

## *GREAT WRITING*

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In a case before the U.S. Supreme Court in 1964, Justice Potter Stewart, in attempting to define pornography, famously said, “I know it when I see it.”

That’s equally true for love, morality, faith and great writing. It’s perplexing that such fundamental attributes, the core structure of our human character, defy the limitations of definition.

There are many different lists of great writers, academic and otherwise, each according to particular criteria. But irrespective of which list, my focus is on the fact that almost always these great works, written in various tongues, some ancient and long grown silent, have endured for centuries. What distinguishes them from all other writings?

Uniformly, they all exhibit richness and precision of language, mastery of metaphor and fables, direct and economical with words, and often peppered with events that rush to a climax.

Still, for all that language power and astounding writing, it would not have been enough to keep these great works alive for hundreds of generations now circa four thousand years.

To a one, in every great book, scroll or stela, in one form or another, directly or indirectly, the passion of the authors burns on every page. Nothing occupies their attention more than dealing with the vicissitudes of life and the travails of mankind. But superimposed on all that is their concern with man’s passion to know his origins, to learn right from wrong, and to comprehend to what end he has been committed.

We who write are treading in the footsteps of giants.