

THE EPOCH TIMES

# ARTS & CULTURE

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Love in full bloom is often associated with summer. A detail from "Derby Day," 1860, by William Powell Frith. Oil on canvas; 18 inches by 12 1/2 inches. Gift of Mrs. Charles Wrightsman, 2008.

## POETRY

## An Aestival Festival

Some poems  
for the summer

JEFF MINICK

**F**rom generals to lieutenants, the best military commanders study the lay of the land and the weather ahead of any mission. How steep are the hills? Are the valleys bare of vegetation or thick with vines and trees? What's the heat index? Is rain likely? Failure to account for these factors can lead to defeat before the battle has commenced.

Like these warriors, poets often consider terrain and climate when marshalling their

words, using for their verse an environment with which they are familiar and which best fits the mood and intention of the poem. This common-sense practice can make for great poetry, but it may require some extra imagination depending on where the reader lives.

Here's an example: A young man who makes his home in Minneapolis memorizes Shakespeare's famous Sonnet 18, which begins, "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" That evening, he recites it to his fiancée, who smiles and says, "That's so sweet." Meanwhile, in Miami, another man declaims this same verse to his bride-to-be. "Summer?" she says, ribbing him. "So, what's that make me? Hurricane season, temps in the 90s, and dive-bomber mosquitoes?" To put it another way, some of Robert Frost's New England poems may seem

as foreign as a snowman to a kid living in the Mississippi Delta.

Remaining alert to this provinciality of poetics—that summer is not only in the mind of the beholder but also where his feet happen to be planted—let's take a look at some poetry of the season.

### The Bounties of Mother Nature

Just as summer calls us to barbecues, hiking, sandcastles, gardening, or relaxing with drink in hand in the twilight, it summons poets with the same message. Woodlands, fields, gardens, and the seashore are celebrated in and of themselves for their joys and beauties.

*Continued on Page 4*

HISTORY

## Pathfinder of the Seas: Matthew Fontaine Maury

Profiles in history: An ongoing series of lesser known but significant figures who shaped our world

DUSTIN BASS

Matthew Fontaine Maury (1806–1873) was born near Fredericksburg, Virginia, before moving with his family at the age of 5 near Nashville, Tennessee. His brother, John, had fought in the U.S. Navy during the War of 1812 aboard the Essex. Maury was obviously too young to be in the military at the time, and it appeared that his life would be made on the farm. An injury, however, changed the course of his life—as injury would later in life. At the age of 12, he fell 45 feet from a tree and injured his back. No longer cut out to work the farm, he was sent by his father to Harpeth Academy, where he excelled.

His passions were science and mathematics, along with a desire to follow in his brother's footsteps. He received a midshipman's commission with the help of Texas Rep. Sam Houston. His first assignment was to join the members of the new frigate Brandywine, which was set to return the American hero of French nobility, Marquis de Lafayette, to France. Maury made quick relations with fellow sailors and had the opportunity to converse with Lafayette. While the ship made its way through the Mediterranean and then back to New York, Maury showed his aptitude for maritime logistics.

When he returned, he was soon brought back from leave to board the frigate again, this time for a three-year voyage (that took four), which would be the U.S. Navy's first circumnavigation of the globe. His time spent on the oceans provided extensive experience and navigational understanding. When he returned home, he passed his promotion exam, and for his next assignment, he held the position of sailing master. The next voyage would be a return to the Pacific, but Maury set his sights on setting a speed record. He searched for information on winds and currents but found none. He decided to take his own notes over the course of this (second) three-year voyage.

Upon returning home, he requested leave. He and his new wife, Ann Hull Herndon, began their life together near his birthplace. While on leave, he wrote



OLIVER HENRIE/LOOKMATTERS/RETNA

In the 1850s, Fontaine proposed laying telegraph cables along the floor of the Atlantic Ocean, along the "telegraphic plateau."

his first two maritime articles, which were published by the American Journal of Science and Arts. He then followed with "A New Theoretical and Practical Treatise on Navigation" in 1836, which proved to be the first nautical science book by a U.S. Navy officer. It was so well received that it became required reading at the Naval Academy.

That same year, he requested to be assigned to the recently Congress-approved United States Exploring Expedition. Though not given the desired position of commander, he was commissioned as the expedition's astronomer and hydrographer. When the commander of the expedition fell ill and was replaced, Maury decided that he could not abide under the leadership of Lt. Charles Wilkes—who would go on to lead the historic expedition.

### Maury wrote the first American oceanography textbook.

In 1839, he suffered a career-altering injury when the stagecoach he was riding overturned. Having given up his seat for a lady, he was riding outside of the coach and was the only one injured. A dislocated right knee and a fractured right femur (which had to be rebroken and reset) forced a long recovery and resulted in his no longer being able to serve at sea. Therefore, he began campaigning for changes within

CHIP SOMODEVILLA/GETTY IMAGES



A statue of Matthew Fontaine Maury, the "pathfinder of the seas," in Richmond, Va.

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the Navy, including the use of steam propulsion, developing trading partnerships with countries near the Pacific Rim, improving the Navy's promotional system, and founding a naval academy that included a four-year course. When the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis was established, Maury was considered by many to be its "father."

Unfit for long tours at sea, Maury was given command of the Depot of Charts and Instruments, which later became the U.S. Naval Observatory. He ran the observatory from 1844 until the outbreak of the Civil War. During his time, he discovered ships' logs from all of the Navy's voyages. Through his meticulous and systematic work, he published the first "Wind and Current Charts" in 1847, a work he had desired during his second three-year voyage. His work reduced voyages from New York to San Francisco by nearly 100 days, to Australia by 40 days, and to the Equator by 10 days.

In the 1850s, he turned his attention to the Atlantic Ocean, specifically conducting soundings of its floor. With the invention of the telegraph, he proposed laying telegraph cables along what he believed his soundings had discovered as the "telegraphic plateau." The plateau was two miles deep and was "neither too deep nor too shallow." When those cables were laid, extending from Newfoundland to Ireland, Maury was given much of the credit.

During this decade, he conjured up the idea for an international maritime conference. The conference, held in Brussels in 1853, was a success. Maury's discussions led the German scientist Alexander von Humboldt to declare that the American Navy officer had founded a new science, the "physical geography of the sea."

With that name, he wrote arguably his greatest work, "The Physical Geography of the Sea," which was published in 1855 and was the first American oceanography textbook. His work would establish him as the "pathfinder of the seas," "scientist of the seas," the (probable) aforementioned "father of the Naval Academy," and the "father of modern oceanography and naval meteorology."

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

LITERATURE

## Humor in Language and Life

A short story by Mark Twain

KATE VIDIMOS

Humor is one of the greatest gifts that mankind has been given. It gives us the ability to bring lighthearted joy into our otherwise serious lives and reminds us of our humanity.

In his short story "To Raise Poultry," Mark Twain shows the importance of humor in our lives. By changing the meaning of a simple phrase, "raising poultry," Twain brings a merriment that lightens the serious dignity of a position.

After being bestowed a "complimentary membership" by the Western New York Poultry Society, Twain writes the society a letter. He seeks to convey to the society not only his gratitude but also his worthiness of such a position.

He begins by telling how he has been interested in raising poultry since he was a schoolboy. Yet as he elaborates on his passion, we realize that he is really talking about something else. When he says "rais-

ing poultry," Twain really means raising chickens off their roost and stealing them.

### How to 'Raise' Poultry

He tells how he raises poultry through two main methods. The first method is used during warmer weather. To get the chicken off the roost (whether a coop, tree, or fence), he burns a match under the chicken's nose until it becomes submissive enough to be placed in a bag.

The second method he employs is for colder months. During this time, he will warm a wooden plank and place it next to the chicken's feet. The chicken will usually sleepily cluck in thanks to the warm roost and willfully hop on.

After explaining his two main methods, Twain explains his method for chickens that involve special "raising." The Shanghai rooster, he explains, must be assoed. If it is not assoed tightly and choked, it will crow and alert the owner to the situation.

The other special chicken is the Black

Spanish. This bird (and its eggs) are so expensive that owners usually keep them in an extremely strong coop in the kitchen. In such a situation, Twain advises taking the whole coop. If you do not succeed, he says, the rest of the kitchen will supply plenty of treasure.

### Twain does not encourage us to steal but rather to look at life with a sense of humor.

#### Humor in Language and Life

Twain assures the members of the Western New York Poultry Society that they truly have welcomed an experienced member. He claims that he is just as good as the president of the institution at raising poultry.

By giving a different meaning to a term or phrase, Twain does not encourage us to steal but rather to look at life with a renewed sense of humor.

He brings to light G.K. Chesterton's words in "Heretics": "He ought himself to be importing humor into every controversy; for unless a man is in part a humorist, he is only in part a man."

We must not be bogged down by too much seriousness and ceremony in the things we do. We must embrace humor—not vulgar or rude humor, but the clever, childlike humor that sees the simple fun in everything. This simple and original fun brings joy, light, and humanity back into our measured lives.

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.



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Engraving of a pair of Black Spanish chickens. Mark Twain recalls a special case of "raising chickens."

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Summer beckons to children's adventuresome spirits. "The Old Stagecoach," 1871, by Eastman Johnson. Oil on canvas. Milwaukee Art Museum.



Death marks a contrast to this happy season. "The Widower," 1844, by Carl Spitzweg. Oil on canvas. Städel Museum, Frankfurt.



The work in summer can provide for the whole year. "An Allegory of Summer," 17th century, by Louis de Caullery. Oil on canvas. Private collection.



The season allows us to enjoy the fullness of outdoor beauty. "Summer Afternoon," 1865, by Asher Brown Durand. Oil on canvas. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

## POETRY

# An Aestival Festival

Continued from Page 1

At the end of "Summer Sun," for instance, Robert Louis Stevenson personifies the sun as a green-thumbed gardener:

Meantime his golden face  
around  
He bares to all the garden  
ground,  
And sheds a warm and  
glittering look  
Among the ivy's inmost nook.  
Above the hills, along the blue,  
Round the bright air with  
footing true,  
To please the child, to paint the  
rose,  
The gardener of the World, he goes.

In Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream," it is a fairy who brings the raiment of summer to the woodland and who answers Puck's question, "How now, spirit? Whither wander thou?" with a song fixed on the natural world:

And I serve the Fairy Queen,  
To dew her orbs upon the green.  
The cowslips tall her pensioners be;  
In their gold coats spots you see,  
Those be rubies, fairy favors,  
In those freckles live their  
savors:  
I must go seek some dewdrops  
here,  
And hang a pearl in every  
cowslip's ear.

From the Society of Classical Poets comes C.B. Anderson's short poem "Summer Concerts."

The katydids and stridulant  
cicadas  
Regale us with their aestival  
sonatas.  
At night, surrounded by the  
sound of crickets,  
We listen just as though we'd  
paid for tickets.

Of course, not everyone takes pleasure in this orchestra, and surely no one is a fan of mosquitoes. Mossie is Australian slang for mosquito, and in her humorous "Mossie Malice" Susan Jarvis Bryant, a Brit now living in Texas, strikes a blow against these summer pests:

Now, swat in hand, I plot to kill  
such irksome quirks of Earth's  
ill will . . .  
I'll swish and squish and smash  
and smite  
until those suckers cannot bite!

### The Children of Summer

Like Anderson's concertgoers, we engage with the slower pace of summer, but surely none do so more than children. The routine of classes is gone, the textbooks and backpacks are put aside, and the days are bright with liberty and adventure. The children live the dreams of summer, but the poets help the rest of us to remember them.

In "June," John Updike celebrates this season for today's kids while reminding

many of his older readers of their own barefoot days and the firefly nights of their youth. Here's the poem in full:

The sun is rich  
And gladly pays  
In golden hours,  
Silver days,  
And long green weeks  
That never end.  
School's out. The time  
Is ours to spend.  
There's Little League,  
Hopscotch, the creek,  
And, after supper,  
Hide-and-seek.  
The live-long light  
Is like a dream,  
And freckles come  
Like flies to cream.

Robert Louis Stevenson's "Bed in Summer" will also bring a smile of recognition, especially to parents who struggle to put children to sleep while it's still light outside. "I have to go to bed by day," the poem's narrator laments, watching the birds "still hopping on the tree" and hearing "grownups still going past me in the street."

And does it not seem hard to you,  
When all the sky is clear and blue,  
And I should like so much to play,  
To have to go to bed by day?

For many young people, the community pool is central to summer. Here, friends gather, boys and girls flirt, and mothers dip their infants in the wading pool. In "The Summer I Was Sixteen," Geraldine Connolly's imagery will awake in adults memories of those afternoons they spent poolside as teens. The poem begins,

The turquoise pool rose up to  
meet us,  
its slide a silver afterthought  
down which  
we plunged, screaming, into a  
mirage of bubbles.  
We did not exist beyond the gaze  
of a boy.

Later, Connolly mentions dancing to "Duke of Earl," which would set the scene in the mid-1960s, and the rest of the poem is filled with snapshots bringing back those days: "cotton candy torches, sweet as furtive kisses," "pressed radios to our ears," and a place "where bees staggered/ into root beer cups and drowned."

### Love and Death

In our minds, and in the minds of poets, cer-

tain seasons connote big-picture ideas and emotions. Spring, for instance, that season in mythology when the goddess Ceres visits the earth to strew blossoms and buds across the land, is the time when for poets "a young man's fancy turns to love." In winter, Ceres returns to the underworld, and the flowers and green grasses wither away—a season we tend to associate with death. Autumn can represent both the fruition of the harvest and the twilight years of one's life.

As for summer, perhaps it represents fullness of that life, both for poets and for us. But of course, the poetry of this season may still address the basic themes of existence. Unlike Ceres, Eros (the god of love) and Thanatos (the god of death) were never banished from the earth.

Two short, simple poems connect summer to these universal themes. Known for his romantic verse, Arab poet Nizar Qabbani gives us this sweet, short love poem, "In the Summer":

In the summer  
I stretch out on the shore  
And think of you  
Had I told the sea  
What I felt for you,  
It would have left its shores,  
Its shells,  
Its fish,  
And followed me.

And here is an equally short and lovely poem about death that some readers attribute to Mark Twain, "Warm Summer Sun":

Warm summer sun  
Shine kindly here,  
Warm southern wind  
Blow softly here.  
Green sod above  
Lie light, lie light —  
Good night, dear heart,  
Good night, good night.

This one requires a note: Though a couple of online commentators believe this verse to be some deep reflection on aging and life, it struck me as an elegy, perhaps written for his beloved daughter after her death. I was partially correct. This elegiac verse is carved on Susy's tombstone, but Twain adapted the words from a poem by Robert Richardson. Later, he added Richardson's name to the stone.

### Heart-to-Heart Magic

Pleasure can be ours from reading these poems (and for that matter, any worthy verse), but along with that pleasure comes a dialogue between the poet's words and our own experience. This exchange goes back and forth, from what we have read in the poem to what we have seen and done, with each enhancing the other.  
On some soft night in June, for in-

stance, we listen to music of the crickets and think of Anderson's salute to their concert, or we read the poem and recollect another night in June, perhaps decades in the past. We watch our grandchildren catching lightning bugs at twilight and think of Updike's "June," or we read the poem and remember when we, too, played hide-and-seek or had games of backyard catch in childhood summers.  
It's a dialogue that ends in enchantment.

Jeff Minick has four children and a growing platoon of grandchildren. For 20 years, he taught history, literature, and Latin in seminars of homeschooling students in Asheville, N.C. He is the author of two novels, "Amanda Bell" and "Dust On Their Wings," and two works of nonfiction, "Learning As I Go" and "Movies Make The Man." Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, Va.



"Fireflies at Ochanomizu," circa 1880, by Kobayashi Kiyochika. Color woodblock print. Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

A poster for the 1883 premiere at the Theatre National de l'Opéra-Comique for Léo Delibes's "Lakmé." Lithograph.



## OPERA

# An Ethereal Classic

The 'Flower Duet' from the opera 'Lakmé'

ARIANE TRIEBSWETTER

With its beautiful harmonies and melody, the "Flower Duet," for soprano and mezzo-soprano, has become one of the most famous duets in the operatic repertoire. Some listeners might wonder what this piece is really about, and what makes it a timeless classic.

### An Exotic Setting

While often performed as a stand-alone

Through the duet's breathtaking melody, listeners feel as if they are transported to another world.

concert piece today, the "Flower Duet" is part of "Lakmé," a French opera composed by Léo Delibes, first performed in 1883. This is perhaps the Romantic composer's most famous work. It follows the dramatic love story of Lakmé, the daughter of a Brahmin priest, and a British officer during the British Raj.

Like many other Late Romantic operas such as Georges Bizet's "The Pearl Fishers" or Jules Massenet's "The King of Lahore," the story is set in an exotic location, featuring a culture unfamiliar to the audiences of Delibes's day. At that time, Western society was fascinated with "oriental" culture and, in this instance, the story is set in late 19th-century India.

In the past, the exotic setting in "Lakmé" helped to drive its popularity in the operatic repertoire. As it remains such a popular piece today, it is not so much for its

once-fascinating setting but rather for the sheer beauty of its musical composition. The "Flower Duet," along with other arias in the opera (such as the "The Bell Song") became synonymous with timeless beauty, well beyond the original context.

### Timeless Beauty

The "Flower Duet" resonates with people today because of the inherent sense of peace that its beautiful melody conveys.

Fittingly, the lyrics of the duet are about beauty itself. As Lakmé and her servant Malika gather flowers by the riverbank, they sing about their picturesque surroundings, giving listeners a sense of a peaceful and idyllic world.

As for the lyrics, they are straightforward and almost naïve, almost as if to emphasize the simple and carefree nature of the piece. This lightness is represented by the 6/8 time

signature, the use of plucked strings, and subtle changes in vocal dynamics, with successively falling and rising vocal lines.

The two female voices start by singing in a call-and-response style, but they soon intertwine with the line "blends with the rose." Just as the jasmine blends with the rose on the riverbank, the voices blend and form an elegant melody, almost otherworldly.

Effectively, what Delibes does with this duet is that he paints with words and music. He creates an idyllic scene using music to conjure the sights and scents of a riverside, from its shining waves to its scented flowers and the peaceful sounds of birds. It is almost as if listeners can hear the birdsongs, smell the flowers, and feel the flow of the river.

This is where the genius of this song truly comes in. Through the duet's breathtaking melody, listeners feel as if they are trans-

ported to another world, outside of space and time—a world where everything is simple, carefree, and beautiful. They feel at peace.

### An Enduring Classic

Over the years, the "Flower Duet" became a popular concert piece known for its beautiful melody and ethereal harmonies.

The duet is regularly performed and recorded, but not for its ease in performing. It is a piece that only the most skilled vocalists can attempt because of its challenging nature. Not only does the duet demand technical agility for the ornamentations and great breath control for the extended melodic lines, but the singers also need to deeply feel and convey the emotions of the piece.

There are many great performances and recordings of the duet by famous opera singers, most notably those of Dame Joan

Sutherland and Marilyn Horne, Renée Fleming and Susan Graham, Anna Netrebko and El Na Garan a, and most recently, Sabine Devieille and Marianne Crebassa.

Today the piece has gained an almost pop-classic status, spreading well beyond the scope of classical music. It first became known by the general public in the 1980s, when British Airways used it in one of their commercials. Since then, the duet has been featured in global advertising campaigns, TV commercials, TV shows, and movies.

While the story of the "Flower Duet" might not be familiar with mainstream audiences today, the duet continues to attract people for the same reason as in 1883: its sheer beauty.

Ariane Triebswetter is an international freelance journalist, with a background in modern literature and classical music.



"Dante and Virgil in the Ninth Circle of Hell," 1861, by Gustave Doré. Oil on canvas. Brou Museum, France.

ALL PHOTOS IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

## POETRY

# England's Epic Poet

ANDREW BENSON BROWN

The Renaissance poet Philip Sidney considered the epic or "heroical" genre to be the "most accomplished kind of poetry." What could possibly substantiate such a claim? In his famous essay, "The Defense of Poesy," he defined the epic hero as one who "stirs and instructs the mind" with moral doctrine, who "doth not only teach and move to a truth, but teacheth and moveth to the most high and excellent truth; who makes magnanimity and justice shine through all misty fearfulness and foggy desires."

Few write epic poems these days, though, and novelists have tended to cast out the search for higher truth in favor of more materialistic themes. James Sale, who is a contributor to The Epoch Times, represents an exception to this rule. His new 3,700-line poem, "StairWell," marks a return to the adventurous heroism of Homer, Milton, and Dante, which is at the heart of the European epic.

The mention of Dante has particular relevance, because like "The Divine Comedy," Sale's epic is also a spiritual journey. Dante and Virgil even show up as characters to guide him on his path.

### An English Epic in Terza Rima

"StairWell" comprises the second volume in a projected trilogy called "The English Cantos." In his first volume, "HellWard," Sale chronicles his own real-life struggle with cancer as he takes us through the different (fictional) levels of a hospital ward—a substitute for the circles of Dante's "Inferno." The reader encounters condemned people who James knew, as well as public figures in recent intellectual and political history who posed a danger to the public good.

"StairWell" continues this journey by offering a modern psychological parallel to Dante's Catholic vision of Purgatory. Each "canto" (chapter) represents a different step in a progression toward the doorway to heaven.

The poem is written in terza rima, consecutive groupings of three iambic pentameter lines that rhyme ABA, BCB, CDC, etc. This is a very difficult form to pull off in our rhyme-poor English language over the course of a long narrative—it has never, in fact, been successfully done (if one discounts Shelley's unfinished "Triumph of Life").

The first canto, "Ascend," opens with the lines:

Some force, unknown before, but light as words  
Are light, when sung beside alpine moraines  
One sunny morning, clear, as those small birds  
Their tweets ring for miles, echoing again  
Eternal joy in that sheer riff of life  
Which advertises nothing's been in vain.

Notice how Sale manages the terza rima by sacrificing pure rhyme and using near rhyme (moraines/again/vain). This hybrid practice contributes to the story's emotional complexity, while avoiding the repetition (and hence boredom) that continual perfect rhymes would necessitate in a long poem. The poem's dominant emotional tone of pathos is also conveyed in these opening lines: the imagery of singing "beside alpine moraines" and the tweeting of birds to describe the light and clarity of the "force, unknown before." The poet continues:

So, then, I felt; or as the day my wife  
Said yes and loneliness was all foregone  
And so in joining her no more the strife  
That's being two: forever we are one;  
And thinking that one word, One, caused me then  
To tremble: sure, another urged me on,  
Awaiting with patience knowing no end  
At last the demon in me would be cast  
Out—to be finally home with all true men.

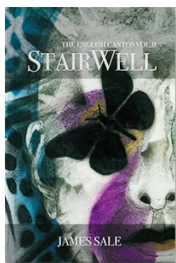
As the day the poet met his current wife gives way to a reminiscence on oneness, his hesitation in proceeding on his journey is expressed through a "trembling" syntactical complexity of colons, semicolons, and dashes. Sale's style can be difficult to digest for those used to reading short, simple poems on Instagram, but the intellectual and emotional rewards exhibit all the richness of the best poets in the Western canon.

### The Power of Loss and Redemption

As in the first volume, Sale meets people from private and public life in his ascent, flawed individuals who are caught between heaven and hell, but not beyond redemption. Classical, mythological, and biblical references abound. Sometimes the mythological figures represent themselves—Apollo, for instance. At other times, they



## 'StairWell' exhibits all the richness of the best poets in the Western canon.



'STAIRWELL'  
By James Sale  
Independently published  
Feb. 28, 2023  
Paperback  
220 pages

"The Wedding Register," 1920, by Edmund Blair Leighton. Oil on canvas. Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery, England.

are mixed with normal people to symbolize their character.

On the third giant step of the poet's ascent, we encounter his ex-wife, bedecked in jewelry, who informs him that she has the Midas touch which turns flesh to gold—the thing she loves the most. She grips an amulet with an ivory "coffin figure," representing their child who was never born. As the poet berates her for having an abortion, she begins to weep in repentance, and a fly emerges from her tear duct (representing the exorcism of Beelzebub, the lord of the flies, through the eye—the window of the soul). The fly then transforms:

The fly—no longer one—now took to wing,  
A butterfly so beautiful, so light,  
So graceful, its sight induced in me song...

James then throws his wife's gold amulet into the lake, where:

I saw its shape take form, taking in air,  
Enlarging as if new breathing began—  
And in my heart of hearts I found a prayer,  
A blessing: I was seeing my lost son,  
Whom she had killed, adrift, and in pursuit  
Of where his mother's butterfly would land.  
I waded—like some lost soul's desperate salute;  
Perhaps his eyes were formed and he'd respond—  
Or lips cry, 'Father!' But his lips were mute.

As his son disappears over the horizon, the poet finds it in his heart to forgive his wife. The scene is deeply moving and, though sad, also uplifting in a sense. This tragic confrontation leads both to a deeper appreciation for what the poet has lost and to his wife's realization of her wrongdoing. The passage is a beautiful evocation of the reality of truth and goodness.

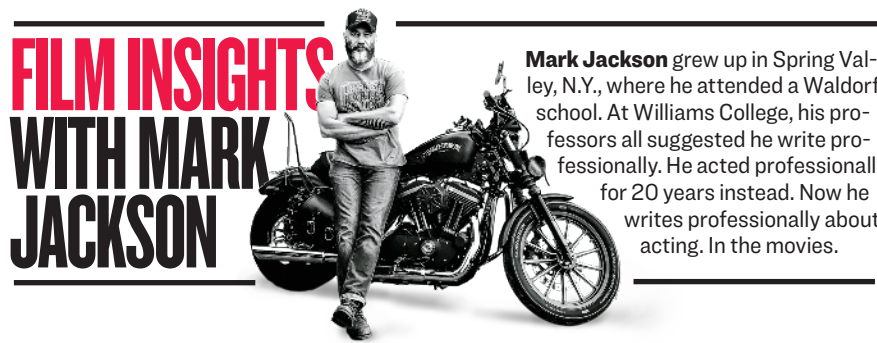
### Tapping Into Tradition

Some might criticize Sale's epic as being too derivative of Dante's. It is important to note, though, that the emphasis on total creative originality is a modern phenomenon. One could just as well say that Virgil's "Aeneid" is derivative of Homer's "Iliad" and "Odyssey," criticize Shakespeare for stealing most of his plots, or call Milton a hack because he retold the beginning of the book of Genesis.

Great literature exists within a tradition, and the greatest works are those which engage that tradition in the deepest and most thorough ways, often drawing on timeworn themes and subjects. The problem with originality is that when you strip away tradition—as our culture has—what is left beneath is just an empty shell.

Sale, who has been writing poetry for 50 years, has poured a lifetime of learning and carefully honed linguistic skill into this poem. He deserves to be recognized as the grandmaster of high epic in our time.

Andrew Benson Brown is a Missouri-based poet, journalist, and writing coach. He is an editor at Bard Owl Publishing and Communications and the author of "Legends of Liberty," an epic poem about the American Revolution. For more information, visit [Apollologist.wordpress.com](http://Apollologist.wordpress.com)



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.

# Tranquility Found on a Fly-Fishing River

Fly-fishing as a cure for PTSD

## MARK JACKSON

My brother was an excellent fly-fisherman. He started tying flies when he was 10 years old. It looked too boring to me. But I've now read every book by fly-fishing author John Gierach for purposes of learning from and enjoying outstanding writing—as well as to bask in venerable, ex-hippie, rustic, Colorado mountain Americana—and letting Gierach's life metaphors meticulously gathered from a lifetime of fly-fishing wash over me like a trout stream. I highly recommend his 23 books.

"Mending the Line" is a post-war military story that follows the typical narrative structure of the subgenre. It features the evergreen topics: wartime ethics, how America treats its war veterans, post-traumatic stress disorder, rehab back into civilian life, survivor's guilt, and more. We've all seen these things portrayed a million times, which can lead to fatigue, but "Mending the Line" adds fly-fishing as a panacea to all of the above, and therefore works regardless.

### 'Mending the Line'

John Colter (Sinqua Walls), a Marine recently returned from Afghanistan, is the sole survivor of a troop decimated in an ambush. It was part of a mission that he, in a leadership position, signed off on against the premonitions of his warrior brothers.

He arrives at a rehab center based in Montana that focuses on physical and mental health. Knowing nothing else and fully embracing the Marine ethos, Colter wants nothing more than to return to active duty, and he works extremely hard in physical therapy. However, due to his heavy drinking, hair-trigger tem-

per, and massive denial, group therapy is challenging, especially his feelings about the group therapy leader never having experienced combat.

Meanwhile, across the hall, Ike Fletcher (Brian Cox), a Vietnam-era Recon Marine, is listening to his doctor lecture to him about being no longer able to go fly-fishing by himself, due to his worsening condition.

Dr. Burke (Patricia Heaton) advises Colter to sign up for some fly-fishing lessons from Ike. The win-win is that Ike will now be supervised, and Colter will have a one-on-one opportunity with a fellow warrior to commence his mental journey out of PTSD.

In the classic way of the redemption arc story, these two currently and formerly dangerous men don't get along, and the active-duty warrior versus grumpy-old-man warrior hostility bristles. Which is always kinda fun.

It's apparent from the outset that fly-fishing, of course, is Ike's true love as well as the source of his never-ending therapy. And once both men lower their guards and allow each other into their respective worlds, a reluctant and heartwarming brotherhood forms between the two veterans. Semper Fi, after all.

### Lucy

Lucy (Perry Mattfeld) is a young woman who quit her passion for photography to work at the local library and volunteer at the VA. She's struggling with the motorcycle death of her fiancé two years prior.

Lucy and Colter meet cute when Ike, as part of Colter's fly-fishing instruction, orders him to do some reconnaissance and immerse himself in fly-fishing literature. There's more great literature on the topic than any other sport, as Ike attests.

Lucy isn't really treated like a supporting



Ike Fletcher (Brian Cox) teaches John Colter (Sinqua Walls) how to properly cast a fly rod, in "Mending the Line."

### Will They All Heal Via Fly-Fishing?

Like Mr. Miyagi teaching Daniel-San karate in "The Karate Kid," Ike teaches Colter to fish by making him do everything but fish. Such as inventorying the stock and unloading boxes at the fishing store. There are tactical operations, and there's boot camp. This is boot camp, he explains.

Colter is, naturally, immensely frustrated. But Harrison (Wes Studi) explains his old buddy: Ike can't drink anymore, doesn't go to the movies, watch TV, or of course—date. Ike's got no friends, and he hasn't listened to music "since Creedence broke up in '72." All Ike has is fly-fishing, so it's an understandably special source of holiness for him. Ike thanks the rainbow, brown, and brook trout he catches, before releasing them.

### 'Mending the Line'

Director  
Joshua Caldwell

Starring  
Brian Cox, Sinqua Walls, Perry Mattfeld, Wes Studi, Patricia Heaton

Running Time  
2 hours, 2 minutes

MPAA Rating  
R

Release Date  
June 9, 2023

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

### Music

The one thing that almost ruins "Mending the Line" is the sappy, stereotypically treacle-y, tear-jerk-y score. Some filmmakers should have a score committee contractually attached to them to ensure they don't ruin their own movie with subpar music.

All in all, though, "Mending the Line's" message of finding healthy ways of staying grounded in order to get through a difficult time is always worth demonstrating and celebrating. As is the concept that the whole point of the meditative tranquility found on a fly-fishing river is that one needs to learn to take that into everyday life. This is probably the most important concept that exists for human beings.

## FILM REVIEW

# Questions Parents Can Ask About Their Children's Technology

With great imagery and little dialogue, Almada's documentary is a feast for the senses

## MICHAEL CLARK

Back in April, I reviewed two documentaries ("Matter Out of Place" and "River") for The Epoch Times. Each focused on ecology, climate change, and the supreme lack of urgency that we humans possess in doing anything to rectify these "sky is falling" issues. Both movies also featured next to no dialogue or narration and depended purely on visual imagery (some of it admittedly spectacular) to make their points.

In many ways, writer-director-producer-editor-narrator Natalia Almada's "Users" bears a strong visual resemblance to these two other films, yet it contains almost completely different subject matter. It includes very few spoken words and depends heavily on its imagery to relay its messages.

The big differences, however, are that "Users" is excellent and doesn't wag any tsk-tsk fingers at the audience, or pass judgment on the issues one way or another. It's one of the most unbiased and original documentaries I've ever seen.

The main plot point in "Users" is Almada's concern with the proliferation of modern technology as it applies to parenting in general and her role as a mother in particular. She says at the start: "Will they [her children] love technology more for its perfection than me with my imperfections?"

It's a fair enough question and one that every parent with minor children who love electronic devices should be asking.

### The Kubrick Connection

The start of the film contains some of its most impactful images when blue and red

circular moving images against a black backdrop appear, bearing an unmistakable likeness to HAL from Stanley Kubrick's "2001: A Space Odyssey." This cinematic connection is furthered when one of Almada's sons is shown, appearing to look directly into the camera.

As it turns out, the changing colors projected on his face show that the boy is looking at a computer screen. It is eerily reminiscent of another scene showing the Dave character from "2001" having a foreboding interaction with an off-screen HAL.

It is entirely possible that this was not Almada's intent, but that was my own takeaway, and it is just one of many passages that can be interpreted differently by individual viewers. Almada is not telling you what to think; she's showing you something that all but demands you come to your own conclusions.

### The Wraparound

After a brief but highly enlightening observation of the properties and quantities of the world's water, Almada drops (to me, at least) a mind-blowing factoid. The circumference of the Earth is a tad over 40,000 kilometers, and there are enough fiber optic cables in the oceans to wind around the planet 30-plus times. Wrap your head around that.

For the duration, Almada and cinematographer Bennett Cerf employ still, moving, and aerial drone cameras to capture

a multitude of stunningly breathtaking images that, in and of themselves, might seem unrelated. I won't give away anything to reveal that these symmetric images are horizontal and move from right to left. For example, Almada and Cerf follow a moving train and cut the scene in half with a distant still shot of cattle walking past a barn.

Again, my take is that so much of what Almada and Cerf suggest carries a deeper parallel connection. The right-to-left horizontal movement suggests forward progress; optimism will eventually conquer

pessimism. Toward the end of the third act, Almada appears on-screen for the first time, and I won't get even close to revealing what her ultimate point is. But it is safe to say that it will certainly floor you, and force you to reevaluate what you might have seen and heard over the course of the previous 70 minutes.

Another factor involved in the overall success of "Users" is the eclectic score composed by Dave Cerf and performed by the legendary Kronos Quartet. From electronic to ambient to traditional strings, the music is a de facto character and further enhances the production's hypnotic, dreamlike quality.

### Viewer's Choice

If it wasn't already obvious, "Users" is certainly not for everyone. Almada does not hold our collective hand and explain her intent. She's counting on and hoping for you to come to your own conclusions.

"Users" got my vote because it's great film-



Natalia Almada wrote, directed, edited, narrated, and produced the documentary "Users." ICARUS FILMS

making and carries an uplifting message. Underscored by a moving and inspirational final scene, the film gave me a marked level of optimism and the belief that mankind has the will and, hopefully, the desire to return to a time when devices didn't claim our attention so much that we forever lose touch with our fellow in-the-flesh human counterparts.

"Users" is presented in English and Spanish subtitles.

The film opened at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in New York City on June 9 and at the Laemmle Glendale in Los Angeles on June 16 with a national expansion to follow.

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.

### 'Users'

Documentary

Director  
Natalia Almada

Running Time  
1 hour, 21 minutes

MPAA Rating  
Not Rated

Release Date  
June 9, 2023

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

## REWIND, REVIEW, AND RE-RATE

# 'All Through the Night': A Lighthearted Angle on Serious Matters

IAN KANE

A year after establishing himself as a household name in 1941's "The Maltese Falcon," actor Humphrey Bogart starred in director Vincent Sherman's 1942 comedic crime caper, "All Through the Night." Bogart is supported by outstanding character actors who have great chemistry together.

Bogart steps into the role of "Gloves" Donahue, who is a "big-shot" sports gambler and tough guy with a heart of gold. His small gang consists of a grumpy man ironically named Sunshine (William Demarest), Starchy (Jackie Gleason), and driver Barney (Frank McHugh).

Each day, Gloves has a slice of cheesecake at a New York dining establishment called Lindy's. However, one morning the place serves him a piece of cake that wasn't made by Mr. Miller (Ludwig Stössel), a kind, older Jewish man who normally makes the delicious cheesecakes for Lindy's.

We soon find that a nefarious character named Pepi (Peter Lorre) has disposed of Mr. Miller. Gloves's mother, Mrs. Donahue (Jane Darwell), suspects that something bad has happened to Mr. Miller and urges Gloves to visit the man's bakery to look for clues. Gloves discovers quite a large clue when he finds Mr. Miller's body in the basement of the bakery.

A pretty nightclub singer, Leda Hamilton (Kaaren Verne), arrives at the bakery but then quickly disappears when she learns of Mr. Miller's demise. The cops also visit the bakery and tell Gloves to stick around town in case the local district attorney wants to ask him some questions relating to the murder.

Mrs. Donahue thinks that Leda knows something about Mr. Miller's homicide and tracks the young woman down to the nightclub where she sings. When Gloves realizes that his mother is at the club, he also visits the place and becomes smitten with Leda. However, Pepi, who plays

## 'All Through the Night'

**Director**  
Vincent Sherman

**Starring**  
Humphrey Bogart, Conrad Veidt, Kaaren Verne

**Running Time**  
1 hour, 47 minutes

**Not Rated**

**Release Date**  
Jan. 10, 1942

★★★★★

piano at the joint, shows up and threatens Gloves to leave Leda alone.

Pepi takes Leda to a back room where one of the nightclub's owners, Joe Denning (Edward Brophy), overhears them discussing a secret Nazi plan. Not wanting word to get out about the plan, Pepi shoots Joe, who runs out of the room and collapses on the hallway floor in front of Gloves.

As he dies in Gloves's hands, Joe, unable to talk, holds his empty hand up as a clue. Meanwhile, Pepi vanishes with Leda. Gloves is seen by a witness as he is hunched over Joe's body and becomes the prime suspect in the murder. He also accidentally leaves one of his gloves at the crime scene. Whoops!

On the run from the law, Gloves and his gang trace the cab that Pepi made off in with Leda to an auction house operated by a shadowy German named Ebbing (Conrad Veidt) and his equally sinister associate, Madame (Judith Anderson), a woman with a very icy countenance.

Gloves tries to secretly infiltrate the auction house by posing as one of the bidders but gets recognized by Pepi. Gloves purchases something that is up for bid and manages to visit a back room with Ebbing. Pepi plans to ambush Gloves by shooting him, but Leda saves the gambler's life by knocking him out instead. What fate awaits Gloves at the hands of this cell of dastardly Nazis?

Bogart was well cast here as a good-hearted gangster and has plenty of humorous scenes and interactions with the excellent supporting cast. Verne is also great as the damsel in distress (she is being forced to work with the Nazi spies), and Peter Lorre is quite threatening as the main enforcer of the secret cell.

"All Through the Night" features lots of suspense, drama, and comedy. And due to its strong cast of colorful characters, it is able to pull off this crime-comedy well. Its lighthearted angle on a more serious subject is sure to entertain.

"All Through the Night" is available on Amazon, Vudu, and Apple TV.

*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.*

WARNER BROS. PICTURES



**Bogart was well cast as a good-hearted gangster.**

Sparks fly between Gloves Donahue (Humphrey Bogart) and Leda Hamilton (Kaaren Verne), in "All Through the Night."

TRUTH and TRADITION

In Our Own Words

## From the Desk of Our Puzzle Master



“I've benefited greatly from the many relationships and friendships formed making the puzzle pages better and better with each passing year.

**Tom Houston**  
Puzzle Master



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Dear Epoch VIP (and Puzzler!),

Thank you for subscribing to The Epoch Times and for supporting our journey of providing the world with truthful, uncensored journalism as well as analysis of world events, especially in China.

My journey with The Epoch Times actually began in 2009 when I discovered the publication's outstanding coverage of events in China, something of which I had studied for over 30 years principally as a linguist and China analyst. The Epoch Times' coverage was unique and included many aspects and facets of Chinese life under the Chinese Communist Party that were either not covered or were entirely avoided by the mainstream press. After reading this coverage, I felt compelled to "climb aboard" and support The Epoch Times on its journey toward truthful reporting that would not be beholden to any kind of censorship, whether it's from a government or commercial entity.

After discussions with the editor-in-chief on what the newspaper actually most needed and what I personally could do to support the paper, **I published my first puzzle page on Jan. 4, 2010—over 12 years ago.** Since then, my Epoch Times journey has been eventful, to say the least. I have learned and grown a great deal, and so has our puzzle page! It's grown from a single page of puzzles in a 16-page edition to two pages of puzzles (and a half page on the Wednesday "For Kids Only" page) in what is now a 52-page paper!

Along the way, hundreds of puzzlers have reached out through our [feedback@epochtimes.com](mailto:feedback@epochtimes.com) email to comment on the puzzles, send me pictures of their unique solutions, ask questions, point out my mistakes (I've made many!), pass along a compliment or constructive criticism and offer to help. I've benefited greatly from the many relationships and friendships formed making the puzzle pages better

and better with each passing year.

Thank you, readers! We wouldn't be where we are today without you! **Each and every one of you who has subscribed, advertised, or who has sent in encouraging words, constructive comments, or ideas has helped to make The Epoch Times what it is today.**

A number of Epoch Times readers (and puzzle fans) actually contribute to our puzzle pages! "Coder Chang" developed a "4 Numbers" puzzle tool (4Nums.com) that we have been using since January 2018. Our skydiving chess master, Michael Gibbs, began donating "Chess Challenges" to The Epoch Times over two years ago. Liz Ball, an accomplished puzzle developer whose work has appeared in more than 300 publications (HiddenPicturePuzzles.com) began donating her popular "Hidden Picture" puzzles to The Epoch Times' kids page over a year ago.

We sincerely appreciate these puzzles, and for me, they are a kind reminder of the community that has built up around this newspaper.

**In short, seeing people genuinely moved by The Epoch Times' commitment to journalism and truthful reporting of events, often glossed over or "slanted" by other media outlets, has been a heartwarming experience for me.**

I hope that your journey with The Epoch Times will be as educational, satisfying, and fulfilling as mine has been. And, please, always feel free to drop us a line at [feedback@epochtimes.com](mailto:feedback@epochtimes.com). We appreciate your insight, and who knows—I could always use a few more hands in the puzzle workshop.

*In truth and tradition,*

Tom Houston  
The Epoch Times

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