

THE EPOCH TIMES

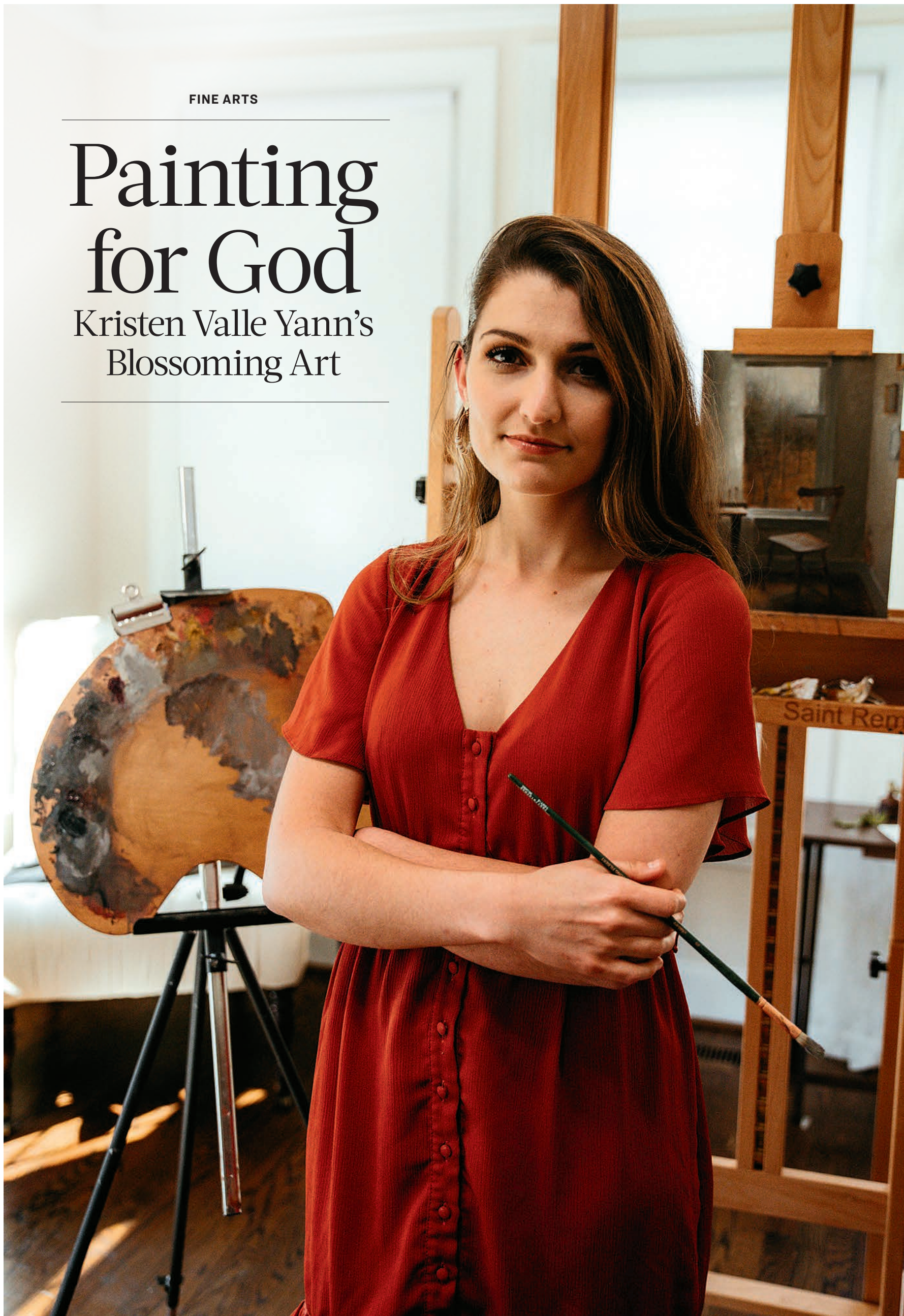
# ARTS & CULTURE

THREE REGION PHOTOGRAPHY

FINE ARTS

## Painting for God

Kristen Valle Yann's  
Blossoming Art



LORRAINE FERRIER

Faith comes first for American representational artist Kristen Valle Yann. She aims to glorify God in all she does, and she's constantly asking herself how her art can appeal to everyone, regardless of their beliefs.

The 24-year-old Floridian artist, of Cuban descent, is at the start of her career and is eagerly exploring the different techniques of past masters, while creating meaningful works that move the viewer in mysterious ways. She's currently preparing for her first solo exhibition.

### Faith-Based Art

As a Christian artist, Yann trusts that



COURTESY OF KRISTEN VALLE YANN

(Above) Artist Kristen Valle Yann spent a year as an intern at East Oaks Studio, in Raleigh, N.C.

(Left) "Blooms," 2020, by Kristen Valle Yann. Oil on panel; 9 inches by 12 inches.

God will use whatever she paints to move someone in a way she doesn't anticipate. She believes that the key is to be open and flexible in what she creates, surrendering her own ideas. And by doing so, she is led by God's will.

"I believe that in His providence, He brings people into my life," she said in a telephone interview. For instance, at a recent life drawing class, she created a portrait sketch. Her plan was to use the sketch as a demonstration piece for a workshop. But the model's parents fell in love with the painting and were moved by the piece in a way that she couldn't ignore, so she let go of her plans for that piece, she said.

*Continued on Page 4*



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## Looking Over My Shoulder: Hope and Inspiration From an Old Textbook

JEFF MINICK

At my elbow as I write these words is “Modern English Readings, Fifth Edition,” a college textbook published in 1946 by Rinehart & Company, Inc.

On the first blank page, written in an impeccable hand with a fountain pen, is this claim of ownership: “Mr. & Mrs. James E. Minick, ‘46.”

My mom and dad were students at Westminster College in Pennsylvania when they purchased this textbook. Dad had returned the year before after serving as an infantryman in the fighting in Italy’s Po River Valley. After the defeat of the Third Reich, he and thousands like him were slated to join the invasion forces against the Japanese. Then came the atomic bomb, and Dad headed home to marry and go to college.

Like so many of us, I suspect, I wish I’d asked my parents more questions about their past. One minor regret has to do with this textbook. Did they both use it? Did they read the entire book, which runs to 1,062 pages of small print? Why did my father keep the book for 40-plus years?

When I recently stumbled across this book on the shelves in my basement, I carried it upstairs and for the first time really looked at it. The editors were Roger Loomis and Donald Clark, both of Columbia University. I discovered online that Roger Loomis was a medievalist and an expert in Arthurian legends. Donald Clark taught rhetoric and specialization in Renaissance literature.

And what they assembled in “Modern English Readings” is remarkable. As I browsed through this collection, stopping here and there to read an essay or a poem, I felt like an archaeologist who had chanced upon some ancient tomb. Here was a textbook published at the end of World War II, a repository of our culture in that momentous time. It respected the intelligence of students, offered help and questions to allow them to dig more deeply into a story or a sonnet, and in several ways paid homage to the veterans attending college.

**The Way It Used to Be**  
 Clark and Loomis kick off their Preface with these words:

“The editors have been guided in

their selection by three aims: (1) The teaching of vital and correct expression through the study of models. (2) The quickening of the student’s interest in literature by giving some of the best fiction, drama, essays, biography, and poetry of the last hundred years to read attentively and to enjoy. (3) An introduction to those problems which, today more than ever, if left unsolved or wrongly solved, mean individual misery and a world in utter chaos.”

A few pages later in their Introductory, the editors offer a short exhortation of encouragement to students as well as this reminder: “Here is a small part of your rich heritage of emotional experience and intellectual insight.”

These were scholars and gentlemen who understood the importance of writing and rhetoric, who revered literature, and who realized that solutions to the trials of the postwar era must come in part from gaining a more profound understanding of culture.

**Writing**  
 In that pre-digital age, Clark and Loomis recognized that the ability to craft competent sentences and to make an argument using the printed work can spell the difference between success and failure in every endeavor from business correspondence to composing a love letter. “Write,” they tell students, “always with honesty, saying what you have really felt or what you believe to be true. Work always toward greater and greater clarity of thought and expression.”

Now, some 70 years later, when we are living in the great age of communication, our writing skills have taken a major tumble. Most colleges and universities feature writing centers to help students who failed to learn, or were never taught, basic composition in elementary and secondary school. American businesses lose billions annually because of poor communications, and friends and lovers often manage to insult one another by hastily written texts and emails.

We may neglect composition in our schools, but Clark and Loomis made it paramount in the advice they gave to educators and students. At the end of “Modern English Readings,” they include almost 50 pages of “Student Helps and Theme Suggestions” as aids to students needing assistance in writing. Some modern textbooks—I’m think-

particularly the essays, with their casual references to writers like Lucretius and Milton, would likely prove daunting to today’s students.

**Liberty**

We living today might turn up our noses at this lack of inclusion, but Clark and Loomis nonetheless produced a textbook in which American values dance and sparkle. They recognized that they were putting together a literary map and compass for a generation of men and women, whether they were veterans or not, works of literature that would give their readers strength, hope, and direction as they walked into the future.

At the end of their book, for instance, where Clark and Loomis included a selection of poems about liberty, they raised questions like these in regard to the poems and the themes their students might write. These queries are as pertinent, and perhaps more so, to our own day as they were then:

“What ... restraints on liberty of thought and discussion are established by pressure groups which protest against all publications not favorable to their own color, race, or sect?”

“How do foreign governments restrict liberty of speech in the United States?”

“Would you, if you had the power, grant freedom of speech to organizations whose aims you consider evil or would you deny freedom of speech to such organizations?”

In their suggested writing exercises, they recommended: “Write an editorial or letter to the editor protesting some act of censorship of the press, by college authorities, pressure groups, or governmental agencies.”

By these questions and suggestions, they reminded their students of what it meant to be an American.

**Education**

In “Education for Freedom,” an essay in this textbook, Robert Maynard Hutchins, then president of the University of Chicago and outspoken advocate of the liberal arts and a Great Books curriculum, made many points pertinent to education today. He argues, for instance, that when university students are treated like adults, they

behave “like adults, or rather in the way adults ought to behave.” He makes the vital point that “the cultural heritage of America is the civilization of Western Europe. The means of understanding it is the liberal arts, the arts of reading, writing, speaking, and calculating.” This sort of education, he contends, is an “education for freedom.”

Their selections for “Modern English Readings” tell us that Clark and Loomis clearly agreed with Hutchins.

If we consider my father and the millions of American women and men like him, we see a generation hard hit by the Great Depression and then called upon to fight in the deadliest war the world had ever seen. But we also see a generation that emerged from these ordeals, built America into the most powerful nation in the world, worked hard, married, and raised families.

Education was key to their success. Though Hutchins complains in his essay that many students of his day were unprepared for university work, “Modern English Readings” rebuts that assessment. Those same students—the great majority of them graduates of the public school system—went on to become professionals like my dad, talented workers in the trades, and for the most part, patriots who knew the history of their country and took pride in its accomplishments.

“What the world needs, what this country must have,” Hutchins wrote, “is free minds. ... It means minds committed to the good by good moral and intellectual habits. It means minds informed by principles derived from human experience through the ages, minds that will operate well no matter what waves of change beat upon them.” True then.

And just as true now.

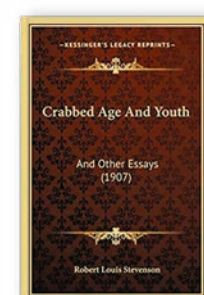
*Jeff Minick has four children and a growing platoon of grandchildren. For 20 years, he taught history, literature, and Latin to seminars of homeschooling students in Asheville, N.C. He is the author of two novels, “Amanda Bell” and “Dust On Their Wings,” and two works of non-fiction, “Learning As I Go” and “Movies Make The Man.” Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, Va. See JeffMinick.com to follow his blog.*



“Modern English Readings.”



Editor Roger Loomis, circa 1930. PUBLIC DOMAIN



The textbook includes an essay by Robert Louis Stevenson.

## What Our Readers Say (#27, part 1)



**It is far better than I expected!** There’s relevant info on every page, special articles and reports that delve deep into the subject and I find that I just can’t put it down! Every corner of this paper has something of interest to me or others in my family. The Epoch Times is a fresh burst of sunshine and good reading! So important to get uncensored, untampered news!!

DIANE C. MOLES



The threat to our democracy has never been greater. I am very concerned at how uninformed and in many cases misinformed, the American public is. **The Epoch Times shines light upon those ... who seek to eliminate the rights and freedoms that Americans so often take for granted.**

PAUL D. SOVA



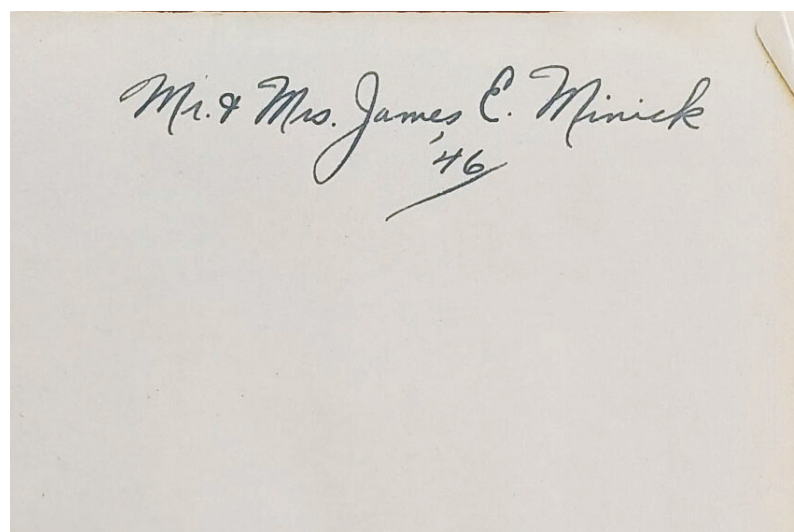
I love this paper. Besides current events, it has a great health section, recipes and more. **Getting the truth is the most important thing.**

KAREN L. BENNA



**This is the only newspaper I know that reports accurately.** It’s a jungle out there, you have to be careful what you read.

MARIA TAYLOR



One of the author’s parents signed the textbook.



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 TRUTH AND TRADITION





"Blush Arrangement," 2021, by Kristen Valle Yann. Oil on panel; 9 inches by 12 inches. In a traditional Dutch-style frame.

FINE ARTS

# Painting for God

## Kristen Valle Yann's Blossoming Art

*Continued from Page 1*

### Cuban Heritage

Yann was born and grew up in rural Tampa with her three sisters, all of whom are her best friends. It was pretty much like "Little Women," she laughed. Each sister is gifted in something, whether it's music, crafts, or cooking. But only Yann is an artist, a talent she inherited from her father.

Yann's father, who had once aspired to be an artist himself, encouraged her artistic talent. He saw her passion for art, and he and her mother encouraged her to pursue a career. Since she grew up in America, they knew that becoming a full-time artist was possible.

"It was truly a Renaissance home growing up. We would go outside and really connect with nature and our imaginations, and we were constantly creating," she said.

Yann's paternal grandparents lived close by, and often her extended family—including aunts and uncles—would visit her grandparents. It's on those visits that she learned from her grandfather about his father, the family farm, and their prior life in Cuba.

The reality of living in communist Cuba, she said, is that whether you were a surgeon or a taxi driver, you stood in the bread line for food each month and used newspaper

for toilet tissue; some people were living in houses with dirt floors and no air conditioning.

Her family was against Castro's communist regime, and her grandparents signed the family up for a freedom flight, which flew Cubans out of the country to Miami between 1965 to 1973.

As a result of signing up, her grandfather was deemed anticommunist and was sent to a forced labor camp, where he was enslaved for several years. He was forced to work the land, doing hard labor under terrible condi-



**Yann is currently developing a body of work based on the Book of Ecclesiastes for her first solo exhibition.**

"Self-Portrait at 23," 2021, by Kristen Valle Yann. Oil on panel; 16 inches diameter.

tions. The family didn't know where he was, or when he would come back. During that time, Yann's grandmother had to find odd jobs, such as painting designs on dresses, to support the family. When her grandfather was released and the time came for the family to leave, Yann's great-grandfather was on the brink of death. The family had to leave before he passed away—he died a week later.

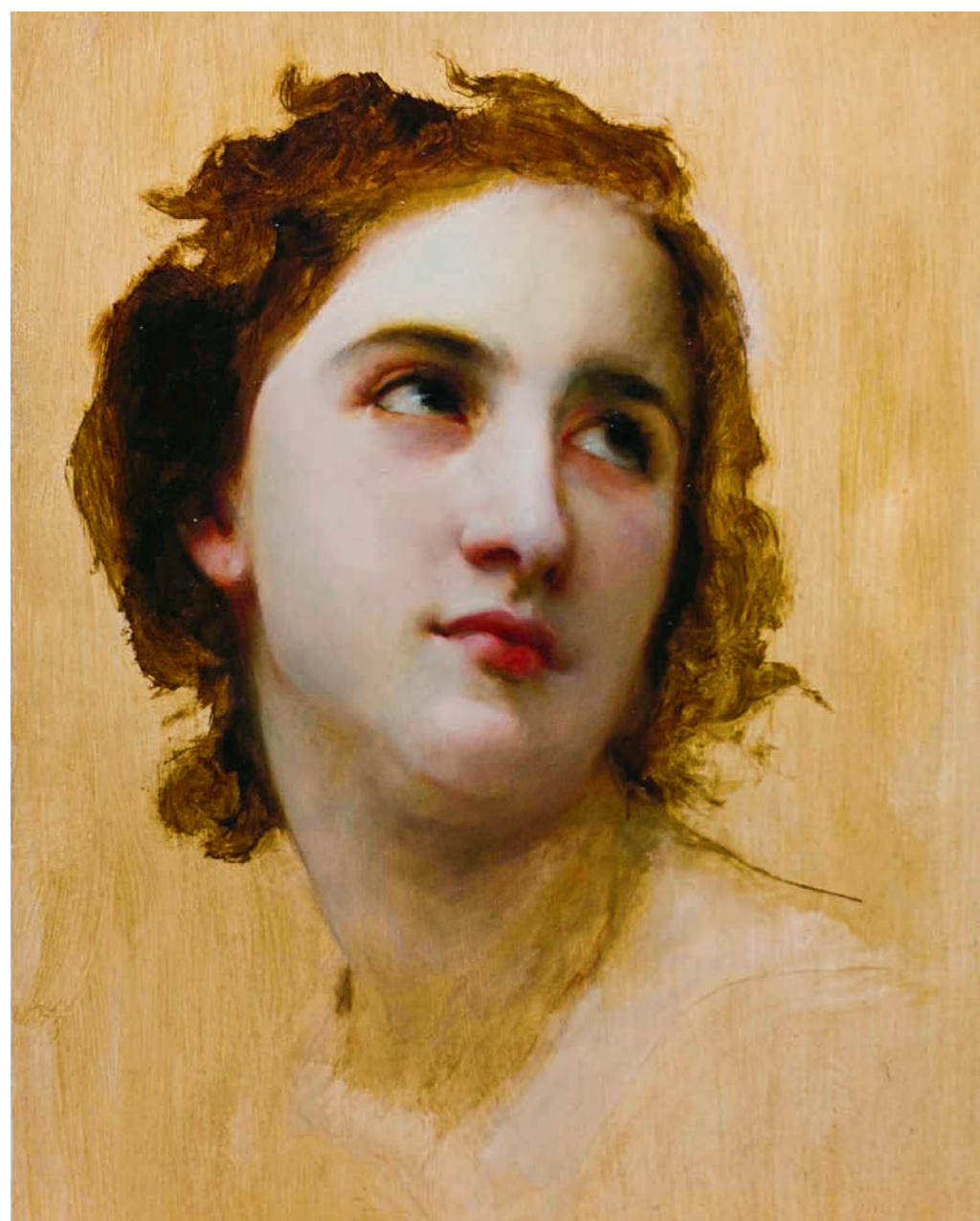
After they left Cuba, the communist regime robbed them of everything. The regime took the family farm and everyone in the family had their citizenship revoked. The family put their faith in a new life in America, she said.

Yann is humbled by the sacrifices her family made. Because of what they went through in Cuba, Yann grew up with a deep appreciation of things that many of us take for granted.

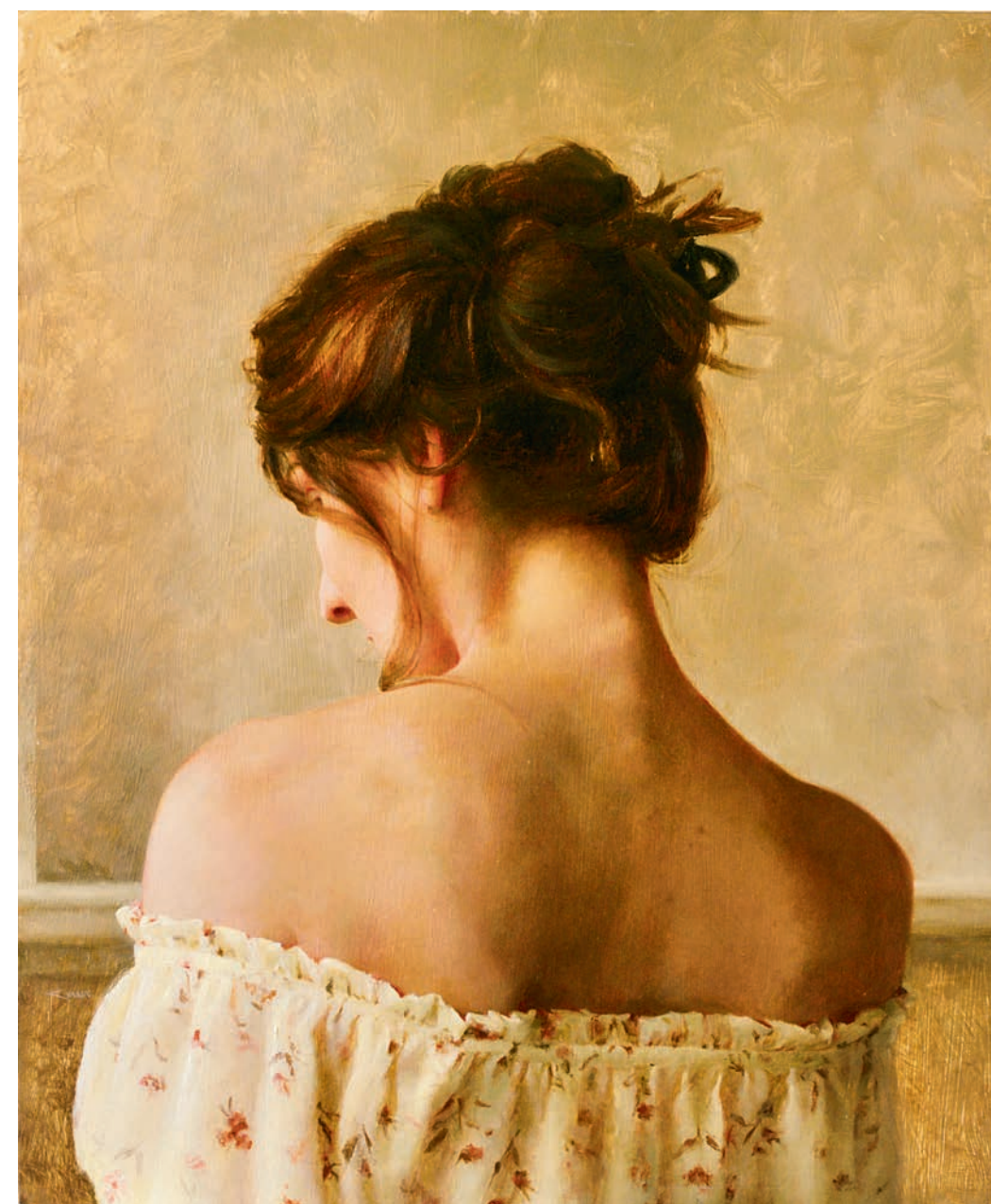
### Seeking Good Art Training

Before she went to art college, Yann went to a community college where she learned the basics of composition and technique. There, she found that the professors were passionate about drawing and painting from life. She assumed a university would be similar. It wasn't.

"Most of them hated traditional art. They told me that the figure is dead, [and] why



"Bouguereau Master Copy, 2020, by Kristen Valle Yann. Oil on panel; 9 inches by 12 inches.



"Entering In," 2022, by Kristen Valle Yann. Oil on panel; 17 inches by 14 inches.



"Apricots With Silver Chalice," 2020, by Kristen Valle Yann. Oil on panel; 11 inches by 14 inches.



"For a Time," 2020, by Kristen Valle Yann. Oil on panel; 12 inches by 16 inches.



"Pears at the Window," 2021, by Kristen Valle Yann. Oil on panel; 6 inches by 11 inches.



"Three White Peonies," 2021, by Kristen Valle Yann. Oil on panel; 8 inches by 10 inches.

paint people with traditional oil paint when that's already been done," she said. She found it very discouraging.

Getting a degree was something that she knew her family would be proud of, as she'd be one of the first in her family to do so. That made her determined to graduate. "But each semester that went by, I just kept asking myself, 'Is this a joke?' ... It was just very poor training as far as technique goes, and a heavy emphasis on how to think," she said.

The one golden nugget of advice she got from college was to look at the websites and résumés of artists whom she admired and see where they trained. For Yann, that was Alex J. Venezia. She found that he, too, had been to a university but ended up training at East Oaks Studio in Raleigh, North Carolina.

When Yann contacted the studio to inquire about an internship, she learned that it was "serendipitous timing." They'd just drafted a new internship program. She visited the studio and was offered the studio's first six-month placement (which then turned into a year).

### Learning True Art

East Oaks Studio, she explained, is not an instructional program. It's a community of artists who paint together, share information, and critique each other's work. She found the experience invaluable. "I learned from observation, and that's a really wonderful thing because you don't get a lot of this 'head' knowledge blocking your intuition" when you're painting, she said.

Yann spent long periods of time watching East Oaks Studio co-founder Louis Carr and resident artist Venezia paint. Venezia is one of her favorite living artists. She believes that observing artists at work far exceeds reading about techniques because you can see art in practice. You see how the artists put their brush to the palette, how much paint they pick up on their brush, how they mix their paints, and even how they hold their brush.

She also learned things that she wasn't taught at college, such as color harmonies and applying edge values to forms in order to create depth of space in paintings.

For the past few years, Yann has been perfecting her painting skills, with many of her works being practice pieces rather than having definite meanings behind them, she said.

Yann's first still-life painting, "Apricot With Silver Chalice," was a practice piece, and one that she created with some input from Carr and Venezia. Venezia encour-

ages all artists to draw or paint fruit, as it can help them paint skin. He particularly favors peaches because this fruit's skin mimics the elements in our skin, such as areas that are fuzzy, smooth, and translucent. Yann chose apricots and added a goblet and tablecloth to the composition to make the painting a bit more poetic. Even though it was a practice piece, she still wanted to make it beautiful.

Several of Yann's still-life paintings have the theme of the passage of time. She is fascinated by how objects transform from new to old just like in "memento mori" paintings and "vanitas" paintings, where symbols represent the transience of life and the inevitability of death.

American sculptor Sabin Howard, who is currently working on the Washington National World War I Memorial, collects Yann's work. He commissioned her to create "Blush Arrangement" as an ode to Dutch painting, which he loves.

In the painting, Yann mimicked the Dutch flower paintings by showing the different stages of life, where the flowers are closed, in full bloom, or in various stages of decay. There's even a ladybug, as Dutch still-life paintings often included insects.

In "For a Time," a nest, some acorns, and weathered oak leaves rest on an empty wooden chest. It's a sentimental remembrance piece, Yann said, and the chest is

an heirloom from Carr's grandfather.

Her painting "Providence" is another remembrance piece, of a sort, to honor a bird that she happened upon providentially. Yann had wanted to paint a bird like those in Dutch still-life vanitas paintings that were often pictured hanging up. Being vegan, however, presented a moral dilemma: She didn't want to harm any creature. Yann spoke to her husband about it while they were out on a walk one day. She thought that if God wanted her to paint a bird, then an opportunity would present itself. On that very walk, they stumbled upon a sick bird, which they moved from the road onto the safety of the grass. Later that evening, Yann found that the bird had died. That's how her painting "Providence" came to be.

We can see where Yann is today by looking at her "Self-Portrait at 23," which she created in January 2021. It was her first self-portrait since high school. She wanted it to reflect that she's an artist at the early stages of her career, and that she's still learning and still growing.

She painted it in the style of the old masters, although it's not directly influenced by any one painter. She particularly admires how 19th-century French painter William-Adolphe Bouguereau painted skin, which she has emulated in her self-portrait.

In her painting, she gazes to one side. She's without makeup or jewelry and is

wearing a white headscarf. There's nothing to indicate the time and place of the painting, although her headscarf alludes to the past. The white of the scarf helped her gauge the color contrasts to avoid making the lights too light or the darks too dark.

### Painting the Human Experience

Yann now lives with her husband in Tallahassee, Florida. As part of her need to reflect on how she can best use her art to magnify and glorify her faith, she found some of her answers in the Book of Ecclesiastes in the Old Testament about the enigma of a life. Yann explained that, just as in vanitas paintings, the book describes life as being like smoke: It's there one day and gone the next, and like vapor, it cannot really be grasped.

What Yann loves about the Book of Ecclesiastes is that it takes the concept of faith and makes one realize that it's not transactional. "Just because you put your faith in these things doesn't mean that you're going to have the perfect life with no pain and sorrow and suffering. But amidst that reality, we can have a hope for something eternal and something beyond this life."

Yann is currently developing a body of work based on the Book of Ecclesiastes for her first solo exhibition, which will be held at the Collins Galleries on Cape Cod in Massachusetts.

Her first painting of the series is "Entering In," which features a woman from the back, slightly turned. She represents the reader, who has Yann's likeness, entering into the teachings of Ecclesiastes with an open mind, ready to learn the lessons. The last painting in the series will be a woman facing forward, representing a reader who has gained wisdom from the book and, maybe, another perspective.

She is presently working on a piece called "The Vanity of Self-Indulgence." Vanitas still lifes often have this as a theme: All indulgences in life soon pass just as we do.

With the exhibition, Yann hopes her faith-based paintings will be the essence of the human experience that we all share. She hopes that Christians "can look at these works and know that this [life] is not the end. And maybe, if you have a different worldview or a different outlook, then you look at these works and just feel comfort [in] knowing that you're not alone in that human experience."

To find out more about Kristen Valle Yann's art, visit [KristenYann.com](http://KristenYann.com)



"Morning Light," 2020, by Kristen Valle Yann. Oil on panel; 18 inches by 24 inches.





ALL PHOTOS IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

## TRADITIONAL CULTURE

## Reviewing 2021, Part 2:

## The Importance of the Question: Why Do We Exist?

JAMES SALE

Instead of focusing on our exercise or diet to increase our well-being, important as these are, what if we were to start at the top end and focus on our spiritual well-being. What would that look like?

In part 1 of this article, we considered how so-called business posts on LinkedIn in 2021 had become much more personal in nature, specifically relating to mental health problems, and how instead of people working at the top end of their nature—that is, the spiritual—often they were seeking to solve their issues at the lower end, which is the physical. The four levels of human nature are physical—doing (body), emotional—feeling (emotions), mental—thinking (mind), and spiritual—knowing/being (spirit).

There are three key questions that the spiritually minded person is always attempting to address. And to be clear, to answer these questions, or attempt to answer, may well lead one to a specific religion that one embraces and believes, but the generic spiritual questions remain in the background whether one is conscious of them or not.

## A Key Spiritual Question

But what are these questions that stand as a backdrop to the spiritual experience itself? First, spiritual people ask themselves this: Why does existence exist? And, of course, as soon as we ask this question, we immediately realize that most people do not want to ask this question. It seems impossible to answer; indeed, from a logical perspective, it is impossible to answer.

The most presumptuous of people—scientists—love to pretend they have an answer to this question. They sometimes love to push back to a millionth of a second (or less!) after the Big Bang and suggest what was happening then. (Apparently, it was very hot!) But that kind of reasoning never gets to the point of why the Big Bang occurred at all.

This kind of overreach by most scientists is well described by professor Brian Josephson, a Nobel Prize-winning physicist, as quoted in Jeffrey Iverson's "In Search of the Dead": "When a scientist says we understand how the brain works, or how a man came into existence through natural selection, these are enormous extrapolations." Yes, enormous! How much more enormous, then, when they purport to explain existence.

We come, inevitably, to the mystery. What in our modern, scientific lives we like the least are the inexplicable, the ambiguous, the wonderful. And the only way we can approach the mystery of existence... is through poetry and myth. The connection between the two is clear, for as American philosopher Allan Bloom commented, "Myths are made by poets." He went on to say, "Men and societies need myths, not science, by which to live."

What an incredible statement! We need myths, not science. We have become so dependent on science (and its kin, technology) and bewitched, too, that we almost fail to see

how enervating it really is. A good example is the current COVID crisis in which all our rights and freedoms are somehow waived because scientists crunch data and then inform us, and governments tell us what we can and cannot do.

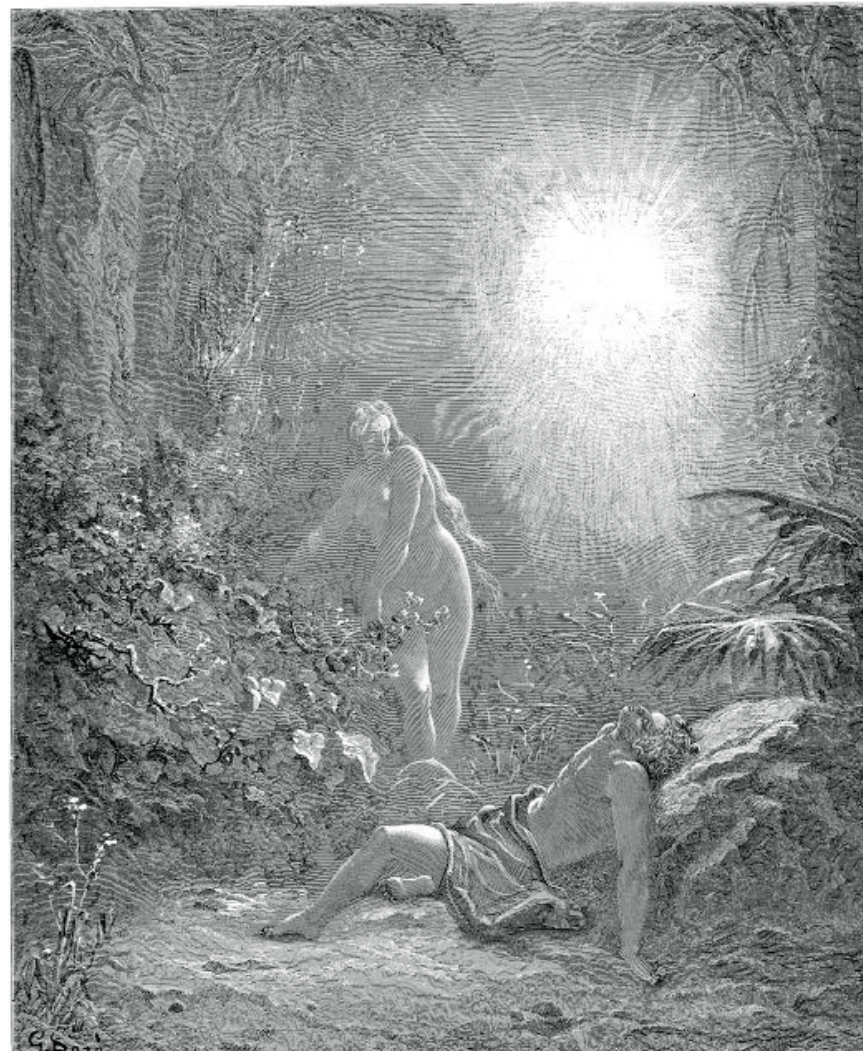
Filipino poet and literary critic José Garcia Villa, as quoted in "Poetry Is," observed that "Poetry exists in abstract time. It transfigures itself into a continuous and perpetual present—with a mythic live time that is universal, live time so that it is true at all times. It is what the Greeks call 'kairos'—inner human time."

## Poetry and Myth

Poetry and myth, therefore, speak for all time because they speak directly to the soul through images. When we ask, then, why does existence exist, only poetry and myth can provide an answer that satisfies us. Indeed, the deepest appeal comes from the most imaginative responses to the question.

In one early Egyptian myth, nothing existed but the deep, dark waters of Nun on which floated in a perfect egg that, inexplicably, cracked open revealing Atum, who had created himself, and henceforth shone as the sun to light his newborn world. Notice here how the myth almost breaks down under its own contradictions: The word "inexplicably" tells us that we can't know. Yet, Atum created himself, so some divine will brings itself into existence.

In Greek mythology, according to He-



For Christians, God created man and woman on the sixth day. A Bible illustration by Gustave Doré.

Can the answer to why creation exists be simply because it is good?

As we attempt to 'read' the universe, we realize what a wondrous, absorbing and mystical 'text' it is.

siod, there were initially four entities: Chaos, Gaia (Earth), Tartaros (the underworld), and Eros (sexual love). These were the primal forces whose procreations led to everything that has been made, including the gods and humans.

In the "Tao Te Ching," more abstractly: "Tao generates the One. The One generates the Two. The Two generates the Three. The Three generates all things." Or put more simply still: "Taoism teaches that 'all things by unity have come into existence.'" By unity—by and through One, the unity.

We see in these wonderful myths how the poetic imagination posits something much simpler at the beginning, but from which a superabundance occurs—a full creation, as it were. In the West, the greatest of all these myths occurs in the first three chapters of Genesis. And here we get something very special and very nonlogical.

We learn that creation is "good" and "very good." When we ask why it exists, an answer that the poetic imagination has summoned in the Genesis story is that it exists because it is good, very good. In other words, there is a massive moral, as well as architectural, dimension to existence.

The "making" (or architecture) in itself was good, very good—and, by the way, the Latin word for poetry or poets "maker." From this, of course, we see the parallel with the word "universe," meaning one song or one poem or verse. And not only that, but goodness informed it, too—a goodness that we know was subsequently compromised.

Asking why existence exists is like asking artists or poets why they created a particular work. The poet might answer this or that, but the real answer comes from reading the poem. The great critic and poet Charles Williams, who was an InKling (a member of a literary group associated with C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien), expressed it this way: "Poetry is a thing sui generis. It explains itself by existing."

Just as we rejoice, therefore, in reading a great poem, so the natural response to reading what we might call the book of existence is also one of joy because it's good—it's very good. And "good" here is not some subjective "good"; it's much more profound than that precisely because of its ultimate importance.

In her article appearing in the book "Writing Cures," counseling educator Jeannie K. Wright correctly observed that "Poetry or story making is therapy for both the body and soul." If that is true in merely contemplating or writing poetry, how much truer must it be to contemplate the poem that is the universe or existence itself?

## A Wondrous Text

As a starting point for consideration of one's own being and existence, then, we might consider the existence of the universe, and as we attempt to "read" it, realize what a wondrous, absorbing, and mystical text it is.

If we needed proof of that, it would not be in science or in data or in anything else as tedious. It would be in the commonplace and universal experience of virtually all human beings who get restored by nature: by walking in the woods, by being near the sea, by viewing scenes from mountaintops, by observing the beauty of all natural phenomena—the sunrises and sunsets, canyons, waterfalls, icebergs, the lakes, the forests, or the incredible complexity and ingenuity of living creatures, be they lions or eagles, or dolphins and sharks, or spiders and scorpions, by the sight of stars at night, the planets and moon and so on.

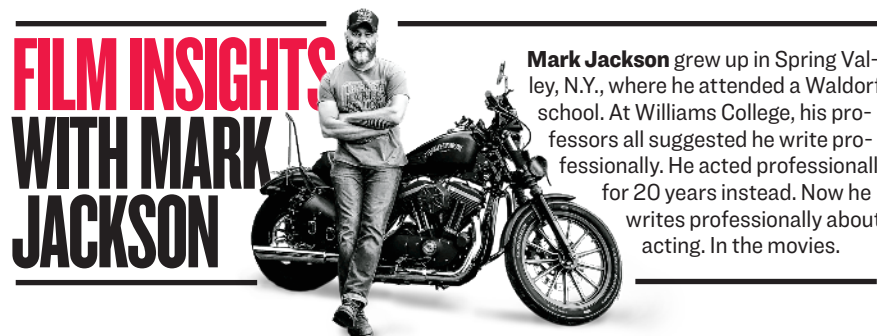
When the world, as Wordsworth the poet put it, "is too much with us"—the dreary industrial landscapes, gray offices, and systematized and processed lifestyles—we find an outlet in nature.

And what is nature? It is a word we use for existence and life at its most uncontaminated by human inventions. In short, the real existence around us refreshes and inspires us, if we let it and if we seek it. Why? Because it is good, very good.

If we think about where this article started, in trying to approach our well-being not from a physical perspective, which is limited in terms of meaning and of the bigger picture, then this spiritual journey is much more likely to invigorate and sustain us. In thinking about why existence exists, we tap into the good, the very good, and this becomes a self-evident reason to live and live well.

However, there are two more spiritual questions that we need to consider, and we will be covering these in the next article in this series.

James Sale has had over 50 books published, most recently, "Mapping Motivation for Top Performing Teams" (Routledge, 2021). He has been nominated for the 2022 poetry Pushcart Prize, 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 EnglishCantos.home.blog



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.

## A Problem the USA Needs to Talk About

## Sex trafficking of Native American girls

MARK JACKSON

Truckers in the news today—they're heroic. There's a certain romance to the whole saga, just like the 1975 song "Convoy."

"Was the dark of the moon on the sixth of June  
In a Kenworth pullin' logs  
Cab-over Pete with a reefer on  
And a Jimmy haulin' hogs  
We is headin' for bear on I-one-oh  
'Bout a mile outta Shaky Town  
I says, "Pig Pen, this here's the Rubber Duck  
"And I'm about to put the hammer down"

The North American truckers had themselves a convoy, and in this instance, when these workers of the world united (against the vaccination)—just like Karl Marx had proclaimed they'd unite—ironically, the socialists protested. God bless the truckers.

## Other Truckers

There's a chilling scene in "Catch the Fair One" of many 18-wheeler trucks parked at a truck stop in an undetermined, presumably Northern state. Not chilling because it's winter, but because underage Native American sex-trafficked girls are being peddled to take care of trucker needs. This is part of the very real, seamy underside of the trucking industry.

"Catch the Fair One" isn't about the truckers but about the girls, namely, one Native woman's quest to find her trafficked little sister.

That Native woman is Kaylee "K.O." Upshaw (Kali Reis), a former boxing champion who is now down on her luck, and battling addiction. She lives in a women's shelter and waitresses at a local greasy-spoon diner. Her mother, Jaya (Kimberly Guerrero), runs a grief support group for

relatives of trafficked Native girls.

Kaylee and Jaya's missing sister/daughter Weeta (Mainaku Borrero) disappeared two years ago. In a heartbreaking scene, Kaylee expresses anguish when her stone-faced mother clearly wishes Weeta had stayed and Kaylee had disappeared.

Kaylee blames herself for not protecting Weeta. Jaya expressly told Kaylee to keep an eye on her little sister, especially at night. But one night, when Kaylee was having a particularly productive training session, she allowed Weeta to walk home by herself.

What her mother doesn't know is that while Kaylee appears to be back in training, she's not training in boxing but in the lethal aspects of jiu-jitsu. Why? She's been secretly hunting Weeta's captors. She's finally uncovered the tracks of the kidnappers, and she's committed to the death to bring resolution and revenge.

Both Kaylee and Weeta are of mixed indigenous heritage, from different fathers. Weeta is lighter skinned—hence the film's title. When Weeta went missing, no one knew, no one cared, and investigations of these types of cases are at best cursory.

## It's Not a Female 'Taken'

Based on an original story co-written with Reis, screenwriter and director Josef Kubota Wladyka's gritty, black-and-blue-colored drama will leave your emotions bruised black-and-blue. It's a bare-bones, topical thriller that would like to turn the proverbial flashlight on and expose the roaches hiding in the dark, in the underlit areas of truck stops as well as in the cold, black-and-blue McMansions of the those human predators further up the food chain.

The film is as cutting-edge as the razor blade that Kaylee hides in her cheek, leaving her pillow bloodstained in the morning. Kali Reis—a former WBC middle-



ALL PHOTOS BY PROTOZOA PICTURES/IFC FILMS

**Director**  
**Josef Kubota Wladyka's gritty, black-and-blue-colored drama will leave your emotions bruised black-and blue.**

## 'Catch the Fair One'

**Director:** Josef Kubota Wladyka

**Starring:** Kali Reis, Daniel Henshall, Tiffany Chu, Mainaku Borrero, Michael Drayer, Kimberly Guerrero, Kevin Dunn

**Running Time:** 1 hour, 25 minutes

**MPAA Rating:** Unrated

**Release Date:** Feb. 11, 2022

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

weight world champion herself as well as a very talented actress—who is a determined advocate for indigenous rights, and director Wladyka are not out to let us enjoy some comfortable entertainment.

This minimalist character study contains a violent ferocity that's not for the weak of heart, and the catharsis of a trafficking film like "Taken," where a former CIA assassin (Liam Neeson) goes to rescue his daughter from Albanian traffickers with immensely satisfying revenge payoffs, is nowhere to be found here. Neither should it be. We're talking about an inhuman reality that the human world needs to sit in collective shame about.

And like the family members and friends of the generations of unsung Native women who have vanished from the face of the earth, audiences do not get to know what happens next. We are forced to wonder if Kaylee's search was in vain and if her mission will produce any effective change.

"Catch the Fair One" should be required viewing. We need to support our truckers but also support the cause of the countless indigenous girls who disappear or are murdered every year in America. God bless the missing girls here, and everywhere, and the millions of families that miss them.



Kaylee (Kali Reis) inspects photos of kidnapped girls, in "Catch the Fair One."

"American": Kaylee (Kali Reis) being inspected by Danny (Michael Drayer), a trafficker of young Native American girls, in "Catch the Fair One."

## Broken-Hearted Schemers Find Love

MARK JACKSON

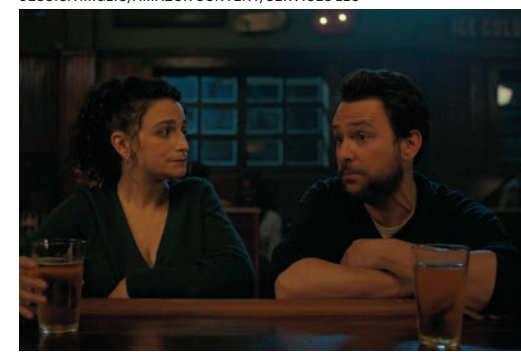
Valentine's Day has come and gone. It's just as well. "I Want You Back," while engineered as a Valentine's date movie, is an R-rated rom-com that probably won't make you laugh till you cry. There aren't really any rom-coms that do that anyway. "I Want You Back" is more like a movie that'll make you chuckle when your Valentine's date is a year-long relationship, and you watch it together on the couch.

But will you chuckle a lot? Will you chuckle heartily? Possibly. I didn't initially want to like it. But it tries so hard and so relentlessly that over a long period of time (and it's definitely too long), you get tired of having your arms crossed in defiance, and when you drop them, you start dropping the rest of your defenses.

And when two grown men invited to a house party by pretty young women jump off the roof into a hot tub (woo-hoo!) and then discover that the women in question are naughty, naughty underage teens, and an irate dad shows up, and now you've got two soaked, terrified men in underwear trying to explain to dad ("Don't call me 'sir'! You're my age!!") how they ended up at a party with 17-year-olds—you have to chuckle a bit.

## Reverse 'Parent Trap'

Emma (Jenny Slate) and Peter (Charlie Day) are complete strangers working in the same healthcare building. They both get unexpectedly dumped by their respective significant others, Noah (Scott Eastwood) and Anne (Gina Rodriguez), on the same weekend. Back at work, neither Emma nor Peter can keep it together, and they surreptitiously rush to the stairwell for some discreet, cathartic bawling. And guess who they run into?



"You have mascara all over your face," Peter tells Emma. "You have, like, a piece of toilet paper ... or something," says Emma. They agree to meet and share their mutual dumping experiences; it's the epitome of misery loving company.

During a drunken karaoke session, they reveal to one another that they are terrified of being in their 30s and losing their shots at ever finding "The One." As neither one wants to start over, Emma labels them the "sadness sisters," and they devise a "Parent Trap"-like plot (or is it "Much Ado About Nothing"?) to win their special people back. They will fiendishly find a way to trash their exes' new relationships, causing their beloveds to run like scalded dogs back into their waiting arms, with newfound appreciation. Let the lying and sneaking about begin!

How do they break up their exes? Peter hires Noah as his personal trainer, while Emma volunteers for a production of "Little Shop of Horrors" at the middle school where Anne works, which her new boyfriend (Manny Jacinto) happens to be directing. Yes, Emma's ploy is barely realistic but, you know, it's rom-com land.

## Their Lives Beyond Their Love Lives

Peter's crisis is somewhat more urgent than

Emma (Jenny Slate) and Peter (Charlie Day) become friends after getting simultaneously dumped, in "I Want You Back."

**'I Want You Back' is not entirely successful in conjuring rom-com magic.**

## 'I Want You Back'

**Director:** Jason Orley

**Starring:** Jenny Slate, Charlie Day, Scott Eastwood, Gina Rodriguez

**Running Time:** 1 hour, 56 minutes

**MPAA Rating:** R

**Release Date:** Feb. 11, 2022

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Emma's. He's at that stage where all his friends have kids and happy careers, while he's at a company he can't stand, which features endless board meetings focused on how to quietly defund healthcare for the elderly. Peter's life-vision is to open a good nursing home.

Emma is stuck in the post-college drifting phase of working a survival job (answering the phone at an orthodontist's office). Her situation prompts Peter to gift her "What Color Is Your Parachute."

The rom-com genre trope that's always in danger of becoming clichéd is The Universe Reveals Its Plan While You're Looking the Other Way. When done correctly—as in "When Harry Met Sally" (about characters who form a believable bond), or "While You Were Sleeping" (about characters with unfulfilled dreams), or "My Best Friend's Wedding" (about characters who create a messy web of sabotage)—it can work like a charm.

"I Want You Back" is less successful in conjuring this magic. In a good rom-com, even though you know the main couple is going to wake up to the fact that they're in love with the person they thought they weren't in the least bit interested in, you—and the characters themselves—can't really see it coming. Even though you know it's coming, the movie does some sleight of hand, like NFL quarterbacks of old who were masters at hiding the football on their bodies so you couldn't see it even though you knew they had it.

In "I Want You Back," you can never not see it coming. That said, Day and Slate, after years of being typecast in quirky, wisecracking supporting roles, get a chance to shine. Hopefully, their next projects will be shinier. Began streaming Feb. 11 on Amazon Prime Video.



ALL PHOTOS IN PUBLIC DOMAIN

## ILLUSTRATION

# Rackham's Illustrations of Fairyland

Featuring 'dancey' fairies and other fancy folk

YVONNE MARCOTTE

The child in us knows about fairies. There are more than fairies, of course—elves, gnomes, giants, grouchy trees, lecturing flowers, legendary heroes, and men who sleep for 20 years. Fairies and their buddies live under, over, and beyond the world we see. We know about them because illustrators like Arthur Rackham (1867–1939) offer adventures to their invisible world.

J.M. Barrie's "Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens," illustrated by Rackham and published in 1906, stated: "Fairies never say, 'We feel happy.' What they say is 'We feel dancey.'" The illustration is richly colored and carefully detailed. In lush sepia tones, fairies swirl and twirl and float with happy elves on a bed of daisies amid berry-filled bushes. The drawing vibrates with motion and life.

### Adventures for the Young

Rackham's illustrations give children a way for their imaginations to travel to mysterious lands for an adventure. In the process of having some serious imaginative fun, they learn about their own world in Rackham's detailed drawings of the natural world.

Rackham depicts figures and places that children can see and enter. A child can fly near a branch where fairies have a tiff with birds and haughtily fly away, sit near gnomes crouched in grouchy old-growth trees, or lounge near a rock with drowsy elves.

These are safe adventures. Children can jump into a scene when scary creatures appear and know they are safe and sound. They can ask questions about what is happening and find solutions. What will the villagers do? What can I do to help them?

In one of Rackham's illustrations for Flora Annie Steel's "English Fairy Tales," a young woman looks down at three heads, in a pool of water, looking up. A child might wonder: "Is she asking them for directions? Their expressions seem to suggest they want to talk with her. To find out what is happening, children have to read the story.

Rackham introduces adults and young readers alike to classic literature, such as with his illustrations of Norse legends and Greek myths, and the plays of Shakespeare. For instance, Shakespeare's "A Midsummer's Night Dream" is the perfect vehicle for Rackham's talent, with characters looking like fairies, elves, or donkeys. His illustration in "Siegfried and the Twilight of the Gods," shows Siegfried leaving Freia to seek his destiny. This is the land of the gods, so Freia can stand in a strong wind at the edge of a precipice while Siegfried blows on his horn amid swirling flames. Here, a child is perfectly safe while his or her imagination flies with the wind.

Nature comes alive in Rackham's illustrations. A child walks by a large solitary chrysanthemum in the middle of winter. The child seems frightened, but the young

reader is not afraid. She is safe and wants to find out what the flower is telling the little girl.

### The Power of Pictures

Research has shown that pictures in storybooks provide a big incentive for children to read. When young readers sound out the words and start to make sense of the text, they already know what the story is about. The pictures have already told the story. Now children want to read it for themselves. Well-executed illustrations make the reading enjoyable and enriching.

The skills required for great children's illustrations include more than mastery of the figure at all stages of human development—babies, children, young adults, the elderly, the misshapen. They must present situations from a child's perspective.

Rackham is a master of expressions that children can understand. He gives insight into what a figure is saying or what that figure is going to do. He enlivens a conversation taking place between a child and an elf or fairy, or a lecturing chrysanthemum.

### Illustrated Books Come Into Homes

As industrialization kept people in factories for hours a day, Victorian society had a renewed interest in nature. Rackham gave the young reader a natural world in his illustrations of plants and animals. His illustrations were made in natural settings where fairies and other creatures could frolic.

The Victorian Age recognized that children needed pictures to learn. The newly wealthy middle class bought books with beautiful illustrations, not for themselves as they were too busy making a living, but for their children.

Rackham showed differences of scale. He made tiny winged creatures in acorns, and giants standing over their cooks ordering dinner. His pictures were not meant to teach measurement, but to present the concept of large or small in spoonfuls that children could swallow.

Rackham's illustrations sought to preserve children's innocence and their sense of play; his work was meant to amuse. The illustrations might have a lesson embedded in the picture, but he also gave his young readers something nonsensical to laugh about, such as a gnome orchestra playing for children. This was an immersive fantasy world that children could jump into and enjoy.

### The Business of Illustrated Books

Color printing was taking off during Rackham's career. According to Corryn Kosik, who wrote about the history of illustration for the Rockwell Center, English printer Carl Hentschel invented the Colourtype process, a technology that enhanced illustrative print for Rackham's works. Beginning in 1905, Rackham's publisher William Heinemann saw an opportunity to sell the illustrator's original drawings when the illustrated books were released. Rackham's original drawings almost sold out when "Rip



"Dancing Fairies."

## Rackham's illustrations give children a way for their imaginations to travel to mysterious lands for an adventure.

van Winkle" was released. This business model became standard for his work.

His illustrations were soon accepted as works of fine art. "Exhibiting original illustration work as limited editions in a prestigious London gallery was beneficial to all illustrators during the time and had a lasting impact on the medium since," Kosik stated. Illustrations soon began to become part of popular art such as gift books, greeting cards, and souvenirs. Deluxe gift books became the popular holiday gift for children. Often, they became collector's items when the children grew up.

Rackham did his best work during what is known as the Golden Age of Illustration (circa 1898–1914). His deluxe gift books were eagerly sought after by parents for their children during the Edwardian period in England and later in the United States.

Rackham's illustrations help the child in all of us see what is invisible and alive, and he made generations of children happy about reading. At this time when families need to be especially diligent in educating their children well, his illustrations take children to a land full of adventure, danger, eeriness, and mystery. A child can learn what is dangerous, what is exciting, and what deserves caution. An illustration says it all.



"Fee-fi-fo-fum, I smell the blood of an Englishman," says the giant, in Arthur Rackham's illustration for a 1918 collection called "English Fairy Tales" by Flora Annie Steel.



"Fairies in the Spring," 1906, by Arthur Rackham. Watercolor, gouache, and pencil on paper.



A caption for an Arthur Rackham illustration for a fairy tale: "They thanked her and said good-bye, and she went on her journey."

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A chrysanthemum heard her, and said pointedly, 'Hoity-toity, what is this,' an illustration for "Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens," by Arthur Rackham.



An illustration in "Siegfried and the Twilight of the Gods" by Arthur Rackham.

JUSTIN ADAM LEE/SHUTTERSTOCK

# How the Courtyard Was Central to Chinese Life

The courtyard helped guide toward the 'middle way'

DUSTIN BASS

Something we often take for granted is a courtyard. It is a place of relaxation, serenity, or gathering, but we may not know how much the courtyard is steeped in history—in this case, Chinese history. Xing Ruan, architect and Guangqi Chair Professor and dean at the School of Design at Shanghai Jiao Tong University, has written a definitive book on the subject of the Chinese courtyard, what it signifies to ancient Chinese civilization, and what it can deliver to those seeking a sense of harmony with the modern world.

"Confucius' Courtyard: Architecture, Philosophy and the Good Life in China" is without a doubt a scholarly endeavor, full of Chinese history that reaches back thousands of years. But it is also a book that demonstrates, with ancient and not-so-ancient stories, the uses and significance of the courtyard.

### The Courtyard Leads to the Middle Way

Confucius, like any good teacher or philosopher, tried to point people, young and old, toward the Middle Way—a life of moderation rather than luxury. The courtyard becomes the primary source in the search of the Middle Way. Through proverbs, stories, and diagrams of courtyards, Ruan shows precisely how the courtyard was used to achieve that moderation and serenity (even if short-lived) by separating oneself from the busyness of the world, even when in the very heart

of the city's marketplace (as shown in one of his examples).

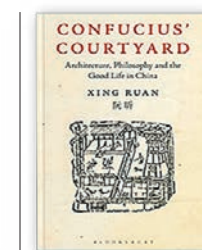
Ruan makes the idea of the courtyard accessible, and not simply in a literary sense but also in a literal sense. The author demonstrates that the Chinese courtyard has been a staple of the country's civilization regardless of economic status. Courtyards throughout China's history have ranged from elaborate to modest, which is easily noticeable from

## The Chinese courtyard has been a staple of the country's civilization regardless of economic status.

the numerous diagrams in the book.

### The Courtyard as an Escape From Materialism

Ruan makes plain the social issues that have arisen from modern materialism. Of the many takeaways from the book, the establishment of the courtyard to escape from, if not tear down, the materialistic mentality of the modern world is a significant one. Readers are drawn to the idea of creating their own courtyard: something to ease the tension of the constant competition we find ourselves in; a place to slow down and think; a place we create for ourselves that requires tender-



### 'Confucius' Courtyard: Architecture, Philosophy and the Good Life in China'

Author

Xing Ruan

Publisher  
Bloomsbury Visual Arts,  
Nov. 18, 2021

Pages  
368

ness, care, and work.

It seems as if that is one of the author's goals with the book: to pull readers of all ages back into the courtyard and toward the Middle Way. The reader will not be lost in discovering what the courtyard meant then and what it can mean now.

"Confucius' Courtyard" should be read like one would tend a courtyard: slowly and with care. There is a lot of Chinese history that most readers will be very unfamiliar with, and it may be difficult to keep up with some of the historical figures mentioned throughout. When it comes to thousands of years of civilization, that issue clearly goes without saying.

For readers interested in learning about ancient Chinese civilization, its architecture, and how the courtyard played a central role in everyday life, this is a supreme work. Readers may even find themselves prodded to re-create an ancient courtyard themselves.

*Dustin Bass is the co-host of The Sons of History podcast and an author.*

A traditional Chinese courtyard with decorative bonsai plants and classical windows at the Chinese Gardens, Singapore.

# A Debut Spy Novel That Ranks Among the Genre's Classics

DUSTIN BASS

Those who enjoy spy novels will tell you that it is difficult to find a good one. Even great spy novelists can't always deliver a good spy novel. For William Maz, his debut novel—"The Bucharest Dossier"—scheduled for release March 15, is a good spy novel. A very good spy novel.

The novel is set during the Cold War, which is no surprise for the genre, but Maz delivers a nice touch by starting his story at the tail end of the Cold War—December 1989 to be exact. As communism collapses throughout Eastern Europe, Romania proves to be the last holdout. The reader is placed on the verge of the violent Christmas Revolution that results in the end of Nicolae Ceausescu's reign.

### A Complex Beginning

The story follows the protagonist Bill Hefflin, a young CIA analyst, primarily during this historic month in 1989. The author methodically creates a web of characters who, for varying reasons, work with Hefflin, though none are more important than Boris, the mole within the Kremlin who has chosen Hefflin as his sole contact.

The story begins with an assassination of a Harvard professor, who is closely connected to Hefflin. This act thrusts Hefflin into the fray that ultimately becomes the Christmas Revolution. The reader is taken from New York City to Bucharest, where Hefflin awaits further contact from his mole.

Romania plays a significant role in the

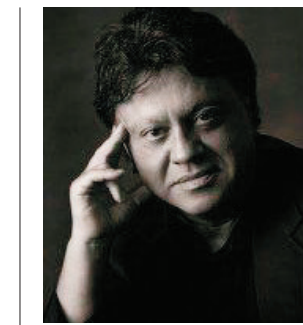
book, as this was Hefflin's birthplace and his home for the first eight years of his life. It was also where he would first fall in love.

Maz elevates the significance of Hefflin's birthplace and his first love to mythological levels, at least in the mind of the protagonist. These two themes of home and love are not secondary to the story but intertwine directly into the crux of the novel. Maz's ability to seamlessly tie elements together in a believable and cohesive fashion makes for easy and enjoyable reading.

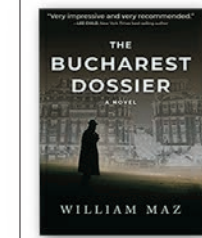
### Using Memory to Tell the Story

The storyline does not always remain on a chronological plane. Maz maneuvers between Hefflin's past and present. As the story moves forward, the reader is pulled into Hefflin's past, typically by memory triggers, like the death of the Harvard professor. These flashbacks, primarily from the protagonist's childhood or college years, help solidify Hefflin's character (and numerous others') and his ability as a spy or, more accurately, a CIA analyst. This is a common method for storytelling and bringing parts together, but rarely is it done with such precision and clarity.

These memories give the reader ever so subtle hints about who is who and what is what, but the reader will be hard-pressed to connect the dots until the dots become connected by the story—or perhaps the dots will be connected just before the connection is revealed. The story often feels straightforward until it takes an immedi-



Author William Maz has written an engaging debut novel.



### 'The Bucharest Dossier'

Author

William Maz

Publisher  
Oceanview Publishing,  
March 15, 2022

Pages  
336

ate and irrevocable turn, which makes for fun reading. This is especially true in the world that Hefflin finds himself in: a world of villains, yet where it is difficult to decipher the true villains.

### Historically Unanswered, Fictionally Answered

William Maz, who was born in Bucharest, has undoubtedly done his research into the Christmas Revolution. Yet there are numerous unanswered questions about the period, such as why did it become so violent, what happened to Ceausescu's money, and who was really in charge of Ceausescu's and his wife Elena's death. Maz takes creative license and does so brilliantly. The license not only makes for a good story but also, in some instances, makes for a good theory.

"The Bucharest Dossier" is an exceptional spy novel and is now among my favorites. Maz's attention to details without getting lost in them moves the story along briskly. His ability to paint a picture—whether of the frightfully frigid climate of Romania, the revolutionary violence, or a sensual game of chess—is the sign of a writer who is here to stay.

If you are looking for a good spy novel, a novel that touches on a dark portion of world history, or simply a book with an intelligent and captivating storyline, I can't recommend this book enough.

*Dustin Bass is the co-host of The Sons of History podcast and an author.*



ALL PHOTOS BY WARNER BROS.



Tony Curtis, Natalie Wood, and Jack Lemmon in "The Great Race."



Natalie Wood as suffragette Maggie Dubois and Tony Curtis as The Great Leslie.

REWIND, REVIEW, AND RE-RATE

# Zany Characters and Outrageous Situations

IAN KANE

Blake Edwards was on quite a roll. Having just directed "The Pink Panther" in 1963 and "Shot in the Dark" in 1964, both starring the great Peter Sellers, the director utilized his ample penchant for slapstick comedy to hilarious effect in 1965's "The Great Race."

It's just after the turn of the 20th century, and two daredevils are competing for public attention by trying to outdo one another with various stunts. The Great Leslie (Tony Curtis) is the quintessential good guy—handsome, fit, with a gleaming smile that almost outshines his all-white suit. Leslie's assistant is a man named Hezekiah Sturdy (Keenan Wynn).

On the other side of the equation is the dastardly Professor Fate (Jack Lemmon), a villainous character who constantly conspires to usurp Leslie's crown as king of the stunt world. The professor's assistant is Maximilian Meen (Peter Falk).

This heated rivalry reaches a critical moment when Leslie proposes an intercontinental race from New York City to Paris. Of

course, Fate asserts that he'll be the winner of the contest and finally prove to everyone that he, not Leslie, is the greatest.

Covering this grand spectacle is journalist Maggie Dubois (Natalie Wood), a suffragette who joins the festivities in order to report on everything that transpires. Some light romance ensues between Dubois and Leslie as the race takes its contestants to exotic locales.

**Bloated Length**

This film is a comedic interpretation of the real-life 1908 New York to Paris Race, which began in Times Square in New York City on Feb. 12, 1908, and, of course, terminated in Paris.

Like other epic comedies of the 1950s and '60s, this film features a somewhat bloated script with a lengthy run time. Fortunately, its talented cast uses that time well, with lots of laugh-inducing pranks, stunts, and ridiculous (in a good way) gags. Jack Lemmon is the standout here in dual roles—one as the ill-fortuned Professor Fate, and the other as goofy Crown Prince Frederick Hoepnick. The movie is also famous for featuring the larg-

**The film is a comedic interpretation of the real-life 1908 New York to Paris Race.**

**'The Great Race'**

**Director:** Blake Edwards  
**Starring:** Tony Curtis, Jack Lemmon, Natalie Wood  
**MPAA Rating:** NR  
**Running Time:** 2 hours, 40 minutes  
**Release Date:** Dec. 17, 1965 (to all of USA)

★★★★★

est pie-flinging contest in cinematic history.

Thankfully, unlike many of today's comedies, this film never delves into lewd or dirty humor; it's all pretty wholesome, and even charming at certain points. Similar to "Journey to the Center of the Earth" (1959) and "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea" (1954), we get to follow these zany characters as they traverse various environs and move from one outrageous situation to the next.

Is "The Great Race" perfect? No. But it works as a good old-fashioned, family-friendly film, and it's definitely a breath of fresh air in these increasingly cynical times.

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



Jack Lemmon as Professor Fate (L) and Peter Falk as his assistant Maximilian Meen somehow manage to keep straight faces in this zany comedy.

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