

THE EPOCH TIMES

# ARTS & CULTURE

PUBLIC DOMAIN



A portrait of George C. Marshall, circa 1949, by Thomas E. Stephens. National Portrait Gallery. In spite of Marshall's many accomplishments, humility may have been his greatest gift.

## HISTORY

## George C. Marshall

### A MAN OF DUTY, HONOR, AND HUMILITY

JEFF MINICK

Fans of the movie “Saving Private Ryan” will recollect the scene where General George C. Marshall, U.S. Army chief of staff, orders a search-and-rescue mission for a paratrooper in Normandy whose three brothers were killed that week in combat.

George Marshall is no longer a household name in the country to which he gave a lifetime of service. He has so little a place in our memory that the Marshall Foundation, which since the 1960s has maintained a museum and research center at the Virginia Military Institute, Marshall's

alma mater, announced in 2021 the closure of that museum. The long decline in the number of visitors finally brought about its demise.

But the demand for the man was once beyond compare.

#### A Life of Accomplishment

After Marshall's mediocre grades prevented him from entering West Point, he decided to follow in the footsteps of his older brother Stuart and other relatives, and won admission to the Virginia Military Institute (VMI). Stuart protested, convinced that his parents were wasting money in sending him there. But his mother sold off some property, paid his tu-

**Marshall had a genius for organization and logistics, gifts which led him up the ladder of promotion.**

ition, and so began a career that would have an enormous effect on American history.

After graduating from VMI—he ranked in the middle of his class academically but received top honors for his military performance—Marshall entered the Army in 1902 and would spend the next 49 years in public service. Several of his superiors recognized in him a genius for organization and logistics, gifts which led him up the ladder of promotion. He served in World War I as General Pershing's staff officer in France and is credited with planning the Meuse-Argonne offensive.

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Cover illustration for Canto IV-87 of "The Lusíads."

### POETRY

## An Epic Poem Celebrating the Portuguese Nation

ARIANE TRIEBSWETTER

The weapons and barons marked,  
That from the western Lusitana beach,  
By seas never sailed before.

Most Portuguese people know these opening lines of "The Lusíads" ("Os Lusíadas"), a Portuguese epic poem by Luís Vaz de Camões first published in 1572.

Written three years after the poet's return from India, it narrates Vasco da Gama's journey to India and celebrates the achievements of the Portuguese nation. It is viewed as Portugal's national epic poem, in the same way that Homer's "Iliad" or "Odyssey" is for the ancient Greeks and Virgil's "Aeneid" for the ancient Romans.

"The Lusíads" is one of the most important works of Portuguese literature and remains a national treasure to this day.

Cease all that the ancient Muse sings,  
What other higher value arises.

The poet alludes to Homer and Virgil as the "wise Greek and the Trojan" and refers to ancient history. He also references classical mythology with Neptune, Mars, and the Muse.

By alluding to the classical world and following the codes of epic poetry, Camões aims to place the Portuguese among the ancient heroes, proving they are worthy of remembrance.

References to the classical world and literature continue with the invocation. Here the poet asks the tágides, mythical entities from the Portuguese river Tagus, for inspiration, in the same way that a classical poet would ask inspiration from the Muses. Camões dedicates his work to King Sebastian of Portugal, who represented hope for the Portuguese nation in spreading the Catholic faith and the Portuguese empire to unknown territories. As such, Camões infuses Portuguese elements with the classical tradition, truly making it a Portuguese epic.

### Camões's poem immortalized the achievements of Portuguese explorers.

#### A Portuguese Epic Narrative

During the 16th century, the world opened to exploration. At the height of the Renaissance, explorers set off to discover new horizons. Portugal was a country of navigators, and one of its greatest explorers was Vasco da Gama, who became the first European to reach India via the Atlantic Ocean, discovering a new sea route.

"The Lusíads" is the story of his journey, intertwined with classical mythology, fantastic elements, and episodes of Portuguese history. Camões's poem immortalized the achievements of Portuguese explorers as well as the country's glorious history. He chose the fitting title "Lusíads"; it is derived from Luso, a mythical entity that supposedly founded Lusitania, also known as the Iberian Peninsula.

Inspired by classical literature, Camões chose the epic form, traditionally used to celebrate the achievements of heroes. He wrote in the Homeric style, showcasing his talent as a poet. The epic poem is structured in 10 cantos (songs), with different numbers of stanzas, featuring decasyllables (10-syllable verses) and octosyllables (eight-syllable verses). Four main themes emerge: da Gama's voyage, the history of Portugal, the poet's reflections, and elements of classical mythology.

The epic begins with the poet's explanation of the purpose of his work: to sing the deeds of Portuguese heroes in exalted ways.

The first verse, "The weapons and barons marked," is inspired by Virgil's "Aeneid," and allusions to the classical world continue:

Cease from the wise Greek and the Trojan  
The great sailings they made;  
Shut up from Alexandro and Trajan  
The fame of the victories they had;  
That I sing the illustrious Lusitano chest,  
Whom Neptune and Mars obeyed:

#### A Celebration of Portuguese History

The narration starts in stanza 19, "in medias res" (middle of the action), with the Portuguese already at sea. The story is interrupted by the council of the gods on Mount Olympus, where Roman god Jupiter meets with other gods to decide if the Portuguese will reach India. Jupiter is on the side of the Portuguese and decides in their favor. The mythological reference reinforces the special character of the nation and places the expedition under divine guidance, another reference to the "Aeneid."

Cantos II and III recount the story of Vasco da Gama's journey, helped by Venus and Jupiter. The fleet lands at Melinde, a town on the coast of Kenya, and after invoking Calliope, who is the Muse of epic poetry, da Gama narrates the history of Portugal. He tells the story of Lusus and Viriathus, legendary figures of the Lusitanian people, and enumerates the deeds of the kings of the first dynasty, from Dom Afonso Henriques to Dom Fernando.

Next is the episode of Galician noblewoman Ines de Castro, one of the most famous in the narrative and in Portuguese history. It is classified as a lyric episode, a "sad and worthy case of memory." The story continues with the recounting of the perils that the sailors face at sea, and the fury of a monster—the giant Adamastor—a mythical representation personifying the dangers of the sea and the unknown.



A portrait of Luís Vaz de Camões, circa 1577, by Fernão Gomes.

### LITERATURE

## The Dandelion as a Symbol of Hope

KATE VIDIMOS

Many of us, when we see dandelions, see them as simply weeds. Yet the dandelion is one of the first hopeful signs of spring and one of the most persevering and resilient plants ever. This plant grows almost anywhere. Even in the most desolate places, this little plant seems to grow and flourish.

O. Henry conveys the springtime promise of the dandelion in his short story "Springtime a la Carte." He tells of a young woman, Sarah, who learns that through life's bitter moments, she must embrace and adopt the hope that spring brings.

Sarah is a freelance writer who works for Schulenberg's Home Restaurant. She types up the menu cards for the restaurant and, in return, receives three meals each day.

While she waits for the menu in pencil draft to be delivered for her to type, she stares out her window. Although her view is only a windowless brick wall on the opposite side of the street, her gaze is directed inward with memories of the last year.

She remembers when she spent that summer in the country, where she fell in love with a young farmer, Walter Franklin. Sarah and Walter had walked together, and he had woven a crown of dandelions for her hair. With the warm summer weather and Walter, it was magnificent.

#### Cold Spring

Now it is March: Springtime! But snow still decorates the city of New York and seems to bury the hope of spring with it. Walter had promised to marry Sarah

Wherever we are, let us look at the dandelion.



ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK

in the spring, but she had not received a letter in two weeks.

Her memories of Walter are broken by a knock on the door. The new menus arrive and need to be typed up.

Sarah sets to typing and is very quick with it, until she reaches the end of the list of vegetables. Seeing the ending, she breaks down and cries.

She is not crying because "the lobsters were all out, or that she has sworn ice-cream off during Lent." Sarah cries because the last "vegetable" on the list is dandelion. The flower that crowned her love is listed as a vegetable and placed alongside an egg. The dandelion and her love seem hopeless.

She cries and cries. Then, knowing that the menus must be typed, she calms herself and types. Walter might not be responding, but she will not leave the menus, even if they list cooked dandelions.

In this story, Henry shows us that Sarah learns the lesson of the dandelion. The dandelion may be bitter, but its perseverance and resilience bring hope that is as sweet as spring.

As spring arrives and the dandelions with it, let us look to hoping. For when we persevere in hope and resilience, we too can blossom and flourish anywhere.

As Ray Bradbury says in his book "Dandelion Wine":

"Pride of lions in the yard,  
Stare, and they burn a hole  
in your retina. A common flower, a weed that no one sees, yes. But for us, a noble thing, the dandelion."

Wherever we are, whatever is happening, let us look at the dandelion. It is a bitter plant, but its bright hope is willing and resilient enough to thrive in the most impossible places. We, too, can make bitterness sweet with hope.

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.

TRUTH and TRADITION

In Our Own Words



With diligent effort, a journalist can map a part of the journey and present it to readers, hoping to help them navigate their own realities.

Petr Svab  
Reporter

## The World Through a Journalist's Eyes

Dear Epoch VIP,

Thank you for your continuing support—we are at your service.

My name is Petr Svab and I've been covering politics, courts, police, immigration, economy, and other topics during my 16 years at The Epoch Times.

**It is my pleasure to work for a newspaper that stands for values I can wholeheartedly endorse and fittingly summed up in our motto of Truth and Tradition.**

I believe that truth is the living world, and an infinite journey of exploration. The more topics I tackle, the more issues I delve into, the more I realize how complex, multifaceted, and enormous the world truly is. We can never dream of grasping it all, but, with diligent effort, a journalist can map a part of the journey and present it to readers, hoping to help them navigate their own realities.

Moreover, I've found, a journalist can open doors closed to others, give readers the facts of the story, the context that enlightens them, as well as the insights of the participants.

I remember walking the streets of West Baltimore a few years ago. My plan was just to interview some local business owners to see what the city was doing about some of its issues—from piles of trash and abandoned houses to homelessness and crime.

Within five minutes of my arrival, a man on the street noticed me and started to shout: "Guy with a camera! There's a guy with a camera here!"

A group of young men further up the street took notice as I approached.

"Are you a cop?" asked one of them. He was a young man with wide eyes that looked like they'd already seen more than their share.

I introduced myself and my business of the day, handing the gentleman my card. The young man's expression softened as he realized I was here to report on a story—the story of his home.

As it turned out, the young man was not only ready to share with me his insights on the local issues, but also to offer advice on where to find what I was looking for. We parted ways with a handshake.

In all my experience talking directly to the people

involved in various events, **the truth seldom (if ever) favors partisan narratives—it's much more colorful: sometimes humorous, other times tragic.**

Consider the story, for example, of Trayvon Martin. According to some, an innocent child killed by a racist man. According to others, a thug killed in self-defense. But after filmmaker Joel Gilbert retraced Martin's last moments, weeks, and months, it turned out neither narrative was quite true. Gilbert told a story of a young man whose life was falling apart and ultimately plunged into a tragedy that nobody wanted.

So if that's truth, what is tradition, then? For me, it is the lessons of history. It's the distilled universal wisdom collected by our ancestors over millennia—the timeless lessons of the enlightened, the sages, and the saints. This treasure chest of the past is where we can turn to help us better understand the truth at present.

My work is to safeguard this treasure, let it live through the pages of The Epoch Times and the hearts of our readers.

While it may seem the foundations of the civilization itself are now under attack, I truly believe our readers will be best equipped to withstand the storm—through clarity and peace of heart. For whatever the future holds, I believe the path will be less treacherous for those who walk it steadily, making choices informed both by truth and tradition.

What I pledge to you is yet more meticulous research, analysis, and fact-finding. I'll do the digging for you, while letting you make up your own mind. Furthermore, I'll also hone my wit to give you an ever-better read along the way.

Yes, we strive to be an influential media in the world, but **I believe that our true success is measured in minds sharpened, hearts uplifted, and lives improved.**

Once again, thank you for joining us on this journey. We do live in truly epochal times, wouldn't you say?

In Truth and Tradition,

Petr Svab  
The Epoch Times

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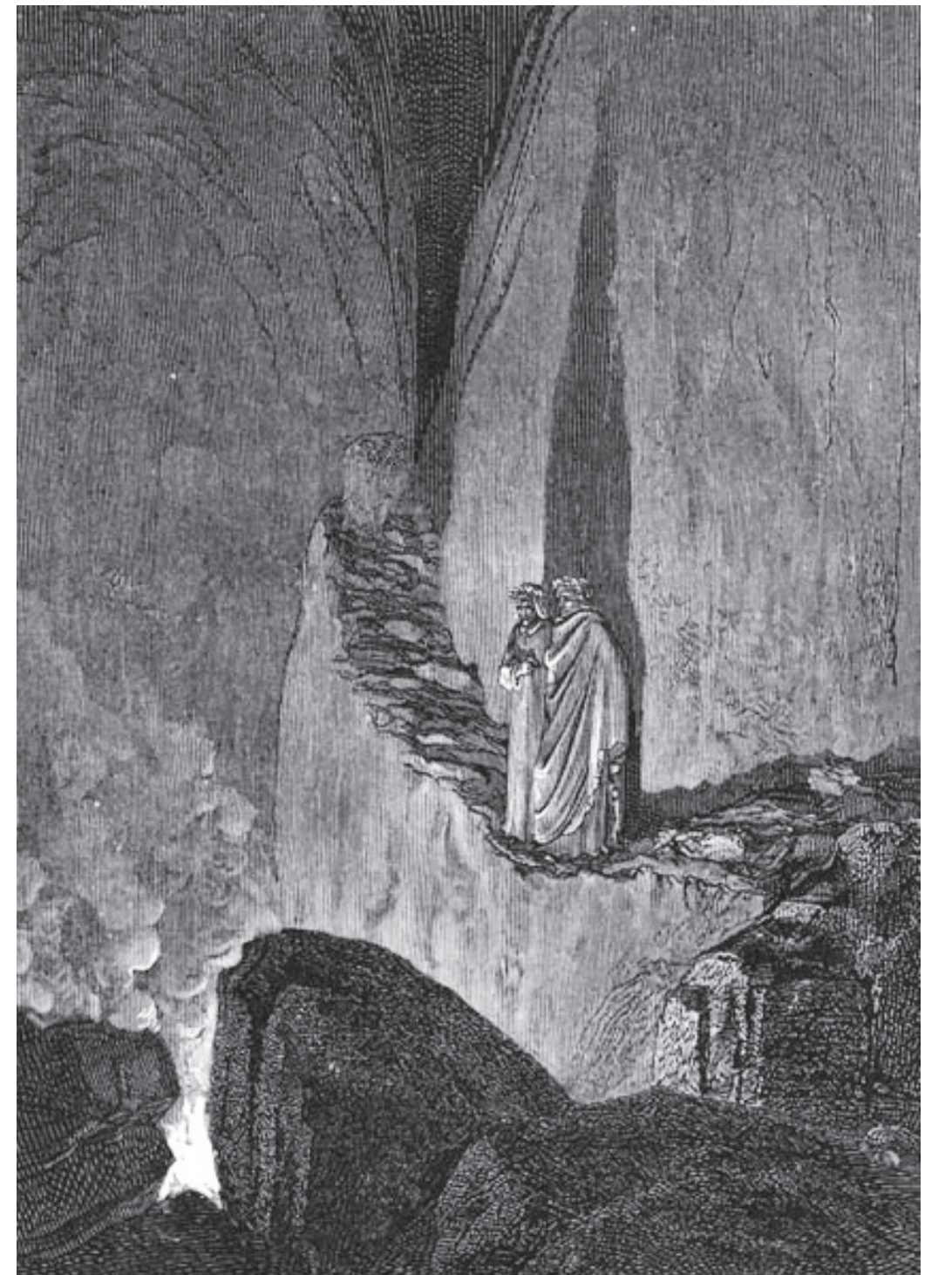
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After facing many dangers at sea, Ulysses, now home, yearns again for adventure. "Odysseus [Ulysses] and Polyphemus," 1896, by Arnold Böcklin.



In Canto 26 of the "Inferno," Virgil and Dante encounter Ulysses who speaks through a flame and tells of the sins he committed during and after the Trojan War.

## POETRY

# To Yield or Not to Yield?

## Tennyson's 'Ulysses'

## MARLENA FIGGE

"To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield." These simple words from "Ulysses" by Alfred, Lord Tennyson became one of the most famous lines in poetry, and with them the acclaimed poet assumes the rousing eloquence that Homer's epic hero might have had.

Written in 1833, the poem presents us with a portrait of Ulysses, as called by the Romans, or as known by the Greeks, Odysseus, after the events of Homer's "Odyssey."

Indeed, Tennyson's dramatic monologue "Ulysses," called a "perfect poem" by T.S. Eliot, is an apt demonstration of the persuasive capabilities of that Greek warrior who was renowned for his intellect. As a dramatic monologue, a form in which the poet assumes the voice of an individual character, the poem gives us Ulysses's words, and thus the reader learns of the events through his perspective.

The poem, like Ulysses's character, draws contradictory interpretations. Many can well understand why Dante consigns Ulysses to the fires of the Inferno for his misuse of his gift of rhetoric during the Trojan War; others hear Tennyson's words and, with a renewed zeal for life, would fain take to their ships as Ulysses's modern-day crewmates. In the end, the question is whether there is merit in never yielding in one's quest for adventure and heroism, or if yielding itself is sometimes a virtue.

**Virtue Becomes Vice**

The opening of the poem seems irreproachably reasonable:

It little profits that an idle king,  
By this still hearth, among these  
barren crags,  
Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and dole  
Unequal laws unto a savage race,

That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know  
not me.

If idle hands are indeed the devil's playground, Ulysses is right to strive to avoid that fate to which Dante would consign him. Who would not pity the travel-weary king who returns to his homeland only to find his wife now aged and his subjects unappreciative?

I cannot rest from travel: I will drink  
Life to the lees: All times I have enjoy'd  
Greatly, have suffer'd greatly,  
both with those  
That loved me, and alone, on shore,  
and when  
Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades  
Vext the dim sea: I am become a name;  
For always roaming with a hungry heart  
Much have I seen and known;  
cities of men  
And manners, climates, councils,  
governments,  
Myself not least, but honour'd of them all;  
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,

Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.

Ulysses arrives at the point in which peacetime is distasteful to him; rest is a burden. Honor lies not in the successful voyage but in the continuing journey. There must be something more to life than this stationary existence, than seeing the same faces every day and serving them when his talents could be better put to use elsewhere:

How dull it is to pause, to make an end,  
To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!  
As tho' to breathe were life!

No, it is not only dull but also "vile" to waste such intellect as his, to "store and hoard" himself when there are far nobler pursuits: "To follow knowledge like a sinking star, / Beyond the utmost bound of human thought." The joyful reunion with his family, which led him to travel for 10 years after the Trojan War, failed to live up to the imaginings of the past decade. He speaks of his wife and son in a detached manner, and even though Telemachus is "well-loved" by him, Ulysses says, "He works his work, I mine."

In his estimation, Telemachus will make a capable ruler in his stead, and this substitution will be for the good of the people.

Work ethic, knowledge, heroism, and valor. Ulysses has worthy intentions, and on the surface, his words hardly seem objectionable. However, he betrays himself in saying that he has been home only three days, and his thoughts are not all centered on his wife and subjects as he would have his audience believe. Instead, he doesn't want to deprive the world of a mind such as his by wasting it on lowlier people. It is the hunger of his own heart that consumes him, not the thought of feeding others. All virtue becomes a vice in this light, and vice instead is called virtue.

**Some Work of Noble Note**

In the third and final section of the poem, Ulysses addresses his former crewmates and urges them to undertake one final voyage with him:

Old age hath yet his honour and his toil;  
Death closes all: but something ere  
the end,  
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,

Not unbecoming men that strove with  
Gods.

Far nobler than his work at home, Ulysses says, would be a continuation of their past adventures, for "'Tis not too late to seek a newer world." Indeed, the ideal life would be an unceasing adventure, and Ulysses proclaims that his intention to go holds fast:

For my purpose holds  
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths  
Of all the western stars, until I die.

He has no intention of returning, and one can assume that the voyage home which he undertook in the "Odyssey" was done for the journey's sake rather than for the purpose of returning home and resuming his responsibilities. Ulysses is well aware of the likely end of this voyage, for he notes:

It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:  
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,  
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.

Death is but another adventure, but behind

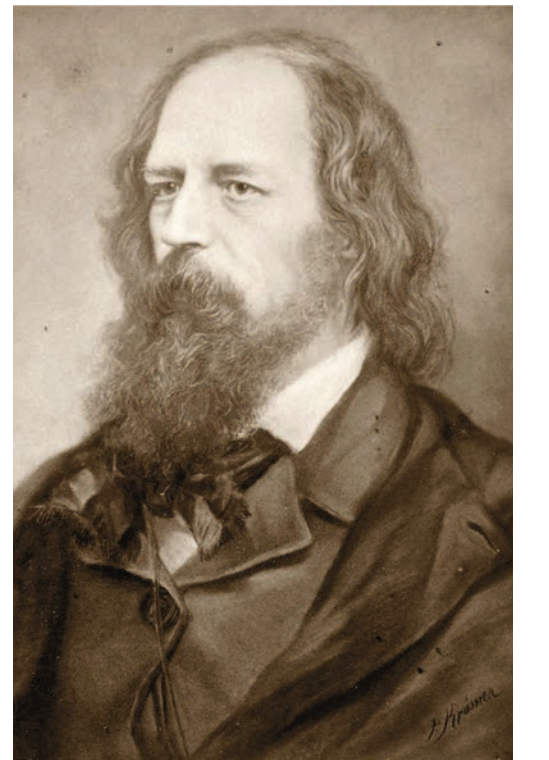
the bravery in Ulysses's speech there is a carelessness with his own life and even a disregard for the impact that his death would have on his family.

At the close of his eloquent address, Ulysses urges his companions to be unyielding. His words seem to encourage his audience to foster the virtues of courage, fortitude, and perseverance. Yet if he develops these virtues to the extreme, they cease to be virtues at all.

Aristotle defined moral behavior as the mean between the two extremes of excess and deficiency. Ulysses is unyielding to the extreme, and brave perseverance turns to the refusal to yield even when his responsibilities to his family and kingdom demand it.

Through his poem, Tennyson demonstrates that it is not always a weakness to yield our will to that of others. Sometimes yielding is the more heroic course of action.

Marlena Figge received her M.A. in Italian Literature from Middlebury College in 2021 and graduated from the University of Dallas in 2020 with a B.A. in Italian and English. She currently has a teaching fellowship and teaches English at a high school in Italy.



Tennyson's poem shows how virtue, taken to an extreme, can be a vice. A portrait of Alfred Tennyson, 19th century, by P. Krämer.

## HISTORY

# George C. Marshall: A Man of Duty, Honor, and Humility

Continued from Page 1

Between the wars, he held a number of positions. In 1939, with the German war machine gearing up, President Roosevelt bumped him up over 33 other general officers, and he became chief of staff, a position he held throughout the war.

On the day the war in Europe ended, Secretary of War Henry Stimson called together a group of officers and officials, summoned Marshall, and in front of this assembly said of the brilliance he'd shown during the last four years: "I have never seen a task of such magnitude performed by man.... I have seen a great many soldiers in my lifetime and you, sir, are the finest soldier I have ever known."

Following the war, Marshall, as secretary of state, took charge of a plan to revive the fortunes of war-battered Europe, an effort that succeeded brilliantly and became known as the Marshall Plan. For this achievement, he won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1953. He served, too, as secretary of defense during the most intense fighting of the Korean War.

**Gravitas**

No World War II American military commander possessed more gravitas than George Marshall.

He was by nature a circumspect personality, careful with his words, often remaining silent when another man might have blurted out an opinion. He was a serious man to be taken seriously, but in turn accorded dignity to those around him, whatever office or station in life they had attained.

In "General of the Army: George C. Marshall, Soldier and Statesman," author Ed Cray's account of Marshall at the time of Franklin Roosevelt's death and the ascension of Harry Truman as president again and again underscores this side of Marshall in just a few pages. Marshall, Cray writes, "seemed impassive, displaying no outward emotion."

For the incoming president, who had served in the field artillery in World War I, "George Catlett Marshall as chief of staff represented the finest qualities that Harry Truman's fondly remembered Army had to offer: selflessness, dedication, uncompromising integrity."



Secretary of Defense George C. Marshall in his office at The Pentagon in 1951. Marshall Foundation Archives.

**Possessing Objectivity**

Disinterested: This word is out-of-date and definitely out of fashion. If we look at public figures today, it's difficult to find any of them—politicians, military general officers, celebrities, even scientists—who push aside their egos and their politics to objectively tackle a problem.

Marshall had this ability to as high a degree as anyone in our history. He had long ad-

mired former American generals like George Washington and Robert E. Lee for their gravitas and their ability to take in a situation with calm, cool objectivity, and he brought to his own endeavors those same qualities.

Six months before Pearl Harbor, a lively and fiery debate ensued on Capitol Hill about American military preparedness, particularly in regard to an extension of the draft. At one point, when Marshall was trying to muster support for this unpopular measure with some Republican members of Congress, one of them refused his entreaties outright "if it meant going along with Mr. Roosevelt."

Uncharacteristically, Marshall snapped back, "You are going to let plain hatred of the personality dictate to you to do something that you realize is very harmful to the interest of the country!" On another occasion that summer, leaving another such meeting, he leaned wearily back in the staff car, closed his eyes, and murmured, "If I can keep all personal feelings out of my system, I may be able to get through with this job."

**Duty, Honor, Humility**

This same disinterestedness was undoubtedly linked to Marshall's philosophy and practice of humility.

This virtue, this ability to take a modest view of one's self-importance, is often a rarity among the great and the powerful—both then and now. Despite his many accomplishments, Marshall kept that temptation toward

pride in check, if it existed at all.

When the time came to appoint the commander of Operation Overlord, the invasion of the European mainland through the beaches of Normandy, the choice came down between Marshall and Dwight Eisenhower. For days, Franklin Roosevelt mulled over that decision, seeking at the same time to get some word of preference from Marshall. He even dispatched his aide and friend, Harry Hopkins, to seek the general's wishes. But all these attempts were rebuffed. "It is for the President to decide," Marshall told Roosevelt. "I will serve wherever you order me, Mr. President."

When Roosevelt selected Eisenhower to command Overlord, thus keeping Marshall with him in Washington, he made a rare admission of dependence, telling Marshall, "Well, I didn't feel I could sleep at ease if you were out of Washington."

As much as any man of his generation, George Marshall shaped the world in which we now live.

Jeff Minick has four children and a growing platoon of grandchildren. For 20 years, he taught history, literature, and Latin to semi-nars 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 nonfiction, "Learning As I Go" and "Movies Make The Man." Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, Va.



Gen. Marshall being sworn in as Secretary of State by Chief Justice Fred Vinson in the Oval Office on Jan. 21, 1947. U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.



Col. Marshall in France as an aide to Gen. John Pershing in 1919. U.S. Army Signal Corps—George C. Marshall Foundation.



Secretary of State Marshall greeted by President Harry S. Truman at Washington National Airport on Aug. 13, 1947. U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.



"Marie Antoinette With a Rose," 1783, by Elisabeth-Louise Vigée Le Brun. Oil on canvas. Palace of Versailles, France.



TRADITIONAL CULTURE

## Fashion Plate à la Française

MICHELLE PLASTRIK

Oscar Wilde quipped, "Fashion is ephemeral. Art is eternal. Indeed what is a fashion really? A fashion is merely a form of ugliness so absolutely unbearable that we have to alter it every six months!" It's true that models, trends, and even designers often come and go. It is rare for something or someone to become a lasting icon. But some fashions, it seems, have staying power.

France, while universally famous for its luxurious fashion industry, with Paris as its peak-of-chic capital, also boasts three ladies from its history: Queen Marie Antoinette, Empress Joséphine, and Empress Eugénie, who continue to inspire designers, books, movies, television, exhibitions, collectors, and lovers of history and style. These consorts set the trends of their times and remain timeless French fashion plates. Surviving portraiture helps the modern viewer understand how each woman's taste transcended borders and eras.

Marie Antoinette

Marie Antoinette was painted throughout her lifetime, from her childhood in the Vi-

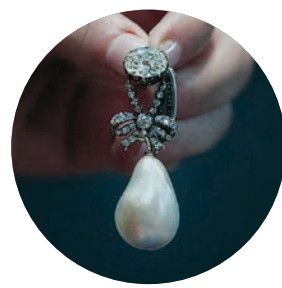
ennese palaces of her mother, the Holy Roman Empress, to her teenage years in the French court as dauphine (wife to the heir to the French throne), and later in adulthood as Queen of France. The painter who captured her best was Elisabeth-Louise Vigée Le Brun.

Vigée Le Brun was one of the most talented artists in 18th century France. When Vigée Le Brun and Marie Antoinette first met they were the same age and soon developed a close friendship. The queen helped the artist gain admittance to the prestigious Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture and, over the years, Vigée Le Brun was called upon to create 30 portraits of the queen.

One such example, with beautiful coloration and exquisite detail, is "Marie Antoinette With a Rose." This painting showcases the queen in a blue-gray silk "robe à la française" adorned with ribbons and lace. This dress was likely made by Rose Bertin, the queen's dressmaker who laid the foundations for haute couture. In the picture, the queen's powdered hair pouf displays a gauzy striped turban trimmed with ostrich feathers. The carefully crafted image of the entire ensemble demonstrates Marie Antoinette's regality and acquired French-ness.

This painting also displays Marie Antoi-

**Rose Bertin, the queen's dressmaker, laid the foundations for haute couture.**



Jewelry worn by Marie Antoinette on display at Sotheby's auction house.

DREW ANGERER/GETTY IMAGES



Portrait of Joséphine, the wife of Napoleon, 1801, by François Gérard. Oil on canvas. Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia.



"The Empress Eugénie," 1854, by Franz Xavier Winterhalter. Oil on canvas. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

nette's legendary love of jewels. In the work, she wears a double strand pearl necklace and matching bracelets. A large pearl pendant once owned by Marie Antoinette sold at Sotheby's in 2018 for a record-breaking \$36 million.

The Queen's Chemise

The same year that Vigée Le Brun painted "Marie Antoinette With a Rose," she had earlier created and put on display the painting "Marie Antoinette in a Chemise Dress." This painting scandalized the public for it showed the queen wearing a robe en chemise, also known as chemise à la reine.

The queen, weary of wearing elaborate and heavy dresses at court, adored this new look of a loosely belted, largely unadorned muslin dress and it became the style of choice among fashionable ladies in France and other countries.

As Aucremanne explained in the L'ÉCOLE talk, during the 18th century "everyone in Europe lived à la française." However, French critics took offense at the dress' resemblance to the chemise undergarment of the period.

Madame Bonaparte

The Martinique-born Empress Joséphine, supreme tastemaker in her husband's empire and great patroness of the arts and botany, pushed sartorial boundaries. The Napoleonic court drew symbolic inspiration from both early medieval French dynasties and the Roman Empire, purposefully bypassing the previously deposed French monarchy.

Under Joséphine, the diaphanous chemise dress was no longer reminiscent of a fairy tale shepherdess or milkmaid, as it had been when worn by Marie Antoinette, and instead was made more transparent with a

lower neckline. This dress type was fastened just under the bust and was known as the Empire silhouette; it is a silhouette still in vogue today.

Joséphine can be seen wearing this style in her portrait at the Palace of Malmaison by François Gérard. The public was captivated by what Joséphine would wear next.

Empress Bonaparte's Tiara

Gérard's painting depicts the empress wearing a tiara. Tiaras were chosen as a means of adornment by Joséphine because they harken back to ancient Rome and previous French queens had not worn them. Joséphine wore tiaras low on her forehead, in a style known as à la Joséphine.

This style became popular again over a hundred years later in the Roaring '20s. Unlike Marie Antoinette, Joséphine wore her hair unpowdered and in soft curls.

In Josephine's portrait at Malmaison, the empress is specifically wearing a tiara set with cameos. The craze during the Napoleonic era for the ancient art of glyptics—cameos (engraved gems with a raised relief image) and intaglios (gems where a design has been cut as a depression into the surface) was heightened by contemporaneous archeological discoveries.

Empress Eugénie

Empress Eugénie, born into Spanish nobility, was the wife of Emperor Napoleon III, the nephew of Napoleon I and grandson of Joséphine. In contrast to Joséphine, Eugénie was fascinated by Marie Antoinette and embraced her style, adapting it to the mid-19th century.

"The Empress Eugénie" portrait by Franz Xavier Winterhalter, a prominent painter of lush portraits of royalty, is reminiscent of Vigée Le Brun's "Marie Antoinette with a Rose." Eugénie is portrayed in a luxurious and elaborate yellow silk dress with fringes, lace, ribbons, bows, and tassels, along with a powdered hairstyle and ropes of pearls.

Marion Fasel, founder and editorial director of *The Adventurine*, describes Eugénie as the "de-facto style icon of the era. She famously changed her clothes and jewelry three or four times a day and rarely wore the same outfit twice. Charles Frederick Worth made her dresses. Louis Vuitton crafted her trunks."

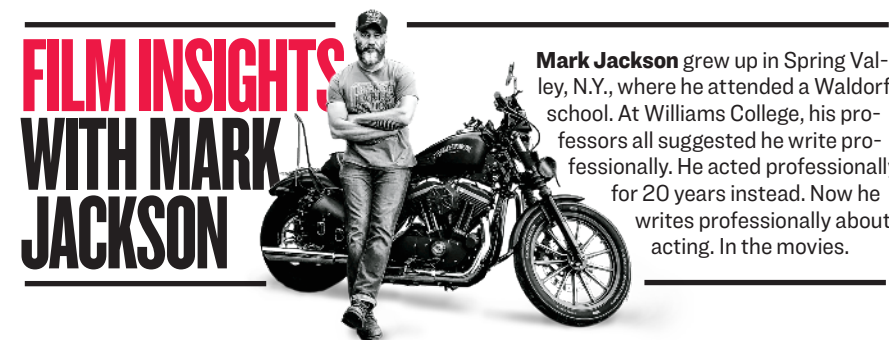
The Bow Brooch

After Napoleon III was deposed, the new French government (French Third Republic) sold a large cache of the French crown jewels at "the auction of the century." The official line was that these were immoral luxury items whose proceeds would be put to better use, but the real reason was that the government was concerned that if various claimants to the French throne were able to wear these jewels ripe with cultural and political power, they would be a threat to the stability of the new government.

At the auction, an American jewelry brand, Tiffany's, bought more than two thirds of the lots. One of the highlights and, indeed, one of the most famous jewels of the era, was a large bow brooch encrusted with diamonds that had been custom-made for Eugénie.

Queen Marie Antoinette, Empress Joséphine, and Empress Eugénie had their own styles and stories. In their time, Paris was the ultimate center of luxury, as it still is, and they were its fashion leaders, still admired today.

Michelle Plastrik is an art advisor living in New York City. She writes on a range of topics, including art history, the art market, museums, art fairs, and special exhibitions.



### FILM INSIGHTS WITH MARK JACKSON

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

## Judy Blume's Adorable Tween-Girl Bible

MARK JACKSON

Tween-girl bible "Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret," written by Judy Blume, is about an 11-year-old girl praying to God to speed up the maturation process. Could she please-please-please have something (other than socks) to fill out the training bra? And also a reason to actually use the surreptitiously, piggy-bank-purchased, menstruation pads? Already? Please?

The book has provided solace for girls ever since 1970. Its enduring power is due to its innocent, hormonally beset but kindhearted and truth-seeking young protagonist, caught in the turbulence of early adolescence.

When we meet her, she's also in the midst of a self-imposed, religious version of a mini-mountaineering solo expedition—to climb high enough to know God. Except with no route plan!

The Move!

Sixth-grader Margaret (the delightful Abby Ryder Fortson, already a seasoned vet of the *Marvel Cinematic Universe*) moves from Manhattan to New Jersey in the early 1970s, with her parents Barbara (Rachel McAdams) and Herb (Benny Safdie).

Just having to go to a new school can be enough to start any nonreligiously raised child to start spontaneously seeking a relationship with God. Margaret, however, faces a triple whammy: She falls in with a group of girls who strongly feel the need to ditch girlhood

and acquire some boy-attracting, er ... stuff, and Margaret's family leaves her dear grandmother (Kathy Bates) behind, in the city.

And so Margaret, in her bedroom, voices the oft-recurring line of the book and movie: "Are you there God? It's me, Margaret," along with some observations and various forms of fervent pleas and petitioning. For boobs and such.

**Margaret's search for God speaks to the book's loyal following.**

New Friends

As mentioned, Margaret's immediately recruited into a new friend group by little charismatic queen-bee neighbor Nancy (Elle Graham). Nancy is highly aware (and vocal) about the slightly advanced state of her, er, mammalian protuberances—and of boys. Margaret now feels immense pressure to catch up, especially since she soon develops a secret crush on a skinny, blond-Afro-wearing buddy of Nancy's brother.

Perceptions begin to crumble, and Margaret slowly starts to form her own opinions and escape from under Nancy's tiny thumb. Margaret had been instructed to ostracize the class "slut"—a girl who (for reasons unbeknownst to herself) had become shunned due to developing an impressive bust earlier than the rest of the girls and become



(L-R) Margaret Simon (Abby Ryder Fortson), Janie Loomis (Amari Alexis Price), Nancy Wheeler (Elle Graham), and Gretchen Potter (Katherine Mallen Kupferer), in "Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret."

ing therefore, naturally, the scapegoat of their jealous projections. Margaret befriends her.

Similar to the now classic TV show "Freaks and Geeks," a game of "Two Minutes in Heaven" at one point pairs Margaret with Nancy's crush, and Margaret develops a fleeting infatuation, before the preening boy (Zack Brooks) reveals himself to be just the type of mean-boy that Nancy would see herself reflected in, and be attracted to. Learning experiences abound! It's in these types of vignettes that "Margaret" excels—when the societal and social embarrassments that might be considered exclusive to 50 years ago reveal their timelessness.

**More on 'Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret.'**

Margaret, of course, begins to wonder about her cultural and religious identity. Dad's Jewish; mom's a lapsed Christian, grandma is decidedly Jewish, but grandparents on mom's side appear to be ... Nazis? So is Margaret Jewish? Religiously rudderless, it's Margaret's search for God that I daresay speaks to the book's loyal following more deeply than all the adolescent shenanigans, although adolescence is of course a potent niche unto itself. Therefore, the entire, confusing mix of religion and puberty continues to speak to new generations of young girls (although the religion portion of the film feels slightly contrived).

Overall

Abby Ryder Fortson's performance is raw and expressive without becoming overwrought. Rachel McAdams as artsy mom Barbara paints a compelling picture of the type of woman of that era who chose love over religious family obligations, thereby reaping decades of familial rejection. Her portrayal is a serious version of Mila Kunis's character in "Bad Moms." Both characters rebel at overextending themselves due to local PTA queen tyranny.

Writer-director Kelly Fremon Craig's last film, the spot-on dramedy "The Edge of Seventeen" actually functions as a companion piece to "Margaret." Fremon Craig was definitely the right director for the job.

"Margaret" is so much more than a coming-of-age story for children, and Fremon Craig delivers a film of disarming vulnerability, complexity, empathy, and humor. Margaret's world may be small, but Fremon Craig's faithful, sweet-but-never-cloying adaptation makes Margaret's journey to God and adolescence accessible to all ages, but mostly for girls in need of encouragement via a conspiratorial giggle. Early adolescence is a trial, but "Margaret" reminds us that it can be a fun adventure, too.

**'Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret.'**

Director  
Kelly Fremon Craig

Starring  
Rachel McAdams, Abby Ryder Fortson, Kathy Bates, Benny Safdie, Amari Alexis Price, Elle Graham, Katherine Mallen Kupferer

Running Time  
1 hour, 45 minutes

MPAA Rating  
PG-13

Release Date  
April 28, 2023

★★★★★

FILM REVIEW

## The Protagonist in Holocaust Drama Inspires and Charms

MICHAEL CLARK

Easily the most horrific event of the 20th century, the Holocaust is also a seemingly endless source of inspirational and heart-breaking films that remind each subsequent generation that evil in all of its forms can and must be thwarted.

"The Forger" is based on the autobiography of Cioma Schönhaus (Louis Hofmann, "Dark"), a German-born Jew who survived the Nazi occupation of Berlin with charm, quick thinking, fearless wit, and a gift for doctoring government-issued identification documents.

Based on the Schönhaus 2004 memoir "Der Passfälscher" (translation: "The Forger"), the screenplay was written by director Maggie Peren and contains many of the same thematic anti-Nazi elements

of her criminally underrated "Before the Fall," also released in 2004.

The movie opens in 1942 after Cioma's parents and sister have already been shuffled off to concentration camps. The only reason he hasn't met the same fate is due to his employment at a munitions manufacturing plant (the first of several narrative parallels to "Schindler's List").

Party Boy

A guy who clearly loves to par-tay, Cioma requires three alarm clocks to wake up every morning in order to make it to work on time. Cioma's boss would love nothing more than him showing up late more than once, which could give him reason to fire him and send him packing.

Through an anonymous tip, Cioma is contacted by Franz Kaufmann (Marc Limpach),



Cioma Schönhaus (Louis Hofmann) doctors government-issued identification documents, in "The Forger."

an icy, all-business facilitator of black-market IDs. Kaufmann recognizes that Cioma's background in graphic design would make him an ideal subcontractor to forge IDs for German Jews wanting to escape to neighboring Switzerland.

Kaufmann is working on behalf of the "Confessing Church," a Protestant organization sympathetic to the Jewish plight, and

entices Cioma not with cash but something far more valuable: food ration coupons. Metaphorical gold, these coupons are coveted by Jews and Gentiles alike; they are used not only for sustenance but also for a multitude of vices, including bootlegging and prostitution.

Regarding the latter, Cioma soon crosses paths with a woman calling herself Gerda (Luna Wedler), the wife of a soldier stationed far away in hostile territory. Recognizing the chances of her husband's return are slim, Gerda trades her affections to Cioma for coupons but soon starts falling for him.

Also married to a soldier, Cioma's landlady Frau Peters (Nina Gummich) starts out as something of a "Karen," scolding him and his best friend Detler (Jonathan Berlin) at every turn. After the two men brazenly entertain a handful of women with the intent of trading Cioma's family possessions for food, Peters reports him to a local Nazi bureaucrat who effectively confiscates everything.

Measured Storytelling

Depending on your storytelling preferences, you could view Peren's pacing as either languid, listless, and plodding, or precise,

patient, and measured. As I favor the latter, I appreciated Peren not spoon-feeding me the plot and allowing the story to breathe. She waits a full hour before starting to reveal many twists, while spending the entire running time carefully constructing multiple character arcs.

The motivations and perspectives of all five principals change greatly over the course of the narrative, providing an excellent example of a character-driven storyline. This goes far in covering up a handful of holes in the plot. When you care about the fates of the people, it's easier to overlook some missing details.

What's harder to ignore is the lensing, lighting, and production design. Yes, it's a movie set in war-torn Berlin, and sparse is apropos to set the mood, but far too much of the finished product is overly dreary and flat. This becomes more glaring during the "intimate" scenes featuring Cioma and Gerda and office encounters including Cioma and Kaufmann.

Director of photography Christian Stanggasser pinches a great deal from the Gordon Willis playbook by including warm hues with deep blacks that would be right at

**Director Peren carefully constructs several character arcs.**

**'The Forger'**

Director  
Maggie Peren

Starring  
Louis Hofmann, Jonathan Berlin, Luna Wedler, Marc Limpach, Nina Gummich

Running Time  
1 hour, 55 minutes

MPAA Rating  
Not Rated

Release Date  
May 2, 2023

★★★★☆

home in the first two installments of "The Godfather" trilogy.

From a "Monday morning quarterbacking" perspective, Peren would have served the story better had she shot everything in black and white à la "Schindler's List."

Shortcomings aside, "The Forger" is another little-known Holocaust story showing how people under duress discover the "better angels of their nature" almost by default and do the right thing, even if it means perishing in the process.

The film is presented in German with English subtitles.

"The Forger" is available in select theaters and on Kino Now and Apple TV+.

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.



## POPCORN AND INSPIRATION

## Teachers Must Be Learners First

RUDOLPH LAMBERT FERNANDEZ

In 2021, at least 31 U.S. states reported rising high-school dropout rates, over twice that in the previous year. That wouldn't be as tragic if it weren't for the fact that graduates are likelier than dropouts to secure jobs, earn better salaries, and escape street crime, addiction, and race-related gangsterism. It's why Erin Gruwell's heroism 30 years ago at Wilson High School, Long Beach, California, is staggering.

As a 25-year-old white woman teaching largely Latino, Asian, and Black students from troubled backgrounds, Gruwell made history by lifting graduation rates at her school. Ms. G, as her class lovingly called her, didn't stop with ensuring that they graduated; she started a movement that thrives even today. Gruwell's 150 students went on to become teachers, writers, architects, nurses, and techies. Thousands of educators mentored over the years by her Freedom Writers Foundation are inspiring those battling homelessness, addiction, bullying, depression, and suicide.

Heartwarming stories by Gruwell and her first students inspired a book and later screenwriter-director Richard LaGravenese's film "Freedom Writers."

In 1994, Wilson High's Margaret Campbell (Imelda Staunton), hiring a visibly idealistic Erin Gruwell (Hilary Swank) to teach Freshman English, warns that many students are just out of or en route to juvenile hall, come from broken homes, and can barely read or write. Others spray graffiti or sport guns to enforce tribalism around color or class identities.

Gruwell smiles but her jaw is firm. Set for law school, she explains that she'd chosen teaching instead, after watching footage of fighting in her neighborhood and thinking: "By the time you're defending a kid in a courtroom, the battle's already lost. ... The real fighting should happen here in the classroom."

That "battle" deters lesser teachers because it entails too many defeats and too few victories. Gruwell succeeds as a teacher because she stays a student of learning: caring, humble, open, positive.

Her colleagues, husband, father, and her students themselves are out to convince her that trying to "reform" her class is a lost cause. Instead of flinching at the odds facing her, including resentment because she's a stereotypical outsider, Gruwell chips away at the far stiffer odds that her students face: poor parents, foolish friends, and selfish siblings.

**Gruwell succeeds as a teacher because she is caring, humble, open, positive.**

Campbell grins at Gruwell's incongruous pearl set, "I wouldn't wear them to class." Gruwell wears them anyway as a defiant act of trust. Her students aren't thieves and she won't treat them so, and they repay her trust. Instead of talking down to them, Gruwell listens. Gradually, they warm to her, alive to the price she's paying, including estrangement from her husband at home. In turn, she shows that no matter how victimized they feel, there's always someone else who's as, if not more, deserving of empathy.

LaGravenese breathes life into his student characters as a group and as individuals. Eva's defensive because her father was arrested without just cause. Marcus lives apart from his mother, near "the projects." Gloria fears teenage pregnancy and the poverty that shadows it. Andre's brother is in jail.

Through flashbacks and voiceovers you get to feel their pain, anger, and regret. An outstanding Swank, as Gruwell, shares all that but asks what they're going to do about it: Wallow in self-pity and lash out in retaliation, or double down, work harder, exercise restraint, and earn respect?

Once, Gruwell plays a game with tape stuck across the floor in the middle of the classroom, while she fires questions. From either side, students must step up to that tape if their answer's "yes" and step back if it's "no." Slowly, and as students are forced to face each other at the tape, Gruwell moves from trivia around music and film to introspection: Do they know someone in jail or in a gang? Have they lost family or friends to violence?

It's quite a sight. Students who step up fancying they're unique in their loss or suffering are stunned to be staring at classmates they otherwise shun or bully who've weathered worse. It unites those fortunate (they eventually stepped back) with those less so (still at the tape at game close).

Gruwell's experiment helps them look beyond looks, beyond street slang, hairstyles, tattoos, rings, bracelets, caps, and T-shirts with forbidding slogans. It helps them see beyond swagger and accept how superficial these symbols are—pretending to help them stand out from a class or belong to a club, but in reality doing neither.

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

Erin Gruwell (Hilary Swank) and Andre Bryant (Mario), in 2007's "Freedom Writers."



PARAMOUNT PICTURES

**'Freedom Writers'**

**Director**  
Richard LaGravenese

**Starring**  
Hilary Swank,  
Imelda Staunton

**Running Time**  
2 hours, 3 minutes

**MPAA Rating**  
PG-13

**Release Date**  
Jan. 5, 2007

★★★★★

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