

THE EPOCH TIMES

ARTS & CULTURE

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF NATURAL PIGMENTS



1. Using ancient wisdom and modern knowledge, George O'Hanlon and Tatiana Zaytseva of Natural Pigments strive to supply professional artists with the best art materials, while staying true to the paint-making tradition. (2.-4.) To make oil paint, artists first make a well in a pile of pigment to which they add drops of vegetable drying oil such as aged refined linseed oil and mix with a palette knife. They may add more oil and keep mixing until the pigment resembles a stiff paste. Using a muller, the artist grinds the paste until it becomes smooth, the smaller the pigment particles the harder the grinding process.

FINE ARTS

America's Guardians of Rare and Hard-to-Find Fine Art Materials

A couple's quest to uphold and improve centuries-old paint-making traditions

LORRAINE FERRIER

For over 30 years, George O'Hanlon has been making paint and investigating natural pigments and mediums, keen to find the best practices and formulations to pass on to professional artists. His quest has taken him around the world, where he's discovered fellow artists and enthusiasts just as passionate about the art of painting and paint making as he is.

Early in his quest, George fell in love. And now he and his wife, Tatiana Zaytseva, support artists from around the world via their California-based business, Natural Pigments.

From Iconography to Natural Pigments George met Tatiana in Russia during his travels in the late 1990s to learn more about iconography. At the time, George ran his own advertising agency, where, after he'd graduated college in the 1970s, he worked as an illustrator—the only viable career option for representational artists.

George's interest in painting icons came about after he'd been sent a paper on medieval art, an era of art that he'd never really liked or understood. When he learned more about that art, he found iconography a fascinating way of looking at humanity and felt compelled to travel to Russia and learn directly from icon

The old masters unlocked the alchemy of painting by making their own paints.

painters and experts.

Together with Tatiana, he founded the nonprofit organization Iconofile to teach artists everything the couple had learned about the icon painting tradition. The couple's work with Iconofile paved the way for their company Natural Pigments.

Paint Making

Icon painters primarily use egg tempera. George found that the traditional materials used by the icon painters behaved differently from the modern materials he was familiar with.

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George O'Hanlon and Tatiana Zaytseva of Natural Pigments have traveled the world to find the best fine art materials for professional artists, such as their Rublev Colours brand of natural pigments.



Ying and Yang by Sandra Kuck

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HISTORY

‘The Paris Library: A Novel’: An American Library in Paris Filled With Heroes

JEFF MINICK

In “The Paris Library,” Janet Skeslien Charles gives us Odile Souchet, a young French woman who in the winter of 1939 follows her love of literature straight into a position at the American Library in Paris.

Throughout the rest of the novel, we meet the rest of the library staff, the eccentric patrons, and the dangers that they, and Parisians in general, faced during the Nazi occupation. Part of the story is also set in the 1980s in Froid, Montana, where Odile lives after becoming a war bride.

If we read “The Paris Library” from beginning to end, with no peeking at the final pages, we may be shocked when we discover in the Author’s Note that what we assumed was fiction in regard to the American Library actually happened.

Below the surface of today’s thriving American Library in Paris is a harrowing tale of heroism.

The library’s heroic American director, Dorothy Reeder, really did face down intimidating visits from Nazi officials, negotiated an agreement to keep the library operating during the occupation, and remained at her post until 1941.

Her successor, Clara Longworth de Chambrun of Cincinnati, a French countess by marriage, continued the fight. She allowed subscribers into the library even when it was ordered closed, and arranged for the surreptitious hand-delivery of books to patrons, including banned Jewish readers.

As reconstructed by Charles, below the surface of today’s thriving American Library in Paris is a harrowing tale of heroism, nobility of spirit, and the vital importance of literature to liberty and culture.

Let’s take a deeper dive.

What to Do With All the Books?

“Atrum post bellum, ex libris lux”: “After the darkness of war, the light of books.” From the library’s founding, that phrase has served as the motto of the American Library.

After America entered World War I, libraries across the country sent reading material overseas for those in uniform—more than a million and a half books by the war’s end. The idea of the American Library in Paris was born from the large collection of these books remaining in Europe after the armistice.

In 1920, Congress and the American Library Association joined to issue a charter. Its purpose was to bring together under one roof works for English speakers in France, the best that could be found in American literature,

the arts, science, and history.

For more than a century, through political upheavals and financial difficulties, the American Library in Paris has endeavored to meet that goal of housing great and worthy books. It has also served as a gathering place for expatriates and refugees, with many writers and lovers of literature visiting the premises or subscribing to the library’s services.

Edith Wharton was one of its first trustees. Ernest Hemingway and Gertrude Stein contributed to the library’s newsletter, “Ex Libris.” Writers from Thornton Wilder and Stephen Vincent Benét to Mary McCarthy, James Jones, and Irwin Shaw became members. Actress Olivia de Havilland, a longtime resident of Paris, was a library trustee and, until her death in 2020, remained a devoted supporter.

Circumstances forced the library to relocate several times, but since 1964 it has stood on rue du Général Camou, a short walk away from the Eiffel Tower. In the past decade, the building has undergone extensive renovations, which included creating more study spaces, expanding the children’s department, and adding a new façade and a members’ lounge.

That membership consists of almost 5,000 subscribers, with annual fees per subscriber around \$150. In 2019, the library hosted over 290 events for children and teens. With over 19,000 items in its collection, the library remains Continental Europe’s largest English-language lending library.

A Candle in a Dark Time

The American Library has done much good for the English-speaking community in Paris and for French-American relations, but it was surely in the days of the Nazi occupation of Paris that its light shone brightest.

The library’s motto “After the darkness of war, the light of books” reflected the hopes of Europeans and Americans that World War I truly would be “the war to end all wars.” When only 20 years later an even greater and more catastrophic war broke out, the library’s motto might well have read “In the darkness of war, the light of books.”

We can read online some barebone accounts of the heroic measures taken by the staff to keep the library functioning and in use as war and oppression gripped the City of Lights. Dorothy Reeder, for example, founded the Soldiers’ Service, which from the outbreak of war in September 1939 until the fall of France in May 1940 shipped over 100,000 books to soldiers of different nationalities fighting the Germans. In a sentence or two, our online resources recount the battles fought by Dorothy Reeder, the Countess Clara de Chambrun, and others of the library staff to maintain the Library’s services and to prevent its destruction.



The old location of the American Library in Paris at 10 rue de l’Élysée

To learn more about these people and events, however, and to experience vicariously the hardships and dangers they endured, we must turn to an object they risked their lives defending: a book.

Courage Undaunted

In 2010, as Charles relates in her Author’s Note for “The Paris Library,” she worked as the programs manager for the American Library. There, she first heard the stories about the heroism of the library’s staff during the war.

Charles began researching those wartime staff members who would appear in her story: Miss Dorothy Reeder, who later worked for the Library of Congress; the bookkeeper Miss Wedd, who was sent to an internment camp but eventually returned to the library; the Russian émigré Boris Netchaev, who was shot and wounded by the Gestapo; Clara Longworth de Chambrun, the countess, who was a Shakespeare scholar and novelist.

Even Hermann Fuchs, the German “Library Protector,” is real rather than imagined, and truly did help protect the library against the looting and theft the Nazis had employed elsewhere.

Charles’s broader take on life in Paris during the war brings home the other challenges faced by these people. Parisians often went hungry. German soldiers patrolled the streets, erected barricades to check papers and identity, and made arbitrary arrests. French radio stations were rife with German propaganda.

Some French officials, including police officers, violated their conscience, arresting Jews and others, driving people from their homes and apartments, and obeying Nazi dictates, all the while proclaiming “I’m only doing my job.”

Other Parisians were what the novel’s protagonist Odile Souchet calls “crows,” the men and women who informed on



A reading room at the American Library in Paris circa 1927.



‘THE PARIS LIBRARY: A NOVEL’ By Janet Skeslien Charles Atria Books Feb. 9, 2021 Hardcover, 368 pages

their neighbors to the police for such crimes as listening to BBC radio or reading certain books.

All of these details only deepen our appreciation for the bravery shown by these librarians.

Takeaway Impressions

History may not repeat itself, but the dead can whisper warnings from the grave to the living.

Though “The Paris Library” was drafted just before the COVID-19 crisis, some who read this story will find parallels, however weak, between the fear that Parisians felt living under Nazi rule with its the suppression of truth and treacheries, and the lockdowns, propaganda, and bullying experienced by some Americans during the pandemic.

In the same vein, the novel gives us real people—ordinary people for the most part—who recognized the connections between books and liberty, books and truth, and who did their best to see that those links remained unsevered.

In the last three years, we have seen some Americans, many of whom were censored or fired from their jobs, step forward with suppressed information they regarded as true and with a bearing on our liberties. Like those librarians of Paris, they refused to give way to threats and intimidation.

Charles ends her Author’s Note with these words:

“A friend said she believes that reading stories set in World War II, people like to ask themselves what they would have done. I think a better question to ask is what can we do now to ensure that libraries and learning are accessible to all and that we treat people with dignity and compassion.”

Let us hope that we never lose the courage to match those aspirations.

Jeff Minick lives and writes in Front Royal, Virginia. He is the author of two novels, “Amanda Bell” and “Dust on Their Wings,” and two works of nonfiction, “Learning as I Go” and “Movies Make the Man.”

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ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF NATURAL PIGMENTS UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED



Tatiana Zaytseva demonstrates the different ways that artists can use natural pigments and mediums in their paints.

FINE ARTS

America's Guardians of Rare and Hard-to-Find Fine Art Materials

Continued from Page 1

At the time, George painted with oils, so out of curiosity, he began making his own oil paints and also noticed how different they were from the commercial paints that he had been using. He didn't quite understand why and wanted to know more.

In the past, George had worked for a Japanese chemical corporation. So using his knowledge of chemistry, he started investigating the paint that he made. He found only a few research papers that focused on paint rheology (paint behavior). When he discovered the old masters' painting processes, the revelation had a huge impact on him. "I found that the way they made their paint changed the behavior of the paint," he said.

The old masters created great art not only because of their painting techniques and exquisite handling of the paint, but also because they made their own paint and had a thorough understanding of their tools and materials.

George believes that the old masters un-

locked the alchemy of painting by making their own paints—an opportunity lost to most artists today.

Assembling Versus Creating Paintings

A lot of artists today don't understand paint. They rely on commercial paint from a tube. George sees this as a major disadvantage for them. He likens those artists to chefs picking up a couple of jars of sauce and ingredients at the supermarket to make a meal. They're not cooking a meal; they're assembling it. "Imagine a chef not knowing how to prepare a sauce from scratch, or how to prepare a dish from the basic ingredients," he said.

Artists today aren't experimenting in paint making, as they did in the past, because they haven't learned how to make paint in college, and they can't readily access the paint-making materials.

Tatiana says that, essentially, every time an artist buys a tube of paint, that artist is buying into someone else's idea of that paint color and composition. Commercial

“There's lots of good things that were done traditionally that still have value today.”

George O'Hanlon,
Natural Pigments

paint companies control the experimentation, which is often limited to market demand.

The Paint-Making Tradition

In the past, parents paid masters to teach their children as apprentices. The apprentices immersed themselves in their masters' art and observed the other artists in the workshops. The children started their apprenticeships between the ages of 8 and 12, becoming masters when they turned 18.

Artists today don't have that immersive experience. George sees many college-educated artists struggling because they've mainly been taught art theory, and they haven't had a chance to observe the practical side of creating art.

Remarkable as it sounds, George has met artists with 40-year careers who don't understand the basics of painting. He stresses that these aren't bad artists. The gap in their practical art training has meant that they've had to teach themselves the basics and seek help from experts like George.



Artists making their own paints in a Natural Pigments workshop. George O'Hanlon and Tatiana Zaytseva encourage artists to keep their paint formulas simple to truly understand how each element interacts with another.



In this image, rolls of lead corrode in the "stack process" or Old Dutch method of making the pigment lead white. This lead has been exposed to acetic acid vapor, moisture, and carbon dioxide produced from fermented matter such as horse manure, which also provides heat. These together cause the lead to corrode, producing scales of lead (flake white).



A rock face full of iron oxides shows a rainbow of red, brown, and yellow earth pigments that artists can use to make paints such as yellow ochre.

Sensing Art

Artists in the past had incredible observational skills. They didn't have the science to understand why paint behaved in a particular way, but they learned by using their senses and by practical application, George said. In his Ghent Altarpiece, for instance, Jan van Eyck painted the figures close to Mary using two layers of the same pigment. George explained that each paint layer had different particle sizes. Van Eyck, as a master of optics, knew those pigments would give him the opacity that he wanted.

Similarly, experts at the National Gallery of Art in Washington recently analyzed their Vermeer paintings and found that the artist used as many as four different yellow pigments to paint the woman's shimmering gold sleeve in "A Lady Writing."

In the 1950s, science caught up with what old masters like van Eyck had observed some 500 years before: the way light scatters when reflected on different mediums.

George explained that in 1952, scientists took a thin three-layer paint sample from the deep royal blue robe of the Virgin Mary in van Eyck's Ghent Altarpiece. Surprisingly, van Eyck was able to obtain the deep blue by using three very thin layers of paint. On analyzing the paint layers, scientists found that the order of the layers was unusual. He altered the final color of the blue paint layers with a thin layer of ultramarine tempera paint—not oil—yet another remarkable feature of the painting. (Ultramarine pigment tends to fade with oil paint, but not with tempera paint.) Van Eyck could only have obtained the deep royal blue of Mary's robe by using certain pigments in a specific order.

Art That Endures

"Paintings do change over time. It would be remarkable that anything 500 years old would look exactly the way it did when it was first painted," George said.

The American Society of Testing and Materials (ASTM) International sets the standards for materials in America. Around four years ago, scientists made a startling discovery that might put some paintings, mainly from the 20th century onward, in jeopardy. They found that some of the pigments that had been determined to be lightfast may actually fade.

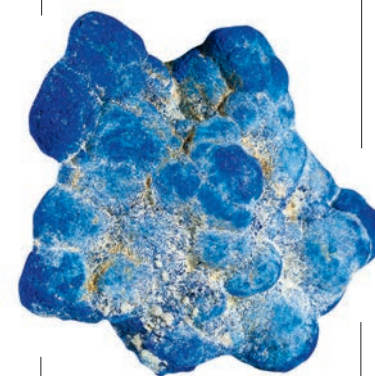
"It's actually a crisis that nobody's really talking about," he said.

As a result of this discovery, Natural Pigments is one of few companies that have retested all of its colors for lightfastness. Natural Pigments found issues with two of its paints, both modern formulations that contradicted the ASTM lightfastness standards. The company believes that the rest of its paints are lightfast because they use a lot of traditional materials, which artists



George O'Hanlon of Natural Pigments gives a lecture at the Lyme Academy of Fine Arts, in Old Lyme, Conn.

The O'Hanlons serve professional artists with their American-made paints.



As far back as the fourth century, ancient Egyptian artists used azurite. Artists throughout the Middle Ages and Renaissance also used the bright blue, or sometimes greenish-blue pigment, often using it instead of the more expensive lazurite (lapis lazuli). JANEMOON/SHUTTERSTOCK

have tried and tested for centuries.

"The Ghent Altarpiece [painted in the 15th century] actually didn't need any intervention until the middle of the 20th century, which is amazing," George said.

The Chemistry of Paint Making

At Natural Pigments, George and Tatiana teach professional artists how to make paint, and they ensure that all the materials are available for purchase. They also sell prepared paints and mediums, but they insist that when artists understand the chemistry of paint, it changes their artwork.

"Painting is a composite structure; it's not just the paint," Tatiana explained. Each part of the painting—the canvas and the varnish, to name a couple—interacts with one another in a beneficial or detrimental way.

George promotes using the simplest of paint formulas, so then artists can see how elements interact with each other. When artists know each element in their paint, because they've made it themselves, they have more control over the painting process.

The O'Hanlons look to the past to make paints, but also with an eye to the future. George is constantly learning. He submits a sample of each pigment for scientific analysis to see the particle size and distribution, both of which are helpful to artists. Pigments of the same chemical composition behave differently in the same medium due to their distinct particle size and shape. They may also age differently due to these physical properties. For instance, Natural Pigments stocks five yellow ochers from different parts of the world. Each one interacts with the medium (oil or egg, for instance) in a different way and flows differently. The company website details the properties of each pigment and relevant information about how to use them.

George wants to resurrect the British tradition of the colorman, who worked with artists to make the best materials for them. He and Tatiana happily spend hours with artists on the phone or in their studio to ensure they get the best paint for their needs. Many college-taught artists use the same materials as their teachers. But the O'Hanlons believe that there's no one size that fits all. Artists should use paints suitable to their unique sensibilities. The couple recently worked with a Brooklyn, New York, artist who'd tried many white paints but none were quite right. After a few hours in his studio, the couple made a special white pigment for him.

A Valuable Yet Misunderstood Pigment

"There's lots of good things that were done traditionally that still have value today," George said. Equally, just because a material isn't used today doesn't mean it has no value. Some of the 500-year-old paintings that we see in museums today have lasted because the artists used the color lead white. Up until the beginning of the 20th century, artists used lead white pigment in spite of its toxicity. Recently, researchers found that lead white preserves oil paint. "Lead white is the only substance that actually works chemically with oil to strengthen the paint film and prevent it from deteriorating faster," he said.

Tatiana said that professional artists at art conferences usually take a step back from Natural Pigments' bench when they see lead white paint. The toxicity of lead white has been widely misunderstood. George explained that people working in industrial processes suffered the most from lead poisoning. In the United States, professional artists can use lead in their paint; as with any toxic substance, they simply need to take simple precautions when working with it.

Artists sing the praises of Natural Pigments' lead white. Paul G., also an analytical chemist, states in his review: "In oils, it has a delicacy where titanium white is brutal. Lead white's ability to mix sensibly with other colors is phenomenal, leading to superior paintings where color has depth as well as subtlety—titanium white just washes colors out, leaving a pasty look to everything."

Upholding a British Tradition

George wants to resurrect the British tradition of the colorman, who worked with artists to make the best materials for them. He and Tatiana happily spend hours with artists on the phone or in their studio to ensure they get the best paint for their needs. Many college-taught artists use the same materials as their teachers. But the O'Hanlons believe that there's no one size that fits all. Artists should use paints suitable to their unique sensibilities. The couple recently worked with a Brooklyn, New York, artist who'd tried many white paints but none were quite right. After a few hours in his studio, the couple made a special white pigment for him.

The old masters took great care in their painting process. They wrote treatises detailing just how pigments behaved and what mediums were best for certain situations, such as when preserving a painting. The O'Hanlons bring that same care to Natural Pigments, relaying their discoveries for professional artists to use for centuries to come.

To find out more about Natural Pigments, visit NaturalPigments.com

Historic Pigments for Today's Artists

Professional artists today can make paint using some of the natural pigments that their ancient peers did thousands of years ago.



Natural Pigments stocks a variety of yellow ochre pigments from around the world in its Rublev Colours brand. Among them are (L-R) Lemon ochre (Northern Italy), Blue Ridge yellow ochre (United States), and Hrzadan yellow ochre (Armenia).



Over 6,000 years ago, miners first extracted lazurite (lapis lazuli) from Kokcha in Afghanistan. Medieval and Renaissance artists saved the expensive, vibrant blue pigment for the robes of Christ and the Virgin Mary.



In Ancient Rome, artists created wall paintings using their most expensive pigment: cinnabar (vermillion).



Researchers found traces of the green pigment malachite in ancient Egyptian tomb paintings, from the fourth century onwards.

BOOK REVIEW

A Story of Triumph in a Moment of Surrender, Chaos, and Tragedy

DUSTIN BASS

The decision to exit Afghanistan was one that was discussed, haggled over, and planned for years. The disgraceful method in which the exit was conducted made it seem as though the decision had been made in minutes. The results of the seemingly nonstrategic Afghanistan exit were tragic, costly, and embarrassing, and the tragedy, costliness, and embarrassment is ongoing.

Chad Robichaux, a Marine veteran who was deployed eight times to Afghanistan as part of the 3rd Force Reconnaissance Company, didn't just fight the enemy in Afghanistan; he developed relationships and long-lasting friendships with citizens. His new book, "Saving Aziz: How the Mission to Help One Became a Calling to Rescue Thousands From the Taliban," tells the story that expresses the contrast of what Afghanistan is to Americans, specifically its military members, versus what it is to the Afghans. The country is the home of great good (those average citizens who risk their lives for some semblance of freedom) and of great evil (the Taliban), of natural beauties, and of man-made horrors.

A Proper Perspective

Robichaux's story begins by showing his friendship with his interpreter, Aziz, though it begins in earnest with a note from the Department of Defense (DOD) explaining the redactions in the book and how the opinions expressed in the book are not those of the DOD. He also provides insight he adopted from Aziz in 2004. For most Americans, the War in Afghanistan was an acceptable response to the attacks of 9/11. Over the course of two decades, however, it was difficult to accept our extended stay.

Robichaux presents a perspective through the eyes of Aziz and the many Afghans who had suffered under the rule of the Taliban. He takes the reader through areas in Kabul, such as to an empty pool with a noose overhead or to concrete walls used as backstops for civilian executions. The author explains why, in 2004, Aziz and his family were so elated over the reelection of George W. Bush. It was perceived as an affirmation of America's commitment to the Afghans.

Throughout the book, Robichaux discusses the reasons for the U.S. military's stay in Afghanistan. Americans on either side of the aisle may disagree with his assessments, but when he details the cruelty of the Taliban or makes comparisons to troops in other countries, like Germany or South Korea that house U.S. troops in greater numbers, the argument against staying perhaps isn't being squelched but is at least placed in its proper perspective.

This book is a story of triumph in a moment of surrender.



Chad Robichaux, the author of "Saving Aziz,"
THE MIGHTY OAKS FOUNDATION



'SAVING AZIZ: HOW THE MISSION TO HELP ONE BECAME A CALLING TO RESCUE THOUSANDS FROM THE TALIBAN'
By Chad Robichaux and David Thomas
Thomas Nelson Publishing
Jan. 17, 2023
Hardcover
224 pages



Clothes and bloodstains of Afghan people who were waiting to be evacuated at the site of the Aug. 26 suicide bombing, which killed more than 170 people including 13 U.S. troops, at the Kabul airport on Aug. 27, 2021.

The book is not arguing about staying or leaving, nor is it arguing for a return. The focal point is about the highest demands of friendship and the allegiance we owe to the common cause of humanity.

A Mission and a Calling

When President Joe Biden announced the complete withdrawal of troops by the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, Robichaux admits to feeling a sense of foreboding. When that time was shortened, that sense became worse. The humanitarian catastrophe was all but inevitable, and Robichaux decided that he had to do all he could to rescue his former interpreter and close friend, along with his wife and children.

The author discusses the intimate details of going into Afghanistan while the U.S. military was ordered to move out. The reader is taken through the utter chaos that surrounded cities and airports, specifically the Kabul International Airport. The effort to retrieve Aziz and his family was not a one-man effort. This was a massive undertaking, made worse by U.S. bureaucratic red tape. Family members, fellow church members, fellow veterans, and others worked together to formulate a plan of action. The operative word is "action."

As the world looked on at the chaos unfolding in Afghanistan, Robichaux and other veterans went into that chaos. They were not there to establish order that cause had already been lost. It was solely a rescue mission that resulted in a calling (as mentioned in the book's title) to save as many as possible.

August of 2021 was the beginning of heartbreak and anguish. It was a harsh reminder of the costs of incompetent governments. The withdrawal from Afghanistan, Robichaux states, was worse than the withdrawal from Saigon at the end of the

Vietnam War. It is more than a blemish on the American record; it is a stain too deep to remove.

Robichaux's story, however, is less about the hubris of our government (though that point is impossible to miss) and more about the heroism of veterans, current military members, federal agency members, members of Congress, foreign governments, and the average citizen. It is through this collaborative private effort after an initial collaborative public (governmental) collapse that Robichaux was able to quickly establish the charity organization Save Our Allies in order to rescue more than 17,000 people.

An Inspiration Never to Be Forgotten

"Saving Aziz" is an inspiring story in the sense that there are those who are willing to risk life and limb to save others. More importantly, there are those with the means and skills to accomplish it. This book is a demonstration of hope in a time of tragedy. It is a story of triumph in a moment of surrender. It is a story that forces us to look at the contrasting demands of national interest versus human interest.

As the faith in American institutions continues to waver and falter, if not dissolve altogether, "Saving Aziz" is a testament to the American spirit. It is a testament to the resolve and heart of the average American. It is a story of courage, faith, and love and for our fellow man. It is a reminder of what good can be accomplished when we embrace what Abraham Lincoln called "the better angels of our nature."

Dustin Bass is the host of EpochTV's "About the Book," a show about new books with the authors who wrote them. He is an author and co-host of The Sons of History podcast.



In Louisa May Alcott's "Scarlet Stockings," a young man decides to fight for a good cause. A Civil War Days Reenactment in Channahon, Ill., on Oct. 17, 2010.

can be heroes, if inspired." When we challenge others or receive challenges in turn, we are helping one another seek those higher virtues that can free us from any indifference or vice that chain us.

We can take the criticism of others as moments to look inside and become better, truer humans and, then, to make the world a much better place.

Kate Vidimos is a 2020 graduate from the liberal arts college at the University of Dallas, where she received her bachelor's degree in English. She plans on pursuing all forms of storytelling (specifically film) and is currently working on finishing and illustrating a children's book.

FILM REVIEW

The Camera Didn't Lie

MICHAEL CLARK

Of the hundreds and hundreds of movies about World War II, the new documentary "Filmmakers for the Prosecution" ("FFTP") is among the very few to be set after the war ended.

Long before the Marshall Plan of 1948 was passed by Congress and the slow cleanup of ravaged Europe began, the international community began preparing for a tribunal prosecuting nearly two dozen former Nazi commanders and some of the civilians who aided financially and otherwise to the decimated Third Reich.

Organized jointly by Allied heads of state Franklin D. Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, and Joseph Stalin, what would become known as the "Nuremberg trials" was scheduled to start in September of 1945. This left relatively little time for lead attorney Robert H. Jackson and his team to prepare.

Yes, That John Ford

Wisely anticipating that any evidence from U.S. sources would be rebuffed by the defense as biased, Jackson turned to Office of Strategic Services (OSS) operative, director John Ford (yes, that John Ford) to field a team to assemble thousands of hours of confiscated Nazi films containing evidence of their extensive crimes against humanity.

In turn, Ford assigned this mammoth task to two underlings, brothers Stuart and Budd Schulberg, the sons of B.P. Schulberg, a movie industry pioneer and head of production at Paramount in the 1920s. After serving his country, Budd went on to pen novels ("The Harder They Fall," "What Makes Sammy Run?") and won a Best Screenplay Academy Award for "On the Waterfront."

So sure and so confident that theirs was a righteous cause, the Nazis chronicled virtually every atrocity they committed for posterity's sake and, yes, for Hitler and his inner circle's after-dinner entertainment high in the Alps. Hint to future tyrants wishing to take over the world by committing mass genocide: Don't make home movies of yourself and your cronies torturing and gassing civilians, and then burying them in mass graves.

Luckily for the prosecution, the trials were delayed until November, which allowed the Schulbergs and others to gather even more incriminating stock footage hidden all over hill and dale—including in (yes) haystacks and saltmines—as well as over 12,000 negatives from the files of Hitler's personal photographer, Heinrich Hoffmann.

The Verdicts

Jackson and the Schulbergs caught an even bigger break when the high-profile German propaganda filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl saw the writing on the wall and decided to flip.



The team assembled thousands of hours of confiscated Nazi films containing evidence of their extensive crimes against humanity.

'Filmmakers for the Prosecution'

Documentary

Director: Jean-Christophe Klotz

Running Time: 58 minutes

MPAA Rating: Not Rated

Release Date: Jan. 27, 2023

★★★★★

Most noted for the 1935 feature "Triumph of the Will," Riefenstahl's choice saved her from prison time and possibly saved her life.

This insurmountable mountain of evidence led to convictions passed down by the judge's panel resulting in 12 death sentences, seven prison terms, and three acquittals. Despite all of this, all but a couple of the defendants showed nothing resembling remorse or contrition. The notable exception was Rudolf Hess, who at the start the proceedings feigned amnesia, but after witnessing the two Schulberg-produced films in the courtroom (totaling 195 minutes), he confessed and threw himself on the mercy of the court.

"FFTP" takes an unexpected (but highly welcomed) turn in the final third of the film, after the trials finished: What would happen to the 300-plus hours of film (only some portions of the trials were allowed to be filmed)? At first, the U.S. government wanted to make a feature out of the footage but that never happened. Also, the Russian film crew (led by Roman Cermen) present at the trials had (mostly different) footage and didn't want to share it.

Then Came the Cold War

The original plan for the Schulberg documentary feature of the trials hit a metaphorical brick wall in the early 1950s when the vanquished enemy (Germany) became a U.S. ally

and their World War II ally (the Soviet Union) transformed into the new enemy. Any and all historic or artistic interest in making the film public came to a screeching halt.

Clocking in at just under an hour, "FFTP" still manages to exceed the length of the Academy of the Motion Pictures Arts and Science's definition of a feature film by 18 minutes, and by doing so, it provides a great lesson for all aspiring filmmakers. If you wish to make a great movie, edit yourself and include only what's needed. Don't consider the running time; consider the strength of the content. That is exactly what French director Jean-Christophe Klotz did here. "FFTP" is a fat-free production from start to finish.

The movie also points out the beyond-skewed perspective of the U.S. government at the time as it applied to art, truth, politics, international relations, and most importantly censorship. It eerily smacks of what's taking place in our own country right now.

Originally from Washington, D.C., Michael Clark has provided film content to over 30 print and online media outlets. He co-founded the Atlanta Film Critics Circle in 2017 and is a weekly contributor to the Shannon Burke Show on FloridaManRadio.com. Since 1995, Mr. Clark has written over 4,000 movie reviews and film-related articles. He favors dark comedy, thrillers, and documentaries.

OSS officer Stuart Schulberg (R) examines film evidence with Nazi photographer Heinrich Hoffmann (C), who was forced to relinquish his cache of thousands of photos for material evidence at the Nuremberg trials.

LITERATURE

Helping a Young Man See His Responsibilities

KATE VIDIMOS

It is difficult to criticize and challenge others. It is also extremely hard to receive challenges and accept criticisms from others. Yet despite the difficulty, giving and taking criticism is beneficial.

In her short story "Scarlet Stockings," Louisa May Alcott shows how when we see someone who is lazy and despondent, we can help that person overcome these pitfalls through constructive criticism and healthy challenges. When we challenge each other to be better versions of ourselves, we build a better world, community, and family.

Alcott presents Harry Lennox, a young man living during the time of the Civil War—though not as a participant. He had the luxury of living in Europe for several years. After his parents die, Harry returns to America to visit his sister Kate. He tries to be as kind and positive as he can, but his visit holds nothing interesting for him and boredom soon sets in.

Harry needs someone to challenge him in his prideful, lukewarm, lazy, and despondent ways. He finds just the right person in Belle, an eccentric young girl who wears scarlet stockings. She is "very blunt and honest, [and] has ideas and principles of her own." Harry is very interested.

Belle calls Harry a proud "peacock" and "Sir Charles Coldstream." She openly expresses her disgust for his prideful actions.

The character Harry Lennox needs someone to challenge him.



Louisa May Alcott circa 1870. U.S. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

She instantly challenges him to adventures that help him overcome his deep flaws.

Belle takes Harry to a house in the dirty, poor, and miserable part of town. She challenges him to come in and help a poor family that is suffering from scarlet fever.

When Harry begins to question this visit to the sick, Belle responds that she enjoys working where she is needed. When done willingly and heartily, such work can be rewarding and even pleasant. She encourages him to work to earn the blessings and gifts that he truly desires, rather than just sitting by and expecting blessings to come to him.

A Strong Challenge

As young men are being recruited, Belle suggests to Harry that he should join the local regiment. When he asks why, she passionately tells him that he has the gifts, strength, and courage. If he has the ability to fight, he should not sit idle but give his best for a good cause.

Though Belle's advice does not seem to touch Harry, the next time she sees him, he is marching in a line of soldiers, off to fight. Because she told him the truth about himself and pushed him, he now marches away with "Love and Liberty" written on his heart. He proves that he does have courage and strength and is willing to fight for a good cause.

In "Heretics," G.K. Chesterton says, "All men can be criminals, if tempted; all men

FILM REVIEW

A Twisty and Edgy Device-Based Crime Thriller

MICHAEL CLARK

The first-cousin-once-removed genre of "found footage," the "screenlife" storytelling technique has been around since 2000 ("Thomas in Love") and began growing in popularity a decade later.

In short, "screenlife" is a movie-telling device whereby no traditional cameras are used. In their stead are images from smartphones and all sorts of personal computing devices. To be sure, it's gimmicky and self-dating, but in the right hands with the right story, it can be quite effective.

Not so much a sequel, but more of a stand-alone, bookend-companion piece to "Searching" (2018), "Missing" employs the same premise: One family member attempts to find another who is missing via social media, search engines, and security cameras.

Better Than 'Searching'

"Missing" is the feature debut for co-writers and co-directors Nick Johnson and Will Merrick, who collaborated as co-editors on "Searching." In addition to having already worked in this burgeoning micro-genre, the team created a better story than "Searching" and their screenplay is airtight, although maybe a tad too long.

After losing her husband, James (Tim Griffin), to cancer, single mother Grace (Nia Long) relocates with her daughter, June

(Storm Reid), from Texas to Los Angeles.

A helicopter parent with all the best intentions, Grace is about to leave for a week-long vacation to Colombia with her new boyfriend, Kevin (Ken Leung). This suits June just fine, as she plans on throwing a days-long blowout rave party to be financed by Grace's "emergency only" account.

Almost thwarted by Grace's attorney friend Heather (Amy Landecker), June's shindig is such a roaring success that she almost oversleeps on the day she is scheduled to pick up Grace and Ken at Los Angeles International Airport. After Grace and Ken fail to post and her mom makes no attempt at contact, June rightfully begins to panic.

Like most of her Gen-Z brethren, June can navigate the internet, find backdoors into websites, and figure out passwords like baby boomers can recall obscure classic rock songs and 1970s sports stats.

In almost no time, she is able to track down where Grace and Ken stayed, when they left, and most importantly, how long (48 hours) before digital copies of security camera footage will automatically be erased.

June manages to buttonhole a Colombia-based American FBI agent who is more than willing to look into Grace's disappearance, but he warns her that any information she may find while hacking into other people's online accounts will be legally inadmissible. He also doesn't quite discourage her doing so.

With next to nothing left in the "emergency" account, June hires Javier (Joaquim de Almeida)—a low-priced, poorly rated Uber/Lyft-type delivery guy in Colombia—to do some snooping, which yields results but also opens up more rabbit holes in the process.

Superb Misdirection

At this point, we're about an hour into

"Missing," and we get the first of what will eventually become dozens of plot misdirections and twists (which aren't the same thing as dubious and belabored time-wasting red herrings).

As with writing most well-crafted screenplays, Johnson and Merrick likely penned the ending halfway through the writing process and worked their way back to the middle of the story.

One of the more (favorably) striking aspects of the film is how it avoids politically correct virtue signaling. Although the cast is (mostly) non-Caucasian, race is never made an issue, which is a rarity in today's filmmaking climate.

The movie also assumes that the audience has more than half a brain and doesn't need to have the details of the plot overexplained or spoon-fed to them. This is not a movie that can be watched on autopilot. Not only can you not take a bathroom break without being left out in the cold upon return, you also literally can't blink at the wrong time.

A Showcase for Storm Reid

For Atlanta native Reid, who made her debut in the watershed Best Picture-winning "12 Years a Slave" (2013), "Missing" is a career-breakthrough performance. She is in 95 percent of "Missing" and is called on to display a plethora of emotions; she never once falters, even when her character is feigning disinterest.

We, as audience members (and, yes, critics are also members of the audience), need more movies like "Missing." Everyone likes to be entertained, but not everyone prefers to be challenged, to expand their gray matter, and to be put in the shoes of those they're watching.



June (Storm Reid) uses the internet to find her mother, in "Missing."

It's refreshing to see a movie that doesn't take the easy route and actually avoids it.

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'Missing'

Directors: Nick Johnson, Will Merrick

Starring: Storm Reid, Nia Long, Ken Leung, Amy Landecker, Tim Griffin, Joaquim de Almeida

Running Time: 1 hour, 51 minutes

MPAA Rating: PG-13

Release Date: Jan. 20, 2023

★★★★★



"Now to the ascent of that steep savage hill/ Satan hath journey'd on, pensive and slow," (IV. 172, 173), 1866, by Gustav Doré for John Milton's "Paradise Lost." Engraving.



"A happy rural seat of various view" (IV. 247), 1866, by Gustav Doré for John Milton's "Paradise Lost." Engraving.



"The savory pulp they chew, and in the rind,/ Still as they thirsted, scoop the brimming stream (IV. 335, 336), 1866, by Gustav Doré for John Milton's "Paradise Lost." Engraving.

ILLUSTRIOUS IDEAS AND ILLUSTRATIONS: THE IMAGERY OF GUSTAV DORÉ

The Divine Nature of Human Beings: Milton's Satan in Awe

ERIC BESS

Our series "Illustrious Ideas and Illustrations: The Imagery of Gustav Doré" has shown the evil ways of Satan as he has vowed to take revenge on God. We've seen in our last article that after having a difficult internal struggle in which he determinedly decides to continue defying God, Satan comes upon the paradise of Eden, which is surrounded by a large wall of overgrown greenery serving to keep any creature from entering or leaving—any creature except for Satan. Milton begins:

"The verdurous wall of Paradise up sprung... Now to th' ascent of that steep savage hill Satan had journeyed on, pensive and slow... Due entrance he disdained, and in contempt, At one slight bound high overleaped all bound Of hill or highest wall, and sheer within Lights on his feet..." (Book IV, Lines 143, 172-173, 180-184).

Satan is still deeply affected by the internal dialogue he had; he's pensive. Seeing the wall that obstructs his entry, he leaps over it with contempt and lands lightly on his feet.

Doré shows Satan sitting on top of the "steep savage hill" from which his bent, shadowy figure can see the Garden of Eden in its enclosure. It's almost as if he's camouflaged. He could be part of the mountainscape, and this may serve to remind us of his chameleon-like, deceptive nature.

The brilliant rays, suggesting the divine inspiration with which the garden was built, fill the upper part of the composition and lead our eyes down toward the lush landscape. It is here where Satan leaps.

Entering the garden and leaping to the top of the Tree of Life, the tallest tree in

paradise, standing right next to the Tree of Knowledge, Satan looks upon the whole Garden of Eden from on high and is overwhelmed by a heavenly affront to his senses that invigorates his desire to harm God's creation.

Milton takes the opportunity to describe how glorious God's garden is, with so much beauty this "narrow" space holds within its boundaries (Book IV, Line 207). The smells, tastes, sights, and arrays of creatures are extravagant and luxurious, and make the whole environment the epitome of awe-inspiring.

The Divine Nature of God's Creation Satan sees a river and follows it, which leads him to a spot where he sees two figures drinking from the river. Milton describes the scene as follows:

"where the Fiend Saw undelighted all delight, all kind Of living creatures new to sight and strange: Two of far nobler shape erect and tall, Godlike erect, with native honour clad In naked majesty seemed lords of all, And worthy seemed, for in their looks divine The image of their glorious Maker shone, Truth, wisdom, sanctitude severe and pure..." (Book IV 285-293)

This is an interesting description that Milton provides for us. It gives us insight into what he thinks about human nature. Humans, when their nature is unaffected and pure, are majestic and worthy of being lords of all things on earth. Fashioned in the image of their Maker, they are divine creations, and this divinity reveals the truth, wisdom, and pure holiness of their unadulterated human nature.

Doré illustrates the two figures by a river in the Garden of Eden. They are canopied by a tree while the man provides for the woman from the river. Now, Milton's Satan reacts to what he sees:

"O Hell! What do mine eyes with grief behold, Into our room of bliss thus high advanced Creatures of other mould, earth-born perhaps, Not Spirits, yet to Heav'nly Spirits bright Little Inferior; whom my thoughts pursue With wonder, and could love, so lively shines In them divine resemblance, and such grace The hand that formed them on their shape hath poured..." (Book IV, Lines 358-365).

Satan is obviously upset and jealous upon seeing humans. He is grief-stricken to see these new creatures ruling over a place like the heaven he once resided in—a heaven that he could never rule.

Satan is still deeply affected by the internal dialogue he had; he's pensive.

Despite his grief, he is almost moved to love the human beings he sees because of their divine nature. They appear so close to being fully divine that Satan is left confused as to where they come from. "Perhaps" they are born of the earth, but irrespective of this, their "divine resemblance" and the "grace" with which they are filled saturate his thoughts with wonder.

Milton's description leaves us to consider both the form and content of human beings: their divine resemblance and their grace. Both of these are provided by God. Their form is not only one that looks godlike, but the grace that fills them meets the standard of God, a standard that Milton seems to align with truth, wisdom, and holiness. Arguably, it is this unification of divine form and divine content that confuses even the epitome of evil into potentially loving what he sought to hate.

Satan's Goal to Corrupt Human Beings

With that being said, this moment of being awestruck is not enough to stop Satan. He quickly snaps out of the trance and recommitment to his goal of attacking their divine connection to God to accomplish his revenge:

"Hell shall unfold, To entertain you two, her widest gates, And send forth all her kings; there will be room, Not like these narrow limits, to receive Your numerous offspring..." (Book IV, Lines 381-385)

Satan makes his intentions clear: He's going to open the gates of hell to receive human beings and all of their offspring. In a previous article, we explored the gates of hell as Satan tried to leave. Guarding the gates were his two children, Sin and Death. As we move forward, it will be interesting to see how Satan and his two children accomplish their goal and what moral insight we might get from how they accomplish it.

Underneath all of the sin, Milton suggests that our original nature—our pure, unadulterated nature—is created to look like and be like the divine, like our Maker. How might we access our divine nature and again be close to God?

Gustav Doré was a prolific illustrator of the 19th century. He created images for some of the greatest classical literature of the Western world, including "The Bible," "Paradise Lost," and "The Divine Comedy." In this series, we will take a deep dive into the thoughts that inspired Doré and the imagery those thoughts provoked.

Gustav Doré was a prolific illustrator of the 19th century. He created images for some of the greatest classical literature of the Western world, including "The Bible," "Paradise Lost," and "The Divine Comedy." In this series, we will take a deep dive into the thoughts that inspired Doré and the imagery those thoughts provoked.

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

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TRADITIONAL CULTURE

What 'The Lord of the Rings' Teaches Us About 'Being Woke'

JAMES SALE

We all like stories, or sometimes (using post-her language) narratives.

There is a good reason for that: "Narrative may be regarded as a primary act of mind," said professor Brian Cox in his introduction to the English National Curriculum that was being introduced into UK schools in 1988. More recently, Frank Wilczek in his book "A Beautiful Question" commented that "humans are especially adapted to think in story and narrative."

It's important, therefore, that we translate whatever is happening to us in our experience, especially when it is important, into a story form or analogue. The analogue is a story we all know, but which somehow surprisingly fits the circumstances. This process helps us see more clearly what it is that we are dealing with and helps contextualize it.

A Loss of Understanding

In general, most see the idea of being "woke"—used by both liberals and conservatives—as a political or social issue (which includes critical race theory, social justice, and gender theory), but much less as a philosophical or even theological matter. This is partly because in the West, we are beginning to lose the vocabulary that would enable us to define "woke."

One word that has been conspicuously absent from our vocabulary for possibly the last 30 years or so is the word "evil." Nowadays, we seem unwilling to describe complete psychopaths, criminals, and others in a similar vein (alongside their corresponding actions) as evil. Instead, we have developed another—a woke—terminology: We say that someone's actions are "unacceptable." We refrain from any negative language that might describe just such a person and, dearie me, that might be construed as judgmental.

It's as if by not judging, we have avoided judgment ourselves. However, we neglect the fact that the failure to judge is a judgment on our self: We have failed to recognize, acknowledge, and respond appropriately to evil. We have in biblical words called the evil good (Isaiah 5:20).

There are many more examples of this sort of linguistic pussyfooting around, but the

net effect is the same: It seeks to redefine morality. And it does so, not by straightforward argument but by this neat trick of verbal substitution. Sure, if we are talking about somebody like Hitler, we may invoke the old word "evil" with a sort of nostalgia, really, but that is only because at this point it would seem risible to describe Hitler's behavior as "unacceptable."

But bit by bit, word by word, we find our understanding of what morality means being undermined. I need hardly add, then, how the deletions, alterations, and perversions of perfectly good words in the realms of gender, race, and disability contribute to this ongoing sense of confusion and uncertainty.

However, while deleting and changing words here and there is gradually working its evil magic (or do I mean unacceptable magic?), there is another force in words that is much more difficult to counter: that is, narrative or stories.

People love stories, and once you hear a great one, it is difficult to root it from the heart and soul. The greatest stories of all are mythical ones, and myth here is not contrary to fact, either—a story can be mythical and historically true. As Ceylonese historian of art Ananda K. Coomaraswamy put it, "Myth is the penultimate truth, of which all experience is the temporal reflection. The mythical narrative is of timeless and placeless validity, true now, ever and everywhere."

The Analogue of Tolkien's Story

J.R.R. Tolkien's epic myth "The Lord of the Rings" supplies a wonderful context for us to understand being woke. It was long thought that in a subtle way the book, while allegedly being about the distant past of humans living in Middle Earth, was really a prophecy about humanity's future. First, the immediate and close future (we call that the present) can be seen, for example, in the slave labor of Saruman and the foul pits of Mordor, where these represent the industrialization of Birmingham in the first half of the 20th century, or the great war against the Eye of Sauron being enacted in World War II against Hitler.

But I think "The Lord of the Rings" goes much deeper than that. In many of its scenes and ideas, we can see the playbook of woke-ism.



A copy of J.R.R. Tolkien's epic myth "The Lord of the Rings" rests on a map of Middle Earth.

Take some simple concepts: Being woke is not one force, one identity, or group, or nation that we can point out and say, "Here it is." No, rather it is like a hydra: many-headed. Aside from Sauron himself, the arch enemy, there are Saruman, Orcs, Uruk-hai, Balrogs, Shelob, Cave Trolls, and more besides. And they operate in different ways. The Orcs are rather like the social media trolls; they swarm their victims. Sheer numbers prevail. But we also note that they have a weakness: They cannot face light. So, exposing them to daylight is very effective.

But the Uruk-hai have been bred to face the light. I see these as the professional woke journalists and administrators who have infiltrated all our institutions. These are dangerous indeed, since they are not ashamed of their own falsehoods and justify themselves even when the evidence points otherwise.

Then again, the Balrog is very different: a creature of the deep that is dangerous to wake up. We might consider the Balrog analogous to a prestigious and powerful woke newspaper or TV network. You cross it at your peril. Like the Balrog, these newspapers and TV channels are deep-pocketed.

Shelob, on the other hand, is more like one of those large and self-appointed NGOs and "charitable" organizations that patiently weave their spidery threads and "compassionate" propaganda, waiting for the unwary to step into their traps. You may recall that Shelob is situated high up the mountainside at the very entrance to Mordor. The point about being high up is that the NGOs are always assuming the moral high ground and pointing to their own virtue.

For the Sarumans of this world, we have a special expression: "useful idiots." This

An In-depth Exposé on the CCP's Plots Against America

IAN KANE

I find it interesting that the most recent round of feverish finger-pointing by both Democrats and Republicans at one another always seems to be centered on accusations of Russian collusion. Certainly, it's rare to see the legacy media outlets reporting on perhaps America's biggest existential threat—the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which totally controls China, the most populous country in the world. And one need only look within the environs of the United States these days. You don't see sprawling networks of Russian community centers, Russian restaurants, movies, and so on. However, you do see plenty of examples of Chinese influence, much of which is directly controlled by the CCP.

Oddly, the U.S. government has been extremely lethargic to acknowledge this rapidly emerging threat, let alone take action against it. The government is just now beginning to look into the massively influential TikTok company, one of the most popular social media apps. It's almost a case of "too little, too late," since TikTok has already been in business for over half a decade.

TikTok is owned by the global technology company ByteDance, which is based in Beijing and has direct ties to the CCP. The app can gather a plethora of information on its many users worldwide, so one would think that the alarm bells would have gone off long ago. TikTok has already admitted that the CCP can access Americans' personal information whenever it wants to.

'The Final War'

Thankfully, alternative news outlets aren't afraid of delivering hard-hitting, inconvenient facts about the CCP, and the degree to which it poses a threat to not only the United States but also the rest of the free world. The Epoch Times is one of those rare voices.

With the help of many former U.S. policymakers, CCP insiders (including a former top CCP strategist), and a crack team of Epoch

Times investigators who specialize in matters pertaining to China, The Epoch Times has produced an incredibly in-depth, thought-provoking documentary titled "The Final War: The 100-Year Plot to Defeat America." It is narrated by Joshua Philipp, the senior investigative reporter at The Epoch Times and an expert on United States-China relations and the CCP.

This 2-hour and 36-minute film is neatly divided into chapters, each of which categorically delves into ways in which the CCP threatens freedom and democracy. Indeed, the CCP is antithetical to these cherished values.

For instance, in Part I, "Post-Pandemic Crisis," Casey Fleming, CEO of BlackOps Partners, points out that just as the world had an axis of evil during World War II, a more modern version of that alliance consists of China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea. These forces all trade military equipment, intelligence, combat strategies, and more with each other. They have put their differences aside and are united with the goal of defeating the free world, with the United States as the principal target.

As Philipp goes on to explain, post-pandemic America is a much different country than it was before. Already weakened from runaway inflation and gas prices, a terrifying surge in crime rates, and a further deterioration of its moral fabric, the country has faced one geopolitical crisis after the next. Upon further investigation, it is revealed that much of the chaos and conflict has been manufactured by the CCP.

For example, the recent fall of Afghanistan to the Taliban has completely disappeared from coverage by any of the usual corporate news outlets, yet this event provides insight into one of the strategies being employed by the CCP. Soon after the Taliban took over the tumultuous South Central Asian country, the Chinese cozier up to the new rulers of Afghanistan, and soon it was broadcast internationally (via China's extensive media channels) that the two regimes would be working together. But why exactly would the CCP want to align itself with terrorists?

An Overt Agenda

Ever since the formation of the CCP in 1949, the Chinese leadership has stealthily and steadily advanced its nefarious plot to destroy the United States of America. This agenda isn't even a secret, so it's puzzling that many of the media and govern-



Epoch Times Senior Investigative Reporter Joshua Philipp narrates "The Final War: The 100-Year Plot to Defeat America."

ments of the free world don't seem that concerned with these plans.

One only needs to look at any number of examples of this strategy in recent times, such as in a speech delivered by CCP bigwig Ji Canrong. Canrong, a professor of International Studies at Renmin University of China, is considered to have a great degree of influence over China's current leader, Xi Jinping. Canrong attended the 2016 United States-China Strategic Philosophy Symposium, and his speech there revealed the CCP's plans for the United States. It entailed luring America into numerous war zones around the world in order to distract and weaken it.

Canrong said that since America enjoys such a high degree of democracy, where many opinions are considered before moving against any enemies decisively, the country can lose focus when confronted with too many foes at the same time. Therefore, the CCP's strategy involves getting America involved in conflict with several traditional enemy nations, as well as a terrorist organization simultaneously to overwhelm its capabilities.

The film also details what would happen if and when China decides to conquer Taiwan (an American ally) by force. It's a nightmarish, yet realistic scenario. Military experts cite that the fall of Taiwan would signal the beginning of a Chinese war with the West, not the end, and they detail how China would take over various countries throughout the Pacific and, thus, exponentially expand its military power projection in a relatively short time.

Ironically, if that option wasn't possible, China wouldn't actually have to do that much territorial expansion. With its advances in hypersonic glide missile technology, which can carry and deliver nuclear payloads to the United States before the threat could even be detected, the world would suddenly become a much smaller and more dangerous place.

expression has been attributed to Lenin to describe "do-gooders" who were sympathetic to the communist cause. Essentially, they were people blinded by utopianism, doing good, and being kind. They never saw the real and ruthless nature of communism and its dark deceptions—until, of course, it was too late.

Saruman was Sauron's useful idiot—never grasping the moral consequences of his alignment. The particular danger of the useful idiot, as we see with Saruman, is his drawing others into his crusade against mankind.

Giving Evil Its Rightful Place

It's helpful to see the "woke" in this way because in doing so, their threat is lessened. Yes, they are dangerous, but we know they can be overcome. Indeed, "The Lord of the Rings" tells us that three things are necessary for the defeat of evil. The first is realizing that it does have a source, a will, an Eye if you will, that must be countered—directly countered, however we strategize to do that.

Second, and perhaps most importantly of all, the enemy cannot be overcome by any individual alone. If there is one thing we learn from this story, it is that a confederation of forces is necessary. An old alliance (in this case, of Humans, Elves, Dwarves, Hobbits, and Wizard) is necessary to defeat evil. We must band together and be clear about who the enemy is.

In this brief overview, then, I hope you see how important stories like "The Lord of the Rings" are in our dealings with those who are woke. They give us massive hope and show us what the true values are that we should be pursuing.

Oh! Did I forget? The third thing? Obvious, really, isn't it? Courage.

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

The film goes on to shed light on the origins of the CCP, its 100-year plan to become the world's foremost superpower by 2049, the many traps that have laid out for the United States over the years, and the massive influence that the CCP has over the rest of the world in recent times.

Fortunately, unlike many other documentaries that merely point out problems, this one also provides ways in which everyone can resist and ultimately defeat the CCP, and therefore free the rest of China from its iron grip.

"The Final War: The 100-Year Plot to Defeat America" is a highly informative exposé on the Chinese Communist Party. The film sports slick, cutting-edge graphics that give the eyes a visual feast and lots of fantastic archival footage to examine. The facts it reveals will probably shock many viewers since so many of them have been ignored or purposefully covered up.

Suffice it to say that anyone who is the least bit interested in China's immense influence on the rest of the world should definitely check out this revelatory and thought-provoking documentary.

To watch the video, visit bit.ly/TheFinalWar

Ian Kane is an U.S. Army veteran, author, filmmaker, and actor. He is dedicated to the development and production of innovative, thought-provoking, character-driven films and books of the highest quality.

'The Final War: The 100-Year Plot to Defeat America'

Director	Running Time
Katherine Hu	2 hours, 36 minutes
MPAA Rating	Release Date
Not Rated	Nov. 15, 2022

★★★★★

POPCORN AND INSPIRATION

A High IQ or High Emotional Intelligence?

RUDOLPH LAMBERT FERNANDEZ

A sense of magic tinges most prodigies, yet Jodie Foster's movie about a prodigy dwells on the mundane instead. How do parents, siblings, and friends relate to such children? How do such children relate to others? If they're always made to feel abnormal, can they ever feel normal? If they behave adultlike at a tender age, can they ever enjoy childhood as the rest of us do?

The movie's as much about the "little man" as it's about the two women who care for him.

Working-class single mother Dede Tate (Jodie Foster, who also directs) raises her 7-year-old son, Fred (Adam Hann-Byrd), in loving awe of his superlative mathematical, reading, artistic, poetic, and musical abilities.

But Fred's sunny aura casts a dark shadow, a kind of intimidating cordon around him, turning away potential playmates. That nagging ostracism leaves him lonely, moody. And with ulcers to show for it.

Anxious, Dede reluctantly puts him in a school for gifted or special children, run by upper-class Jane Grierson (Dianne Wiest), a former prodigy herself. Dede imagines that her supposed inadequacy as a mother won't thwart specialists who may be able to nurse his mind better than she can. And Jane is desperate to kindle the cerebral flame she sees in Fred.

The film is less about Fred's prowess and more about his yearning for intimacy, acceptance, and joy among people who otherwise see him only as another prodigy rather than also as Fred. It's about how warmth will always elude relationships if people keep exaggerating differences while ignoring mutualities.

Little Man, Big Women

It's where the two women characters, Dede and Jane, diverge. Trouble is, Jane knows the "theory" behind bringing up children but has no "practice," not having had her own. She knows what they must eat to become healthy, what they must

drink to stay healthy, but next to nothing of what makes them happy.

Jane's so used to dishing out answers to a child that she's unsure of questions to ask herself or a child when confronted with a child's natural thirst for firsthand understanding and experience.

Jane surrounds herself (and little Fred) with her idea of perfection: Obey all the rules, all the time. It's easy, when you're the one setting the rules. She reels out a list of rules and Fred's responsibilities, earmarking what's his and what's hers.

For all her cognitive superiority and noble intent, Jane lacks Dede's empathy, her common sense, her tact, her sensitivity, and her selflessness. Jane can't remember what it's like to be a child, gifted or not. Brittle as ever, she's unable to adapt to new situations and guide Fred as he struggles to relate, even to other gifted children.

If anything, Fred's fraught interactions with the other gifted children only harden his resolve to mingle with normal children and adults as he tries to escape the stilted conversations and contrived activities that mark Jane's school.

Raw and unrefined, Dede is unlike other prodigy parents who treat their children as trophies or extensions of their own egos, basking in bountiful but unearned limelight. Dede doesn't treat Fred like some freak show or traveling circus, commanding him to perform for friends and family, and showing displeasure if he balks.

Dede is compassionate with Fred's weaknesses as much as she's in thrall of his strengths. She cherishes his uniqueness, his clearly advanced mind, yet treasures with no less joy the child in him who longs for normality: to be able to play without an obvious purpose, or have companionship without incessant commendation. She treats Fred as a person with distinctive likes, dislikes, fears, and dreams—a child who, like every other person on the planet, has good days and bad days.

A Directorial Debut

Foster dazzles as debutant director be-



(L-R) Jane (Dianne Wiest) has different opinions about how to nurture the genius of young Fred (Adam Hann-Byrd) than his mother, Dede (Jodie Foster) has, in "Little Man Tate."

Dede (Jodie Foster) is unlike other prodigy parents who treat their children as trophies.

'Little Man Tate'

Director:
Jodie Foster

Starring:
Adam Hann-Byrd, Jodie Foster, Dianne Wiest

MPAA Rating:
PG

Running Time:
1 hour, 39 minutes

Release Date:
Oct. 18, 1991

★★★★☆

cause she's grown up on advertising, TV, or film sets since the age of 3. She's convincing as a fretful mother because she's grown up a prodigy herself. She brings sensitivity to her role and Adam's. They're so natural together, almost like real-life mother and son.

Foster's lesson is also that superior knowledge, a surfeit of facts, by itself shouldn't overawe as much as an understanding of what is right: an ability to make sense of things, with empathy rather than contempt. As Damon, a publicly contemptuous prodigy at Jane's school, in a moment of rare self-reflection confides to Fred, "It's not the size of a guy's IQ that matters. It's how he uses it."

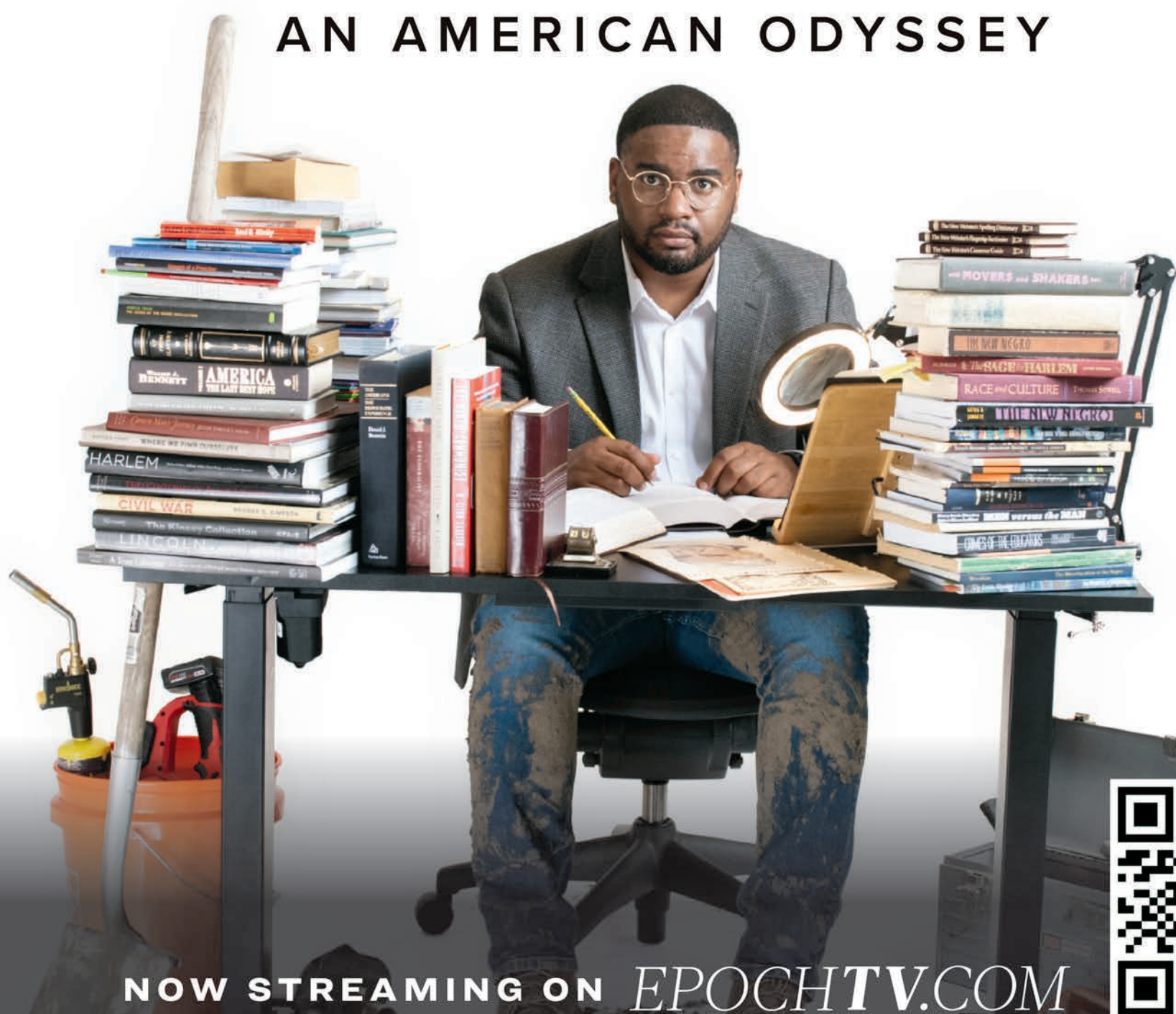
Being gifted is meaningless if you don't know how to gift back.

Foster's film is a touching invitation to revisit our responses to prodigies. Should we passively gather around them in a daze and dutifully clap because they can calculate the square root of pi without much tutoring? Or while delighting in their amplified minds, must we actively urge them to grow even more amplified hearts? On reflection, not a bad way to bring a child up regardless, prodigy or not.

Rudolph Lambert Fernandez is an independent writer who writes on pop culture.

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