Cormac McCarthy leads a famously enigmatic life. Intensely private, McCarthy agrees to interviews like Oliver Twist’s orphanage ladles out second helpings of gruel. And yet, in 2007, the writer gave his first (and only) television interview to, of all people, Oprah, for her daytime talk show. In April 2017, he penned his first piece of published non-fiction for the monthly science magazine Nautilus, which generated much fanfare but little further commentary from McCarthy. George Berridge mentions this latest publication in his review of two new books on the Pulitzer Prize–winning novelist’s career. The first, Michael Lynn Crews’s Books Are Made out of Books, is an extensive study of McCarthy’s literary forebears, while the second, Stacey Peebles’s Cormac McCarthy and Performance, examines the variously successful adaptations of the author’s novels to the screen and stage.

“The Popular Connoisseur”

Richard Dorment’s review of James Stourton’s 2016 Kenneth Clark biography is encouraging in its suggestion of renewed critical support of the English art historian’s scholarship by “mainstream” academics. Dorment recalls the “delightful” 2014 “Kenneth Clark—Looking for Civilisation” exhibition at Tate Britain, which examined Clark’s life through the objects he collected or commissioned. An object-oriented presentation that eschewed the theory-based art history beloved by most scholars and curators today, the exhibition was a massive success, and perhaps portends a rise in critical acceptance of a man long loved by the general population. Clark was a precocious mind and embarked on an electric career, rising from research assistant for Bernard Berenson (age twenty-two) to keeper at the Ashmolean (age twenty-seven) to director of the National Gallery (age thirty). But it was his public presence, as exemplified by his BBC series, Civilisation, that cemented the man’s legacy for generations to come. For more on Clark, and on Civilisation
Can one truly “curate” a bookstore’s holdings? How about a thrift shop? One’s “social media presence”? Or is the recent proliferation of the word’s usage an indication of our society’s inclination to sprinkle linguistic prestige onto our mundane, everyday activities? Wilfred M. McClay of the University of Oklahoma expounds on a personal pet peeve in the Spring issue of The Hedgehog Review.

“Russia: Putin remains the linchpin of a vulnerable system”
Paul du Quenoy, France 24 English

On Tuesday, Paul du Quenoy, a frequent contributor and music critic for The New Criterion, appeared on France 24 to weigh in on Putin’s recent controversial election to a fourth six-year term as President of Russia. Du Quenoy, an expert in Russian government and society, discusses the style and appeal of Putin’s rhetoric, which hews closely to that of many Soviet rulers of old.

From our pages:

“Who could ask for anything more?”
Jay Nordlinger

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