

THE EPOCH TIMES

ARTS & CULTURE



PUBLIC DOMAIN

"Niagara Falls, From the American Side," 1867, by Frederic Edwin Church. Oil on canvas; 101 inches by 89 inches. Scottish National Gallery, Edinburgh, Scotland.

FINE ARTS

FREDERIC EDWIN
CHURCH CAPTURES THE
POUNDING PRESENCE OF

NIAGARA FALLS

19th-century landscape artist gives heavenly glow to natural treasure

YVONNE MARCOTTE

Like other landscape artists of the Hudson River School, Frederic Edwin Church (1826–1900) painted wild scenes of the new land: an American wilderness that most people had never seen for themselves. Church worked with such attention to detail that his paintings mesmerized the society of his day.

He suggested how light could leap and swirl around great natural landscapes. This was shown to great effect in the paintings he did of Niagara Falls. He visited the falls often, inspired by its pounding water tripping over a rocky ledge in a steep fall to a plunge pool below.

The artist made many oil sketches and drawings during his visits, including one drawing based on a sepia photograph. His artistic efforts culminated in two impressive paintings: "Niagara Falls, From the American Side" (1867) and "Niagara," also called "Niagara Falls From the Ca-

nadian Side" (1857).

Niagara Falls is made up of three impressive waterfalls at the southern end of the Niagara Gorge—Horseshoe, American, and the smaller Bridal Veil—and they link Canada's Ontario province and New York state in the United States. The word "niagara" is said to derive from an Iroquois term meaning, aptly, "thundering water."

American Falls

Church made many sketches and drawings of the falls from 1856 to 1858. He used these studies for a painting of the American Falls that New York art dealer Michael Knoedler

commissioned in 1866. When it was exhibited first in New York City and then in London, it caused a sensation.

In order for the viewer to appreciate the impressive size of the falls, Church had to paint on a great canvas.

Continued on Page 4

Church interpreted the interplay of light and water.

2022 NTD 8TH INTERNATIONAL CHINESE VOCAL COMPETITION



GOLD AWARD \$10,000
Merkin Hall-KMC
NEW YORK Sep. 2022

VOCAL.NTDTV.COM
 REGISTER
 +1-888-477-9228
 VOCAL@GLOBALCOMPETITIONS.ORG



Prime Minister Winston Churchill visits a Scottish armored unit during World War II, circa 1940s. Churchill was very much a hands-on prime minister, taking an intense interest in military matters.

HISTORY

In the Classroom With Clio: A Review of '1942: Winston Churchill and Britain's Darkest Hour'

We study history to learn from the past

JEFF MINICK

On Feb. 15, 1942, the city of Singapore fell to the Japanese. Fifty-five thousand British and Australian troops were taken captive. Of the 45,000 Indian troops allied with them, some 40,000 took up an offer to join the Indian National Army, created by the Japanese to fight against the British. This was the largest military surrender in the history of Britain.

In April of this same year, after several months of fighting, the Japanese took Bataan in the Philippines, capturing 78,000 of the American-led Allied troops. Corregidor fell next, leaving the Japanese in complete control of the country. In the Battle of the North Atlantic—that conflict between German U-boats and Allied convoys and their armed escorts fought over a vast territory—Allied shipping losses rose at staggering rates during the first six months of 1942, with 300 ships totaling more than a million tons of shipping sinking to the bottom of the Atlantic.

During this time, the German Luftwaffe ripped into other convoys sailing the Arctic bearing vital supplies, including aircraft and tanks, from Britain to the hard-pressed Soviet Union.

And in the desert of North Africa, by late spring military forces under the command of Erwin Rommel seemed set to destroy the British Eighth Army, a defeat that would assuredly bring Egypt and the vital Suez Canal into Nazi hands.

Days of Gloom and Desperation

When we look over our shoulders into the past, the outcome of events often appears preordained. We think today of World War II and the defeat of the Axis powers—Germany, Italy, Japan—as a given. We recollect the fall of France to Germany in 1940 or the astounding advances of Japanese forces after Pearl Harbor, all the while knowing how this drama ends.

We forget that the men, women, and children living through these ordeals had no such luxury; they did not know how the drama would end.

In his new book, "1942: Winston Churchill and Britain's Darkest Hour," Taylor Downing gives readers a blow-by-blow account of this dire time in the fight for freedom, focusing especially on the string of military defeats that left the British people reeling. With their hope of victory waning, or-

dinary citizens' confidence in the government, particularly in Prime Minister Winston Churchill, began to fade as well. The collapse of European resistance to the Nazis in 1940, followed by the devastating Blitz of England's cities, towns, and factories, is often called "Britain's Darkest Hour."

But as Downing demonstrates, using new evidence garnered from various sources and archives, 1942 was the year when Britain's triumph and Churchill's continued leadership both hung by a thread.

The Bulldog's Missteps

"The British Bulldog" was an apt nickname for Churchill. With that cigar clamped firmly in his mouth, that face set like flint against defeat, and his brilliant oratory, Churchill personified British courage and tenacity.

At the end of "1942," Downing sums up the man by writing, "Although he stared into the abyss of defeat, he had the determination to keep fighting."

Strong, virtuous leadership is imperative. In times of crisis, we need leaders who will clearly state their beliefs and then firmly defend them.

Yet Downing is keenly aware of Churchill's leadership errors and discusses them at length. He was, for example, very much a hands-on prime minister, taking an intense interest in such military matters as weapons development, battlefield tactics, and equipment inventories.

After becoming prime minister, his attention to such details, Downing tells us, brought a greater sense of urgency to the government but also led one War Department official to complain that he needed a second staff, "one to deal with the Prime Minister, the other with the war."

In another regard, Downing writes that "he did not always pick his best lieutenants." This failure is illustrated throughout the book, particularly as to some of the military commanders Churchill se-



Clio, who was the Muse of History (L), and Calliope, the Muse of Poetry, in a black-figure-style Greek painting.

lected. General Bernard Montgomery, for example, won the battle of El Alamein, which gave an enormous boost to Churchill's popularity, but Montgomery was not the prime minister's first selection for this post.

Regarding these choices, we may question Churchill's appointing himself, on becoming prime minister, as Minister of Defense. This unprecedented joint role "gave him unique authority to oversee all matters of military policy," which was true enough, but one wonders whether holding both offices didn't also make Churchill a broader target for the military failures of 1942.

Here's another example of Churchill's flawed judgment. Until reading "1942," I never quite understood why at war's end the British public would vote out of office the man who had guided them to victory.

Though I've read a number of biographies of Churchill, for the first time I understood that throughout the war he showed little interest, other than in a general way, in a society post-war Britain might enjoy.

Meanwhile, his political opponents had spent a good deal of time planting seeds in that field, then brought forth a crop of promises during the elections, and won.

Morale Wins Wars

Both Churchill and the government recognized the importance of gauging and keeping up spirits on the home front. Charged with this mission was the Ministry of Information (MoI). Though this ministry was at first poorly managed, ex-journalist and Churchill's close friend Brendan Bracken eventually took control and got the organization on track producing posters that supported war efforts, leaflets to be dropped over Germany, and films to guide and encourage the public.

One division of the MoI was charged with recording the mood of the British public. In a program called Mass Observation, government workers were dispatched to record discussions about the war overheard in shops and cafes. They conducted interviews and distributed diaries to certain people so that they might set down their thoughts on the changing events.

In these primitive forms of our contemporary opinion polls, the government hoped to keep abreast of the attitudes of



Lt. Gen. Bernard Montgomery looking out of a tank, circa 1940s. Gen. Montgomery won the battle of El Alamein in Africa and raised British hopes for victory in World War II.

those at home, without whom, they knew, victory might be lost.

By 1942, the British had endured three years of warfare, standing part of that time alone against fascism. Downing shows us the corrosive effects of this ordeal on morale—the rationing, the Blitz, the loss of loved ones. The string of defeats in 1942 only further sapped the spirits of ordinary citizens.

According to Downing (who brings the MoI frequently into his history), in the wake of Montgomery's victory in North Africa along with the turning of the tide at Stalingrad and the American victory at Midway, public optimism rebounded. After news of the victory at El Alamein, for instance, journalist Mollie Panter-Downes "recounted that the girls behind their shop counters, taxi drivers, every one she met had a smile, including the bus conductor 'who tinkled his bell and shouted, 'Next stop, Benghazi!'"

Clio at the Blackboard

Long ago, when I was a graduate student, a history professor warned me against drawing lessons from the past, a stance that baffled me. To my way of thinking, then and now, Clio, the muse and goddess of history, is first and foremost a teacher. We study history to learn from the past, not just about the past.

What lessons, then, might we draw from "1942?"

Lesson No. 1: Strong, virtuous leader-

ship is imperative. In times of crisis, we need leaders who will clearly state their beliefs and then firmly defend them.

Despite his flaws, Churchill stands front and center among the leaders discussed in "1942." Whether Britain would have defeated fascism without him can never be known. What we do know, however, is that Churchill carried the day by dint of his personality and even by his words. As correspondent Edward Murrow said, "He mobilized the English language and sent it into battle."

Lesson No. 2: In a free society, these leaders need to pay attention to those people they represent. During the war, the British government attempted to do so.

In July 2022, a poll found that 85% of Americans believe the country is headed in the wrong direction. They may disagree as to which direction we should be taking, but dissatisfaction is clearly broad and deep. Wise politicians would take note and seek out the thoughts and opinions of their constituents.

Lesson No. 3: Here, the old adage "It is always darkest before the dawn" comes into play.

This is the greatest lesson we can draw from "1942" and wartime Britain. Whatever our predicament, whatever our situation, to lose hope is to despair. To despair is to lose. Period. Abandon hope, and the enemy wins.

Immediately following Pearl Harbor, Winston Churchill traveled to America, addressed the Congress, "forged a close personal bond" with President Roosevelt, and returned to Britain in a buoyant frame of mind. Downing writes that Churchill would then "require immense reserves of strength to withstand" the coming calamities.

Churchill found that strength. And in whatever crises we face, whether personal or political, so must we all.

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.



'1942: Winston Churchill and Britain's Darkest Hour'
 Author
 Taylor Downing
 Publisher
 Pegasus Books, Ltd.,
 Oct. 4, 2022
 Hardcover
 432 pages

DONATE YOUR CAR

To a media that stands for **TRUTH and TRADITION**

Your old vehicle can support The Epoch Times' truthful journalism and help us get factual news in front of more readers.

WHY DONATE TO US?

- Accept cars, motorcycles, and RVs
- Free vehicle pick-up
- Maximum tax deduction
- Support our journalists

Donate Now:

www.EpochCar.org

1-800-822-3828

Our independence from any corporation or holding company is what ensures that we are free to report according to our values of Truth and Tradition. We're primarily funded through subscriptions from our readers—the stakeholders that we answer to, who keep us on the right track.

THE EPOCH TIMES

American Essence

FROM THE PUBLISHERS OF THE EPOCH TIMES



Non-political, real-life look at goodness, decency, and excellence in the world.

—EDWARD LONG

A breath of fresh air in troubled times.

—CHARLES MIDDLEMAS

You'll hear a voice that reminds you all is not lost.

—PAT MORACHE



Uplifting stories, stunning photos. ... exceptional magazine.

—MONICA GUZA

Bring Home Traditional American Culture and Great American Stories.

Subscribe today at AmericanEssence.net



"Niagara," also known as "Niagara Falls From the Canadian Side," 1857, by Frederic Edwin Church. Oil on canvas; 40 inches by 90 1/2 inches. Corcoran Collection. National Gallery of Art, in Washington, D.C.

FINE ARTS

FREDERIC EDWIN CHURCH CAPTURES THE POUNDING PRESENCE OF

NIAGARA FALLS

19th-century landscape artist gives heavenly glow to natural treasure

Continued from Page 1

It was his largest, at 8 1/2 feet by 7 1/2 feet. The painting shows a person as a tiny speck watching the falls on the edge of an outcropping, where the surging water cascades down with uneasy energy. The human figure gives a sense of scale to the falls, a sense that spectators can fully appreciate. With this view, the falls is both stirring and terrifying.

The painting was composed to show

Church depicted the effect of mist and turbulent water with great realism.

the falls sweep across the canvas in a curve. In the immediate foreground on the left, the detail is more precise; on the right, the falls is shrouded in mist. The artist wanted us to feel "the cascade in person, hearing the rush of water, feeling the spray of mist. The marginalized line of the horizon is important in this sense, consuming the gaze in a tumult of flowing water," according to The Art Story website.

Dark green trees on the cliff top break the sweep of the whooshing, unstoppable flow. Although the clouds are tinged with sunlight, they take a back seat as all eyes are on the churning cascade. The blue pool at the base of the painting is dramatically inviting. A cloud of spray hovers at the foot of the falls while a denser mass of spray lies in the center of the composition.

A rainbow emerges in the lower right corner, and rocks disappear as the water takes on an almost solid shape. The viewer feels an overwhelming sense of the vastness of a water-filled landscape.

Horseshoe Falls

Church's painting "Niagara" (1857) is of Horseshoe Falls, most of which is on the Canadian side but straddles the international border. It's the largest of Niagara's three waterfalls. This was his first large-scale painting of the falls.

Over 100,000 people saw the painting during the first two weeks it was exhibited in a darkened Manhattan gallery where only the painting was illuminated. A decade later, it won a silver medal

at the 1867 Exposition Universelle in Paris and established Church's international reputation as the preeminent American landscape painter.

The painting presents a panoramic view on a canvas twice as wide as it is high at 7 feet, 7 inches wide. The painting was made horizontal so the viewer could experience the immense stretch of the falls.

The viewer is meant to feel close to the dangerous edge of the watery cliff at a precipice, nearing the very edge. This view is seen from Table Rock, a large shelf of rock that juts out from the Canadian shore.

The sky is overcast, as if a storm will soon arrive. The sights and sounds of a storm about to occur over the heavy water flowing down only intensifies the immense awe that the falls inspires. A watery white rainbow connects the darkened sky with the rushing water.

On the horizon in the upper right corner of the composition are a number of buildings; in the upper left corner stands Terrapin Tower, where a tiny figure stands on a platform, again showing in scale mankind's place in an immense, awe-inspiring environment.

Through extensive study, Church depicted the effect of mist and turbulent water with great realism, and his work was considered a technical achievement. He painted the churning water as if it is alive, aware of its descent and the force of its downward movement. Art historian David C. Huntington said that, in this painting of the falls, the artist captured the "soul" and "spirit" of Niagara.

The Smithsonian American Art Museum wrote on its website about the artist's visits to make compositional studies and how he had mastered the depiction of natural bodies of water:

"Church demonstrates his mastery of the depiction of rapidly flowing water. Critics had earlier admired Church's ambition but criticized his handling of water. This prompted the artist to make a trip to Niagara Falls in 1856 to study the movement of water in preparation for painting 'Niagara,' which in the end, proved his mastery."

A Meditation on Nature

Niagara Falls was the ideal place for Church to interpret the interplay of light and water. He observed, studied, and put to paper how on a misty morning, images of trees and even water would emerge only as blurry shapes. Historians call this style luminism, a term coined by art scholar and curator John I.H. Bauer in 1954 to describe naturalistic landscapes and seascapes that depicted light in all its natural forms in a glowing way.

Church was influenced by early American writers, especially Ralph Waldo Emerson. According to Emerson, natural light makes the world "transparent"



Detail that shows a person looking out from an outcropping in the painting "Niagara Falls, From the American Side," 1867, by Frederic Edwin Church. Oil on canvas; 101 inches by 89 inches. Scottish National Gallery, Edinburgh, Scotland.

so the "light of higher laws" can shine through nature. As described on The Art Story website, the Hudson River School painters displayed "nature infused with a divine light."

Natural phenomena have a spiritual side that is filled with light, just as human beings are filled with spiritual light. Church painted that unseen, but important, side of nature. He saw nature as a gift from God. He also showed us that our place in the natural world is really just a speck in the immensity of creation.

Church's paintings evoke quiet reflection on the magnificence of a natural phenomenon. With his own observations, he helps us notice the beauty of nature. He did this by presenting parts of the natural world that we normally don't notice, such as sunlight, moonlight, clouds, and mist. Using his oil paints like watercolors, he thinned the viscosity of the paint to create the effect of air being lit by radiant light. His colors were applied with precision, so brushstrokes could not be seen on the surface, and the artistic process was invisible. If the painting was a day scene, the sunlight was a wash of yellow. For a night scene, moonlight became awash in white to transform the night's landscape into a silhouette.

Church's paintings of Niagara Falls allow us to raise our minds and hearts to higher things, just as his imposing canvases of the falls allowed viewers of his time to immerse themselves in the phenomena of ethereal light, watery mist, and the pounding water of a natural wonder.

As we reflect on his paintings of a natural treasure, we might see what he saw: that Niagara Falls is alive with the light and love and vibrancy of creation. Church's works encourage us to step away from our material concerns for a moment and appreciate what God has created for mankind.



Frederic Edwin Church (cropped), 1826, Brady-Handy photograph. Library of Congress.

FINE ARTS

Lavishly Languid: The Insightful Dreamscapes of John William Godward

JENNIFER SCHNEIDER

John William Godward (1861–1922) was a neoclassical painter of the Victorian era. He established a reputation for his careful rendering of details and the ability to convey contrasting textures: flesh, marble, fur, and fabrics. From his London studio, Godward created romantic worlds that featured women bathed in soft light against Mediterranean dreamscapes.

At first sight, Godward's paintings are an aesthetically pleasing symphony of beautiful women, colorful flowers, and meticulously detailed textures. Was his intention to paint scenes for the sake of beauty, also known as "art for art's sake," or did he intend hidden messages beneath the surface?

When digging a little deeper into the elements that tie his seemingly innocent dreamscapes together, we find some potential moral lessons on decadence.

'Idleness'

Godward, the protégé of Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, Victorian England's most celebrated artist, similarly depicted scenes of the luxury and decadence of the Roman Empire. Whether Godward purposefully selected moral symbolism for his artwork is unknown, yet his paintings are full of ancient moral symbolism while nonetheless paying tribute to the sensibilities of Victorian times.

In his painting "Idleness" (1900), a young woman teases a kitten with a peacock feather. The peacock—the type of feather that the woman is holding—was a common tool for depicting morality in 19th-century art and literature.

Since peacocks strut when displaying their beautiful plumage, they have been symbolically connected with the sins of pride and vanity. In Renaissance art, for example, the peacock often appeared in the Flemish masters' depictions of the Seven Deadly Sins.

In Godward's dreamscapes, we find some potential moral lessons on decadence.

Reverend Thomas Dick, author of "On the Mental Illumination and Moral Improvement of Mankind" (1836), tells his readers: "Be not like the peacock, proud and vain, on account of your beauty and your fine clothes; humility and goodness are always to be preferred to beauty."

"Idleness" might be viewed as a careful examination of a relaxed summer afternoon. Godward's selections of colors and symbolism acknowledge the cultural trends of the Victorian times. According to designer George Audsley's book "Color in Dress" (1870), the color yellow was believed to be most similar to light and therefore best suited to wear in spring and early summer. Audsley wrote: "The effect of yellow upon the mind is of a bright, gay, gladdening nature, owing its likeness to light, both natural and artificial."

The pink oleander flowers that frame the seated woman contribute to the theme of summertime, as blossoms tend to peak during the spring and summer months. In addition, pink was often associated with youth and playfulness. But at the same time, the symbolism of the oleander flower meant "beware" in the Victorian language of flowers.

'The Quiet Pet'

In his 1906 painting "The Quiet Pet," we view another scene of a young, beautiful woman beckoning an animal. Bathed in warm light, this painting is likewise set against a late summer, Mediterranean backdrop. The ripened cherries the woman is holding as well as the potted cyclamen flowers allude to the late summer and early autumn season on the



"Idleness," 1900, by John William Godward. Oil on canvas. Art Renewal Center.



"The Quiet Pet," 1906, by John William Godward. Oil on canvas. Private collection.

coast of Greece.

The meaning of cherries in art and literature runs the gamut from the sublime to the provocative. To understand what cherries may represent in a particular piece of art, we would need to look at the context and time period it was produced. By the time of the late Victorian era, the erotic symbolism for cherries had become solidified; the Oxford dictionary of 1899 references the cherry as a symbol for a woman's virginity.

"The Quiet Pet" can also be viewed as a modern reference to Eve in the Garden of Eden. The cyclamen flowers in Victorian flower language were associated with resignation or submission and were often given as a farewell gift.

The cyclamen, however, has had multiple associations across cultures and throughout the generations. The Greek physician, botanist, and pharmacologist Pedanius Dioscorides (first century A.D.) referred to the cyclamen as an aphrodisiac. In Christian symbolism, the cyclamen flower represented the Virgin.

Whether this painting was referencing a young girl's submission to desire is unknown. However, in both paintings, we can learn from the symbolism. Both the peacock feather and the cherries that are being used as bait allude to two of the seven deadly sins: pride and lust. The pink oleander flowers from the kitten painting signify a warning for the viewer to beware: Beware of vanity and pride as a lure or false illusion. The turtle that has long been associated with slow and patient persistence can be a reminder to not be hasty to submit or resign our values. We are all familiar with the story of Eve and the fall of humanity. With patience and humility, we will reap the fruits of our labor in time.



"Allegory of Pride," circa 1650, after Pieter Bruegel the Elder (1526/1530–1569). Oil on panel. Private Collection.

ALL PHOTOS IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN



Humankind struggles against Kronos. "Men and Animals Struggling Against Death and Father Time," circa 17th century, by David Vinckboons. Oil on panel. Museum of Fine Arts Boston, in Boston.

TRADITIONAL CULTURE

Kronos and Kairos: Sacred and Mundane Time

JAMES SALE

Do you remember when school vacations seemed to extend forever? Six weeks was an infinite amount of time to do almost everything in, and only perhaps in the last few days did you have that uneasy feeling that the vacation was soon to end. Now, six weeks? You blink and it's gone. I'm writing this in early September, and blink, Christmas will be here! Heck, 2023 will be over before I have had time to savor it.

The fine American novelist, now a Panamanian resident, Christa (Wojo) Wojciechowski has recently published a blog titled "It's About Time: My attempt to slow down the perception of time," and it's fascinating. As she puts it: "As we each spend more time on Earth, our perception of it shrinks. At first, it's by small degrees. Then suddenly, a year seems like a few months. It's frightening, disorienting, and it seems the harder we try to hold on to it, the more quickly it slips through our fingers." Surely, we have all—at least all of us of a certain age—experienced this.

Time seems to evaporate, and there is never enough to do what one wants to achieve. In her blog, Wojciechowski describes how she tried to get back to that plenitude of time that she once had by not doing anything: by only meditating, journaling, and reading; and yet for all the enforced non-doing, the experiment failed. As she says, "I did not succeed in slowing down my perception of time in a significant way."

One positive consequence for her, however, was that she began to prioritize more effectively what she needed to do with the time she had. Her blog is worth a read just for this. But I think her ability to prioritize points to another way forward.



In the heavenly Elysium, the angels Raphael and Gabriel keep the blessed from the darkness of Tartarus (lower right) where the departed souls writhe in torment. "Elysium and Tartarus," or "The State of Final Retribution," 1792, by James Barry. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, in New York.

The Titan Kronos

The Greeks actually had two gods of time, a fact that is not widely known. The god of time that Christa Wojciechowski is attempting to placate or manipulate is the well-known one: Kronos, or Saturn as he is called in the Roman pantheon.

Kronos, of course, reminds us of the etymology of our words like chronology or chronometer: time to be measured and marked. And as Saturn, we have the planet and its whole astronomical and astrological significance.

Kronos was a Titan and king of the gods until dethroned by his son, Zeus or Jupiter. That dethronement led to his deportation to Tartarus: the lowest pits of the Earth, the hell below the hell that humans experience after death. In short, it's a highly negative place.

Kronos is routine, while Kairos is virtually sacred.

Therefore, time takes us down; there is a downward force in time that is equivalent to the power of decay. No wonder Wojo can't reverse its tendency!

Saturn gives us the word "saturnine," meaning cold, gloomy, surly, sardonic, and related to the metal lead, not to gold. Generally speaking, Saturn is seen as the planet and god of limitation and ill omen. Time does its limit us; time finally does prove fatal for each one of us. It might be said that the religions of the world exist to overcome the shackles that Time binds each mortal person with.

The Greek God Kairos

But as I said, there are two gods of time in Greek mythology. And just as Kronos is the fa-

ther of the king of the gods, Zeus, so in line of succession, Kairos is the son of Zeus. Time, in other words, runs through the genetic code (if one may express it that way) of the arbiters of the cosmos. For the cosmos to exist at all, the notion of time was in its progenitors' DNA!

How, though, are there two gods of time and what is the difference? Well, it's quite clear that Kronos is the god of the time we all know so much about and experience on a 24/7 basis. Note the measuring numbers here; it's the absolute or eternal time of successive moments.

"Kairos," on the other hand, is an ancient Greek word meaning "the right, critical, or opportune moment." So an essential difference here is that Kronos is quantitative, whereas Kairos is qualitative. While there is not much to argue about what the time is today, especially given our atomic clocks, there is plenty to argue about when the Kairos is, the proper or opportune time for action.

The Right Time for Action

Think about three simple examples of timing one's action right now. One, we have come out of COVID-19. Is this the right time for you to consider a change of job or even career? Two, inflation is rampant in the United States at present. Have the feds chosen the right moment to raise interest rates? Are they in front of or behind the curve? Three, President Putin invaded Ukraine earlier this year. Did he choose the right moment to do it, or was it a mistake?

To take that last question a stage further: Yes, for Putin it was Kairos, because he understood that the Western allies were divided among themselves and within themselves, struggling to contain or spread communistic woke movements in their own homelands. On the other hand: No; it was a tactical opportunity but a huge strategic mistake. He failed to take into account the strength of his own forces, the strength of the enemy's, and the resources that might be deployed against him.

At this point in Kronos's time, we cannot know whether Kairos was with Putin or not, but the main issue is to look at time not as a sequence but as an opportunity and to discern when the chances are in your favor.

In the New Testament (written in the ancient Greek language), the word "Kairos" is used some 86 times as in expressions like "the appointed time in the purpose of God." Such a time is, of course, the right time—the right time, for example, for Jesus to enter Jerusalem. By way of contrast, the word "chronos" is used only 54 times and in the context of phrases about specific units of time, like days and hours.

Kairos, then, invests our life with im-



Kairos, the god of time, personified. He has one lock of hair and regulates the weight of time with scales. "Time as Occasion (Kairos)," 1543-1545, by Francesco de' Rossi. Fresco at the Palazzo Vecchio Museum in Florence, Italy.

mense significance; Kronos is routine, while Kairos is virtually sacred. When we really start thinking about the right moment for action in our own lives, we transform how we view our lives. The right moment is not about gambling (as possibly Putin's actions are), but about a divine sense of rightness in terms of what we do.

In Greek mythology, Kairos was depicted as having only one lock of hair. This is to signify that he can easily be seized by the lock dangling in front of his face when he is coming toward you. But once he has passed by, he cannot be grasped because the back of his head is bald—there is nothing to hold on to! To neglect opportunity, then, to miss seizing the right moment, is to lose it forever, for we cannot hold him once he has passed.

Let's stop counting our hours and days, then, and worrying about them. Instead, let us look for the right moment to take action, the right time to seize the opportunities that are coming our way; and the right time to do good. Yes, to do good. That is our blessing now.

James Sale has had over 50 books published, most recently, "Mapping Motivation for Top Performing Teams" (Routledge, 2021). He has been nominated for the 2022 poetry Pushcart Prize, won first prize in The Society of Classical Poets 2017 annual competition, performing in New York in 2019. His most recent poetry collection is "Hell Ward." For more information about the author, and about his Dante project, visit EnglishCantos.home.blog

ALL PHOTOS BY UNIVERSAL TELEVISION

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.

TV POPCORN AND INSPIRATION

Best Vicarious Small Town USA Experience Ever

MARK JACKSON

"Friday Night Lights" is a meditation on a subject dear to the American heartland, told with a deft touch by sports fan and director Peter Berg, with finely choreographed football action sequences and fun camerawork. With its big heart and noble characters, it's a story about America, sports as upward mobility, haves and have-nots, racism, and finding meaning in life.

It is an hour-long dramatic series (44 minutes without commercials when it aired on NBC in 2006), and the West Texas town with the fictional name of Dillon was inspired by the real-life town of Odessa, home of the Permian Panthers, depicted in the original book and the movie.

Director-writer Berg made an effort to talk to coaches, parents, players, and spectators throughout the Lone Star State about high school games. He captured the fervor surrounding the state's (and indeed, America's) football culture. He achieved an authenticity rare in television.

I'd read H.G. Bissinger's book "Friday Night Lights" a few years before the 2004 movie came out. Read it three times. It's exceptional journalism. It was a bestseller. And then the movie happened, which was reminiscent of director Richard Linklater's nostalgic depiction of Texas high school footballers in the now cult classic "Dazed and Confused." "Friday Night Lights" (the movie) followed the book fairly accurately. The movie was a hit.

For some reason, I missed the TV series, which was also hugely popular. So finally, 11 years after it ended, I was scouting around, looking for premium streamable binge-watchables, and turned up this gold nugget. I scarfed the whole 76 episodes in 5 weeks, and so I'm here to tell you about what you've been missing. I may be late to the party, but if I—with my particular devotion to the subject matter—missed this show, I'm definitely not alone in this.

'Friday Night Lights' Is Not About Shabbat Candles

This thoroughly engrossing drama is about high school football in West Texas, and the title refers to the fact that (at least in southern and southwestern states, largely because of the heat) games are played on Friday nights, under stadium klieg lights. To crowds sometimes upward of 20,000. The young players are local celebrities, with big signs on their lawns saying who they are and what position they play.

In the drought-blighted rough terrain of West Texas, further swept bare by the dusty winds of economic collapse (desiccated ranches and the scarecrow silhouettes of mute oil rigs abound), these games are the week's high point for these boys, for the cheerleading squads and the marching bands, and for the adults who live vicariously through them.

Every town wants to win. High school coaches sign two-year contracts, and it's a precarious job—the coach is the town scapegoat. When the team loses, the town reminds the coach by pounding "For Sale"

signs into his front lawn, or hollering at him when he goes to pick up a few hot fudge sundaes for his family at Texas's version of a Dairy Queen: the local Alamo Freeze.

These high school games are the only show in town; it's the only interesting thing. Monies for education are earmarked for Jumbotrons—heck, for whole, professional-level stadiums for high schoolers. Because this is as good as it gets in the lives of a vast majority of the American blue-collar denizens of Small Town, USA.

Better Than the Movie

The movie version is more somber, shot with a washed-out, desert-y Texas palette of browns, grays, and yellow ochres; the Panthers' uniforms are black and white, and the film has an almost documentary feel. Head coach Gary Gaines (Billy Bob Thornton) is more of a hard-hitting, ever-so-slightly disingenuous, opportunistic, realistic coach.

The TV version, however, is more of a fun, ever-so-slightly "Fast Times at Ridgemont High" experience, with an overwhelmingly delicious small-town nostalgia that no American in their right mind would want to miss out on. Even if you hate sports, take note: No matter how jaded, well-read, above-it-all, or even hardcore NFL sports fan-snobbish you might be, "Friday Night Lights" will suck you in before you can say the quarterback cadence, "Blue 22! Hut!"

Players

"Friday Night Lights" is anchored basically by four women: cheerleader Lyla Garrity (Minka Kelly), mean girl Tyra Collette (Adrienne Palicki), the coach's daughter Julie Taylor (Amiee Teegarden), and the coach's wife, Tami Taylor (Connie Britton).

In terms of the student football players, both Brian "Smash" Williams (Gaius Charles) and Vince Howard (Michael B. Jordan) are versions of the real-life characters from the book.

Tim Riggins plays the early-onset alcoholic stud-muffin fullback Tim Riggins, and Matt Saracen (Zach Gilford) is the new, deer-in-the-headlights, nerd-turned-jock quarterback. They're all extremely fun to watch.

Riding herd on the raucous teen fray is the only high-functioning couple in Dillon: coach Eric Taylor (Kyle Chandler) and his wife, Tami (Connie Britton, who played the same role in the movie). If nothing else, watch the series for a beautiful depiction of marital teamwork.

The Taylors are that classic couple; we all knew one, where she's the local den mother and he's the camp counselor of the ages. All the kids go to them with their problems. It's a natural function of the American high school football coach, that (hopefully) molder of men. And Tami's the high school guidance counselor (who's later promoted to principal), dealing with irate parents who try to get her fired before asking her if she really told that girl to get an abortion, or simply followed school protocols and lent a sympathetic ear.

The Taylors often speak endearingly over each other, simultaneously, which is good



The head coach of the West Texas high school football team, the Dillon Panthers, is Eric Taylor (Kyle Chandler, R). He fires up his players in the first season.



Former Panthers' quarterback Jason Street (Scott Porter) and cheerleader girlfriend Lyla Garrity (Minka Kelly), in the first season of "Friday Night Lights."

This thoroughly engrossing drama is about high school football in West Texas.



Dillon High principal Tami Taylor (Connie Britton) and her husband, coach Eric Taylor (Kyle Chandler) are a near perfect couple.

actor improv at work. And when they (rarely) lose their tempers, it's great because one or the other is going to eventually come up with a very satisfying apology.

In fact, coach Taylor apologizes constantly. He's manly enough to be able to do that. He slams and berates the boys from the moral high ground with tough love in his literal school of hard knocks. He facilitates manliness, shoving the unforged iron of boys into the furnace, hissing them in cold water, and whacking them with the sledgehammer of 106-degrees-in-the-shade football practice to produce the steel of never-quit manhood. But every once in a while, he makes a bad call, devastates some boy's feelings, and then (figuratively) crawls on his hands and knees to that boy's front porch and apologizes profusely. And this is why the boys love him. And why his wife and daughter do. And why you will.

When Tami is promoted to high school principal and starts getting bored with her husband's endless work issues, he says, "You know who I miss? I miss the coach's wife." To which she replies, "You know who I can't wait to meet? The principal's husband." The look on his face is priceless. It might very well be the finest depiction of the storied American middle-class marriage in popular culture.

Much More Than Football

While the football game is the highlight of the show, the extracurricular pressures drive the series. Head coach Taylor, as you can imagine, regardless of whether it's a casual dinner, vouching for a kid looking at jail time, a chance encounter at the Alamo Freeze, or turning on local talk radio—everyone and (literally) their grandmother has an opinion on how the coach should best do his job. The entire town is depending on him to win at football—which is to say, they're counting on him to validate their very existence.

The series works because the lives of the adults and "kids" are treated with equal weight. What makes "Friday Night Lights" superior is that it does not declaw America's gridiron pastime or present an overly bucolic version of small-town life. "Friday Night Lights" treats both life and football in all their gritty, bloody, sweaty, dramatic glory.

'Friday Night Lights'

Director:
Peter Berg

Starring:
Kyle Chandler, Connie Britton, Taylor Kitsch, Minka Kelly, Jesse Plemons, Adrienne Palicki, Amiee Teegarden, Michael B. Jordan, Brad Leland, Zach Gilford, Gaius Charles

MPAA Rating:
TV-14

Running Time:
44 minutes, 76 episodes

Release date:
2006-2011

★★★★★

REACHING WITHIN:
WHAT TRADITIONAL ART OFFERS THE HEART

Driving Out Negativity From Our Family: ‘Oedipus Cursing His Son Polynices’

ERIC BESS

Family can be one of the most beautiful things in our lives. It can be filled with love and support and can even extend outside of blood relatives to include close friends.

However, family can also prove destructive. Manipulation, jealousy, and in-fighting within a family can cause resentment and estrangement. Sometimes, it can be so bad that we don't even want to be associated with our family or with certain family members.

Then, what makes a family a family? Does family consist of mere blood relation, or does it go deeper?

Oedipus and His Family

We probably remember from the Sophoclean tragedies the complicated story of Oedipus and his family—especially that he killed his father and married his mother. But there is more to the story, and it's helpful to see the emotions of this particular ill-fated family.

An oracle warned the king and queen of Thebes that Oedipus would later kill the king and marry the queen. In trying to avoid this fate, the frightened king ordered his newborn son, Oedipus, to die from exposure on a mountain, but instead the baby was ultimately raised by the king and queen of Corinth. Thus, a father's fear led to the wish to kill his son.

When Prince Oedipus grew up and overheard one day that he was fated to kill his father and marry his mother, he, not knowing that he was adopted, was also frightened; he left Corinth to avoid this horrific fate.

But his journey led to a chance encounter with a proud, older man who ordered Oedipus out of his way on the road. When the willful Oedipus refused to give way, the king—for it was Oedipus's own father—berated and struck the young man out of anger. Also in prideful anger, Oedipus killed the man for these transgressions.

Oedipus is also known for defeating the



A section from "Oedipus Cursing His Son Polynices," 1786, by Henri Fuseli. National Gallery of Art, Washington.

Sphinx, which was terrorizing Thebes. For this deed, the Thebans proclaimed him a hero and accepted him as their new king. Thus, Oedipus married the queen of Thebes. Together, they had four children: two daughters and two sons.

As the years went by, a plague visited the city. The plague could be lifted only if the murderer of the previous king was found and expelled from the city. Thus, Oedipus's duty as king was to find the culprit who murdered the king. When the truth was revealed—that Oe-

Oedipus drives away and curses the negativity that Polynices represents.

dipus killed the king, his father—the queen, out of shame, committed suicide. And Oedipus, realizing that his own anger and pride caused his fate to be fulfilled, and ashamed of his crimes, blinded himself. Banished, he left Thebes and aimlessly wandered the earth.

The Family Saga Continues

Although the first part of Oedipus's story is best known, the rest of the story also demonstrates the destructive nature of this family. Oedipus's daughter Antigone helped and

guided her blind father for years, while his two sons, Eteocles and Polynices, who had done nothing to aid their father, fought each other over who would rule Thebes.

The oracle promised victory to whichever son could get Oedipus's blessing. The oracle also prophesied that Thebes would fall when any Theban stood upon Oedipus's grave. In an attempt to garner his blessing, Polynices with King Creon (who took power after Oedipus left) traveled to see Oedipus.

By this time, Oedipus had wandered

blind for many years, and had had time to consider his own failings while enduring a great deal of suffering. He had come to gain great wisdom.

Instead of bestowing his blessing, Oedipus, disgusted by the jealousy and fighting between his sons, cursed them. As a result, Polynices and Eteocles killed one another.

Then, in an attempt to control where Oedipus was buried, King Creon kidnapped Oedipus's daughters (his nieces, in fact) to force Oedipus to return to Thebes. King Theseus of Athens, however, imprisoned King Creon and reunited Oedipus with his daughters. King Theseus also gave Oedipus a blessing to stay in Athens despite Oedipus's warning that his presence might cause war with Thebes.

When Oedipus later prepared for his death, he decided to share the secret of eternal life with the one person who was kind to him, gave him shelter, and saved his daughters: King Theseus. Oedipus died and was buried in Athens. No Theban dared to invade Athens, for were they to stand upon Oedipus's grave, Thebes would fall.

'Oedipus Cursing His Son Polynices'

Henri Fuseli's painting "Oedipus Cursing His Son Polynices" provides a visual illustration of the moment when Oedipus drives away and curses his son. On the left of the painting, Polynices (dressed in yellow, white, and red) has come to meet his father, Oedipus, and receive his blessing. Yet the focal point is Oedipus, who points his finger toward his son. Oedipus's high-contrast figure emerges out of the darkness on the right side of the composition. The blind Oedipus grabs his son's arm, curses him, and points for him to leave. Polynices puts his hands up as if to stop Oedipus's curses.

The two faithful daughters, Antigone and Ismene, support their father. Ismene cries on Oedipus's leg while Antigone puts her hand up to shield her father from his son.

Together, the four figures are arranged in a very dynamic, swooping composition that adds tension between the figures.

The Foundation of Family

There are certain emotions throughout Oedipus's story that result in negative consequences. Fear causes his birth parents to try to murder him, anger results in his killing his father, and pride comes before the shame that causes his mother to kill herself. Oedipus's shame, perhaps, also results in his banishment and wandering, and the envy between his sons pushes him to curse them.

Let's take a moment to truly consider the great suffering in this tragic story. Can you imagine a family so bad that your parents wished you dead? That you would unknowingly kill one parent and marry the other? Can you imagine bearing children with one of your parents, only later to have your sons lend you no support when you were in your greatest need? Can you imagine one of your



"Oedipus and the Sphinx," 1864, by Gustav Moreau. Oil on canvas. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

For more arts and culture articles, visit TheEpochTimes.com

sons returning to gain your blessing only so that he might rule the very land you've been banished from?

Could it be, then, in Fuseli's painting, that Oedipus isn't merely cursing his son but what his son represents? To me, Polynices represents all of these tragic sufferings due to negative emotions. Oedipus's sons, especially, are the continuous reminder of everything that has gone wrong with his family.

The fact that Oedipus points for his son to go away and curses him tells a deeper story about Oedipus's understanding of family. If Oedipus blesses Polynices in a fight against his brother, he would have blessed not only the violence within his family but also the fear, anger, pride, shame, and envy as an accepted part of family life.

Instead, Oedipus drives away and curses the negativity that Polynices represents. If violence, anger, fear, envy, pride, and shame are blessed as the foundation of family, they will only serve to tear a family apart. Oedipus recognizes this and drives out and curses

these qualities and emotions.

Oedipus curses the negativity his sons represent, but he blesses Theseus with death's opposite—eternal life. And why does he bless Theseus, the king from a foreign land? The king represents kindness. Oedipus grants his blessing to Theseus, who didn't even request it. He blesses what Theseus represents: kindness, hospitality, and standing up for what is right. A stranger becomes the one with whom Oedipus shares his secrets; a stranger becomes family.

Of course, our blood relations are our family. But our relationships are meaningless without kindness. If the negativity that Polynices represents in Fuseli's painting haunts our family life, we will suffer for it. How might we banish such negativity and accept kindness as the foundation of our families?

Eric Bess is a practicing representational artist and is a doctoral candidate at the Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts (IDSVA).

GOLDEN AGE FILMS

Celebrating Back to School and Joyful Giving

It pays to cultivate a habit of joyful giving

RUDOLPH LAMBERT FERNANDEZ

Producer, director, and screenwriter Leo McCarey's box-office hit "Going My Way" (1944) inspired his sequel, "The Bells of St. Mary's" (1945). The films introduced Father O'Malley to audiences, a character McCarey created and dramatized.

Rare even for those years, McCarey's sequel won greater popular acclaim than his original. The sequel won less critical acclaim (one Oscar to the original's seven) but would have bettered the original's haul of Oscars had it not been mere months separating their production and the similarities between the two films in character and theme.

The story revolves around people caught up in the past, present, and future of St. Mary's church and school. Father O'Malley (Bing Crosby, then the first actor to be Oscar-nominated twice for the same character) is the new parish priest.

He arrives being warned that the nuns running the school, headed by Sister Benedict (the unfailingly gorgeous Ingrid Bergman), drove his predecessor away, in a wheelchair, by their sheer willfulness.

O'Malley and Benedict couldn't be more different. He takes life a little lightly, she a bit too seriously. First at (good-natured) loggerheads over their differing leadership styles, they grow to develop mutual admiration and respect.

Together, their compassionate persistence wins over their cranky neighbor and landlord, Horace P. Bogardus (Henry Travers). Instead of converting the school into a parking lot as he first threatens, Bogardus ends up expanding the school by donating his

building, as Benedict had repeatedly begged him to.

Power Tempered With Humility

McCarey's movie is a lighthearted tale of power and authority. The message is that power wielded with humility and responsibility can work miracles. Used selfishly or recklessly, that same power can destroy.

Here, power operates at several levels. Bogardus, as owner-builder of estates abutting the school, has the clout as chairman of the city council to revive or ruin the school.

O'Malley and Benedict have the power to work with Bogardus to keep the parish prosperous. Instead of becoming complicit in Bogardus's predatory ambition, they challenge him to be generous, and to use his power to protect rather than threaten the vulnerable.

Benedict, as Mother Superior and school principal, holds sway over the nuns and children. O'Malley holds sway over them all. But neither lords it over those under their charge. They're firm, but gentle and principled, yet practical. So, the nuns and children love and admire both Benedict and O'Malley.

Lightness of touch permeates the movie, and Crosby and Bergman deliver it expertly in that opening where she introduces him as the lone priest to a contingent of nuns. Asked to "say a few words," O'Malley rises with all the self-importance he can muster, places his hat on the fireplace mantel behind him, and launches into a grandiose speech.

Unknown to him, the parish kitten nestles under his hat and never quite settles down. O'Malley figures the nuns are listening deferentially to him. He isn't amused that they're giggling at his every phrase. It isn't

until they've had their share of laughter, at his expense, that he finds the feline culprit behind him.

Caring Communication

McCarey's movie also shows how caring communication can break down barriers within and between power structures, no matter how irreconcilable they seem. But, he insists, we must care enough to understand what people are going through, and why they say and do what they do.

This movie about a tiny school quickly became associated with things precious, things worth preserving.

O'Malley uses his power of discretion to admit a young girl, Patsy Gallagher (Joan Carroll), to the school purely on her mother's word, waiving mandatory third-party references or background checks. Patsy, upon spying a strange man cozying up to her mother and fearing the prospect of moving out of town, can't concentrate on her studies and fails her exam. That's actually a ruse to stay at school and, with luck, away from the strange man. Only later does she discover that he's her estranged father.

O'Malley knows Patsy's backstory, but Benedict doesn't. That difference in understanding provokes their opposing stances on

Patsy's exam results. O'Malley wants Patsy to graduate on what he "knows" are compassionate grounds. Benedict won't lower her (or the school's) bar of excellence merely to match what she "believes" is his whim.

Finally, it is communication and shared understanding that bring Benedict and O'Malley together to help Patsy graduate and accept her father back into the family.

Steeped in a patriarchal priesthood, O'Malley is humble enough to learn from Benedict that indulging school children with ad hoc holidays isn't the best way to mold them into responsible, disciplined, educated adults.

Benedict is humble enough to learn from O'Malley that her habit (pun intended) of being righteous needn't be joyless. Both learn that men and women can be allies instead of antagonists; differing styles can, with caring communication, complement instead of clash.

Dealing with children, Benedict and O'Malley are models of joyful giving. They're patient. They talk but listen even more. They empathize. They don't dismiss the faults that children point out in themselves or others, but they go out of their way to stress a child's strengths. And they smile an awful lot.

Benedict has the funniest scenes, including one training little Eddie (Dick Tyler) to stand up for himself, all played for laughs, of course.

What's Worth Living For

McCarey's inventive use of disease (and looming death) shows how new truths can transform our responses to life's realities. Both Benedict and Bogardus are diagnosed as being ill: she from tuberculosis, he from stress-induced depression and a faltering heart.

Bogardus first recoils in shock at his diagnosis. Later, he cultivates a habit of joyful giving that is not only its own reward but also prom-

ises others health and longer life. The moment he frees himself from clinging to that piece of real estate and donates it to the church, he finds he's far happier and far healthier.

The film's casting is a stroke of genius. Even a nun's habitual sternness does little to hide Bergman's stunning features and charismatic smile. Her exchanges with Crosby are marked by wit and humor, their onscreen chemistry lighting up every frame.

Luckily for McCarey, his movies hit screens on the back of the Great Depression and World War II, when audiences were yearning for redemption, or even the faintest sign of it. This movie about a tiny school quickly became associated with things precious, things worth preserving.

Unsurprisingly, when audiences heard Bergman herself sing the Swedish folk melody "Varvindar friska" ("It's Spring"), it was reported that they cheered its melancholic sweetness.

They were not just pleased with the simplest things; they were delighted just to be alive, to be free, to be themselves. The movie's simple melodies didn't disappoint audiences of that era. When Crosby sang "Aren't You Glad You're You?" they actually were.

Rudolph Lambert Fernandez is an independent writer who writes on pop culture.

'The Bells of St. Mary's'

Director:
Leo McCarey

Starring:
Ingrid Bergman, Bing Crosby, Henry Travers

Not Rated

Running Time:
2 hour, 6 minutes

Release Date:
Dec. 6, 1945

★★★★★



Bing Crosby as Father O'Malley and Ingrid Bergman as Sister Benedict look over St. Mary's grounds in "The Bells of St. Mary's."



Sister Benedict (Ingrid Bergman) shows Eddie Breen (Richard Tyler) how to defend himself.



Ingrid Bergman as Sister Benedict discusses a generous donation with Henry Travers as Horace Bogardus in "The Bells of St. Mary's."



Joan Carroll as Patsy Gallagher talks with Bing Crosby as Father O'Malley about her future.

FILM REVIEW

The Tennis 'Enfant Terrible' Bad Boy Makes Good

MICHAEL CLARK

The opening scene in "McEnroe" shows John McEnroe walking alone at night on a New York street while he delivers a brief voice-over monologue.

"Greatness is a combination of things. You look back and you say, well, someone gave me an ability to do something better than others. You have to recognize that and put yourself on the line, especially when you're out there by yourself. And I didn't do a good enough job of that."

Reflections

These are the words of a man well into middle age who has finally managed to corral his gargantuan ego and petulant, childlike tantrums, which were on a par with his formidable talents on the tennis court. He's mellowed; he has tamed his raging inner beast, a feat that he himself seems surprised by.

Born in Germany, McEnroe grew up in Douglaston, a neighborhood in the Queens area of New York City. In recounting a story told to her by McEnroe's mother, Kay, his second wife, singer Patty Smyth, says he's been an overachiever his entire life. After getting an A- in math on his first grade report card, he came home, cried, and... well, threw a tantrum.

In the wake of leading Stanford to an NCAA championship in 1978, McEnroe turned pro, a decade after the start of the Open Era. This is when executives in the tennis hierarchy began allowing professional and amateur players to compete in the annual Big Four Grand Slam tournaments: The Australian, French, and U.S. Opens, and Wimbledon.

Tennis Monopoly

This was also the time when three men essentially had a monopoly on the sport. From 1974 through 1984, Bjorn Borg, Jimmy Connors, and McEnroe won over half of the major titles; and from 1979 through 1989, McEnroe won four more majors as a doubles player. He is the only male in the sport's history to be ranked No. 1 as a singles and doubles player at the same time.

Beyond these staggering statistics and ri-

valries were the styles and personalities of Borg, Connors, and McEnroe, both on and off the court. Slightly older than the easily triggered, left-handed Americans Connors and McEnroe, the Swedish, impossible-to-rattle Borg more than earned the nickname "Ice-Borg" and was dubbed "the Greta Garbo of tennis" because of his quiet, "leave me alone" attitude. Possibly because of his tight-lipped demeanor and Nordic god good looks, he became the sport's first rock star.

Fresh Viewers

McEnroe, on the other hand, would loudly contest calls made against him by the officials, hurl profanities, smash rackets, and the like. While many people within the largely stuffy tennis establishment found this to be abhorrent (and much of it was), it brought in untold millions of new viewers, most of whom had never watched a tennis match.

In recent years, Borg and McEnroe have become perhaps not friends, but "friendlier." One of the many highlights in the movie is the present-day interviews with Borg opening up more than he ever did back in the day. His once-blond locks are shorter and have grayed, and he certainly appears relaxed. This might also be the first time he's ever been captured smiling on film.

Noticeably absent are any retrospective remarks or interviews with Connors, which leads to tons of speculation. Did Connors turn down requests to be interviewed? Is he angry that no one has made a movie about him?

A Wise Omission

Also not interviewed and barely mentioned is Tatum O'Neal, McEnroe's first wife and mother to three of his five children, and this shouldn't come as a surprise to anyone remotely familiar with her history.

The youngest person to ever win a competitive Academy Award, O'Neal married McEnroe in 1986 and they got divorced in 1994. In the fallout after the severing of the union, O'Neal began escalating her drug use (cocaine, crack, and heroin), and as a result, McEnroe was awarded sole custody



John McEnroe celebrates a championship in the documentary "McEnroe."

He's mellowed; he has tamed his raging inner beast, a feat that he himself seems surprised by.

'McEnroe'**Documentary****Director:** Barney Douglas**MPAA Rating:** Not Rated**Running Time:** 1 hour, 44 minutes**Release Date:** Sept. 2, 2022

★★★★☆

of their children in 1998. It's all very sad, and writer-director Barney Douglas displayed wise discretion by not including it.

It would have been nice for Douglas ("Warriors") to include a segment devoted to McEnroe's subsequent career as a TV color commentator, the many TV parodies of him, and self-deprecating appearances on TV and in film that he's willingly participated in.

Most of us have done or said things under the mindset of uninformed and brazen youth that we regret and would like to do over—which is, of course, impossible. No one knows that reality more than McEnroe, who has the added bonus (or onus) of having all of these past events witnessed live by millions, and permanently committed to video.

Once the movie is over, the opening salvo becomes more resonant. This is a man who has achieved things that few of us could ever imagine accomplishing, yet he did so like a bull in a china shop. Not only has he come to terms with his past actions, but he's also become a more self-aware person in the process.

We should all be so lucky.

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.



THE 6TH NTD INTERNATIONAL FIGURE PAINTING COMPETITION

Reviving the pure authenticity, beauty, and goodness in art

June 2023 | New York City

Call for Global Entries / Deadline : 1/15/2023 / US\$25,000+ in Awards

NTD

1-888-477-9228 | Oilpainting@globalcompetitions.org

OILPAINTING.NTDTV.COM

