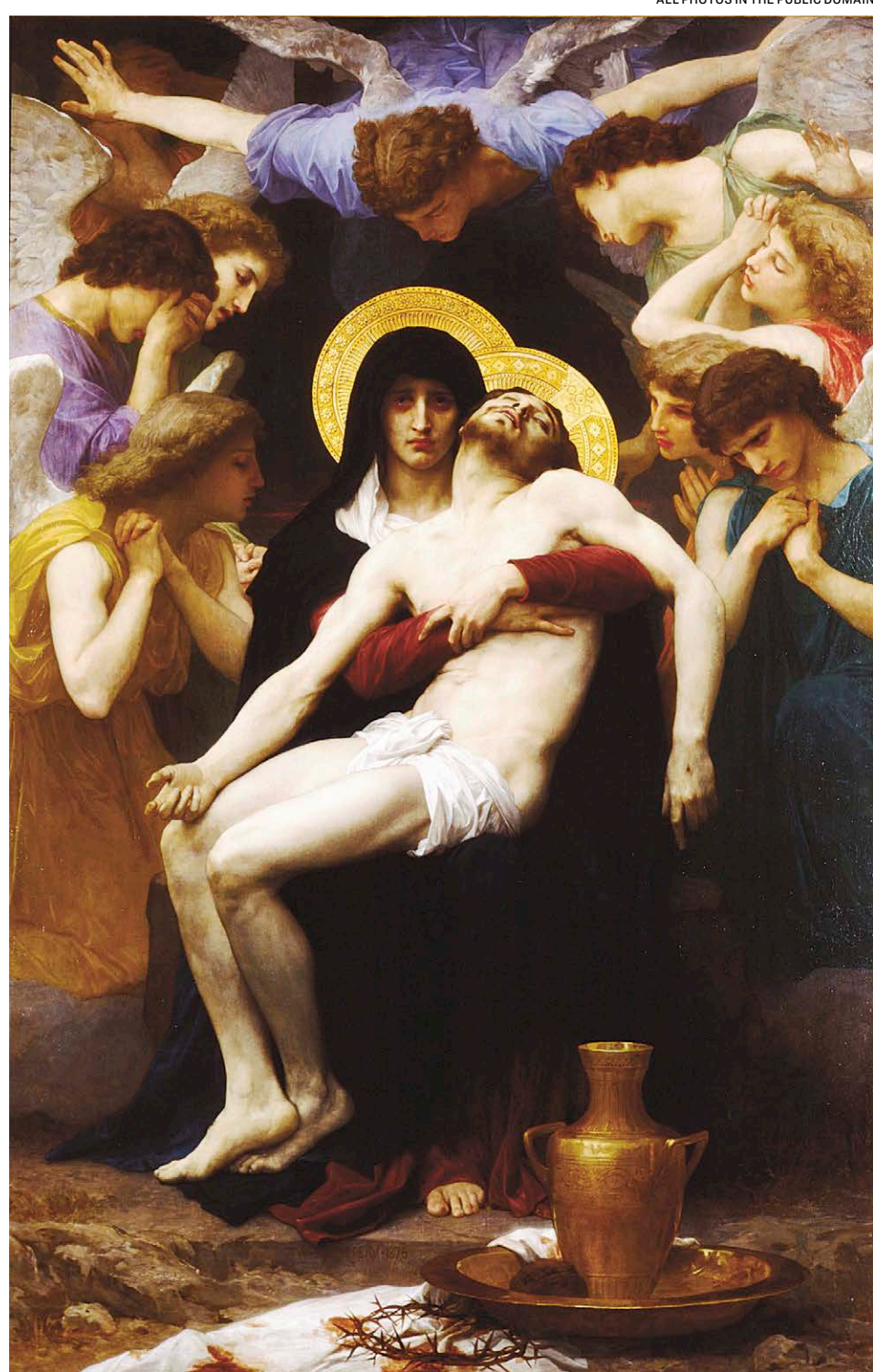
All in All

“Zero Dark Thirty” is a painstaking, journalistic portrait of the events, as mentioned. It's one of the great cinematic procedural—but also a gripping thriller of the highest caliber.

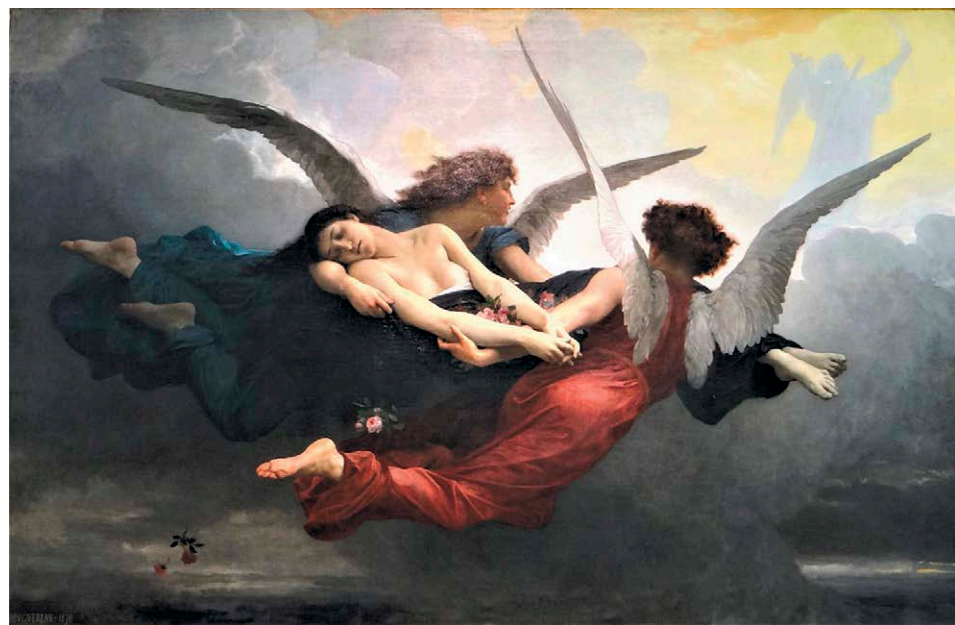
The film doesn't do a victory dance over bin Laden's death, and no one is more conflicted in the end than Maya, who spent 10 years hyperfocused in search of a symbol. When the actual, pathetic, frail human is finally dispatched and Maya heads home, sitting alone on the giant, empty, military transport plane, the pilot remarks, “You must be pretty important.” Then you can see the weight of the inner conflict settle on her. Because after a decade of incredible effort and strain, none of the violence of humans has been alleviated whatsoever.

This Memorial Day 2021, if you watch “Zero Dark Thirty,” keep in mind that there's a designated wall located at the main entrance of the CIA's headquarters, which was created in 1974. It displays a star for each agency member who died in the line of duty. Spanning the CIA's 72-year history, there are now 130 stars, honoring the CIA's continuing fight to help keep America safe and free.

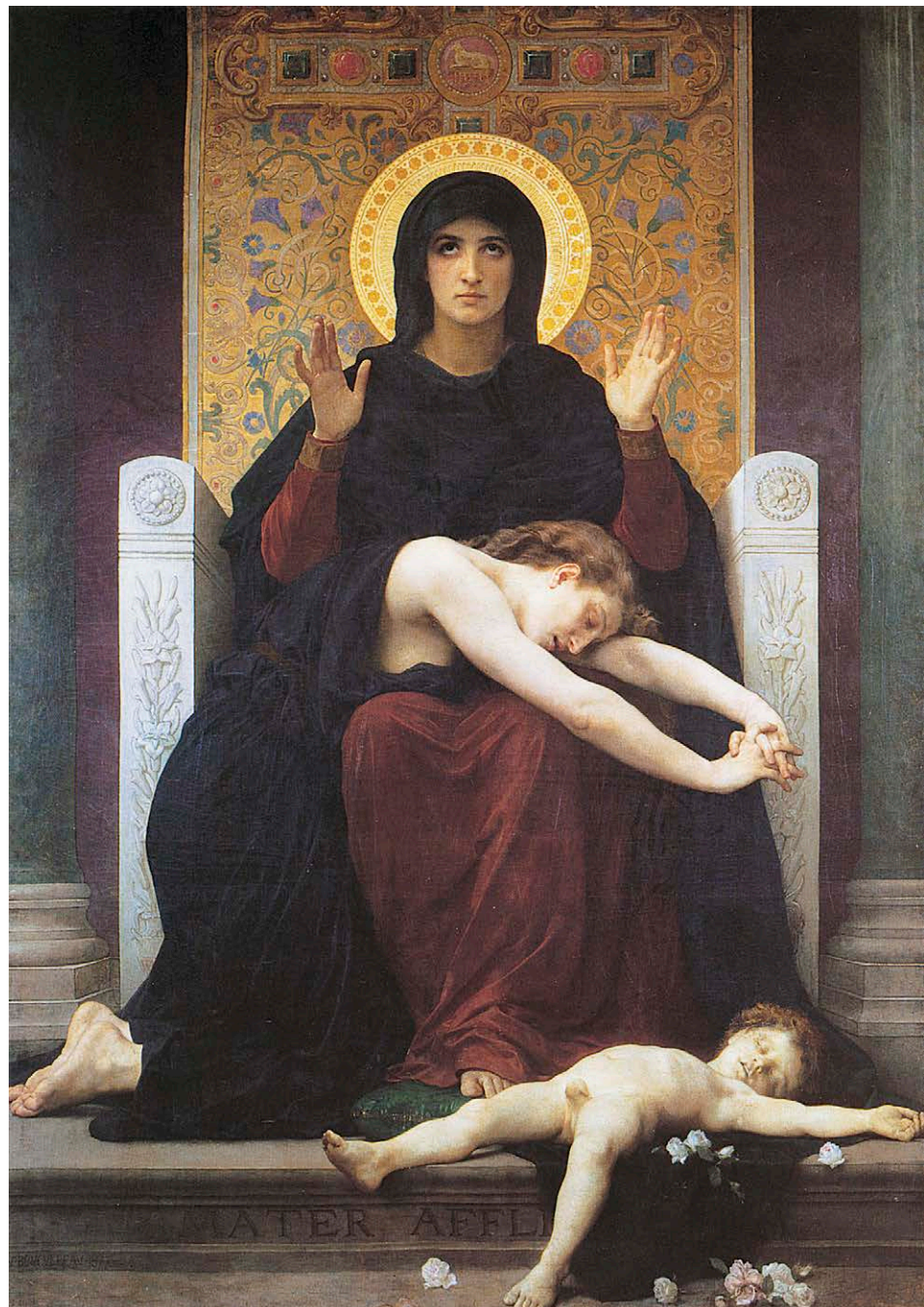
Mark Jackson is the senior film critic for *The Epoch Times*. Mark has 20 years' experience as a professional New York actor, classical theater training, and a BA in philosophy. He recently narrated the *Epoch Times* audiobook “How the Specter of Communism is Ruling Our World,” and has a Rotten Tomatoes author page.



"Pietà," 1876, by William-Adolphe Bouguereau. Oil on canvas, 87.7 inches by 58.7 inches. Private Collection.



"A Soul in Paradise," 1878, by William-Adolphe Bouguereau. Oil on canvas, 70.8 inches by 108.2 inches. Museum of Art and Archeology of Périgord, France.



"The Virgin of Consolation," 1875, by William-Adolphe Bouguereau. Oil on canvas, 80.3 inches by 57.8 inches. Strasbourg Museum of Fine Arts, France.

THE STORY OF ART: WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM THE LIVES OF ARTISTS

How William-Adolphe Bouguereau Dealt With Grief

ERIC BESS

As human beings, we try our best to deal with the pain of death. Today, we will look at how one of the greatest artists of the 19th century, William-Adolphe Bouguereau, dealt with death through his paintings.

Bouguereau's Artistic Development

Bouguereau was born in 1825 in La Rochelle, France, and at a young age entered the local school, where he impressed his classmates with the drawings he did in his notebooks and school texts. However, his father's business was failing, and their financial situation often led to arguments between his parents. It wasn't long before Bouguereau's parents sent their children to stay with relatives.

The young Bouguereau went to stay with his uncle, who showed him love and affection and encouraged the boy's love of classical culture. In 1839, when Bouguereau was 14 years old, his uncle enrolled him in the college of Pons to study religion and classical literature, which would influence much of his later artwork.

At Pons, Bouguereau received some of his first drawing lessons from a professor named Louis Sage, a pupil of the great neoclassical painter Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres.

After several years, Bouguereau's father began trying his hand at the olive oil trade and wanted his son to help with the family business. Thus, at the age of 17, Bouguereau returned home, despite wanting to continue his art studies.

Yet his artistic gift was undeniable, and his family and friends helped convince his father to enroll the boy in art courses at the municipal art school, where he won the Best Historical Painting Prize. Then, with his father's blessing, Bouguereau decided to study art full-time. Needing money to study in Paris, he earned his income by painting portraits, while his uncle provided him lodging.

In Paris, Bouguereau entered French artist François Picot's studio. As the new student at the studio, he was hazed, forced to buy drinks, and made to complete menial tasks. These chores would be his responsibility until a new student arrived.

Bouguereau, however, loved Picot, and he endured to become the best artist he possibly could be under Picot's tutelage. By 1846, Bouguereau was barely admitted to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, a prestigious school for learning traditional fine arts.

In 1850, through hard work and perseverance, he was able to win the Grand Prix de Rome, which was the Ecole des Beaux-Arts' highest competitive prize. Winning the Grand Prix allowed Bouguereau to enjoy a year-long trip to Rome, where he studied the art of the great masters.

Upon his return to France, he quickly became one of the most popular and sought-after painters. He settled down, got married in 1866, and had children. And this is where Bouguereau's story becomes one of repeated loss. He had five children with his first wife, Marie-Nelly Monchablon; four of these children and his wife would die before him.

Painting the Pain Away

Painting became the way Bouguereau dealt with his losses. Creating brought him comfort. He said, "Each day I go to my studio full of joy; in the evening when obliged to stop because of darkness[,] I can scarcely wait for the next morning to come ... if I cannot give myself to my dear painting[,] I am miserable."

So what did he paint after his children died? How did he deal with his pain? How did he memorialize his children? Several of his paintings give us insight into these questions.

According to "William Bouguereau: His Life and Works" by Damien Bartoli and Frederick Ross, Bouguereau "re-immersed himself in his art, his only effective palliative against grief." After the death of his eldest son, George, "Bouguereau wished to complete a project that was now constantly on his mind,

one in fact that haunted him, for he wanted dearly, by means of his art, to pay one final, sublime tribute to his unfortunate son George."

This project would be his version of the "Pietà," which is an Italian word meaning "pity" or "compassion." In "Pietà," Bouguereau depicts the Virgin Mary dressed in black to mourn her son's death, whom she now holds tightly in her arms.

The Virgin Mary seems to stare out at us directly, though she may be looking up. Either way, her stare asks us to share her loss. Both she and Jesus are adorned with a gilded halo, which suggests their divinity.

Nine angels surround the two central figures, and in contrast to the black worn by the Virgin and the white worn by Jesus, the nine angels wear the colors of the rainbow. Along with the black worn by the Virgin Mary and the white worn by Jesus, the rainbow represents all of the possible colors used to paint an image.

According to Kara Ross of the Art Renewal Center, in this painting "the rainbow symbolizes that the sacrifice of Jesus was complete and that the human soul can be born anew and ascend to God after death."

Art can provide solace and comfort, not only for the artist but also for those who view it.

The Solace of Art

Did Bouguereau simply paint an image that he could relate to in his time of suffering? Or did he also ask the viewer to feel his pain? Or perhaps he believed that creating divine images could help ease his suffering and help his soul be born anew?

Shortly after the death of his son, Bouguereau's wife, Nelly, became very ill. She had just given birth to a son they named Maurice. Within approximately two months, both Nelly and Maurice died.

This time, Bouguereau put his sorrow into two paintings: "The Virgin of Consolation" and "A Soul in Paradise."

"The Virgin of Consolation" depicts a sorrowful mother dressed in black who has thrown herself over the Virgin Mary's lap because of the death of her son. The Virgin Mary sits on an elegant throne and has a halo of gold. She puts her hands up and looks up as if to say that these things are in the hands of God.

"A Soul in Paradise" depicts two angels carrying a young woman from the darkness below to the yellow light of heaven, which the silhouetted angel at the top right of the composition represents.

Here again, Bouguereau used the creation of divine imagery to suggest that these painful circumstances in life are beyond our control, that they are in the hands of God, and that the divine light of heaven is potentially open to us all.

Art can provide solace and comfort, not only for the artist but also for those who view it. Art can also encourage compassion. By showing the suffering of other human beings, works of art can invite us to share in this suffering. Finally, art can encourage us to reflect on what might be beyond our human lives.

Art history is a story that forever unfolds. It is also our story, the story of the human race. Each generation of artists affects their respective cultures with their works of art and their decisions in life. This series will share stories from art history that encourage us to ask ourselves how we may be more sincere, caring, and patient 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).

THEATER

Identifying Works of Natural Theater: Serious Plays

ROBERT COOPERMAN

I have previously offered on these pages a description of the Natural Theater and how it is, as my first article asserted, the antidote to the Theater of Misery (where pessimism, hopelessness, and victimology are the human condition). I have also contended that plays from the classical era, such as "Oedipus Rex," uniquely speak to American audiences because their playwrights understood how characters are irreversibly subject to natural laws and human nature—the "Laws of Nature and of Nature's God," as Jefferson wrote in the Declaration of Independence.

However, one does not have to look only in the oeuvre of the classical playwrights or Shakespeare to find examples of the Natural Theater. They are, no doubt, still being written. The trick is to find them among the more prevalent examples of the Theater of Misery being churned out by playwrights with little understanding of our Founding, let alone how to write a play that is meaningful, hopeful, and redemptive.

Playwrights, directors, producers, or simply theater lovers take notice! If you are inspired by the tenets of the Natural Theater, here's a quick primer on how to spot them in a play. For all intents and purposes, I will be considering serious drama as opposed to comedies. Like Aristotle in the "Poetics" (about which I will have more to say later in this article), I focus on weightier theater, saving lighter fare for future discussions.

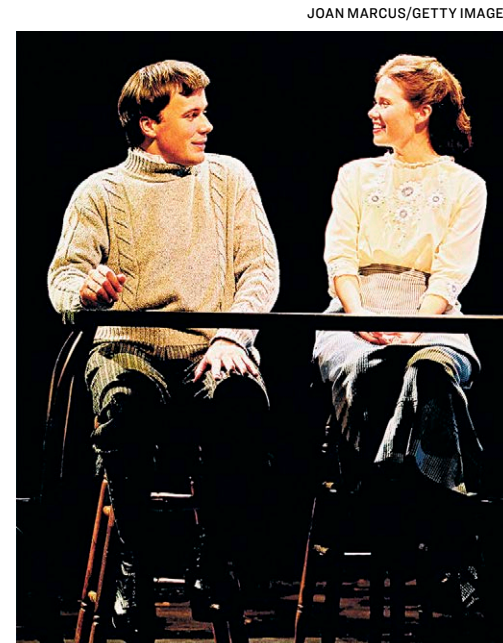
The Nature of the Characters

The protagonists of the Natural Theater exist to find meaning—not only find it, but also support it. They do not go through the action of the play unscathed but retain a quiet dignity that both accepts their fate and finds redemption and hope. They are decidedly not victims and, if they are, it is because of the choices they made, not because of the imposition of a hostile world that refuses to acknowledge the character's intrinsic value.

These characters do not seek solace in meaningless sexual encounters, illegal substances, or raging at the universe. And they do not blame past generations for their failings. If they do, they are made to be seen as foolish, hypocritical, and superficial. In short, the protagonists (dare I say heroes?) of the Natural Theater first look inward to determine the cause of their fate, find meaning in the situations in which they find themselves, and do not seek nor need to cast blame on others.

As one considers the characters in a play, one should ask: Would I want to spend time with them (especially the protagonists)? After examining what a protagonist says and does, ask: Is there a dignity within him or her that transcends the situation, or is there only victimization? Do the protagonists express the idea that positive meaning can be found in their struggle or are they content to live life, as the eponymous and popular musical states, "next to normal"?

Consider, for example, the characters of Thornton Wilder's "Our Town," a play I consider an American masterpiece. The inhabitants of Grover's Corners are decent people, going about their lives with humility and a strong sense of community. Wilder purposely focuses on the everyday—going so far as to have the characters mime their actions such as eating or stringing beans—so that the audience recognizes and finds deep meaning in the elements of a good life that we often take for granted. Yes, there is the town drunk, but he is the exception. And other than expressing pity for his situation, no one makes allowances for his actions. He

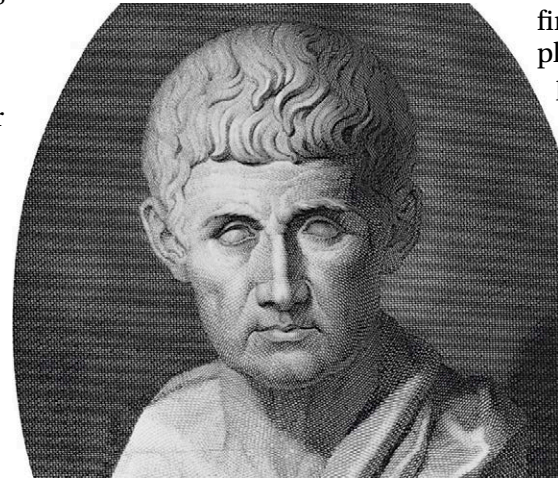


JOAN MARCUS/GETTY IMAGES



The cast of the 2003 Broadway revival of Thornton Wilder's "Our Town," a play that highlights element of Natural Theatre.

HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES



A bust of Aristotle (384–322 B.C.). The early Greek philosopher and scientist also outlined the first treatise on theater for the Western world. It is called the "Poetics."

Plots that confirm the beauty and promise of life are the ones the Natural Theater embraces.

(Left) Actors Ben Fox and Maggie Lacey as George and Emily in the Broadway revival of the Thornton Wilder classic "Our Town."

(Right) The cast of the 2002–03 Broadway revival of Thornton Wilder's "Our Town."

is not a victim of anything but his own choices and everyone knows it.

The Situations

Of course, what truly defines the characters of the Natural Theater is their response to the situations in which they find themselves. Therefore, almost any plot can work from a Natural Theater perspective, and any circumstance can be the source of conflict.

The plays of the Natural Theater explore conflict specifically as it is created by flawed human beings, not by external forces over which the characters can only see themselves as innocent victims. However, even this scenario is possible in a Natural Theater play if the protagonist comes to the realization that he or she is at fault (based on their free will and reason—those pesky "Laws of Nature") and that there is meaning, hope, and possibly even redemption in the struggle. Plots that confirm the beauty and promise of life are the ones the Natural Theater embraces.

I turn again to "Our Town," where the concerns of the characters—an impending marriage, the loss of loved ones—are precisely those issues that almost all people experience. For example, George must deal with the death of his beloved Emily. He does not rage against the universe or blame God, but rather recognizes death as part of the cycle of life. Of course, he is miserable at Emily's demise, but one gets the sense that his misery is a reaction to a larger grand plan, about which he cannot control anything but his own reaction. He cries, we cry, but we all understand.

There are certain situations that should immediately raise suspicions that the Theater of Misery is about to rear its head: plays that take place in a post-apocalyptic world (inexplicably a favorite among amateur playwrights); plays focusing on the failure of the character to find meaningful, lasting relationships; plays that pay undue attention to death; plays that posit that life is absurd (and with that I have relegated an entire genre—the Theater of the Absurd—to be the antithesis of the Natural Theater). Of course, there can be a Natural Theater play in such scenarios, but the chances are greatly reduced if the playwright's prevailing message is "life isn't worth it if the protagonist isn't fulfilled."

Frame of Reference

One of the sure ways to spot a Natural Theater

JOAN MARCUS/GETTY IMAGES



ater play is its frame of reference. Natural Theater plays strive for longevity, providing messages and themes that are not meant to be limited to the contemporary world. This, of course, parallels the Founders' quest, stated in the Preamble to the Constitution, to "secure the blessings of liberty" not only for themselves but for "posterity."

Plays depicting contemporary events with no greater goal than to claim injustice, unfairness, or absurdity without any hope of redemption are not Natural Theater material—nor are plays whose references will be known only to a contemporary audience. "The Book of Mormon" comes to mind. Its numerous allusions to popular culture will not help it stand the test of time.

In this context, "redemption" does not mean merely a way for the protagonist to get by somehow. It does not mean the protagonist dies and the audience is left miserably by the death but takes away no greater message than the person was wronged. Redemption means a wholeness, a return either to normalcy or a better life for the protagonist and, by extension, the ensemble. It means that should the protagonist die, the death carries with it a dignified lesson of the resilience of human beings to survive and to leave the earth a better place for having lived.

What the Audience Thinks or Feels

Theater artists seeking a Natural Theater play should give consideration not only to what the audience experiences throughout the action but what it will think or feel once the curtain comes down. At the conclusion of a Natural Theater play, the audience should feel elation—not an unbridled joy—but sincere contentment in knowing that it has witnessed something positive and transformative. This is not unrelated to Aristotle's "catharsis," where feelings of terror and pity are "purged." Indeed, Aristotle's description of this phenomenon as the "pleasure proper to tragedy" suggests that the overall effect of catharsis is optimistic.

An audience departing the theater with a death wish has seen the Theater of Misery. An audience exiting with a renewed spirit has experienced the Natural Theater.

The call of the Natural Theater should be apparent especially to any American who takes pride in our founding and understands what our Founders set out to create. I truly believe that despite the quality of education these days—where American history is reduced to one paradigm, that of the powerful constantly and seditiously oppressing the powerless—Americans know in their hearts that our nation was formed to elevate human beings, despite their flaws, and to be an improvement on all other governments that have come before.

The Natural Theater simply weaves our founding principles into art, capable of touching those among us with free will, reason, and a love of liberty. That would be all of us, if only we are willing to embrace those principles.

Robert Cooperman is the founder of Stage Right Theatrics, a theater company dedicated to the preservation of the founders' vision through the arts. Originally from Queens, N.Y., he now lives in Columbus, Ohio, where he earned his doctorate at The Ohio State University.

REWIND, REVIEW, AND RE-RATE

A Masterpiece That Only Gets Better With Time

IAN KANE

I've watched my share of war movies over the years and many of them fit into two categories. While some show the evil and destruction that men can visit upon one another (as in Oliver Stone's "Platoon"), others contain a stern antiwar message (such as in Mel Gibson's "Hacksaw Ridge"). Despite these differences, most of these films usually play things straight on the nose, without too much subtlety.

Adapted from French author Pierre Boulle's 1952 novel, "Le Pont de la Rivière Kwai" ("The Bridge on the River Kwai"), a 1957 film adaptation of the same name is quite another story. Known for going over budget and falling behind schedule, legendary English director David Lean ("Lawrence of Arabia," "Doctor Zhivago") was perfect for helming this project. His lengthy, nearly three-hour production allowed for a nuanced showcasing of not only some of the ironies of war but also the gradual, creeping madness that can be caused by it.

Simply put, this film is a true tour de force of filmmaking.

The year is 1943, and a large detachment of British soldiers under the command of Col. Nicholson (Alec Guinness) has just arrived at a Japanese prison camp in Burma, where they will be subject to hard labor.

The commander of "Camp 16" is Japanese Col. Saito (Sessue Hayakawa), who wants the POWs to build a bridge nearby, which will connect a train line from Burma to Thailand. It must be completed on a tight schedule. The prisoners are allowed to rest on the first night of their arrival but will be marched off to work the following day.

'The Bridge on the River Kwai'

Director
David Lean

Starring
William Holden, Alec Guinness, Jack Hawkins

Running Time
2 hours, 41 minutes

Rated
PG

Release Date
1957

★★★★★

(L-R) William Holden, M.R.B. Chakrabandhu, Geoffrey Horne, and Jack Hawkins.



ALL PHOTOS BY COLUMBIA PICTURES

Foreground: Sessue Hayakawa (L) and Alec Guinness, as colonels in opposition, in "The Bridge on the River Kwai."



That evening, Nicholson meets Cmdr. Shears (William Holden), a US Navy officer who has already been at the prison camp for some time. Shears tells Nicholson of the camp's brutal conditions, and how it's inescapable because they're on an island. Nicholson dismisses the Navy man's concerns and states that Saito seems like a reasonable man.

But right away, the iron wills of the colonels of two opposing forces come into conflict. While Saito wants all of the POWs—officers included—to lend a hand in building the bridge, Nicholson points out that the Geneva Convention expressly excludes officers from performing manual labor while in captivity. After a brief standoff, Saito has Nicholson beaten and then thrown into "the oven," a small metal box exposed to the tropical sun. The officers under Nicholson's command are likewise tossed into a similarly cramped container.

Shears escapes the camp but is wound-

ed. Near death, he stumbles upon a Burmese village where the locals nurse him back to health. The kind villagers give the American a boat, and he struggles to get off the island. Unfortunately, he gets lost at sea, but a seaplane spots and rescues him. He is taken to a British military base in Sri Lanka.

As Nicholson languishes in the brutal box for many days, his enlisted men work away on the bridge. At least that's what the Japanese think they're doing. Instead, the British POWs move very slowly and sabotage the construction of the bridge at every turn.

As the bridge's construction deadline approaches and Saito realizes that not much work is being accomplished and comes up with a plan to save face and appease the British officers. With this small victory or perhaps due to the torture, cracks in Nicholson's stern façade begin to appear, albeit subtly. He expresses his abject shock and dismay at the shoddy job his men are

doing on the bridge and tells his officers that he wants to show the Japanese what fine craftsmen the British are.

For him, successfully building the bridge would represent a symbolic victory over the Japanese captors, even though his chief medical officer, Maj. Clipton (James Donald), warns him that completing the bridge could be construed as aiding the enemy.

Meanwhile, back in Sri Lanka, British intelligence wants Shears to help them blow up the bridge that he has told them about during his debriefing.

This sets up two main thrusts of the film—one side wanting to complete the bridge (Nicholson), while the other is on a mission to destroy it (Shears). The dramatic collision of these two opposing forces during the film's final act is nothing that I expected.

Simply put, this film is a true tour de force of filmmaking. Instead of physical violence, most of the action takes place in the psyches of the men. And, because of Lean's brilliant direction, the phenomenal cast (mainly Guinness and Holden), and quite a bit of wry humor and irony thrown in for good measure, "The Bridge on the River Kwai" is considered to be one of the greatest films ever made.

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

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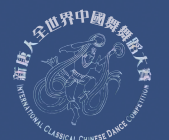
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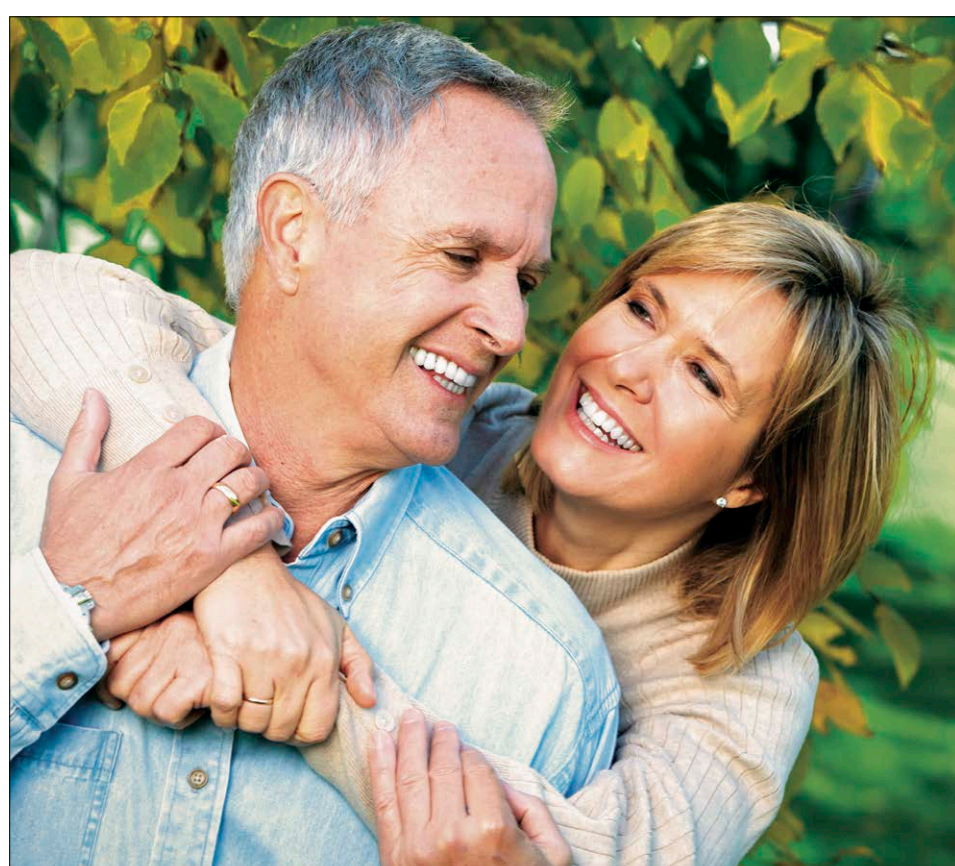
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