

# THE EPOCH TIMES

# ARTS & CULTURE

PUBLIC DOMAIN



## FINE ARTS

## HERCULES

## AND THE LOVE OF VIRTUE

*Our human destiny is to rise above vices*

LUDOVIC GENIN

Who do we remember as the greatest ancient hero of them all? Hercules. Legend says that the gods honored him for his achievements by granting him apotheosis, or ascendance to the heavens. The powerful 17th and 18th century French kings commissioned magnificent art, including a ceiling painting to celebrate the achievements of the renowned hero and pay homage to the virtues inherent in his character.

François Lemoyne took four years to

**The virtues displayed in this ceiling painting are in direct opposition to vices that besiege man.**

complete “The Apotheosis of Hercules” on the ceiling of the Salon of Hercules at the Palace of Versailles. When the artist began the mural, he had already been trained in the best techniques of Italian painting in Paris at Louis XIV’s Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture. The purpose of the academy was to gather, preserve, and perfect the classical arts.

Initially, Lemoyne wanted to paint the glory of the French monarchy and the royal line, sovereign after sovereign. “Through the achievements of the greatest French kings, such as Clovis, Charlemagne, Saint

Louis, or Henry the Great, the painter wanted to recognize their immortality,” wrote Donat Nonnotte, a former student of François Lemoyne, in his treatise on painting delivered at the Academy of Lyon.

But Louis XV selected the Apotheosis—a subject that glorified virtues—to decorate the ceiling of the former royal chapel in the palace, and the work was finally completed in 1736. Louis XV took the throne officially a few years later, in 1743. The people called him “the beloved.”

*Continued on Page 4*

A detail from “The Apotheosis of Hercules” by François Lemoyne, in the Room of Hercules at the Palace of Versailles.



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THE EPOCH TIMES

LITERATURE

# Riches Lost and Found: *The Redemption of Silas Marner*

JEFF MINICK

Falsely accused of taking money from his church—the real thief is his best friend, who sets him up and marries his fiancée in the bargain—the weaver Silas Marner leaves behind his job and acquaintances at Northern England's Lantern Yard. He moves to the remote village of Raveloe in the Midlands, where he sets up his loom. For 15 years, he plies his trade there, having little to do with his neighbors or the local church, brokenhearted as he is by the betrayal of those whom he had trusted.

In Raveloe, Marner gains a reputation for being both a miser and a sort of freak. His bulging eyes and scowling countenance frighten the young children who peep through the windows of his cottage. His catalepsy causes him to fall into a trance at times (unable to move and unaware of what is occurring around him), which leads the villagers to be wary of him, with some wondering whether he is an instrument of the Devil. As he makes money from his exquisite skill at the loom, he forms the habit of nightly counting his gold and silver coins.

When a thief steals these savings, Marner falls into despair. He's only brought back to life by a golden-haired toddler whose desperate mother, an opium addict, dies in the snow near his doorway. Marner adopts the girl and names her Hephzibah after his deceased mother and sister but calls her Eppie. By his act of love, he finds himself drawn back into the community and once again closer to God.

This is the essence of George Eliot's "Silas Marner: The Weaver of Raveloe."

ditches, yet he sticks to the right path and eventually ends up securing the love and affection of Eppie and the admiration of his Raveloe friends.

## The Blessings of Children

"Silas Marner" begins with these lines from the poet William Wordsworth:

A child, more than all other gifts  
That earth can offer to declining man,  
Brings hope with it, and forward-looking thoughts.

Eppie brings that hope, and those thoughts, to Marner. Unlike the gold coins he had once so obsessively fingered, caring for Eppie draws the miserly weaver out of his self-pity and misanthropic isolation into the community at large. A neighbor, Dolly Winthrop, for example, offers him emotional support as well as sound advice on how to raise a daughter.

Others step up as well: "Notable mothers, who knew what it was to keep children 'whole and sweet...' were equally interested in conjuring how a lone man would manage with a two-year-old child on his hands, and were equally ready with their suggestions. ..."

Marner turns out to be a fine father who raises Eppie to be kind and gentle. In return, his care for her redeems him, bringing him back from the abyss of loneliness into which he had fallen. By loving her, Marner finds himself transformed.

## Love Conquers All

At the end of the novel, Godfrey Cass finally confesses to his daughter that he is her true father and asks her to live with him and his wife, thereby gaining a foot up the social ladder. Yet Eppie won't even consider this proposal. Of her adoptive father, Silas Marner, she says: "And he's took care of me and loved me from the first, and I'll cleave to him as long as he lives, and nobody shall ever come between



Silas Marner is an odd-looking fellow. An illustration by Hugh Thomson from George Eliot's book "Silas Marner."



George Eliot (1819–1880) was the pen name for Mary Ann Evans. A replica (1849 to 1886, based on a work of 1849) by François D'Albert Durade. National Portrait Gallery, London.

Standing in contrast to this sordid trio is Silas Marner, a rustic who nonetheless practices integrity and believes in truth-telling. His road of honor is filled with potholes and

him and me."

Eppie elects to stay with this man who lives in relative poverty because of the everyday acts of love that he has always shown her. Later, on her wedding day to a local man, Eppie says to Silas Marner: "Oh father, what a pretty home ours is! I think nobody could be happier than we are."

Readers will nod in agreement.

## Beauty

In addition to Eliot's skillful exploration of these ideas, there's another reason to read "Silas Marner," and that's the beauty and wisdom of the words themselves. Novelist Christopher Bohjalian, who wrote the Introduction to my copy, states: "No material is wasted, no threads are left dangling. There is a reason for every word. This, in my mind, is a great strength—and reason enough to savor the story."

Agreed. But in Eliot's concise use of language we also find beauty. Here, for instance, are the writer's ruminations at the end of Chapter 14 regarding the early relationship of Silas Marner and Eppie:

"In old days there were angels who came and took men by the hand and led them away from the city of destruction. We see no white-winged angels now. But yet men are led away from threatening destruction: a hand is put into theirs, which leads them forth gently towards a calm and bright land, so that they look no more backward; and the hand may be a little child's."

## An Aside: Rereading the Classics

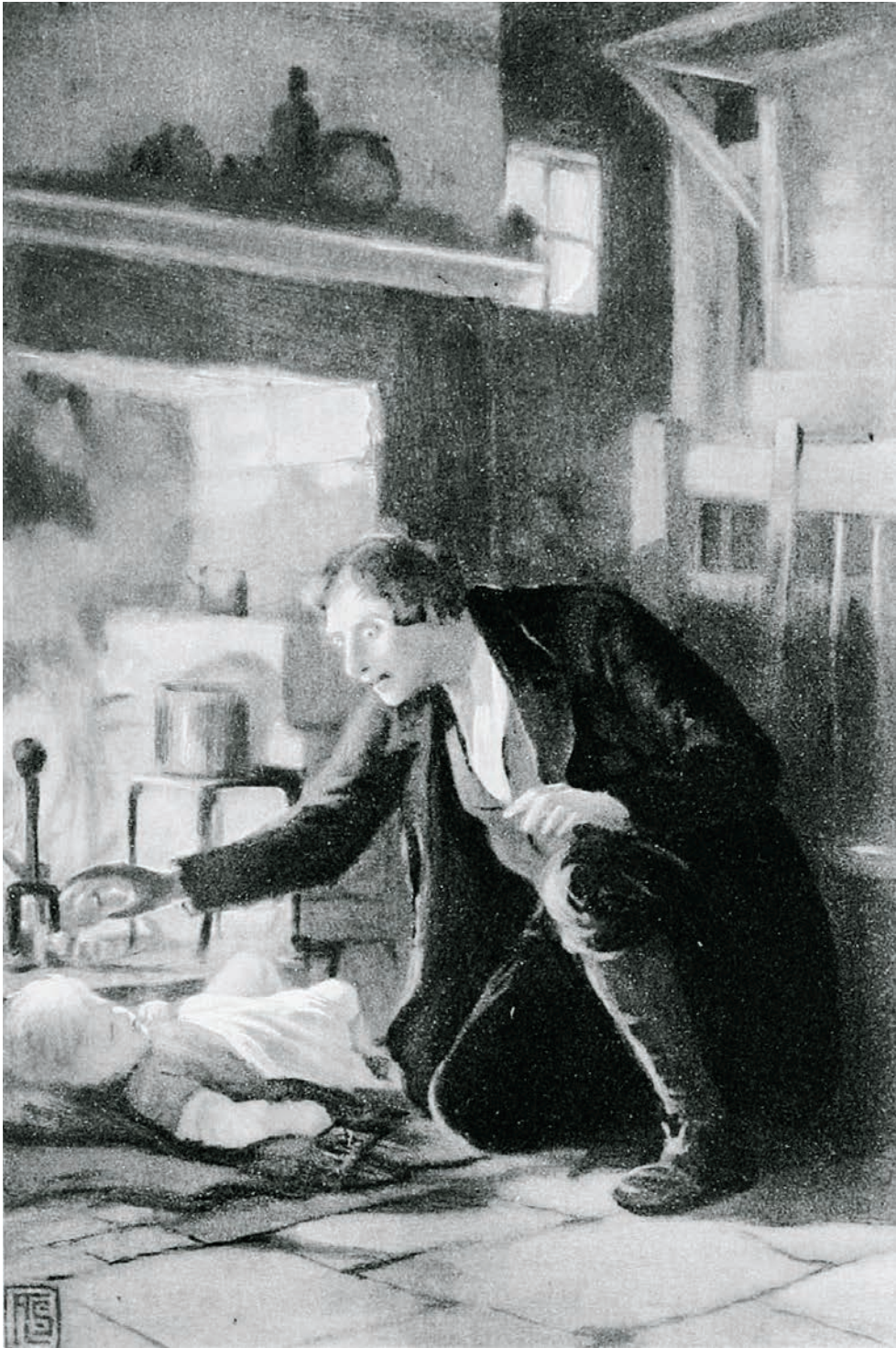
Over 50 years ago, when I was in high school, my class read "Silas Marner." I remembered only a few scenes from that time—a conversation in the Rainbow Inn, Marner's discovery of Eppie on his hearth—and my rereading the novel for this review revealed to me that I had missed the gold of this story, and by that I don't mean the stolen coins. I suspect I was just too young and too immature to appreciate the many treasures found in this tale.

Other books I read long ago—Dickens's "Great Expectations," for example, or Tolstoy's "War and Peace"—are

**In contrast to Silas Marner, three of Eliot's characters lie, cheat, and deceive others.**



Cover of the 1907 edition of the book "Silas Marner," written by George Eliot and illustrated by Hugh Thomson.



An illustration of the moment Silas Marner finds a 2-year-old girl upon his hearth, from the 1910 edition of "Silas Marner." Published by The Jenson Society, N.Y.

likewise vague memories shrouded in the mists of time. I know the general plots and the names of some of the characters in these books, but again I realize now that I might with profit revisit some of the old classics and find new wealth in them in my old age.

That's the final wealth I take away from "Silas Marner."

Jeff Minick has four children and a

growing platoon of grandchildren. For 20 years, he taught history, literature, and Latin to seminars of homeschooling students in Asheville, N.C. He is the author of two novels, "Amanda Bell" and "Dust on Their Wings," and two works of non-fiction, "Learning as I Go" and "Movies Make the Man." Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, Va. See JeffMinick.com to follow his blog.

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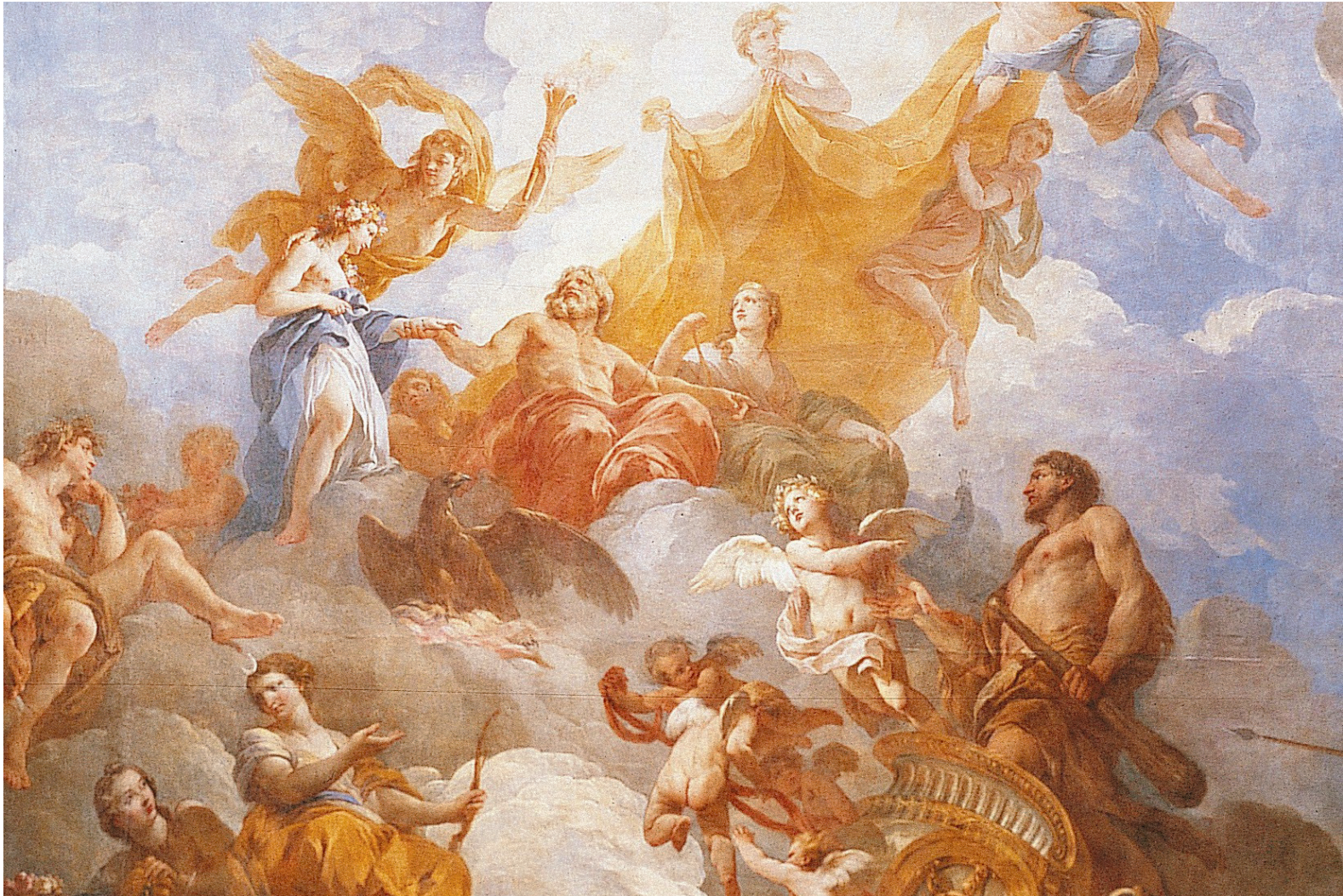
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“The Apotheosis of Hercules” by François Lemoyne, in the Room of Hercules at the Palace of Versailles.



ALL IMAGES IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN



The angel named Love of Virtue shows Hercules to his father, Jupiter (in muted scarlet). Jupiter presents to his son Hebe, goddess of youth (in blue), led by the winged goddess Hymen.

marized the meaning of “The Apotheosis”: “The Love of Virtue elevates a man above himself and makes him superior in the most difficult and perilous labors; obstacles disappear at the sight of the interests of his King and his Fatherland. Supported by honor and led by fidelity, he arrives at immortality by his actions.”

### As he ascends to heaven, Hercules encounters monsters and vices.

#### Only the Love of Virtue Can Overcome Monsters and Vices

In “The Apotheosis,” the hero is shown riding to heaven in a chariot, guided by an angel called Love of Virtue. This angel, accompanied by putti who pull the chariot of the half-god, presents Hercules to his father Jupiter. Jupiter is seen offering the goddess of youth, Hebe, to Hercules. She is led to him by the goddess Hymen. As he ascends to heaven, Hercules encounters monsters and vices that try to hold him back but are easily overthrown. Because the hero chooses to be guided by Love of Virtue, the monsters and vices cannot endure his glorious progress and grimace as they are thrown down. Four allegorical figures that represent the cardinal virtues sit at the corners of the painted ceiling. These symbolize the values of the hero: Strength, Justice, Temperance, and Prudence. They portray the character of the new Hercules as he elevates to the heavens. At the time of the painting, these words had a different meaning than they have today. They belonged to a culture linked with the divine and contained messages about man’s destiny. Strength, for example, did not mean physical strength but the mental strength of courage and fortitude. Justice signified steadfastness and a



Three of the four virtues from the four corners of “The Apotheosis of Hercules” by François Lemoyne, in the Salon of Hercules at the Palace of Versailles.

resolve to give everyone their due. Temperance meant the control of one’s will over instincts, and the keeping of desires within the limits of common sense. Prudence was embodied in practical wisdom and reason that allowed one to discern true good from true evil. The virtues displayed in this ceiling painting are in direct opposition to vices that besiege man. The first of these vices is Envy (Jealousy). The rest follow, shown in the painting by hideous and tortured figures. Among them are Anger, Hatred, and Discord, which the newly installed god finally triumphs over through Love of Virtue. Envy (Jealousy) is closest to the hero. In the 18th century, this monster was considered “the most dangerous and the most relentless of all the vices, and the only one whose rage extends beyond death,” as described in the Mercury of France magazine of 1736. It is not Hercules’s strength but the Love of Virtue, when accompanied by the four cardinal virtues, that allows him to face and to defeat these relentless vices seeking to destroy him.

#### The Universal Message of French Art in the 18th Century

The stroke of genius by the French at the end of the “Grand Siècle” (Great Century) was to unite the classical arts by merging the sacred with reason. French art academies transmitted this to society as French classical arts which, in turn, merged the deep meaning of a work of art with its intrinsic beauty. Three centuries later, when our world has never been so uprooted and cut off from the glorious culture of our past, monsters and vices are redoubling their efforts to make humanity forget its divine destiny. But works like “The Apotheosis,” with its ancient and universal virtues, enable us to see an upright man overcome all difficulties, pursue the good in all endeavors, resist destructive temptations, and ultimately ascend to heaven.

#### FINE ARTS

# HERCULES AND THE LOVE OF VIRTUE

Our human destiny is to rise above vices

Continued from Page 1

But by the end of his reign, Louis preferred the softness of his many mistresses’ salons to the cool but important solitude of the palace of a great monarch. This decadence began a period of decline in rational thinking that would eventually lead to the unprecedented destruction of French culture at the end of the 18th century by the French Revolution and the Reign of Terror. Three centuries later, the colossal work “The Apotheosis of Hercules” continues to address the destiny of humankind and the tools given to us to rise above our human flaws.

#### FINE ARTS

## Capturing the Strength and Spirit of the Noble Horse

THE NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON

“Whistle-jacket,” circa 1762, by George Stubbs. Oil on canvas; 116 5/8 inches by 97 5/8 inches. The National Gallery, London.



The art of English painter George Stubbs, the ‘Sporting Raphael’

#### LORRAINE FERRIER

LONDON—English artist George Stubbs painted a stallion so true to life that, as you approach, you can almost catch a whiff of him as he hears and tosses his mane. He’s a tower of strength, on high alert. And he’s not happy. His nostrils flare and his eyes bulge as he pulls his head back full of fear, or perhaps in a display of dominance. It’s a wild moment to witness, and there’s no sense in the painting of what will happen next.

Stubbs’s painting shows the power of both art and nature.

My instincts make me want to step back to a safe distance in The National Gallery, London, but Stubbs’s expert painting, “Whistle-jacket,” demands close attention. I wonder how Stubbs (1724–1806) created each hand of this near-life-size, Arabian thoroughbred from its silky mane and velvet, chestnut coat to the tiny veins on his flank that show just how much the stallion’s muscles contract. Stubbs’s painting shows the power of both art and nature, and he achieved such mastery through directly copying nature itself, including intently drawing anatomy.

#### The ‘Sporting Raphael’

As Britain’s preeminent animal painter, Stubbs took horse art from stock farm and racing images to real characters. In his book “Five Centuries of British Art: From Holbein to Hodgkin,” author and museum

curator Andrew Wilton calls Stubbs the “Sporting Raphael,” due to how sensitively he rendered multiple figures in harmonious compositions. Just like Raphael, Stubbs painted each subject—be it a horse or a person—with care, attention, and character. But Stubbs didn’t idealize his horses; he painted them as nature intended and without sentiment. For Stubbs, nature was of the utmost importance and the heart of his art. Stubbs received little artistic training. At age 5, he began drawing with an ardor that was more than a childhood interest, becoming interested in anatomy when he was 8 years old after a doctor gave him some bones to draw. His father hoped his son would become a currier like him, processing leather, but it wasn’t meant to be. Instead, Stubbs’s father arranged an apprenticeship for his then 15-year-old son with a local artist who was copying art in a nearby estate. The young Stubbs didn’t last long; he didn’t want to copy other artists’ work. He wanted to see for himself, and to learn from nature.

CHAKRIT VENTH/SHUTTERSTOCK



Visitors admire the Arabian thoroughbred named Whistlejacket in George Stubbs’s near-life-size painting of the same name, at The National Gallery, London, in 2017.

#### A Different Route

Normally, 18th-century artists would start learning art by copying classical art and architecture, first becoming competent in drawing classical statuary before drawing live models. Stubbs took a different route. From around 1745 and 1751, Stubbs first studied cadavers, including those of pregnant women, at York County Hospital.

He even privately studied the body of one woman who died giving birth. A doctor then commissioned Stubbs to draw and etch a series of fetuses in the womb for the doctor’s paper on midwifery. Stubbs went to Rome in 1754, but it doesn’t appear that he copied any art. He told his friend, Ozias Humphry, that he went to Rome “to convince himself that nature was & is always superior to art whether Greek or Roman.” He therefore felt that studying classical art and sculpture was not the way forward for art, but studying nature was. Stubbs’s horse paintings are the epitome of his nature studies. He spent 18 months in a barn studying horse cadavers. He’d hoist each one on a series of pulleys and then dissect it in stages from the skin, to the muscle and tendons, and then right down to the bone, drawing as he went. Each horse lasted 11 weeks. Stubbs studied horse anatomy because he wanted to understand how to portray horses properly, and to leave a guide for other artists, horse handlers, and the like. He didn’t study the organs, since they weren’t needed

for him to paint the horse effectively. Those studies became his now famous “The Anatomy of the Horse” (that he etched the plates for, when no engraver was interested), which he published in 1766. Timeless Appeal Stubbs’s “Whistlejacket” has a magnetic, timeless appeal. Even from afar, this huge and enigmatic portrait seems to follow me around the gallery, much like Rembrandt’s portraits do. Some experts believe that the painting’s empty background, stripped of any indication of when it was painted, is a nod to classical marble friezes as the 2nd Marquess of Rockingham, who commissioned the painting, was at the time building the best collection of classical sculpture in Europe. Whistlejacket may not have been as successful as other racehorses, but the painting is famously an ode to nature and to Stubbs’s brilliance in painting true to life. To find out more about “Whistlejacket” by George Stubbs, visit NationalGallery.org.uk



BOOK REVIEW

# The Man Who Understood Democracy: The Life of Alexis de Tocqueville

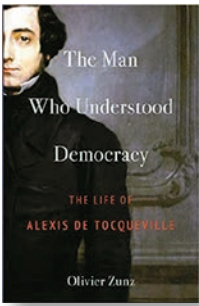
A wonderful biography of the Frenchman who best understood America, democracy

DUSTIN BASS

Arguably the preeminent scholar on Alexis de Tocqueville has written a new biography on the French aristocrat who defied aristocracy in favor of democracy. Olivier Zunz, the James Madison Professor of History at the University of Virginia, has assembled a studious work on the life of an incredibly studious man. “The Man Who Understood Democracy: The Life of Alexis de Tocqueville” is a wonderfully written biography on the foreigner who arguably best described America politically and socially through his work “Democracy in America.” The title of the book is indicative of its central theme. Zunz focuses less on Tocqueville the man and more on how his understanding and his pursuit of understanding democracy shaped him, his countrymen, and the political and social landscape of the 19th and 20th centuries, especially in the West.

### Learning From French Political Upheaval

Zunz discusses Tocqueville’s early life, particularly regarding the aftermath of the French Revolution. Tocqueville, though born in 1805, just a few short years after the Reign of Terror, was heavily impacted by that Jacobin era, as many of his relatives were executed at the guillotine. He was



### ‘The Man Who Understood Democracy: The Life of Alexis de Tocqueville’

**Author**  
Olivier Zunz  
**Publisher**  
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born, however, during a different reign: the reign of Napoleon Bonaparte. The French bore constant political and social upheaval, ranging from the Napoleonic Wars to the reinstating of the monarchy, to coups, to republics, to threats of revolutions, to new revolutions, and back to monarchical reign. France of the 19th century provided Tocqueville an endless supply of material. But it was his adventure to America with his friend Gustave de Beaumont to study the country, its politics, and its prisons that propelled him to greatness.

### ‘Democracy in America’

Tocqueville’s book “Democracy in America” pulls from his travels in America during the presidency of Andrew Jackson. Noted are his travels through various states, as well as his encounters with prominent individuals and statesmen, like John Quincy Adams, Sam Houston, and Jared Sparks, the eventual president of Harvard University (then named Harvard College).

Upon their return home, he and Beaumont set off on the project of prison reform. Their work proved influential, but it was not until Tocqueville wrote his work regarding the young nation across the Atlantic that he was considered the next great political philosopher.

Tocqueville’s political philosophy is precisely what readers will obtain from this biography. Zunz follows Tocqueville’s course of understanding democracy through American eyes. Tocqueville believes that America figured out how to make democracy work, and points to the people’s ability to allow politics and religion to coexist peaceably (a notion with which France struggled).

### Convincing the French

From this point, Tocqueville struggles to convince the French through his writings and his eventual, though relatively short-lived, rise to politics that democracy is the form of government to be embraced, rather than monarchical dictatorships.

In Zunz’s book, Tocqueville does not seem to struggle with his arguments for democracy, despite the continual political and social setbacks that France incurs. In fact, Zunz provides insight into just how Tocqueville’s early writings in “Democracy in America” remain in line with his later writings, such as “The Old Regime and the French Revolution,” and also his correspondences with colleagues and friends, ranging from Beau-



“Alexis de Tocqueville,” 1850, by Théodore Chassériau. Oil on canvas; 51.7 inches by 38.7 inches. Palace of Versailles.

mont to George Sand to John Stuart Mill.

### Insight and Conviction Combined

Incredibly, Tocqueville was not only a man of conviction—which is noble enough in itself—but also a man who was right quite often in those convictions. This is not to say that he was never wrong, or that Zunz attempts to portray him that way. No, there are issues in which Tocqueville proves out of step at times with his own views, at times rather contradictory, such as his disdain for America’s “conquest” of lands at the expense of the natives, while at the same promoting the colonization of Algeria. The author merely presents Tocqueville as a man who was ahead of his time in many ways, while simultaneously being a man of his times in others.

Zunz brings to the forefront many of Tocqueville’s powerful assessments of political and social issues, including religion in society, equality, welfare, democracy (obviously), the dangers of socialism, and, possibly most astounding, his view of how revolutions (if not at least the French Revolution) begin. The author has brought forward the thought processes of a man who was a rarity among thinkers.

That rarity, as made clear in Zunz’s work, was Tocqueville’s gift of insight combined with the strength of conviction. History has shown that people can possess the insight to do or know what is right without having the strength to stand by those insights.

His ability to stand by his convictions when he knew they were right (though he was not incapable of being convinced when he was in error) at times cost him politically. It also

cost him in relationships, familial and otherwise. In one instance, when his one-time colleague Arthur de Gobineau wrote and sent for his review “The Inequality of Human Races,” Tocqueville made it clear that he viewed Gobineau’s theories as “quite false” and “very pernicious.”

Zunz points out, and this merely attributes to Tocqueville’s ability for insight, that he believed the essay would “appeal to the slave owners in the United States and to Germans in their exaltation of the Aryan race.” Gobineau’s work was tragically used in both instances, just as Tocqueville predicted.

### A Life Worth Studying

The world was blessed by Tocqueville’s gifts for insight and for putting them down on paper, especially “Democracy in America,” and especially for Americans. Tocqueville rightly felt that America, though only slightly more than 50 years old with a constitution that was younger than that, was a country worth studying and replicating.

He provided Americans and Westerners—indeed, the future generations of the world—a breakdown, if not a roadmap, of a properly coordinated and practiced democracy. Zunz, in his wonderful biography of a brilliant man, has provided us a clear-eyed roadmap for understanding the man who understood democracy.

*Dustin Bass is the host of Epoch TV’s “About the Book: A Show about New Books With the Authors Who Wrote Them.” He is an author and co-host of The Sons of History podcast.*



Addie Morales as Maria and children in “The Sound of Music.”

which he died nine months after “The Sound of Music” premiered.

A fantastic, must-see for couples, families, and anyone who wants to experience one of the most intoxicating and captivating productions to come out of Broadway’s Golden Age, this show is a musical gift for our difficult times.

*As an arts writer and movie/theater/opera critic, Betty Mohr has been published in the Chicago Sun-Times, The Chicago Tribune, The Australian, The Dramatist, the SouthtownStar, the Post Tribune, The Herald News, The Globe and Mail in Toronto, and other publications.*

### ‘The Sound of Music’

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THEATER REVIEW

# ‘The Sound of Music’: New Production Is an Audience Favorite

BETTY MOHR

LINCOLNSHIRE, ILL.—“The Sound of Music” first played in New Haven, Connecticut, as a pre-Broadway tryout on Oct. 3, 1959. After the show, its composer Richard Rodgers, its lyricist Oscar Hammerstein II, and the show’s performers waited for the town’s critical reviews to come in.

When the newspapers came out with bad reviews, everyone was crestfallen, believing that after all their hard work the show was a flop. Everyone, that is, except for Hammerstein. He dismissed the critics and predicted that the musical would become the biggest hit on Broadway.

Hammerstein was right. “The Sound of Music,” which opened on Nov. 16, 1959, in New York City, not only became one of the most popular musicals of all time, but it also followed up the stage production with one of the biggest blockbuster movies ever in 1965.

### Musical Blockbuster

Hammerstein had the pulse of the public right because he was more in tune with them than were the elitist critics of the day. He knew that people were searching for inspiration and wanted goodness to triumph

over evil. That is why “The Sound of Music” has been enchanting audiences for more than half a century and will continue to do so for years to come.

While there have been many reincarnations of the show in the Chicagoland area, this newest revival at the Marriott Theatre in Lincolnshire, Illinois, is one of the best ever. Elegantly directed by Nick Bowling, it unfolds with a fresh spirit infused with powerful energy.

The story takes place against the background of the Nazi invasion of Austria in 1938 and was written in the 1950s, yet the musical comes across as very modern—a contemporary lesson on the importance of love, family, religion, and courage.

The show—with a book by Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse, which was based on Maria Augusta Trapp’s “The Trapp Family Singers”—begins with the heavenly sound of the nuns in lyrical song set against Collette Pollard’s scenic archway design and Anthony Churchill’s backdrop projection of a mountainous Salzburg.

The production also is enhanced by the artistic talent of Sally Dolembro’s costume design, Jesse Klug’s lighting, Michael Daly’s sound design, and the musical supervision of Patti Garwood.

It doesn’t take long before the innocent Maria appears at the von Trapp household. She has been sent from the abbey to become a governess for Capt. Georg von Trapp’s seven children. The captain has withdrawn from life since his wife died, and his children are suffering because of it. The emotional repression of the household changes, though, because of Maria’s nurturing and her indomitable love of life and music.

### New Faces, Familiar Songs

Addie Morales is a compelling Maria who, with a velvety soprano voice, attempts to sing away her fears with “I Have Confidence” and tries to impart a positive outlook to the children with “My Favorite Things.”

Erik Hellman, who plays Capt. von Trapp, stands out with a portrayal of moral strength, refusing to give in to the monstrous Nazis as they try to force him to betray his ideals and his country. His singing of “Edelweiss” is a moving, heart-felt moment that will bring a lump to the throats of those who love their country.

The children, who grow to love Maria—as does the captain—not only sing in lovely harmony with “Do-Re-Mi” but also demonstrate some wonderful dance moves given to them by choreographer William Carlos Angulo.

The seven children include some special turns, such as Omi Lichtenstein, adorable as Brigitta; Campbell Krausen as Liesl in a duet singing “Sixteen Going on Seventeen” with Emmet Smith as the telegram delivery boy Rolf; and other charming kids played by Milla Liss, Archer Gey, Olivia O’Sullivan, Brody Tyner, and Reese Bella.

In addition, Heidi Kettenring gives a terrific portrayal of the social snob Elsa Schraeder who plans to become the captain’s new wife. At her side is Rob Lindley, playing the cynical, self-serving entrepreneur Max Detweiler, who believes the captain’s children will help his business.

Another superb highlight of the production is golden-voiced Daniella Dalli as the Mother Abbess singing “Climb Every Mountain.” What’s amazing about this poignant song is that Hammerstein wrote its lyrics while he was suffering from stomach cancer, from

LIZ LAUREN



Nick Cage (Nicolas Cage) greets Javi Gutierrez with a “Palm Hold Fist” salute as he arrives in Mallorca, Spain, in “The Unbearable Weight of Massive Talent.”

FILM REVIEW

# Welcome to the Nicolas Cage Metaverse

MICHAEL CLARK

It’s certainly not a frequent occurrence, but when performers are cast in prominent roles as themselves in live-action movies, there is usually some tweaking involved. It’s not them but fictionalized versions of them, such as John Malkovich in “Being John Malkovich,” Bill Murray in “Zombieland,” and Neil Patrick Harris in the “Harold & Kumar” franchise. Up until now (to my knowledge, at least), no actor has played the lead character in any such a movie before and, after watching Nicolas Cage do so here, I believe it is something few, if any other actor could convincingly pull off.

In the too-busy titled “The Unbearable Weight of Massive Talent” [TUWOMT], Cage plays Nick Cage, an actor who, try as he might to hide it, is becoming increasingly desperate and has his heart set on what he thinks will be the dream role that will salvage his sagging career.

He presses director David Gordon Green (as himself) too hard and doesn’t get the part. In order to get some quick, much needed cash, he takes the advice of his agent Richard (ironically, Harris) and agrees to attend the birthday party of one of his biggest fans for \$1 million.

That fan is Javi (Pedro Pascal), an olive magnate living the high life on the island of Mallorca in Spain. He is obsessed with Cage but hides it well, at least for a while.

Javi doesn’t fawn, but he is in awe, something that Cage seems to appreciate if not fully embrace. After a brief and slightly bumpy getting-to-know-you stretch, the two men slip into an authentic mutual-admiration bromance and Cage is on the way to his easiest-ever paycheck.

Things get interesting when CIA agent Vivian (Tiffany Haddish) plants a GPS device on Cage in order to make it easier to capture Javi, whom she and her partner Martin (Ike Barinholtz) have identified as an international arms dealer.

The agents kidnap Cage, tell him about Javi, and lean on him to infiltrate the private quarters of Javi’s estate during the party in order to snare some electronic dirt needed in order to take him into custody. As this is a farce or parody flick starring Nicolas Cage as (kind of) himself playing a semi-unwitting spy, this scenario isn’t as far-fetched as it might appear, but it’s close.

### A Rewrite or 2 Was Needed

The screenplay by director Tom Gormican (“That Awkward Moment”) and co-writer Kevin Etten is entirely serviceable but feels as if it is one or two drafts away from being great. The film isn’t laugh-out-loud the whole way through as the trailers indicate, nor is it nearly as “action-y” as it half-heartedly tries to become.

Weaving itself in and out of the narrative the entire time is a subplot involving Cage’s teen daughter Addy (Lily Sheen, the child

KATALIN VERMES/LIONSGATE

The screenplay is one or two drafts away from being great.

### ‘The Unbearable Weight of Massive Talent’

**Director:**  
Tom Gormican  
**Starring:**  
Nicolas Cage, Pedro Pascal, Neil Patrick Harris, Tiffany Haddish, Ike Barinholtz, Lily Sheen  
**Running Time:**  
1 hour, 47 minutes  
**MPAA Rating:**  
R  
**Release Date:**  
April 22, 2022  
★★★★★

REWIND, REVIEW, AND RE-RATE

# ‘Run Silent, Run Deep’

A mesmerizing clash of wills during World War II

IAN KANE

Plenty of submarine movies involve the men onboard coming into conflict with one another. When you put a large crew into a cramped, congested space and away from home for months on end, there are bound to be squabbles and flare-ups. It’s one of the reasons I joined the Army instead of the Navy: I had mild claustrophobia and didn’t want to take a chance of being assigned to a sub.

In fact, a number of these submarine films depict the clash of wills between a sub’s commander and his second in command, the executive officer. If there’s one film that set the standard for this, it would have to be 1958’s World War II submarine film, “Run Silent, Run Deep.”

### Great Stars in Great Roles

Here you have ubertalented actors Clark Gable and Burt Lancaster starring as the commander and executive officer respectively, so we’re in for a monumental clash of wills.

The film opens with Commander “Rich” Richardson (Gable) patrolling the dangerous Bungo Straits just off the coast of Japan in 1942. He and his submarine crew are targeting a Japanese cargo convoy and lining up their sights for a torpedo run. Soon, a notorious destroyer, called the Akikaze, which is escorting the convoy, detects the sub and quickly manages to sink it. Richardson and a handful of his men are lucky to escape a watery death and make it out of the sinking sub to the surface.

Richardson is assigned to desk duty, where he passes time with his friend Yeoman 1st Class Mueller (Jack Warden). One

of their favorite distractions is to re-create the fateful sub-destroyer encounter over and over using models, except with Richardson’s crew winning each time. But the fantasy matchups only make the deflated commander want revenge and compel him to hatch a clever plan.

### Dashed Hopes

A little later, a submarine known as the USS Nerka is returning to port from active sea patrol. On board is Lieutenant Jim Bledsoe (Lancaster), who has bonded with the sub’s raucous crew, including Ensign Gerald Cartwright (Brad Dexter), Quartermaster 1st Class Ruby (Don Rickles), and Russo (Nick Cravat).

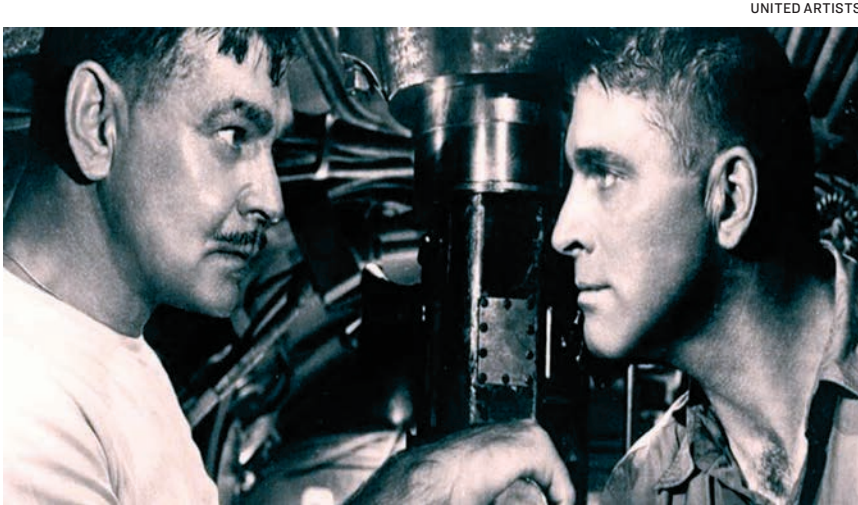
The crew is prematurely celebrating the promotion of Bledsoe to commander of the Nerka since he’s performed so diligently as an executive officer. However, Bledsoe soon discovers that the Nerka’s reins have been passed over his head to none other than Richardson, who was successful in pulling a few strings with the Navy higher-ups.

Furious, Bledsoe pays Richardson a visit at his home and requests that he be released from duty so that he can be assigned somewhere else. Richardson stubbornly refuses.

The Nerka, now with Richardson at its helm and Bledsoe as his new executive officer, casts off for a fresh patrol in Japanese waters. Their mission is to sink any convoy ships they find while staying relatively undetected. However, Richardson has his own plan afoot that may jeopardize not only his life but also the lives of his crew as well.

### Nuanced Conflict

Although this is a classic “clash of wills”



Clark Gable and Burt Lancaster star in 1958’s “Run Silent, Run Deep.”

Some of the film’s elements elevate it above similar World War II fare.

### ‘Run Silent Run Deep’

**Director:**  
Robert Wise  
**Starring:**  
Clark Gable, Burt Lancaster, Jack Warden  
**Running time:**  
1 hour, 33 minutes  
**Release Date:**  
March 27, 1958  
★★★★★

of Kate Beckinsale and Michael Sheen) and his amiable Irish ex-wife Olivia (Sharon Horgan). Again, this portion of the story could have been excellent with a few more nips and tucks.

The arguable high points in the movie involve exchanges between Cage and Nicky, who is a younger, imaginary version of himself, circa “Valley Girl,” “Peggy Sue Got Married,” “Raising Arizona,” “Birdy,” or “Wild At Heart.” Thanks to a CGI-enhanced “de-aging” process similarly employed by Martin Scorsese in “The Irishman,” Nicky represents Cage’s more commercially concerned alter ego—the boisterous, unchecked, young-buck upstart unaware of the future roles (“Leaving Las Vegas,” “Joe,” “Pig,” and even “Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse”) that would make clear Cage’s stealthy ability to navigate between Hollywood pap and art-house prestige projects.

### The Story Within a Story

Also interesting is a thread involving a mystery screenplay penned by Javi, which was submitted to Richard who summarily threw it away instead of passing it along to Cage. Not until the last five minutes of the film is the full scope of the story clear: It recalls similar twists found in Robert Altman’s “The Player” and Barry Sonnenfeld’s “Get Shorty.”

### Weak-ish Fan Service

Make no mistake, “TUWOMT” is essential, mandatory viewing for all Cage fans and is well worth the investment of time and money. For anyone else looking for something off the beaten path, which also takes a hearty swipe at low-hanging fruit Hollywood tropes, it’ll work, just not as well as it should.

During the pre-wide-release screening of the film, I counted only about a dozen or so references to the over 100 previous Cage films (some of them more than once) and was slightly disappointed with that relatively low number and the fleeting acknowledgment.

Having a guy with such a devoted fan base and varied résumé like Cage agree to participate in this unique type of production and not dive deep down into his cinematic rabbit hole was a huge missed opportunity. What we’re left with in the end is a pretty good and underachieving movie that should have been great.

*Originally from Washington, D.C., Michael Clark has provided film content to over 30 print and online media outlets. He co-founded the Atlanta Film Critics Circle in 2017 and is a weekly contributor to the Shannon Burke Show on FloridaManRadio.com. Since 1995, Mr. Clark has written over 4,000 movie reviews and film-related articles. He favors dark comedy, thrillers, and documentaries.*

type of picture, some of its elements elevate it above similar World War II fare. One of these is that the film’s writing is first-rate: The dialogue between the various crew members on board the cramped submarine never feels stilted or phony. There are also some fascinating power dynamics at play as we learn about the motivations behind the main characters.

The plot (and Richardson’s scheme) also unfolds in gradients, as the rest of the crew begin to catch on, not only to the great peril they will face but also to the power struggle between Richardson and Bledsoe. Bledsoe resents the Navy brass, who passed him over for command, and Richardson, whom he feels stole his rightful position through political wrangling.

“Run Silent, Run Deep” is a taut war drama that features two Hollywood megastars in Gable and Lancaster, arguably at the height of their powers. It showcases how incredibly talented they were when given such a deftly written script, trimmed of any excess fat and bereft of pomp.

*Ian Kane is an U.S. Army veteran, author, filmmaker, and actor. He is dedicated to the development and production of innovative, thought-provoking, character-driven films and books of the highest quality.*



ALL PHOTOS IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN



A detail from “The Effects of Good Governance,” 1338–40, by Ambrogio Lorenzetti. Siena, Italy.

# Sound Stewardship: Lorenzetti’s ‘Allegory of Good Governance’

Siena frescoes affirm that the common good guides statecraft

YVONNE MARCOTTE

The year is 1340, and the Republic of Siena is a happening place. Nine elected magistrates, known as the Council of Nine, enter the Palazzo Pubblico (or town hall) and proceed toward the Sala dei Nove (Salon of Nine or Council Room). They enter the council room and gaze upward at three wall-size frescoes, reminders of how to rule for the benefit of the people.

One of four powerful city-states in the region of Tuscany, Italy (including Florence, Pisa, and Lucca), Siena enjoyed prosperity for almost 400 years (1125–1555), boasting a coat of arms declaring “libertas” (freedom). And its leaders wanted to keep it that way. Around 1285, they commissioned local artist Ambrogio Lorenzetti (1290–1348) to paint frescoes in the council room as reminders of what is at stake in good governance.

Between 1338 and 1340, Lorenzetti painted the “Allegory of Good Governance” on the main wall and two more frescoes on each adjoining wall. On the left is shown the effects of good governance and to the right, the effects of bad governance.

A contemporary of Giotto (1267–1337), Lorenzetti painted his frescoes just as the

Renaissance kicked off. His paintings of almost 300 figures present allegorical figures of a higher realm watching over Siena, where the locals engage in their normal activities in the city and countryside.

## Justice Over All

On the central wall of the council, the main figures of Justice and Common Good dominate the scene and are proportionately larger than other figures in the fresco. Justice sits directly above the door of the hall. She looks up for guidance from Wisdom. On each side of her chair, Justice balances scales where angels mete out punishments or rewards.

On the left, an angel cuts off the head of a wrongdoer. The angel on the right rewards good people with gifts. Sitting at the feet of Justice is another seated figure Harmony (“Concordance”), in white, who hands two woven cords (“concordes”) to representatives of the people, so they will govern amicably.

## Common Good Rules

A procession of magistrates connects the section presided over by Justice with the court of Common Good, who rules the city.

Above the king, the heavenly virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity guide the realm.

Below them, Common Good holds court in a high, spiritual realm. In his court are the crowned and stately virtues of good government who advise the king: Peace, Fortitude, and Prudence on the left; Magnanimity, Temperance, and Justice on the right.

## His paintings of almost 300 figures present allegorical figures of a higher realm watching over Siena.

Peace, or Pax, to the left of the king, does not appear concerned with the management of the city. She leans back on a large, soft cushion, very relaxed. She has nothing to do because the city is being ruled very well with the help of the other virtues. Under her cushion is armor, which she no longer needs. The armor, originally silver, has tarnished to black because of lack of use.

## A Well-Run City

On the right side of Lorenzetti’s well-planned

fresco series, we see what happens when good governance is carried out. Lorenzetti knew his city well for he lived there. The structures are good representations of the city, which was just coming out of the medieval era.

The excitement of the early Renaissance is just on the horizon as portrayed by the fresco titled “The Effects of Good Governance.” This is a happy scene. People dance in the streets, a wedding is happening—people are engaged in living the good life. Everywhere, there is abundance, activity, and happiness.

The artist separated this fresco into two parts: On the left of a city wall is the urban environment, and a fruitful countryside on the other. The city is bustling and beautiful. People are well-dressed, mules carry bundles of produce from the farmland, and men work diligently on building their city. Children listen attentively in a classroom.

On the city’s side, many details symbolize that it’s rich and prosperous. Goods fill the shops; people leisurely sit in café-like bars. A lady waters her window-ledge flowers, and a bird sings in an open window.

Lorenzetti was able to show accurate representations of Siena’s city life, and this scene merges flawlessly with the majestic landscapes of rural Siena. There is a steady



A section of the right wall in Siena’s council room showing a prosperous and fruitful countryside. The detail is from “The Effects of Good Governance,” 1338–40, by Ambrogio Lorenzetti. Siena, Italy.

stream of farm produce entering through the gates of the city. The artist fills Siena’s rolling hills with all kinds of crops in the fields and orchards.

## Good Stewardship

Statesmen and philosophers have long realized the importance of good government. Lorenzetti and the magistrates of Siena may have taken the advice of a preeminent Greek philosopher. Socrates spoke of his experience in the ancient city-state of Athens. He said that “government worked best when ruled by individuals who had the greatest ability, knowledge and virtue, and possessed a complete understanding of themselves.”

Centuries later, statesman and third president of the United States, Thomas Jefferson mirrored the words of Socrates, as well as the images in Siena’s Council Room when he said, “The care of human life and happiness, and not their destruction, is the first and only object of good government.”

Even today, people look to Lorenzetti’s frescoes for answers. The website Organic Cities draws these conclusions: “Genuine prosperity, the artist tells us, is possible if agriculture, craftsmanship, and trade are intertwined and interdependent, if the city and the countryside are in dialogue. Only then will the explosion of grandeur in the buildings shape and embellish the urban design. Only then will the well-finished houses, the stores, the schools, and the streets be populated by people of all social strata engaged in work, exchange, and leisure. It is only by respecting the tranquil rhythm of the seasons that the countryside, shaped by man to nourish an increasing number of people, will guarantee to all the serenity of their living or working contexts and in

their peaceful and continuous movements.”

The Lorenzetti Governance Foundation, founded in 2020, seeks to brings us back to good government. It intends to do this by “[b]ringing the ideas of Lorenzetti’s unique frescoes to our time and thereby solving administrative problems of large cities. Today, these three frescoes are still a source for testing the quality of governance and are an inspiration for administrative renewal. Good Governance does not serve the administrators, the state or the city, but is subservient to the citizens and their own state or city.”

People today want their administrators to

listen to the needs of the local population, and the local residents must be prepared to actively participate in their government. Amazingly, because the small republic was very concerned about corruption, the term of office for council members was only two months before they were switched out.

Lorenzetti shows in the left wall fresco that political opportunism and neglecting the common good are key causes of bad governance and the source of tyranny.

Then as now, sound stewardship is based on maintaining the well-being of all within its sphere.



Justice (large seated figure) looks to Wisdom above for guidance. She holds scales where angels mete out reward or punishment and hands down woven cords to Harmony. Harmony, or Concordance, gives them to the city’s magistrates so they work harmoniously with each other for the benefit of the city. A detail from the “Allegory of Good Governance,” 1338–40, by Ambrogio Lorenzetti. Siena, Italy.



The figure of Peace on the central wall of the Siena Council Room. The figure is relaxed and sits on a cushion over her armor, unused and black from tarnish. A detail from the “Allegory of Good Governance,” 1338–40, by Ambrogio Lorenzetti. Siena, Italy.



## ‘The Effect of Bad Governance’

In the council room of the Siena town hall, two frescoed walls on each side of the central wall show the effects of good and bad governance. The fresco on the left wall shows the effect of bad governance. Front and center in the scene is the figure of Tyranny, an armored, dark, horned creature that controls people. At his feet is a bound and defeated figure of Peace. A figure holds Peace by a rope in contrast to the cord of Concordance, or Harmony, that comes from Justice, as shown in the central fresco. Society badly governed has come to a standstill. The scene is dark. There is no prosperity or happiness when a society is governed by a tyrant.

GOLDEN AGE FILM

## ‘It Should Happen to You’

Making your name stand for something

TIFFANY BRANNAN

“I want to make a name for myself.” How many times has this been said? Many people give in to a desire for fame, and it seems even more achievable as the internet provides new ways to gain notoriety.

As social media spawns a host of “influencers” (celebrities in their own limited spheres), more and more young people see apparently easy ways of making a name for themselves. However, few of these internet stars have the talent or accomplishments to back up their newfound fame.

## All About Fame

People pursued fame long before the internet came on the scene. A 1954 film reminds us of that: It’s all about a girl whose main goal is to make a name for herself.

“It Should Happen to You” starring Judy Holliday, Jack Lemmon, and Peter Lawford was produced by Columbia, directed by George Cukor, and produced by Fred Kohlmar. A black-and-white romantic comedy, the clever story and screenplay were written by Oscar nominee Garson Kanin. The playful score was written by Frederick Hollander, a lesser-known but talented film composer.

Jack Lemmon is the biggest name of the film’s three stars. You might be surprised to see him in such an early movie. Long before starring in movies like “Save the Tiger” and

“Grumpy Old Men,” Lemmon made his feature film debut at age 28 as the leading man in “It Should Happen to You.” It was a success, cementing his early career at Columbia. At the time, the film’s main star was Judy Holliday, a successful stage actress who made only nine movies during her short film career. One of those roles was her Academy Award-winning performance as Billee Dawn in “Born Yesterday” (1950). Peter Lawford, the charming Englishman of the Rat Pack, completes the love triangle as a suave playboy.

## A New York Story

Gladys Glover (Holliday) meets Pete Sheppard (Lemmon) in Central Park when he candidly films her for his documentary. She is depressed because she lost her job and has failed to make a name for herself after two years in New York City.

Pete, obviously smitten, encourages her.

Later that day, Gladys visualizes her name on a huge sign at Columbus Circle, so she decides to rent the billboard for three months. Soon after, Pete moves into her apartment building. They begin going out together, although he thinks her sign is a pointless waste.

Meanwhile, Evan Adams III (Lawford) wants the Columbus Circle billboard for Adams Soap Company’s advertising, so he charms, threatens, and eventually trades



A lobby card with Judy Holliday and Jack Lemmon starring in “It Should Happen to You.”

six of his signs to Gladys for her one. This gains her the attention of greedy agent Brod Clinton (Michael O’Shea), who puts her on several television programs.

One of this film’s most charming aspects is its location footage. Central Park in old movies is usually a Hollywood backdrop, but this production spent 10 days filming in New York City.

Anyone who has visited Central Park will recognize the charming bridges, water fountains, and pathways through the greenery, surrounded by historic buildings that still

populate the skyline.

Director George Cukor “used Central Park as a character... and this time it was during a heat wave, which brings all the mad people out. You can see lots of mad people in the park and sitting on steps in front of houses,” according to Internet Movie Data Base.

The movie begins at the Bethesda Fountain, recognizable as the “Friends” fountain, where Pete shoots the scenery with his handheld movie camera. As he films snippets of different locations throughout the park, he leads us to Gladys, who is

walking barefoot to think.

Judy Holliday’s comedic talent shines in this story. Gladys Glover is a funny, sometimes irrational young lady, but she’s not the typical ditzy blonde. Whether feeding pigeons barefoot, driving around and around Columbus Circle to see her beloved sign, speed-reading a teleprompter on live television, or cooling off an aggressive Romeo with champagne down the neck, she’s always hilariously lovable.

Jack Lemmon is charming as her love interest, a fun-loving guy who tries to bring Gladys down to earth. Their first fight over Gladys’s sign is full of impassioned emotions, as they realistically cut each other off. When filming this scene, Cukor coached Lemmon to incorporate his natural impulse of holding his stomach in anger, and the realism of this mannerism was the beginning of Lemmon’s brilliance as a movie actor.

## Stand for Something

One of this film’s most poignant scenes is when Pete and Gladys are having lunch in her apartment. He tries in vain to divert the topic away from her signs, but he eventually must address the issue. “It isn’t just making a name. Don’t you understand that, Gladys? It’s making a name stand for something. Different names stand for different things. ... My opinion is, it’s better for your name to stand for something on one block than for nothing or something bad all over the entire world.”

Pete makes an excellent point. When the greedy Clinton learns the story behind Gladys’s signs and sees a way to cash in on her funny personality, he helps her achieve her goal. At last, by being on every television show he can arrange, Gladys Glover has

## Judy Holliday’s comedic talent shines in this story.



A publicity shot of Judy Holliday. PUBLIC DOMAIN

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made a name for herself. Adams Soap Company hires her to advertise its soap, putting her picture on the Columbus Circle billboard she first rented. However, this doesn’t lead to much of anything. She basically is just famous for being famous.

## ‘A Name for Herself’

The movie’s working title was “A Name for Herself.” It’s a shame that this very appropriate title was changed to the generic “It Should Happen to You.” Nevertheless, don’t assume that the movie is shallow, formulaic, or commonplace because of its title. The story is unusual, and the characters are unique. The score is infectiously upbeat in the lighter moments but powerfully absent in the more dramatic scenes.

More importantly, this movie carries more meaning than ever today. Looking at the current celebrities, one sees a lot of people who stand for nothing. Those who actually stand for something, seem to stand for something unwholesome. This film is a good reminder that fame is ultimately empty, especially when it is based on fame alone.

Tiffany Brannan is a 20-year-old opera singer, Hollywood history/vintage beauty copywriter, film reviewer, fashion historian, travel writer, and ballet writer. In 2016, she and her sister founded the Pure Entertainment Preservation Society, an organization dedicated to reforming the arts by reinstating the Motion Picture Production Code.



In the film, the main character puts a sign up with her name on it in Columbus Circle, Central Park South.



FILMS

2022 Summer Movie Preview

MICHAEL CLARK

Don't let the date on the calendar or those still chilly early mornings fool you. As far as the film studios are concerned, the summer movie season has already started. It's a time when the days (and running times) are generally longer, a more than normal amount of stuff blows up, and your hearing might come under assault. Here's a select list of some promising looking mainstream offerings and a few of the under-the-radar art-house titles coming out in the next few months. Please note: all release dates are subject to change.

April 22

'The Unbearable Weight of Massive Talent'

In what could be the textbook example of Meta self-awareness, Nicolas Cage stars as Nick Cage, an actor going through a professional dry spell who is offered \$1 million to attend the birthday party of one of his biggest fans. Chaos and hilarity soon follow.

'The Northman'

The third effort from director Robert Eggers ("The Witch," "The Lighthouse") is based on "The Legend of Amleth" (as was Shakespeare's "Hamlet") and stars Alexander Skarsgard as the title character who, after many years away, returns home to avenge the murder of his father (Ethan Hawke) by the hand of his uncle (Claes Bang) and salvage the honor of his mother (Nicole Kidman).

May 6

'Operation Mincemeat'

Delayed from January (which is a good sign), this fact-based World War II drama from director John Madden ("The Debt," "Shakespeare in Love") stars Colin Firth as British Intelligence officer Ewan Montagu, the point man heading a mission charged with creating a diversion to help ensure the successful Allied defense of Sicily. Co-stars include Jason Isaacs and Matthew Macfadyen.

May 20

'Downton Abbey: A New Era'

The second feature based on the enormously popular British TV series sees the return of the entire principal cast. Again penned by show runner Julian Fellowes, it's directed by Simon Curtis ("The Art of Racing in the Rain") taking over for first installment helmer Michael Engler.

May 27

'Top Gun: Maverick'

Delayed by almost three years because of the COVID-19 fallout and being released nearly 36 years after the first installment, "Maverick" sees the return of Tom Cruise as the title character and Val Kilmer whose character in now an admiral. Jennifer Connelly co-stars as Cruise's love interest.

June 10

'Hustle'

After wowing critics and audiences alike with his performance in "Uncut Gems," Adam Sandler again takes on a dramatic role as a former basketball scout who tries to jump-start his ailing career by recruiting a European player (Juancho Hernangómez) with a dark past. Robert Duvall, Ben Foster, and Queen Latifah co-star.

June 16

'The Father of the Bride'

The third feature film adapted from the best-selling 1949 novel by Edward Streeter includes a predominantly Latin cast led by Cuban Americans Andy Garcia and Gloria Estefan and is directed by relatively unknown Mexican-American Gary Alazraki.

June 24

'Elvis'

The hotly anticipated cradle-to-grave biography directed by Baz Luhrmann ("Romeo + Juliet," "Moulin Rouge," "The Great Gatsby") stars Austin Butler ("Once Upon a Time in Hollywood") as Elvis Presley and Tom Hanks as Colonel Tom Parker, his shady Dutch-born business manager.

'Marcel the Shell with the Shoes On'

Judging by its winsome, cloying trailer, this offbeat, yet heart-tugging live-action and animated dramatic comedy hybrid could be a tough sell to the family demographic yet might turn out to be a sleeper hit with the art house crowd. Screenplay co-writer Jenny Slate also voices the title character.

July 1

'The Forgiven'

If this latest from filmmaker John Michael McDonagh is anything like his past efforts ("Cavalry," "The Guard"), anyone who appreciates dark comedy is going to love this movie. Starring Ralph Fiennes and Jessica Chastain, it's a mystery thriller set in Morocco where all is not what it seems.

July 8

'Thor: Love and Thunder'

Director Taika Waititi's follow-up and sequel to "Thor: Ragnarok" again stars Chris Hemsworth as the title character, this time buttressing heads with "Gorr the God Butcher" (an unrecognizable Christian Bale). Reprising their roles from previous Marvel outings are Natalie Portman, Chris Pratt, Vin Diesel, Jeff Goldblum, Karen Gillan, and Dave Bautista.

July 15

'Where the Crawdads Sing'

Echoing Harper Lee and William Faulkner, this haunting Southern gothic mystery thriller (based on the novel by Delia Owens) stars Daisy Edgar-Jones as a woman that was abandoned by her parents as a child and who is being tried for the murder of an abusive ex-boyfriend.

'Mrs. Harris Goes to Paris'

'Mrs. Harris Goes to Paris' is directed by Anthony Fabian and based on the 1958 novel by Paul Gallico. Lesley Manville stars as the title character, a London charwoman who, inspired by the wardrobe of her employer, makes a journey to Paris to find a dress designer. Co-stars include Isabelle Huppert and Jason Isaacs.

July 29

'Bullet Train'

If the trailer is any kind of indicator, this looks like an over-caFFEinated comedic crime thriller and a day-glow Asian mash-up of Hitchcock and Tarantino. Brad Pitt stars as a courier charged with delivering a mysterious metal briefcase which several nefarious types wish to steal from him. As it is directed by David Leitch ("John Wick," "Atomic Blonde," "Deadpool 2") expect lots of action and laughs.

August 5

'Not Okay'

The second feature from actress-turned-director Quinn Shephard ("Blame") is a satire



starring Zoey Deutch ("The Outfit") as young woman desperate for social media attention who believes the solution is in documenting her European vacation. To her chagrin, nothing goes as planned.

August 12

'The Man From Toronto'

Kevin Hart and Woody Harrelson are the leads in this fish-out-of-water comedy about an assassin and a perpetual loser who are mistaken for one another and, against both of their wills, team up to save each other's hides. Co-stars include Kaley Cuoco and Ellen Barkin.

September 23

'Don't Worry Darling'

For her second feature effort, Olivia Wilde ("Booksmart") directs this slow-boil thriller set in the 1950s about a disgruntled housewife (Florence Pugh) whose mild-mannered husband (singer Harry Styles) does everything he can to keep a dark secret from his past hidden.

Originally from Washington, D.C., Michael Clark has provided film content to over 30 print and online media outlets. He co-founded the Atlanta Film Critics Circle in 2017 and is a weekly contributor to the Shannon Burke Show on FloridaManRadio.com. Since 1995, Mr. Clark has written over 4,000 movie reviews and film-related articles. He favors dark comedy, thrillers, and documentaries.



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