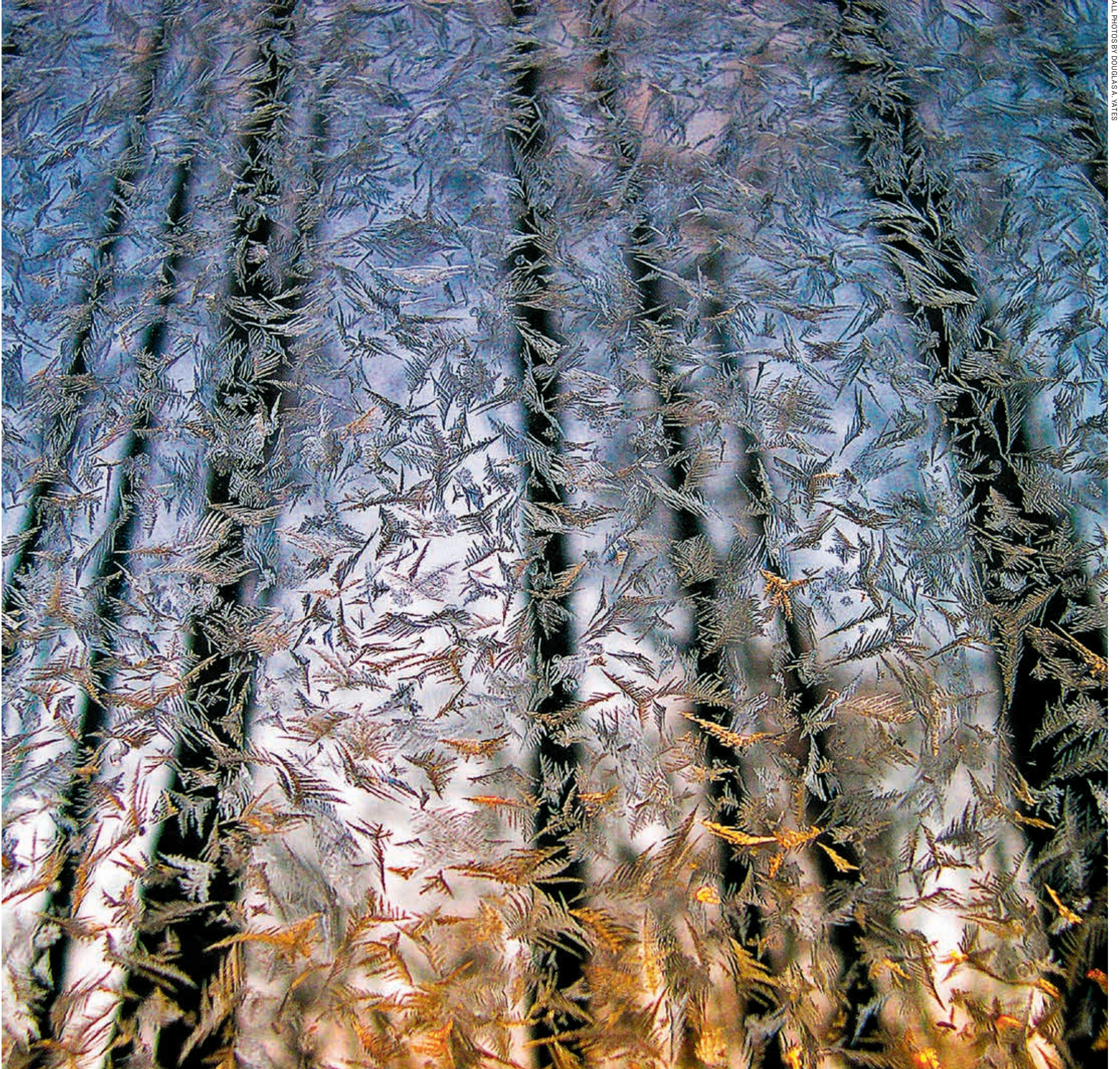


THE EPOCH TIMES

ARTS & TRADITION



ALL PHOTOS BY DOUGLAS A. VATES



Ineffable Awe
Where Land and Water Meet...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.

‘Wrestle’ Fatherless Sons Grapple Against Bleak Futures

MARK JACKSON

The studio pitch for the documentary “Wrestle” might have been “Hoop Dreams” on a wrestling mat.” It’s a thoroughly engrossing tale of one young coach’s attempt to grow boys into men via the discipline of competition grappling, and a blistering depiction of failing public high schools in America.

The outstanding take-away from 1994’s “Hoop Dreams,” which chronicled the embryonic basketball careers of a few highly talented, up- and coming high-school ballers, was that it demonstrated the absolutely insane amount of talent, hard work, and sheer luck it takes to get into the NBA.

We American hoop-fan couch potatoes tend to take the NBA Kings—the M.J.s and the LeBron—for granted. “Hoop Dreams” smashed all that. But the ridiculous, “Oh, they’re just talented” outlook nonetheless continues to run rampant in the USA. “Wrestle” is another good reminder about talent, hard work, and luck.

Friday Night Lights

It was Buzz Bissinger’s book, “Friday Night Lights,” the resulting TV series, and the movie by the same title that started this documentary trend, which is also now the go-to format for how the Olympics and Super Bowl are presented: Get to know the players’ and their families’ life stories. Then you care about them. You’ll be invested in the outcomes of their lives. The drama is heightened, we pay more attention. We really want them to win. It’s basically new, improved storytelling.

High school is also one of America’s favorite things. It’s the time of the great sorting. Just like in “Harry Potter”: Are you a Slytherin or a Ravenclaw? Are you a nerd, jock, stoner, or mean girl? It’s the time of the prom. It’s the time of the class president, the class valedictorian, the captain of the football team, and the head cheerleader. These are the American archetypes of when everything is new, exciting, euphoric, and excruciating.

And so the directing team of Suzannah Herbert and Lauren Belfer picked four underdog high school grapplers and followed them around for an athletic season, documenting their lives. It’s a powerful, moving group portrait.

Big Cats

Like the Permian Panthers football team of “Friday Night Lights,” the J.O. Johnson Jaguars of Huntsville, in northern Alabama, is another team with a big-cat mascot. Except the Panthers captured our collective imaginations because, while their footballers weren’t physically big, that area of Texas is known for its toughness.

These young wrestlers from Huntsville are truer underdogs in the sense that that level of Midland, Texas, toughness is not part of the landscape in Alabama. Huntsville is situated at the base of the southern Appalachians, and these boys have nary a father in sight, between the four of them.

Which makes the role of 28-year-old head wrestling coach (and social studies teacher) Chris Scribner all the more heroic. He’s basically the Caucasian dad to these (mostly) African-American teens, and in this—the third year after he established the wrestling program—the Jags have already qualified to go to state. As we all know, “going to state” is a phrase as grounded in Americana as apple pie—our particular early harbinger of greatness.

Scribner’s mentoring, guiding, and coaching is mostly a thankless job: Like all teens, the boys ruthlessly rag on their coach. He’s trying to be their coach, psychologist, dad, teacher, chauffeur, cop, truancy/parole officer, and, according to Jailen Young, “grammar Nazi.”

He’s game, though. Scribner is tough, and at one point compares himself to Teague, the sole Caucasian boy of the group. Like Teague, Scribner also had a serious addiction problem in high school, and has, as a result, instituted the Alcoholics Anonymous “Serenity Prayer” in the team huddles.

At one point, tough love results in a coach-student lawn grapple. Muscled-up, dreadlocked senior Jamario Rowe’s got a baby on the way, no post-high-school prospects, and resides in a constant state of psychic anguish. Which of course manifests as mouthing off, hostility, and insubordination.

Coach Scribner sets a strong but compassionate boundary for him, refuses to let him walk away, and in the ensuing tussle, out-grapples Jamario but holds him gently as a fragile egg, all while taking elbows to the face, and ultimately comforts the boy’s tortured soul. It’s a beautiful thing to behold.

Stacked Against Them

Alabama’s public schools suffer from endemic dead-beat dad and welfare mom situations, resulting in low high-school test scores and graduation rates for their offspring.

Throw in some endemic, Deep South racism, aptly depicted here by a hostile white cop itching to jail

young Jailen Young for a dimmed taillight (and the black boys admitting it’s a common occurrence), and coach Scribner, knowing how hard he himself had it coming up, has to admit he didn’t face the full array of hardships that await the average young African-American male. Jailen, raised by his grandfather, hasn’t seen his mom since he was 2.

Jaquan Rhodes gets pulled over as well, and a trace amount of weed in the car puts his entire, fragile life immediately in jeopardy.

Teague Berres’s psychic battle is no less intense, however. He’s on four different medications for ADHD (which he doesn’t take because they affect his wrestling); he’s got the above-mentioned highly addictive personality, and smokes whatever he can get his hands on. His mom wishes he’d get arrested to knock some sense into his head.

One of the most powerful scenes is when the assistant coach crowds the team into a hallway and informs them that Teague just got caught going door-to-door, posing as a charity worker, taking donations, and then running off and spending it on marijuana. The boys harangue Teague: “That’s just evil!” And then, seeing the anguish on his face, they group hug. Nobody here is a thug, but it’s not easy in this neighborhood. And they all know it, all too well.

Gott to State

The Jags eventually do make it to the state championships. However, this is a documentary and not a Hollywood happy ending—not all our boys do well, and that’s tragic.

What was most interesting to me, though, is that I believe all these boys are equally matched talent-wise, athletically. Teague appears the least talented, but he also smokes too much, and only has Big Pharma looking after his mental condition, which I think is one of the greatest current crimes perpetrated upon America’s youth. Jamario’s a brick house, but his mind is weakened from a myriad of psychological pressures.

Of all of them, Jailen’s got the most positive outlook and confidence, backing his tremendous grappling talent—and wins the opportunity to climb out of his social crab-bucket.

The saddest part of the movie is that J.O. Johnson High School, long on the federal list of failing schools, was shut down in 2016 and turned into a training facility for local law enforcement.

Actually, that’s not the saddest part: Jamario’s girlfriend Samara gives birth, by herself, in the hospital while he’s at graduation. And he ends up leaving her. What high school will their child attend now, if she even makes it past our now endemic meth and opioid epidemics?

What with America’s ravenous appetite for mixed martial arts competition in the Ultimate Fighting Championship, I think this film would have a big audience if it opened wide. The wrestling is electrifying, even if the shots are too fleeting.



Coach Chris Scribner visits the home of Jamario Rowe in psychologist-chauffeur mode.

It’s quite striking, really, the ability of non-actors nowadays (due to practice gained from selfie and selfie-video culture) to let a camera be ever-present in their lives and not hide any of their emotions, regardless of the intensity and tragedy of their personal situations. All involved in this effort should be proud for having put all their pain on display, for the rest of us to learn from.

And it must be said that while there is mostly tragedy here, nevertheless, overall hangs the enduring, peculiar American romantic atmosphere that high school is a magical time of life, holding the most promise of good things to come.



(Top) (L–R) Jailen Young, Teague Berres, Jamario Rowe, and Jaquan Rhodes at a post-state championship wrestling competition.

(Bottom) (L–R) Cast and production staff for the film: Steven Klein, Graham Edward Lebron, Suzannah Herbert, Teague Berres, Jaquan Rhodes, Jailen Young, Jamario Rowe, Lauren Belfer, Sinisa Kukic, and Pablo Proenza.

‘Wrestle’

Director

Suzannah Herbert, Lauren Belfer

Starring

Jailen Young, Jaquan Rhodes, Teague Berres, Jamario Rowe, Chris Scribner

Running Time

1 hour, 36 minutes

Rated

R

Release Date

Feb. 22

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

ALL PHOTOS BY TERRY DUDLEY/A FIREFLY THEATER FILMS

ALL PHOTOS BY DREAMWORKS ANIMATION/PARAMOUNT PICTURES



Astrid (voiced by America Ferrera) and Hiccup (voiced by Jay Baruchel).



A scene from “How to Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World” by DreamWorks Animation.

Third ‘How to Train Your Dragon’ Needs More Zooming and Booming



Hiccup leading his dragon kingdom to freedom in “How to Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World.”

MARK JACKSON

“How to Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World.” Let’s get right down to what you’re wanting to know: 1) Is it good for kids, 2) is it good for adults, and 3) is it as good as its predecessors?

It’s definitely good for kids, and seated behind me at the critic press screening was a nice, adult lady critic who told me, over and over, and over, and over, and over again, how much she loved this series of taming-the-dragon movies. And so there you have it—yes, and yes. And for No. 3—not really.

Now, the first one, which came out in 2010, was a story about a boy (Hiccup, voiced by Jay Baruchel) and his supercool pet; the coolness stemming from—nevermind the fact that any pet dragon is cool—this boy’s dragon was a Night Fury, not your run-of-the-mill fire-breather. Noooo. This special hot rod of a dragon sped actual lightning! Those of us who enjoyed high school biology thrilled to the Night Fury’s design being more along the lines of an electric eel than, say, Smaug (the dragon in “The Hobbit”).

The sequel (2014) dealt with now-Hiccup’s-teenager issues. And this third installment grows Hiccup all the way up, to where he eventually grows a beard and looks remarkably like actor John Krasinski. And finally takes his place in the leadership lineage of this forefathers.

He furthermore defends his kingdom, establishes a new understanding of the proper relationship between dragons and humans, and ultimately releases the Kraken, er, Toothless his black Night Fury along with Toothless’s new girlfriend, the “Light Fury” (who looks like a cute, coy, white, winged newt), back into their natural habitat. Hence “The Hidden World.”

Sounds good, right? But now that everyone’s all

grown up, the original kid fun goes away a little bit. Now, we’ve arrived at the stage of “When I became a man, I put away childish things.” Like dragons. And so, therefore, this installment is not quite as awesome for kids as its two predecessors. Still quite good, though!

What Goes On

So, Hiccup is now king of Berk, an island village where humans live in harmony with their dragon pets. It sort of looks like parts of Brazil, very crowded, with everything and everyone stacked on top of each other. In fact, it has a slightly, amusingly, uncomfortably crowded, ghetto-ish look about it. I couldn’t help but think of the inevitable hygiene issues. Hercules and the stable of King Auegas came to mind.

Hiccup’s life’s mission is still as the leader of a dragon-rescue squad, liberating dragons everywhere from captivity. Which is why Berk is now overcrowded. The ineptness of Hiccup’s dragon-saving crew is more than compensated for by his hot-rod dragon’s outsized capacity for mayhem and routing enemies, to the point where it’s called into question whether Hiccup would actually be anything without his dragon.

Anyway, cue new bad guy: dragon-hunter Grimmel the Grisly (voiced by F. Murray Abraham in fine, disdainful form). His dragon philosophy is diametrically opposed to Hiccup’s—enslave ‘em or kill ‘em all! It’s slightly understandable, given his hench-dragons are sort of nasty, scorpion-like belchers of what appears to be green, hydrochloric acid. Yuck.

Grimmel’s coming for Toothless! It’s on! What to do?! Release all the Krakens! Dragons, I mean! Take them all back to their true home, far across the sea, and down in the depths of the oceans, via a secret portal!

This is the best part of the movie, the hidden world, bringing to mind James Cameron’s “Avatar” world, looking sort of like a colossal subterranean aviary, the size of which dwarfs immense dragons to the point that they look like flocks of wheeling birds. There should have been more of this world.

While Grimmel hunts for Toothless, Toothless has a beach courtship of his new(t) bride-to-be, which takes the form of many of the bird courtship dances you’ve seen on YouTube and Facebook. Quite cute.

And you’ll immediately start to conjecture about the look of the offspring of black Toothless and white Newt (that’s what I’m naming her). The nice critic lady behind me hoped loudly that one would be a tiny, white Light Fury, with a black ring around one eye, like Pete the Pup from the “The Little Rascals.”

And then there’s Hiccup getting married to Astrid (America Ferrera). Other returning characters are in flashbacks of Hiccup’s hulking Scottish dad (Gerard Butler), Viking Eret (Kit Harington), Snoutlout (Jonah Hill), Fishlegs (Christopher Mintz-Plasse), Ruffnut (Kristen Wiig), Tuffnut (Justin Ruppel), and Gobber (Craig Ferguson).

All in all, it needed more of what makes these movies excellent; it needed more of what Navy and Air Force fighter pilots refer to as “zooming and booming” (flying around at supersonic speeds). It needed more GoPro-type footage from the dragon’s back cockpit. Because we all want to fly, and flying dragons would be so lovely. Similar to the “SNL” skit “More Cowbell,” here, it would be more zooming and booming.

There won’t be another “Tame Your Dragon” movie, but if the new, James Cameron-produced “Alita: Battle Angel” is any indication, we can look forward to some excellent zooming and booming in his next “Avatar.”

‘How to Your Dragon: The Hidden World’

Director

Dean DeBlois

Starring

Jay Baruchel, Kate Blanchett, America Ferrera, Gerard Butler, Kit Harington, Jonah Hill, Christopher Mintz-Plasse, Kristen Wiig, Justin Ruppel, Craig Ferguson

Running Time

1 hour, 44 minutes

Rated

PG

Release Date

Feb. 22

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

PHOTOGRAPHY

Ineffable Awe

Where Land and Water Meet

The fine art photography of Douglas A. Yates

LORRAINE FERRIER

Led by the Alaskan sun, the award-winning photographer Douglas A. Yates aligns himself with nature's time as he catches astonishing images of earth, water, and ice. Each photograph is a pictorial encore to a unique natural performance between land and water. For some 50 years, Yates has worked as a photographer. His work has been widely exhibited in group and solo shows, and his images have been published in *Outdoor Photographer*, *Alaskan Airline Magazine*, and *Whole Earth Review*, to name a few. Yates also has a passion for prose; he's an avid, published writer. His skill in both visual imagery and the written word make for a marriage fit for his purposeful images, which he says in his online artist statement are "an intersection of aesthetics and metaphor."

Yates lives a simple life on the Alaskan landscape, just south of Fairbanks, in a cabin he built himself some 30 years ago. The cabin is surrounded by the boreal forest that sustains both him and his art.

But Yates's life hasn't always been like this.

In May 1968, a few years after Yates graduated from high school, he was drafted into the U.S. Marine Corps. At that time, Yates felt he was destined to become an infantryman in Vietnam but then, he says, "fate intervened." Instead of the infantry, he was sent off to photography school in Denver, where he learned the basics of how to take photographs and how to chemically process the film in the darkroom. He was then posted to Marine Headquarters in Washington, D.C.

On leaving the Marines, Yates worked for five years as a freelance entertainment industry photographer in Reno, Nevada, where his family lived at the time.

But Yates had always wanted to build a cabin and live in the woods, a dream he made real in 1983, after he moved to Fairbanks.

Yates shares how nature and a large dose of serendipity guide him to take each photograph. As he tells his story, Yates's words mirror the quality of water as it flows, as enthusiastic narratives burst forth full of great shots and walkabouts—a fast, rhythmic outpouring of sharings that only slow as answers need more reflection.

THE EPOCH TIMES: Can you please explain what it's like where you live in Fairbanks?
DOUGLAS YATES: This region in Alaska is called the interior, and it's characterized by very deep cold in the winter with very little wind. And in the summer, it can be over 90 degrees Fahrenheit and bright blue sky. Fairbanks is about 350 miles north of Anchorage, which is on the coast, and it's about 350 miles south of Prudhoe Bay where all the oil comes from. So, it's kind of the center of Alaska. It is a boreal forest: heavily forested with spruce, birch, alder, and aspen.

I am located about 10 miles south of Fairbanks on a south-facing slope, in a cabin that I built about 30 years ago. I heat with wood. I do have a telephone and electricity, but I find that the physical requirements of heating with wood keep me connected with the landscape and a simple life.

THE EPOCH TIMES: On your website it says you take photographs to record your surveys. What does that mean?
MR. YATES: It means a walkabout. It means getting into the country, following my eyes, and letting the light tell me where I should go: following trails, and sometimes walking off the trails, following the water courses downstream and upstream. And that's where I find my photographs—on my walkabouts.

THE EPOCH TIMES: So you just happen upon your photographs? They're not planned?
MR. YATES: That is correct. A lot of it has to do with serendipity and being in the right place at the right time. Over the years, of course, you gain certain skills about where to go and what to expect, but it's basically a random walk, although my destination is that interface between water and land. That's where I think most of the action happens. It's very dynamic there because of the erosion and the deposition and the daily change in the level of the water. That's where the patterns that please my eye are found, more than any other place: whether it's moving water, whether it's icicles, whether it's some debris that is caught in a

pool, whether it's the patterns of bubbles that may have developed during a break-up when the ice is melting and the water is warming and finding its way to the next level and then out to a creek and then down to the river and then down to the sea.

THE EPOCH TIMES: So there is no typical shoot?
MR. YATES: No. Nobody's waiting for me. There's no timeline. I just go and I wander, and I follow my eyes, and the light tells me where to go.

From May to September, I go out late in the day—6, 7, or 8 o'clock in the evening—that is when the sun is low in the sky and the shadows are long, and that presents a dramatic opportunity for photographers. So, I will be out on the landscape for three or four hours during those months, if it is not cloudy.

Fairbanks is famous for its cloudless summer skies. That is one of the tremendous draws to this latitude; living at the 64th parallel, you have stage lighting for five to six hours a day.

In the winter, when the landscape is covered mostly in white and the running water is concealed beneath the snow cover and ice, it is not as dramatic as when the water is actually moving. Now, in about 40 to 50 days, the sun is really going to be coming back strong at this latitude, and the sun will start eroding the ice and snow, and then we will begin to see ice and snow melt. And that's when things really become lively for my photography: when the water starts to run, whether it's just a trickle or whether it's the full force of the river.

I use the deep winter months to do editing and post-production work on my photographs. I'm also a writer, and I use these long winter nights to pursue nonfiction essays.

THE EPOCH TIMES: What's the subject of the essay you are working on?

MR. YATES: As you might suspect, I'm a contrarian, and I don't buy into the idea of man-made climate change. The essay is a rebuttal to the mainstream idea that we're responsible for climate change.

It's a complicated story, but I would say that we've been fed misdirection. And whether there is a malevolent reason behind it, I can only speculate, but I think there is a great deal of evidence that shows that human activity simply is too small in scope and intensity to actually change the climate on Earth.

The climate does change, but it's a consequence of the sun's intensity, which changes, as well as of the orbital variations of the Earth's movement around the sun. At some points, we are much closer to the sun than at other times, and if you look at the rise and fall of temperature based on climate proxies (ice cores, tree rings, and pollen grains), the climate on Earth oscillates between warm and cold—and it has a history of doing this as far back as we can find the data.

THE EPOCH TIMES: I guess you have seen that firsthand, as nature is right at your door.

MR. YATES: I do have a fascination with ice, so I should probably tell you a bit about that. This, of course, has to do with where I live because ice is so prevalent here. But at one time, I worked as an aide in the Alaska state legislature, and I learned about opportunities to travel to China. This was in 1984. I had been particularly interested in Paul Theroux's "Riding the Iron Rooster, by Train Through China." I had some connections in Harbin, and I went on my own and spent about 30 days there connecting with artists, writers, and creative people, who introduced me to the ice festival that Theroux wrote about in his book. I documented the festival with all of the ice sculpture.

When I returned to Fairbanks, I gave a slideshow about Harbin's ice festival to the Chamber of Commerce and other public groups who rallied 'round the idea, and they created organizations here in Fairbanks that invited Chinese master carvers to come and show us how to do ice carving as part of a cross-cultural linkage that is now in its 30th year. We have ice carving here in Fairbanks every year.

THE EPOCH TIMES: I've seen on your website that you take photographs of the Ice Alaska festival.

MR. YATES: I go to the festival early, when the carvers arrive and they start their projects, and then until the spring sun melts the ice sculptures away. There are wonder-

ful opportunities for photographs after the ice sculpture park closes and the sun continues to erode the sculptures. They take on a kind of macabre life of their own.

THE EPOCH TIMES: What is your most memorable shot?

MR. YATES: Well, that's like asking a mother who's her favorite kid! So, it's the one I haven't made yet. You've seen my website. Do you have some favorites?

THE EPOCH TIMES: "Isthmuses of Desire," that's one of my favorites, along with "Frost Forest" and "Axis Mundi."

MR. YATES: "Isthmuses of Desire" was an early image, probably made over 10 years ago. It was in the spring, and winter was being chased away by a warm sun, and there was a remnant of melting ice along the creek edge. And the color of the creek edge

was coming up through the ice at the same time as the angled light was moving down the hill-side. So, you have this side-light and reflections happening at the same

time. I was kneeling on my hands and knees at the edge of the creek, selecting a specific point that seemed to have some significance in terms of weight and bal-

ance, to make that shot.

THE EPOCH TIMES: When you said you were kneeling down, it almost seems like a spiritual experience in taking these shots.

MR. YATES: At one point, I thought I was alone out in the woods working on a shot like this, but somebody else was on the trail and stopped to watch me. After I had completed that particular shot, this person came on down the hill, and we talked for a moment and she said, "I thought you were praying."

THE EPOCH TIMES: Please tell us about the images "Frost Forest" and "Axis Mundi."
MR. YATES: "Frost Forest" was taken one November. I was working as a journalist for a native organization in Fairbanks, and I carried my camera with me everywhere. One morning as I was going down to my car, I swung the door open to climb in, and then I looked through the window, which was heavily frosted, and that was the scene I saw. That's my car window with all of

the frost interfacing with the rising forest that I live in immediately behind it, and the rising sun coming up from the bottom. "Axis Mundi," that's an interesting one



“I wander, and I follow my eyes, and the light tells me where to go.”

Douglas A. Yates, photographer



Douglas Yates's photographs express the natural beauty of where the earth and water intersect. Here we see "Spring Frieze."



"Towers and Pillars."

2



because it's not a so-called natural object. What you are looking at is a degrading ice sculpture. The park had closed, and I'm wandering around on my own to see what the light was telling me, and on my way out and into the parking lot, I found the remnants of an ice sculpture illuminated by the sun immediately behind it. And I rendered an image that I later found the perfect title for: "Axis Mundi," which means the center of the world.

THE EPOCH TIMES: What do you want people to know about your work?

MR. YATES: The act of sharing the image I select is a kind of invitation to explore my mind through a visual visitation of what I think is significant. So, at one point it's a prayer, but it's also a sharing.

And I also think that, not all of them, but many of my captions are leading the viewer to make some assumptions about what I'm thinking about, and to render, through words, another way to look at the image.

THE EPOCH TIMES: What criteria do you use to select your images?

MR. YATES: It has to have a kind of subjective pleasure to my eye: the balance, the asymmetry that makes for an intriguing, interesting image, something that you want to know more about, or something that reminds you of something in your past. And it is refined and sophisticated, and it resonates on some level that is almost beyond words: ineffable—that's what I'm looking for.

I'm looking for things that have a sense of fragility and a sense of sensitivity and a sense that, hey, this is important, but it's not going to last very long because light is

nothing but change.

And, if there are any other natural materials that we encounter in the northern hemisphere that are subject to shifting, changing temperatures, then it's ice and snow.

THE EPOCH TIMES: As you were trained in analog photography, was there anything that surprised you when you transferred over to digital photography?

MR. YATES: As a kid, I spent a lot of time outside, wandering on my own, even before I had a camera, so I had these innate perceptual skills. But what I learned at the Marine Corps photography school was a foundation upon which everything else has been built. And the movement toward digital photography is just a technological variation that allows more efficiency, less expense, and less time. So it's certainly an advancement, but if you don't have the foundations of observation and perceptual objectivity, it's not necessarily going to make you a better photographer.

THE EPOCH TIMES: What has the ice taught you?

MR. YATES: Everything moves and changes, and being a photographer, I've trained myself to slow down my perceptual discernment, and as a consequence, I think that I may have a step-up on my fellows. I think that by slowing down and sitting in one spot and just letting the landscape teach you what you want to know, it's all there, but most of the time we are so busy, diverted, and distracted that we miss the lesson.

This interview has been edited for clarity and brevity.

4

ALL PHOTOS BY DOUGLAS A. YATES. ILLUSTRATION: SAMSERIUS/SHUTTERSTOCK



3



1. "Trail Marker."
2. "Verging."
4. "Isthmuses of Desire."
4. "Oracle."

1



FILM REVIEW

Rhino Poaching Crisis in South Africa Exposed in ‘Stroop’ Documentary

JANI ALLAN

“Stroop,” a film about rhino poaching in South Africa, has won 10 international awards at 15 film festivals in Europe and North America, where it was screened to packed audiences. It’s being hailed as a lyrical yet hard-hitting documentary—made with female passion—in a wildlife film industry dominated by men.

Bonné de Bod and Susan Scott are the filmmakers. While Scott trained as a cinematographer in the United States, De Bod has been a wildlife television presenter with the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), the country’s public broadcaster, for the past decade.

The two women sold everything they had, moved in with their parents, and crowdfunded to make what has been called the most important movie about the genocide of the rhino. “Stroop” (meaning “stripped” in Afrikaans, a reference to rhinos being separated from their horns) took four years of filming to complete.

Crisis

A century ago, half a million rhinos (*Ceratotherium simum*) could be found across Asia and Africa. Today, it is estimated that no more than 28,000 are left on the planet. Some call rhino poaching a crisis, some call it a war, and others even call it a campaign. De Bod calls it a genocide. The word is defined as the “intent to destroy, in whole or in part,” and this applies to the mass slaughter of rhinos; it means to wipe out a species.

Every day, three rhinos are killed in South Africa; that’s one every eight hours. De Bod puts it this way in the film: “You get up in the morning and go to work, and a rhino is killed. You come home, and a rhino is killed. While you are sleeping, a rhino is killed.”

Rhino horn is the most valuable substance on the planet. A horn can fetch \$300,000 on the black market; it’s more valuable than diamonds, gold, or platinum.

Eighty percent of the world’s rhinos are found in the Kruger National Park, South Africa. This area, about the size of New Jersey, is targeted by some 15 gangs of poachers every day. A park ranger there is 12 times more likely to die than an FBI agent.

“At the end of the day, someone must stand between the rhino and the poacher,” says a game ranger. The park has 450 rangers, who often find themselves in war-zone combat situations. They are poorly paid and face extreme danger every day. Rangers hate a full moon. They know a full moon is a poacher’s moon.

The Kruger National Park has a sophisticated high-tech surveillance system called “Postcode Meerkat,” and there are also K-9 dog patrols. But as long as the insatiable demand for rhino horn continues, so will the war.

The gruesome methods used by the poachers are well documented. In order to avoid being tracked, the poachers—there are always three of them—will attack a rhino with an ax, rather than a gun. The ax is used to chop through the rhino’s face. Then, the Achilles tendons must be severed.

Should the rhino have a calf, the calf has been known to stay with its dying mother for days.

Organized Crime

Wildlife crime is one of the world’s largest transnational organized criminal activities, alongside trafficking in drugs, arms, and human beings, valued at more than \$23 billion a year. The international criminal syndicates that the poachers report to are usually also involved in other criminal activities, such as human trafficking.

Criminal groups are using the same routes and techniques for wildlife trafficking as for smuggling other illicit commodities, exploiting gaps in national law enforcement and criminal justice systems. These are serious crimes, driven by demand, facilitated by corruption, and linked to organized crime and militias in many countries, as well as terrorist networks.

The rhino poaching issue is a multilayered problem. It starts with an ancient belief held by millions of people, hundreds of miles across the ocean, which regards the rhino horn as being able to cure disease and uplift status. The brutal slaughter is driven by insatiable markets in China and Vietnam. There is a perception that ground rhino horn is a miracle medicine, and it is

Bonné de Bod with two dead rhinos. It was at this moment that she decided an independent movie must be made about the killing of rhinos.



SUSAN SCOTT FOR “STROOP”

An orphaned rhino.



SUSAN SCOTT FOR “STROOP”

The rhino is hunted for its horn. The crime of poaching rhinos is explored in the documentary “Stroop.”



PEXELS/PI XABA Y.CO M

Photographer Susan Scott, the director of “Stroop,” on location in the bushveld, South Africa.



SDB FILMS

The most expensive substance on the planet, rhino horn. Its mythical healing properties generate a billion-dollar illegal rhino-trafficking industry that is pushing the rhino to extinction.



SUSAN SCOTT FOR “STROOP”

sold on the black market for \$94 a gram. “There is an epidemic of cancer in Hanoi,” de Bod explains. The pollution in Hanoi is extreme. Two hundred Vietnamese die every day from cancer. The super-rich believe that rhino horn will cure lung and liver cancer. It is used as a detox for hangovers too.

“Traditional Chinese medicine believes that rhino horn boosts the immune system. The mythical, powerful properties they give it was something to see and film,” de Bod says. “In fact, the horn has no more medicinal property than keratin, but how do you change an ancient mindset?”

The parts of the horn that aren’t used as “medicine” are carved into tsatskes—status symbols for the super-rich.

On the ground in South Africa, it begins with poverty, as many poachers come from poor communities surrounding the national parks. After 25 years in a post-apartheid world, there are 2 million Shangaans living in abject poverty, utterly disconnected from nature.

“How can you love something if you don’t know it?” de Bod says. “We have to get communities involved. Young children must be taught that keeping a rhino alive is worth more to them. That is why we have an outreach program. The movie, translated into Shangaan, has been screened to local communities.”

The South African rhino poaching crisis is compounded by corruption at the highest levels. Under government “care,” poaching increased to 1,215 animals from 135 in national parks between 2012 and 2014—an increase of 800 percent.

Skukuza Court alone handles 40 to 60 cases a day. The criminal justice system seems to conspire to work in favor of the poachers, since paid defense teams can delay proceedings for five years. The group Outraged Citizens Against Rhino Poaching (OSCARP) was established in order to protest and document the number of poachers who walk free, only to be caught a few weeks later for poaching.

The South African rhino poaching crisis is compounded by corruption at the highest levels.

Danger and Protection

Part of “Stroop” was filmed in communist Vietnam. Since it’s highly dangerous there for journalists, in order for de Bod and Scott to capture the black market—the destination for rhino horn—they posed as backpackers. Their cameras and true motives were hidden.

Rhino farmers live under constant threat that their animals may be attacked. Insiders will inform the poachers where the rhinos are.

Protection for rhinos is big business. Vana Mockford has a private game farm, where each rhino has its own security guard.

“It is an astronomical amount to protect them 24/7, but we have been hit three times. It is insane that you can buy a rhino cow for \$31,000, but on the black market, the horn would fetch \$250,000,” Mockford says.

Pieter Els, another private rhino owner, made the front page of the British newspaper the Daily Mail, when nine of his rhinos were killed in one night.

“Making this film has been an emotional rollercoaster ride,” de Bod says. “I was shocked to see the unbelievable cruelty inflicted on rhinos, but then I remembered why we had to make this film. These are God’s creatures. We, as humans, have a moral responsibility to protect them, to protect all living species.”

“Gorillas in the Mist,” a 1988 movie based on the book by U.S. primatologist Dian Fossey, successfully drew attention to the plight of mountain gorillas in Rwanda.

“Blood Lions,” a 2015 documentary about a business dubbed “canned hunting” by critics, led a South African parliamentary committee to call for a review of captive lion breeding.

“Stroop” may well be the game-changer that halts the extinction of rhinos. De Bod and Scott’s *raison d’être* has always been, “We made this film so that no one can say they didn’t know.”

“Stroop” debuted on Amazon, iTunes, Google, and DVD on Feb. 12.

Jani Allan is a South African journalist, columnist, writer, and broadcaster.

CLASSICAL DANCE

EPOCH TIMES STAFF

According to legend, the Yellow Emperor founded the Chinese civilization in 2697 B.C. He is said to have stabilized China: It was he who united tribes and changed society from one that relied on hunting to one that grew crops, and his reign glittered with prolific invention. Essential knowledge for the civilization of humanity became known during this time, such as music, medicine, arithmetic, the written word, and the making of boats, silk, and clothes.

He is said to have achieved spiritual enlightenment during his life. According to the legend, when he was ready, heaven opened for him, and a yellow dragon came down. He is said to have flown skyward on that yellow dragon, taking with him more than 70 officials who also achieved enlightenment, and leaving behind an enriched civilization and 10,000 witnesses of the spectacular flight.

Two other great influencers of Chinese culture, Lao Zi and Confucius, were born about 2,500 years later. Both were born in the long Zhou Dynasty during its decline. Lao Zi instructed people to return to their original, pure nature and left for people “The Classic of Dao and Virtue,” commonly known as the “Dao De Jing.” Confucius taught benevolence, and that through benevolence people can achieve the Dao.

In A.D. 67, the teachings of Buddha Sakya-muni, originating in India, swept through China, advocating self-salvation and meditation, further enriching the spiritual thought and culture of China.

Divine Culture Continues

Approximately 5,000 years after the reign of the Yellow Emperor, in 2006, a group of artists formed a performing arts company in New York, which they named Shen Yun Performing Arts. Their vision was to restore and disseminate traditional Chinese culture, retaining its depth and essence, and conveying its wisdom to people in the world today.

Even the name, “Shen Yun,” is a reminder of the profound essence of the culture the arts company tries to convey. “Shen Yun” translates roughly as “the beauty of divine beings dancing.”

The company’s website says: “Since ancient times, China has been known as the ‘Celestial Empire.’ This refers not only to China’s strength and position as East Asia’s Middle Kingdom, it also captures a more profound



BLUE HSIAO/EPOCH TIMES STAFF

China’s legendary founder, the Yellow Emperor, is said to have attained Enlightenment. Thus, spirituality comes from the very roots of the Chinese culture.

meaning, describing a land where the divine and mortal once coexisted.

“It [the name “Celestial Empire”] refers to the belief that the divine, through various dynasties, transmitted a rich and abundant culture to the Chinese people. Chinese culture is thus known as ‘divinely inspired,’ and is the only culture in the world to have a continuous recorded history of 5,000 years.”

The types of experiences that many people talk about after watching Shen Yun produc-

tions indicate that the wisdom of the Land of the Divine, home to Confucius, Lao Zi, and countless sages, is reaching the audience.

After watching Shen Yun’s 2019 production in Paris, Laurent Dassault of the Marcel Dassault Group said: “I felt that there was deep thought going into the Chinese culture, through its history, and so it touches us Europeans a lot because we don’t have all this history throughout our families, and especially in this France that we love.”

And after watching Shen Yun’s performance in Boston in January, businessman Mike Li said: “What I see is not just performing arts. It is China’s traditional culture, a divinely inspired culture—one with a few thousand years of venerating the heaven and earth.”

Embodying Chinese Culture

Shen Yun Performing Arts transmits these meanings to modern audiences through the Shen Yun performers. All performers, from Shen Yun’s orchestral musicians, to solo virtuosos, to classical Chinese dancers, to the conductor and stage technicians, work together to uplift the audience with the essence of Chinese culture.

Confucius said, “Wherever you go, go with all your heart.” Shen Yun performers, exemplifying this saying, are focused and disciplined. Each year Shen Yun’s 80-member touring companies (six of them for the 2019 season) travel the world, imparting the brightest wisdom that emerged from a culture made over the course of many dynasties.

Like many monks and sages throughout Chinese history, Shen Yun performers meditate daily together, and apply self-discipline not only to their bodies but also to their hearts and minds.

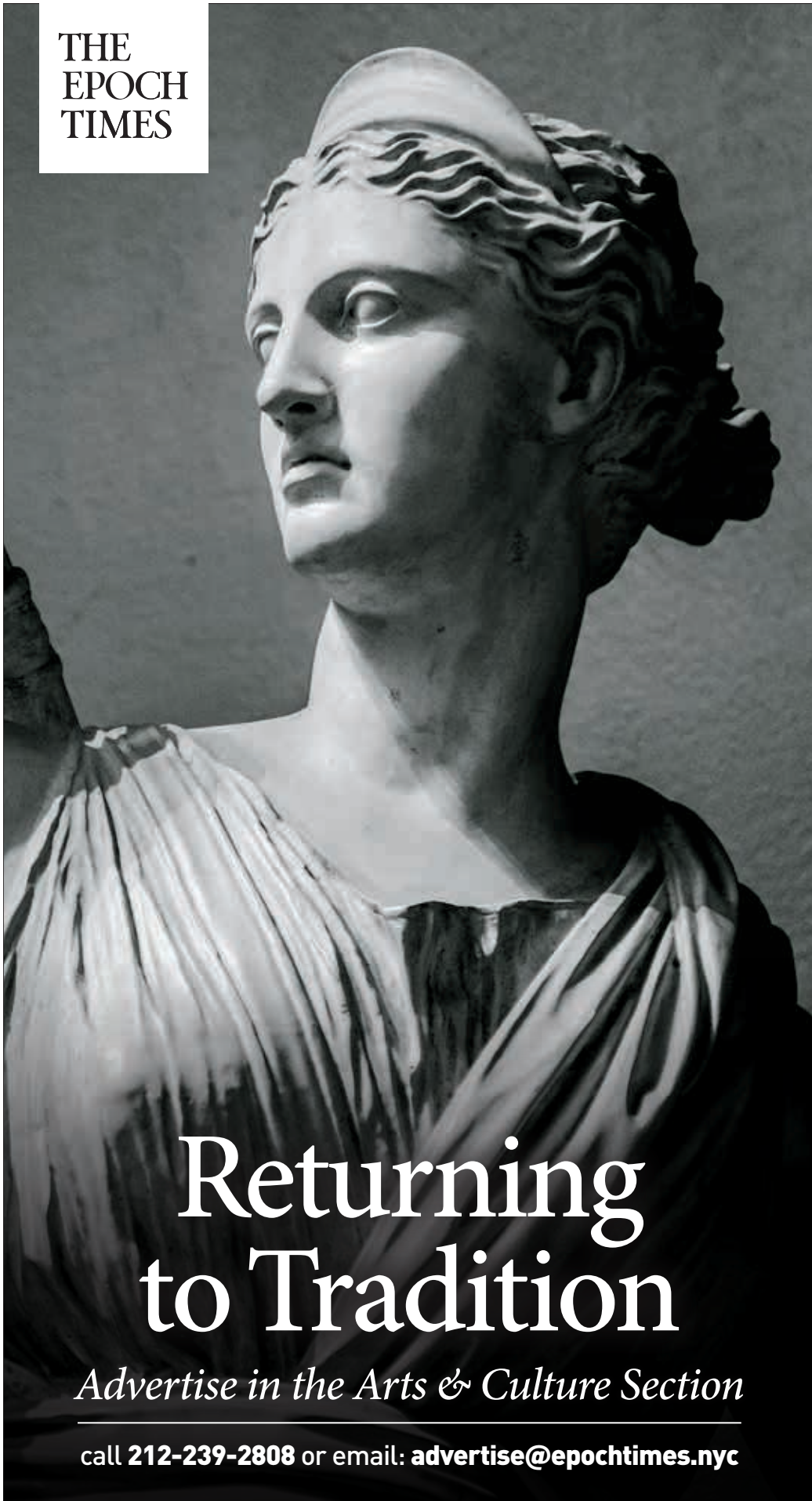
After watching the performance in Tokyo, Japanese dancer and choreographer Erika Akoh said: “Every performer’s dancing skills are superb... Though no vocal languages are employed, they depicted every character’s state of mind by means of body language and dance.”

“I deeply felt the world’s indispensable qualities of truthfulness, compassion, gracefulness, and peacefulness in the program,” she said. “Through dance performance, these qualities are transmitted in a natural manner. The traditional values are portrayed exquisitely so that they are easily understandable.”

Performing in theaters all over the world and at many sold-out shows, Shen Yun continues to expand its tours. The company is now in its 13th season, has added new cities to this year’s itinerary, and has increased the number of performances in several major cities.

There are billions of people in the world, but the word is getting around: Shen Yun Performing Arts not only performs divine culture—it radiates it.

THE EPOCH TIMES



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THE EPOCH TIMES

TRUTH AND TRADITION

LITERATURE

LYDIA CHUKOVSKAYA

Editor, Writer, Heroic Friend

TJUDITH ARMSTRONG

he Russian poet Anna Akhmatova is too tragic and striking a figure ever to be forgotten. A famous portrait depicts her in a midnight-blue dress and brilliant yellow shawl beside an objectivist arrangement of lighter blue hydrangeas. Nose aquiline and eyes contemplative under the signature black fringe, she is utterly transfixing. Yet much of our knowledge of Akhmatova is due to the self-effacing journals of a less-remembered woman, Lydia Chukovskaya, who brought her friendship, food, and unfailing support.

Chukovskaya was a literary editor and a significant poet, novella writer, and memoirist, born in 1907. Her father was Kornei Chukovsky, a prolific and highly regarded writer of much-loved children's books—a kind of Russian Dr. Seuss.

In cultured St. Petersburg, young Lydia Chukovskaya developed a passion for literature, but soon after the outbreak of the 1917 Revolution, she was briefly exiled to the city of Saratov because one of her friends had used her father's typewriter to produce an anti-Bolshevik pamphlet.

Permitted to return to newly named Leningrad, she got a job editing children's books in the state publishing house, began to write stories, and married a brilliant young physicist, Matvei (Mitya) Bronstein.

Their marriage took place shortly before the outbreak of the Great Terror of 1936–38, one of the most brutal periods in the history of the Soviet Union. Both Mitya Bronstein and Akhmatova's son Lev were arrested. By the time Chukovskaya was informed that Mitya had been sentenced to 10 years in a labor camp, he had in fact been executed. Lev was held in a Leningrad prison for 17 months.

The frantic wife and devastated mother met each other while desperately seeking information about their loved ones.

Chukovskaya fled briefly to Kyiv, but soon returned to their looted flat in St. Petersburg to remake a home with her baby daughter Lyusha. Mitya's room was occupied by a government surveillant.

Chukovskaya kept a diary, but she now omitted from it everything that was "really important," including her friendship with Akhmatova, whose intransigence invited arrest at any moment. Chukovskaya

Chukovskaya was informed that her husband, Mitya, had been sentenced to 10 years in a labor camp; he had in fact been executed.



knew that to write down their conversations endangered both their lives; yet not to record them, she felt, would be "criminal." She compromised by waiting until much later to fill in names.

Akhmatova was in the process of writing a long poem, her now-famous "Requiem." An extended elegy for all who suffered under the Terror, it was obviously far too dangerous to commit to paper.

When visiting Chukovskaya, Akhmatova would whisper parts of it for Chukovskaya to retain, but in her own bugged apartment, she would gesture at the ceiling and say in a loud voice, "Will you have some tea?" while passing over a handwritten page.

Chukovskaya would memorize the poems on it and give it back. "How early autumn has come this year," Akhmatova would then muse, striking a match and burning the paper over the ashtray.

'Hands, Match, Ashtray'
Chukovskaya wrote of this act of rebellion: "It was a ritual: hands, match, ashtray—a beautiful and mournful ritual." She would then use her nightly walk home to recall what she had memorized, oblivious to her route. "Poems guided me instead of the moon," she wrote. "The world was absent."

Leningrad was yet to experience the extreme shortages of the Siege (1941–1944), but food was far from plentiful. Chukovskaya brought sugar, eggs, or rissoles to the impractical Akhmatova, but also lilacs, "so it would seem more like a present."

During those years she described herself as feeling "less and less alive," reviving only when she was with Akhmatova, "a certainty amidst all those wavering uncertainties... her words, deeds, head, shoulders and hand-movements possessed of [the] perfection which, in this world, usually belongs only to great works of art."

But writing also sustained Chukovskaya's own spirit. In 1938 she'd been allowed a stint in a writers' colony where she completed a novella, "Sofia Petrovna"—naturally unpublishable given that it described the realities of living under the Terror. Sofia is a typist whose son Kolya, a promising engineering student, is arrested.

Sofia embarks on the existence so familiar to Chukovskaya and Akhmatova: frozen

hours standing in lines, the lack of news, the attempt to sneak food into the prison. Falling foul of the authorities. When a letter from Kolya finally arrives, Sofia is so terrified of compromising him that she forces herself to burn the precious scrap.

After 1956, the year of Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin, "Sofia Petrovna" was circulated in samizdat (manuscript form), and even, during the thaw of the early 1960s, came close to publication, but was ultimately rejected for "ideological distortions." It finally appeared 25 years later, thanks to Gorbachev's glasnost.

Grit and Grief
Chukovskaya's "acceptable" work included an Introduction to the Ukrainian anthropologist Macleouho-Maclay's account of life in New Guinea, but her second book, "Going Under," published in Paris in 1972, describes how in 1949, Akhmatova and the satirical writer Mikhail Zoshchenko were thrown out of the Writers' Union. She also wrote letters of support regarding Alexander Solzhenitsyn, and the physicist Andrei Sakharov, harassed by the KGB but later awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

However, her best-known work remains the two volumes recording the almost daily conversations with Akhmatova, an overwhelmingly impressive mix of grit and grief as the two women confronted threats, cold, privation, and starvation.

The journals first appeared in Paris in 1976 and 1980, alongside several volumes of autobiographical poetry, "On This Side of Death," which express the profound sense of loss that afflicted both her and her country. In 1976, Chukovskaya received the first ever PEN Freedom Prize for the journals, and in 1990, the first Sakharov Prize for her life's work.

Akhmatova died in 1966; from then on Chukovskaya lived in Moscow, moving between a central flat and her father's dacha in Peredelkino, the writers' colony outside the city. She died in 1996, not altogether forgotten, but her memory outdazzled, as she would have deemed appropriate, by that of her more splendid friend.

Quotations from Lydia Chukovskaya, The Akhmatova Journals, Vol. 1, 1938–41, Harvill 1994, translated by Milena Michalski and Sylva Rubashova. Judith Armstrong is an honorary fellow of the School of Languages and Linguistics at the University of Melbourne in Australia. This article was first published on The Conversation.



RANKIN STUDIOS



A 1922 portrait of writer Anna Akhmatova by Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin.



Lydia Chukovskaya in 1926.

CRAFTSMANSHIP

Holding On to Heritage Crafts

The 'Red List of Endangered Crafts' in the UK

LORRAINE FERRIER

Traditional craftsmanship is diminishing worldwide. We wouldn't let our museum collections decay and disappear, so why do we allow this to happen with our intangible heritage, asks Daniel Carpenter, research manager at the Heritage Crafts Association (HCA), a UK-based charity.

The HCA is an independent UK charity that was set up in 2009 by craftspeople and supporters of crafts, as a direct response to a perceived lack of recognition and support for traditional craftsmanship in the UK.

UK heritage crafts lack support because these crafts fall between the heritage and art sectors. The heritage sector focuses on the tangible heritage, such as objects, buildings, monuments, and museum collections; it doesn't focus on the intangible heritage inherent in traditional craftsmanship. The art sector supports

▲ Father and son Mike and Greg Rowland build coaches and cartwheels. The trades have been in their family since 1330.

contemporary crafts (traditional crafts reinterpreted beyond their original intentions of making useful objects) through Arts Council England, a government organization, but heritage crafts are not publicly funded.

The challenge is how to preserve our intangible cultural heritage: the living skills, practices, and knowledge that define heritage crafts. One solution is to make the intangible tangible, and that's what the HCA has done by publishing "The Radcliffe Red List of Endangered Crafts" in 2017, a UK first.

The list highlights heritage crafts that are practiced in the UK, categorizing each craft as "viable," "endangered," "critically endangered," or "extinct."

Carpenter is in the process of updating the list, no doubt drawing on his doctoral research on craft heritage at the University of Exeter. The 2019 update will be published as the "HCA Red List of Endangered Crafts" and available on March 9.

Here, he shares about heritage crafts in the UK and the impact of the first "Red List."

THE EPOCH TIMES: On the HCA website, it mentions that the UK has not ratified the UNESCO 2003 Convention for Intangible Cultural Heritage. Why is this important?

Continued on Page 10

CRAFTSMANSHIP

Holding On to Heritage Crafts

The ‘Red List of Endangered Crafts’ in the UK



The trade of coachbuilding and wagon making is a critically endangered heritage craft. Greg Rowland offers cartwheel-making classes, as an Airbnb Experience in order to raise awareness of his trade.

RANKIN STUDIOS



PAUL FELIX

Blacksmith Melissa Cole working at her forge near Marlborough in Wiltshire. Blacksmithing is a viable heritage craft in the UK. The “Red List” will continue to monitor these kinds of crafts to ensure these skills are not lost.



ROBIN WOOD

The last sieve and riddle maker, Mike Turnock. The trade was listed as extinct on the 2017 “Red List,” but has now been revived.



ROBIN WOOD

Spade making at Patterson’s Spade Mill. Spade making (forged heads) is critically endangered.

Continued from Page 9

ANIEL CARPENTER: We’re one of only 15 countries now in the world not to have signed up to the convention. We’ve never had a clear answer from the government as to why that is, just that it’s not its priority.

We’ve got amazing intangible heritage crafts in the UK, not just craft knowledge and skill, but also artistic practices and festivals. In other countries, they’re able to list their practices as recognized as intangible heritage by UNESCO and they get extra support, but we’re not able to do that, unfortunately.

THE EPOCH TIMES: So you’re updating the “Red List” now. What are you doing differ-

ently in the update?

MR. CARPENTER: Because we’re on limited resources, we missed a lot in the first list; we didn’t have enough time to capture everything. So a lot of the research has been focused on filling in the gaps of what we were unable to research last time.

And then, there are some things that have changed in the last two years: either that the crafts have become more sustainable, or they’re struggling a bit more.

THE EPOCH TIMES: Can you please give some examples?

MR. CARPENTER: The actual new entries will be embargoed until the new publication. But one of the things that we missed last time was millwrighting. That’s constructing and maintaining windmills. We’re adding

to the list this time around as a critically endangered craft.

And then, there are crafts that are changing categories. One big success we’ve had is that last time, sieve and riddle making was listed as extinct. Sieves and riddles are beechwood and wire mesh hoops used to sort and filter material, and they are used in industries such as agriculture, fishing, mining, and catering. But since we launched the “Red List,” two makers have seen the list and taken up the craft. So sieve and riddle making is moving from extinct to critically endangered. That’s a craft that’s been revived as a result of the “Red List,” which is fantastic.

THE EPOCH TIMES: How did they go about learning sieve and riddle making if it was extinct?

MR. CARPENTER: One of them is teaching himself; he’s a shellfish fisherman, and he’s used riddles all his life. And the other one has gotten the last craftsman, Mike Turnock, out of retirement to show him how to make them. Turnock is delighted that the craft is going to be carried on. He was really sad to have been the last maker.

THE EPOCH TIMES: Do you think these craftspeople have that sense of responsibility to continue their craft?

MR. CARPENTER: Yes. I’ve been doing a lot of thinking about that. When something is labeled as “heritage,” does it give people a sense of responsibility and indebtedness for future generations that they have to carry on? I think that may be one side effect of this work that we’re doing: to give people that sense of responsibility. We don’t want it to weigh too heavily on their shoulders, but if it means that a craft is passed on, then that could be a good thing.

A lot of these crafts are quite specific, and they’re putting all their energy into serving a niche market. If they step away from production for any length of time, that market could disappear, and they might find it very difficult to train somebody. It takes a lot of time away from the workbench to train somebody up to the requisite level in order to have them as a productive worker.

That’s where the crisis points are happening with these crafts, with an aging workforce who may feel that they’ve left it too late to pass on their skills to the next generation.

THE EPOCH TIMES: In addition to sieve and riddle making being revived, what’s been the outcome of the previous list?

MR. CARPENTER: Other crafts that were featured have had good exposure. One is Martin Frost who does fore-edge painting, which is painting on the edge of a book so you can see the design when the pages are fanned open. Fore-edge painting is listed as critically endangered.

Frost was struggling for 30 years to make a living in his craft, and after being featured in the “Red List,” he was on the BBC’s “The One Show,” and he’s had bookings to demonstrate and teach from all over the UK, and he’s been to Holland to demonstrate his craft. And then, in the recent New Year Honors list, he was awarded a Member of the Order of the British Empire, a national honor for his craft, so it’s really been life-changing for him and his craft.

Then, there’s a lady called Lucy McGrath who’s just started her paper-marbling career. She’s been teaching, and it’s really been taking off. I think she might have struggled without the “Red List.”

And then we’ve partnered with Airbnb; we’re providing experiences and workshops, as well as accommodations. We’re really pleased to be working with them, as they’re quite a modern company. We don’t want people to associate heritage crafts with the past all the time. It’s about the present and the future as well.

THE EPOCH TIMES: Is there a difference in how young and old people approach heritage crafts?

MR. CARPENTER: Yes, I think young people tend to be more positive about the future of these crafts. There’s a big

reaction, I think, to digital culture: People want something more analog and more real than being in front of a screen all the time. There’s definitely an upsurge of interest in these crafts among young people, and I think a lot of it is very genuine; it’s not just a fad or a fashion. I think there are people who want to take these crafts on, and make a lifelong career out of it.

I think that in the past a lot of people didn’t want to share their skills because they were worried about people setting up in competition. But people are more open to sharing them and realizing that the potential market is big enough for new competitors as well.

THE EPOCH TIMES: I had this romantic idea of some craftspeople working in a forest or a little cottage away from everywhere. Is that the case?

MR. CARPENTER: Sometimes it is, but not always. It’s not always as romantic as it seems; a lot of craftspeople are struggling to get by on less than minimum wage or the equivalent of.

The romantic and nostalgic side of it can help us sometimes, in that it can generate a lot of interest, but then we hope that we can give a more complex story of the issues facing these craftspeople.

THE EPOCH TIMES: If people are living on a minimum wage, what keeps them going?

MR. CARPENTER: I think it’s just the enjoyment of what they do; they’ve made a life decision not to focus their lives on money, but just have a good quality of life.

There are a lot of people who supplement their incomes through demonstrations and through teaching. Probably the majority actually have to do things other than making things, in order to make a living.

THE EPOCH TIMES: Are these heritage crafts viable industries to go into?

MR. CARPENTER: I think it is, but it’s not just a judgment based on your projected income; it’s got to be a passion as well. I think the people who are the most passionate are willing to adapt what they do to the market. I think it definitely is possible to make a good career from these crafts, and people are doing that.

The more people that are doing it, the more the general public will appreciate these traditionally made items. So hopefully, it’ll be more the norm for people to choose these types of careers.

THE EPOCH TIMES: Do you think there’s a common thread running through these craftspeople you connect with?

MR. CARPENTER: Yes, definitely. I think it’s something about working with your hands and creating something that, at the end of the day, you can look and have that sense of achievement. I think that ties all these craftspeople together, and I think that’s a very attractive way of living.

These days, a lot of people who work in an office don’t get that sense of achievement that they’ve produced something at the end of the day.

THE EPOCH TIMES: What do you hope from “The HCA Red List of Endangered Crafts”?

MR. CARPENTER: A lot of people think we want public funding to serve all these crafts, and for the government to pour lots of money into it. We do want to save as many as possible, but the main objective of the “Red List” is just to draw people’s attention to the fact these crafts are disappearing without anybody noticing.

So it’s to promote that public debate of what we feel is an important part of our culture and heritage. It’s not necessarily saying everything should be saved, and we should pour millions into it. It’s more about drawing people’s attention to the fact that we’re nearing a cliff edge with a lot of these crafts, and they’re just going to drop off and not be able to be revived.

To find out more about the Red List, visit HeritageCrafts.org.uk

This interview has been edited for clarity and brevity.



ROBIN WOOD

Oak will basket maker Owen Jones. Willow basket making is at risk of being lost and is considered a critically endangered craft.

To find out more about the “Red List,” visit [Heritage Crafts.org.uk](http://HeritageCrafts.org.uk)

Paper marbling, a critically endangered heritage craft. ▶



THE EPOCH TIMES: Is there a difference in how young and old people approach heritage crafts?

MR. CARPENTER: Yes, I think young people tend to be more positive about the future of these crafts. There’s a big



FOREDEGEFROST

Fore-edge painter Martin Frost paints scenes on the edges of books, a skill critically endangered in the UK.



RANKIN STUDIOS

Paper marbler Lucy McGrath in her studio. Paper marbling is a critically endangered craft in the UK. McGrath teaches paper marbling as an Airbnb Experience, a joint venture with the Heritage Crafts Association.



DANIEL CARPENTER

◀ Research manager Daniel Carpenter of the Heritage Crafts Association is responsible for updating the “HCA Red List of Endangered Crafts.”

“We don’t want people to associate heritage crafts with the past all the time.”

Daniel Carpenter,
Heritage Craft Association

ESSENCE
OF
CHINA



Ancient Chinese Story: Two Monks’ Conversation

ANONYMOUS

“There are only two monks in this small temple—you and me,” a young monk said to an old monk. “People berate me behind my back whenever I go down the mountain and beg for alms,” continued the depressed little monk. “They say I am unruly.”

“Visitors to our temple don’t even leave enough money for us to buy incense. Master, how can our temple become a large one, with bells sounding continuously, as you had once said?” asked the little monk while sitting in the shabby little temple.

With eyes closed, the old monk listened without a word. The little monk droned on and on. Finally, the old monk broke his silence. Opening his eyes, he asked, “The northeast wind is blowing hard. It’s snowing and extremely cold. Are you cold?”

“Yes, my feet are frozen and numb,” replied the little monk, shivering. The old monk suggested they go to bed early that night.

After lying in bed for some time, the old monk asked, “Are you warm now?”

“Yes. I feel warm, as if lying under the sunlight,” the young one answered.

“The quilt on the bed is always cold, but if a person sleeps under it, it becomes warm,” said the old monk. “Think about it: Does your quilt make you warm, or do you make the quilt warm?”

“How can quilts add warmth to people?” said the little monk. “It’s clearly people who add warmth to quilts.”

“If quilts don’t provide warmth, and we have to add warmth to the quilts, then why should we need quilts in the first place?” challenged the old monk.

After some thought, the little monk exclaimed, “Quilts can’t give us warmth, but a quilt can hold in warmth for us!”

The old monk smiled. He asked his disciple whether monks who chant scriptures are like people who lie under thick quilts, and whether all sentient beings

are like the thick quilts.

“As long as we are very kind, we can warm the quilts. All sentient beings—the quilts—will also hold on to the warmth,” explained the old monk. “Won’t we be warm sleeping under this type of quilt? Will bells sounding continuously at a large temple still be just a dream?”

The little monk suddenly understood. From then on, he descended the mountain early every morning to beg for alms. He continued to encounter many people who said unpleasant words to him, but he was very polite to them in return.

Ten years later, Bodhi Temple became a large temple where many monks and people went to worship. Bells at Bodhi Temple sounded continuously. By then, the little monk had become the temple’s abbot.

Translated by Dora Li into English, this story is reprinted with permission from the book “Treasured Tales of China,” Vol. 1, available on Amazon.

SHUTTERSTOCK



The phoenix adorning a Chinese temple. The Han Hao Bird believed it was the most beautiful bird in the world, even more beautiful than the phoenix.

Han Hao Bird and the Winter Cold

CINDY CHAN

On Wutai Mountain, there once lived a creature called the Han Hao Bird. Unlike other birds, it had four legs and two fleshy wings not useful for flight, so it couldn’t fly.

In the summer, the Han Hao Bird grew bright feathers all over its body, looking exquisite in its coat of stunning colors and patterns. It believed it was the most beautiful bird in the world, even more beautiful than the magnificent phoenix.

“Look at me! Look at me! Even the phoenix can’t compare to me!” it sang.

As summer faded into autumn, the other birds began planning for winter. Some started preparations

for flying south; others gathered food and reinforced their nests.

The Han Hao Bird, however, did nothing but strut up and down with an air of arrogance.

The other birds tried to offer kind advice: “While the weather is still nice, build your nest now and you’ll have a warm, cozy place to pass the winter.”

But the Han Hao Bird didn’t listen.

As winter approached, the Han Hao Bird began to lose more and more of its fine feathers, until one day it looked like a newly hatched bird, without any feathers at all. Each night it shivered in the cold, saying to itself: “It’s so cold! So cold! I must build a nest tomorrow!”

But as soon as the sun came out, it forgot all about building a nest.

The other birds said: “Hurry to build your nest. It’ll get cold again at night.” But the Han Hao Bird still didn’t listen. “It’s warm under the sun! As long as I can get by like this, I’ll continue on this way,” it said.

So the Han Hao Bird continued to muddle along, until it finally froze stiff and solid one night in the icy cold.

This story comes from a collection of records called “Chuogeng Lu,” or “Records Compiled After Retiring From the Farm,” written by Tao Zongyi, a scholar from the late Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) and early Ming Dynasty (1368-1644).

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