THE EPOCH TIMES

ARTS© CULTURE

"Library With Reader," turn of the 20th century, by Charles Edmund Brock. Watercolor on paper; 10 inches by 8 inches. Dorotheum, Vienna.

TRADITIONAL CULTURE

TREASURES FROM THE PAST

Our Libraries, Public and Private

JEFF MINICK

hetherit's a special trip to the Library of Congress or a 10-minute drive to the local library, when true lovers of books hear the words "Let's head for the library," they experience the same stab of excitement produced by the words "ice cream parlor" in a 5-year-old. For bibliophiles, the Magic Kingdom isn't in Florida, and the only price of admission is a library card.

For some libraries, of course, Magic Kingdom is an apt description. Harvard's Widener Library, for example, is not only a building of beauty and grace, but it also contains 57 miles of shelf space and can hold over three million books. The Library of Congress in Washington has the largest collection in the world and offers a cornucopia of artistic and architectural delights. The Iowa law

Libraries are a gathering place for those seeking wisdom. library in Des Moines is a tangled extravaganza of artwork, beautifully tiled floors, terraces, and twisting stairs visited by over 100,000 visitors a year. In Virginia's Northern Shenandoah Valley is Winchester's Handley Library, another architectural gem, which the National Park Service says is "perhaps Virginia's purest expression of the regal and florid Beaux Arts classicism."

Continued on Page 4

Although Mozart composed this opera

as a child, it sounds very much like the

composer's future works, full of charm

The opera is short, with only 16 arias. The

ensembles and solo arias are light, yet skillfully constructed and orchestrated with

clear rhythms and evident musicality. While

A Charming Opera

and subtlety.

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Cartoonist of World War II: Bill Mauldin

DEENA BOUKNIGHT

HISTORY

ill Mauldin once said, "Humor is really laughing off a hurt, grinning at misery." Few of the 16 million who served during World War II are still living. At least a half-dozen wars have occurred since Japan surrendered in 1945, but some surviving veterans recall details as if they happened yesterday. Among the highlights and horrors of the World War II experience, Bill Mauldin's cartoons are remembered by many.

At 19, when the New Mexico native joined the Army in 1940 as a rifleman in the 180th Infantry Regiment, he was already leaning toward a career as an illustrator, having studied political cartooning at the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts. So when an opportunity opened up for him to illustrate for military newspapers,

including Stars and Stripes, he landed it. Fairly quickly into his service, Mauldin established the cartoon characters Willie and Joe, and these quirky, often haggard infantrymen, sketched in pen and ink, became the recognizable visual images of the World War II era.

The National WWII Museum in New Orleans expresses to visitors regarding Mauldin: "Although surrounded by the brutality of battle, his main characters, Willie and Joe, reflected the inextinguishable spirit of America's citizen soldiers who overcame the hardships of war with resilient humor."

Mauldin's cartoon following increased after 1943 and his involvement in the Italian campaign. He traveled regularly by jeep to observe and sketch soldiers. The Library of Congress noted: "Bill mostly worked at night, until the wee hours, on drawings made from innumerable sketches made up [during his time on the front with the combat troops."

By 1944, six Mauldin cartoons were published weekly and, because the cartoons featured the average soldiers' daily rigors, they were relatable. For example, my life an' I swore I'd pay ya back. Here's "Up Front." It was a bestseller.

my last pair of dry socks."

"He turned his considerable talents (not to mention his wry wit) to capturing the gritty and absurd reality of life in uniform," noted the website Military History Now in a March 2015 report.

Another Mauldin cartoon of a GI digging a trench reads: "Me future is settled, Willie. I'm gonna be a perfessor on types o' European soil."

Traversing with pen and ink around battlefields was not without its dangers. The Library of Congress documented that "around Christmas 1943, while sketching at the front, a small fragment from a German mortar hit his shoulders. 'My only damage was a ringing in my ears and a fragment in my shoulder. It burned like a fury but was very small," Mauldin said. Mauldin received a Purple Heart for his

injury, yet he supposedly protested that he had "been cut worse sneaking through barbed-wire fences in New Mexico." The Military History Now website pointed out: "While Mauldin's wounds were non-life-threatening, the experi-

ence only added to his comic strips' authority. No one could say the artist behind Willie and Joe didn't know soldiers' sufferings. He shared them." Although many of the cartoons may not

have produced laugh-out-loud reactions from readers, they did convey to soldiers that their service was noticed. In the Stephen Ambrose biography of Mauldin's life, Mauldin is quoted as saying: "When you lose a friend [in battle] you have an overpowering desire to go back home and yell in everybody's ear, 'This guy was killed fighting for you. Don't forget him—ever. Keep him in your mind when you wake up in the morning and when you go to bed at night. Don't think of him as the statistic which changes 38,788 casualties to 38,789. Think of him as a guy who wanted to live every bit as much as you do."

Mauldin's cartoons garnered so much notoriety that in 1945 he received a Legion of Merit citation as well as a Pulitzer Prize. Time magazine devoted its June 18, one cartoon shows two rain-soaked, 1945, cover to his "Willie" character. That exhausted GIs squatting in a mud-filled same year, Mauldin released a compen ditch. Willie says, "Joe, yestiddy ya saved dium of the best of his 600 cartoons titled

HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES



American GI and cartoonist Bill Mauldin holds a drawing board featuring some of his



Mauldin's 1958 cartoon for which he received his second Pulitzer Prize.

After the war, Mauldin continued to work as a cartoonist, even winning a second Pulitzer Prize in 1959. His sketches evolved from communicating soldiers' lives to addressing decades of political issues. For example, one cartoon depicted Soviet author Boris Pasternak in a gulag, asking another prisoner: "I won the Nobel Prize for literature. What was your crime?"

While Mauldin attempted to keep Willie and Joe "alive" in his cartoons after World War II ended, he decided that their civilian lives would not have the same appeal. However, Willie and Joe did resurface in Mauldin's cartoons around the time of the deaths of Gen. George C. Marshall in 1959 and Gen. Omar Bradley in 1981.

Mauldin left behind a legacy of ironic visual creations when he died in 2003. He was buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

A 30-plus-year writer-journalist, Deena C. Bouknight works from her Western North Carolina mountain cottage and has contributed articles on food culture, travel, people, and more to local, regional, national, and international publications. She has written three novels, including the only historical fiction about the East Coast's worst earthquake. Her website is DeenaBouknightWriting.com

Mozart's Childhood Opera: 'Bastien and Bastienne'

ARIANE TRIEBSWETTER

Everybody is familiar with Mozart's most famous operas: "The Magic Flute," "The Marriage of Figaro," and "Don Giovanni." But few are familiar with "Bastien and Bastienne," a one-act singspiel (a comedic German opera with spoken dialogue), which Mozart composed when he was only 12 years old.

It was long considered his first opera, for although "Apollo and Hyacinthus" was written when he was 11, it was not accepted in society for its same-sex theme, and "La Finta Semplice," also written when he was 12, had a delayed production.

Uncertain Origins

We don't know much about the origins of this opera. What we do know comes from Georg Nikolaus von Nissen, Mozart's first biographer and the second husband of Maria Constanze, the composer's former wife.

According to Nissen, the young prodigy composed "Bastien and Bastienne" in the summer of 1768 at the request of Dr. Franz Anton Mesmer, a famous Viennese physician and hypnotist, whom Mozart parodied in the Act 1 finale of "Così fan tutte." The private performance supposedly took place in the physician's garden theater in Vienna. However, in 1768, this theater didn't exist yet, and the opera may never have been composed in Vienna.

Whatever the case, this was Mozart's first singspiel and one of his first works. Friedrich Wilhelm Weiskern wrote the libretto, inspired by a popular play in Vienna, "The Loves of Bastien and Bastienne," which was a comedic parody of an opera by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "The Village Soothsayer" (1752).

There are only three characters in the opera: Bastien, Bastienne, and Colas. These roles are often sung by a tenor or mezzosoprano, a soprano, and a bass. While Mozart originally planned to transpose the role of Colas for an alto and replace some of the spoken dialogues with recitatives, he never did. This early Mozart opera was rediscovered and revived in 1890, in a Berlin performance.

A Delightful Pastoral

and delightful.

recites a magical formula.

Bastienne comes back but continues her stratagem, and pushes Bastien away. The lovers start to quarrel but soon remember their past happiness. The shepherds reconcile and Colas congratulates them. The opera ends with praise of the magician and the lovers' newfound bliss.

It is a delightful plot, but what makes it Ariane Triebswetter is an international so charming is its delightful music and the freelance journalist, with a background in childlike emotions it portrays.

The plot of the opera is very simple. It is the love story of two young shepherds, Bastien and Bastienne, and their happy ending, aided by the village's magician, Colas. It is essenshepherd's way of life. The opera is short, light,

Bastienne believes that her lover, Bastien, is unfaithful to her. Feeling abandoned, she seeks help from Colas, a magician. He comforts her and reassures her of Bastien's love, while admitting that the young shepherd can be fickle at times. The magician suggests that she feign indifference to make her lover his schoolboy humor. come back.

This stratagem succeeds far beyond her hopes, and it is now Bastien's turn to be distraught as Colas tells him that Bastienne has a new lover. Desperate, the young shepherd asks the magician for help. Following his request, Colas opens his book of spells and

nothing in this singspiel is, strictly speaking, moving, every emotion is believable—from sadness, jealousy, and seduction. In "Bastien and Bastienne," there are no useless palavers, tially a pastoral, an idealized depiction of the only the magic of a child's heart. "Bastien and Bastienne" is an appealing work, with memorable melodies. Although there is no vocal virtuosity in this opera, Mo-

zart displayed excellent writing skills for the voice and a talent for parody, which would bloom in his later works. Colas's nonsensical aria "Diggi, Daggi," for example, where Latin and nonsensical syllables combine, exhibits

"Bastien and Bastienne" displays Mozart's emerging talent in all aspects of musical composition. The young composer imitated the French, Italian, and German models, adding popular-sounding tunes, while demonstrating a confident sense of the style and its language. He created a work at the crossroads of the Baroque and Classical genres, creating a new kind of opera in what would become the 18th-century Classical style, and which would lay the groundwork for his later music.

More than the work of a child prodigy, it is the work of a genius. And it is unmistakably Mozart.

modern literature and classical music.



shepherds, Bastien and Bastienne, and their happy ending, aided by the village's magician, Colas. Bastienne is shown here with the magician Colas in a production at the Marinsky

Mozart's opera

is the story

TRUTH and TRADITION In Our Own Words



66

With diligent effort, a journalist can map a part of the journey and present it to readers, hoping to help them navigate their own realities.

Petr Svab Reporter

The World Through a Journalist's Eyes

Dear Epoch VIP,

Thank you for your continuing support—we are at your service. My name is Petr Svab and I've been covering politics, courts, police, immigration, economy, and other topics during my 16 years at The Epoch Times.

It is my pleasure to work for a newspaper that stands for values I can wholeheartedly endorse and fittingly summed up in our motto of Truth and Tradition.

I believe that truth is the living world, and an infinite journey of exploration. The more topics I tackle, the more issues I delve into, the more I realize how complex, multifaceted, and enormous the world truly is. We can never dream of grasping it all, but, with diligent effort, a journalist can map a part of the journey and present it to readers, hoping to help them navigate their own realities.

Moreover, I've found, a journalist can open doors closed to others, give readers the facts of the story, the context that enlightens them, as well as the insights of the participants.

I remember walking the streets of West Baltimore a few years ago. My plan was just to interview some local business owners to see what the city was doing about some of its issues—from piles of trash and abandoned houses to homelessness and crime.

Within five minutes of my arrival, a man on the street noticed me and started to shout: "Guy with a camera! There's a guy with a camera here!"

as I approached. "Are you a cop?" asked one of them. He was a young man with wide eyes that looked like they'd already seen

more than their share

A group of young men further up the street took notice

I introduced myself and my business of the day, handing the gentleman my card. The young man's expression softened as he realized I was here to report on a story—the story of his home.

As it turned out, the young man was not only ready to share with me his insights on the local issues, but also to offer advice on where to find what I was looking for. We parted ways with a handshake.

In all my experience talking directly to the people

involved in various events, the truth seldom (if ever) favors partisan narratives—it's much more colorful:

sometimes humorous, other times tragic.

Consider the story, for example, of Trayvon Martin. According to some, an innocent child killed by a racist man. According to others, a thug killed in self-defense. But after filmmaker Joel Gilbert retraced Martin's last moments, weeks, and months, it turned out neither narrative was quite true. Gilbert told a story of a young man whose life was falling apart and ultimately plunged into a tragedy that nobody wanted.

So if that's truth, what is tradition, then? For me, it is the lessons of history. It's the distilled universal wisdom collected by our ancestors over millennia—the timeless lessons of the enlightened, the sages, and the saints. This treasure chest of the past is where we can turn to help us better understand the truth at present.

My work is to safeguard this treasure, let it live through the pages of The Epoch Times and the hearts of our readers. While it may seem the foundations of the civilization

itself are now under attack, I truly believe our readers will be best equipped to withstand the storm—through clarity and peace of heart. For whatever the future holds, I believe the path will be less treacherous for those who walk it steadily, making choices informed both by truth and tradition.

What I pledge to you is yet more meticulous research, analysis, and fact-finding. I'll do the digging for you, while letting you make up your own mind. Furthermore, I'll also hone my wit to give you an ever-better read along the way.

Yes, we strive to be an influential media in the world, but I believe that our true success is measured in minds sharpened, hearts uplifted, and lives improved.

Once again, thank you for joining us on this journey. We do live in truly epochal times, wouldn't you say?

In Truth and Tradition,

Petr Svab The Epoch Times THE **EPOCH** TIMES



The Main Reading Room of the Library of Congress.

TRADITIONAL CULTURE

TREASURES FROM THE PAST:

Our Libraries, Public and Private

Continued from Page 1

Lovely as they are, like any community library these buildings and others like them have one chief purpose: to preserve books and other resources, and make them available to the public. In a sense, they are the secular counterparts of our places of worship, gathering places for those seeking enlightenment and wisdom.

A Snapshot History of Public Libraries

Founded in 1640, the Biblioteca Palafoxiana in Puebla, Mexico, is recognized as the oldest public library in North America.

Nearly 3,000 miles to the north, Massachusetts Puritans and Virginia planters who ies become commonplace in the United States, colonized these lands soon took pride in their home libraries. In Philadelphia, booklover Benjamin Franklin, who over a lifetime ment. Individual citizens, local governments, amassed more than 4,000 volumes in his private library, helped open the first subscrip- Carnegie used some of his fortune to build tion library in Philadelphia as well as lent his 1,679 public libraries—built these repositories

influence to create medical, philosophical, and university libraries. Only in 1790 was the first real public library

founded in the United States, in a small town in Massachusetts, and therein lies a story. Formerly known as Exeter, the town changed its name to Franklin in 1778, and then some of the inhabitants, their names now lost to history, asked the revered Franklin to donate a bell for the steeple of the town meeting hall. Franklin turned down that request, but he offered books instead, replying "sense being preferable to sound." Known among the townspeople as the Franklin Collection, the books circulated free of charge after 1790.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, public librarpoints of pride in cities and towns, and they were a driving force in the nation's developand donations from the wealthy—Andrew



BOOKS: HOW **BOOKLOVERS LIVE** WITH AND CARE FOR THEIR LIBRARIES'

By Estelle Ellis Potters Style

'AT HOME WITH

Hardcover

256 pages



The historic Carnegie Library, built in 1903, Palafoxiana Library, the oldest library in the Americas, in Puebla, Mexico.

for books, thereby enhancing the education of millions of Americans.

Treasures From the Gilded Age

Meanwhile, private collectors made their own impact on libraries and library architecture, most noticeably so during the period after the Civil War, the so-called Gilded Era. With enormous funds at their disposal, wealthy bibliophiles indulged themselves by purchasing rare works or bringing together books on subjects that particularly interested them. And some of them built libraries.

In the early 20th century, for example, financier Pierpont Morgan had a library constructed adjacent to his Madison Avenue residence in New York to house his burgeoning collection of literature, old manuscripts, and drawings and prints. Architect Charles Mc-Kim designed three magnificent rooms to resemble a Renaissance palazzo. Following his father's death, "in what constituted one of the most momentous cultural gifts in U.S. history," according to The Morgan Library and Museum website, J.P. Morgan opened the library to scholars and the public. Later additions, including one that was completed in 2006 and added spaces like a lecture hall, a restaurant, and a reading room to the complex, have helped make The Morgan Library & Museum a Manhattan landmark.

Gifts From the Brothers Vanderbilt

One of the greatest 19th-century American architects, Richard Morris Hunt (1827-1895), who had attended the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, showed a keen interest in libraries throughout his career. In the early 1870s, he designed a library for James Lenox, one of New York's wealthiest men. The Lenox Library was one of the city's first libraries accessible to the public. It housed arcades, reading rooms, and valuable manuscripts and art, and stood until 1912, when entrepreneur and art collector Henry Frick demolished the building and built what is today a museum of art: The Frick Collection.

Two of Hunt's libraries that have survived the ravages of time are meccas for booklovers from around the world. Like Morgan and Frick, Cornelius Vanderbilt accumulated vast wealth during his lifetime. One of his grandsons, Cornelius Vanderbilt II, commissioned Hunt to design The Breakers in Newport, Rhode Island, a 70-room "cottage" that is today visited by hundreds of thousands of tourists every year. His brother George Vanderbilt likewise engaged Hunt and had him draw up the plans for the Biltmore House in Asheville, North Carolina, which is the largest private home ever built in America and homes around America inhabited by

Cornelius and George were inveterate readers and collectors of books, and the beautiful libraries designed by Hunt for both these homes are testaments to this passion. These rooms are done up in a grand style, ornately decorated from floor to ceiling, yet they also offer intimacy, inviting readers to take a book in hand and draw

up a chair before the fireplace or sit in one of and talk, thinking and reading, recapturing the stuffed chairs scattered around the room. In both libraries, we see the homage paid by wealth to the printed word.

At Home With Books

Most of us who are booklovers visit these magnificent private libraries and others like them, and come away with mixed emotions: happy to find books so revered, overwhelmed by the setting in which these jewels of paper and print have been placed, and perhaps a little envious. We return to our own homes, an apartment so small that our books are stacked on tables or kitchen counters, or to a house where shelves are scattered willynilly room to room. We may let out a sigh of longing, thinking that if we possessed a library like the one at Biltmore, we could spend every free moment in that room and never become bored.

But in one important way our collection is unique. The books lined up on our shelves or standing on the floor in the corner of the bedroom are mirrors of who we are. That volume of "The Best Loved Poems of the American People" may mean little to a visitor, but when we turn the pages, we remember our mother reading from it to us when we were children. Mark Helprin's novel "A Soldier of the Great War" gave strength to our hearts during a desperate time, and we remember and honor its counsel when we pass it by in the den. Some of the Golden Book titles we read to our grandchildren were shared with us decades before by our own grandmothers. In "At Home With Books: How Booklovers Live With and Care for Their Libraries," now regrettably out of print, the authors created a

lavish feast of photographs from apartments and which again is a major tourist attraction. men and women who treasure books, some of them quite wealthy, others middle-class. In the Introduc-

tion we read:

Our personal

"People continue to make a libraries are home for books because books mirrors of make a home. Book-centered rooms are described as nurturwho we are. ing, a comfort zone, an escape hatch, a place to retreat to for tea

memories, regenerating spirit and ideas."

Whatever the state of your own home library—messy and cluttered, tidy and ordered, a spacious getaway room with a Persian rug and some fine works of art, or a single easy chair surrounded by shelves and stacks of books—just remember this: It's the books that count. All the rest is just the whipped cream on the dessert.

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.



The Franklin Public Library in Franklin, Mass., the first and oldest public library in the United States, with books donated by Benjamin Franklin.



East room of the Morgan Library and Museum in New York.



Lenox Library building, Fifth Ave., New York, circa 1905. Library of Congress.



The library at The Breakers in Newport, R.I.

PUBLIC DOMAII

"An Allegory of Repentance" or "Vanitas," circa 1650–1660, by unknown artist. Oil on canvas. Pollok House, Glasgow, Scotland.

TRADITIONAL CULTURE

Freedom or Victimhood

Morality, politics, and decline (part 2)

JAMES SALE

reedom of the will is something we all know; it's obvious when we have acted freely, or when we have been under some sort of compulsion. At least, we can recognize freedom until we are so saturated in the streams of compulsion that we no longer see our own pitiable, enslaved state.

In Part 1 of this two-part article, we looked at how the idea of morality had become not truly a moral position, for paradoxically, "unacceptable," to use a current term for this kind of "freedom" has, of course, an of the central tenets of my religion. All major it, and how the idea of evil, too, was being unintended consequence which is the op- religions teach these principles and I would replaced by victimhood and psychiatry, and underlying this was a fundamental assault on freedom and especially the freedom of will. In Part 2, we look more closely at freedom and the freedom of will.

Freedom, ultimately, is an expression of love. When we marry for love, we choose somebody voluntarily from the millions of possible choices and we freely commit to circumscribing ourselves because in some weird way that kind of love enlarges us. (It's interesting that our "next of kin" is always our partner, not our children, not our parents or other relatives with whom we have blood connections; no, but the stranger we have chosen to love; that is, freely to love.)

Freedom Versus Enslavement to Victimhood

Author Theodore Dalrymple in "Our Culture, or What's Left of It" observed that the famous writer Stefan Zweig, who was a pacifist, one of the most famous writers of the 1920s, and who escaped from Nazi Germany, "would have viewed with horror the cacophony of monomanias—sexual, racial, social, egalitarian—that marks the intellectual life of our societies, each monomaniac demanding legislative restriction on the freedom of others in the name of a supposed greater, collective good." These demands derive from the same sense of victimhood, the same sense of determinism (I'm a victim of social pressures, therefore I am not responsible for my actions) that we noted earlier, and which is the opposite of

What Dalrymple is pointing out is precisely what author Kenneth LaFave points out when he says that, "The whole point of putting freedom at the center of our civilization is to push politics to the periphery." Exactly the reverse, indeed, is now happening. For it is precisely in this area of personal freedom that "woke" politics demands allegiance. (To be clear, the term "woke" is used by both liberals and conservatives to describe a number of more radical progressive ideologies, including critical race theory, social justice, and gender theory.)

The most compelling evidence for this is in the explosion of their insistence that we

change even the pronouns we use, and not only change them, but start misrepresenting reality, too: a woman not a "she" but a "they" personal freedom? As Canadian literary critic Northrop Frye said, "real freedom is some-

thing only the individual can experience." Another insistence is that others "be kind" and allow us the freedom of accepting our vulnerabilities—our victimhood—and even to start parading these around. But this is posite of what it seeks. Namely, instead of freeing us, it binds us; for as Anglo-Irish philosopher Edmund Burke wisely pointed out: "It is ordained in the eternal constitution of things, that men of intemperate minds cannot be free."

The "intemperate mind" is what we referred to before as the "cacophony of monomanias." That is, we become enslaved by our victimhood and by the very idols we worship with such attentiveness and devotion; and by idols, I mean the sexual, racial, social, and egalitarian obsessions alluded to above.

Reason Cannot Be Our Foundation "Morality is not one sub-system among oth-

ers, such as that there is art, science, religion, business, politics, and so forth, alongside morality. Instead, morality is the guiding principle for all human endeavors," according to University of Notre Dame professor Mark William Roche in his book "Why Literature Matters in the 21st Century."

It is important to stress that morality has always been the guiding principle for all human endeavors—all human endeavors. What could be more invasive to our sense of We may disagree on issues as fundamental as our religions—there may be profound disagreements of philosophy and theology—but as to morality guiding our conduct and behavior, we should not disagree on the essentials. I should not kill you, steal from you, bear false witness against you, or attempt to sleep with your partner; indeed, if I did any of those things, I would be in denial be, in fact, an immoral person.

But this is not what nearly all Western politicians and their ethics committees of today wish to hear; they have a different message. They try to establish morality through reason, for if it is a question of reason, then it is not a givenor transcendental reality. It can be debated, it can be changed, and it allows politicians to take control through any political agenda they feel committed to.

Yet American classicist Allan Bloom made it very clear. "Reason cannot establish values, and its belief that it can is the stupidest and most pernicious illusion." Polish historian of ideas Leszek Kolakowski in his book "Religion" called modern reliance on reason as a value "Promethean atheism."

The invariable message of Promethean atheism is that "human self-creativity has no limits, evil and suffering are contingent, life is infinitely inventive, nothing is valid morally or intellectually—just because it has



"Triumph of the Virtues Over the Vices," circa 1592, by Paolo Fiammingo. Oil on canvas. Private

passed for valid throughout history, there is no authority in tradition, the human mind does not need any revelation or any teaching from without, God is but man oppressing himself and stifling his reason."

In essence, you can be whatever you want and to hell with conventional morality. Again, Theodore Dalrymple: "Who is more contemned than he who clings stubbornly to old moral insights?"

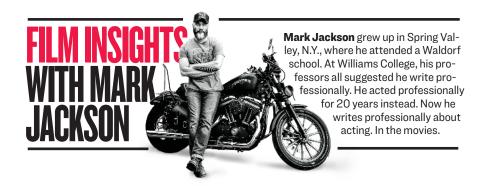
One hundred years ago, the writer and prophet G.K. Chesterton, in a biography by Catholic writer Joseph Pearce, foresaw all this when he wrote:

"The work of the sceptic for the past hundred years has indeed been very like the fruitless fury of some primeval monster; eyeless, mindless, merely destructive and devouring; a giant worm wasting away at work that he could not even see; a benighted and bestial life, unconscious of its own cause and its own consequences.... But to say that there is no pain, or no matter, or no evil, or no difference between man and beast, or indeed between anything and anything else—this is a desperate effort to destroy all experience and sense of reality; and men will weary of it more and more, when it has ceased to be the latest fashion; and will look once more for something that will give form to such a chaos and keep the proportions of the mind of man."

Sadly, one hundred years later, our culture has still not wearied of Promethean atheism in the West, and this is our perilous danger. For as American sociologist W.I. Thomas once said, "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences." If we are going to abolish right and wrong, usurp the common sense of the majority of the population, spend our time in gratifying our hedonistic desires without any moral checks, then the West will fall.

The fall of the Roman Empire in the West to the barbarians in the fifth century was only possible because it had first corrupted itself and lost its internal authority. That is the true danger now for America and its allies. As we fiddle with redefining moralities, the fires from the East burn ever nearer. We need to rediscover once again the true proportions of the mind of man, and most essentially their moral dimensions.

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 "StairWell." For more information about the author, and about his Dante project, visit EnglishCantos.home.blog



FILM REVIEW

Yogi Berra Documentary Is a Home Run

MARK JACKSON

I was always aware of the late Yogi Berra as an American cultural icon, the legendary New York Yankee ballplayer. Sports documentary "It Ain't Over," Sean Mullin's somewhat hagiographic tribute to Berra, lays it all out for everyone to finally be able to separate where the athlete Yogi Berra ended and the cultural phenomenon began. It's jam-packed with stories from family members, fellow major league players, and celebrities who collectively raise a glass to the iconic sports hero.

Mullin separates man from myth, and allows us to see the chronically unsung athleticism and talent that were the true foundation of the Berra myth.

The documentary opens with the 2015 Major League Baseball All-Star Game, which itself opened by honoring the four ostensibly greatest living baseball players: Hank Aaron, Johnny Bench, Sandy Koufax, and Willie Mays. These four had been determined by 25 million fan votes. Meanwhile, watching the game at home on TV was 90-year-old Yogi Berra, who had more MVP awards than Aaron, Bench, Koufax, and Mays. Plus, plus!!—more World Series rings than Hank, Johnny, Sandy, and Willie combined!

Watching with him was his granddaughter, Lindsay Berra, who was thinking, "How was my grandfather left out of this line-up?!" That moment generated the impetus to put a documentary out there that explained how Yogi Berra's status as a cultural icon came to eclipse his legacy as one of the greatest baseball players of all time.

Road to the Big Leagues

Yogi began life as Lorenzo Pietro Berra, in the Italian section of St. Louis. His immigrant dad was less than thrilled about his son's baseball obsession, but the boy could hit. His teammates eventually nicknamed him "Yogi" due to his predilection for sitting cross-legged on the ground while waiting his turn at bat.

Berra signed with the New York Yankees in 1943 rather than his hometown St. Louis Cardinals, but his path to baseball glory, in true Hero's Journey fashion, led through the killing fields of World War II. Before setting foot in Yankee Stadium, 18-year-old Berra signed up to man a rocket boat during the Normandy D-Day invasion, despite not knowing how to swim. This situated Berra firmly as a member of the "Greatest Generation." Fishing dead bodies out of the surf, Yogi famously said, "Baseball isn't hard. War is hard."

It's not widely known, but the catcher position in baseball is akin to football's quarterback—the catcher is all-knowing (as hilariously portrayed by Kevin Costner's character Crash Davis in "Bull Durham"). Yogi didn't start out as a catcher, but he learned the art and the craft of catching from the legendary Bill Dickey. Yogi was also one of the Yankees' best hitters, swatting home runs in both his first game and his second.

Yogi was highly intelligent and knew how to run a game. He kept a long list of every player's strengths and weaknesses in his head, which allowed him to signal his pitchers to throw mostly perfect pitches against all of the Yankee opponent hitters. In 1956, when Don Larsen pitched



Yogi Berra (C) in "It Ain't Over."

Yogi would **famously** swing at everything coming across home plate.

'It Ain't Over'

Director Sean Mullin Starring Documentary **Running Time** 1 hour, 38 minutes **MPAA** Rating **Release Date** May 12, 2023

his perfect World Series game, it was all compliments of Berra's catcher signals from behind home plate—Larsen didn't shake Berra off even once.

Yogi would also famously swing at everything coming across home plate—or in and around it—and still managed to have one of the lowest strikeout rates in the league, which was due to having almost supernormal, fast hands.

Among the many interviewees remarking about Berra's on-field achievements are three members of latter-day Yankees royalty (Don Mattingly, Derek Jeter, Mariano Rivera), three managerial Joes (Torre, Maddon, and Girardi), two broadcasters (Vin Scully and Bob Costas), and one superfan (Billy Crystal).

"It Ain't Over" succeeds most in shining a light on a storied baseball career that often gets overlooked by the man's subsequent cultural status: Yogi really was bigger than baseball. To avoid the hagiography and the cloying tribute of an ending, perhaps a little more conflict would've been good. Berra's infamous feud with Yankees owner George Steinbrenner, when Berra for years refused to set foot in Yankee Stadium so long as the team still belonged to the owner everyone loved to hate, is played as just another lovable quirk.

No fewer than eight Yogi-isms made it into "Bartlett's Familiar Quotations," and the film finds room for many of them. All in all, what I appreciated most were the stories about Berra's love for his wife, Carmen, who predeceased him by a year, and their adorable marriage. It's understandable why more than one of those assembled start to choke up while paying their respects directly into the camera at the end of the film.

DOCUMENTARY REVIEW

Portrait of an American Treasure

MICHAEL CLARK

With the possible exception of Lucille Ball, no American woman has had a greater impact on the generations of comediennes who followed in her wake quite as much as Mary Tyler Moore.

Known mostly for her roles as a spunky homemaker on "The Dick Van Dyke Show" ("Van Dyke") and an unassuming TV producer on "The Mary Tyler Moore Show" ("Tyler Moore"), Moore is forever referred to as the "girl next door" but was also a driven trailblazer whose life was marked with many

professional and personal ebbs and flows. In "Being Mary Tyler Moore" ("Being"), his first solo effort as a feature director, three-time Peabody Award-winning cinematographer James Adolphus delivers an awe-inspiring, cradle-to-grave biographical documentary of Moore.

Taking many storytelling gambles along the way (and winning most of the time), Adolphus takes exactly two hours to deliver volumes of information that most filmmakers couldn't do half as efficiently with twice as much running time.

Hostile Interview

Taking the sometimes iffy out-of-sequence route, Adolphus opens with a snippet of a 1966 interview of Moore conducted by David Susskind shortly after "Van Dyke" had wrapped its fifth and final season. The condescending, somewhat hostile Susskind asks Moore if she thought her character (Laura Petrie) was correctly presenting the typical American housewife or merely "projecting" a fantasy version of the same.

Tilting her head just slightly and pausing a beat or two before retorting, Moore, smiling but clearly taken aback by the barbed



tone of the question, said that there are many different versions of "housewife," and all of them should be "a human first, a woman second, and a wife and mother third." Considering the time frame, that's some pretty heady stuff.

At another point in the movie, "Van Dyke" (which aired on CBS) creator Carl Reiner recalled Moore telling him that she would prefer Laura's wardrobe consist mostly of Capri pants, as she felt that past portrayals of previous sit-com moms doing housework in semiformal dresses was ludicrous, out of date, and passé. Reiner agreed to Moore's request without a second thought.

The point here is that Moore, with no track record to speak of and operating in a medium ruled mostly by men, made a suggestion that bucked the status quo. She wanted Laura to be modern and reflective of the audience, and it worked like a charm.

After "Van Dyke" ended, Moore gave both musical theater ("Breakfast at Tiffany's") and feature film ("Thoroughly Modern Millie") a shot. "Breakfast" tanked and although "Millie" mostly succeeded, Moore played second fiddle to lead Julie Andrews.

First Career Reboot

Only after Moore's appearance on a variety special hosted by Van Dyke did CBS offer her what eventually became "Tyler Moore." Picking up where she left off five years earlier, Moore (along with show runner James L. Brooks) wanted her character, Mary Richards, to be single with no interest in marriage and primarily concerned with her career.

Despite some resistance, CBS eventually acquiesced, and "Tyler Moore" went on to become one of the most popular and critically acclaimed series in TV history, winning 29 Emmy Awards.

Mary Tyler Moore during documentary "Being Mary Tyler Moore."

Moore is

referred to

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forever

Moore was nominated for a Best Actress Oscar for "Ordinary People." To say that Moore's character in the film was the antithesis of Laura Petrie and Mary Richards would be a colossal understatement. Icy, detached, and emotionally distant,

Showing up in regular intervals through-

interview by Rona Barrett not long after

Moore's rendering of a mother suffering from a devastating loss eerily mirrored a recent event in her off-screen life and proved she was capable of doing far more than just light comedy.

Time for Some Me Time

Recognition in "Ordinary People" could have resulted in further big-screen success but it didn't, yet this turned out to be the personal fulfillment that had largely eluded Moore for most of her adult life. Through an odd twist of fate, she met Dr. Robert Levin, a cardiologist nearly two decades her junior. Their marriage lasted for over 30 years until her death in 2017.

The crowning achievement of "Being" isn't Moore's career recap, which most of us all already aware of, but rather the inclusion by Adolphus of the candid passages captured through other interviews, home movies, and stills, the memories shared by her closest friend Beverly Sanders, and the accolades lavished upon her by the many she inspired.

Moore was a complex and imperfect person who was never afraid to portray characters with the same traits. She lived a life that yielded great rewards, but it was also one that included significant devastating setbacks. "Being" offers a near-perfect balance of both.

"Being Mary Tyler Moore" will air on HBO Max beginning May 26th.

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.

Director

James Adolphus Starring Documentary **Running Time MPAA** Rating TV-PG

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ONLINE SERIES REVIEW

The Hunt for Public Enemy Number One

The hunt for Hezbollah terrorist Imad Mughniyeh ranks with that of Bin Laden, but it was many more years in the making. The CIA also never officially took on-the-record credit for its involvement, even though their widely reported joint-operation with Mossad targeted the man considered the most prolific murderer of Americans until the September 11 attacks.

Mughniyeh never became a household name in America, but for Western intelligence services, he was public enemy number one. Mughniyeh's reign of terror and the operation to take him out are chronicled in creators Avi Issacharoff and Lior Raz's four-part "Ghosts of Beirut."

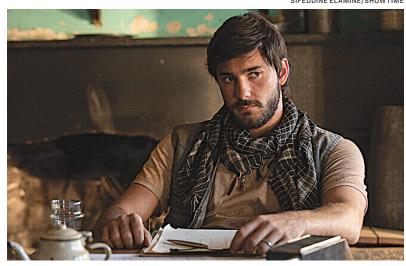
Each episode starts with the preamble: "This is a fictional account of deeply researched events," so consider yourself reassured or forewarned. The action kicks off in 2007 Iraq, when a group of terrorists masquerading as American soldiers brazenly kidnaps four U.S. servicemen from the Karbala regional headquarters.

The series then rewinds to when it all started in 1982, with the assassination of newly elected Lebanese President Bachir Gemayel and the Israeli invasion of the country in anarchy. CIA station chief Robert Ames (Dermot Mulroney) warns of the potential long-term radicalization that could result, especially among Shia Muslims, like Mughniyeh.

However, Ames has a reputation for being a little too close to his PLO contacts, which stokes the suspicions of Israel's Mossad intelligence agency. That distrust lingers throughout the series, even when the CIA and Mossad unite to run an ambitious joint operation.

Regardless, Ames's perceived pro-Arab sympathies benefit him little when the increasingly enraged Mughniyeh (Amir Khoury in episodes one and two, Hisham Suliman thereafter) masterminds his first suicide bombing.

The second episode focuses on Ames' successor, the ill-fated Bill Buckley (the CIA officer, not the political commen-



The younger Imad Mughniyeh (Amir Khoury), in "Ghosts of Beirut."

tator). Buckley (Garret Dillahunt) will spearhead the search for Mughniyeh, of whom little is known, despite his growing influence. As the scale of Mughniyeh's operations grow, the pressure from Washington increases, but so does the danger to Americans stationed in-country.

The final two episodes flow together more smoothly, picking up where the 2007 prologue left off. As the CIA's point officer on Mughniyeh, Lena (Dina Shihabi) is forced to work with Teddy (Iddo Goldberg) from the Mossad.

Initially, they do not trust each other very much, because of institutional rivalries. Her Lebanese heritage does not help much either. However, the fictional spies convince their bosses the time is right to pool their resources.

It might have been more efficient to produce "Ghosts of Beirut" as a feature, focusing on Lena and Teddy's hunt for Mughniyeh, because the stop-and-start progression from the first episode to the third lacks a unifying narrative cohesion.

Series director Greg Barker (who previously helmed the documentary "Manhunt: The Inside Story of the Hunt for Bin Laden") and his co-writers Issacharoff and Raz added background information that strays a bit far afield from the thriller meat of the story.

On the other hand, viewers would have

The series contrasts the values of U.S. intelligence agencies with those they hunt.

'Ghosts of Beirut'

Director

Greg Barker Starring

Dina Shihabi, Dermot Mulroney, Garret Dillahunt, Iddo Goldberg, Hisham Suliman

Running Time

MPAA Rating

TV-MA

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missed an outstanding performance from Dillahunt as Bill Buckley. Sadly, those who lived through the reporting of his ordeal mostly remember Buckley from the grainy photos pictured in newscasts. Dillahunt fleshes out and humanizes Buckley, which deepens the tragedy of the events that unfold.

Engaging Characters

Regardless, Shihabi and Goldberg make an engaging odd couple team, who easily pulls viewers into the procedural details of their investigation. Mulroney is credibly measured and down-to-earth as Ames, but he is not as tall as the reallife 6-foot 3-inch CIA officer, who was a member of La Salle University's NCAA championship men's basketball team.

Frankly, Khoury is much more chilling and intense playing the younger Mughniyeh than Suliman is as the older Mughniyeh, but, arguably, that accurately reflects the ruthless terrorist's growing complacency.

Too often, CIA officers are the villains in movies. "Ghosts of Beirut" reminds us they are human beings who serve and sacrifice for their country. It is also interesting to see the CIA's caution with regards to Mughniyeh's Iranian puppetmaster, Qassem Soleimani (Khalid Benchegra), who was considered absolutely off-limits in 2007, for fear of provoking the Iranian regime.

Yet, President Trump successfully ordered Soleimani's execution by drone in 2020, with no apparent repercussions, despite widespread predictions it would launch World War III.

"Ghosts of Beirut" is indeed an uneven series, but the writing is consistently smart. Most espionage series focus on Cold War Europe, so watching spycraft in a Middle East setting is an interesting change of pace. Even with its early detours, "Ghosts of Beirut" is recommended for fans of films like "Zero Dark Thirty" and "Argo."

Paramount started streaming "Ghosts of Beirut" on May 19 and the Showtime network premiered the series on May 21.

Joe Bendel writes about independent film and lives in New York. To read his most recent articles, visit JBSpins. blogspot.com

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