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Hello, Friends!

Summer is HERE! (Well, at least according to the thermometer and the peonies in our gardens.)

We were so pleased to welcome 3rd grade students from six Danbury Public Schools to the Danbury Museum for our first field trips in more than two years! It was great having our re-enactors and interpreters back on

campus and it was fun to have great questions and interactions with our 3rd grade friends as well. Thank you to all the students and teachers from Mill Ridge, Pembroke, Ellsworth Avenue, Shelter Rock, AIS, and Morris Street for visiting us.

This Saturday is looking like a perfect afternoon for our first summer concert in the garden! Join us for a free, fun, and open to all concert from 4-6 in our gardens. Bring your own lawn chairs and enjoy the music of Duo Montagnard.

We're so pleased to have essays from John O'Donnell and Thomas MacGregor once again, with John exploring the legacy of famed literary critic Edmund Wilson and Tom writing about Richard III and the Apothecary Rose.

We're looking forward to showing you all our 80th Anniversary exhibit opening later this month. You'll start to see some of the outdoor exhibit signage going up around the campus in the coming days, featuring some great Danbury Fair visuals as well as colorful postcard depictions of Main Street.

Keep well and we'll look forward to seeing you again here in early July.

Brigid Guertin (*Executive Director, City Historian*)

Patrick Wells (*Research Specialist, Social Media Manager*)

Michele Lee Amundsen (*Collections Manager, Newsletter Editor*)



Free, Fun, and Open to All!

Duo Montagnard

(Joseph Murphy, saxophones, Matthew Slotkin, guitar)

Danbury Museum

43 Main Street

Danbury, CT

Saturday, June 4, 2022

4:00 pm

Duo Montagnard was formed in 2002 and has performed over 350 concerts in all fifty states, eight Canadian provinces, and twenty countries on six continents. Festival performances include the Chautauqua Institution, Scandinavian Saxophone Festival, Hartwick College Summer

Music Festival, North-West University New Music Week (South Africa), UNC-Wilmington New Music for Guitar and Saxophone Festival, Radford University International Guitar Festival, and the Alexandria Guitar Festival. The duo has commissioned, premiered and recorded more than forty works for guitar and saxophone by composers including Perry Goldstein, Laura Kramer, John Anthony Lennon, Ingram Marshall, John Orfe and Russell Peterson.



A Titan of Literary Criticism

Recently I was part of a book discussion of *The Sun Also Rises* by Ernest Hemingway. The group was on the whole dissatisfied with Hemingway (I defended him but that is material for another essay). There were objections to his misogyny, his machismo, and to the prodigious drinking scenes in the book. I related an anecdote about a luncheon that editor and

publisher Jason Epstein had with Edmund Wilson in the 1950s. Wilson was arguably America's foremost literary critic. When Epstein arrived Wilson had already ordered half a dozen martinis as if, Epstein recalled, he were ordering oysters. When the martinis arrived at the table Epstein made the mistake of reaching for one. Wilson quickly informed him that these were all for him. Epstein would have to order his own! I think that the prodigious drinking in *The Sun Also Rises* was not an exaggeration. I think World War One and the horrors it produced led people to undertake serious drinking as a way of coping. Likewise, Hemingway was a prodigious drinker in his own right (he once drank eighteen daiquiris at his favorite bar, the Floridita, in Havana, Cuba). I think we need take a closer look at the incredible career of Edmund Wilson who is sadly neglected today.

Edmund Wilson (1895-1972) was born in Red Bank, New Jersey. He attended the Hill School and then Princeton University from 1912 to 1916 where he befriended F. Scott Fitzgerald. He began his writing career as a reporter for the *New York Sun*. During World War One he served in the army with Base Hospital 36 in Detroit, Michigan, and later as a translator. He had early on displayed great literary abilities as well as facility with foreign languages.

He parlayed these talents into a series of literary positions with increasing notoriety and importance: managing editor of *Vanity Fair* in 1920-1921, associate editor of the *New Republic*, and book reviewer for *The Dial* where he favorably reviewed early work by Ernest Hemingway. His reputation as an astute critic was cemented by the work he did at these publications. I think a major reason why he wrote such discerning criticism was that he himself was a serious writer as well as an arbiter of literary taste. He wrote plays, poems, novels, and historical works which accompanied his literary criticism. He was also friends many of the leading literary figures of his day including Hemingway, John Dos Passos, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and somewhat later Vladimir Nabokov. He was fluent in Russian and well-versed in European literature and history. He was a polymath who did not confine himself solely to his literary criticism but published widely in many fields such as Civil War history, the Dead Sea Scrolls and *Red, Black, Blonde and Olive: Studies in Four Civilizations: Zuni, Haiti, Soviet Russia, Israel*.

Wilson's critical oeuvre is enormous, but I will briefly discuss one of his seminal works of criticism *The Wound and the Bow: Seven Studies in Literature* (1941) to give you an insight into his superb critical power. Wilson uses the metaphor of the wound from the Philoctetes myth. (The story of the Greek warrior Philoctetes who was exiled to the island of Lemnos due to a suppurating laceration.) Sometimes you have a wound that never heals; the pain never goes away, though there are people for whom it becomes a kind of fuel, according to Wilson. Suffering was the mother of creativity. Philoctetes is sought out by his fellow Greeks because they need his prowess with a magic bow and arrow to win the Trojan War.

Wilson applied this analysis to Dickens whose reputation had suffered severely before Wilson revived interest in his work and life. Dickens was analyzed in Wilson's essay *The Two Scooges*. This essay backed up what was then (1941) an extraordinary thesis—that Charles Dickens by rights “should have been very large in the whole perspective of the West.” He used the argument that the trauma of his blacking factory experiences at the age of twelve lay behind “the work of Dickens's whole career.” These experiences provided the necessary wound from which a true creative writer had found the strength to draw the bow of incredible art.

Likewise, Wilson turned his penetrating gaze upon Ernest Hemingway in his essay *Hemingway: Gauge of Morale*. Hemingway and Wilson had been friends since 1924 and Wilson had subsequently provided generally favorable reviews of Hemingway's works, though it was Wilson who accurately foresaw the decline of Hemingway's career and downward slide (in a career which had been meteoric up to now). Wilson noted a slippage in Hemingway's writing beginning with *To Have and Have Not* and then continued with subsequent work. Wilson also presciently saw the imprisonment of Hemingway within the vice grip of his public image, pointing to the building up of Hemingway's public personality by posing for handsome photographs with open shirt and outdoor grin. Wilson described him as a man of “loose disquisition, arrogant, belligerent and boastful.” He also found in Hemingway's recent work a growing antagonism to women which he thought might be traced to his implicit fear that the woman will get a man down. Hemingway was of course enraged by the essay. He told his editor, Max Perkins, that “he still had a hell of a good bow and that was what Wilson couldn't forgive: some day when he wrote his memoirs, he

would notch up an arrow and shoot Wilson with it.” Wilson’s arrow had scored a bullseye with his uncannily accurate prediction of the downward slope of Hemingway’s later career which would end with his suicide in 1961.

These are just two examples of the amazing insightfulness of Wilson’s work. He certainly merits a reading or a re-reading because he will provide you with a deep critical look at writers which you will not get anywhere else.

John O'Donnell first became a history devotee while in elementary school. He was raised in Brooklyn and frequently went to Prospect Park which has a Revolutionary War monument. He was hooked!



The Story of Richard III and Roses

by Thomas MacGregor

Richard III, King of England and Lord of Ireland, died August 22, 1485, bringing to an end England's civil war. As the last king of the House of York, his death at the Battle of Bosworth Field brought an end to the Plantagenet dynasty. In 2012 his body was excavated from under a parking lot (sounds anachronistically like a mob hit), identified by mitochondrial DNA based on his sister Anne's matrilineal descendants,

and in 2015 was reburied at Leicester Cathedral with the full honors of a king. Leicester Cathedral is 20 miles from the battle site. An excellent series of articles on the discovery, excavation, and painstaking archeology of the dig are presented in a series of articles in the *New York Times* (2012 – 2015).

Richard III was vilified by the conquering Tudor House in an attempt to justify the rise to power of Henry VII and his tenuous claim to the throne. The House of Tudor capitalized for 500 years on a smear campaign by William Shakespeare to curry favor with the last Tudor monarch, Elizabeth I. Shakespeare depicted Richard III as a limping, hunchbacked murderer despite evidence to the contrary.

Was Richard III the murdering monarch that killed his two nephews to prevent them from ascending the throne or was he a good and just king for the common man during a period of harsh conditions? In Josephine Tey's classic 1951 detective novel *The Daughter of Time*, he is cleared of the murders and suspicion is placed on the Tudors. His skeletal finds should bring about a new era of scholarship.

What is historically known is that Richard III of York was king of a branch of the Plantagenet Royal House in battle with the other branch, the House of Lancaster. The Tudors inherited the claim to the Lancaster branch due to the continual decimation of the male lines during the previous Hundred Years' War (1337 – 1453) with the French. For 30 years (1455 – 1485) following the Hundred Years War, the two branches battled in a civil war with each side claiming kingship of the Royal House of Plantagenet until Richard III was killed at the hands of the Tudors.

This civil war is referred to as the "War of the Roses" by historian David Hume and novelist Sir Walter Scott because of the emblems worn by each house. The House of York wore a white rose (*Rosa alba*) emblem, while the House of Lancaster's emblem was a red rose (*Rosa gallica officinalis*) that originated in France. The Red Rose of Lancaster has a long history in medicinal preparations and is commonly called "The Apothecary Rose." Although this rose has very little scent while on the vine, when the flower is dried, the scent is overpowering and is used to make Rose Water USP by distilling a bunch of petals with hot water or steam.

One legend has it that the civil war ended when the two sides noticed a mutant rose among pure white and red roses that was a striped mixture (*Rosa gallica versicolor*). This red and white rose inspired the two factions to resolve their differences. Following the war, Henry VII unified the heraldic badge to include both emblems with what he called the “Tudor Rose.”

The red and white heirloom roses from the Middle Ages are both still popular today as they tolerate and prosper in New England growing conditions. A drawback to heirloom roses is that they only bloom once-a-year on old wood; however, they need only minimal pruning and are highly disease resistant. Modern roses benefit from constant pruning to produce blooms all summer long.

If you are interested in establishing a rose garden, consider the following tips. Roses prefer a soil of 35% clay, 35% loam, and 30% sand at a pH of 6 – 7. This type of soil is very common in Danbury, but you can tweak the pH a bit each year with a cupful of dolomitic limestone if your pH is drifting lower or with a tablespoon of Epson salts if your pH is just right to get strong, green leaves. To test the nutrients in your soil, a sample can be sent to the UConn Laboratories for an analysis (soiltest.uconn.edu). To test the texture of your soil, dig out a sample 4 – 5 inches below ground level, fill a mason jar half-way with the soil, add water to almost fill the jar, cap and shake vigorously for several minutes. Then allow the jar to stand for 12 or more hours. Visible layers will form in the jar. The bottom layer will be sand (heaviest particles), next loam, and then clay (the lightest particles). Floating on the top will be any organic humus (compost) that is present.

Soil texture is important because roses need water every week, but they need drainage so their roots will not rot. Adding fertilizer (fish emulsion works wonders), composting, mulching, and watering roses (weekly at ground level – avoid wetting the leaves) will yield roses that live for many years. Roses at my parents’ home were planted when I was in the 2nd grade and are still doing great some 60+ years later, even after moving them to a different location.

To see many different roses in all their glory, tour the rose garden near Rogers Park Middle School several times this summer. It is one of the

finest displays of roses in this part of Connecticut. You may also want to take a trip to West Hartford's Elizabeth Park where you can get ideas for your own rose garden (and they have a gift shop too). When purchasing some rose plants, I hope you'll consider red and white varieties so that you can share with your visitors the still unfinished story of Richard III.

After 33 years at Boehringer Ingelheim, Dr. Tom (UConn '85) retired to his garden and piano.**



Lancaster Rose



York Rose



Tudor Rose

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Celebrate 80 Years of the Danbury Museum With Us!



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