

THE EPOCH TIMES

ARTS & CULTURE

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Pope John Paul II (L) and Stefan Wyszyński monument in Lublin, Poland. Karol Wojtyła was a pope known for his humility. Lesser known is that when the Nazis invaded Poland, he participated in underground resistance through theater.

HISTORY

In the Forge: The Making of John Paul II

Karol Wojtyła found his way through the Nazi invasion of Poland

JEFF MINICK

In his poem “The Truly Great,” Stephen Spender ends with these lines:

The names of those who in their lives fought for life,
Who wore at their hearts the fire’s centre.
Born of the sun, they travelled a short while toward the sun
And left the vivid air signed with their honour.

The harsh years of Nazi occupation helped create the man who would be priest, bishop, and later, pope.

Those whom we humans credit as having “left the vivid air signed with their honour” come from all sorts of backgrounds, circumstances, and experiences. Theodore Roosevelt, for example, was born into a wealthy family in Manhattan, lived a privileged youth, and entered Harvard University. Margaret Thatcher, an equally adept politician and Great Britain’s first female prime minister, grew up in a small town in Lincolnshire, England, the daughter of a grocer.

Whatever their circumstances, these same heroic figures usually faced battles of their own as they came of age. Roosevelt may have led a silver-spoon childhood, but he was a weak, sickly boy until his father took him in hand and pushed him to excel athletically. This encouragement paid dividends, as even today he is remembered as one of our most energetic of presidents,

an explorer, a hunter, a cowboy, and a soldier. As a girl, Thatcher was more serious about school and life than many of her classmates. She pushed herself hard academically, and so displayed early signs of the personality that would later earn her the nickname of “Iron Lady.”

And some of the truly great who “wore at their hearts the fire’s centre” were forged by suffering and loss, shaped and beaten into steel between a hammer and anvil not of their own making.

The Boy and His Father

Karol Jozef Wojtyła (1920–2005), known in boyhood to his family and friends as Lolek, was born in Wadowice, Poland, to Karol and Emilia Wojtyła, the third and last of this couple’s children.

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The final liberation of the Philippines came at the end of World War II in 1945. National WWII Museum.

BOOK REVIEW

How a Pacific Theater War Widow Became a Heroine

ANITA L. SHERMAN

When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, they had another strategic target as well. On Dec. 8, 1941, they bombed the Philippines, with invasions to the north and south of Manila that quickly followed. Thousands of American, British, and Filipinos would eventually be killed, tortured, or imprisoned.

Amid the horror of this war many heroes were born, often rising from humble beginnings.

Known for his works on history and the military, writer Robert Mrazek, who authored the Amerasian Homecoming Act, which brought 19,000 children of Americans who served in Vietnam to the United States, brings readers a heartfelt and stirring story of the unsurpassed heroism of a passionate young woman.

Florence long to figure out that by carefully falsifying records at her workplace, she could divert gallons of fuel, a valuable black-market commodity, into money that could then be used to get medicine and food. She couldn't do it alone. And that's when she weighed the risks and connected with the Philippine Underground, a growing resistance movement.

It was a dangerous move. Testing her plan with an initial divergence of 25 gallons, Florence was gratified to learn that stealthy couriers managed to get money into the prison.

Always under tension and fear of discovery, Florence, together with her resistance collaborators, was eventually diverting 250 gallons a week. She was now a successful saboteur and impacting the lives of hundreds of POWs.

One Person Can Change Lives

The book is set against the historical background of the Pacific theater during World War II, and readers get an inside glimpse into the horrors and personal tragedies that ensued.

Beloved by many Filipinos and seen as their savior, Gen. Douglas MacArthur's personal political ambitions come into conflict with President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's. The larger picture of America's resolve to win the war plays in the background as the riveting narrative focuses on Florence and her extraordinary heroism.

In October 1944, Florence was arrested, imprisoned, and tortured by her Japanese captors. Based on the details in the book, it was providential that she survived and never betrayed the resistance nor named individuals who helped her. Ultimately, she was sentenced to three years of hard labor.

Following the Battle of Manila, Florence was liberated by American forces in February 1945 weighing just 80 pounds.

Her story continued to a new life in New York, meeting Bob Finch, starting a family, and enlisting in the U.S. Coast Guard Women's Reserve. She was one of the first Asian American women to wear a Coast Guard uniform.

Florence Finch was a war widow turned war warrior. Her incredible, long overdue, breathtaking story is inspiring. There were military accolades to follow, including the U.S. Medal of Freedom. Her grit, determination, compassion, and fight make her more than a historical hero. Florence Finch is a woman worth knowing, a strong woman who risked it all: a hero for all ages.

Anita L. Sherman is an award-winning journalist who has more than 20 years of experience as a writer and editor for local papers and regional publications in Virginia. She now works as a freelance writer and is working on her first novel. She is the mother of three grown children and grandmother to four, and she resides in Warrenton, Va. Anita can be reached at anitajustwrite@gmail.com

'The Indomitable Florence Finch: The Untold Story of a War Widow Turned Resistance Fighter and Savior of American POWs'

Author
Robert J. Mrazek
Publisher
Hachette Books; Illustrated edition, July 21, 2020
Hardcover
368 pages

A Pivotal and Poignant Plan
Ironically and perhaps fatefully, during this time, Florence learned that her former boss, Maj. E.C. Engelhart, had been taken prisoner at Cabanatuan Prison and that he and his fellow POWs were being treated badly. Others had been sent to an internment camp on what had been the campus at the University of Santo Tomas. They were in dire need of medicine and food. Florence wanted to ease their misery. Her heart was with her American and Filipino connections. Her hope was that the Philippines would be liberated, but they just had to hold out until that day arrived. Intelligent and resourceful, it didn't take

SUMMER READING

More Than a Satire: A Rollicking, Jolly Good Yarn

SEAN FITZPATRICK

Most readers appreciate a thoroughly entertaining read, and such books can especially delight during the long, hot days of summer. If, as you're sitting on the beach or near a pool or just in your backyard, you come across a nautical page-turner that includes a little scintillating satire, fantastic farce, and daredevil heroes too dashing to be dashed on the rocks of disaster, all the better.

Most books that make up the seafaring category are unable to deliver on all of these levels, but there is one in particular that does deliver, and with aplomb. "Mr. Midshipman Easy" (1836) by Capt. Frederick Marryat is one of these swashbuckling, brandishing bright prose, tremendous spirit, and sharp humor, with a penetrating yet hilarious look at human nature.

This unique naval novel is a rollicking comedy set in the context of a British man-of-war in 1836, a vessel that the author captained himself and saw considerable action at sea. His hero, Mr. Midshipman Jack Easy, is a young officer of nobility serving in the Royal

Navy, having taken advantage of the navy's attempt to make its officers more genteel by allowing any young man of aristocratic birth to become a ranking officer on a battleship.

This effort often meant that the most unusual and unfit gentlemen would take charge of a crew of weathered old salts. Mr. Midshipman Easy is in this unlikely position. He cuts a most endearing figure and strikes quite a pose among the heroes in the log of seafaring stories.

Mr. Jack Easy's Story

Jack Easy is sent off to sea in order to be righted of the social sophistries embedded in his brain by his eccentric father. Jack must navigate the brutal and beautiful realities of sailors, ships, and skirmishes with a philosophical fortitude that is hilarious to behold. He is a bold mixture of the innocent inquirer and the cunning conspirator, who always lands on his feet and claims the last laugh.

"Mr. Midshipman Easy" is one of those impossible stories with an unbelievable makes it irresistible. There is no shortage of exotic and exciting marvels, such as African

There is no shortage of exotic and exciting marvels in 'Mr. Midshipman Easy.'



This read offers adventures galore. "The Bombardment of Sveaborg, 9 August 1855," 1855, by James Wilson Carmichael. National Maritime Museum, UK.



The title page to the first edition, 1836, of "Mr. Midshipman Easy."

curses, duels involving three men, ships struck by lightning, and musket balls and powder kegs peppering the air with fire and brimstone. The reader will also encounter petticoats for flags, death-defying cruises, heart-pounding elopement campaigns, conniving cloak-and-dagger clerics, an army of escaped convicts, mad philosophers, and murderous mutinies.

There's more: shark attacks, violent family feuds, carousing mishaps, and a thousand other delectable wonders and intrigues too numerous to mention.

The work is clearly satirical. Capt. Marryat takes every opportunity to point out flaws in the regimented systems and traditions of the British navy, the abuses in society, and the absurdities of certain accepted opinions regarding what makes a proper education or a good man.

Yet it is a pity to limit the captain's jolly story to simply being a satire. "Mr. Midshipman Easy" does more than point at human flaws. The Romantic poet John Keats famously said, "We hate poetry that has a palpable design upon us," and the same can be said of literature. Much of literature inflicts a palpable design upon its readers, imposing moralist medicines that can more often than not nauseate readers; we have little appetite for being lectured.

The whole point of literature, therefore, is not to force any design on its audience but to allow readers to encounter things as they are and on their own in a pleasant way, or as American author Flannery O'Connor liked to put it, "to show, not tell."

In its style, delivery, and instruction, "Mr. Midshipman Easy" excels in this strategy. And, while it shows us everything from cannons to capers, it actually teaches some pretty hard lessons in the most delightful fashion.

The book is magnificently silly and serious at the same time, embodied by the gentleman-rogue at the helm of Capt. Marryat's indomitable little book. It teems with laughs, lessons, and life, which is why it should hold a place of honor in the ranks of summertime reading.

Sean Fitzpatrick serves on the faculty of Gregory the Great Academy, a boarding school in Elmhurst, Pa., where he teaches humanities. His writings on education, literature, and culture have appeared in a number of journals, including *Crisis Magazine*, *Catholic Exchange*, and the *Imaginative Conservative*.

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THE REAL STORY OF JAN. 6

AN EPOCH TIMES DOCUMENTARY



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What Really Happened on Jan. 6, 2021?

It's been over a year since Jan. 6, 2021, and the events that happened at the Capitol that day have once again been brought before the court of public opinion. However, in many discussions of the events, key information is omitted.

The Epoch Times takes a look at the whole story, from

the origins of the chaos to the police's use of force against protesters, in an effort to present an objective view of what truly transpired.

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HISTORY

In the Forge: The Making of John Paul II

Karol Wojtyla found his way through the Nazi invasion of Poland

Continued from Page 1

An older sister had lived only a few weeks after her birth, and his beloved brother Edmund, a physician, fell ill and died while treating patients for scarlet fever when Lolek was only 12 years old. Meanwhile, his mother had passed away three years earlier of kidney failure and congenital heart disease.

Fortunately, the boy was blessed with an upstanding father, a recently retired noncommissioned officer in the Polish army.

In his massive "Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II," George Weigel writes: "Karol Wojtyla had many mentors in his youth and adolescence. The most influential of them was his father."

As Weigel then tells us, his father's high reputation with his superiors in the army was "based on a combination of intelligence, diligence, dependability, and above all, honesty." It was the father who passed these virtues to the young Karol and who undoubtedly encouraged his son in his schoolwork—he would graduate as valedictorian of his class—and on the athletic field, where Lolek excelled in soccer. Just as importantly, the elder Wojtyla was a devout Catholic later remembered by his son as "a man of constant prayer." Father and son regularly read the Bible and prayed the rosary together.

Once their tanks and troops had rolled across Poland, the Nazis waged a war on Polish culture, intending to erase it.

In a short autobiography written years later about these early days and his religious formation, the son wrote of his father: "We never spoke about a vocation to the priesthood, but his example was in a way my first seminary, a kind of domestic seminary."

Into the Flames

Wojtyla graduated high school as a model student and son, an enthusiastic athlete, and a passionate advocate of Polish history and literature. By that time, he had also fallen in love with the theater, where he both acted in plays and participated in poetry recitations. When in 1938 he entered Jagiellonian University in Krakow—he and his father rented a basement apartment, which friends quickly dubbed "the catacombs"—he excelled in his studies of literature and philology while continuing to pursue his theatrical interests.

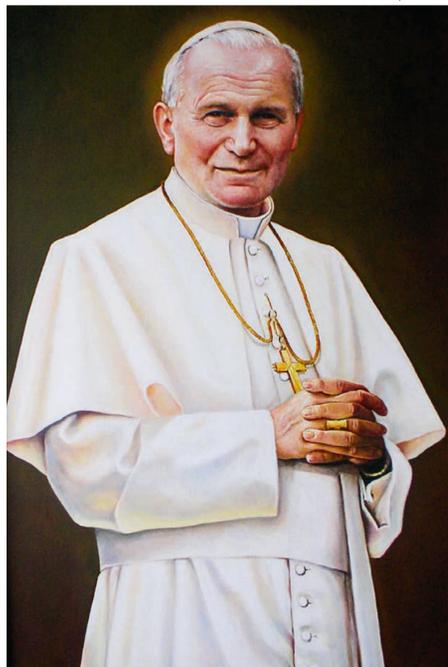
A year later, the Nazis launched their blitzkrieg into Poland, and Wojtyla's life, like those of his countrymen, was forever changed.

Once their tanks and troops had rolled across Poland, the Nazis waged a war on Polish culture, intending to erase it. In the case of Jagiellonian University, for instance, where Wojtyla had enrolled for the fall semester, the Germans arrested dozens of deans and professors, shipped them off to concentration camps, and then wrecked the libraries and laboratories. Males between the ages of 14 and 60 were required to have work papers and a job. Like his classmates, Wojtyla was forced to find employment.

One of his acquaintances, Mieczyslaw Malinski, would write of that time: "The police arrested people who were caught walking the streets without passes, and fired at any who did not stop when challenged. We were hungry for five years without a break, and each winter we were desperately cold."



The statue of Pope John Paul II near the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris.



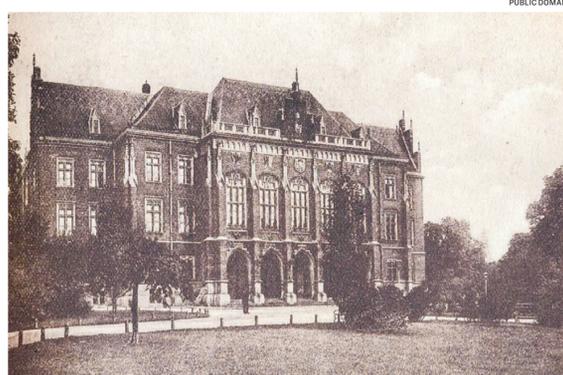
A portrait of John Paul II, 2012, by Zbigniewa Kotyllo.



President Ronald Reagan with Pope John Paul II, at the Vizcaya Museum in Miami on Sept. 10, 1987. Both helped bring the fall of Soviet communism. National Archives.



A German flag hoisted over the Military Transport Depot of the Polish Army during the Nazi-Soviet invasion of Poland in 1939. Keystone Press photographer.



Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Poland, circa 1930, where Wojtyla enrolled in 1938.



Emilia and Karol Wojtyla, parents of Pope John Paul II, circa 1903-1906. Karol Wojtyla was instrumental in guiding his son's spiritual life.



White smoke rises from the chimney on the roof of the Sistine Chapel, signaling a newly elected pope.

The Gifts of Adversity and Pain

While Wojtyla daily endured these harsh years of Nazi occupation, forces came into play that would create the man who as priest and bishop would later push back against the postwar communist government of Poland. Along with President Ronald Reagan and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, as Pope John Paul II, Wojtyla also helped bring about the fall of the Soviet Union, using talents and skills he had acquired under the Nazi regime.

After a stint as a messenger for a restaurant, Wojtyla began working for the Solvay chemical company, where for almost three years he served as a manual laborer, first in a quarry mining limestone and then in a plant's water purification system. Trolling alongside workers from a social class largely unfamiliar to him, Wojtyla learned the hearts of many of these men, their aspirations, their views on the urban proletariat, and their care for others. Four decades later, when dockworkers and then others rose to demand a union and to protest their government in Soviet-controlled Poland, the pope heard and understood their cries for freedom and justice.

During these years of fear and oppression, the young man who was so entranced with literature also turned to a new vocation: the priesthood. Two events in particular moved him in this direction. Along with other young Poles, he joined and led a Living Rosary group, which was an underground religious organization founded by a tailor, Jan Tyranowski. With so many priests sent off to camps, where a sizable number of them perished, the Church called on lay leaders to provide solace and guidance for parishioners. Largely self-educated in theology and regarded by many as a mystic, Tyranowski exerted an enormous influence on Wojtyla, guiding him in his reading, particularly in the works of St. John of the Cross, and in his prayer life.

Wojtyla was fortunate to find such a mentor, for in early 1941 he returned from work to find his ailing father dead of heart failure. That death deeply affected the now orphaned son. "I never felt so alone," he later said, and friends would remember that he began spending hours in prayer offered up not only for his father but also as a means of discernment for his vocation. After nearly a year of such contemplation, he asked to be received into the local seminary. Like his fellow seminarians, he continued to work a job while furtively pursuing his theological studies underground so as to avoid the Gestapo and its efforts to shutter such enterprises.

A Way of Resistance

Of the lessons that Wojtyla learned from Nazi oppression, the third and perhaps the most significant for non-Catholics, and for that matter, for readers who value traditional culture, is the path of resistance selected by Wojtyla.

Many other Poles—men and women, young and old—resisted the Nazis by forming guerrilla outfits or by sabotage. As Weigel points out in "Witness to Hope," however, Wojtyla and other like-minded friends "deliberately chose the power of resistance through culture, through the power of the word."

These Polish patriots, most of them quite young, formed what they called the Rhapsodic Theater. They performed plays, some of them original, and offered dramatic readings. They frequently gathered and rehearsed in the Wojtylas' apartment and often played to small audiences of 30 or fewer people.

And as Weigel reports, near the apartment "they walked past posters announcing an ever-increasing list of executions by firing squads, their virtually certain fate if they had been caught." Yet they persisted, striving to preserve their culture from extinction.

That defense of culture might serve as an example to us all.

The Pope

On Oct. 16 of 1978, white smoke appeared above the Sistine Chapel announcing that a new pope had been chosen, and the man who would become the first non-Italian pope stepped to the balcony. Later at his inaugural Mass, this new pope, who had taken the name John Paul II, would declare the words that perhaps summed up his entire life: "Be not afraid."

Much later, in the summer of 2017, Lech Walesa, who was a co-founder of the trade union Solidarity, a leader in the Polish battles against the nation's communist government and the Soviet Union, and later president of Poland, delivered an address to some students and faculty at Western Carolina University in Cullowhee, North Carolina, followed by a press conference. Having obtained a press card from the Smoky Mountain News, where I normally wrote book reviews, I attended Walesa's lecture and the press conference. To my astonishment, both events were sparsely attended, and as one of only two print journalists present, I had the opportunity to ask some questions.

When I asked Mr. Walesa how much influence the pope had on events in Poland during the Solidarity protests, he answered through an interpreter: "Before the pope first visited Poland, I had 10 supporters. After the pope left Poland, I had 10 million supporters."

The man who had walked out of the fire had brought light to a darkened world.

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.



"Taddeo Decorating the Façade of the Palazzo Mattei," circa 1595, by Federico Zuccaro. Pen and brown ink, and brush with brown wash over black chalk and touches of red chalk; 9 13/16 inches by 16 5/8 inches. Getty Museum.

FINE ARTS

The Trials and Tenacity of a Young Artist in Renaissance Rome

'The Lost Murals of Renaissance Rome' exhibition at the Getty Center in Los Angeles

LORRAINE FERRIER

Around 1543, 14-year-old Taddeo Zuccaro left his family home in Urbino, Italy, and headed off to Rome to immerse himself in art and to seek out artistic training. In four short years, at just 18 years old, Zuccaro's murals on the façade of Palazzo Mattei made him the most talked about fresco decorator in Rome—and that was before he finished them. Even Michelangelo came to see them.

At the height of his fame, Zuccaro had a studio of artists working on the Farnese family's frescoes at Villa Farnese in Caprarola, central Italy. But Zuccaro's fame didn't come overnight; it came from his resilience, resourcefulness, and diligent practice of art.

In 1595, over 50 years after Zuccaro went to Rome, his younger brother Federico decided to compose a series of narrative drawings (where several scenes appear in one picture to show a story) depicting his brother's first years in Rome. Federico's celebrated series of 20 charming drawings is titled "Early Life of Taddeo Zuccaro," 16 of which show select events that led up to his brother's becoming a successful artist.

The Artist's Forbearance

In contrast to Venice and Florence, Rome didn't have established studio apprenticeships, so aspiring artists like Taddeo Zuccaro had to find jobs as artist assistants, which often meant doing domestic chores, too. Zuccaro had one advantage, or so he thought. His cousin, the painter Francesco il Sant'Angelo worked in Perino del Vaga's studio, a painter in Rome. And so, with a letter of introduction, he set off to see his cousin, only to be turned away by him. Federico depicted the scene in his drawing "Taddeo Rebuffed by Francesco il Sant'Angelo," as poor Zuccaro trudges off in tears.

But fate intervenes. Walking away, Zuccaro

sees a mural on a building's façade that had been painted by the celebrated artist Polidoro da Caravaggio. Zuccaro then becomes determined to learn.

In some drawings, Federico showed his brother working as an assistant for various minor artists. In the drawing "Taddeo in the House of Giovanni Piero Calabrese," Zuccaro is grinding pigments under the watchful eye of the artist's wife. The detailed scene shows how hard life must've been for the young artist. Stored up high on a pulley and rope is bread in a basket along with a bell to prevent the youngster from stealing the food. In another scene, in the left corner of the drawing, Calabrese is keeping an eye on Zuccaro to stop him from copying a drawing by Raphael that Calabrese owns, perhaps for fear of his assistant outshining him.

Zuccaro worked all day. With no time to draw during daylight hours, and no oil for light, he'd often catch the moonlight and work late into the night. Or he'd rise early with the sun to catch the first rays of daylight. An endearing image ("Taddeo Drawing by Moonlight in Calabrese's House") sees Zuccaro by a moonlit window. He's tossed off his bedcovers and hurriedly leaped out of bed, grabbing only one slipper to wear. He's disheveled but that doesn't matter: He's drawing.

Like many artists, Zuccaro set about copying great art. In another moonlight drawing ("Taddeo Copying Raphael's Frescoes in the Loggia of the Villa Farnesina"), Zuccaro sits under the loggia at the home of banker and art patron Agostino Chigi, to copy Raphael's frescoes. Zuccaro often had nowhere to sleep and would snooze under the loggia (as shown in another scene in the same drawing). Another of Federico's drawings, "Taddeo in the Belvedere Court at the Vatican," shows his brother sitting between ancient art sculptures, the "Apollo Belvedere" and the "Laocoön," drawing the latter.

Zuccaro's hard work paid off. He began

Zuccaro's much admired murals established his fame.



"Taddeo Copying Raphael's Frescoes in the Loggia of the Villa Farnesina," circa 1595, by Federico Zuccaro. Pen and brown ink, and brush with brown wash over black chalk and touches of red chalk; 16 11/16 inches by 6 7/8 inches. Getty Museum.

working on commissions with his cousin, Francesco il Sant'Angelo, who had originally spurned him. Francesco recommended Zuccaro paint a mural on the façade of Palazzo Mattei, owned by nobleman Jacopo Mattei, and his cousin convinced Mattei to let the youngster complete two panels to prove his work.

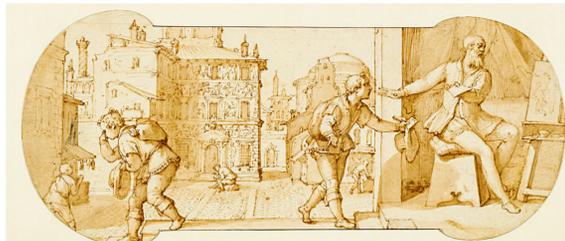
That worked. Even before Zuccaro completed the murals, artists came to admire them. In the drawing "Taddeo Decorating the Façade of the Palazzo Mattei," we see Michelangelo arrive on horseback, and artist and art historian Giorgio Vasari in conversation on the righthand side of the drawing. Zuccaro's much admired murals established his fame.

Experts believe that Federico made the drawings as designs for ceiling frescoes, which explains their distinctive shape. These designs may have been destined for his Palazzo Zuccari, which he bequeathed to the poor, struggling, young artists at St. Luke's Academy.

All 20 of Federico's celebrated series, including four allegorical drawings, are on display in "The Lost Murals of Renaissance Rome" exhibition at the Getty Center in Los Angeles. The exhibition focuses on the murals that once decorated Rome's important buildings and includes mural designs by artists from the Getty's collection, including Taddeo Zuccaro.

In Taddeo Zuccaro's story we can see the strength of the human spirit to overcome the odds and do the hard work needed to fulfill one's dreams. Tragically, Zuccaro died when he was 37 years old, the same age as fellow Urbinate Raphael. Federico Zuccaro went on to be possibly the most famous living painter of his time. But that's another story.

"The Lost Murals of Renaissance Rome" exhibition at the Getty Center in Los Angeles runs until Sept. 4. To find out more, visit Getty.edu



"Taddeo Rebuffed by Francesco il Sant'Angelo," circa 1595, by Federico Zuccaro. Pen and brown ink, and brush with brown wash over black chalk; 7 1/16 inches by 16 5/16 inches. Getty Museum.



"Taddeo in the Belvedere Court at the Vatican," circa 1595, by Federico Zuccaro. Pen and brown ink, and brush with brown wash over black chalk and touches of red chalk; 6 7/8 inches by 16 3/4 inches. Getty Museum.



Danni Sanders (Zoey Deutch) fakes an Instagram-friendly trip to Paris in the hopes of boosting her social media clout, in "Not Okay."



Danni (Zoey Deutch) and her office crush, Colin (Dylan O'Brien).

FILM INSIGHTS WITH MARK JACKSON



Mark Jackson grew up in Spring Valley, N.Y., where he attended a Waldorf school. At Williams College, his professors all suggested he write professionally. He acted professionally for 20 years instead. Now he writes professionally about acting, in the movies.

Faking Your Life on the Internet: A Parable

MARK JACKSON

The increasingly potent desire to build a personal online brand and get thousands of "likes" is viewed by many as the downfall of modern civilization. "Not Okay" is already old hat in the new genre about the old human foible of selling one's soul to the devil for worldly success. One of the better movies about trying to be someone you're not and its repercussions was 2018's "Eighth Grade."

Arriving in the wake of the Johnny Depp and Amber Heard defamation trial, "Not Okay" feels immediately familiar. It opens with a warning that the movie will feature "flashing lights, themes of trauma, and an unlikable female protagonist."

I actually fell for that for a second, because the same kind of cloying, hyper-safe-y-safe ridiculousness is all over Facebook now, but for real: Facebook now bleeps out phrases like "domestic violence" (because it might harm you if you hear those actual words spoken), so it was easy to miss that "unlikable female protagonist" was supposed to be ironic. But you see why that phrase reminds one of the Depp-Heard court case.

Anyway, "Not Okay" is not really a fun watch, but it functions well as a cutting-edge social commentary, and its biting, pitch-black comedy puts a high-velocity sniper bullet through the heart of influencer culture. It can't be recommended for impressionable youth to watch due to the R rating, but they're going to find a way to watch it anyway, so maybe its warning will do some good.

Zoey Deutch Has Some Nerve

Zoey Deutch (daughter of Lea Thompson, who played Marty McFly's mom in "Back to the Future") is making a name for herself as a pretty face who dares to go where most actresses fear to tread: allowing herself to be hugely unlikable. It's a dangerous area to navigate and a gutsy move to try and pull off, but she traverses this mine field brilliantly.

In "Not Okay," Deutch plays Danni Sanders, a lovely photo editor desperate to be-

come a writer for Depravity, the online magazine she works for. Danni's editor (Negin Farsad) is highly skeptical and chastises Danni for writing an article about feeling like she missed out on the generational trauma of 9/11, because she was out of the country on vacation. Socially tone deaf and narcissistic doesn't begin to describe Danni.

Danni's need for attention is borderline sociopathic. The social ineptness of someone this pretty, trying desperately to insert herself into the conversations of the cooler office cliques and not really registering the high repetition of cold shoulders is highly unlikely. But Deutch makes it work.

Danni's sick and tired of being a nobody at her job, and she can't manage to get the attention of her office crush, Colin (Dylan O'Brien), a bleach-blond, tatted, perennially vaping, ebionics-spewing influencer.

What's a girl to do? To boost her visibility and follower count, she photoshops herself a shiny new life: She'll soon be jetting to Paris for a writer's retreat, don'tcha know.

Oops

Now that everyone knows she's in France, she wakes up to see on the news that terrorist bombings have wreaked massive havoc in the French capital. So Danni doubles down on her deception, going so far as to hide in the airport so she can create a photo-op of herself returning to the good old U.S. of A. Then, she builds an entire fake online persona as a heroic bombing survivor.

This is a comedy? It trends a very fine line, especially when Danni starts going to support groups and rallies, and befriends Rowan (Mia Isaac), who is an earnest school shooting survivor and gun violence campaigner dedicated to societal change. Danni parasitically hitches her cart to Rowan's wagon, and for a short while she's highly followed and liked; it gets her 15 famous minutes based on her own personal version of #MeToo. Her particular little phrase is "notokay," because, you know, she's a bomb survivor, and so it's okay for her to be not okay—and her obnoxious character is happy as a pig in excrement.

'Not Okay' functions well as a cutting-edge social commentary.

But it's only a matter of time before the world catches Danni working the levers behind the curtains, and she learns the hard way that the internet loves a take-down, again, as recently evidenced in the Depp-Heard trial.

Also, eventually, by way of her web of lies, she gets invited to an exclusive party by Colin. Colin's a perfect match for her; he's just as disingenuous, albeit in a slightly less toxic fashion. At one point, he drops his own über-curious personality to confront the one person who's been wise to both him and Danni from the start. She, an office colleague named Harper (Nadia Alexander), hilariously reminds Colin's street-talking wannabe-gangsta self that he's from Maine.

Unlike most female leads in this genre, Danni ends the movie in a much worse place than where she was in the beginning. And while a smidgin of character building, remorse, and regret happens along the way, we're constantly reminded that her toxic, narcissistic neediness brought this whole mess down upon her head.

Danni got what she wished for and thereby demonstrates how the placing of any sort of measurable value on what online strangers perceive of you is a useless goal. And if you covet fame so badly that you sell your soul to the devil, especially on the fickle and devious internet, there can be swift retribution.

Influencer Culture

Deutch deserves kudos for having the courage to portray such an irredeemably morally bankrupt parasite for the majority of the movie's run time. By the time Danni tries to make amends, nobody wants to hear it. Death threats, memes, and more, turn her life into an eventual living nightmare that was entirely avoidable before she intentionally lit the fuse that blew up and caused the end of her world as she knew it.

And the question hangs there, the entire time, of how much sympathy we should really feel for someone who ultimately destroys their own life by lying and using people.

'Not Okay'

Director: Quinn Shephard

Starring: Zoey Deutch, Mia Isaac, Dylan O'Brien, Embeth Davidtz, Nadia Alexander

MPAA Rating: R

Running Time: 1 hour, 40 minutes

Release Date: July 29, 2022

★ ★ ★ ★ ★



(L-R) Charles (Kirk White), Danni (Zoey Deutch), and Rowan (Mia Isaac) attend a survivors support group.



Danni (Zoey Deutch) receiving massive cyberbullying, and now she's really not okay.

FINE ARTS

Giorgio Vasari: The Forgotten Artist Who Recorded the Renaissance

JAMES BARESEL

Those interested in Renaissance art will soon become familiar with the name Giorgio Vasari, Florentine architect, artist, and art historian. His 1568 compilation, “Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects,” is the most important written source for the artistic history of the period. Many of 16th-century Italy’s leading artists were among his friends and acquaintances. Included in his circle were numerous friends who had known their 15th-century predecessors.

Vasari has been credited with creating the idea of the Renaissance. He even initiated the term “Renaissance” (rebirth), which can be described as a restoration of strict classicism defined by two characteristics: the acceptance of ancient Greek and Roman aesthetics and the belief that these ideals should form the basic reference point of art.

Vasari wrote that Giotto, the 14th-century Italian artist, launched a “rebirth” of art. Giotto’s work inspired the innovations in art that became the Renaissance style a century later. Jules Michelet, a 19th-century French historian, later extended the term to include paintings, sculpture, and architecture created in Italy during the periods spanning the “quattrocento” (1400–1500) and “cinquecento” (1500–1600).

Vasari’s articulation of classicist principles in his “Lives” also established him as a leading artist theorist—and his influence wasn’t limited to the strict classicist school. Many Renaissance artists were actually “semi-classicists.” Early artists of the period mixed aspects of classicist and medieval aesthetics. Others used elements of classicism as tools in the service of obtaining the superlative, refined realism seen during the late period of the High Renaissance. Artists continued to work in these traditions long after the Renaissance ended. These semi-classicists often relied on Vasari as an important source of theory.

Despite such stature, Vasari’s significance as an artist is largely overlooked. Yet by profession, he was a painter. His works achieved an excellence a little short of genius.

Vasari the Painter

A sense of Vasari’s artistic skill can be gained by comparing his “Christ Carrying the Cross” (circa 1555–64) with a composition of that same event by Titian, a 16th-century Italian artist celebrated as the greatest Venetian painter.

Titian’s work communicates a sense of tragedy and physical strain that is absent from Vasari’s; Christ’s face has an emotional intensity that Vasari didn’t match. However, a closer inspection reveals that Vasari’s painting is superior in one way: anatomical detailing. The contours of Christ’s arm are masterful, with muscles and veins visible through the skin. Strands of hair, knuckles, and folds of clothing are likewise depicted with equal precision.

“Christ Carrying the Cross” was among Vasari’s best works. Titian ranks among the greatest artistic geniuses of all time. For Vasari to paint a few works with some features superior to artists such as Titian required rare ability.

The Shadow of the Giants

Why, then, is so famous a man as Vasari so forgotten as an artist? In part, ironically, for the same reason he is famous. No other period of history has seen such a multitude of artistic giants as the mid-15th to the mid-17th century. Being close to the heart of artistic life in the 16th century allowed Vasari to compile historical records of tremendous



“Christ Carrying the Cross,” circa 1555–64, by Giorgio Vasari. Oil on panel. Spencer Museum of Art, Kentucky.

Why is so famous a man as Vasari so forgotten as an artist?

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importance. But it also meant painting in the shadow of the men whose lives he chronicled. Only in such an era would a man of Vasari’s abilities fail to rank among the more notable artists of his day.

A further irony is that Vasari’s “Lives” actually undermined his reputation as an artist. Shorter biographies often indicated an artist’s lesser importance or the lack of information. Vasari’s autobiography is one of the shortest. A self-publicist would have used the compilation to enhance his reputation. Vasari humbly presented himself as less than he was.

A final factor is that history best remembers artists who break new ground. This can mean developing techniques that allow greater beauty or greater realism. It can mean stylistic innovation. Vasari had the rare enough gift of creating first-class works with existing techniques and styles. His accomplishments expertly put into practice lessons learned from geniuses like Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, and Raphael.

That skill, however, was enough to surpass most works painted before the late 15th century. Earlier painters like Giotto

and Fra Angelico, Masaccio, and Jan van Eyck couldn’t benefit from the same lessons. Therefore, their works were inevitably less developed. But each of them had taken painting to heights not previously reached. Vasari, despite considerable skill, did not. The difference comes down to exceptional creativity versus creative genius, and great technical ability versus innovative brilliance.

Art enthusiasts rightly reserve their highest esteem for the creative geniuses and the brilliant innovators. The fact that artists can attain excellence without rising to superlative greatness is too easily ignored. Vasari was among those who attained such “lesser excellence.” Viewed in itself, his body of artwork is a tremendous achievement. The value of that work—and the extent of Vasari’s total contribution to the world of art—deserves to be more widely recognized.

James Baresel is a freelance writer who has contributed to periodicals as varied as Fine Art Connoisseur, Military History, Claremont Review of Books, and New Eastern Europe.



“Christ Carrying the Cross,” circa 1506–07, by Titian. Oil on canvas. Scuola Grande di San Rocco, Venice, Italy.



“Justice,” 1542, by Giorgio Vasari. Oil on panel. Accademia Gallery of Venice, Italy.

BOOK REVIEW

‘The Intermediary: William Craig Among the Nez Perces’ by Lin Tull Cannell

The ‘Father of Idaho’ was a legendary peacemaker

ANITA L. SHERMAN

I am originally from the Northwest, Oregon specifically, but for nearly 35 years I’ve called Virginia home. I will always have a fondness for the Northwest with its majestic mountain ranges, lush forests, deep canyons, and grand rivers.

Venturing west in the 1800s from the settled security of the eastern cities is an adventure only to be imagined. But many did, those seeking new beginnings and perhaps fame and fortune.

If you are a history buff, particularly of those western states like Washington, Oregon, and Idaho, you’ll find Cannell’s “The Intermediary: William Craig among the Nez Perces” to be a well-researched account of one such hearty individual: a tall, red-haired man who has been heralded as the “Father of Idaho.”

An Enterprising Adventurer

William Craig was born in Virginia in 1807. By the late 1820s, after allegedly killing a man (some accounts call it self-defense), he fled west and entered the lucrative Rocky Mountain fur trade. Since the late 1700s, the French, English, and Americans had benefited from the riches to be had in trapping and trading animal pelts.

Part of their success was due to alliances with the various Native American tribes that enabled them to navigate the landscape and survive.

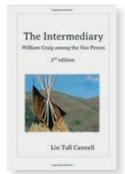
The Nez Perce were familiar with white trappers and, for the most part, got along fairly well. They had good memories from when Lewis and Clark made their famous expedition across America in 1804–06. They were allies and friends.

In 1838, Craig married Pah-tis-sah, the daughter of Thunder’s Eye, a Nez Perce medicine man. He called her Isabel. Their marriage was long and fruitful, giving him several children who were heirs to his eventual legacy.

In 1840, Craig agreed to help forge a trail (later known as the Oregon Trail) from Fort Hall near the Portneuf River to the Whitman Mission near the Columbia River.

His exploits seem to get only bigger and

William Craig had a jovial nature, keen sense of humor, and a caring heart for the Nez Perce tribe.



‘The Intermediary: William Craig among the Nez Perces’

Author
Lin Tull Cannell
Publisher
Ridenbaugh Press
Date
Oct. 20, 2010
Paperback
244 pages



The marker for the William Craig’s Homestead in Idaho. He was the first permanent white settler in the state.

broader in scope. He secured several hundred acres and built a comfortable home in the Lapwai Valley. He befriended missionaries. He sheltered and saved missionaries Henry and Eliza Spalding from the cruel fate meted out to Marcus and Narcissa Whitman by angry Cayuse warriors in 1847.

Trustworthy Translator

The author, Lin Tull Cannell, was born in Coeur d’Alene, Idaho, but raised in the Pacific Northwest. Upon returning to Idaho after decades of being away, she became curious about all the landmarks that bear Craig’s name. That curiosity led her into years of research because there wasn’t much information readily available about him.

Craig was described as generous and helpful by those who knew him. He had a jovial nature, keen sense of humor, and a caring heart for the Nez Perce, given the inevitable conflict of diverse cultures and hostilities that were inherent in westward expansion.

Complicating Craig’s role as peacemaker were events beyond his control, like the discovery of gold which brought in a flood of miners, the introduction of whiskey to Indian reservations, and a major disrupter: the Civil War in 1861. The war drew focus to the North and South, pulling needed resources away from promised services. The war also pulled away many military officers and government officials.

In 1859, Craig was relieved from his position as Native American agent. Politics always in play, there was speculation that one of the reasons was because of Craig’s Southern sympathies. This was the same year that Oregon was vying for statehood.

The book is filled with many accounts of Craig’s efforts to help the native peoples. One account has him donating several of his cattle to feed the Native Americans so that they would remain and participate in an upcoming council and not leave in anger. His efforts were applauded as an

act that forestalled a war.

The book also portrays a loving family man, shrewd businessman, farmer, ferryman, and a host of other roles he played at an instrumental time in the settling of the western states.

A Creative Collaboration

The author, Lin Tull Cannell, was born in Coeur d’Alene, Idaho, but raised in the Pacific Northwest. Upon returning to Idaho after decades of being away, she became curious about all the landmarks that bear Craig’s name. That curiosity led her into years of research because there wasn’t much information readily available about him.

That changed when assistance came from Gloria Manning, William Craig’s great-great-granddaughter, who offered to help with research. Being a descendant, she broadened the information on the Craig family.

Their partnership and collaboration, as well as their love and ties to the land and its people created this volume. It not only brings to life the legacy of William Craig, but it also gives the reader a richer understanding of a dynamic time when natives encountered newcomers, and when the Pacific Northwest was drawing thousands of new settlers.

Craig died in 1869 at the age of 62. For more than 30 years, he lived among the Nez Perce people. His history is intertwined with theirs. It is a story not without injustices, but it is also a story about hope and triumph and how one man made a difference in many ways for many lives.

Anita L. Sherman is an award-winning journalist who has more than 20 years of experience as a writer and editor for local papers and regional publications in Virginia. She now works as a freelance writer and is working on her first novel. She is the mother of three grown children and grandmother to four, and she resides in Warrenton, Va. Anita can be reached at anitajusturite@gmail.com

LITERATURE

Kate Chopin’s Short Story ‘A Matter of Prejudice’: Problematic Preconceptions

KATE VIDIMOS

Our judgments and opinions affect our actions and emotions and, whether they are favorable or unfavorable, lead us to form prejudices. These prejudices can be detrimental, for they can prevent us from seeing the truth around us.

Kate Chopin, most often today considered a forerunner of feminism, addressed something quite different in her short story “A Matter of Prejudice” (1894), wherein her main character simply learns to see humans as humans.

The story looks at our judgmental tendencies by inspecting the life of Madame Carambeau, who is “a woman of many prejudices, so many, in fact, that it would be difficult to name them all.”

Though she lives in America, she despises Americans, anyone who practices a different faith, and anyone who is not French or does not speak French. As Jane Austen says in “Pride and Prejudice,” Madame’s defect is “willfully to misunderstand” everything and everyone around her.

Madame Carambeau’s daughter, Madame Cécile Lalonde, throws a birthday party for her son, Gustave. The older Madame finds this unbearable. This party has so many children with their horrible noises and their insufferable organ grinders that she must move herself from the back gallery to the front gallery.

Though she distances herself from the

party, Madame does not hide far enough away. The horrible noises still reach her and so do two young children, who come running and screaming to the front gallery. The little girl in the lead jumps into Madame’s lap, while the pursuer “lightly strikes her a ‘last tag,’ and runs laughing gleefully away.” Madame scolds the little girl in French, but the girl remains “panting and fluttering, like a frightened bird.”

Providence

As she is about to move the girl away, Madame notices that the little girl is unwell and is, in fact, contracting a fever. In an instant, Madame’s manner changes, for “though she is a creature of prejudices, she is nevertheless a skillful and accomplished nurse, and a connoisseur in all matters pertaining to health.” She sees it as her duty to attend to the little girl. She removes the girl into her own room, where she changes her into cooler clothes and places her on the bed.

When the carriage and nurse come for the little girl after the party, Madame refuses to let the girl go and sends a note to the parents, explaining that the girl must not be moved. Within two days, the girl recovers and is sent home, leaving Madame the mistress of her quiet and peaceful house again.

Yet Madame soon realizes that this little girl has influenced her more than she would like to admit. Madame realizes that “she can think of nothing really objectionable against [the little girl] except the



“Grandmother and Granddaughter,” 1863, by Julius Scholtz. Oil on canvas.

accident of her birth ... and her ignorance of the French language.”

Ever since the little girl threw herself into Madame’s lap, Madame is never the same. The little girl penetrates “the crust of Madame’s prejudice and reaches her heart.” As Madame remembers the little girl’s hugs and kisses, she can no longer resist the doubt that arises. Doubt, mistrust, and dissatisfaction grow, which give way to doubt and misgiving, until finally the “flower of Truth” blooms from Madame’s dusty, opinionated heart. As the flower of Truth grows, Madame’s prejudices fall like a house of cards.

The Seed of Truth

With a new perspective, Madame realizes that all her perceptions have proven faulty

and have led her to disregard the truth, and she now seeks to mend her ways. On Christmas Day, Madame decides to not only go to an “American church” (all in English) but also visit her son, M. Henri Carambeau, whom she banished from her life because he married an American girl.

When she and Madame Lalonde arrive at Henri’s house, he, his wife, and their daughter come out, truly thankful and overjoyed to see them. The granddaughter who approaches Madame proves to be the little girl Madame nursed to health. (Madame Lalonde never tells her mother about her niece, Madame Carambeau’s granddaughter, because Henri was banished).

Seeing that the little girl is her granddaughter, Madame says, “[The fever] was no accident, I tell you; it was Providence.” And as she holds her little granddaughter, Madame announces that she will teach the girl French, while the child, in turn, will teach her grandmother English.

Chopin shows that our prejudices are not really what we think they are and are often made without any proof or knowledge. They can prove to be trivial, weak, and utter nonsense and can be dismantled and destroyed in an instant. Sometimes the people in our lives can help us reverse our deeply held prejudices.

Chopin proves that the seed of Truth will show us the way. By recognizing and addressing our biases, we can live better lives. By recognizing truth, we can truly see and appreciate people, places, and things in the correct light.

Kate Vidimos is a 2020 graduate from the liberal arts college at the University of Dallas, where she received her bachelor’s degree in English. She plans on pursuing all forms of storytelling (specifically film) and is currently working on finishing and illustrating a children’s book.

FILM REVIEW

A Hopeful Romance in the Autumn Years

MICHAEL CLARK

A more-than-suitable bookend to the recently released film "Icon," first-time director (also writer and co-producer) Max Walker-Silverman's spare, delicate, and soulful "A Love Song" examines budding romance from a vastly different age spectrum and set of circumstances.

Faye (Dale Dickey, "Winter's Bone," "Hell or High Water") lives in a single-wide motor home on the shores of a dying Colorado lake. Her daily routine consists of dining on freshly harvested mammoth crawfish, black coffee, and warm Busch beer, while studying the night sky and identifying bird whistles.

She has two neighbors she barely knows. But she does receive daily visits from USPS employee "Postman Sam" (John Way), whose parcels, packages, and letters are carried on the back of a donkey.

A Nod to the Coen Brothers

She's also dropped in on regularly by four men and a preteen girl named Dice (Marty Grace Dennis), all wearing cowboy hats and carrying shovels. The deadpan and exceedingly polite Dice is the only one of them with audible dialogue, and exactly why they're there should be kept secret. The men's silent presence and Dice's off-kilter lines would be completely at home in any Coen brothers' movie, particularly "Raising Arizona" or "No Country for Old Men."

Although it is eventually revealed that Faye was raised in the area she now inhabits, we also get the impression that she hasn't been there in close to a decade. Unlike her neighbors who have "planted roots" so to speak, Faye can pick up and leave in mere minutes.

This location, it would appear, was chosen because it is both familiar to her and in close proximity to Lito (Wes Studi, "Dances With Wolves," "Avatar"), a Native American man she's known since childhood but hasn't seen in over 40 years.

Based on what takes place in the first act, it appears that both Lito and Faye are old-school types who didn't reconnect online or through social media, but rather by old-fashioned snail mail, hence her visible delight every time Postman Sam shows up. The letter sent by Lito letting Faye know that he's on

his way doesn't arrive until after he actually knocks on her door.

A Gentleman Caller

Reaching his destination with a freshly picked bouquet of wildflowers, a disarming smile, a gravelly lilt, and his loyal dog Huck, Lito is the embodiment of weathered jeans and a pair of long-broken-in boots. It's clear that he is both excited and wary, as Faye and their first shared moments are understandably awkward and tentative but never suspicious or leery.

Each is unsure of what the other, or they themselves for that matter, wants or expects. The ice is eventually broken when each recalls a moment shared between them during a 10th-grade field trip that took place at the very spot where they now stand.

He's sure she tried to kiss him, and she thinks it happened the other way around. At last the air is let out of the balloon. In a brilliantly conceived scene, Walker-Silverman illustrates, through body language, the pair's newfound comfort level by showing just their legs and feet while they dine.

Besides their shared upbringing and obvious attraction to one another, Lito and Faye are both widowed and low-maintenance types who play guitar and share a fondness for country and Americana music.

Decorum From Another Era

In addition to the duet that Faye and Lito perform, the accompanying score and source music become de facto characters in the movie, but not in a manner you might expect. There are a dozen instances where Faye powers up her arcane transistor radio and randomly twirls the rotary tuner until it finds a strong signal. In each instance, the song being played is slow, deliberate and melancholic, but never depressing.

As the sun begins to set on their day, Faye and Lito's tentativeness makes a slight return with both of them exhibiting the kind of decorum, manners, and morality practiced by most of us in decades past. As with a similar event depicted in "Icon," Walker-Silverman demurs and allows the audience to make their own conclusions and judgments over what transpires.

Unfortunately, dear reader, what takes



BLEECKER STREET

Both exhibit the kind of decorum, manners, and morality practiced by most of us in decades past.

'A Love Song'

Director:
Max Walker-Silverman

Starring:
Dale Dickey, Wes Studi, Marty Grace Dennis, John Way

Running Time:
1 hour, 21 minutes

MPAA Rating:
PG

Release Date:
July 29, 2022

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

place in the last 20 minutes of the movie cannot be revealed or even hinted at here, as any mention of plot detail—overt or otherwise—will thoroughly spoil things for any and all interested viewers. Walker-Silverman waits until the very last shot in the film before we ultimately find out what's in store for the two leads.

Hope for the Future

It is refreshing to see that Walker-Silverman, a man in his mid-30s, is so attuned to and in touch with the timeless universality of the human condition and affairs of the heart. People in the autumn of their years still yearn for romance and companionship and, for at least some of them, they never throw in the towel.

While the first half of Walker-Silverman's film is metaphorically half empty, the second is more than full, so much so that it overflows with optimism, unbridled joy, and a coda guaranteed to make your spirit soar.

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.

Although the couple can't sing well, they enjoy making music. Wes Studi as Lito and Dale Dickey as Faye in "A Love Song."



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