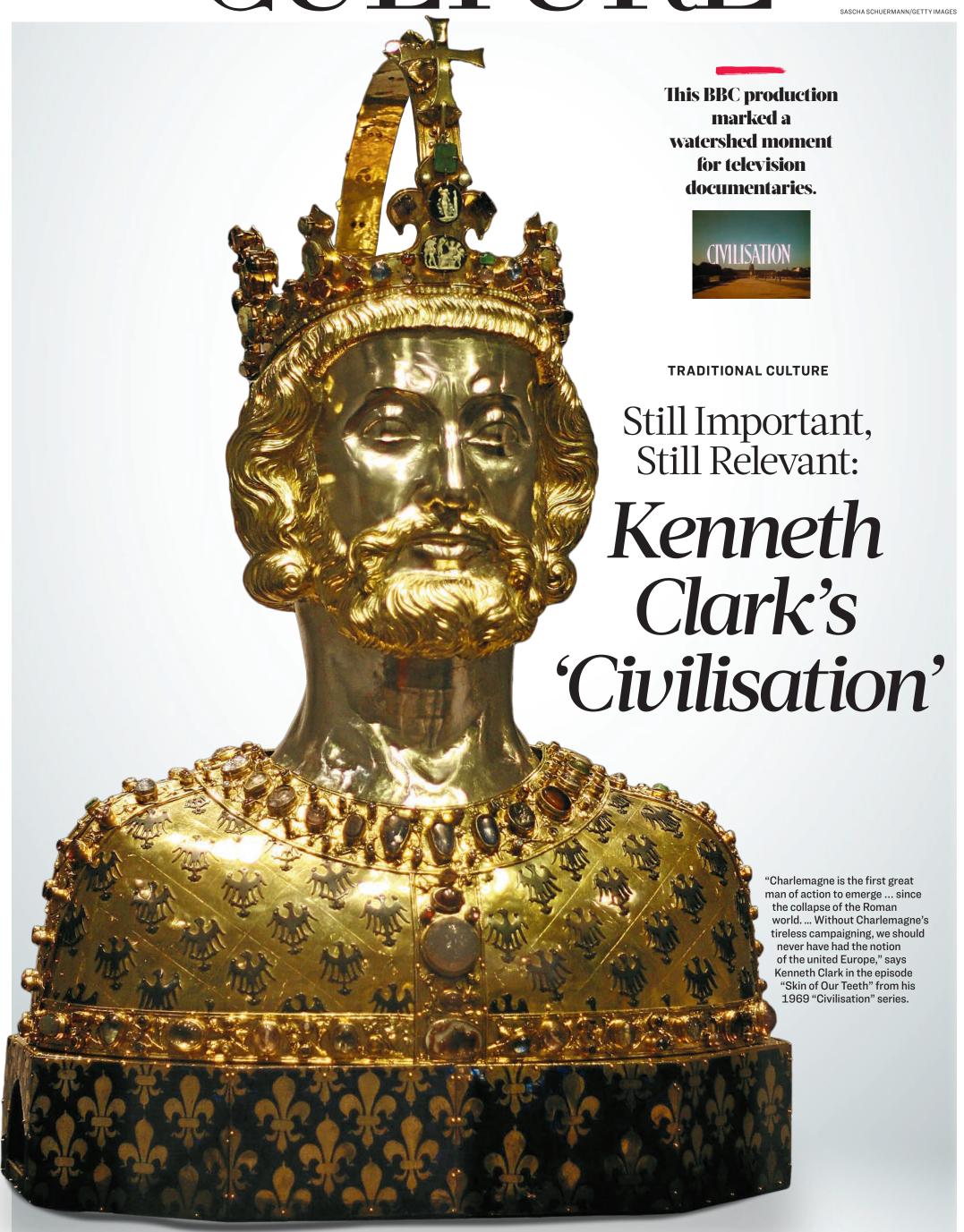
THE EPOCH TIMES ARTS ARTS CTITISTS CTITISTS CTITISTS CTITIST CTITIST



JEFF MINICK

he year 1969 is one to remember in the history of American television.

"Monty Python's Flying Circus" premiered that year, and its madcap antics transformed TV comedy. Other beloved series still remembered today, like "Gunsmoke," "Bonanza," and "Walt Disney's Wonderful World of Color," entranced audiences as well. In January of

that year, in what is still regarded as one

of the biggest upsets in American football

history, the New York Jets knocked off the Baltimore Colts 16 to 7 to win Super Bowl III, the first championship officially bearing that trademark name.

Of course, the most widely watched event on the screen that year, with more than 600 million viewers from around the world, was the flight of Apollo 11, the spacecraft carrying three American astronauts—Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin, and Michael Collins—to the moon and back.

Largely forgotten nowadays in this '69 cavalcade of drama and entertainment is a BBC production that marked a watershed

moment in the making of television documentaries and the promotion of Western culture. More than 5 million Americans and 2.5 million citizens of Great Britain tuned in once a week to watch Kenneth Clark's 13-part series, "Civilisation: A Personal View."

On both sides of the Atlantic, enthusiasts threw "Civilisation" parties—in part so that neighbors without color television could join them. In England, churches worked to reschedule evensong so that parishioners wouldn't miss an episode. Later in the summer, an uptick in Ameri-

can tourists traveling to Europe was noted, and on a trip to the United States the refined Sir Kenneth Clark was greeted like a rock star.

Soon afterward, Clark's book based on this series sold more than a million copies. Today, "Civilisation" remains in print, DVDs of the series continue to sell, and episodes are available online.

All of which raises questions: Why? What was the attraction for these forays into art and history?

Continued on Page 4

Week 1, 2023 THE EPOCH TIMES

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An early professional photo of Jimmie Rodgers posing with his guitar, circa 1921.

COUNTRY MUSIC

Jimmie Rodgers: The First Star of Country Music

REBECCA DAY

rom 1890 to 1930, the small town of Meridian, Mississippi, was a bustling stop along the Mobile and Ohio Railroad. Meridian's main attraction was the former McLemore Plantation, a destination that railroad workers took note of while traveling the route for the first time.

Nestled in rural Mississippi, the plantation was set against a forest of pine dotted with giant, moss-laden oak trees. Vast fields of corn and cotton surrounded the property. When the railroad was built, the historic plantation became the Sowashee Station.

People from nearby towns flocked to it, mailing off packages and picking up deing the in-demand route was Meridian native Jimmie Rodgers, a brakeman who had a penchant for singing the blues.

When Rodgers wasn't meticulously operating track switches or uncoupling freight cars, he entertained railroad workers with original music about life on the road. Even in his early singing days, his languid, easy sound was distinctly influenced by his home state.

The Singing Brakeman

Rodgers's acoustic guitar style featured rolling bass lines and a gentle swinging waltz rhythm. His melodic voice stole the show, delivering story-centric lyrics about his various travels across the southern region of America. His style was the first of its kind, succinctly combining traditional folk influences from his childhood, blues standards, and gospel vocal arrangements all within two- or three-minute recordings.

Rodgers got his musical start in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina, participating in what were then known as "field recordings" for the Victor Talking Machine Company. The success of those recordings landed him a contract with the company's recording studio in New Jersey.

During his time with Victor in the late 1920s until his passing in 1933, Rodgers recorded over 100 songs, quickly becoming known for his distinct yodeling style. At the time, the warbling vocal technique was popular in rural Southern communities due to populations with deeprooted ties to both Europe and Africa, where yodeling originated. When people came to America, musical traditions like yodeling continued to influence musical trends through generations.

Rodgers experienced success with his "Blue Yodel" recordings, a series of songs he released that gave listeners a peek into the life of a railroad worker-turnedtraveling musician. His interesting past quickly earned him the nickname "The Singing Brakeman."

Jimmie Rodgers's languid, easy sound was distinctly influenced by his home state.

The recording company was intrigued by the singer's past and chose to highlight his blue-collar roots in a 1929 short film titled after his nickname. The film "The Singing Brakeman" featured Rogers singing some of his most popular early tunes, including "Waiting on a Train."

His yodeling paired with folksy guitar and delta blues song influences drew the attention of fellow musicians, especially those in blues communities. Soon, bluesmen like Mississippi John Hurt were deeply influenced by Rodgers's unique sound.

Chicago blues musician Howlin' Wolf credits Rodgers as one of his early influences as well, famously turning to howling after trying out Rodgers's distinct vocal style and feeling like he came up short. Some might say that without Rodgers's yodeling, blues fans would have never been gifted with Howlin' Wolf's



A mural to country music, showing Jimmie Rodgers on the far right, in Bristol, Va. Carol M. Highsmith Archive, Library of Congress.

haunting falsetto vocal runs.

During the height of his career, Rodgers sometimes teamed up with fellow bands and musicians like the Carter Family, and trumpeter Louis Armstrong, whose melodic prowess perfectly accompanied one of Rodgers's most enduring recordings, "Blue Yodel Number 9 (Standin' on the Corner)." The single helped earn him a new nick name, "The Blue Yodeler."

The First Star of Country Music

Before Jimmie, there was no country music in America. Known simply as "hillbilly music," the genre's subject matter often had a somber feel to it due to the socioeconomic realities of war and Reconstruction. Because of this, the songs never garnered much attention outside of the local communities of the musicians who authored them.

Rodgers connected with music lovers in a way like never before. His lyrics and tender vocal delivery showed that he was an expert on the human condition: He sang poignantly about love, overcoming pain, and celebrating family while rhythmic instruments waltzed in the background With his one-of-a-kind style, the singing bluesman from Meridian became known as the Father of Country Music.

While performing and recording, he also had to work through a long bout of tuberculosis, which left him with long-term repercussions from the illness. In true artistic fashion, he channeled his pain into his work and produced "T.B. Blues," a recording that features his surprisingly sunny disposition as he sings about his condition.

Just days before his passing at the age of 35, he was still recording tracks with Victor's studio, taking breaks to catch his breath in between takes, and leaving behind a vast body of work that shows he made the most out of his short time here on earth.

Like the railroad he traveled on as a young, aspiring musician, Jimmie Rodgers's music acted as a bridge, connecting genres, stylings, and even people from different continents and cultures. In 1961, almost 30 years after his death, Rodgers was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame. The organization's website honors him by saying he "created and defined the role of the singing star in country music."

Rebecca Day is an independent musician, freelance writer, and frontwoman of country group, The Crazy Daysies.

LITERATURE

Overcoming Fear in a Crucial Moment

KATE VIDIMOS

Fear can paralyze us and prevent us from taking action, and courage can overcome its paralyzing force.

In her short story "The Shed Chamber," Laura E. Richards shows us courage in action and how one young woman overcame her fear. She tells the story of young Nora who leaves home to work for a family in need.

Leaving home for the first time, Nora feels understandably anxious and cautious. She doubts whether she will like the family and whether the family will approve of her. Yet when she meets the Bowles family, she realizes, as does the biblical heroine Esther, that "perhaps [she] was made for such a time as this." Mrs. Bowles is an invalid with three children, Mr. Bowles cannot care for all of them alone, and the previously hired help left everything in disarray.

In times of fear and dread, we can still do the right thing.

Nora's concern and compassion for the Bowles family overcomes her apprehensions. She immediately begins cleaning the kitchen, feeding the family, and setting the house to rights. Within a few days, Nora "feels that she belongs there." The family truly needs her and welcomes her completely into their lives. They give her a bedroom upstairs that contains another smaller room with a door, bare except for some old trunks, called the "shed chamber."

Mr. Bowles leaves on a business trip a week after Nora is hired. The day that he leaves, a young girl, Annie, arrives at the house late in the evening. She was the last hired help that the Bowles family had before Nora came on, and was let go because she "was careless and saucy."





Author of "The Shed Chamber" Laura E. Richards, circa 1902, The Critic.

Annie says that she left something in the shed chamber and asks if she can retrieve it. Nora senses something is off and quietly follows the girl upstairs. Through the keyhole of the shed chamber door, Nora sees Annie open the window, let in an "evil, coarse" man, and hide him in the largest trunk.

'Courage, Brave Girl!'

The moment Annie leaves the house, Nora's "strength seems to come back with a leap, and she knows what she has to do." She bolts upstairs, locks the largest trunk, and runs back downstairs to Mrs. Bowles.

She has a plan. With composure

protagonist in "The Shed Chamber," is given a upstairs that contains another smaller room with a door, bare except for some old trunks.

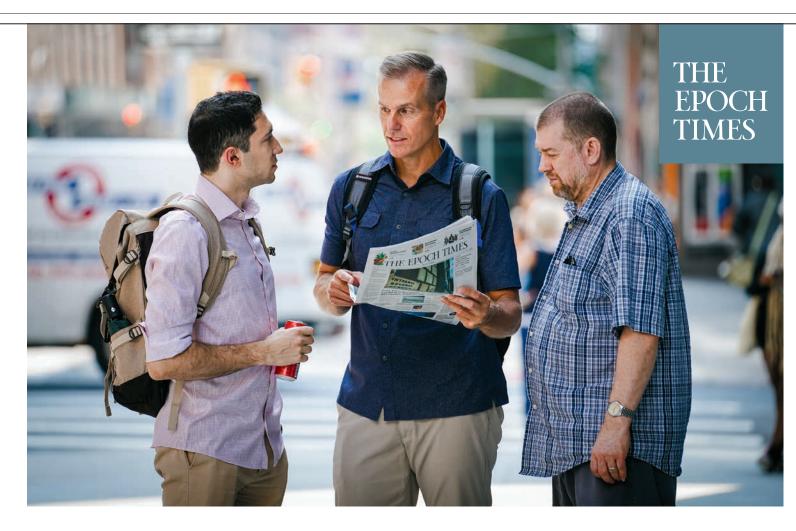
and calm, Nora asks Mrs. Bowles if she may go for a walk in the beautiful moonlight

Nora knows that by trying to stop this evil man, she puts herself in great danger. If he escapes, he will harm her and the Bowles family. Yet she does not worry about her own safety and wants to do everything to protect defenseless Mrs. Bowles and the children.

Through Nora's exemplary bravery, Richards shows, as Eleanor Roosevelt says: "You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face." In times of fear and dread we can still do the right thing. Filled with love and hope, we can find the courage to face our darkest fears as Nora does and free ourselves from its paralyzing force.

In 1917, the author won a Pulitzer Prize shared with her sisters for a biography of their mother, Julia Ward Howe, who wrote the words for "Battle Hymn of the Republic."

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.



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"A Mon Seul Désir" ("To My Sole Desire") is one of the six tapestries based on the five senses. In the episode "Romance and Reality," Clark remarks: "Its real subject is the power of love, which can ... subdue all the forces of nature including these two emblems of lust and ferocity: the unicorn and the lion." National Museum of the Middle Ages, Paris.

TRADITIONAL CULTURE

Still Important, Still Relevant: Kenneth Clark's 'Civilisation'

Continued from Page 1

The Man and the Medium

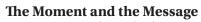
With his bad teeth, tweed jackets, and upper-class accent and demeanor, Kenneth Clark (1903-1983) seemed an unlikely candidate to become a television star in the political tumult of the late 1960s. Yet perhaps it was these very attributes that lent him authenticity—"the real deal," as Americans might say.

Certainly his credentials could not be disputed. Born into wealth, Clark attended Oxford University and then spent two years in Italy under the tutelage of Bernard Berenson, one of the great art critics of the 20th century. On his return to Britain, Clark served as director of Oxford's Ashmolean Museum and soon held the same position at the National Gallery, two extraordinary achievements for so young a man. For the rest of his life, he gave himself to art as a teacher, a writer, and a public

And though he himself didn't own a television, Clark took an early interest in exploring ways this new medium could serve the culture. Before making "Civilisation," he had worked extensively with television and its place in the arts as a tool for reaching and educating mass audiences.

Once television was no longer recorded live, and shows began appearing on the screen in color rather than in black-andwhite, the medium became an ideal vehicle for displaying the richness and beauty of paintings, sculpture, and buildings. The man had met his moment.

"In the early 19th century, Paulus Potter's bull was one of the most famous pictures in Holland. It's one of the first pictures that Napoleon wanted to steal for the Louvre," Clark remarks in the episode "The Light of Experience." "The Young Bull," 1647, by Paulus Potter. Oil on canvas. Maurice House, Hague, Netherlands.



For some people in the late 1960s, Western civilization seemed on the verge of collapse. Radicalism had become chic, momentous changes in everything from fashion to music to romance and marriage had kicked tradition to the ground, and riots and massive protests from all sorts of causes had broken out in places as distant from one another as Paris, London, Chicago, and Los Angeles.

And then, one winter evening in 1969, rooms throughout Great Britain and the his series on Western European art and civilization by looking first at the collapse of the Roman Empire and the chaos that followed its demise. In the very beginning, Clark spoke of the fragility of civilization, saying of the fall of Rome: "For two centuries the heart of European civilization almost stopped beating. We got through by the skin of our teeth" which was, by the way, the title of his first episode.

Clark then adds: "In the last few years, we developed an uneasy feeling that this could happen again. And advanced thinkers, who even in Roman times thought it fine to gang up with the barbarians, have begun to question if civilization is worth preserving."

As the series progressed, viewers were repeatedly reminded of the art and culture they had inherited from the previous millennium—of why, in other words, their civilization was indeed worth preserving. The building of Chartres Cathedral, the invaluable gifts bestowed by Renaissance Florence and Rome, the writings of the hearts of the program's viewers as

Shakespeare and Montaigne, the music of German composers, the art of Dutch painters: These subjects and many more were brought together by Clark and the camera, and made into an enormous collage of European civilization, presented without gimmickry or false notes by the man with the mellifluous voice and gentlemanly presence.

Enchanting Beauty

In her online article on "Civilisation," a man largely unknown to the general Anne Morey speaks of Clark's insights public appeared on television in living into the use of television as a medium for education and art. She cites this quote United States. Kenneth Clark launched from "The Other Half: A Self-Portrait," his memoir: "When I set about the programmes I had in mind Wagner's ambition to make opera into a gesamtkunstwerk—text, spectacle, and sound all

Clark and his sound and camera crew adhered to this ambition throughout the series. From the dramatic landscapes of coastal Ireland in the beginning of the series through all the shots of cathedrals, museums, castles, and more, we learn from Clark's words about the art while we view the works themselves and hear the music of the age in which they were

And perhaps this feature offers the best explanation for the popularity of "Civilisation." The beauty that attracts human beings can move us in profound and mysterious ways. Strangers to faith, for example, may enter Chartres Cathedral and be overwhelmed by feelings of awe, wonder, and peace, a yearning for something beyond themselves. Surely, some of these same emotions crept into



they were enchanted by the spectacle of beauty they found on their screens.

The Critic's Critics

Not all who watched "Civilisation" fell under its spell. Some art historians considered the production too sweeping and facile, overlooking the fact that the series was designed for multitudes rather than the denizens of academia. Others have accused Clark of chauvinism for neglecting female artists. They forget that Clark was born two years after the death of Queen Victoria and grew up in an era when views about men and women differed from our own. They also forget that in most of the centuries discussed by Clark, the artists considered prominent were men.

In today's culture, "Civilisation" also leaves itself open to be criticized and mocked for its focus on Europe and Western art. Here again, however, critics miss the point. The full name of both the series and the book is "Civilisation: A Personal View." Kenneth Clark devoted a lifetime of study and writing to Western art, particularly that of the Renaissance. For him to venture into the arts of China, India, or other civilizations would have been both wrongheaded and ludicrous.

The beauty that attracts human beings can move us in profound and mysterious ways.

Here, one thinks of the old Arabic saying "The dogs bark, but the caravan moves on." The wise among us will ignore the critics and continue to enjoy and learn from "Civilisation."

Lessons for Today

The primary purpose of this series is to educate us in the arts and to allow us a glimpse into why and how we, like Kenneth Clark, might acquire a

treasure trove of riches from studying them.

But there is also another lesson here, mainly the idea that civilizations are fragile things and that art and the culture that produced it can be destroyed. Just as the Protes tant Reformation brought about of old churches,



paintings, statuary, and relics, so too can movements like today's cancel culture smash statues in our public squares or remove certain books from our libraries and university curricula.

At the end of "Civilisation," Clark reflects: "I said at the beginning that it is lack of confidence, more than anything else, that kills a civilization. We can destroy ourselves by cynicism and disillusion, just as effectively as by bombs."

True. And to push back against disillusionment and gain some confidence from our ancestors, we might begin by watching "Civilisation" as we make our way into the new year.

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 nonfiction, "Learning As I Go" and "Movies Make The Man." Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, Va.



"The Visit to the Nursery" demonstrates a minor ritual of polite society: a cradle visit. Clark comments that the "Dutch invention of every picture telling a story, and paintings of everyday life—especially paintings relating social customs and etiquette—is what inspired Victorian British art." "The Visit to the Nursery," 1661, by Gabriel Metsu. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



"The Annunciation" in "The Beautiful Hours of Jean of France, Duke of Berry," 1405–1408 or 1409, by the Limbourg brothers (Herman, Pol, and Jean de Limbourg). Tempera, gold, and ink on vellum; 9 3/8 inches by 13 7/16 inches. The Cloisters Collection, 1954, at The Metropolitan

The Teenage Limbourg Brothers' Illuminated Work 'The Annunciation'

LORRAINE FERRIER

In 1405, three Flemish teenage brothers— Herman, Pol, and Jean of Limbourg—began a commission that would alter the art of illumination and painting.

Prince Jean, the Duke of Berry and the third son of King Jean II of France, was an extravagant art patron. He commissioned the brothers to create "The Beautiful Hours of Jean of France, Duke of Berry."

Many hands worked on the 172 illuminations in the manuscript, which took up to characteristic of the International Gothic scribe to write each of his books of hours (of which he had 14 at that time). Two artists created the borders and another made the historiated initials, which are the illuminated letters at the beginnings of sections or

In every book of hours, artists made the illuminations of the Virgin Mary the most opulent. Working in the duke's court afforded the brothers rich and rare pigments that they'd grind down to make jewel-colored tempera. "The Annunciation" is a grand example of Many see the Limbourg brothers' striking

these pigments put into practice, and it is the only leaf in the "Beautiful Hours" that the brothers completed themselves.

brothers' pioneering The illumination is rich in both style of illuminating color and meaning. The angel advanced that art Gabriel holds three lilies (each in a different stage of bloom) representing Mary's purity. Both Mary and Gabriel have their arms crossed, showing their humility. Gabriel points his index finger at Mary, symbolizing that he is speaking, and God in heaven above holds his hand in the blessing gesture. Golden rays (symbolizing the Word of God) rain down on Mary as a dove (symbolizing the Holy Spirit) hovers over her head.

The brothers painted putti, prophets, angel musicians, and the duke's heraldic crest in the vibrant blue border, along with bears and swans (the duke's heraldic emblems) that playfully weave their way through scrolls of Italianate acanthus leaves.

Inspiring Illuminations

The Limbourg brothers' pioneering style of illuminating advanced that art form and influenced the development of the Northern traditions of landscape and genre painting.

Their illuminations exemplify the International Gothic style, a courtly style that matured in the 1400s when the French and Italian styles of painting converged. In this style, "Elegance of line, delicacy of color, and a jewel-like sharpness of definition were prized above all," according to "A World History of Art" by Hugh Honour and John Fleming.

When Pol visited Italy, he was inspired by the frescoes of the Italian painters Taddeo Gaddi (Giotto's godson) and Ambrogio Lo-

renzetti. After his trip, Pol's illuminations imitated and surpassed the Italian painters' naturalistic renderings and simple linear perspective. In addition, all three brothers were influenced by Byzantine art, which they observed in the Sienese School of painting that upheld the Byzantine tradition.

The brothers painted using perspective, and they painted truer to life by incorporating solid figures and architecture, and even by introducing shadows. But the figures still took on the more elongated look that was

The "Beautiful Hours" is unusual in that the brothers included seven narrative cycles depicting Christian figures or events that the duke held dear, such as the martyrdom of St. Catherine. In addition, rather than incorporating the illuminations into the text, as per tradition, the brothers included standalone miniatures that were set apart from the calligraphy.

"Beautiful Hours" as a practice run for their masterpiece "The Very Rich Hours of the Duke of Berry," laud-The Limbourg ed as the best surviving example of International Gothic-style illumination. Sadly, the three brothers and the duke died in 1416, probably from the plague, leaving

"The Very Rich Hours" unfinished. Despite the brothers all dying before they were 30, they left a lasting legacy. For instance, art historian E.H. Gombrich in his book "The Story of Art" said of the preeminent 15th-century Netherlandish painter Jan van Eyck: "He rather pursued the methods of the brothers Limbourg, and brought them to such a pitch of perfection that he left the ideas of medieval art behind."

Van Eyck left medieval art behind, and the Limbourg brothers' work continued to inspire Northern Renaissance artists. For instance, in "The Beautiful Hours," the brothers placed figures, objects, and buildings in their compositions to show depth of field, which was pioneering at the time, and something that 16th-century Flemish artists developed further in their landscape and genre paintings. Some of these artists copied the figures in the illuminations, and some even went so far as to replicate the entire compositions.

After The Metropolitan Museum of Art made a facsimile of the "The Beautiful Hours of Jean of France, Duke of Berry," the leaves were bound into three manuscripts. Visitors to The Met Cloisters can always see one of the three manuscripts on display on a rotational basis. To find out more, visit MetMuseum.org



of Kenneth Clark from James Stourton's biography, "Kenneth Clark: Life, Art and Civilisation."



Portrait

Seneca

lived during

the reign of

Nero. "The

Death of

Seneca,"

1773, by

Jacques-

Louis David.

Sage Advice: Do Not Get Caught Up in the Everyday

What the ancient Roman Seneca has to say about how to spend time

DUSTIN BASS

In the ongoing "Ancient Wisdom for Modern Readers" series from Princeton University Press, "How to Have a Life: An Ancient Guide to Using Our Time Wisely" may be one of the timeliest publications with the arrival of a new year. With the inevitable lists of New Year's resolutions, making the most of our time is often on the list.

In this book, translator James S. Romm, who is the James H. Ottaway Jr. professor of classics at Bard College, takes excerpts from two of Seneca's works: "On the Shortness of Life" and "Moral Epistles."

Romm begins the book with a brief introduction about the purpose of Seneca's works, and an even more brief biography of who the ancient Roman was. Romm identifies one of Seneca's more important talking points in his introduction when he suggests to "total up the days spent on pedestrian tasks, on meeting the needs of others, or on idle, transitory pleasures. When you look at what's left, ... you'll see that you're actually dying young."

'On the Shortness of Life'

In his work "On the Shortness of Life," Seneca's view of time is less about age and more about how the time is spent. The Roman states that "life is long if you know how to make use of it" and adds later that "you'll see that your number of years does not measure up to your original count." It is indeed a sobering thought. The old adage that "life is short" takes on a new meaning when you're subscribing to Seneca's philosophy.

Seneca is not completely direct about how people should live their lives; he doesn't say one should do A or B. He speaks less about what one should do and more about what one shouldn't do. One shouldn't embrace luxurious living or be caught up in work.

The reader could mistakenly take some of his advice as a preference toward selfishness when he warns against fulfilling other people's needs. He doesn't mean to never

Seneca's view of time is less about age and more about how the time is spent.



'How to Have a Life: **An Ancient Guide** to Using Our Time Wisely'

Author Seneca, Translated by James S. Romm Princeton University Press, Oct. 18, 2022

Hardcover 200 pages

help others, but rather to do so in moderation; otherwise, one will never live one's own life.

His life, however, was spent in the service of others—particularly emperors, and specifically Nero. Romm points out that historians and classicists have noted Seneca's seeming hypocrisy in his writings when he decries people being bogged down by politics and their jobs, while his time was taken almost completely by others.

Analogies and Warnings

While making this exception, readers can hardly miss Seneca's valid points and analogies. One memorable analogy contrasts merely existing to truly living:

"There's no reason to think someone's lived long on account of their gray hair and wrinkles. That person only existed, not lived, a long time. Would you say that a man has done much voyaging, if, as soon as he left port, a violent storm seized him and, with furious blasts of wind arising from every direction, drove him in a circle over and over the same route? He didn't do much journeying; he was only much tossed around."

Seneca encourages people to take time for things and to not be too busy with the mundane. He adds that one should not live in anticipation because "it depends on tomorrow while squandering today." He also makes the very contrarian statement that one can choose one's own family because "there are families out there made up of the noblest intellects; pick the one you want to be joined with."

And lastly, in "On the Shortness of Life," he warns against working toward money and power, commonly known today as climbing the corporate ladder, when he writes: "Others, after they've clawed their way up through a thousand indignities to the heights of dignity, are struck by the awful thought that they've only been toiling to carve their

Seneca is writing to a friend, Lucilius (real or fictive), in much the same way that other ancients did, like Cicero and Plato, to get their points across. It allows for questions and answers as well as counterarguments, which are able to be addressed.

Seneca pleads with Lucilius to truly consider how time, and therefore his life, gets away from him and is thus lost:

"Some spaces of time are snatched from us; some are siphoned off; some seep away. But the worst loss of all comes about through neglect. Indeed, if you're paying close attention, the greatest part of life slips past for those who fail to get things done, a large part for those who do nothing, and all of it for those who do something other than what they ought."

In many ways, Seneca is suggesting that readers discover who they are, what they wish to do, and then to pursue that. Readers will be encouraged to consider or reconsider their current positions in life and what they should change, whether physically or mentally.

Romm, in short order, has provided the details of Seneca's philosophy. These books by Princeton University Press are condensed translations, so they are always quite short and can be read within a couple of hours.

Dustin Bass is the host of EpochTV's "About the Book," a show about new books with the authors who wrote them. He is an author and co-host of The Sons of History podcast.

FILM REVIEW

Bill Nighy Delivers a Career-Defining Performance

MICHAEL CLARK

As a character actor best known for his reoccurring roles in the "Pirates of the Caribbean," "The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel," and "Underworld" franchises, Bill Nighy makes every film he appears in better simply by showing up. His boozing and aging rock star from "Love, Actually" was the sole interesting character in that otherwise overly frothy confection.

The closest Nighy has ever come to carrying a dramatic feature as the lead was the just-OK "Sometimes Always Never" from 2018, but with "Living," the 73-year-old Nighy has finally "arrived."

Kurosawa and Tolstoy

Based on the 1952 Japanese masterpiece "Ikiru" by Akira Kurosawa (itself based on the 1886 Leo Tolstoy novella "The Death of Ivan Ilyich"), "Living" is an initially brittle character study of a prim and staid government bureaucrat ruled by routine and red tape.

Mr. Williams (Nighy) runs a generic branch of London's "County Hall," a monoover all city expenditures. Williams and his counterparts in other divisions are masters of passing the buck around, as it is all of their jobs to spend as little money (and take as little blame) as possible.

We get an idea of the severity of this inefficient boondoggle through the eyes of Mr. Wakeling (Alex Sharp) during his first day on the job. He accompanies three world-weary ladies through the corridors of power, where they are all received like hot potatoes. The women are requesting funds to turn a literal cesspool into a playground.

Get to It

It is only after widower Williams receives confirmation that he has mere months to live does he decide to start "living." While overhearing a disparaging conversation about him between his mealymouthed son Michael (Barney Fishwick) and his shrew daughter-in-law Fiona (Patsy Ferran), Williams decides not to tell them his bad news and instead heads to a coastal resort city.

With the aid of bohemian-tortured-artist playwright Mr. Sutherland (Tom Burke), Williams does a pub crawl where he gets summarily hammered and (as much as is possible for him) lets his hair down. It is also the first time we hear him sing his mother's favorite song: the Scottish ballad "The Rowan Tree."

Drained, yet rejuvenated after his extended "lost weekend," Williams returns to work with new purpose, which goes well. He also attempts to kindle something resembling romance with Miss Harris (Aimee Lou Wood), a much younger former subordinate employee. That doesn't happen.

Starting the production with a late-1950s, color-drenched stock montage of London and an era-matching opening title sequence, South African director Oliver Hermanus ("Shirley Adams," "Moffie") immediately sets the desired visual mood

Silence Is Golden

The screenplay was adapted by Japaneseborn British writer Kazou Ishiguro, the Nobel Prize winning author of "Remains of the Day" from 1989. Ishiguro's ear for the muted, clipped, and monotone, but oflithic collective which has purse power ten pointed and barbed English language is nothing less than stunning. While the narrative is propelled by a higher-than-average amount of dialogue, it also relies on frequent, strategically-placed silent beats which provide a level of communication and character intent no words could fulfill.

Following what can only be described as a false ending, the filmmakers present the entire third act via flashback. Often used as a crutch or spackle to fill holes in the screenplay, the flashback device employed here is jarringly effective and takes the story in a direction we weren't expecting.

The movie's sole drawback is an oftenoverwrought score by French-born British composer Emilie Levienaise-Farrouch ("Only You," "The Forgotten Battle") that is heavy on orchestral strings.

Praise Aplenty

Having already received numerous critical and industry accolades (including Golden Globe and Critic's Choice Association nods), Nighy is practically a lock for an Academy Award nomination in what will be a crowded field.



Mr. Williams (Bill Nighy) runs a generic branch of London's County Hall, in "Living."

Bill Nighy is practically a lock for an Academy Award nomination.

'Living'

Director: Oliver Hermanus Starring: Bill Nighy, Aimee Lou Wood, Alex Sharp, Tom

Burke, Barney Fishwick, Patsy Ferran Running Time: **MPAA Rating:**

Release Date: Dec. 23, 2022

What is most impressive about this particular performance is its understatement. All too often, people perceive bold and flashy histrionics as great acting, and that's fine as long as it is apropos for the character being portrayed. Playing "small," as Nighy does here, is nowhere as easy as it looks; in fact, the exact opposite is true and only heightens our suspension of disbelief.

Correctly referred to at various points by other characters as "frosty" and "Mr. Zombie," Williams starts off as an impossible-to-read man whose underlings both deeply respect and fear him. This might service him well in a working environment but when he's off the clock, we can see it is gnawing away at his soul and we feel for him as if he was a relative or close friend.

Nighy's triumph here is no mean feat and something less than a handful of actors on this globe could get close to pulling off.

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

Directors-writers-producers Gregg Backer

and Evan Kanew craft their film with an

observant, unobtrusive eye, which is not to

say that it is dispassionate or lacking in the

honest portrayal of raw human emotion.

Only the coldest of cynics could make it 30

minutes in and not be totally engrossed with

Sporting high-end (for a documentary)

graphics and photography, the movie has a

polished but never overly slick look. The use

of drone cameras is particularly intriguing

as they provide a "big-picture/God's-eye"

view of the community and its citizens, salt-

of-the-earth people who unapologetically

subscribe to traditional values and who

believe the collective is much greater than

As tense and nail-biting as any modern

what they witness.

Looking Down From Above

the sum total of its parts.

FILM REVIEW

Can This Small Football Team Save Their School? You Bet

MICHAEL CLARK

Of all sports movies, the subgenre with the fewest entries but highest percentage of overall quality is high school football.

With just 16 such titles identified on IMDb.com, six of them—"All the Right Moves," "Friday Night Lights," "Remember the Titans," "The Blind Side," "Varsity Blues," and "School Ties"—are all excellent, and the lone documentary, "Undefeated," went on to win a Best Documentary Feature Academy Award.

As with all similar movies before it, the documentary "All In: Miracle at St. Bernard's" ("AIMSB") contains humaninterest subplots that extend beyond the playing field, but in this film it is (almost) the main attraction.

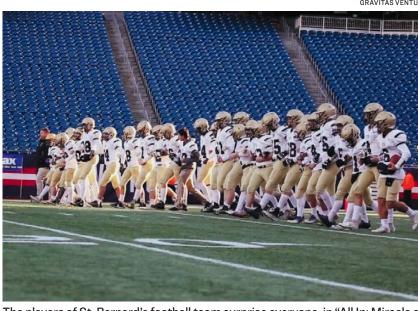
Hard Times

Founded in 1920 in Fitchburg, Massachusetts, St. Bernard's is a coed, multiracial Catholic school, which like four other parochial high schools in North County had fallen on hard times. In 2000, the enrollment exceeded 500, a number that dwindled to a mere 143 in 2018, and dropped to less than 100 in the spring of 2019.

The Diocese of Worcester, the arm of the local Catholic Church that provides funding to the school, informed the administrators and staff that the school would be closed at the end of the school year. It is worth noting that the tuition per student per year is \$8,550, and as with all churches in the area, the school is required to give 10 percent of its entire income to the diocese.

This news was received as more-thanshocking by everyone, but no one more than Tom Bingham, the owner of a generationsold lumber mill and coach of the football team since 2001. Only months earlier, Bingham led the team to the state championship—its first since 1997—and did so with the smallest (both in player size and numbers) of any school in the state.

At the ripe age of 33, former Latin teacher Linda Anderson had been appointed as the new principal before the closing announcement was made, and faced the possibility of



The players of St. Bernard's football team surprise everyone, in "All In: Miracle at St. Bernard's."

never serving a single day in her new position scheduled to begin in the fall.

A Sliver of Hope

The diocese did provide the slightest glimmer of hope to Bingham, Anderson, their staff, teachers, and students. If they would boost enrollment to at least 100 and raise enough money (\$1 million) over the next 30 days to guarantee operating costs in the upcoming year, St. Bernard's could remain open.

Like so many small towns across the land, the citizens of Fitchburg (secular and parochial alike) make heavy emotional investment in student athletic programs. Almost immediately, Anderson and the PTA realized that fundraising would be contingent on the probable success or failure of the upcoming football season—one that might not even be played.

Adding to Bingham's already monumental challenge was the fact that he'd lost eight players to graduation and would have to include incoming freshman on his squad, which would eventually number only 26 barely half of the national 45 player average. For those unaware, St. Bernard is the patron

saint of mountain climbing, and it became more than a metaphor for everyone involved in keeping the school financially solvent.

The film is a 'truth is stranger than fiction'

type of story.

'All In: Miracle at St. Bernard's'

Documentary **Directors:** Gregg Backer, Evan Kanew Running Time: 1 hour, 36 minutes MPAA Rating: Not Rated **Release Date:** Dec. 13, 2022

thriller, "AIMSB" is also a "truth is stranger than fiction" type of story that, if pitched to a studio, would be deemed impossible to believe; hence, the word "miracle" in the title. My sole complaint (and it is minor) is the backing score, which never seems to take a break. You don't have to be Catholic or a sports fan

(or even an optimist) to appreciate everything contained within the frames of this film.

In this week leading up to Christmas, "AIMSB" (available on Amazon Prime) would make for a worthy alternative to the familiar holiday-themed titles in your library. Although it's not about Christmas, it is uplifting, inspirational, and family-friendly. It will leave you feeling better about your fellow man, and maybe prove that there "ain't no mountain high enough."

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

BOOK REVIEW

The Fearless Reporters Who Documents the Whirlwind 1920s

Cub reporters take a ride on the wild side

ANITA L. SHERMAN

When I was a college student decades ago at the University of Washington in Seattle, I majored in communications, specifically editorial journalism. Decades after that, I worked for several publications in the northern Virginia area as a reporter and editor. In retrospect, my beats were mundane compared to the globe-trotting escapades that author Deborah Cohen chronicles in "Last Call at the Hotel Imperial: The Reporters Who Took On a World at War."

Most of their names were unfamiliar to me save perhaps for John Gunther, who authored "Death Be Not Proud" in 1949, a memoir about the decline and death of his son from a brain tumor.

Cohen introduces a close-knit group of cub reporters in the 1920s who proved, through their individual and collective charisma, to be quite an astonishing and astute group.

While their techniques differed, these reporters were strategically all on the same page: to get the scoop on the most pressing political stories of the day and on the people pulling the strings to change world events. They were all hungry for the hot stories and willing to go to any lengths to secure that interview, whether it was with Adolf Hitler, Winston Churchill, Benito Mussolini, or Mahatma Gandhi. Reporters jockeyed to lock in key figures, and the more status the

For these reporters, it was critical that the Americans wake up to what was happening in Europe.



'Last Call at the Hotel Imperial: The Reporters Who Took On a World at War'

Author Deborah Cohen **Publisher** Random House, March

15, 2022 Hardcover reporter acquired, the bigger interviews he or she would land.

Fearless Foreign Correspondents

Meet John and Frances Gunther, H.R. Knickerbocker, James Vincent "Jimmy" Sheean, and Dorothy Thompson. There were others, but these are the main protagonists in Cohen's work. They were American reporters who landed foreign correspondent gigs at a time when American media outlets could no longer sit back and rely solely on European sources, but

needed feet on the ground. Their coverage of those tumultuous years in many ways helped shape what Americans knew about the world. It was a heady time. Late hours, smoke-filled rooms, no doubt too much booze, and personal lives that were as chaotic as the dictators' attempts to overthrow other countries. Cohen's riveting narrative blends the professional and personal lives of these maverick reporters who bent lots of the rules and ushered in their own

brand of journalism. Moving from one global crisis to another, they found it hard to separate themselves from the turmoil around them. It engulfed their psyches as their bylines broke new boundaries, sharing not only the facts but their feelings as well.

Richly Researched

Cohen is the Richard W. Leopold professor of history at Northwestern University. Her previous works include "Household Gods: The British and Their Possessions," "The War Come Home: Disabled Veterans in Britain and Germany, 1914-1939," and "Family Secrets: Living With Shame From the Victorians to the Present Day." Heavily researched with more than 100 pages comprising detailed notes and an extensive index, she draws on personal memoirs, diaries, and journals to delve into the emotions of the main characters and what drives them.

Cohen paints meticulous portraits of their upbringing, family life, and education. What's most interesting is their introduction to the world of words and the power it can yield. Each had their entry point into the profession, whether it was by dogged determination, luck, or fate; when opportunity came knocking, they willingly dashed through the door.

When in Vienna, their favorite haunt was the Hotel Imperial. There, you would find some combination of journalists gathered to make merry and perhaps play at a bit of one-upmanship on who had secured the latest interview with whom. They worked hard and they played hard.

Readers will get an upfront and personal introduction to a cast of characters who were committed above all to seeking and sharing the truth about a world that, in their minds, was being turned upside down. For them, it was critical that the American populace wake up to what was happening as Europe's most powerful players looked to change global dynamics.

Pivotal, poignant, powerful, and oftentimes

extremely intimate and personal, this book

will have readers basking in the writers' com-

pelling journeys and noteworthy journaling.

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. She can be reached at

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Simone Peterzano:

The First Great Baroque Painter

JAMES BARESEL

xcept among some specialist art historians, Simone Peterzano is generally known only as the teacher of Caravaggio: the notable, great master of Baroque painting. Beyond that, he tends to be dismissed as a competent but unexceptional artist. On closer inspection, though, he becomes a fascinating example of how such artists can lay the foundations on which great masters build—a man who took some of the first steps toward the style that Caravaggio would one day perfect.

Born circa 1535, Peterzano began training as a painter in Venice when the city was becoming Europe's greatest center of artistic life. Titian and Tintoretto were at the height of their careers and would soon be joined by Veronese. Florence, long the capital of Renaissance art, had fallen to more modest status with the death of all but one of its greatest artists: Michelangelo (1475–1564). So too had Rome, to which Florentine artists had migrated a few decades earlier.

Throughout his life, Peterzano would stress his Venetian connections, often describing himself as a student of Titian. For centuries, the transparency of that marketing ploy led many to question the authenticity of the artists' relationship.

Recently discovered evidence from the 2020 exhibition "Titian and Caravaggio in Peterzano" at the Accademia Carrara in Bergamo, Italy, suggests that Peterzano did indeed serve his apprenticeship under Titian. It is also possible that occasional employment as an assistant in Titian's workshop or some informal relationship led Peterzano to The best of Peterzano's paintings foreshadow Caravaggio.



A self-portrait, 1589, by Simone Peterzano.

For more articles, visit TheEpochTimes com



consider him his true teacher.

Other evidence from the exhibition indicated that Peterzano lived in Venice for some time before his apprenticeship. It may even have been his native city rather than Bergamo, as was traditionally believed. Full details are lacking, but the overall picture is clear enough: Peterzano was precisely what he claimed to be—a minor painter who learned his profession from great Venetian masters.

Didactic Narratives

As the location of artistic life changed, the aesthetics of Italian art began to evolve. Florentine art had emphasized idealization and symbolism. Venetian painters, on the other hand, favored greater realism and were given a boost by the Catholic Church's 1545–1563 Council of Trent (Catholic Revival) and its new Jesuit order. The Jesuits went beyond the Church's longstanding influence as a major patron. Until Peterzano's time, that influence had concerned subject matter rather than style. The enactments of Trent and the moral influence of the Jesuits led the clergy to actively direct stylistic development in a way never seen before or since.

Week 1, 2023 THE EPOCH TIMES

"David and Goliath.'

1600, by

Oil on

canvas.

The Prado

Museum,

Spain.

Caravaggio

The Council of Trent opened a quarter century after the High Renaissance had begun to decline. Many of the bishops at the council were from the most cultured segments of society, and Jesuits received thorough classical educations. Although the average person of the time probably had a greater artistic sensibility than many people today, most of the population still lacked the requisite education to understand the complex symbolism detailed in the art of the High Renaissance. Only the upper echelon of the educated society fully recognized the intricate and covert symbolism embedded in classical paintings.

Trent's bishops decreed that future ecclesial art should be self-explanatory, even didactic—then supported efforts to ensure that such art reached the height of aesthetic perfection. This shift was solidified by the Jesuits' highly imaginative method of meditation, which required visualizing some religious scene as though personally present. In the new atmosphere, narrative and drama began to replace intellectually assessed symbols and allegories in secular as well as religious art.

The Foundations for Baroque Art

Among the most enthusiastic proponents of the didactic aesthetic was St. Charles Borromeo. From 1564 to 1584, he served as archbishop of Milan: the city that Peterzano moved to in 1572, near the town where Caravaggio spent his childhood. Borromeo also exemplified a combination of high culture and religious fervor. His mother had been born into the Medici family—arguably the greatest of all Renaissance patrons. Highly influenced by the Jesuits, Borromeo ran his bishop's palace like a monastery. Not surprisingly, he wrote a book on religious art and actively guided local artists in their work.

None of the artists active in Milan during Borromeo's lifetime would achieve more than minor status in their profession. However, they collectively embraced the narrative and dramatic emphases called for by the religious renewal, which became foundational for Baroque art. The pervasiveness of their works in the region's churches assuredly contributed to Caravaggio's inter est in art and choice of profession.

Within that admittedly limited world, Peterzano was in high demand and painted dozens of large-scale works. The best of these foreshadow Caravaggio in their tenebrism (where certain features of the main subjects are highlighted through contrast with darker background objects). It is hard to look at "Christ in the Garden," the "Flagellation," or "Angelica and Medoro" without seeing the basis for the aesthetics that Caravaggio perfected in his works like "David and Goliath" and "Narcissus."

Of course, such similarities do not mean that Caravaggio merely put Peterzano's aesthetic principles into practice in a brilliant way. An artist of Caravaggio's genius undoubtedly had a more refined grasp of aesthetic theory as well as greater technical skill. But that Peterzano provided Caravaggio with the basic framework that allowed him to refine his understanding should be just as certain. While there is no question of Peterzano's being a great artist, his life demonstrates how minor painters can play important, if secondary, roles in the history of great art.

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.



President Franklin Roosevelt and His 1936 Victory

A biography that captures the first modern campaign

HERBERT W. STUPP

I have long admired the writing and fastidious research of historian David Pietrusza, but "Roosevelt Sweeps Nation: FDR's 1936 Landslide and the Triumph of the Liberal Ideal" is his magnum opus, at least to date.

Much more so than other Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR) biographies, Pietrusza's incredible inquiries and presentations of dialogue from the mid-1930s bring readers into America's salons and streets, White House corridors and quarters, and Roosevelt's homes in New York City and in the Hudson Valley to the north. One truly gets a sense of the epoch and also of the ebbs and flows of the 1936 presidential campaign.

Uniting a Diverse Camp

Somehow, FDR managed to keep liberals and leftists on board his campaign while corralling Deep South segregationists in his camp as well. Pietrusza provides windows into the views of racist characters like Louisiana U.S. Senator Huey Long, and the anti-Semitic attitudes of national radio preacher Father Charles Coughlin, among others.

The incumbent vice president, John Nance Garner, of Uvalde, Texas, was FDR's running mate again. He had been speaker of the House prior to his 1933 inauguration as veep. As a state legislator, Garner had voted to install a "poll tax," widely seen as discouraging suffrage among African Americans.

Perhaps owing to his Polish American, anticommunist roots, Pietrusza focuses more on far-left efforts during the 1936 campaign than do other historians. He explains that socialist Norman Thomas, though past his peak of popularity, was still having an impact. In fact, Eleanor Roosevelt remarked that she would have voted for Mr. Thomas in 1932, but for her marriage to Franklin!

Even the Moscow-directed Communist Party USA was a factor. Though posting only about 79,000 votes (compared with 188,000 for socialist Thomas), presidential nominee Earl Browder filled indoor arenas in various cities, where his rhetorical vitriol was



reserved more for Republican Alf Landon

Overturning the Odds

Kansas Governor Landon emerged to be a lackluster campaigner as the Republicans' nominee. A "progressive" Republican, Landon favored many New Deal initiatives but suggested that he could rid them of waste and inefficiency. A less-than-inspiring speaker, he was slow in joining the campaign trail. Pietrusza observed: "Had Leni Riefenstall filmed this (Alf Landon) rally, she would have titled her production 'Triumph of the Dull.'"

President Roosevelt managed to keep liberals and leftists on board his campaign.

In contrast, though mostly confined to a wheelchair, FDR crisscrossed the nation en route to his 46-state, 523-to-8 Electoral College landslide victory. Ultimately, Franklin Roosevelt garnered 61% of the popular vote versus Landon's 37%, with 2% going to independent William Lemke, the North Dakota

But with political polling in its infancy, an FDR victory was hardly a unanimous

forecast. In July, the Gallup organization predicted a Landon edge in a close election. The Literary Digest had correctly predicted the results of each presidential election from 1916 through 1932. However, in January 1936, only an underwhelming 38% of the 1.7 million respondents supported the "acts and policies of the Roosevelt New Deal." On Halloween, the Digest forecast a 57%–37% victory for Landon! However, Fortune magazine's Roper poll predicted a Roosevelt landslide in nearly the precise vote percentages that actually

occurred on Nov. 4. Pietrusza elucidates an electoral shift underway, with black voters swinging from Republicans to supporting Roosevelt and his New Deal. Still, being a visible supporter of the GOP was accepted in the black community. Olympic gold medalist Jesse Owens, an African American icon based on his summer track victories in Berlin, openly campaigned for Alf Landon. FDR countered with future

heavyweight champ Joe Louis. The author captures FDR's charisma well, including references to the women in the president's orbit. His persuasive powers were legendary. During one meeting, the president roared with laughter during the conversation. Later, FDR aide Missy LeHand advised that was his "public laugh." Presumably, his laugh around senior aides and family was

The First Modern Campaign

Franklin D.

Roosevelt

in 1938 in

after his

landslide

1936.

election in

Washington,

There are numerous parallels between the 1936 presidential campaign and those conducted in the 21st century, Pietrusza catalogs. The familiar modern tactic of waging "class warfare," pitting lower- and middle-income people against the more prosperous, was honed successfully by FDR. Perhaps the publicity garnered by socialist, communist, and radical populist campaigns (such as Huey Long's "Share Our Wealth" scheme and Francis Townsend's fiscally untenable old-age pension plan) in 1935 and '36 influenced the president to shore up his left flank, mouthing a softer version of Marxist "critical theory."

The national media of the 1930s never focused on FDR's reliance on wheelchairs, braces, and crutches, concentrating on his irrepressible smile and his confident speechmaking. There was no coverage of the presi-

dent's omnipresent female assistants. This sprawling, colorful depiction of Franklin Roosevelt's first reelection drive presents the initial real campaign of the modern age. With the rapid penetration of radio into most homes, the medium was a gift for a president to showcase his oratory, reassuring nervous Americans, often with real-world analogies.

The impending power of television may be fodder for David Pietrusza's future books on presidential campaigns.

Herbert W. Stupp is the editor of Gipperten. com and served in the presidential administrations of Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush. Stupp was also a commissioner in the cabinet of NYC Mayor Rudy Giuliani. Early in his career, he won an Emmy Award for television editorials.



'Roosevelt Sweeps Nation: FDR's 1936 Landslide and the Triumph of the Liberal

Author avid Pietrusza

Publisher Diversion Books Sept. 13, 2022 Hardcover 544 pages

REWIND, REVIEW, AND RE-RATE

Jerry Lewis's Directorial Debut, Sure to Elicit Some Laughs

Comedian Jerry Lewis's genuinely funny directorial debut

It's quite fun to watch big Hollywood stars who are so self-assured of their celebrity that they poke fun at both themselves and the rabid, celebrity-worshiping infrastructure that surrounds them. A perfect example of this type of self-deprecating humor is during the first act of the 1960 slapstick comedy "The Bellboy," where Jerry Lewis plays himself as a big-time, self-important celebrity who is visiting the posh Fontainebleau Hotel in Miami Beach, Florida.

Lewis arrives at the hotel with his army of an entourage, which sycophantically swarms around him like a cloud of locusts, feverishly attempting to predict his slightest desire—such as rushing up to light his cigarettes or diving in to help him register at the hotel's front desk, nearly smothering him to death. He has to remind this throng of scampering hangers-on to restrain themselves by constantly shouting "Hold it!"

Harking Back to the Silent Era

But that's the most you'll see of Lewis talking in the film. The majority of its rather short 72-minute running time harks back to the silent era of film as Lewis embraces the role of one of the hotel's bellboys, a blundering simpleton named Stanley. He mutely obeys the orders given to him since his superiors forbid him to "talk back."

The film's opening is a scathing illustration of how demeaning the service industry can be to work in. A line of fully grown men, referred to as "boys," march in a line out into the hotel's sprawling main foyer. With almost military precision, they stand in place continuing to march until Bob, the bell captain (Bob Clayton), orders

As Bob walks down the line and inspects each man-boy, there's a conspicuous gap that Stanley quickly shuffles up to fill. Here, we get the first inkling of what's to come as Stanley dramatically contorts his face in an effort to look as innocuous as possible under the menacing glare of Captain Bob.

The bulk of this brisk comedy comprises short blackout gags, a rapid-fire vaudevillian technique where the lights are turned down after a joke's punchline, allowing the crowd to laugh. Here, this method is emulated by the camera fading to black after many of the film's scenes. Together, these vignettes form a larger tapestry of the misadventures of Stanley as he interacts with both his fellow employees and the various guests who come to stay at the luxurious hotel.

While none of the film's comedic skits elicit hysterical laughter, there are quite a few laugh-out-loud moments or at least a chuckle. Having worked in the service industry (and at hotels) in the past, I am reminded of how belittling it can be, and this film lambasts the darker side of it. Some genuinely imaginative skits play out from the very beginning of the film.

For instance, we see Stanley taking his time while placing room keys into their small boxes behind the front desk. A couple of managers come up to scold him for taking so long to do such a simple task. After they depart, Stanley simply begins to toss the keys at the boxes haphazardly and then dashes off with a mischievous glint in his eye. The next scene shows shots of numerous hotel guests as they all try to wrangle their misplaced keys into their doors at the same time.

In another funny scene, Bob and a few other managers stare at Stanley as he happily whistles while completing a simple task. His childlike glee at fulfilling any task baffles them since they tend to lounge around. Bob suddenly orders Stanley to "set up the seats for the motion picture tonight." As Stanley walks into the huge movie theater chamber, it's quite evident that he's been given a task for at least a dozen men.

Bob jokes about assigning Stanley to the theater seating duty to one of his work buddies, and about how long it'll take. They go to the movie room to get a laugh at Stanley working, only to find hundreds of chairs



Stanley the bellboy

(Jerry Lewis) in an

"oops" moment.

'The Bellboy'

Jerry Lewis, Alex Gerry,

Director:

Jerry Lewis

Bob Clayton

MPAA Rating:

Running Time:

Release Date:

July 20, 1960

1 hour, 12 minutes



Slapstick Gags

There's a certain kind of surrealism in these scenes that are obviously not meant to be realistic, although they poke fun at realistic situations that most of us can relate to. The slapstick gags hit more than they miss and quickly move from one silly situation to the next, each one becoming more ridiculous

as the film progresses. It's great to see Lewis, arguably at the height of his incredible stardom, playing a humble bellboy, and it's quite apparent that he's channeling parts of his own life, as he used to work menial, dead-end jobs during his younger years (such as working as a soda jerk). The bellboy character is also named in honor of Stan Laurel, Lewis's friend and mentor.

"The Bellboy" marked Lewis's directorial debut. (He also wrote the script.) And it achieved commercial success, although some critics believed his performance to be a little too restrained in comparison to his usual frantic antics. Reportedly, Paramount Pictures needed to quickly fill the gap for a summertime film and Lewis was tasked to come up with a comedy on short

notice, and with a stringent budget. In my estimation, Lewis rose to the occasion and filled that gap, just as he did in the line of bellboys.

Available on Amazon Prime, Vudu, and Apple TV.

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

Bellboy.'

Jerry Lewis

as Stanley

the bellboy

in "The

WARNER BROS. PICTURES

A Musical Comedy to Cheer the Soul

IAN KANE

Out of all of the genres I've enjoyed and immersed myself in over the years, musicals were never my favorite—with few exceptions. However, watching funnyman, singer, and dancer Danny Kaye in films such as 1946's "The Kid from Brooklyn" and 1954's "White Christmas" (with fellow standout Bing Crosby) made me his fan.

So, it was only a matter of time before I watched the rom-commusical "The Inspector General," a 1949 Danny Kaye vehicle. Directed by Henry Koster ("The Bishop's Wife," 1947; "Harvey," 1950), this zany romp is a briskly paced affair that showcases Kaye's numerous talents. The film is based on a 19th-century Russian play by Nikolay Gogol.

Mistaken Identity

The film opens with Gregor (Nestor Paiva) traversing some dusty and drab foothills, desperately pushing his horse to its limits. He gallops into a town called Brodny and, as he dismounts, is immediately accosted by guards. However, Gregor manages to barge through the guards, insisting that he talk to his cousin, the mayor of Brodny (Gene Lockhart). Gregor greets the mayor, a shady man who is holding court in the town council's chambers, surrounded by other murky characters who are all related cousins and oversee various facets of the town.

Gregor has ridden in from a neighboring town and brings bad news: The emperor has sent forth an inspector general to purge the countryside of corruption. He tells his highly corrupt cousins that "wherever [the inspector] finds bribery and corruption, there the gallows and the firing squad go to work!"

Since Gregor explains that the inspector general is traveling incognito and no one knows what he looks like, the mayor orders all of his subordinates to begin cleaning up the town, or at least make it presentable as a place where corruption doesn't exist.

Meanwhile, Yakov (Walter Slezak) has a traveling band of performers. He is perform-

This is one of the most outrageous of Danny Kaye's films.



Romance blossoms between Georgi (Danny Kaye) and Leza (Barbara Bates), in "Th Inspector General."

ing with one of his actors, Georgi (Danny Kaye), a good-natured simpleton. While a gathering crowd looks on, Yakov insists that Georgi's life has been extended for 2,000 years by ingesting "Yakov's Golden Elixer," which is actually furniture polish.

But when Georgi witnesses Yakov selling some of the fake medicine to a poor old lady whose husband is sick, he tells the lady the truth. Naturally, when the crowd overhears this deception, they turn into an angry mob that runs Yakov and Georgi off. Furious that Georgi revealed his scheme, Yakov tells his former actor to leave.

Yakov wanders into Brodny and is wrongly arrested as a horse thief. Shortly afterward, the mayor meets with all of his officials, and Kovatch (Alan Hale), his chief of police, reports that he's had all of the roads leading to the village blocked off, thus preventing any surprise visits from the anticipated inspector.

But when Kovatch also mentions that he recently arrested a "common tramp," the rest of the council assumes that their new prisoner, Georgi, is actually the inspector general in disguise. The council thus frees Georgi and tries to impress him—all the while plotting to murder him.

From there, over-the-top high jinks ensue, with Georgi at the center of several plot lines, including a romantic one with the outstanding Barbara Bates as local girl Leza.

Infectious Silliness

This is one of the most outrageous of Kaye's films I've seen—and I mean that in the best of possible ways. It packs a fantastic supporting cast that doesn't disappear due to Kaye's over-the-top physical antics but rather complements him.

Additionally, it features some great writing, with a story line that has many twists and turns, as well as some positive messages about being honest and forthright no matter how dire or confusing one's circumstances are.

Some of its musical numbers are a bit long-winded (no pun intended) for my taste. However, fans of musicals will probably enjoy them.

In the end, "The Inspector General" is highly entertaining with some hilarious, often satirical dialogue that is elevated further by Danny Kaye's infectious brand of physical humor. By the time the ending credits roll, its satisfying climax should cheer anybody's mood—the perfect sort of film for these challenging times.

Ian Kane is an U.S. Army veteran, author, filmmaker, and actor. He is dedicated to the development and production of innovative, thought-provoking, characterdriven films and books of the highest quality. You can check out his health blog at IanKaneHealthNut.com



Director: Henry Koster

Starring: Danny Kaye, Walter Slezak, Barbara Bates

Not Rated

Running Time: 1 hour, 42 minutes

Release Date: Dec. 31, 1949



