

Awards, Success and Aesthetic Quality in the Arts

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The role of gatekeepers, gurus and experts is dramatically increasing in our societies, where sorting information about quality can become a very cumbersome task. A change in the rating of a corporate bond or of a country's risk by Moody or Standard & Poor's can generate large capital movements. In the field of cultural economics, prominent examples of expert judgment include the award of an Oscar by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, the opinion by an art expert to attribute a painting to Rembrandt or the rating of a wine by Robert Parker.

One approach to the description and rating of the aesthetic nature of a work is to decompose the overall judgment into characteristics, explain how to rate each of them and how to aggregate the rates. The French art critic Roger de Piles (1635–1709) was probably among the first to try to define the characteristics of beauty. In his *Cours de Peinture par Principes* (1708), he decomposes painting into four fundamental characteristics—composition, drawing, color, expression—and rates each of these on a scale from 0 to 20 for 56 painters from his and previous times. Rembrandt, for example, is very low on drawing and obtains 15, 6, 17 and 12 on the characteristics just mentioned, while Michelangelo is very high on drawing, with scores of 8, 17, 4 and 8, respectively. De Piles thus goes almost the whole way by defining and rating characteristics, but stops without discussing how to aggregate the ratings (he does not even dare to add them).

Current art historians and art philosophers usually either ignore such views or

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criticize them strongly. For example, the great contemporary art historian Ernst Gombrich (1966, p. 76) considers de Piles's exercise as a "notorious aberration." However, some contemporary analytic art philosophers have become interested in an "activity [that] may be thought of as either breaking up beauty into its parts or supplementing beauty with additional concepts" (Dickie, 1997, p. 3; see also, 1988, p. 157–182). When characteristics are named and evaluated, cultural economists can use the information (which need not be expressed in numerical terms) as a basis for estimating demand and supply equations.

Short of being able to decompose artworks into characteristics and rating them, an alternative method of ranking is to have experts enunciate their preferences and to see which works and artists survive over time and space. These arguments are developed in David Hume's (1757 [1965]) classic essay on tastes and have been elaborated by philosophers and critics ever since.¹ There are distinctions between philosophers and economists here. Philosophers typically put the burden of proving quality on experts, while economists often argue that the actual choices made by consumers are a better measure. Philosophers also stress the importance of time. This perspective is seldom raised by economists—it is invoked by Landes (2002), who studies survival of early twentieth-century American painting, and Ginsburgh and Weyers (2002) in their study of art from the Italian Renaissance—although it seems a very natural criterion. Time makes it possible to reduce at least some of the noise present in evaluations made shortly after the work is produced and that is due to fads, fashion, envy and jealousy (Hume, 1757 [1965], p. 9), clearing the way for those works that transcend the ideal or style of a period (Savile, 1982, p. 32). Even if there is still room for fads, the judgment passed on artworks from the past is at least less influenced by the fashion that prevailed in the time of their production. This "test of time" is also the expression of a tradition that "professionals will not devote labour and attention, generation after generation, to sustaining [artworks] whose life functions have terminated" (Coetzee, 2002, p. 18).

In the paper, I look at three types of artistic productions: movies, books and musical interpretation. In each case I gather three types of evidence: how experts rank artworks by conferring prizes shortly after they have been produced; a measure of the economic success of the work as reflected, for example, in sales or box office; and a measure of the long-term reputation of the work assumed to encapsulate its fundamental aesthetic quality, even if only imperfectly. With these data, I will illustrate that prizes awarded shortly after the production of an artwork or rankings that result from competitions are correlated with economic success and may even influence or predict it, but are often poor predictors of true aesthetic quality or survival of the work.

¹ For a contemporary and comprehensive treatment of aesthetics, see Dickie (1988, 1997). For a less technical approach, see Budd (1995). For an extended essay on the role of time in discerning artistic merit, see Savile (1982).

Movies: Oscars, Golden Globes and Others

Movies are a good example of an art form with immediate critical recognition (prizes), evidence on commercial success (box office) and also expert rankings about their survival long after the movies have been released (“best movies of all times”).

A number of prominent organizations choose “best movies” each year, including the National Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (Oscars), the Golden Globes, the New York Film Critics Circle and the National Board of Reviews. I compiled a list of all movies nominated for or winning “best movie” awards from these organizations between 1950 and 1980.²

For a longer-term perspective on quality, I turned to several prominent lists of all-time best movies published in the late 1990s. The American Film Institute America’s 100 Greatest Movies bills itself as “a definitive selection of the 100 greatest movies of all time, as determined by more than 1,500 leaders from the American film community.” A second list is *Mr. Showbiz Critics Pics*, which includes the 100 Best Movies of all Time, compiled by responses of critics asked to vote for their ten best movies of all the time. The third list is *The 100 Must-See Films of the 20th Century*, by the American movie critic Leonard Maltin.³ For the years 1950–1980, 77 different movies produced between 1950 and 1980 are cited. I will distinguish movies according to the number of times they are cited (0, 1, 2 or 3 times). Though these lists are also compiled by fallible experts who have information on the past of each movie, there is no specific reason for them to be swayed by decisions and judgments made 20 to 50 years earlier.

Finally, I collected information on economic success. Box office numbers measuring gross ticket sales are scant and incomplete. Thus, I turned to rentals—the amount of money paid by movie theaters to producers and distributors to show a film. They were collected mainly from Reynolds (1995) and Sarkett (1996) and completed with data available at <http://www.worldwideboxoffice.com/source.html> and <http://www.imdb.com/top>. Rentals paid to distributors are typically about half of gross proceeds, but the fraction is usually smaller for well-known

² Information on the movie awards is at the following websites: Oscar awards are at <http://awards.fennec.org>, Golden Globe awards at <http://awards.fennec.org>, National Board of Review awards at <http://www.goldderby.com/nbr/index.asp> and New York Film Critics Circles awards at <http://goldderby.com/nyfc/index.asp>. Note that there may be fewer than 31 winners (one per year), since in some years, no winner or a non-English speaking movie was chosen. There may also be more, since some organizations award more than one movie. Movies that were not produced in English language are excluded, since they cannot be nominated for the “best movie” awards by the National Academy. So are cartoons produced by Walt Disney studios, since their box office is very much influenced by children.

³ These lists are all available on websites. The American Film Institute list, which includes 56 movies between 1950 and 1980, is at <http://www.filmsite.org/afi100films.html>. The *Mr. Showbiz Critics Pics* list, which was chosen about 18 months before the American Film Institute list, includes 51 movies between 1950 and 1980 and is at <http://www.filmsite.org/mrshowbiz.html>. *The 100 Must-See Films of the 20th Century*, by Maltin, includes 34 movies produced between 1950 to 1980 and is at <http://www.filmsite.org/maltin2.html>.

producers or distributors and higher for others. Rentals are not easily comparable across years because of inflation, year of production and varying global attendance numbers over the 30 years. To overcome this difficulty, the rental of the movie with highest income in each specific year is normalized to 100, and the other rentals are computed accordingly. It should be noted that, with the exception of productions such as *Gone with the Wind*, most of the income of the movies that I consider (1950–1980) is generated by theaters not very long after the release of the film.

Taking together the movies nominated for or winning awards, the movies from the top 100 lists and the top five film rentals in each year created a sample of 559 movies (rentals could be retrieved for 368 movies only), which is a small fraction and probably the upper tail of the quality distribution of the many thousands of films produced during the 30 years under review.

Awards and Economic Success

Table 1 contains the estimation results for the movies recognized by the National Academy (Oscars) between 1950 and 1980. The first equation relates success (measured by normalized rentals) to awards and shows that winners are significantly associated with higher success (benefit from a larger average rental) than nominated movies, which in turn do significantly better than nonnominated ones. With the data at hand, it is difficult to say whether awards influence success, or whether the Academy goes with the flow. Since movies that compete for awards are often released before awards are announced, success may precede Oscars. However, I do not think that the Academy just endorses the opinion of moviegoers, given the large number of voting experts (5,600 in 2003) and the Academy's own declaration of recognizing excellence in filmmaking only.⁴ Therefore, I can only suggest that awards and commercial success are associated or that experts and moviegoers share the same tastes. To check whether awards influence success, one should only account for the income generated after the Oscars announcement, but even if the data were available for these older movies, it may not be easy to infer whether it is the announcement that triggered the additional income.

In the second equation, I check whether success is correlated with the long-term measure of aesthetic quality (best movies lists). A standard F-test shows that listed movies do better than others, but the number of lists on which a movie is present makes no difference. Finally, the third equation takes both groups of variables together and shows that Oscar winners and nominees still pick up significant coefficients, while only those movies that are cited in all three best movies lists are then associated with short-run success.

⁴ The National Academy, on its website, (<http://www.ampas.org/academyawards/index.html>), describes its activity as “three quarters of a century of recognizing excellence in filmmaking achievement” and not of recognizing commercial success. Its judges consist of “the most gifted and skilled artists and craftsmen in the motion picture world.” The Academy also warns its judges that they “may be importuned by advertisements and other lobbying tactics” and emphasizes “that excellence in filmmaking is the ONLY factor [to] consider in casting [their] votes.”

Table 1

Movies: National Academy Nominations and Box Office Success

	Equation (1)	Equation (2)	Equation (3)
National Academy recognition			
Winner	0.955* (0.168)	—	0.842* (0.185)
Nominated movie	0.428* (0.101)	—	0.385* (0.103)
Presence in “best movies” lists			
All three lists	—	0.600* (0.169)	0.393* (0.167)
Two lists	—	0.491* (0.236)	0.104 (0.241)
One list	—	0.420* (0.193)	0.140 (0.196)

Notes: The dependent variable is the (logarithm of) the rental (income) paid by movies theatres. Rentals are normalized so that the highest rental for a movie produced in a specific year is set to 100. Explanatory variables are dummies: Winner = 1 for a movie that was awarded the Oscar; nominated movie = 1 for a nonawarded but nominated movie; the base group consists of nonnominated movies. All three lists = 1 for a movie that is present in all three lists and so on, while the base group consists of movies that appear on none of the lists. Intercepts are omitted. Standard errors appear under the parameters. Starred coefficients are significantly different from zero at the 5 percent probability level. The number of observations is 368. Equations are estimated by ordinary least squares. Note that for equations (1) and (2) this is equivalent to an analysis of variance.

Awards and Aesthetic Quality

One strong hint that movie awards do not necessarily go to the best quality movies is based on comparing the award-winning movies to the films that appear on the top-100 lists long enough after their release. Thus, 65 percent (20 of 31) of the movies that appear on at least one of the top-100 lists have received an Oscar, but only 26 percent appear on all three lists. These numbers could however be misleading, because there may be good years with several highly rated movies. Since there is only one possible winner, not all highest-quality movies can be awarded. In 1950 for instance, both *All About Eve* and *Sunset Boulevard* appear in all three best movies lists, but only one could receive the Oscar. However, a more detailed breakdown fails to demonstrate that this factor explains most of the failure of prizes to identify long-term quality. In 18 years out of 31, the National Academy failed to award the best movie Oscar to the one that, with the passage of time, is considered the best.

Some illustrations may be useful here. In 1952, *Singing in the Rain*, which appears in all three lists, was not even nominated, while *The Greatest Show on Earth* (which appears in no such list today) got the Oscar. In 1959, *Ben Hur*, another nonlisted movie today, received the Oscar, while two movies appearing in all three lists, *North by Northwest* and *Some Like it Hot*, were produced during the same year. In some occasions, such as in 1968, the Academy failed to choose as “best movie” *2001, A Space Odyssey*, which, today, is considered to be the only production of that year

that is common to all three lists. Still, the National Academy does much better in terms of choosing high-quality movies than do other organizations, such as the Golden Globes (of 65 winning movies, only six make it to all three best movie lists, while 45 are rated in no list), the National Board of Reviews (two out of 31 winning movies in all three lists) or the New York Film Critics Circles (four out of 29). Clearly, when it comes to movies, there is reason to doubt whether prizes are successfully identifying movies that survive the test of time.

Books: The Booker Prize

The Booker Prize for Fiction in the United Kingdom was established in 1969. The prize aims at rewarding the best novel of the year written in English. Americans living in the United States seem to be excluded for the reason that the Pulitzer Prize is awarded to U.S. citizens only, but the Booker has been awarded to citizens other than Britons.⁵ The website (<http://www.bookerprize.co.uk>) contains the one or two winning books each year, along with three to five “shortlisted” books.

In this case, success is measured by the number of editions published during the ten years after the selection. (Sales would obviously be a much better measure, but are not available.) For each winner and shortlisted title from 1969 to 1982, I collected information on the number of various editions (hardbound, paperback, audiobook, new or used) that could be ordered from Amazon.com in July 2002; the age of each author; and the number of other titles available on the online catalogue of the Library of Congress by each winning or shortlisted author written before and after the year that author was selected.⁶

As indicators of lasting quality, I use two types of data: the number of editions that were published between year 11 and year 20 after the title was selected for the prize, assuming that by then consumers have forgotten about the prize and the book is bought for its quality only; and the number of other titles written by each author that are available from the Library of Congress (and expressed in terms of titles per year, published before and after the award). The measure of long-term quality here is thus not an expert judgment by, say, professors of literature, but rather based on the opinions of readers and librarians.

Awards and Economic Success

The findings reported in the first equation in Table 2 point to the fact that winners are not more successful than nominees. The number of editions of the

⁵ Another possibility was to study the American Pulitzer Prize for Fiction (website (<http://www.pulitzer.org>)), established long before the Booker. This would have produced a much longer list and made the use of the test of time more effective. Unfortunately, the names of the nominated finalists other than the winners were not disclosed before 1980 and could not be obtained.

⁶ The Amazon information is available on the web at (<http://www.amazon.com>), and the online catalogue of the Library of Congress is accessible at (<http://www.catalog.loc.gov/>).

Table 2

Books: Booker Prize Nominations and Success

	Equation (1)	Equation (2)	Equation (3)
Winner	0.243 (0.245)	1.870 (1.876)	2.535 (1.988)
No. of years since nomination			
All nominees	—	-0.152* (0.035)	-0.146* (0.036)
Winners only	—	-0.062 (0.076)	-0.082 (0.080)
No. of editions of nominated title			
11 to 20 years after award	—	—	-0.005 (0.075)
No. of titles published before nomination	—	—	1.341 (0.829)
No. of titles published after nomination	—	—	0.481* (0.245)

Notes: The dependent variable is the number of different editions published during the ten years after nomination of the nominated or winning title that could be ordered from Amazon.com in July 2002. Explanatory variables are a dummy (winner = 1 for a title that was awarded the Booker Prize, while the base group consists of other nominated titles); the number of years elapsed since nomination; the number of different editions (published during years 11 to 20 after nomination) that could be ordered from Amazon.com in July 2002; and the number of titles other than the nominated one that are listed in the Library of Congress catalog. Intercepts are omitted. Standard errors appear under the parameters. Starred coefficients are significantly different from zero at the 5 percent probability level. The number of observations is 70. Estimation results from a Poisson model (a negative binomial estimation method) leads exactly to the same results, indicating that there is no heterogeneity.

nominated title, published during the ten first years after nomination is the dependent variable. Equation (1) shows that the number of editions is not significantly different for winners and other nominees (though the effect is positive for winners).

Contrary to what happens with movies, books are awarded very shortly after publication and do not benefit from the same amount of publicity than do movies. Therefore, I assume that here the award can predict success. However, the estimated coefficient on the award variable may be a biased estimate of how the award predicts economic success, if fundamental quality, absent as explanatory variable, is correlated with awards. In the second and third equations, I introduce also variables that may be thought of proxying fundamental quality. The negative coefficient on the number of years elapsed since nomination shows that the number of editions available in 2002 decreases with time and even somewhat faster for winners than for shortlisted authors. This does not affect the previous result: the effect on winners is not significantly different from the effect on nominees.

Awards and Aesthetic Quality

Under the assumption that the number of editions published 11 to 20 years after the nomination is a reasonable measure of fundamental quality, it appears

that only three Booker award winners out of 14 (13 years in the sample, but in 1974, there were two winners) outperform shortlisted titles, while in nine cases, shortlisted titles do better; in two cases a winning and a shortlisted title are tied. The number of books per year of life written (or available) before the nomination is equal to 0.20 both for winners and shortlisted authors. After the nomination, there are more titles available for shortlisted authors (0.56 per year of life after the nomination) than for winners (0.43)—although this difference is statistically not significant.

Both considerations lead to the conclusion that there is no difference in aesthetic quality between winning and shortlisted titles.

Music: The Queen Elisabeth Piano Competition

The Queen Elisabeth musical competition is an international competition for piano (and violin) performing, organized in Belgium and considered among the best and most demanding in the world. The list of past finalists includes very prestigious recipients: Leonid Kogan, Leon Fleisher, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Malcolm Frager, Lazare Berman and Emmanuel Ax, among others. The most unusual characteristic is that the finalists are given a single week to study a contemporary concerto especially composed for the competition and thus completely unknown to them as well as to the jury. The competition, organized every four years, attracts some 85 pianists from many countries. The order of appearance of those who are admitted is drawn at random before the competition starts and remains unchanged during the three further stages, including the finals in which the twelve nominees perform at a rate of two per evening.

The data consist of the twelve finalists in eleven competitions held between 1952 and 1991. For each of the 132 musicians, who represented some 50 countries, some indicators of success as well as observable individual characteristics were collected. There are two indicators of success. One is the presence of records and CDs in three catalogs (for details, see Ginsburgh and Van Ours, 2002), where the variable takes integer values 0 to 3 according to the number of catalogs in which a musician is present. The other indicator of success is ratings from 0 for unknown to 4 for outstanding obtained from twelve music critics, so that the rating can range between 0 and 48, although there are many zero values. Other characteristics consist of gender, nationality, age at the time of the competition, time elapsed between the competition and the date at which the success indicator is observed, order of performance during the competition and final rank (one to twelve).

Ranking and Success

The success of musicians, measured by presence in catalogs and by ratings from critics, is the dependent variable in two regressions. Final ranks (1 to 12) of the musicians obtained in the competition are used as the independent

variable. The first row of Table 3 shows the results from estimating an ordinary least squares regression. However, given that the presence in catalogs is a discrete variable with values 0 to 3, it is then estimated as an ordered probit variable in the second row. The ratings by critics can be considered continuous (0 to 48), but since there are many zeros, the equation is also estimated as a Tobit equation in the third row. The use of the probit and Tobit approaches does not much alter the ordinary least squares results, which show that the effect of ranking on success is significantly different from zero. However, because this equation does not control for talent (quality) of the musicians, the coefficients are biased if talent is correlated with the final ranking resulting from the competition.

In this example, there is no fundamental measure of quality, but an unexpected outcome of the competition allows for an instrumental variables approach to estimating an unbiased coefficient for the effect of ranking on success. The order of appearance of musicians is chosen randomly at the very beginning of the competition. It appears, however, to have an effect on the final ranking of the twelve musicians who perform at the rate of two per evening, during six evenings. Musicians who perform during the first evening, as well as those who perform first in any of the six evenings, have a lower probability of being ranked in the top group. Since this order is not correlated with the fundamental quality of musicians (it should, of course, not be, since it is randomly chosen, and some tests conducted on the data confirm this result), it can be used as an instrument.⁷ Actually, it is not the full order that is used, but two dummy variables. The first takes the value 1 for the first musician to perform during the first evening; the other one takes the value 1 for those who perform first during every evening. Gender of the performer (a dummy variable) also has an effect on ranking and is therefore used as third instrument.⁸

Thus, in the first stage of the two-stage least squares estimation, rankings are used as the dependent variable, and the dummy variables for performance order and gender are used as the independent variables. In the second stage, the rankings for each participant are estimated, using the instrumental variables and the coefficients from the first stage. Then, these estimated rankings are used as the explanatory variable, with the measures of success in catalog appearances or the rankings of critics as the dependent variable. Essentially, this instrumental variable approach relies on the insight that some of the difference in the rankings is random—the result of order of performance (and gender) rather than talent. The fourth row of Table 3 shows the result of running this estimation by two-stage least

⁷ A similar procedure is used in the labor economics literature to estimate the unbiased effect of education (here, awards) on earnings (here, success). Angrist and Krueger (2001) provide a recent survey of the issues.

⁸ Glejser and Heyndels (2001) suggest that the reason why gender is correlated with final rank is the consequence of the previous stage of the competition, which they consider as more woman-friendly since there is no concerto to perform. Therefore, more women are selected for the finals than otherwise would be, and their ranking in this last stage is, on average, worse than that of men.

Table 3
Musicians: Ranking in a Competition and Success

	<i>Presence in Catalogs</i>	<i>Ratings by Critics</i>
<i>Estimates of a single equation</i>		
Ordinary least squares	0.092* (0.029)	1.475* (0.273)
Ordered probit	0.097* (0.029)	— —
Tobit	— —	1.644* (0.299)
<i>Estimates of Simultaneous Equation Model, with Order and Gender as Instruments</i>		
Two-stage least squares	0.188* (0.075)	2.350* (0.671)
Ordered probit	0.186* (0.056)	— —
Tobit	— —	2.620* (0.845)

Notes: The dependent variable is presence in catalogs or ratings by critics. Only the coefficient on the ranking variable is reported. Intercepts and other coefficients are omitted. The number of observations is 132. Estimation is by various methods, as indicated by the headings in the various rows.

squares. The fifth and sixth rows repeat the process using a maximum likelihood probit approach in the catalog appearance regression and a maximum likelihood Tobit approach in the critic's ratings regression. All the results point in the same direction: Rankings definitely affect success.

Ranking and Talent

Although each competition can be taken as a randomized experiment, this is a case in which randomness appears to be unfair. Finalists in this competition are probably not ranked according to their talent. Ginsburgh and van Ours (2002) attribute this outcome to the organization of the competition, in which musicians have to perform a concerto that is composed for this occasion and is thus unknown to the judges as well. Though the judges are usually accomplished expert musicians, it may take them some time to get used to the score. They may thus become less severe as the competition unwinds and less severe for the second performer every evening.

Concluding Comments

The three case studies described here are concerned with art forms that appeal to very different senses: the visual arts, books and the performing arts. There are some clear differences among the results.

One interesting difference is that prized movies are reasonably often box office successes. This pattern does not hold with prize-winning books. Between 1980 and 1989, for example, no Pulitzer-winning or -nominated title made it to the list of the 15 bestsellers in the United States.⁹ Between 1969 and 1989, only Salman Rushdie's shortlisted Booker in 1988, *The Satanic Verses*, made it to number six in the bestsellers list in 1989, but this is most probably due to the *fatwa* enacted against the author by Iranian mullahs, more than to the Booker award.

Another difference is that movies and books are not necessarily produced with a competition in mind, and the artist is not present during the evaluation stage. In the musical competition, the work is unwinding while being judged in several stages and in the presence of the artist who is producing it, which means that the art may reflect qualities other than artistic talent. Will Crutchfield, music critic for the *New York Times*, writes that "the emotional stamina to tough it through round after round, as the competition winds on and the stakes rise, does not necessarily go along with the emotional sensitivity to make five minutes worth of truly remarkable Chopin" (quoted in Kohn, 1986, p. 54).

Still, with these cautions duly noted, the main outcomes of the case studies are very similar. Awards, prizes and critics may have an impact on success. This is quite clear for the music example, less so in the case of books and probably so for movies, but more work is needed to show it clearly (it is certainly so in Europe, where awarded movies are strongly advertised as such).

However, for movies, award winners may often not be the best ones as captured by other measures of quality, produced 20 to 50 years later. For books, there is no significant difference between prize-winning and shortlisted authors (there may be differences though, had my control group been "other books" that were not even short-listed). In the musical competition that is studied, interpreters are not ranked according to talent. The surprising thing about this finding is that although the fallibility of critics should be known to consumers, the reputation of critics, judges and experts does not seem to be affected. For example, anyone who compares the movie awards and best movies' lists might well question the choices made by the Academy of Motion Picture, as well as by other prize-awarding organizations.

Thus, there is at least an association between awards, prizes or rankings and success and, in one case (music), a clear influence, but in the three cases that I review, awards are bad predictors of what I assume to represent fundamental quality or talent.

Since there is often little difference in quality or talent between winners and nominees, one could wonder why competitions want to provide a "winner" every year. Experts might become more reputable if they just picked say, five nominees, without ranking them. Organizers have sometimes taken this approach. Before 1993, the Queen Elisabeth ranked the twelve finalists from 1 to 12; since then, only

⁹ Norman Mailer won a Pulitzer in 1980 for *The Executioner's Song* and appears in the bestsellers list in 1983 for another book, *Ancient Evenings*. Toni Morrison won the Pulitzer in 1988 for *Beloved* and was listed ten year later for *Paradise*. See Korda (2001) for bestsellers lists in the United States.

the first six are ranked. The famous Chopin piano competition does not always chose a winner. The National Academy could also refrain from awarding an Oscar if its jury feels that no movie deserves it.

That experts are not perfect in predicting quality is also the case elsewhere. Auction house experts do not take into account all the information that they have when setting presale price estimates; Bauwens and Ginsburgh (2000) provide some evidence on this for silverware auctions. Ratings of wine experts do not predict in an efficient way the prices of mature Bordeaux wines for the same reasons (Ashenfelter and Jones, 2000). Restaurant experts cannot refrain from taking into account elements other than cuisine, such as the look of the venue or the choice of wines in the cellars, while they claim that they rate the food only (Chossat and Gergaud, 2002). In their assessments about whether to sue, settle out of court or plead guilty to a lesser charge, American lawyers' judgment shows no predictive validity (Koehler, Brenner and Griffin, 2002). Properly developed statistical procedures, based on the rating of explicit characteristics, perform much better in diagnosing health conditions than clinical methods, which rest on implicit mental processes (Dawes, Faust and Meehl, 1989; Meehl, 1996).

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