

THE EPOCH TIMES ARTS & TRADITION



PUBLIC DOMAIN

"Lofty Mount Lu," 1467, by Shen Zhou. Hanging scroll with ink and color on paper, 76.3 inches by 38.6 inches. National Palace Museum, Taipei.

Chinese Shan Shui Painting of the Ming and Qing Dynasties...4



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.

‘To Dust’: A Grisly Comedy About the Specifics of Death

MARK JACKSON

Hasidic cantor’s wife dies, and he has no understanding of the post-death process since, apparently, these things are never really discussed in his form of Judaism, and it’s driving him absolutely batty. Shmuel (Hungarian actor Geza Rohrig), writhing in his grief and haunted by macabre nightmares, feels a deep need to know exactly what’s going on with wife Rivka’s body, which is wrapped in a shroud, buried in a pine box (with three holes drilled in it) six feet under, somewhere in Rockland County, New York.

This Jewish Laurel and Hardy team of the hapless Shmuel and the spineless Albert—both need to man up.

He’s obsessed, fixated. “What’s going on inside that coffin?!” his mind shrieks at him. He feels that her soul remains attached to her remains and as long as he remains, er, remain—then she will remain, in pain. This is a comedy, by the way. Shmuel’s a fabulously Ichabod Crane sort of a fellow, hunched and scarecrow-ish,

and he stomps over to confer with his elder, payots flapping in the breeze (the long, curled sidelocks that accord with the Divine’s proclamation that “One should not shave the corners of one’s head”). The ancient community rebbe (Ben Hamner) tells him that he should probably stop indulging in such morbid thoughts. Shmuel’s got two young boys to raise, after all. “How does she return to the Earth?” “Maybe you don’t think of these things, Shmuel.” Oh, but Shmuel will think of these things, and so his next stop is a non-Jewish funeral home. It’s a major sin for him to go there. His list of sins, while on this macabre journey of detective work/science project, grows daily by leaps and bounds. There, he inquires of the goyische (gentile) funeral director (Joseph Siprut) after decomposition details. When the “I’m just a coffin salesman” young man realizes no sale will be forthcoming, he quickly turns hostile, informing Shmuel that after the embalming process, “We don’t really check up on their progress,” and furthermore, “Look, handsome, sometimes, in those hermetically sealed containers, the bodies explode. Trapped gas with nowhere to go.” This still doesn’t do it for Shmuel. He must know more. He hires himself to the nearby community college to look for a science professor. But due to religious reasons, he cannot converse with the lady at the front desk, and so, after a series of back-and-forth Post-it note exchanges wherein he queries, “May I speak to a man?” She writes back, “We appear to be out of those,” and she deposits him in the back of a science classroom taught by Ferris Buel-



‘To Dust’

Director Shawn Snyder

Starring Matthew Broderick, Geza Rohrig

Running Time 1 hour 45 minutes

Rated R

Release Date Feb. 8

★ ★ ★ ★

ler. I mean Mathew Broderick. I mean Albert.

Blind Leading the Blind

Shmuel presents his case: Albert tries to politely flee, but a more persistent man than our Shmuel, you will never find. Albert suggests that Shmuel study up on the decomposition of pigs, since they’re biologically similar to humans and therefore similarly chowed-down upon by the same maggots, bugs, and bacteria. “Who doesn’t like bacon?” This Albert, a recently divorced, weed-smoking, Jethro Tull-listening schlub of a professor of staggering mediocrity, is not how shall I say—terribly manly? And so he has boundary-setting issues. He can’t shake Shmuel (whom he cluelessly for passive aggressively never ceases to stop calling “Shmell”). And so Albert, off the top of his head, suggests one could get a dead pig and observe it, and extrapolate as to the prog-

ress of Shmuel’s wife Rivka’s decomposition, factoring in her approximately four-week head start. Albert didn’t realize who he was dealing with, and soon we have the delightfully scandalous image of a bushy-bearded, 17th-century-Polish-garbed, concerned citizen (black frock coat, wide-brimmed fur hat, flapping payots, and white knee socks) schlepping a deceased pig of no small size somewhere into the forests out back behind the town of Suffern, New York. Will Shmuel find peace? Will the consciousness of the details of the process of decomposition soothe his tortured soul? Will his concerned sons, sneaking into Shmuel’s room in the middle of the night and exposing his left big toe and talking to it (while father loudly snores) be able to exorcise the dybbuk (evil spirit) they feel certain he has eaten, which resides in said toe? Well. You’ll have to go and find out. I’m

not telling. Suffice it to say, while not uproarious, it’s a muted tale of two melancholy circus clowns tackling a taboo, sacrosanct area of life, offering scattered nuggets of high humor. Such as when, attending a traditional Hasidic wedding, Shmuel can’t take it anymore, swipes the Manischewitz wine bottle off the table, and, dead-drunk, weaves off through the woods to visit Rivka’s grave. The visuals of that are exceedingly giggle-worthy. Conversely, there are touching moments, such as when this cantor who is too depressed to sing anymore finally sits on his son’s bed, head bowed, and finds his voice again, singing a hauntingly beautiful song.

Culture Clash There’s the orthodox versus secular clash, succinctly represented at the film’s outset, first by a quote from the Torah, and then a quote from a Jethro Tull lyric, saying, “God



ALL PHOTOS BY WING AND A PRAYER PICTURES

(Left) Geza Rohrig plays Shmuel, a man obsessed with the death of his wife, in “To Dust.” (Right) Albert (Matthew Broderick, L.), a science teacher, tries to help Shmuel (Geza Rohrig) understand the physical effects of death, in “To Dust.” (Bottom) Geza Rohrig as Shmuel in “To Dust.”

It’s a muted tale of two melancholy circus clowns tackling a taboo, sacrosanct area of life.



is an overwhelming responsibility.” But then there appears to be another culture clash: I was slightly taken aback at seeing a photo of director Shawn Snyder. He’s black. This is some politically shaky ground for a black man to be commenting on in America, since this portrait of Shmuel will most likely offend the heck out of the Hasidic community.

However, looking at his last name, Snyder, I’m guessing it used to be at one point “Schneider,” and that Mr. Snyder—like Lenny Kravitz and Lisa Bonet—is a Jewlatto (half Jewish, half black). So he’s allowed to poke fun at Judaism (and I’m allowed to indulge in this jokey conjecture about him, because I’m a Blu-

latto [“blue-blood mulatto”-white ancestors came over on the Mayflower, black ancestors came over on a slave ship]. However, to the Hasidim, that would still make Snyder a secular schwartze goy, and his efforts will not be appreciated. Not that the Hasidic community goes to the movies, ever. What’s particularly striking to me about this film is that this pair of secular and orthodox wretched clowns—this Jewish Laurel and Hardy team of the hapless Shmuel and the spineless Albert—both need to man up. Like, go take one of those Men’s weekends that happen up around those parts.

Ultimately, Though That particular area is chock-full of mis-understood gods. The Ramapo Mountain range is the upper part of the U.S. eastern mountain range and is populated by hill people, uparound Sloatsburg. Farther up the Hudson Valley exist all manner of spiritual movements and healing centers. Had Shmuel driven north and consulted with Buddhist and Taoist practitioners, say, he might have learned that while Rivka’s molecules may have disintegrated in this dimension, her atoms, neutrons, electrons, quarks, and neutrinos live on in other dimensions, and the entire process is not in the least bit painful. Now that would be an interesting film indeed. Imagine the debates! Probably not as funny, though. Maybe even funnier.

THEATER REVIEW

‘God Said This’

JUDD HOLLANDER

NEW YORK—Forgiving past hurts and moving forward is often easier said than done, especially when the reason for your pain is still right in front of you. Playwright Leah Nanako Winkler makes this point clear in her involving comedic drama “God Said This,” presented by Primary Stages at the Cherry Lane Theatre. Hiro (Satomi Blair) is a 30-something New Yorker who left her childhood home of Lexington, Kentucky, long ago. Her memories of that time are colored by her father’s alcoholism and her mom’s efforts to shield her children from the worst of the turmoil. Family obligations, however, have forced Hiro to return to the one place she’d rather not be. Her mom Masako (Ako) is recovering from surgery and is now undergoing a strenuous round of chemotherapy as an in-patient at a Lexington cancer center. Also present at Masako’s bedside are Hiro’s younger sister Sophie (Emma Kikue), who is a born-again Christian, and their dad James (Jay Patterson), now a very committed member of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). While the rest of the family has seemingly come to terms with what happened years before, Hiro is not yet ready to be so understanding. As Hiro tries to sort out her still-raw feelings, it falls to Masako and Sophie to play peacemakers, albeit in different ways. Along the way, Hiro gets some unexpected insights from John (Tom Coiner), an old friend from high school, who has had to come to terms with some important issues of his own. Blending family angst with hilarious down-home worlds of wisdom, “God Said This” strikes a poignant cord because none of its characters come off as preachy, pretentious, or having all the answers. Rather, they are shown to be everyday people, just trying to get through the day, even as the world threatens to crash down around them. The play ultimately shows that the most important reason to move on from painful events in the past is to be able to begin a new chapter in your life—even if that proves difficult. This is something James makes quite clear in one of his AA testimonials, when he notes how it’s easy to be a jerk but how it’s hard to be nice. (We don’t need to mention that he uses another word in the play.) This character, who turns out to be the most together person in the story, serves as a sort of unofficial narrator. It falls to the rest of the family to realize that healing is a two-way street, irrespective of who ever may have been initially at fault. While James and Hiro try to deal with their past,

The family pulls together for the matriarch’s cancer treatment: Hiro (Satomi Blair), Sophie (Emma Kikue), Masako (Ako), and James (Jay Patterson) in Primary Stages’ production of “God Said This.”



JAMES LEYNSE

The most important reason to move on from painful events in the past is to be able to begin a new chapter in your life.

Sophie has her own issues to face, as she tries to be perfect for everyone around her. She uses her faith as a way to help others find their own strength, as when telling her mother “what God said.” Yet, each new situation or trauma pushes her closer to the breaking point. Patterson does very well as James. A particularly nice sequence has James recounting how he and Masako first met, while offering a glimpse of the love they initially felt for each other, a connection that has lasted for over 37 years. Patterson shows the character to be someone who has accepted responsibility for the pain he’s caused, has taken a lot of verbal abuse as a result, yet remains emotionally stunted in other ways. Ako is excellent as Masako, the one constant the family could always count on, but whom they now must rally around to help. In fact, the show’s most emotional moments occur when Masako is in her hospital bed, reacting to the massive pain caused by the chemotherapy. Masako’s spasms of pain are particularly gripping when she cries out that her very bones hurt due to the treatment. Ako also shows the harsher side of the character. What angers Masako the most is that James, who himself was in a life-threatening situation due to his drinking, was able to make a full recovery once he stopped. Yet, ironically, Masako, who had always taken care of herself, is now watching her body turn against her. Kikue, though her part is underwritten at times, gets in some good moments as Sophie, a woman trying to balance what seems like the weight of the world on her shoulders. Coiner is wonderful as Hiro’s old friend, a combination comic relief and armchair philosopher.

His comments, while not always politically correct, have a caustic ring of truth, especially when he describes how he handled a bad situation of his own. Blair works perfectly Hiro, the returning prodigal child, who learns the importance of healing for both herself and for those around her. Morgan Gould’s direction is letter-perfect as she expertly blends the show’s more traumatic and lighter moments into a cohesive whole. She keeps the story moving forward, with nothing presented feeling out of place or unnecessary. The sets by Arnulfo Maldonado, most notably a hospital room, work well. The lighting work by Ryan Seelig suggests the proper atmosphere for the hospital and other locales as well: places ranging from an AA meeting to a very significant car ride. “God Said This” is an intimate and not-always-gentle tale of people trying to deal with what life brings their way and, hopefully, come out the other side. Hitting all the right notes, it’s definitely worth checking out.

Judd Hollander is a reviewer for Stagebuzz.com and a member of the Drama Desk and the Outer Critics Circle.

‘God Said This’

Cherry Lane Theatre 38 Commerce St. New York

Closes Feb. 15

Running Time 1 hour, 45 minutes (no intermission)

Tickets 866-811-4111 or PrimaryStages.org

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"One Hundred Horses," 1728, by Giuseppe Castiglione. Handscroll with ink and color on silk, 37.2 inches by 305.6 inches. National Palace Museum, Taipei.

FINE ARTS

Chinese Shan Shui Painting of the Ming and Qing Dynasties



A detail from "One Hundred Horses," 1728, by Giuseppe Castiglione. Handscroll with ink and color on silk, 37.2 inches by 305.6 inches. National Palace Museum, Taipei.



A detail from "One Hundred Horses," 1728, by Giuseppe Castiglione. Handscroll with ink and color on silk, 37.2 inches by 305.6 inches. National Palace Museum, Taipei.



(Above)
"The Palace of Nine Perfections," 1691, by Yuan Jiang. Set of 12 hanging scrolls with ink and color on silk, 81.5 inches by 221.7 inches. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



(Top left)
A detail from "The Palace of Nine Perfections," 1691, by Yuan Jiang. Set of 12 hanging scrolls with ink and color on silk, 81.5 inches by 221.7 inches. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

(Bottom left)
"After Huang Gongwang's 'Autumn Mountains'" by Wang Yuanqi. Hanging scroll with ink and color on paper, 32 inches by 19.8 inches. National Palace Museum, Taipei.

(Right)
"Jade Cave Fairyland" by Qiu Ying. Hanging scroll with ink and color on silk, 66.5 inches by 25.8 inches. The Palace Museum, Beijing.

Court painting and literati painting were the two main artistic traditions during the Ming Dynasty.

MIKE CAI

Stately mountains surrounded by flowing water—this is the essence of Chinese landscape painting, or "shan shui" ("mountain water"). Through its long development, the genre demonstrated the ancient Chinese belief that heaven and earth exist in harmony.

That ancient belief comes from Taoist philosophy which, in particular, influenced the art form: Tall, robust mountains reaching to the heavens represent yang, whereas soft, flowing water covering the earth represents yin. Situated together, these demonstrated the Taoist balance of yin and yang—essential in the design of the landscape painting. And against the backdrop of these magnificent forces of nature, humans were depicted as insignificant specks.

The Great Age of Chinese landscape painting occurred during the Five Dynasties period (907–960) and the Song Dynasty (960–1279); the genre then underwent significant developments with the literati tradition of the Yuan Dynasty (1279–1368) under Mongolian rule. The meticulous brushstroke technique was the official style of the Song court, but during the Yuan Dynasty, the literati painters, who were Chinese scholars and artists exiled from the Mongol court, focused on capturing the spirit and energy of their subjects in their paintings. They often employed calligraphic techniques as a means of self-expression and tried to depict not only what they had seen but also what they felt.

Landscape painting continued to flourish during the Ming and Qing dynasties. These artists often studied and drew inspiration from past masters but developed distinctive styles and techniques of their own. For example, the color palette of Ming and Qing artists expanded beyond those of previous artists who mostly used monochromatic ink in black or blue-green.

Perhaps the greatest development was that, unlike in the past where a single artistic movement dominated, the Ming and Qing dynasties witnessed a juggle between different schools and styles of landscape painting.

And we are fortunate that some of these great paintings can be seen at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

The Ming Dynasty

With the dawn of the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) and the collapse of the Yuan Dynasty, China was under native rule once again. The Ming court sought to revive the artistic traditions of the academy of the Song Dynasty. Dai Jin (1388–1462) founded the Zhe School of painting, which was based on the national Song landscape style and characterized by a combination of high mountain peaks and soft mists.

While the Zhe School was an important school of court painting, it was overshadowed by the Wu School that was associated with the Four Ming Masters.

The Wu School

While court painting flourished during the early Ming, literati painting that had taken a stronghold during the Yuan Dynasty saw a decline. However, the literati tradition was by no means lost, as court painting and literati painting were the two main artistic traditions during the Ming Dynasty. In fact, as imperial power waned during the late Ming, artists like Shen Zhou (1427–1509), one of the four great Ming masters, emerged, and the literati tradition made its way back into vogue. Shen Zhou had renounced his government post and lived a reclusive life. He studied the traditions of the Yuan masters and founded the Wu School. The Wu School not only represented literati painters like Shen Zhou, but also included professional painters who mastered the meticulous style closer to the style of the court.

"Lofty Mount Lu" is one of Shen Zhou's well-known paintings that shows the stylistic influence of Yuan Dynasty painting. Located in northern Jiangxi, the lofty mountain is depicted with steep rifts and ravines.

Shrubs adorn the rocky slopes and vines drape the cliffs. A waterfall plunges hundreds of feet and cascades down the rocks to form a river. Near the base of the waterfall, a small figure stands in the shade of some pine trees and appears to be looking up in awe at the scenery. The minuscule size of the figure in comparison to the mountains suggests the Taoist philosophy of human insignificance in the vast expanse of nature.

In the vein of the literati style, Shen Zhou's brushwork seeks to express a certain sentiment. He used hemp-fiber texture strokes to portray

the rocky ridges and slopes to give a faceted appearance, imparting strength and rhythmic vitality.

Shen Zhou painted this piece as a gift for his teacher, Chen Kuan, in honor of his 70th birthday. Out of admiration and respect, he used the height and vigor of Mt. Lu as an analogy for his teacher's strong virtues. It is as if Shen Zhou depicted himself in the painting as the figure who gazes up in wonder at his teacher, who is embodied as the lofty mountain, the top of which he could never hope to reach—such is the sentiment expressed in the painting.

One of the Four Masters of the Ming was the celebrated artist Qiu Ying (1494–1552), who epitomized the professional painter of the Wu School. Although born into a family of humble origins, he acquired the support of wealthy patrons and art collectors. His style is known for its mastery of the meticulous brushwork technique that is characteristic of Ming court painting. Yet, he was able to draw upon the literati tradition without sacrificing precision to ultimately create his own unique style.

In "Jade Cave Fairyland," Qiu Ying portrayed a terraced fairyland that is removed from the mundane world. Beginning near the bottom, a bridge crosses a flowing stream that leads into the realm of immortals. A scholar dressed in white robes plays the zither under a canopy of pine trees, as if trying to communicate with the deities. Here Qiu Ying has invoked literati motifs, as the zither was an important musical instrument of the literati scholars.

Hidden pathways amid floating clouds lead to tiered pavilions among pine and cypress trees. Jade-tinted, crystal-shaped mountains pierce the sky with their towering spires. Qiu Ying's use of brushwork in the piece is delicate and refined to bring out the exquisite splendor of an immortalized fairyland.

The Qing Dynasty

China fell under the rule of the Manchurians during the Qing Dynasty (1644–1912). Those loyal to the Ming became a minority and sought refuge in religion; some became Buddhist monks. The Four Monk Painters belonged to this group, and they expressed their frustration and longing for the fallen regime through their somber landscapes.

Perhaps more importantly, the Qing emperors fervently embraced Chinese culture and became major patrons of the arts. In contrast to the Yuan Dynasty, Qing emperors were eager to employ Chinese scholars and artists at court.

One such artist who served at the Qing court was Yuan Jiang (1671–1746), who was known for his paintings of landscapes and buildings in the meticulous brushwork style. "The Palace of Nine Perfections" is his most famous work that exemplifies his specialization for large-scale palatial complexes. A set of 12 hanging scrolls form a large scene painting that represents a fusion of references to ancient antiquity in the context of contemporary events.

Set in the hills north of Chang'an (present-day Xi'an), the piece portrays a Tang Dynasty (618–907) imperial retreat. The Palace of Nine Perfections was known as one of the most opulent residences built that was then destroyed near the end of the dynasty. Yet, rather than referring back to the Tang, the lavish palatial complexes are depicted in the contemporary Qing style architecture, with its curved rooftops, ornate architecture, and brilliant colors. The large palatial retreat sits in a vast landscape resembling an enchanted Taoist paradise, with its lush gardens and sumptuous mountains.

From the left side in the foreground, a regal procession of figures descends from the hills. A close-up reveals the Qing emperor on



A detail from "The Palace of Nine Perfections," 1691, by Yuan Jiang. Set of 12 hanging scrolls with ink and color on silk, 81.5 inches by 221.7 inches. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

horseback, about to cross a bridge, followed by an escort holding a parasol. This scene is a reference to Emperor Kangxi's second inspection tour, when he visited Yangzhou—Yuan Jiang's hometown. Yuan Jiang was inspired by the ceremonial visit and created a painting to refer to the event in a splendid and historic setting.

The Orthodox School

The Qing court not only exhibited decorative court painting but also endorsed the literati tradition that became known as the Orthodox School of landscape painting. This school arose from the late Ming as an attempt to formalize what was once a rather private painting style of literati scholars. The painters known as the Four Wangs dominated this school and advocated for a grand synthesis of styles as a means to express their feelings and emotions toward nature.

Wang Yuanqi was the youngest of the Four Wangs and a personal painter for the Kangxi emperor. In his "After Huang Gongwang's 'Autumn Mountains,'" wispy clouds coil around the mountain peaks. A riverbank in the foreground zigzags through the valley before disappearing into the distant slopes. Red-orange specks of color are sprinkled among the greenery for a tint of

autumn. While his style was influenced by the Yuan Dynasty's painter Huang Gongwang, Wang developed his own techniques as well. He often used dry brushstrokes for texture and created his own unique diamond-pestle tip brushwork technique.

Influence From the West

As contact with the West increased during the Qing Dynasty, court artists were influenced by European oil and fresco painting techniques as well as the concept of linear perspective. The Italian Jesuit missionary painter Giuseppe Castiglione (1688–1766) served under three emperors in the Qing court. He developed a Sino-European technique that combined the Western techniques of light and shadow with the Chinese techniques of brush and ink.

Castiglione's most significant painting that represents this fusion is his "One Hundred Horses." This handscroll spans over grassland plains, mountains, and a riverbank, where a hundred horses are depicted in different poses and activities. Some are grazing leisurely, while others frolic playfully, combat aggressively, and so on; some are crossing the water.

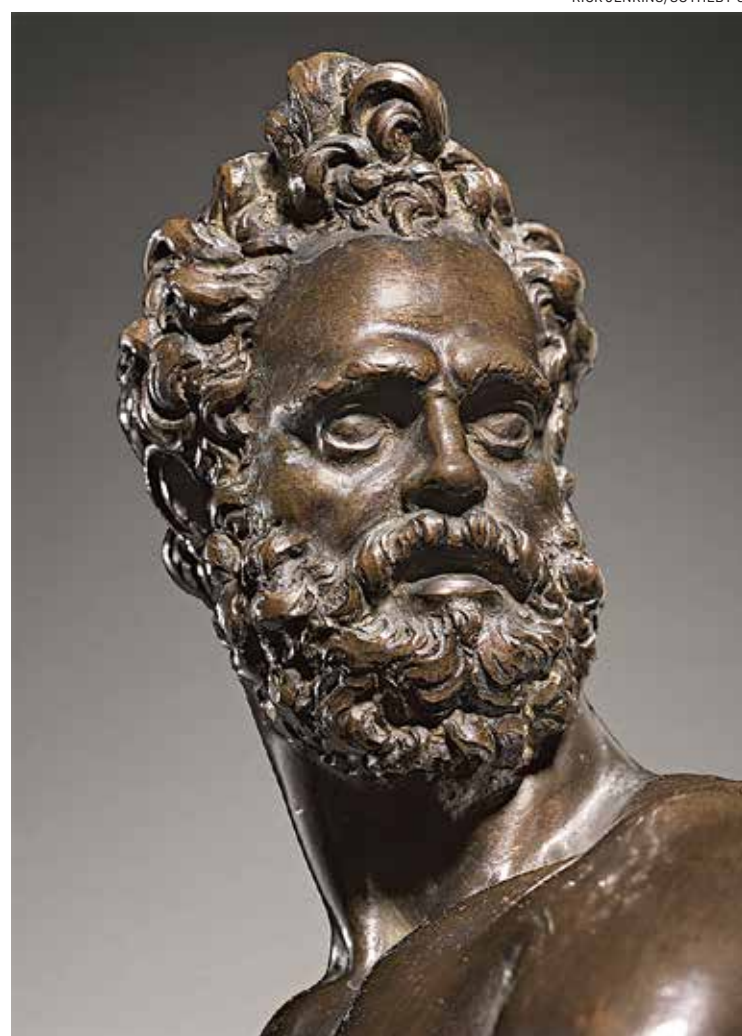
The foreground displays Western features while the background displays Chinese characteristics. Linear perspective is evident as objects farther away diminish in size. Castiglione's use of texture brushstrokes and outlining for the hills and mountains shows a Chinese influence. Ink washes in the background portray a soft, hazy atmosphere that also reveals native techniques. The trees, grasses, and shrubs in the foreground have shadow and contrast, while the horses are given a full-bodied, volumetric quality. However, he purposely toned down the overall shading to avoid dramatic contrast, which was intended to create a seamless blend of the two traditions of painting.

Throughout each dynasty, cultural, political, and social influences shaped the different styles and schools of landscape painting. Yet throughout, the philosophies of ancient China remained consistent, lending the genre a profundity that shaped the rich heritage of ancient Chinese art.

Mike Cai is a graduate of the New York Fei Tian Academy of the Arts and the University of California-Berkeley.

The Qing emperor fervently embraced Chinese culture and became major patrons of the arts.

Rare Giambologna Statuette Returns to Germany



Detail of the "Dresden Mars," 1587, by Giambologna. Florence, Italy.

LORRAINE FERRIER

The small bronze "Mars" first came to Dresden, Germany, in 1587 as a gift from the Late Renaissance sculptor Giambologna (1529–1608) to Elector Christian I of Saxony. (Electors were German princes with the power to elect the Holy Roman Emperor.) The "Dresden Mars" is thought to be the only surviving bronze that Giambologna produced for a royal sovereign. For 300 years, the statuette was part of the Saxon electors' art collection.

Then, in 1924, the bronze went into private ownership as part of the "Fürstenabfindung," when the personal property of the de-throned princes was confiscated by the German state.

Now, Giambologna's "Mars" returns to the region of Saxony, where it has embarked on a regional tour before it is put on permanent display at the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister (Old Masters Picture Gallery) in Dresden's Semper Gallery when it reopens in December.

Giambologna and Mannerism

Giambologna was considered the greatest sculptor of the Mannerist era (1520–1600), which was a transition stage at the end of the Renaissance, and his reputation was felt for two centuries after his death, second only to Michelangelo's. His small bronze statuettes continued to be reproduced until the 20th century.

Although definitions of mannerism differ, mannerist art usually

shows complex compositions made up of elegant, and sometimes exaggerated, artificial poses, purely to show an artist's ability.

Mars as Man

Giambologna's "Mars" is the epitome of traditional masculinity. As the archetypal hero, the warrior-god Mars is poised, ready to attack, or to protect in order to secure peace.

This statuette strikes a powerful pose: Mars is captured mid-stride, without his helmet, shield, and spear

that are so often shown in antique depictions of him. Giambologna's "Mars" is nude, perhaps to show fearlessness in the face of danger, a common device used by Renaissance artists. The only indication that this figure is the mythological god of war is the sword hilt that Mars holds in his right hand.

The palpable, primal instinct of the warrior runs throughout the sculpture, alongside an overarching elegance and the sheer beauty of man.

Obviously, a warrior needs strength, but strength here is not merely the physical strength that is seen in Mars's beautifully defined musculature. Mars's thoughtful, yet commanding gaze shows a mental strength, a needed skill in battle, and also in time of peace, when wisdom and courage have to come together to discern the right action.

An earlier version of Giambologna's "Mars" can also be seen at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.



Mars is captured mid-stride, without his helmet, shield, and spear.

LORRAINE FERRIER

St. Peter's Basilica in Rome can now be seen in a whole new light, after 100,000 LEDs were recently installed throughout the basilica by the Germany-based high-tech company OSRAM Licht AG. Before and after photos of one of the domes show the dramatic transformation. If these photos are anything to go by, seeing the newly lit St. Peter's Basilica must be like rediscovering a lost treasure, or even like regaining sight. Now, previously dark or unlit niches can be seen and truly appreciated by fine arts aficionados and pilgrims alike.

One photo shows the basilica's main cupola, or rounded dome. Although the main cupola was primarily designed by Michelangelo, he saw only the base of the colossal 65-foot-high drum, or circular walls of the cupola, built before he died. It was Michelangelo's pupil Giacomo Della Porta who carried out Michelangelo's design, completing the cupola in 1590. The diameter of the cupola at its plinth (base) is 139 feet. Below the cupola are four medallions, each 28 feet in diameter, which show the four evangelists: Mark with a lion, Luke with an angel, John with an eagle, and Matthew with an ox. Matthew wrote the first gospel of the New Testament, and the medallion shows him with

New illumination lights up the main dome at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.



ARCHIVE PHOTO OF ST. PETER'S

A dome in St. Peter's basilica shows the difference between the old and new lighting.



ARCHIVE PHOTO OF ST. PETER'S

his pen, all 9 feet of it.

Sunlight enters the dome through its 16 windows. Above the windows, a total of 96 figures decorate the dome from top to bottom on six ascending, concentric levels. The lower levels depict important figures in Christendom from the earthly realm: the busts of the 16 popes buried in the basilica, and Christ, the Virgin Mary, St. Joseph, St. John the Baptist, and some of the apostles. As the dome ascends higher, the figures enter into the ethereal, celestial realms, where angels are contained in rectangular frames holding the instruments of Christ's passion. And higher still, protective angels act as custodians for St. Peter's tomb. Next are cherubim and seraphim reflected on circular medallions, and then nearest to the peak are the serene faces of winged angels.

Moving farther up, the dome decor diffuses into a starry blue sky, and then a large Latin inscription is at the base of the lantern (a small cupola-like structure, usually with decorative arcades, mounted on top of a dome.) Each letter is over 4 1/2 feet high. The inscription gives thanks to St. Peter and to Pope Sixtus V, who had promoted the cupola's construction. Up high, about as tall as a 40-story building, the artwork on the lantern depicts, of course, God.

To find out more about St. Peter's Basilica, visit www.vaticanstate.va

CLASSICAL MUSIC

Secret Masses, Setting Faith Into Music, and the English Reformation

CATHERINE YANG

When England's King Henry VIII broke from the Roman Catholic Church in the 16th century, it was as if overnight an entirely new liturgy had to be created. Composers of the time had to write all new works, in a new language and a new style—even as some continued to practice their faith in secret.

"The program is an exploration of musical responses to the change in religion and also the change in political leanings," said Phillip Cheah, music director of Central City Chorus. On March 9, the chorus will perform "The Tudors," a program of music written around the time of the English Reformation, at the Saint Ignatius of Antioch Episcopal Church in Manhattan.

We will hear from composers Thomas Tallis, Thomas Tomkins, Robert Parsons, John Taverner, and William Byrd. And though many of these composers were contemporaries, and the pieces all sacred music, the style of the programmed works will vary greatly.

"They're all Tudor composers, but they all have their own specific style, their own approaches to this new liturgy, and this new approach to setting music," Cheah said.

Instead of Latin, the composers now worked with English text. The liturgy was meant to be simplified, in vernacular, and accessible to the masses, and the music was meant to reflect that. Gone was the thick Latin polyphony, Cheah said. Henry VIII even wrote a letter with instructions that the songs were to set one syllable per note, so that what was sung could be more easily

understood. "I wanted to explore what that meant for



SEAN SCANLIN

composers at the time," Cheah said. The earliest of the works is an Easter piece by Taverner, which shows the complex polyphony of the music that preceded the Reformation.

The history surrounding these pieces may be complex, but first and foremost, Cheah programs music to be enjoyed.

From Tallis, the well-known "If Ye Love Me" motet is "a perfect example of the very simplified style that the Reformation called for," Cheah said.

Tallis and his student Byrd were both composers for the Royal Chapel—and both were Roman Catholics. Despite that, the composers had very different styles.

"I wanted the various pieces to have a conversation with each other," Cheah said.

Performed in Secret From Byrd, the program includes his "Mass for Four Voices," which is a Catholic

Mass that had to be performed in secret. "These Masses were performed in someone's home, in a room somewhere," Cheah said. Even hearing them today, you get that sense, he adds. "There's a lot of stuff in the music that has harmonic tensions and whatnot, a somewhat secret code for tensions happening outside, in England."

Cheah explained that while some composers claimed outwardly to be Protestant and wrote Protestant music, they were still Catholics and "they're still people who want to practice their faith in secret." For example, on the words "grant us peace," or "dona nobis pacem," Byrd "unleashes the most dissonant suspensions of the entire Mass," Cheah said. The listener can feel the tension, waiting for the harmonies to resolve. "It cannot be a coincidence that he's using that text in reference to what's happening."

The Mass will be performed movement by movement, spread throughout the program rather than all at once. "We want to give a sense of how the Mass would have actually been heard if it were performed in public in a service," Cheah said.

Byrd's Mass differs from Catholic Masses written before the Reformation as well. "He is still living in this time,"

Cheah said, "so the harmonies are not as angular and rhythmically complex as ... say, John Taverner's."

Layers The history surrounding these pieces may be complex, but first and foremost, Cheah programs music to be enjoyed. Even knowing nothing about the music or the history, one can sit in the concert and enjoy the experience.

And sometimes, like Cheah saw during rehearsals, something clicks and you experience a piece of music in a new light because of what you heard right before or after it. He feels this happens for the audience too, but it might be more subliminal than conscious.

"I feel like the concert becomes analogous to peeling away layers of an onion, where as you peel, you find more and more things that connect or are interesting," he said. "I think if you can give the audience a chance to walk away and think about things, then I think that deepens their lives aesthetically."

Central City Chorus performs "The Tudors" on March 9, 2019, 7 p.m. at the Saint Ignatius of Antioch Episcopal Church in Manhattan.

Central City Chorus will perform "The Tudors" at the Saint Ignatius of Antioch Episcopal Church in New York on March 9, 2019.



The Petronella Oortman dollhouse, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

CRAFTSMANSHIP

Petronella Oortman *and Her* Giant Dolls' House

SUSAN BROOMHALL

A 17th-century dolls' house must number among the more unusual source "texts" through which we can find out about women's lives in the past. Yet, for Petronella Oortman (1656–1716), this exquisite object forms an important window into the creative and imaginative life of a wealthy, married woman in Amsterdam.

Petronella came from a large family of seven children and grew up on the Singel canal. Her father was a gunmaker. She began to construct her dolls' house as an adult, during her second marriage to a silk merchant, Johannes Brandt. Petronella's dolls' house appears to have been made in the late 1680s before the birth of four children.

Petronella was one of a small group of wealthy Dutch women who created exquisitely crafted dolls' houses in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. Like her female contemporaries, she spent vast sums of money on creating and decorating her house, commis-

Petronella Oortman was one of a small group of wealthy Dutch women who created exquisitely crafted dolls' houses in the late 17th and early 18th centuries.

sioning artwork and furniture for her miniature world from leading manufacturers and artists of the day.

The house itself, made of tortoiseshell with pewter inlay, was crafted by a French cabinetmaker. It was over two and a half yards high and almost two yards wide. Some women kept detailed notebooks about their additions, expenses, and renovations to their houses. Petronella's house was even painted by a local artist, Jacob Appel, showing it full of life.

When Petronella died at the age of 60, her dolls' house passed to her only living daughter, Hendrina. These houses were often mentioned in their owners' wills as important possessions to be passed on through the family (usually female) line.

Petronella's house, today one of the most popular exhibits in Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum, was not a children's toy. It was likely opened only at adult parties for people to marvel at the clever craftsmanship, as well as the creative vision and wealth of its owner.

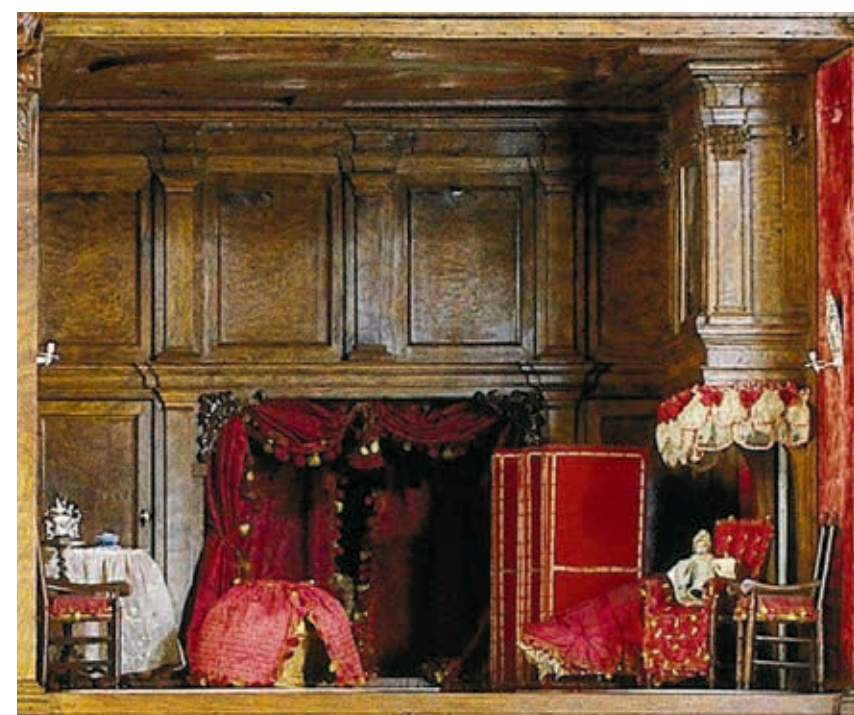
Visualizing Child-Bearing

So what can we learn about Petronella, and women like her, from her miniature house? Unlike other dolls' houses that we know existed at this time, those made by these Dutch women each contained a nursery and lying-in room. This was a special room the mother occupied for up to six weeks after the birth of a baby, where she received visitors and held parties.

Having a dedicated lying-in room was unusual, as most people just held their parties in their best and warmest room. People took these celebrations very seriously, because the birth of a healthy child was important. The inclusion of such rooms reflected the importance for wealthy women of bearing children, and also its joys when mother and child came through the experience safe and sound.

But Petronella's arrangement may have originally recorded other feelings too. Appel's painting of the dolls' house shows a layout that we no longer see in it today. In one room, he depicts a laid-out infant surrounded by other living children. This may reflect Petronella's mourning for the loss of her firstborn child.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY SHUTTERSTOCK



The lying-in room and nursery of the Oortman dollhouse, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.



The kitchen of the dollhouse, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

Over the course of her 10-year marriage to her first husband, silk merchant Carel Witte, Petronella had had a daughter but she had died in 1684, less than 12 months old. Carel himself passed away the following year.

Materializing Female Domestic Work

Petronella's dolls' house also had a special linen or laundry room. In 17th-century Dutch society, wealthy people sent out their linen to be washed and bleached, and it was then returned to the house for drying and ironing.

Often this might be done just once a year, with maids hired specially to carry out the household part of the laundry process. The less frequently you did this, the richer it showed you were, because it meant that you had a lot of linen to spare when it got dirty.

Petronella's dolls' house had special places for the maidservants to sleep, each with different fabrics for the maids' beds, its own chair, and chamberpot. These dolls' houses also had foot warmers, a special box where warm coals from the fire were placed, which women rested their feet on underneath their skirts. Women putting to-

Petronella Oortman's dollhouse also has a beautiful kitchen full of fashionable blue and white china.

gether dolls' houses thought of such things. After all, it was women who traditionally sat farthest away from the fire.

Petronella's house also had a beautiful kitchen full of fashionable blue-and-white china. The houses of some other women even had two kitchens: a working one and a "best kitchen," where you might invite your friends and show off your best crockery.

Writing Her Own History

Unfortunately, not much more is known about Petronella's life. There are no known portraits of her. But we can interpret her dolls' house as a kind of ego-document, or self-narrative, that presented a vision of her as she wanted to be remembered by future generations.

It was a vision that her widower respected, preserving his wife's creation intact after her death. An eyewitness recorded visiting the Brandt home in 1718, where Johannes and his daughter reverently showed him the beautiful house Petronella had created.

Her dolls' house partly conformed to contemporary expectations of wealthy women. Books from that era suggested that girls should play with toys that could teach

them how to become useful housewives. Girls were given pots to polish or dresses to sew for dolls. Thus, when rich women like Petronella thought about what their fantasy home would look like, perhaps it was indeed one with gleaming pots, dishes, and fine china in their kitchens, lots of linen and the maids to manage it, and the joy of healthy babies to celebrate.

Women's real domestic work was never far removed from these creative objects. Most were in cabinets based on the design for linen and clothing cupboards, and some contained drawers for clothing as well as the dolls' house. So the real and the imagined worlds of the household interacted in these spaces.

Yet Petronella's house shows us that it was possible for an elite female patron to find a creative way to operate with these expectations and still signal her wealth and status, engage with the artistic milieu of her era, and craft an identity of her own.

Susan Broomhall is a professor of history at the University of Western Australia. This article was first published on *The Conversation*.

ALL IMAGES IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN



The Oortman dollhouse, in a painting by Jacob Appel, 1710. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

The Pure Ecstasy of Saint Teresa



PUBLIC DOMAIN (PHOTOS), ACANTSTUDIO/SHUTTERSTOCK (ILLUSTRATION)

"Ecstasy of Saint Teresa," 1647–1652, by Gian Lorenzo Bernini, Cornaro Chapel, Santa Maria della Vittoria, Rome.

REACHING WITHIN: WHAT TRADITIONAL ART OFFERS THE HEART

ERIC BESS

Art has an incredible ability to point to what can't be seen so that we may ask "What does this mean for me and for everyone who sees it?" "How has it influenced the past and how might it influence the future?" "What does it suggest about the human experience?" These are some of the questions I will explore in my series Reaching Within: What Traditional Art Offers the Heart.

Between the years of 1647 and 1652, Gian Lorenzo Bernini produced what is considered his greatest sculpture: "Ecstasy of Saint Teresa." One of the greatest artists living at the time, Bernini found his reputation tarnished after a mishap during the construction of the basilica of St. Peter's Cathedral. It was later proven that he wasn't at fault.

Certainly, he redeemed himself by sculpting the "Ecstasy of Saint Teresa."

Saint Teresa of Ávila was a 16th-century Catholic nun. She became ill at the monastery and began to study the writings of Christian mystics. These writings consisted of spiritual exercises that required inner reflection, contemplation, meditation, and prayer. She began to have visions from her spiritual practice. And one of these became Bernini's inspiration, which Teresa described:

"Beside me, on the left, appeared an angel in bodily form. ... He was not tall but short, and very beautiful; and his face was so aflame that he appeared to be one of the highest rank of angels,

who seem to be all on fire. ... In his hands I saw a great golden spear, and at the iron tip there appeared to be a point of fire. This he plunged into my heart several times so that it penetrated to my entrails. When he pulled it out I felt that he took them with it, and left me utterly consumed by the great love of God. The pain was so severe that it made me utter several moans. The sweetness caused by this intense pain is so extreme that one cannot possibly wish it to cease, nor is one's soul content with anything but God. This is not a physical but a spiritual pain, though the body has some share in it—even a considerable share."

In this vision, Saint Teresa tells of an angel who pierces her heart with a spear. The wound from this spear causes her to feel the ecstasy of God's love and the pain from its absence.

Bernini expertly uses marble to depict this vision. Rays of gold shine from above to illuminate the scene. The angel, depicted as serene and peaceful, is lifted by the softness of clouds and gently holds

a long, golden spear in his right hand between his thumb and finger. The spear is aimed at Saint Teresa's heart. She is presented in a state of ecstasy: Her eyes are closed, her head is drawn back, and her lips are parted.

It is safe to assume that Bernini chose to depict this event after it had begun, since she describes the angel as plunging her with the spear "several times." But what does this all mean?

A Contemporary Misunderstanding

The contemporary understanding is to associate Teresa's visions and Bernini's depiction with eroticism. In the early 20th century, the founder of psychoanalytic theory, Sigmund Freud, popularized the theory that unconscious sexual impulses are behind the decisions we make and the experiences we have. Has a Freudian interpretation been projected onto Saint Teresa's spiritual experiences and on this sculpture?

It is common across all religions and spiritual disciplines for practitioners to have mystical experiences after the sincere effort put

into their spiritual exercises. The Buddha and Jesus, for example, engaged in spiritual exercises that resulted in mystical experiences, that is, experiencing nirvana, heaven, and God. In modern times, adherents of qigong disciplines such as Falun Gong also speak of mystical experiences. The type of psychological interpretation popularized by Freud serves only to limit the spiritual potential of aspiring saints.

Instead, and even in opposition to this idea, Saint Teresa's experience may be interpreted as the ecstasy that occurs when the mind, no longer attached to bodily urges, transcends the mundane and moves toward the sublime. Visions and ecstasy are a result of the spiritual discipline initiated during her life as a Carmelite nun. She elevated her heart and mind through the diligence of her spiritual discipline to be worthy of being touched by God.

A Freudian interpretation seems to belittle the power of Teresa's transcendent mystical experience to nothing more than the ripple effect of bodily urges.

The visions and ecstasy of Saint Teresa were the result of a real, sincere spiritual effort and can serve as an inspiration for raising our own spirits toward what is higher and unknown.

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



A detail of the "Ecstasy of Saint Teresa," 1647–1652, by Gian Lorenzo Bernini, Cornaro Chapel, Santa Maria della Vittoria, Rome.

LITERATURE

How King Arthur Became One of the Most Pervasive Legends of All Time



PUBLIC DOMAIN

Virtues and values prevail and are the enduring features of the Arthurian legends.

"King Arthur" by Charles Ernest Butler.

RALUCA RADULESCU

King Arthur is one of, if not the, most legendary icons of medieval Britain. His popularity has lasted centuries, mostly thanks to the numerous incarnations of his story that pop up time and time again.

Indeed, his is one of the most enduring stories of all time. Though his tale is rooted in the fifth and sixth centuries, it has continued to captivate audiences to this very day. There is just something about the sword in the stone, the Knights of the Round Table, Lancelot, and the wizard Merlin that has kept us coming back to the various legends of King Arthur for such a long time.

In the last 15 years alone, there have been Hollywood movies, computer games, and other creative re-tellings. With Bangor University's new Center for Arthurian Studies just launched in 2017, and Joe Cornish's "The Kid Who Would Be King" just released, there is no doubt that both the scholarly search for Arthur and the impact of his legends on modern culture are continuing to flourish.

Arthur's life story is one that has become almost a standard for knightly heroes to aspire to. He is seen as brave, noble, kind—everything that some might say is missing from our modern world.

The Epic Hero

Few might know that Arthur is a hero whose ancestry goes back to the Brittonic inhabitants of early medieval Wales before the arrival of the Saxons, and not just the kingly figure that appears in later romances. In fact, the Arthur of legend was neither a king nor the owner of a round table, at least not in the way we use these terms today.

Records about Arthur's life are few and far between. He emerges in the sixth century in the work of the Welsh monk Gildas, where Arthur's victory at Mount Badon is celebrated, but he is not named. It is only in the ninth century "Historia Brittonum," composed by another monk, Nennius, that Arthur is named as a "dux bellorum," a military commander, and his 12 battles are listed.

Much time passed between these early records and the 12th century's full-blown accounts of Arthur's reign, in the work of Geoffrey of Monmouth and the French Chrétien de Troyes, the writers who truly made Arthur the legendary king we now know, and he took on a variety of roles.

In the Welsh stories, Arthur remains a warrior, often a foil for other heroes' path to greatness. But in the early French romances, he provided a yardstick for courtly behavior, as epic battles do not form the backbone of these later stories written on the continent. Geoffrey of Monmouth brought back the leadership and determination of an Arthur who becomes not only a king (on whom 12th-century An-



KERRY BROWN/TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX

"The Kid Who Would Be King," a new film based on the legend of King Arthur, stars Louis Ashbourne Serkis.

go-Norman kings could model themselves) but also a conqueror—again reflecting a desire for greatness beyond national boundaries. Thus the image of the courtly king, a leader in both war and times of peace, was born.

A Modern Legend

However, Arthur was always connected to the realities of those countries, and the times and peoples for whom he was reinvented. The Arthurian revival of the late 19th century, for example, helped put him back on the international cultural map by removing the historical aura and emphasizing the values he stood for—a far cry from the medieval attempts to utilize him as a national figure from whom medieval kings could derive their right to rule. This paved the way to the fantasy worlds created, most famously, by T.H. White in "The Once and Future King," published in 1958.

All of these interpretations were about more than just revealing the secrets of one of the most intriguing men of all time. In this confusing and sometimes frightening world, audiences seek reassurance in the models of the past. They want a standard of moral integrity and visionary leadership that is inspirational and transformational in equal measure, one that they cannot find in the world around them but will discover in the stories of King Arthur.

Is our modern appetite for fantasy a reflection of our need to reinvent the past, and bring hope into our present? Moral integrity, loyalty to one's friends and kin, abiding by the law, and defending the weak form the cornerstone of how Arthurian fellowship has been defined through the centuries. They offer the reassurance that doing the morally right thing is valuable, even if it may bring about temporary defeat. In the end, virtues and values prevail, and it is these enduring features of the legends that have kept them alive in the hearts and minds of so many through the centuries.

Raluca Radulescu is a professor of medieval literature and director of the Centre for Arthurian Studies at Bangor University in the UK. This article was first published on The Conversation.

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TRUTH AND TRADITION

LITERATURE

How PC Moralism Cuts Us Off From Our Cultural Heritage

A 1905 illustration of the protagonist Lily Bart, in Edith Wharton's novel "The House of Mirth." Although the novel documents the descent of an educated, sensitive woman due to societal forces, a college student today wouldn't read it, for politically correct reasons.

MARTIN COTHRAN

Anyone who has read classic literature knows that there are things in old books that offend our sensibilities. And this isn't a new phenomenon, either. Every generation sees something in the thought and writing of previous generations that it doesn't like or that it finds offensive.

The difference today is not that there are any more things about the past we don't like, but in our reaction to them.

Writing in the New York Times Book Review, Brian Morton takes note of the increasing tendency among young people to condemn out-of-hand any piece of literature that contains an intolerant character or distasteful idea.

In the article, titled "Virginia Woolf? Snob! Richard Wright? Sexist! Dostoyevsky? Anti-Semite!" Morton mentions meeting a college student who couldn't bring himself to read more than 50 pages into Edith Wharton's "The House of Mirth" because he encountered an anti-Semitic character.

Every generation down to the last one took the warnings of the occasional disagreeableness of the past under consideration and then read old books anyway. You were not expected to find these things appealing, but it was always expected that you understand the mentality behind them, a mentality you could only understand if you read about it.

But today's readers are different. Says Morton: "When they discover the anti-Semitism of Wharton or Dostoyevsky, the racism of Walt Whitman or Joseph Conrad, the sexism of Ernest Hemingway or Richard Wright, the class snobbery of E. M. Forster or Virginia Woolf, not all of them express their repugnance as dramatically as the student I talked to, but many perform an equivalent exercise, dumping the offending books into a trash basket in their imaginations."

To today's Politically Correct generation, books should not be read because they are good, but only because we agree with them. Because of this, our society is becoming increasingly inbred—which is why we see so many intellectual hemophiliacs: people who can't sustain the wound of disagreement, lest they bleed to death.

Disagreement today is less a provocation to discussion and debate, and more an excuse for maledictions and anathemas. This is producing a generation of people who think in sound bites and talk in slogans.

The funny thing about this is that it used to be religiously conservative people who were caricatured as closed-minded and easily offended. Today, it is just the opposite.

Politically and socially, I am a little to the right of Attila the Hun. But last year I read the "Girl with the Dragon Tattoo" series, books that could easily have offended my sensibilities given the lesbian heroine and its setting—a culture (Swedish) that exemplifies many of the things I abhor. But, despite this, I thoroughly enjoyed them.

I didn't agree with the way the characters lived or the values they held, but I could at least understand them and see the world, for a moment, as they might see it. They did nothing to change my opinions, but they expanded my vision.

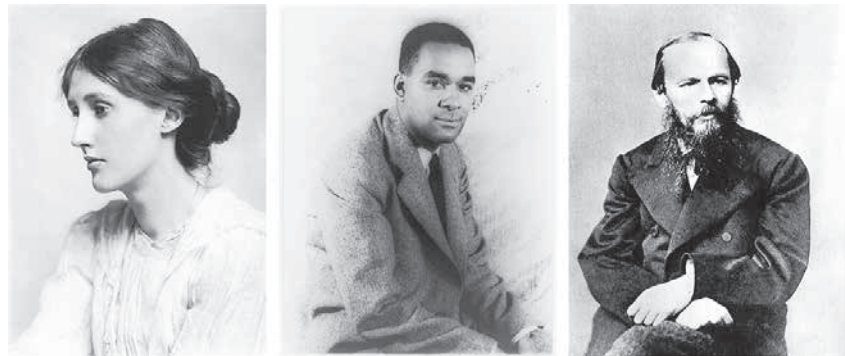
The irony, of course, is those who have produced this close-mindedness are the ones who pretend to stand for openness and tolerance.

This post, "How PC Moralism Cuts Us Off From Our Cultural Heritage," was originally published on Intellectual Takeout by Martin Cothran. Martin Cothran is the editor of Classical Teacher magazine, published by Memoria Press, and the director of the Classical Latin School Association.



She lingered on the broad stairway, looking down into the hall below.

ALL IMAGES IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN



"Virginia Woolf? Snob! Richard Wright? Sexist! Fyodor Dostoyevsky? Anti-Semite!" is the title of a piece, in The New York Times Book Review, by Brian Morton.



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