

Silent Trade War
EAMONN FINGLETON

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Not-So-Special Ops
WILLIAM S. LIND

James Bond's Mission
STEPHEN B. TIPPINS JR.

OCTOBER 2012

The American **Conservative**

IDEAS OVER IDEOLOGY • PRINCIPLES OVER PARTY



THE CLOSING
OF THE
CONSERVATIVE
MIND

(Or: What Has the Culture War Done to Our Culture?)

PATRICK DENEEN • DANIEL McCARTHY

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Letters

CONNED BY OBAMA

Michael Dougherty's article "Obama's Right Wing" (August 2012) was interesting but perplexing. I can understand the "fear of adventurism in foreign policy" which the Obamacons share, but I scratch my head in wonder at how anyone who deems himself conservative, or even centrist, could support a president who has essentially shredded the Constitution, promoted a culture of death at home and abroad, signed into law a takeover of one-sixth of the U. S. economy via the Affordable Care Act, actively undermined the vital institution of marriage, ballooned the national debt, and trampled on religious freedom. I can appreciate how some of them felt in 2008, but now? I am particularly disappointed in Jeffrey Hart, an elegant writer whose work I have enjoyed in the past, but whose continued support for Obama, while stretching the boundaries of conservatism like Silly Putty, I find utterly baffling.

I am pleased to hear, however, that some of these folks are having second thoughts; after all, what harmony has Burke with a 21st-century Jacobin?

JEFF McALISTER
Longview, Texas

PRINCIPLES OVER PARTY

Thank you for being a voice of real conservative principles—especially as opposed to Republican principles, which I find tend to vary depending on who is saying what and who's running for reelection. (I find that goes for Democratic principles too, but that doesn't really apply here!)

I don't always agree with the point of view, but I always respect it. Thank you so much for that.

KRISTINE GAMMER
via email

THE TWAIN SHALL MEET

Having just discovered *The American Conservative*, I am thrilled. I am not a

conservative. All my life I have placed myself somewhere on the left. But I have long recognized that there are legitimate issues between a responsible right and a responsible left. I've read and appreciated Burke. I've read the *Federalist Papers*. I've also read Marx. My problem lately is that there's no one in the Republican Party that I can take seriously.

I have always found *National Review* to be too much in thrall to the Republican Party. Too much focused on political advantage at any price. But a few days ago, from the Arts & Letters Daily website, I was led to *The American Conservative*. I've spent a couple of hours since then reading articles and essays. I am really impressed. It's not, of course, that I agree with everything I read there. But you actually have serious thinkers. Some of them actually challenge the Democratic Party and generally accepted liberal opinion on grounds worth considering. I actually believe that liberals and conservatives have things to discuss that transcend the election cycle.

JOHN LEARY
via email

BEAT ROOTS

Kerouac was from the French-speaking community of Lowell, Mass. ("Conservative Kerouac," Sept. 2012)? I did not know this. I visited that community in 1970. I had the doleful duty of escorting the body of one of my men home to his parents. Despite the grim duty, they welcomed me with such hospitality that 40 years later, I still have warm memories of this wonderful place. In the middle of a rather grimy Northeastern industrial town (as it then was) there was this marvelous and largely French speaking community that worshiped at St. Jean d'Arc Church. I suddenly have a much better understanding of who Kerouac was; I have met his people.

JOHN MÉDAILLE
web comment

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The Other Culture War

“**T**his election is about much more than who gets what. It is about who we are. It is about what we believe. It is about what we stand for as Americans.

There is a religious war going on in our country for the soul of America. It is a cultural war, as critical to the kind of nation we will one day be as was the Cold War itself.” Pat Buchanan was addressing the 1992 Republican National Convention in Houston, but he could have delivered the same remarks in Tampa this year. Mitt Romney and Barack Obama may have more than their share of similarities—starting with the healthcare plans and foreign policy—but culture divides the candidates, their parties, and their voters. A platform fight at the Democratic convention in Charlotte, North Carolina, over referencing God in the document underscored the contrast.

But it’s hard to say that two decades of culture war have done much for America’s culture—Republican congressional takeovers after the 1994 and 2010 midterms and GOP presidential victories in 2000 and 2004 did not lead to any kind of moral reawakening. Differences between the parties on such issues as abortion and mandatory coverage of contraception in health-insurance plans are real enough, but they have little, if anything, to do with the country’s overall cultural complexion. Indeed, even more mundane policy matters have roots that go deeper: as Irving Babbitt once wrote, “When studied with any degree of thoroughness, the economic problem will be found to run into the political problem,

the political problem in turn into the philosophical problem, and the philosophical problem itself to be almost indissolubly bound up at last with the religious problem.”

The Republican Party of the past 20 years hasn’t lived up to Buchanan’s challenge—not on culture, not on economics (where Buchanan warned about the erosion of America’s industrial base and middle class), and not in foreign policy (where again he was prophetic about the costs to the republic of embracing empire abroad). Party politics not only isn’t the answer to America’s cultural troubles, but isn’t even the answer to its political ones; not in full, at any rate. Philosophy, religion, and literature are less immediate but in many ways more fundamental. Progressives have invested so much in higher education and creative fields for a reason—not because they hope to translate leverage at Harvard or in Hollywood into partisan victories but because they intuit that these things count in their own right, and they add up to something much more than an electoral majority.

Conservatives have understood this, too, or did in the age of Babbitt and T.S. Eliot. But lately pure politics has been a greater focus for the right, and even culture—in the sense of film, music, and literature—has come to be valued more for its propagandistic value than for its higher ends. The culture war, and ultimately the culture peace, requires a recalibration, a reminder—as readers will find in this issue—that ideas and their authors have consequences even beyond November. ■

Front Lines

From Kennan to Trotsky

How the United States became a superpower of the left

by MARTIN SIEFF

Russia and China today both enjoy the same grand-strategic advantage against the United States that the United States enjoyed through the 44 years of the Cold War.

The Soviet Union was then the superpower of the left, as the left had been globally understood since the French Revolution. It was the state committed to the promotion of revolutionary change across the world.

The United States, by contrast, was the superpower of the right. It was committed to the maintenance of stability and continuity in government systems around the world.

The bipartisan policy of the United States has become Permanent Revolution until Total and Perfect Democracy is finally achieved.

The United States won the Cold War. The craving for stability, peace, and continuity among governments and populations alike proved infinitely stronger than the fleeting flashes of revolutionary fervor. The Soviet Union eventually became physically exhausted and globally isolated by its ideological commitment to revolutionary change.

Today, however, the roles of the two

great powers have been reversed. Since the advent of Madeleine Albright as secretary of state in 1997, the United States has become increasingly ideologically committed to the spreading of “instant powdered democracy” in every nation of the world, as defined and approved by the United States. Russia and China have become the main “conservative” or “right-wing” powers committed to preserving the status quo.

Ironically, the U.S. commitment to continual revolution around the world is a revival of the discredited concepts of Leon Trotsky. Josef Stalin abandoned Trotsky’s ideas in the 1920s when he took power in the Soviet Union. This gave him the ideological flexibility to create the Grand Alliance with the United States and the British Empire that won World War II—the Great Patriotic War.

But Nikita Khrushchev revived Trotsky’s disastrous concept: he and his successor, Leonid Brezhnev, drained their superpower dry by pouring resources into promoting revolution throughout the developing world, from 1954 in Egypt to Afghanistan in 1979-87. This led to the collapse of the Soviet system. It also prompted governments around the

world to seek protection from efforts to fan the flames of revolution within them by turning to the United States for security on U.S. terms.

Today, it is the United States under presidents of both parties that has embraced the Trotskyite delusion. The bipartisan policy of the United States has become Permanent Revolution until Total and Perfect Democracy is finally achieved. This can only end the way it ended for Maximilien Robespierre in the French Revolution and for Trotsky in the Bolshevik one.

It is fitting that so many of the older generation of American neoconservatives started life as communist enthusiasts in the 1930s and ’40s. For today’s neocons are really neo-Trotskyites promoting the old, doomed enthusiasms under a new label.

By contrast, Russia and China are led by pragmatic governments guided by the concepts of profit and self-interest. They support and want to do business with existing governments and governing systems around the world. This has made them the 21st century’s major global powers of the right.

This is the strategic and psychological force behind China’s immense success in displacing the United States and the European Union in Africa. Chinese investment and aid comes free from the destabilizing, potentially revolutionary ideological strings that undermine existing systems of government throughout the region.

The governments of China and Russia hate and fear revolution and see the endless ideological promotion of democracy American-style in

small countries around them and in their own homelands as planting the seeds of chaos and disintegration.

Democracy works admirably in societies where it is allowed to develop organically. But when other governments try to accelerate its growth artificially or hasten its triumph from outside, especially when they resort to military force to do so, the result is almost always a fierce reaction against the forces of democracy. This reaction often generates extreme fascist, repressive, and intolerant forces. And these forces usually win and take power. Then they impose themselves on the societies in question, delaying any real democratic development for decades or generations.

The efforts of the French Revolutionaries and Napoleon to export liberty, equality, and brotherhood across Europe by fire and sword instead ensured the survival of the old traditional empires for another 120 years. The efforts of Lenin and Trotsky to export socialism and communism by similar means were even more catastrophic. The backlash against them in Germany propelled Adolf Hitler to power.

It is not in America's interests to follow in those footsteps—to put it mildly. ■

Martin Sieff is Chief Global Analyst for The Globalist and the author of the upcoming Cycles of Change: The Patterns of U.S. Politics from Thomas Jefferson to Barack Obama.

What's So Special About Special Ops?

SEALs and Rangers are no answer to our military woes.

by WILLIAM S. LIND

In the face of the failure of America's conventional military forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Washington establishment seeks a silver bullet, a "force of choice" that can win. It thinks it has found one in Special Operations Forces, which include most famously the Navy's SEALs and the Army's Green Berets.

Experience is the best teacher, as the old saying goes, but she kills all her pupils. Experience is likely to teach us that against Fourth Generation non-state enemies Special Operations Forces are no silver bullet. We could learn the same lesson beforehand through a bit of reflection, without expending the lives of some of our best and most admirable men.

The first reason is that the strategic objectives the foreign-policy establishment sets are unattainable by any military. Not even an army of elves and ents could remake Third World hellholes into Switzerland. And as Russell Kirk wrote, there is no surer way to make a

man your enemy than to tell him you are going to remake him in your image for his own good.

Second, while there is wide variance within the Special Operations community, most SOF units share the same problems that afflict our conventional forces. They, too, are stuck in the Second Generation of modern war, with an inward-focused culture of order that reduces the complex art of war to putting firepower on targets.

SOF are more skilled at techniques than their conventional counterparts, but techniques are not a typical American weakness. Our armed forces are technically capable across the board.

Techniques and tactics are not only different but opposite in nature—the first is formulaic and the second should be situational—and like our conventional forces, SOF are mostly not tactically competent, at least from what I have seen of them. Few American Special Operations units know light-infantry ("Jaeger") tactics,

without which they depend tactically on massive fire support (usually air strikes) that in Fourth Generation war works to the enemy's advantage. They do not even know the basic Third Generation maneuver-warfare tactics the German army evolved late in World War I. They use their superior techniques merely to put more fire more accurately on more targets in wars of attrition against enemies who are not sensitive to losses.

SOF's tactical obsolescence is doubly harmful in that they are often employed to train the forces of the weak states we are attempting to support. By teaching them Second Generation firepower/attrition war, we undermine their effectiveness while making them dependent on firepower they are unlikely to have once we depart. Beyond the level of techniques, we are too frequently the Typhoid Mary of military advice.

The picture at higher levels of war is also grim. SOF understand operational art no better than the rest of the American military, which is to say they can spell it. (This is now evident in the increasingly desperate attempts of the American command in Afghanistan to respond to green-on-blue attacks. They are trying to counter an operational move by the Taliban at the tactical level, which is doomed to failure.) This is an especially serious failing for Special Operations Forces because what makes an operation "special" is that it is operational, not just tactical. The result is that most American "special operations" are merely tactical actions with fancy techniques, the equivalent of raids by police SWAT teams. Our Special Operations Forces get dribbled away in minor events that, again, add up to a war of attrition. Night raids to kill or capture Taliban squad leaders are a long way from Otto Skorzeny's rescue of Mussolini, which was the model special operation.

SOF fare no better at the strategic level. There, attrition has been and

remains the American way of war, and Special Operations Forces are employed accordingly.

In Fourth Generation war, Special Operations Forces share yet another weakness with our conventional forces: they are American. With the important exception of Special Forces (the Green Berets), they take America with them wherever they go to war. After an action, they go back to a base that is “little America,” with air conditioning, steak, and the Internet. The locals, whether enemies or allies, look on with envy that soon shades into hatred.

This feeds a central problem in Fourth Generation war, what Martin van Creveld calls the power of weakness. With our overwhelming technical and equipment advantages, luxurious (by local standards) way of life, and nice country to go home to after we have wrecked someone else’s, we are Goliath. Our opponents, however repulsive, become David. How many people identify with Goliath?

In the end, Special Operations Forces differ from the conventional armed forces that have failed repeatedly against Fourth Generation opponents primarily by putting on a better show. Their techniques can be dazzling. But few wars are won by superiority in technique.

A general rule of warfare is that a higher level trumps a lower, and technique is the lowest level of all. Our SEALs, Rangers, Delta, SF, and all the rest are vastly superior to the Taliban or al-Qaeda at techniques. But those opponents have sometimes shown themselves able at tactics, operations, and strategy. We can only defeat them by making ourselves superior at those higher levels of war. There, regrettably, Special Operations Forces have nothing to offer. They are just another lead bullet in an obsolete Second Generation arsenal. ■

William S. Lind is director of the American Conservative Center for Public Transportation.

Two Cheers for Heresy on Global Warming

Climate change is a cycle—of faddish opinions

by RON UNZ

I first encountered the strong case for global warming in the early 1970s in an Isaac Asimov science column. As an elementary school student, I merely nodded my head, assumed that America’s political leadership would address the danger, and moved on to an explanation of quarks.

Even in those days, the subject was hardly new. The Asimov column had originally run in the late 1950s, before I was even born, and the possibility that burning fossil fuels might raise the Earth’s temperature via the “Greenhouse Effect” had already been around for many decades, going back to the late 19th century. Whether it occurred in the real world was a different matter.

My next encounter with climate change came in the mid-1970s. Suddenly all the magazines and newspapers were filled with stories that scientists had determined that the world was on the brink of a new Ice Age, with global cooling about to devastate our civilization. I still recall *Newsweek*’s famous cover depicting an American street scene blanketed by an arctic blizzard. Although I wondered at how quickly warming had switched to cooling, I was in junior high and assumed that our scientists—and the media that presented them—knew what they were talking about. Fortunately, no glaciers appeared, and the topic was soon forgotten.

By the late 1970s, I had joined high-school debate, and one year the topic was the environment, with climate-related issues being the biggest sub-topic. So I diligently gathered vast quantities of highly credible evidence from noted scientific experts proclaiming the certainty of global warming, global cooling, both, or neither, and lugged them around in my evidence boxes to all the tournaments. Random lot would determine whether I persuasively argued that

CO2 emissions would fry us to a crisp or whether solar blockage from particulate emissions would freeze us to an icicle, or whether perhaps the two effects would perfectly cancel out. Since debate tournaments often had four rounds, I might alternate my claims of glaciers growing and glaciers melting every hour or so, always backing my position with copious evidence from expert sources. I reluctantly concluded that climatology was merely a pseudoscience, at least compared to my own field of theoretical physics, and I was glad when the debate topic switched to foreign policy the following year.

I had almost forgotten about both warming and cooling when the unusually hot summer of 1988 stampeded our media and political elites into suddenly declaring that global warming was a proven reality. As I joked to my friends, going from Ice Age to oven in just a dozen years seemed a bit much, especially since both trends were allegedly decades or centuries long.

But as the years went by and more and more mainstream voices endorsed global warming, I began to assume it must be true because “everyone said so,” or at least everyone not subsidized by Exxon Mobil. For similar reasons, I later assumed that Saddam must have WMDs—at least of the chemical or biological variety—given the absolutely uniform proclamations of our mainstream media commentariat.

In that latter case, I eventually discovered that I—together with the entire American public—had fallen for a massive hoax, and this raised huge doubts about the credibility of the establishment media. But even so, I was quite shocked in 2007 to read a series of major *Counterpunch* columns by the late Alexander Cockburn denouncing global warming as the same sort of massive hoax, protected and promoted

by the establishment media just like the Iraqi WMDs. Obviously Cockburn himself was no scientist, but those he quoted seemed to be, and more importantly, Big Oil probably didn't own one of America's foremost radical-left journalists.

So what is one to think? The scientific topic involved is complex and specialized, requiring years of academic study to properly comprehend. The experts seem divided, with nasty accusations of dishonesty and corruption flying in both directions. The mainstream media and our political elites seem overwhelmingly to favor one side, but given their recent track record, that almost constitutes a negative indicator. Tens of billions of dollars are at stake, so the volume of propaganda is enormous, and I would need hundreds of hours just to dip my toe into the topic. Therefore, my considered verdict is: I just don't know.

But if I were prodded to take some position, I would focus on the simplest, clearest argument, the one least requiring expertise in complex atmospheric modeling or meteorological theories. Alex's original April 28, 2007 column did just that.

As he explained, the early years of the Great Depression had seen worldwide industrial output drop by about one quarter, along with carbon emissions from coal, oil, and natural gas, requiring most of a decade to return to previous levels. Yet during these same years, there appears no significant change in the trends of rising CO₂ or temperature. If enormous changes in human carbon output have negligible impact on the atmospheric trends of the global warming hypothesis, how can there be a causal connection?

This relates to another point made by Alex and also mentioned in the original Asimov column. The oceans contain perhaps 50 times more dissolved CO₂ than is found in the atmosphere, and as our planet warms, evaporating seawater releases carbon dioxide. Is the increase of CO₂ producing the warming or is it the other



way around? He cited claims that over the last million or so years, changes in CO₂ had always tended to lag the corresponding changes in temperature by many centuries, implying that CO₂ was a consequence rather than a cause of the warming.

Five minutes spent with Google uncovers a vast wealth of articles debunking or supporting these simple claims, with endless data and citations all around. Can I effectively judge these competing arguments? Certainly not, and a dozen or more years ago I would have assumed that establishment opinion was probably correct, with the near-unanimous verdict of elite-media sources outweighing a few scattered figures mostly drawn from the political fringe. But that was before the Iraqi WMDs. And Bernie Madoff. And the housing bubble, and so many other revealed hoaxes and scandals that have

so totally undermined the credibility of our official sources in almost everything. Consider that one of the strongest private-sector backers of global warming had been the Enron Corporation, up until the moment that it collapsed in the largest corporate fraud in history.

The tendency to attack dissent as heresy hardly engenders free and open debate. Just a couple of years after I read those *Counterpunch* columns, the *New York Times Magazine* ran a cover story on Freeman Dyson, one of the most brilliant physicists of his generation. He was labeled "The Civil Heretic" for his strong public skepticism on global warming theories. Given the recent track record of the *Times* and its peers, I'm half inclined to automatically favor the heretics. ■

Ron Unz is publisher of *The American Conservative*.

A Man Called Tubesteak

Farewell to the legendary Kahuna who christened Gidget

by ROGER D. McGRATH

I started surfing at Malibu in the late 1950s. I was only a kid, not yet a teenager. In the vernacular of the surf culture of the day, I was a gremmie. I had to wait my turn in the lineup out on the point. Good set waves were not for me. The older guys had dibs on those. The leftovers from the sets or the smaller waves that rolled through between the sets were the best I could hope for. Even then, if an older guy wanted one of those, it was tough

toenails for me. Resigned to my lowly status, I had been waiting for a wave of my own for quite some time when a small two-footer humped up just outside of where I was straddling my board. "This is mine," I thought. Just then a really old guy, maybe 20, began paddling for it—but a powerful voice bellowed, "Let the gremmie have it." The 20-year-old immediately stopped paddling—as if ordered by a top-kick sergeant—and I stroked into the wave.

Allan Grant/Time Life Pictures/Getty Images



Tubesteak, wearing a jacket, sits to the right of Gidget in Malibu in 1957

The voice that bellowed belonged to Terry Tracy, known to all as Tubesteak. Although not the best surfer at Malibu, he was indisputably the king of the beach. His physical stature, enormous strength, booming voice, wit, and age made him a natural for leadership. No one was about to challenge him. Moreover, he actually lived right on the sand of the famed surfing point in a shack that he had built without permission of any kind.

Kemp Aaberg, an older brother of my best friend, Denny, began surfing at Malibu during the summer of 1956. Kemp would become one of the stars of several of Bruce Brown's surfing movies. Kemp told me that he was "hanging around the entrance to Tubesteak's shack after a good go-out on the waves. Everyone was laughing, talking, and drying out in the sun. Suddenly, the damp Army blanket that served as the door to the palm-frond shack was swept aside and there stood the Tube, observing his flock. Then, in a very loud, deep, authoritative voice, he proclaimed, 'I AM THE KAHUNA.' Everyone had a great laugh, and we all knew from that

day on who our leader was at Malibu!"

Terry Tracy was born in Los Angeles in 1935 and grew up attending Catholic schools, including all-boys Cathedral High, operated by the Christian Brothers. He was an outstanding football player but the siren call of waves had begun to interfere with both his interscholastic sports and his studies by the time he was 15. He began spending more and more time surfing at San Onofre. Upon graduation in 1953 he went to Santa Monica City College, playing football and occasionally studying. After a year he called it quits. He went to work for a Los Angeles Spring Street savings and loan run by an aunt. He lasted two years before quitting in 1956.

Exchanging his suit and tie for a pair of trunks, he headed up to Malibu. He fell in love with the waves that broke along the rock-reefed point on the west side of the Malibu Pier. He decided to stay. Right there on the sand. He built a shack out of lumber and palm fronds, just inland from the high-tide line. He furnished the interior with a small stove, a couch, a mattress, milk crates,

beach towels, and posters. Tracy built a new, sturdier shack on a raised platform in 1957 and added to his furnishings. Some surfers thought he had sold out and was going upscale.

Shortly after Tracy arrived at Malibu, he acquired the nickname Tubesteak. Different versions for the origins of his sobriquet abound. He himself had two or three explanations, including having worked for a restaurant called Tubesteak's. The story that had the most currency when I started surfing at Malibu said that Tracy showed up at a barbeque with hotdogs instead of the steaks he had promised. When someone complained, Tracy, without batting an eye and in high dudgeon, said, "There are T-bone steaks, Porterhouse steaks, rib-eye steaks ... these are tube steaks." Everyone collapsed in laughter. From then on Terry Tracy was known as Tubesteak. I suspect there were many surfers who never knew his real name.

When the Tube hit the waves it was on a 10'6" balsa board. Even when polyurethane foam boards made their appearance in 1958, he stuck to his old board. He didn't maneuver his board with exceptional quickness or agility but would drop down the face of a wave, make a sweeping turn, trim up, and come roaring down the line. No one would dare drop in on him. He was Tubesteak, the Kahuna. But also he and his board racing down a wave were like a battleship coming at you, and it was up to you to avoid a collision. When he got a good wave that broke all the way from the point into the cove—and occasionally to the pier—he'd strike a pose. People on the beach would laugh and applaud.

Tubesteak probably would have remained an obscure figure, known only to us local surfers, were it not for an Austrian immigrant and Hollywood screenwriter, Frederick Kohner, and his daughter, Kathy. The Kohners lived in Brentwood but enjoyed the beach at Malibu. By the time Kathy was 15 she was captivated by the surfers and surf-

ing. Cute and pert, and maybe five feet tall and 95 pounds, she decided she'd walk down the beach to Tubestek's shack and see if she could convince one of the surfers there to take her out on a board. Flat rejection is what she got. She was told to move on. Not willing to take no for an answer she told one of the surfers that she couldn't be bothering him by just sitting there. "Yeah?" he replied. "You're still breathing."

Just then Tubestek emerged from his shack and the Kahuna surveyed his domain. What was this little thing amongst his surfing novitiates? It's a girl, said one of the guys. No it's a midget, said another. Tubestek put an end to the debate, declaring Kathy a Gidget, half girl and half midget. As with Tubestek's own nickname there are other versions to this story but from that time on, the Tube became Kathy's protector. Gidget bought her first surfboard from Mike Doyle for \$30. Paddling and surfing on it soon became easier for the Gidge than carrying it from a parked car on the Coast Highway to the water. The balsa boards of that era were double the weight of boards of a similar size today.

Riding waves at Malibu gave Gidget a bad case of surf stoke. She'd come home at night talking excitedly about nothing but surfing and all the characters at the beach, starting with Tubestek, the Kahuna. Soon her father was taking notes. The daily tales and the characters were too colorful to pass up. Within six weeks he had a completed manuscript. *Gidget* was published in 1957 and quickly became a bestseller. *Life* was intrigued. Could this lifestyle and these characters be for real? The magazine sent a reporter and a photographer to Malibu. There was Tubestek, his shack, and all the guys on the beach. Hollywood was also intrigued. Kohner was paid \$50,000 and 5 percent of the gross for the movie rights. In 1957, \$50,000 bought a house on the beach in Malibu.

The movie "Gidget" was released in 1959. Cliff Robertson ably played

Tubestek, although physically Dan Blocker would have been more appropriate. Surfers were not entirely pleased with the movie. It had plenty of hokey Hollywood in it and no one liked James Darren, except a million teenage girls. He didn't look the part of Moondoggie, couldn't begin to surf, and was apprehensive about even going in the water. Several of our local guys worked in the movie, though. Doug McClure, a budding actor, a real surfer, and a friend of my older brother's, played the part of Waikiki, and others, including Mickey Munoz, worked as stunt doubles. Small and wiry, Munoz put on a blond wig and a girl's bathing suit and surfed for Sandra Dee, who played Gidget.

Tubestek didn't directly profit from the movie, but his reputation as the Kahuna of Malibu now spread far and wide. He was asked by different shapers to represent their surfboards and paid to appear at surf expos and in surfing movies. In the spring of 1960 Denny Aaberg and I, and many others from Pacific Palisades and Malibu, went to the Surf-O-Rama expo at the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium. Tubestek

was there representing Dewey Weber surfboards. He was standing in front of Dewey's exhibit, looking larger than life as usual and wearing a Hawaiian shirt that could have covered a bear. I had been saving my paper route money for six months to buy a new board. The Tube made me a deal that later caused Dewey to blanch. Dewey thought about backing out of it—I was but 13 and couldn't have held him to a contract—but with a little Tubestek influence he stuck to it.

By 1960 the Tube was married to Phyllis, a lovely girl who was devoted to the Kahuna. They would soon buy a house in San Clemente and settle into middle-class life, including filling their home with seven children. Tubestek continued to surf, now back at his original spot of San Onofre, until he hit 50. From then on he mostly sat on the beach, regaling all with his wonderful tales of the golden years at Malibu. He died on August 22 at the age of 77. ■

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The Art of Trains

Rail offers a poetic way to watch the world

by MICAH MATTIX

It was a warm autumn day in 1996, and I was sitting on a Swiss train with a backpack full of my father-in-law's potatoes. My wife and I had been married just a few months, and we didn't have much money. She was finishing her last year of studies in social work, and I was teaching English-language courses in Geneva, making just enough to pay the rent, utilities, and food. I could make a good wage one month, but very little the next, depending on the number of students. This was a particularly difficult month, and we were excited about the 80 pounds of free potatoes my

wife's father had offered us. There'd be no want of potato soup, potato bread, or rösti, and the money we'd save on the staple could go towards a little extra fruit or vegetables, or maybe even some beer or ice cream.

We didn't have a car, so I walked the six miles to my wife's parents' house, picked up the potatoes, and walked the three remaining miles to the station in Etoy. It seems strange to take a train for what turned out to be a little over three miles, but those potatoes were heavy. Shortly after leaving my father-in-law's, I could feel the weight of them in my knees with each step. As I was

Front Lines

walking, my wife's grandparents pulled up beside me and offered me a ride, but I refused in a vain attempt to maintain a sense of self-sufficiency.

When I arrived at the station, I was exhausted, thirsty, and sore. It was a great relief to step on the *régional*, which would arrive in Morges after a few local stops. I hadn't ridden on that particular train much, and I became confused about where I should get off. I grabbed my potatoes and got off at what I thought was the first stop in Morges. It wasn't. I had gotten off at the stop before, which was at least another mile from town.

As much as I despised that mile, and the inconvenience of that day, it did nothing to cool my love of trains. If there were an occasion to regret not having a car, surely this was it, but I didn't. I had come to love the sound of popping electrical wires and groaning metal, the stale smell of cigarettes in cabins formerly allotted to smokers, and the rhythm of the wheels on the rail joints. I memorized all the recorded announcements on the line from Morges to Geneva, which I took into work each day. These incomprehensible words (at least to me) were like magic, conjuring the beautiful Swiss countryside that seemed to change with the light.

My love of trains is at least in part a love of novelty. My father worked briefly for the metro in Seattle, but I rarely used public transportation before moving overseas. And while I had visited Switzerland before, my first year of living there was the beginning of a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the country, and my commute was a daily opportunity to observe the habits and mannerisms of these people who were both so different and not so different from myself. But it's more than that.

To get on a train is like stepping into another world, from which the first can be viewed almost as a work of art—a transformed image of reality. The train window is the frame, and as farm hous-

es, school children waiting for the bus, or businessmen driving to work pass in front of it, you see things as they are and as they are not. The window offers a true image of everyday life, but one cut from its original context, not by the artist but by technology. This lack of context allows you to provide your own. You can imagine the farmer's day and his preoccupation with milk, the schoolchildren's vague sense of worry and hope each morning, the breakfast table at the château in the distance, you can even become a part of those images yourself, entertaining possibilities suggested by them as they pass.

I remember experiencing something similar as a child, riding in the back seat of my parents' station wagon as we drove to Spokane in the summer to visit my grandparents. It's possible to engage reflectively with the world around you as you drive or sit in the front passenger seat, but it's more difficult. The concentration required by driving is limiting, as is the view of the road, which is a constant reminder of reality, of your destination, whether it's the office or a vacation home, complete with those Puritanical mile markers that remind you how far you still have to go.

Trains offer the opportunity to people-watch. There are typically two sorts of people on a train—professionals and vacationers—and both are fruitful sources for the imagination. Vacationers offer the most obvious respite from reality. With their backpacks, Italian hiking shoes, maps, and brochures, they remind you that there are millions of people not going to work. For me, this was always bittersweet, because while I could observe their excitement for the day ahead, it made the harsh reality of the workday awaiting me in Geneva seem that much harsher. I preferred watching professionals. There was something about seeing others go someplace, dressed sharply in pressed shirts and slacks, *Le Temps* tucked under the shoulder, that made me feel that I too was “going someplace.”

I am not one of those individuals who feels he has to choose between cars and trains, private and public transportation. I love cars. They offer a sense of freedom quite distinct from the sense of freedom trains offer. Driving a car makes you feel in control of your life. If you don't like your destination, you can change it. If you're tired or want a coffee, you can stop. This is, perhaps, a distinctly American sort of freedom. It is prosaic, preoccupied as it is with “plot,” whereas the freedom offered by trains is poetic, associative, largely because the destination is predetermined. There is a literary lesson here, too, about the value of formal constraints, but that's another topic.

Are trains more convenient than cars? I don't know. Transfers are a pain, as is walking to the station in the rain. And while I don't deny that trains offer at least the possibility of working and traveling at the same time, I didn't do it as often as I had anticipated. In all my years of riding trains, it was the exception rather than the rule to see someone banging out a letter on a laptop or reading a report. Trains can be crowded, which makes them uncomfortable, and come with an assortment of smells that can be either intriguing or nauseating. They are a favorite method of suicide, especially among men, something my wife and I learned one summer returning from Bordeaux.

As much as I love trains, I am skeptical about the recent push to invest in rail in America. We've come too far with cars, it seems to me, and it's too late to go back. Who knows what new form of public transportation using America's existing infrastructure might be invented in the future? But one thing I do know is that there is nothing quite like finding yourself alone on a *régional*, sunlight pouring into the cabin, with a moment to quietly reflect on life. ■

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Calling Bibi's Bluff

What is Bibi Netanyahu up to? With all his warnings of Iran's "nuclear capability," of red lines being crossed, of "breakout," of the international community failing in its duty, of an "existential threat" to Israel, what is the prime minister's game?

The answer is apparent. Bibi wants Iran's nuclear program shut down, all enrichment ended, all enriched uranium removed, and guarantees that Iran will never again start up a nuclear program.

And if Tehran refuses to surrender its right even to a peaceful nuclear program, he wants its nuclear facilities, especially the enrichment facility at Fordow, deep inside a mountain, obliterated.

And he wants us to do it.

How has Bibi gone about getting America to fight Israel's war?

He is warning, indeed threatening, that if we do not set a date certain for Iran to end enrichment of uranium, and assure Israel that we will attack Iran if it rejects our ultimatum, Israel will bomb Iran and start the war itself.

Fail to give us assurances that you will attack Iran if Iran refuses to surrender its nuclear "capability," Bibi is warning, and we will attack Iran, with all the consequences that will have for you, for us, and for the Middle East.

This is diplomatic extortion.

Thus far, Obama has called Bibi's bluff, assuming it is a bluff. The United States has refused to set a date certain by which Iran must end all enrichment. Hillary Clinton said this weekend that we are "not setting deadlines." And the election, which could give Obama a free hand to pursue his own timetable

and terms for a deal with Tehran, is only eight weeks off.

If Obama, no fan of Bibi, wins, he can tell Bibi: We oppose any Israeli preemptive strike. If you attack Iran, we will not support you. Nor will we follow up an Israeli attack with an American attack.

Bibi's dilemma: Despite his threats of Israeli strikes on Iran, Tehran is taunting him. His Cabinet is divided. The Shas Party in his coalition opposes a war, as do respected retired generals, former Mossad leaders and President Shimon Peres.

And the Americans have sent emissaries, including Secretary Leon Panetta, to tell Bibi we oppose an Israeli attack. The Pentagon does not want war. Three former U.S. Central Command heads oppose a war. And last week, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Gen. Martin Dempsey said he does not wish to be "complicit" in any Israeli attack.

The Israelis were furious, but suddenly the war talk subsided.

From the clashes, public and private, between these two close allies, it is apparent the United States shares neither Israel's assessment of the threat nor Israel's sense of urgency.

Why not? Why, when Netanyahu says Israel is facing an "existential threat," do the Americans dismiss it?

The first reason is the elephant in the room no one mentions: Israel's own nuclear arsenal. If Fordow is a difficult target for Israel to destroy with conventional air strikes, it could be annihilated with a single atom bomb.

And Israel has hundreds.

Indeed, if Israel has ruled out use of an atomic weapon, even when it says its very existence is threatened, and

neoconservatives claim that Iran's mullahs are such death-wishing fanatics they cannot be deterred even by nuclear weapons, what is Israel's awesome atomic arsenal for?

What this suggests is that the Israelis do not believe what they are saying. Their nuclear deterrent is highly credible to all their neighbors. Their existence is not in imminent peril. And the mullahs are not madmen.

When Ronald Reagan was about to take the oath, suddenly those mullahs, assessing that the new American president might be a man of action, not just words, had all the U.S. hostages winging their way home.

When the USS *Vincennes* mistakenly shot down an Iranian airliner in 1988, the Ayatollah Khomeini, founding father of the Islamic Republic, ended his war with Iraq on unfavorable terms, fearing America was about to intervene on the side of Saddam Hussein.

Like all rulers, good and evil, Iran's leaders want to preserve what they have—families, homes, lives, privileges, possessions, power.

Moreover, the latest report of the international inspectors reveals that while Iran increased its supply of uranium enriched to 20 percent since last spring, an even larger share of that 20-percent uranium has been diverted to make fuel plates for Iran's U.S.-provided research reactor to make medical isotopes.

If there is no reason to go to war with Iran, there is every reason not to go to war. Notwithstanding the alarmist rhetoric of Bibi and Ehud Barak, President Obama should stand his ground. And on this one, Gov. Romney should stand with the president, not the prime minister. ■

Who Closed the American Mind?

Allan Bloom was brilliant, but wrong about Burke and multiculturalism

by PATRICK J. DENEEN

One crisp morning 26 years ago I was walking across the campus of the University of Chicago, where I had just enrolled as a first-year Ph.D. candidate in the renowned Committee on Social Thought. While I had not yet met him, I had heard much about Allan Bloom, a legendary professor, teacher, and lecturer. I had read his translation of Plato's *Republic* as an undergraduate and had some notion that I would write my eventual dissertation under his direction.

As I crossed one of the campus quads, I saw a man sitting on a bench, swaddled under a heavy overcoat and his head topped by a fedora. A photographer was arranging his equipment across from him, while he bemusedly awaited some kind of publicity shoot. While I realized only a short time later that the man I had seen was Allan Bloom, it was a year later—a quarter-century ago—that I realized that I had witnessed the photo session that led to the headshot inside the hardcover jacket of Bloom's blockbuster book *The Closing of the American Mind*. By that time, I had left the University of Chicago, disillusioned by the program and put off by Bloom's circle of students. But I loved the book and credit it, at least in part, for my eventual return to the academy and a career as a professor of political philosophy.

I still assign the book with some regularity, especially in a freshman seminar on education that I've taught over the last half-decade. As the years have passed, I've noticed how the book has aged—many of its cultural references are long dated, while contemporary hot-button issues like gay marriage and religious liberty are altogether absent from Bloom's confident pronouncements on our likely future. Still, the book continues to excite new readers—today's students find it engaging, even if, unlike their elders, they don't get especially up-

set by it and almost unanimously have never heard of it before. And with every re-reading I invariably find something new that I hadn't noticed before, a testimony to the expansiveness of Bloom's fertile mind.

While I continue to learn much from Bloom, over the years I have arrived at three main judgments about the book's relevance, its prescience, and its failings. First, Bloom was right to be concerned about the specter of relativism—though perhaps even he didn't realize how bad it would get, particularly when one considers the reaction to his book compared to its likely reception were it published today. Second, his alarm over the threat of "multiculturalism" was misplaced and constituted a bad misreading of the *zeitgeist*, in which he mistook the left's tactical use of identity politics for the rise of a new kind of communalist and even traditionalist tribalism. And, lastly, most of his readers—even today—remain incorrect in considering him to be a representative of "conservatism," a label that he eschewed and a worldview he rejected. Indeed, Bloom's argument was one of the early articulations of "neoconservatism"—a puzzling locution used to describe a position that is, in fact, today more correctly captured by its critics on the left as "neo-liberalism."

What should most astonish any reader of Bloom's *Closing* after 25 years is the fact that this erudite treatise about the crisis of higher education not only sat atop the bestseller list for many weeks but was at the center of an intense, lengthy, and ferocious debate during the late 1980s over education, youth, culture, and politics. In many ways, it became the most visible and

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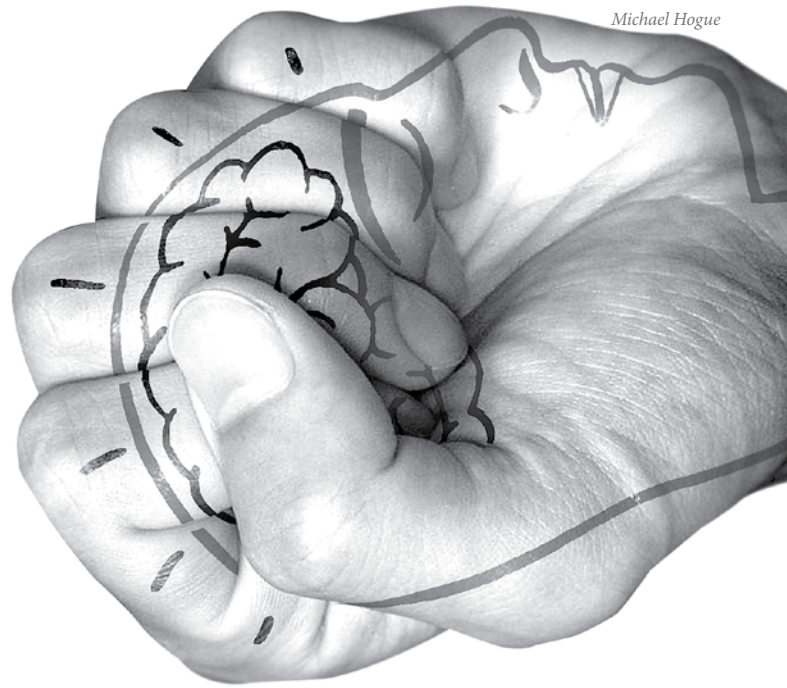
weightiest salvo in what came to be known as “the culture wars,” and people of a certain generation still hold strong opinions about Bloom and his remarkable, unlikely bestseller.

Today there are many books about the crisis of higher education—while the nature of the crisis may change, higher education never seems to be out of the woods—but none before or since Bloom’s book achieved its prominence or made its author as rich and famous as a rock star. It was a book that many people bought but few read, at least not beyond a few titillating passages condemning rock-and-roll and feminism. Yet it was a book about which almost everyone with some engagement in higher education held an opinion—indeed, it was obligatory to have considered views on Bloom’s book, whether one had read it or not.

Bloom’s book was at the center of a debate—one that had been percolating well before its publication in 1987—over the nature and content of a university education. That debate intensified with the growing numbers of “diverse” populations seeking recognition on college campuses—concomitant with the rise of departments of Women’s Studies, African-American Studies, and a host of other “Studies” studies—leading to demands that the curriculum increasingly reflect contributions by non-male, non-white, non-European and even non-dead authors.

The Closing of the American Mind spawned hundreds, perhaps even thousands of responses—most of them critiques—including an article entitled “The Philosopher Despot” in *Harper’s* by political theorist Benjamin Barber, and the inevitably titled *The Opening of the American Mind* by Lawrence Levine. Partly spurred by the firestorm initiated by Bloom’s book, perennial presidential candidate Jesse Jackson led a march through the campus of Stanford University shouting through a bullhorn, “Hey hey, ho ho, Western Civ has got to go!” Passions for campus reform ran high, and an avalanche of words, articles, denunciations, and ad hominem attacks greeted Bloom’s defense of the Western canon.

Yet the nuances of Bloom’s qualified defense of the Western canon were rarely appreciated by critics or supporters alike. While Bloom was often lumped together with E.D. Hirsch—whose *Cultural Literacy* was published the same year and rose to number two on the *New York Times* bestseller list, just behind *Closing*—Bloom’s argument was fundamentally different and far more philosophically challenging than Hirsch’s more mundane, if nevertheless accurate, point that educated people increasingly did not have knowledge about their own culture. Hirsch’s book



spoke to anxiety about the loss of a shared literary and cultural inheritance, which today has been largely supplanted by references to a few popular television shows and sports televised on ESPN.

Bloom made an altogether different argument: American youth were increasingly raised to believe that nothing was True, that every belief was merely the expression of an opinion or preference. Americans were raised to be “cultural relativists,” with a default attitude of non-judgmentalism. Not only all other traditions but even one’s own (whatever that might be) were simply views that happened to be held by some people and could not be judged inferior or superior to any other. He bemoaned particularly the decline of household and community religious upbringing in which the worldviews of children were shaped by a comprehensive vision of the good and the true. In one arresting passage, he waxed nostalgic for the days when people *cared*: “It was not necessarily the best of times in America when Catholics and Protestants were suspicious of and hated one another; but at least they were taking their beliefs seriously...”

He lamented the decline of such true belief not because he personally held any religious or cultural tradition to be true—while Bloom was raised as a Jew, he was at least a skeptic, if not a committed atheist—but because he believed that such inherited belief was the source from which a deeper and more profound philosophic longing arose. It wasn’t “cultural literacy” he wanted, but rather the possibility of that liberating excitement among college-age youth that can come from realizing that one’s own inherited tradition might not be *true*. From that harrowing of belief can come the ultimate philosophic quest—the effort to replace mere

prejudice with the quest for knowledge of the True.

Near the beginning of *Closing*, Bloom relates one telling story of a debate with a psychology professor during his time teaching at Cornell. Bloom's adversary claimed, "it was his function to get rid of prejudices in his students." Bloom compared that function to the activity of an older sibling who informs the kids that there is no Santa Claus—disillusionment and disappointment. Rather than inspiring students to replace "prejudice" with a curiosity for Truth, the mere shattering of illusion would simply leave students "passive, disconsolate, indifferent, and subject to authorities like himself."

Bloom relates that "I found myself responding to the professor of psychology that I personally tried to teach my students prejudices, since nowadays—with the general success of his method—they had learned to doubt beliefs even before they believed in anything ... One has to have the experience of really believing before one can have the thrill of liberation." Bloom's preferred original title—before being overruled by Simon and Schuster—was *Souls Without Longing*. He was above all concerned that students, in being deprived of the experience of living in their own version of Plato's cave, would never know or experience the opportunity of philosophic ascent.

This core of Bloom's analysis seems to be not only correct, but, if possible, he may have underestimated its extent. Consider the intense response to Bloom's book as evidence against his thesis. The overwhelming response by academia and the intelligentsia to his work suggested anything but "indifference" among many who might describe themselves as cultural relativists. Extraordinary debates took place over what books and authors should and should not appear in the "canon," and extensive efforts were undertaken to shape new curricula in light of new demands of "multiculturalism." The opponents of Bloom's book evinced a deep concern for the formation of students, if their concern for what and whom they read was any indication.

In retrospect, however, we can discern that opponents to Bloom's book were not the first generation of "souls without longing," but the last generation raised within households, traditions, and communities of the sort that Bloom described, and the last who were educated in the older belief that a curriculum guided the course of a human life. The ferocity of their reaction to Bloom was not simply born of a defense of "multiculturalism" (though they thought that to be the case) but a belief that only a curriculum of the right authors and books properly shapes the lives of their students. Even in their disagreement with Bloom, they shared a key premise: the books we ask our students to read will shape their souls.

Today we live in a different age, one that so worried Bloom—an age of indifference. Institutions of higher learning have almost completely abandoned even a residual belief that there are some books and authors that an educated person should encounter. A rousing defense of a curriculum in which female, African-American, Latino, and other authors should be represented has given way to a nearly thoroughgoing indifference to the content of our students' curricula. Academia is committed to teaching "critical thinking" and willing to allow nearly any avenue in the training of that amorphous activity, but eschews any belief that the content of what is taught will or ought to influence how a person lives.

Thus, not only is academia indifferent to whether our students become virtuous human beings (to use a word seldom to be found on today's campuses), but it holds itself to be unconnected to their vices—thus there remains no self-examination over higher education's role in producing the kinds of graduates who helped turn Wall Street into a high-stakes casino and our nation's budget into a giant credit card. Today, in the name of choice, non-judgmentalism, and toleration, institutions prefer to offer the greatest possible expanse of options, in the implicit belief that every 18- to 22-year-old can responsibly fashion his or her own character unaided.

Bloom was so correct about the predictable rise of a society defined by indifference that one is entitled to conclude that were *Closing* published today, it would barely cause a ripple. This is not because most of academia would be inclined to agree with his arguments any more than they did in 1987. Rather, it is simply the case that hardly anyone in academe any longer thinks that curricula are worth fighting over. Jesse Jackson once thought it at least important to oppose Western Civilization in the name of an alternative; today, it would be thought untoward and unworkable to propose *any* shared curriculum.

Those who run institutions of higher learning tell themselves that this is because they respect the choices of their young adult charges; however, their silence is born precisely of the indifference predicted by Bloom. Today's academic leaders don't believe the content of those choices has any fundamental influence on the souls of our students, most likely because it would be unfashionable to believe that they have souls. As long as everyone is tolerant of everyone else's choices, no one can get hurt. What is today called "tolerance," Bloom rightly understood to be more deeply a form of *indifference*, the extreme absence of care, leading to a society composed not only of "souls without longing" but humans treated as utilitarian bodies that are increasingly incapable of love.

If this core argument of Bloom's seems prescient, a second major argument not only seems to me incorrect but in fact is contradicted by this first argument. It was because of his criticisms about the rise of "multiculturalism" that Bloom came to be readily identified with the right-leaning culture-warriors like William Bennett and Dinesh D'Souza and was so vilified on the academic left. Yet Bloom's first argument implicitly makes a qualified praise of "multiculturalism," at least as the necessary launching pad for the philosophic quest. In his praise of the belief structures that once inspired some students to disillusionment, he was singing the praises of a society composed of various cultural traditions that exercised a strong influence over the beliefs and worldviews of that culture's youth.

Such qualified praise led him to wax nostalgic about an age when Catholics and Protestants cared enough to hate one another. But at his most alarmist—and, frankly, either least perceptive or most pandering—Bloom portrays then-regnant calls for "multiculturalism" as a betrayal of the norms of liberal democracy and as the introduction of dangerous tribalism into the university, as well as the body politic. At times, Bloom painted a portrait in which the once-ascendant claims of American individual rights, enshrined in the Declaration of Independence, were about to be displaced by the incipient warfare of identity tribalism and groupthink.

At his best, Bloom sees through the sham of yesterday's "multiculturalism" and today's push for "diversity"—little of which had to do with enthusiasm for real cultural diversity, but which was then and remains today a way for individuals in under-represented groups to advance entitlement programs within America's elite institutions. Those individuals, while claiming special benefits that should accrue to members in a particular group, had no great devotion to any particular "culture" outside the broader American anti-culture of liberalism itself. Indeed, the "cultures" in question were never really cultures at all, if by a culture we mean an identifiable group of people who share a generational, geographical, and distinctive set of customs aimed at shaping the worldview and practices of successive generations.

By this measure, women, blacks, Hispanics, and so on were people who might once have belonged to a variety of particular cultures, albeit not specifically as women or blacks or Hispanics. These new categorical groupings came to be based on claims of victimhood rather than any actual shared culture; many cultures have been persecuted, but it does not follow that everyone who has been mistreated constitutes a culture. While in passing Bloom acknowledged the paucity of such claims to cultural status, too often he was will-

ing to take seriously professions of "multiculturalism" and to lament the decline of the American project of universalist natural rights.

The stronger case would have been to expose the claims of multiculturalism as cynical expressions from members of groups that did not, in fact, share a culture, while showing that such self-righteous claims, more often than not, were merely a thin veneer masking a lust for status, wealth and power. If the past quarter century has revealed anything, it has consistently shown that those who initially participated in calls for multiculturalism have turned out to be among the voices most hostile to actual cultures, particularly ones seeking to maintain coherent religious and moral traditions.

Bloom was prone to obtuseness about this fact because, at base, Bloom himself was not an admirer or supporter of the multiplicity of cultures. Indeed, he was suspicious and even hostile to the claims of culture upon the shaping of human character and belief—including religious belief. He was not a conservative in the Burkean sense; that is, someone apt to respect the inheritances of tradition and custom as a repository of past wisdom and experience. Rather, he was at his core a liberal: someone who believes that the only benefit of our cultural formation was that it constituted a "cave" from which ambitious and rebellious youth could be encouraged to pursue a life of philosophy.

Reflection about Bloom's distaste for particular cultures suggests that the differences between Bloom and his apparent nemesis, the Cornell professor of psychology, are rather minimal. Both wanted to disabuse the youth of their "prejudices" in the name of openness: the psychology professor in the name of nihilistic openness, and Bloom for the encouragement of philosophical inquiry, open to the possibility of Truth as well as the possibility of nihilism.

In fact, Bloom's critique of the "multicultural" left is identical to and drawn from the critique of the "multicultural" right advanced by his teacher, Leo Strauss. In his seminal work *Natural Right and History*, Strauss identified Burke's criticisms of the French Revolution as one of the lamentable responses to the "Crisis of Modern Natural Right," a crisis that arose as a reaction against the social contractarianism of "modern natural right." Burke's argument against the revolutionary impulses of social contractarianism constituted a form of conservative "historicism"—that is, in Strauss's view, the rejection of claims of natural right in favor of a preference for the vagaries of History. While today's Straussians concentrate

Cover

their criticisms largely on left historicism (i.e., progressivism), Strauss was just as willing to focus his criticisms on right historicism, that is, the traditionalism of Burke and his progeny.

Ironically, because the left in the 1980s adopted the language (if not the substance) of multiculturalism, Bloom was able to turn those Straussian critiques of Burke against those on the left—though of course they were no Burkeans, even if they used some Burkean language. For this reason, Bloom was assumed by almost everyone to be a “conservative,” a label that he not only explicitly rejected, but a worldview that he philosophically and personally abhorred.

Bloom’s argument became a major touchstone in the development of “neoconservatism,” a label that became associated with many fellow students of Strauss but which, ironically, explicitly rested on rejection of the claims of culture, tradition, and custom—the main impulses of Burkean conservatism. Bloom continuously invoked the natural-rights teachings of the Declaration and Constitution as necessary correctives to the purported dangers of left multiculturalism: rather than endorsing the supposed inheritance of various cultures, he commended the universalistic claims of liberal democracy, which ought to trump any identification with particular culture and creed. The citizen who emerged from the State of Nature, shorn of any specific cultural, religious, or ancestral limitation, was the political analogue for the philosopher who emerged from the Cave. Not everyone could become a philosopher, Bloom insisted, but everyone *could* be a liberal citizen, and ought rightly to be liberated from the limitations of place and culture—if for no other reason, to make them more tolerant of the radical philosophers in their midst.

Bloom’s was thus not only an early salvo in the culture wars, but an incipient articulation of the neoconservative impulse toward universalistic expansion. Burke’s willingness to acknowledge the basic legitimacy of most cultures—his “multiculturalism”—led him, in the main, to oppose most forms of imperialism. The rejection of multiculturalism, and the valorization of a monolithic liberal project, has inclined historically to a tendency toward expansionism and even imperialism, and neoconservatism is only the latest iteration of this tendency. While many of the claims about Strauss’s influence on the Iraq invasion and the neoconservative insistence upon spreading democracy throughout the world were confused, there was in fact a direct lineage from Bloom’s arguments against the multicultural left and rise of the neo-liberal or neoconservative imperialistic impulse. Bloom explicitly rejected the cautiousness and prudence endorsed

by conservatism as a hindrance to philosophy, and thus rejected it as a political matter as a hindrance to the possibility of perfectibility:

Conservatives want young people to know that this tawdry old world cannot respond to their demands for perfection. ... But ... man is a being who must take his orientation by his possible perfection. Utopianism is, as Plato taught us at the outset, the fire with which we must play because it is the only way we can find out what we are.

Bloom here witheringly rejected “realism” as “the easy way out” of real inquiry; yet, in the wake of the Iraq invasion, one of Bloom’s longstanding allies and admirers, John Agresto, lamented the overconfidence of the neoconservatives, and especially their neglect of the reality of culture, in a post-invasion book entitled *Mugged by Reality*.

Bloom’s book remains a kind of liberation, an intellectually adventurous work written with a kind of boldness and even recklessness rarely to be found in today’s more politically correct and cramped age. But it was, ultimately, more reckless than many of its readers realized at the time—not because it was conservative, but precisely because it rejected the conservative impulses to modesty, prudence, the genius of place, and tradition. It opened an era of “culture wars” in which the only combatant who seemed absent from the field was a true conservatism. Perhaps it is finally time for an opening of the American mind. ■



Michael Hogue

Modernism & Conservatism

Does the culture of “The Waste Land” lead to freedom—or something more?

by DANIEL MCCARTHY

Nearly 30 years before he shocked *National Review* by endorsing Barack Obama for president, senior editor Jeffery Hart announced a divorce of a different kind from the American right. With “The Intelligent Woman’s Guide to a Modern American Conservatism”—published in *The New Right Papers* in 1982 and previewed in *NR* a few months earlier—Hart split with tradition and declared himself on the side of modernism in art, literature, and morals.

“Despite its recent victories, the conservative cause has been creating unnecessary difficulties for itself,” he wrote, and as “a professor of English at Dartmouth, a senior editor of *National Review*, and a conservative activist”—he might have added former Reagan speechwriter—Hart knew better than most what limits the right’s philosophy ran up against. “The fact is, a lot of my students are not sold on conservatism. ... They think conservatives are preppies against sex.”

Was it true? “In some visible cases, the main content of ‘conservatism’ seems to be a refusal of experience,” he wrote. Yet Hart was arguing not for hedonism but for what he called “the ‘proportions’ of orthodoxy.” He had in mind much more than sex. “The Intelligent Woman’s Guide,” its title adapted from Shaw, made the case that conservatism was American modernism, at the heart of which lay a drive for freedom. “Americans believe in possibility, in ‘making it new,’ as Ezra Pound once urged. If conservatism is to be truly American,” according to Hart, “it must embrace that sense of possibility.”

And with that possibility the culture that expresses it, from T.S. Eliot’s “The Waste Land” to Picasso’s “Les Femmes d’Alger (O. J. R. M.).” Modernism, Hart explained, was not a period but a spirit. Works produced in the first decade of the 20th century could be more modern than anything made today, if they partook of the ethos: “The modern artist is

concerned to assert his freedom, and that involves an adversary relationship to past conventions. ... a modern work creates its own conventions and does not take them over from previous works,” even if it appropriates fragments from the past. This bric-a-brac approach is part of what it means to be modern: “Freedom implies an eclectic style.”

Hart’s essay seemingly won no converts—a symposium of reactions in the December 25, 1981 *NR* was entirely negative, including objections from Hart’s colleagues Joseph Sobran, Linda Bridges, Rick Brookhiser, and Charles Kesler. The last, a disciple of Harry Jaffa, couched his critique in terms worthy of the master: Hart was “going backward ... from Burke to Hegel to Marx and Nietzsche. ... The language of authenticity belongs to Heidegger, but the politics of emotion and authenticity belong to Hitler.”

So far, so bad. If “An Intelligent Woman’s Guide” was a dud 30 years ago, why would anyone want to give it a second look now? The fact that Hart has become the most outspoken “Obamacon” of 2012 only heightens suspicion that the Dartmouth don left the right long ago and has since been a liberal in conservatives’ clothing.

But Hart was right: there is a deep connection between modernism and conservatism—not, however, because modernism means freedom but because modernism shows us what comes after freedom has run to disillusionment.

Irving Babbitt, the Harvard professor of Romance languages who was one of the preeminent conservative minds of the 20th century’s first decades, provides a definition of modernism that complements Hart’s: “The modern spirit is the positive and critical spirit, the spirit that refuses to take things on authority.” Modern man cannot take things on authority, simply because there are no authorities

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left. Democracy, religious liberty, scientific inquiry, and free markets have torn down the old hierarchies that once set the standards for art, morals, and philosophical truth in the Western world.

This transition from classes to the masses largely overlapped the 19th century, though it only completed itself at the time literary modernism arose—shortly before (and flourishing after) World War I. That conflict was a clarifying moment in art. “The war smashed romanticism and sentimentalism, naïve notions of patriotism and imperial adventure,” writes critic Malcolm Bradbury in *The Modern British Novel*,

But, paradoxically, some of the complex aesthetic ideas that had stirred in the years between 1910 and 1914—‘hardness,’ ‘abstraction,’ ‘collage,’ ‘fragmentation,’ ‘dehumanization’—and the key themes of chaotic history, Dionysian energy, and the ‘destructive element,’ did help to provide the discourse and forms of the world to come.

T.S. Eliot, in a review of James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, would allude to “the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history.” In a world like that—the one described in Eliot’s own masterpiece, “The Waste Land”—everything was

The Eliot who stared into the abyss in “The Waste Land” saw something there that brought him back to belief.

possible. But nothing was real; nothing possessed fixed meaning.

Literary modernism was a product of this desert of meaning, as well as an attempt to transform it. Sanguine souls—or manic ones—might follow Pound’s injunction to “make it new.” Yet newness led Pound to enthusiasm for Benito Mussolini and sent others down the path of Bolshevism. This was new politics to answer the new art, certainly: an attempt by main force to create value and meaning in a world that had been stripped of them. Liberalism had failed to provide answers, and if it provided bread, it asked men to live by that alone. And when between the wars even bread seemed beyond liberalism’s powers, new modes of authority-politics arose.

Then they fell in Europe’s last great conflagration, which ended with Stalin in command of half the continent but put paid to any delusion that communism was on the side of progress, let alone art. (The CIA, quick to recognize this, began to subsidize modern art and the modern-minded literary journal *Encounter*.) “All the great tyrannies of the twentieth century are monstrously reactionary,” Hart insisted in 1981. “They are rear-guard attempts to hold back the universal human desire for concrete freedom. Naturally they suppress modern art. They are puritanical about sex. From Hitler and Stalin through Mao and the Ayatollah they have been desperate attempts to re-establish a lost community.”

But why does modern man feel such a longing for community?

The answer is that modernism and modernity are inherently unstable: the hollowing of authority that elicits modernism in the first place leaves a vacuum something will fill. In the immediate postwar West, that something was a state-resuscitated liberalism. The war effort had temporarily reinvigorated authority—that of parents and pastors as well as presidents and generals. The baby-boom generation born into this war-reinforced web of authority rebelled against it—but did so with a doomed idealism that echoed the romanticism (and revolutionary fever) of more than a century before. Again it failed, and modernism came roaring back in the popular culture of the 1970s and early 1980s: in nihilist punk and the alienation and ennui of authors such as Bret Easton Ellis.

Then—and still now—the ethos of the later 19th century came around again, with money and technology promising to supply what the Age of Aquarius failed to achieve. We’ve arrived at a world that looks a little like the *Brave New World* Aldous Huxley described back in 1932, at least as far psychopharmaceutical and pornographic substitutes for happiness are concerned. Freedom, yes—but to do what? To pass the time as painlessly as possible, through the most intense distractions available.

Modernism points a way out of this wasteland—but only if it’s carried to its utmost extent, past the point of all-consuming skepticism. Consider the case of Eliot, whose unflinching engagement with the modern condition brought him back to the understanding that society is never a mere contract or the expression of pure will or reason. Modernism brought Eliot back to tradition.

He would come to call himself a “classicist in literature, royalist in politics, and Anglo-Catholic in religion” after being baptized into the Church of England (and that same year, 1926, renouncing his American citizenship). If this self-description sounds too Tory by half, there’s no doubting the sincerity of his beliefs—they are well attested in such later works as *Four Quartets*, the play “Murder in the Cathedral,” and the essay “The Idea of a Christian Society.”

For these Eliot is much admired by cultural conservatives. But too many overlook the role his modernist commitments played in making him who he became. The Eliot who stared into the abyss in “The Waste Land” saw something there that brought him back to belief. Russell Kirk, writing in *Eliot and His Age*, perceived how it happened: “In the progress of a terrifying quest, some wisdom is regained, though no assurance of salvation. We end by knowing our peril, which is better than fatuity: before a man may be healed, he must recognize his sickness.” This diagnosis is what modernism provides—what perhaps only modernism can provide.

Modernism is freedom from all formerly established authority, a critical mindset, as Irving Babbitt said, that uncovers the shattered foundations of authorities old and new. Everything can be juxtaposed, recontextualized, and thrown into question. What’s left may seem to be sheer will—the individual free to choose his own direction in an endless sea of possibility. But one cannot even choose a direction without fixed points of reference by which to navigate. Those, however, are ready at hand in the civilization into which one is born. Modernism, after debunking rationalistic and universal pretensions, provides a surer basis for appreciating what we already have—presence and familiarity.

What Eliot accomplished through literary modernism is parallel to what David Hume discovered through thoroughgoing philosophical inquiry—another form of modernism. The acids of philosophy dissolved not only what Hume took to be superstition but even reason itself; he wound up casting into doubt even as basic a notion as “cause.” Pursued to its end, reason led to Pyrrhonian skepticism. But as Donald Livingston, professor emeritus of philosophy at Emory University, points out, this is not where Hume ended—he drew a distinction between the true philosopher, who having discovered reason’s limits accepts what is before philosophy, and the false philosopher, who attempts to rationalize his way beyond the limits. As Livingston summarizes:

The true philosopher recognizes that philosophical reflection consistently purged of the authority of the pre-reflective leads to total skepticism. In this moment of despair, hubristic reason ... becomes impotent and utterly silent. It is only then that the philosopher can recognize, for the first time, the authority of that radiant world of pre-reflective common life in which he has his being and which had always been a guide prior to the philosophic act.

Once reason has disestablished everything, including its own authority, what remains? The ground beneath your feet, the social order of which you are a part—things predicated not on any theory but on their immediacy. This is the profound conservatism to be realized from modernism. In Eliot’s case—and those of certain others, including Evelyn Waugh—the free and critical spirit led to the despair of “The Waste Land.” It’s the despair of Europe after World War I, the despair of Eliot in the midst of an unhappy marriage, and above all a poetic and philosophical despair over the absence of order. To this Eliot’s poem supplies an answer in its penultimate line: the Sanskrit *datta*, *dayadhvam*, *damyata*—give, sympathize, control. It’s a reasonable paraphrase for what Livingston calls “the autonomy of custom.” Or as literary critic Hugh Kenner says of Eliot’s poem, “The past exists in fragments precisely because nobody cares what it meant; it will unite itself and come alive in the mind of anyone who succeeds in caring...”

Following the spirit of modernism past despair to a new appreciation for the givens in life meant different things for Eliot and for Hume, to be sure. Both turned toward political conservatism, but while Eliot embraced the Christianity embedded in the given culture of his (adopted) country, Hume did not. “No assurance of salvation,” as Russell Kirk said.

But modernism, in literature or philosophy, clears away a lot of dead wood, including its own detritus. The rigid rationalisms and aimless will to power—the “restless desire of power after power, that ceaseth only in death”—that characterize today’s culture and politics break down under the solvents of modernism. What does not break down is the social world that pre-exists ideology and individual will. And the reference points provided by that social world, however minimal they may seem at first, imply larger constellations of customs—the very stuff of a civilization, including its ideas. Modernism has its risks, but it makes conservatism possible once more in a world otherwise blasted to fragments. ■

Japan's Bad Trade

Why won't anyone talk about Tokyo's auto protectionism?

by EAMONN FINGLETON

Mitt Romney was in his element a few years ago as the Obama administration struggled to rescue the Detroit auto industry. In an eat-your-spinach tone, he ticked off his recommendations for reform. Top management should go, executive dining rooms should be shut, and factory wages slashed. Then there were the industry's "legacy costs": given how drastically Detroit's market share had shrunk in the face of rampant imports, retiree entitlements had come to account for as much as \$2,000 per car. Countless retirees would just have to be thrown overboard.

Whatever the merits and demerits of Romney's lengthy list, it contained a notable omission. It made no mention of international trade. This despite the fact that for decades Detroit has been undermined by an egregiously unfair world trade system. As if to rub salt in Detroit's wounds, Romney held up Japanese automakers as a model of quality manufacturing—the same companies which for two generations have been the greatest beneficiaries of rigged markets.

As the Michigan-born son of a top auto executive—and as one of America's most capable experts on how the global economy really works—Romney certainly knew better. But he is hardly alone in but-toning his lip where trade with Japan is concerned. America's entire globalist elite has long realized that Tokyo no longer tolerates frank discussions and is often devastatingly effective in evening the score with anyone rash enough to challenge it.

Yet facts are facts. Here are a few which, though they remain hidden from most Americans, are widely known to media commentators, diplomats, Japan scholars, and of course aspiring presidential candidates:

1. The Japanese government has used a plethora of constantly evolving regulations to keep the combined share of all non-Japanese automakers to just 4 percent of the Japanese market. The share never varies, whether the yen is strong or weak. (The yen is up nearly 50 percent against the dollar in the last five years.)
2. The Detroit corporations, in common with all major automakers, make many cars in Europe configured for Britain's drive-on-the-left roads, and by extension for Japan's. They also make countless components and assemblies that have been shut out of Japan for no other reason than that they are not made there.
3. Even Volkswagen, which sells broadly as many cars around the world as Toyota, has been allocated—that is the right word—just 1 percent of the Japanese market; by contrast Toyota's share is close to 40 percent. (Volkswagen is lucky, incidentally: Hyundai's share is 0.02 percent and Daewoo's 0.003 percent, and this in a country where close to 1 percent of the people are ethnic Koreans.)

As Pat Choate, a former top executive of TRW Corporation and an expert on the global auto industry, points out, the fact that so little of the truth of the Japanese market has emerged in public in recent years is a message in itself.

The fundamental economic issue here is that by pricing high in the protected home market, Japanese automakers can powerfully subsidize their prices

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abroad. The policy is underpinned both by traditional Japanese cartel dynamics and by governmental “guidance.” Basically, the Japanese consumer unwittingly foots the bill for much of the Japanese industry’s consistently heavy investment in R&D and ever more efficient new production processes. This leaves cartel members free to price abroad at little more than low variable costs (which means they need aim to recover merely the cost of direct labor and immediate inputs such as components).

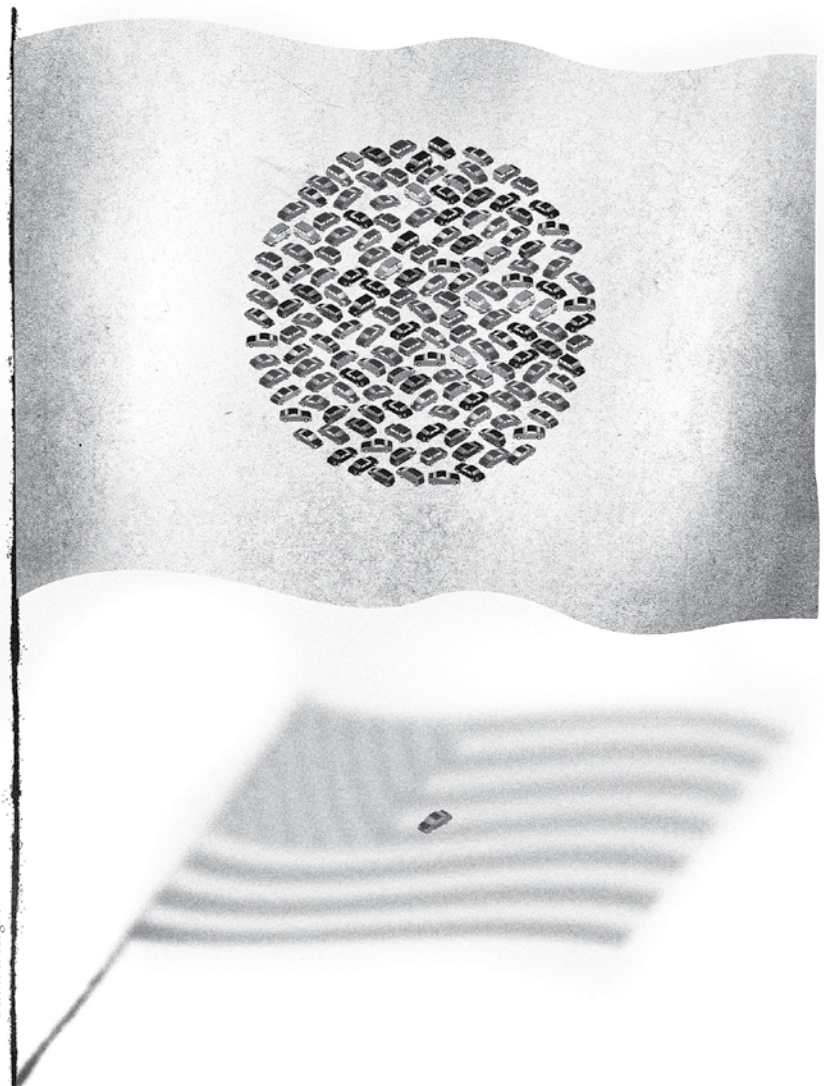
The cartel’s profitability is further bolstered by Japan’s so-called *sha-ken* system of car inspection. This is so rigorous that most Japanese drivers trade in their autos every three years. Choate comments: “Japanese autos, of course, last far longer than three years. But to keep up revenues, the industry has a market of captive customers that keep buying new. Japan is the land of new cars—virtually all Japanese made.”

Worn down for four decades by such unequal competition, the Detroit companies have been chronically starved of funds to invest in R&D and new production processes. The result is they have gone from leaders to laggards in quality and productivity.

Of course, umpteen times over the years the problem of Japan’s closed market has been declared solved. A particularly impressive-sounding solution was presented by President Bill Clinton in the White House Briefing Room in 1995. With Japanese Trade Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto by his side, Clinton announced that Japan had agreed “to truly open its auto and auto parts markets to American companies.”

He added: “This agreement is specific. It is measurable. It will achieve real, concrete results . . . we finally have an agreement that will move cars and parts both ways between the United States and Japan. This breakthrough is a major step toward free trade throughout the world.”

Clinton focused on the Japanese distribution system, pointing out that, whereas 80 percent of U.S. car dealers sold foreign brands—often, of course, alongside American ones—only 7 percent of dealers in Japan sold anything other than Japanese cars.



This deal was the most recent attempt by any Washington administration to open the Japanese market and, like all previous such agreements, it was dead on arrival. If the Clinton administration made the slightest attempt to enforce it, we were never told. Even Detroit never revisited it and has only in the last few months begun to agitate again on Japanese protectionism. (Detroit’s return to the issue has been stimulated by the Obama administration’s effort to push through the so-called Trans-Pacific Partnership, a proposed new trade agreement.)

In the seventeen years since Clinton’s breakthrough, the number of actors who have tried to keep the Japan trade story alive has dwindled to almost nothing. Meanwhile, Tokyo no longer makes even a pretense of complying with American ideas of fair trade.

Perhaps the most graphic evidence of Tokyo’s true policy has been the story of the Renault-Nissan alliance. Originally established in 1999 and consolidated in subsequent years, this odd-couple partnership ostensibly gave Paris-based Renault control of Yokohama-based Nissan. In a powerful symbol of Japan’s

ostensible acquiescence to American-style globalization, Renault's Carlos Ghosn was even installed as simultaneous chief executive of both companies.

Given that Renault enjoyed a fundamental advantage in lower French wages and was more than a match for Nissan managerially, many observers expected it to make big inroads in the Japanese market. After all, the Nissan distribution chain—Japan's second largest—was now ostensibly Ghosn's to reshape. As reported by the BBC in 2005, the two companies were "expected to go through a process of rapid integration." In particular they hoped to achieve savings through "jointly owned distribution subsidiaries."

To the extent that the companies have cooperated on distribution, however, this has been confined entirely to markets beyond Japan. In the Japanese home market, Nissan has kept its distribution system strictly off-limits to Renault. The result is that, far from increasing, Renault's Japanese market share has dropped from a negligible 0.08 percent in 1999 to a totally insulting 0.04 percent in 2009, the latest year for which figures are available. Indeed, to the extent that the company's brand is known at all on Japanese roads, it is as a minor brand of Taiwanese-made bicycles!

And this is just the beginning of Renault's woes. Judged by growth in total global sales, Renault has consistently been a hopeless also-ran, whereas Nissan has been a star performer. (Renault's global sales are up less than 15 percent since the first full year of the partnership, whereas Nissan's have zoomed nearly 78 percent. Nissan's success has been attributable not least to increasing inroads in Renault's home turf of Western Europe.)

How does Renault feel about all this? Neither Ghosn nor any of his executives in Tokyo or Paris has responded to numerous telephone and email messages. Even Renault's major French rival, the Peugeot-Citroen group, with a recent share of just 0.1 percent in Japan and similarly known there as a minor Taiwanese bicycle brand, is not commenting.

Perhaps the French government might be more forthcoming, I thought. But when I emailed some questions to the French embassy in Tokyo, diplomats there could hardly have been less gracious had they been stung by bees. In an email response, Jules Irrmann, an official spokesman, gratuitously implied that any discussion of Japanese protectionism amounted to "Japan-bashing." As for my questions, he vaguely directed me to the embassy's website. Given that there appeared to be nothing there of relevance, I followed up with several requests for clarification. They went unanswered, and so did similar

messages sent directly to two successive ambassadors and to the deputy head of the French mission in Tokyo.

What is clear is that Renault's experiences in Japan should be of some significance to Paris. After all, the company is one of France's most important "national champions" and French officials signed off on its tie-up with Nissan.

French feelings cannot have been soothed by Japan's remarkably more robust performance in overall trade. Even in the teeth of one of the biggest earthquakes in history, Japan last year logged a current account surplus of \$120 billion. France by comparison incurred a deficit of \$66 billion—almost as poor a performance on a per-capita basis as the United States.

Japan's unemployment rate, moreover, was recently one of the lowest in the developed world, while France's was one of the highest. On an apples-to-apples basis, as adjusted by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the French unemployment rate last year was 9.4 percent, more than double Japan's 4.2 percent (and considerably higher even than America's 8.9 percent).

Given numbers like these, what explains France's pusillanimity? It might seem uniquely mysterious—except that when I asked similar questions about Volkswagen's virtual exclusion from the Japanese market I encountered a similar pattern: Volkswagen did not reply and the German Embassy in Tokyo took two weeks to respond, and then to say that all questions should be referred to the German government in Berlin.

As for the United States, a spokesman for John Roos, the Obama administration's ambassador to Japan, responded promptly, but only to say the embassy had no comment. For good measure I also tried to contact Mitt Romney's campaign staff but never received a response.

What do American Japanologists think of all this? Their collective institutional memory is second to none—many of them indeed were already fully credentialed as far back as the early 1970s, when Japanese trade issues first surfaced in Washington. Certainly few of them need reminding that as early as 1982 Japanese foreign minister Yoshio Sakurachi assured a meeting of the GATT that Japan "is one of the most open markets in the world." Many of them are probably aware too that Nobuhiko Ushiba, who served as Japan's ambassador to Washington in the early 1970s, told reporters: "There is no example in recent history of a nation liberalizing trade policy as fast as Japan."

To say the least, American Japanologists know the score. Unfortunately, their voices have long been

silenced. I have not been able to identify a single American scholar who has published a paper on Japan's auto-trade barriers in more than a decade. At a more informal level, a useful indicator is the Japan-U.S. Discussion Forum. This is a website moderated by the National Bureau of Asian Research, a think tank associated with the University of Washington. Japanologists across the United States monitor this forum daily, and many of them contribute to it. Though its search facility is dysfunctional and gives inconclusive results, there seems to be no record of the remarkable problems Renault has encountered in Japan ever having been raised there. Rather the reverse: the Renault story has been presented as a French success and an encouraging example of Japanese market-opening. In fact, at least one contributor some years ago went unchallenged in presenting Japan as opening its auto market to foreign competition.

The only American academic observer I know of who continues fearlessly to uphold the Western truth ethic on Japanese trade is Ivan P. Hall, a Harvard-educated Japan historian and a former cultural diplomat to Japan. Author of *Bamboozled*, an account of how American views of Japan have been shaped by a propagandistic agenda in Tokyo, Hall minces no words in pronouncing the Japanese car market one of the world's most protected.

Why is he almost alone in calling a spade a spade? Hall's answer is forthright: "We are living in very cowardly times."

Perhaps most surprising of all has been the performance of the English-speaking media. Major news organizations have long since swept the Japanese trade story under the carpet. Even Renault's comeuppance, obvious as it is to every Japan-based foreign correspondent, has not been reported. Meanwhile the Foreign Correspondents Club of Japan has not organized a significant discussion on auto trade problems since the mid-1990s. Indeed, it has done the opposite by organizing several events portraying the Renault-Nissan alliance as evidence of a globalizing Japan.

Why do so many key people duck the issues raised by Japanese mercantilism? As Hall points out, a key factor is the State Department's anachronistic Cold War mindset. "Diplomats in Tokyo," he comments, "typically view their overriding function as political rather than economic—presiding over a bromidical 'broader relationship' and easily frightened by tough trade questions that might 'offend' their Japanese hosts."

Another factor is that the Japanese are now the world's dominant suppliers of producers' goods to the

global car industry. This means their erstwhile formidable rivals in the United States and Europe must now humbly stand in line for the latest, most advanced Japanese equipment, components, and materials. Not only are Japanese suppliers organized in solid cartels, but they are led by authoritarian bureaucrats skilled in maintaining industrial corporations' focus on long-term national goals.

As for the silence of other actors, in virtually every case money has clearly played a role. This is most consequential in the case of candidates for national office. They are beholden to Wall Street investment bankers, which in turn often function as surrogates for foreign industrial interests.

Meanwhile, as Hall has extensively documented, the field of Japan studies at American universities is now heavily dependent on Tokyo-based grant-giving authorities. Other money comes from a few globalist-minded U.S. corporations that have entered into a Faustian bargain with the Tokyo establishment: in return for receiving "affirmative action" in the Japanese market, they undertake to promote Tokyo's agenda among American scholars. The most important such collaborator, until it flamed out a few years ago, was the disgraced New York-based insurance company AIG. For decades it drew much of its profits from Japan's highly regulated—and rigged—insurance markets. It returned the favor by funding academics willing to portray the Japanese market as proverbially "one of the world's most open." Boeing, Goldman Sachs, and Coca-Cola have also long played a similar role in steering scholarly inquiry into acceptable areas.

Money also goes a long way towards explaining the timidity of the American media. While American editors have an honorable tradition of standing up to American advertisers, the challenge presented by the Japanese is of a different order. In advertising matters, as in so many other aspects of Japanese life, government-led Japanese cartels prevail, and they have increasingly used their financial clout to intimidate American editors. These latter rarely speak frankly, of course, even in private. But one episode that did become public some years ago was an effort by about a dozen Japanese advertisers to muffle the launch of a controversial book on the Nanking massacre. The book, by the late Iris Chang, was due to be serialized by *Newsweek*. The advertisers made clear their displeasure. For a moment, *Newsweek's* editors vacillated, but in the end, to their credit, they went ahead. It is clear that they had little choice: their hand was forced by Chang, a particularly determined writer with a reputation for fearlessness, who went public with the

story of the advertisers' intervention.

A knock-on effect of media silence is that politicians have an alibi. As Matt Blunt, president of the Washington-based American Automotive Policy Council, points out, efforts to push for market-opening action in Japan have long been stymied by the fact that most American politicians know little about the issues. "They simply assume that because they are not reading anything in the press, the access problem has been solved."

Will the U.S. government ever get serious about Japanese protectionism? I put the question to a prominent Washington-based lawyer who served in the Reagan administration and considers himself a hawk

on America's industrial decline. "The U.S. government has simply given up on opening the Japanese auto market," he said. "The United States is just not going to close its market to Japan. We need Japan against China."

This does not quite add up. If Japan deserves to be considered a U.S. ally, why has it worked so assiduously, under clear government leadership, to hollow out one key U.S. industry after another? And why has it, contrary to its claims to have embraced Western values, resorted to such elaborate measures to suppress Western comment on its policies? These seem like reasonable questions. But in money-minded Washington, they are the wrong questions. ■

DEEPBACKGROUND by PHILIP GIRALDI

A recent intelligence assessment has predicted a likely breakup of the Kingdom of Jordan if a new war were to erupt in the Middle East. Together with the impending collapse of Baath rule in Syria, it would mean that three major secular Arab nations, including Iraq, will have vanished in the course of ten years. Jordan is an American ally, cooperating closely with CIA and the Pentagon. It has good relations with Israel, and its intelligence and security services are regarded as the most capable among Arab states. The Hashemite Kingdom has a major demographic problem because more than half of Jordanians are Palestinian in origin. The Palestinians have only token representation in government, and the security services but are now overrepresented in the political opposition. King Abdullah II, who holds most political power, is being squeezed by his inability to accommodate those demanding faster democratization and those who want a more Islamic form of government. Many traditionally loyal non-Palestinian Jordanians, referred to as East Bankers because they originated east of the Jordan River, are speaking out and even demonstrating over the pervasive corruption of the government. As Jordan is resource poor, the king can do little in the way of improving living standards to mitigate the criticism. The report concludes that an "Arab Spring" in Jordan triggered by a new war in the Middle East would be a disaster for U.S. policy in the region.

The Obama administration, hoping for a foreign-policy success in Africa before the November election, has been urging intelligence and special-

ops units to conclude ongoing operations as quickly as possible. Largely unreported in the U.S. media, there has been an open war being mostly fought using proxies against al-Shabaab in Somalia and Kenya, a not-so-secret war in Uganda using special-ops advisers and surveillance drones against the Lord's Resistance Army, and clandestine CIA-led wars against al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in Mali and Mauritania. In addition, considerable logistical and technical support is being provided to the Algerians and Moroccans for use against AQIM. The United States Army's African command, based in Stuttgart, Germany, was created by the Bush administration but has been enhanced and given operational status by President Obama, who is more than willing to claim it as his own initiative. Recent reports from the field suggest that Obama might be able to claim success on nearly all fronts. In Mauritania, government forces have seized the initiative and pushed the rebels back to the border regions. In Mali, AQIM has piggybacked on a Tuareg separatist uprising to establish an enclave in the northern part of the country, but security forces aided by CIA drones have stabilized the situation, while the Economic Community of West African States is preparing to strike back. Al-Shabaab has been driven from all but a small corner of Somalia, and the Lord's Resistance Army has fallen back and is under intense pressure from the Ugandan army, again assisted by CIA drones and special-ops advisers. ■

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Congress Cries War

When hawks roost on Capitol Hill, even Canada isn't safe.

by TED GALEN CARPENTER

Most worries about Washington's proclivity for dubious military adventures focus on the imperial presidency. There is certainly good reason to fear an unfettered executive in foreign affairs. But there are instances in which Congress has been the more warlike branch, and we are currently witnessing two examples.

One involves the growing pressure for the United States to take action against Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria. The other is the congressional campaign for a more confrontational policy, including the possible use of military force, against Iran's nuclear program. Although the Obama administration has taken a fairly hard line on both issues, it apparently is not uncompromising enough for Congress. Led by the Three Amigos in the Senate—John McCain, Lindsey Graham, and Joseph Lieberman—and their hawkish counterparts in the House, a crescendo of calls for new U.S. crusades in the Middle East is rising.

But this is not the first time the legislative branch has taken the lead in getting the country into armed conflicts. Consider two fateful historical instances: the period before the War of 1812 and the run-up to the Spanish-American War in 1898.

The term "warhawk" was in fact coined to describe the militant attitudes of such congressional figures as Henry Clay and John C. Calhoun, who helped push the United States into the War of 1812. The stridency of that faction put constant pressure on James Madison's administration to confront Great Britain.

Warhawks typically stressed alleged British violations of U.S. territorial integrity and maritime rights on the high seas. They had some grounds for their complaints. The British Navy was not shy about resorting to "impressment"—stopping U.S. merchant vessels, removing supposed British citizens,

and essentially conscripting them on the spot. That would have been irritating enough if those seized were indisputably British citizens. But citizenship was often in question, and it appeared that many of the targets were in fact American citizens.

In addition, nearly three decades after the treaty ending the Revolutionary War and recognizing the independence of the United States, British troops still occupied forts in U.S. territory, primarily in what is now Michigan and other portions of the upper Midwest. Angry members of Congress accused those military units of forging alliances with Native American tribes, arming them, and encouraging them to attack American settlements. They contended further that warriors from those tribes often retreated to sanctuaries in British Canada following their attacks.

Yet the focus on such grievances concealed less savory motives for congressional pressure to go to war. Many of the warhawks were motivated by the desire for U.S. territorial expansion. They coveted Canada and recalled that Benedict Arnold's forces during the Revolutionary War had come so tantalizing close to capturing Quebec, after already taking Montreal. If Arnold's army had been victorious, the British government might well have had to recognize U.S. sovereignty over that territory. To Clay, Calhoun, and other militant nationalists who displayed early signs of embracing what would later be known as Manifest Destiny, the "liberation" of Canada was unfinished business, and the American republic would not be complete until that land was incorporated into the Union.

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Michael Hogue

Opponents of war with Britain were furious at the apparent hypocrisy of the hawks. Virginia Congressman John Randolph of Roanoke issued a blistering indictment. If the United States went to war, he charged, it “will not be for the protection of, or defense of, maritime rights.” Hunger for Canadian land “urges the war,” Randolph fumed. “Ever since the report of the Committee on Foreign Relations came into the House, we have heard but one word—like the whip-poor-will, but one eternal monotonous note—Canada! Canada! Canada!”

Motivated by national pride pricked by British affronts and an insatiable hunger for Canadian territory, Congress put steadily more pressure on Madison to confront the powerful British Empire. Eventually the warhawks got their wish. Revealingly, the vast

majority of the early actions during the ensuing conflict consisted of U.S. offensives into Canada. It is a sobering historical lesson that those offensives largely failed, and the United States came perilously close to losing the war. A low point in American history occurred when British forces captured Washington, D.C., burned the White House and other buildings, and forced the president and the rest of the government to flee. The United States was fortunate to come out of the War of 1812 with essentially a draw.

Eight decades later, another militant Congress prodded a cautious White House to launch a war. This time the target was Spain. Much has been written about the role of the so-called Yellow Press—the Hearst and Pulitzer newspaper chains—in producing highly biased and inflammatory accounts that led the

United States into war. But influential members of Congress served as willing allies of that effort. Both President William McKinley and his influential political adviser, businessman Mark Hanna, were reluctant to take the country into war. Pro-war agitators had more of an impact on congressional opinion.

As in the lead up to the War of 1812, there was a major gap between the issues hawks stressed and what appeared to be their real motives. During the mid-and-late 1890s, the Yellow Press and its congressional allies focused on the brutal treatment that Spanish authorities meted out to inhabitants of Cuba, one of the handful of colonies remaining in Madrid's once vast empire. That treatment was indeed harsh, but it was no coincidence that the most vocal advocates of U.S. support for Cuba's rebel forces were also advocates of U.S. imperialism. Massachusetts Senator Henry Cabot Lodge asserted that the sympathies of the "generous, liberty-loving" American people were "with the Cubans in their struggle for freedom." He added that Americans would "welcome any action on the part of the United States to put an end to the terrible state of things existing there."

But just as the emphasis on the British practice of impressment and the Redcoats' illegal outposts on U.S. territory served as a fig leaf for the less noble goal to seize Canada, the focus on the Spanish authorities' atrocities in Cuba concealed a growing desire to seize Spain's colonies in the Caribbean and elsewhere to increase the reach of U.S. power, especially naval power. To the cheers of congressional warhawks, the main targets once war erupted were Spanish installations in the Philippines and Puerto Rico, neither of which had much relevance to Madrid's behavior in Cuba.

American forces quickly crushed the decrepit Spanish navy and army units, and the United States acquired the far-flung colonies that Lodge and other imperialists so desired. But the aftermath was not exactly pleasant. Not only did the U.S. victory lead to a prolonged, bloody insurrection by pro-independence forces in the Philippines, but the new U.S. territorial holdings entangled the Republic in an assortment of headaches over the long term in both the Caribbean and East Asia.

Those experiences should be kept in mind as McCain, Graham, Lieberman, and other congressional hawks seek to push the Obama administration into war

against Syria and Iran. And that is their goal: in the case of Syria, they and their ideological allies openly call for arming the so-called Free Syrian Army, despite evidence that anti-Western Islamic militants may have a hefty influence in that faction. The Three Amigos have also urged the administration to establish no-fly zones to provide safe havens for civilian refugees and rebel fighters. And pro-war members of Congress have lobbied for air strikes against Syrian government targets. Air strikes would "break the will of pro-Assad forces," Lieberman states confidently, and "result in a much sooner end to this terrible waste of life." Despite

There are times, such as this one, when the sentiment for aggression is even stronger on Capitol Hill than it is in the White House.

the humanitarian rhetoric, such measures would entangle the United States in a very murky, dangerous conflict.

Their objectives are equally worrisome with regard to Iran. One gauge of the shrill, hawkish quality of congressional sentiment is a U.S. Senate resolution, which has some 32 co-sponsors, that urges the administration not even to consider deterrence and containment as a response if Tehran acquires a nuclear-weapons capability. Graham argues that containing Iran is simply not an option. "We're not going to contain people like that, we're going to stop them," he stated at a press conference unveiling the resolution. In addition to pressuring the White House, both houses of Congress have passed a series of increasingly drastic economic sanctions against Iran, measures that only ratchet up tensions and strengthen the hand of hardliners in the Islamic Republic itself.

Advocates of a prudent foreign policy like to think that a vigorous congressional role in foreign policy—even beyond the constitutional requirement that war be declared by Congress—is an important restraint on chief executives who are inclined to embrace aggression. That may be true more often than not. But there are times, such as this one, when the sentiment for aggression is even stronger on Capitol Hill than it is in the White House. Both branches need to be watched carefully. ■

Not Amish, But Close

A farmer puts Wendell Berry's agrarian ideal to the test

by GLENN ARBERY

When it comes to food, chefs get all the fame. A few weeks ago, *New York Times* food guru Mark Bittman tried to right the wrong. In an online piece called "Celebrate the Farmer!" he wrote about the need to honor the men and women who put the food on all our tables. Their work raising and butchering cows and pigs requires "weeks, if not months, of daily activity and maintenance," but the chefs, who might spend 20 minutes preparing a dish, get the high-profile recognition.

Bittman didn't mean to praise big industrial farmers. "We need more real farmers, not businessmen riding on half-million-dollar combines." He asks readers to "imagine thousands of 10-, 20- and 100-acre farms ... the vegetables sold regionally, the pigs fed from scraps, the compost fertilizing the soil, the cattle at pasture, the milk making cheese." Bittman echoes the idea of a "local economy" advanced by Wendell Berry, whose many books have helped define contemporary agrarianism. He even sounds like Andrew Lytle in his essay "The Hind Tit," from the prophetic 1930 Southern manifesto, *I'll Take My Stand*.

On the other hand, Bittman's policy suggestions to help farmers—raise the minimum wage (so workers can afford healthier food) and steer recipients of food stamps toward farmers' markets—are big-government solutions, if not utopian fantasies. But the vision of an America of small farmers is on the mark, and it's certainly no utopia.

My wife and I met such a farmer, Mike Scannell, at Logan Airport as he was waiting for a plane and rereading Lytle's essay in *I'll Take My Stand*. Intrigued, we struck up a conversation that has grown into a friendship.

Mike Scannell and Joan Harris have been raising cattle for years on Harrier Fields Farm, about 20 miles east of Albany, New York, and they've been doing it the way Wendell Berry would approve. The cattle—

purebred Devons, the oldest breed in North America—graze the acres in a way that benefits both them and the land itself. Scannell is as far from the opinions of the *New York Times* as it's possible to be, but at the same time he has nothing in common with the porky populists who think everything organic is elitist.

The way of life Scannell chose several decades ago is a glimpse back into the 19th century, which is just as Scannell would have it. He admires the Amish. He doesn't like the idea of being on anybody's big grid—electrical, financial, partisan, you name it. Because of his principles, he encounters fortune head on, unprotected by the usual safety nets, including the nets of community that the Amish and most of the characters in Berry's Port William novels can count on. Scannell finds Wendell Berry's work compelling, and unlike many who admire Berry but support themselves in other ways, he's built his life around the vision of a sustainable life on the soil. But bad fortune almost broke him.

A Vietnam veteran and former rodeo rider, Scannell attended a conference on holistic resource management at about the time he paid off his 30-year mortgage 17 years early, back in the 1990s. (He hates usury.) He expected to find "a bunch of hippies." Instead, he encountered the thought of Allen Savory and a technique of sustaining the land through proper management of cattle first developed by a Frenchman named André Voisin. Using this method, Scannell lets his cows graze for a day or less in a "paddock" defined by light, moveable electric fences (a single strand of wire), then he moves them to another paddock. The cows leave behind healthy grasses, not over-

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grazed by being bitten down to the roots, and their droppings fertilize the ground naturally. When the cows return to the area later, the grass is better than before.

The results have been phenomenal. After being in danger of depletion when Scannell was growing hay commercially some years ago, the soil at Harrier Fields has been fully restored. Over the past decade, the grass-fed Devons raised by Scannell and Harris have been widely recognized for their extraordinary quality. They have been written up on the website of the North American Devon Association and in *The*

Valley Table, a magazine devoted to “Hudson Valley Farms, Food & Cuisine.”

Harris and Scannell know the animals intimately—the chickens in the yard, who hop up on the kitchen windowsills; the horses in a distant pen, who whinny as soon as either of them comes out the back door; the heavy Devons who lumber over like pets, wanting to be scratched. Harris’s five-year-old grandson loves visiting the farm. Once she took him to a nearby industrial farm—“Everything is GMOs,” she told us—and he looked around in confusion. The cows he had seen grazed in paddocks, but not

these penned creatures. “You mean they go and *get the grass and bring it to the cows?*” he asked, incredulously. “Yes, they do,” she admitted. He watched for a while and saw something even more astonishing. “And they *clean up their mess?*”

Both times my wife and I have visited, Harris, who is an artist and retired art teacher, has served us a simple lunch. “We don’t have much money, but we eat like kings,” says Scannell. The first time it was superb Devon beef with mustard; in May, it was a light cheese she had made from that morning’s milk from a cow named Princess that Harris marveled at. She didn’t know how to account for the fact that Princess produces milk containing over 6 percent cream, except that both her mother and another cow (who had just lost a calf) had nursed her. For us, it was a little startling to be served cheese made from milk drawn that very morning, but for Scannell and Harris, it was nothing out of the ordinary. It’s the way they live, even without the three connected barns from 1835 that used to distinguish their property.

Andrew Lytle’s essay “The Hind Tit” is about what happens when the blandishments of the market start to erode the integrity of a self-sustaining farm. According to Lytle, the market keeps urging the farmer “to over-produce his money crop, mortgage his land, and send his daughters to town to clerk in ten-cent stores, that he may buy the products of the Power Age and keep its machines turning.”

It became evident in the first few minutes after we met him in the airport that Scannell’s whole aim has been to reverse this process, at least in his own life. He has never renounced machines per se—in fact, he served in Vietnam as a helicopter mechanic—but he wanted to free his farm from any reliance on fossil fuels. In his barn he had a pair of draft horses and enough painstakingly acquired, animal-powered equipment to farm without reliance on petroleum. Not too long ago, he was nearing the point when it wouldn’t have mattered at Harrier Fields if the power went off and the oil supply dried up.

That’s where bad fortune comes in.

Shortly before noon on a hot Tuesday in late July 2010, the dispatcher in Columbia County began receiving 911 calls about a fire on County Route 21. A blaze had broken out in the barns at Harrier Fields Farm. The first company to respond from nearby Schodack Landing needed help, especially pump-and-er engines. The fire chief from Stuyvesant told the *Register-Star*, the newspaper serving Columbia and Dutchess counties, that the fire was already “fully involved” when the first men arrived on the scene.

Before the site was cleared that night, more than 25 fire companies from the area had assisted, and one nearby pond was pumped completely dry.

The effort went for nothing. The barns were a total loss, and so was everything in them, including two Suffolk punch mares in foal, all the horse gear and antique horse-drawn equipment, thousands of bales of hay, and scores of miscellaneous items from seed to tarps, ladders, and ropes.

Once a central symbol, deeply felt in its importance, the barn has become for most people a relic from a lost world visible from the Interstate. My students have always been mildly perplexed by the seriousness Faulkner’s characters bring to the loss of a barn in his short story “Barn Burning.” In this age of the insured, the vaccinated, the replaceable, the outsourced, and the digitized, they have difficulty seeing why it would be more than a temporary inconvenience to lose a barn. Now if it had been a hard drive...

But for people like Scannell and Harris, as their friend Peter Zander explains, the barn is “the basis of the farm after the ground, after the soil. It makes what you do possible.” He tells of going to see them in their farmhouse, which is as old as the barns were. The roof leaked—he helped keep it from collapsing once—and he thought Scannell was crazy for putting money into the barn first. “I thought, ‘Put a roof on the house!’ He’s spending money to have a guy rebuild the windows on the barn and build new doors that would slide nicely. They were beautifully done,” Zander says. “And then I got it! One of those aha! moments. The barn was what made it work.”

Two days after the fire, Zander—a professional photographer—organized a fund and had his nephew put up a website to raise money for his friends. He described them as “two of the finest people I’ve met and a rare breed of farmer. These are people that work 14 hours a day, seven days a week to earn a small, but very honorable living. As is the case with most small-scale organic farmers, they had little insurance ... enough to cover a very small fraction of the replacement costs.” When I asked Zander what the day of the fire was like, he said that he was one of the first people Scannell called. “There was a horrible tone in his voice. All he could say was ‘It’s gone. It’s all gone.’”

But it wasn’t all gone. It just took awhile to recover. After lunch on our second visit, I asked the question that had been on my mind: what had fundamentally changed with the fire? Scannell and Harris were silent for a moment, because it is

obviously a very painful subject.

"It just humbles you," said Scannell.

I knew from Zander, and from things that Scannell had told me already, that the fire had three terrible ironies. First was that Scannell had bought hay for the first time in his farming career instead of growing it himself, thinking it would be a better use of his time. The man he bought it from baled the hay before it was properly dried. Wet hay heats up when it's stacked, and after a certain point, the chemical reactions produce flammable gases that ignite when they're exposed to air. Spontaneous combustion from wet hay—*bought* wet hay—caused the fire that destroyed Scannell's barn. The second irony was Scannell's opposition to insurance, which went along with his hatred of debt, so the barn was disastrously underinsured. The third irony was that the community around them, generous as it was, could not be the community they needed.

"I think it involves the realization that the important things, God created. What man created can disappear overnight. It's pretty humbling. It just set us back so far it made us realize how old we are. There's a lot of soul-searching on it."

One of the things he's done the most soul-searching about is what it means to be leading his life in an age when very few people see what he sees.

"I think it's difficult or impossible to be a separatist by yourself. Community is so important." He gave me an example from an Amish friend in Ohio. "He told me that somebody in their community lost his barn to lightning. And in three weeks they had a barn again. And I asked, 'How the heck do you do that? I mean is there a fund or something that you borrow from, and then you pay it back?' And he said, 'There was no debt.'"

Scannell had to stop talking.

"That was David Kline?" Joan Harris gently interjected, and he nodded.

Kline, an Amish farmer, edits *Farming Magazine*. He is the author of three books about the Amish farming life, including *Great Possessions*. What Kline meant by "no debt" was that the community got together and did a barn raising. Friends and neighbors contributed the new barn as their gift. In other words, the farmer had insurance that wasn't financial in nature: the community itself. The misfortune of a neighbor was an occasion for unanimity and generosity.

No debt: it is difficult to overstate what those words mean to a man like Scannell. The idea of the United States running up trillions of dollars of debt simply convinces him that he's taken the right course. There

is a great gulf between the bond of personal gratitude and the nature of modern debt.

"The community that we have here," Harris said, "really worked hard to help us in the way that they knew how to help us."

"They tried, they really did," Scannell added.

"People that we don't even know—even people from other countries—sent money to the barn fund," said Harris. "I don't want to sound ungrateful."

But by its very nature, the way of life they have been trying to live differs so radically from the conventional one that it's difficult for others to help. Who has workable, animal-powered farm equipment on hand, for example? Who knows how to do a barn raising? Everyone was willing to help, but no one could give them what they really needed.

Crippling as the loss of the barns was, Scannell and Harris have humor and patience. They love conversation, especially talk about the farm, about books and ideas. They laugh easily. They convey the conviction that they're doing well, even if they don't have the money to get the bathroom repaired, and some of their hopes have had to be revised. They still have the animals and the land. Zander praises the simplicity of their lives and their consciousness of "the things that are important—keeping the farm free of debt, living without the encumbrances that we have all come to expect as being essential, being the norm."

These are the kinds of farmers conservatives ought to celebrate. Not only do they raise excellent beef, but they have a daily virtue that has nothing to do with "environmentalism" in the abstract. They have consciences, not causes. They understand themselves as answerable to the natures of the things given into their care. They fear that what they have learned will not be passed on, except perhaps to Harris's grandson. To lose the knowledge would be a loss worse than the fire. Scannell thinks about it all the time.

As for the barn, he thinks daily about what to do. He opposes a cheap temporary shelter, but on the other hand he doesn't want to have to pay exorbitant taxes on the kind of barn he'd like to build. It's hard to know what to do or what their future will be. In the meantime, daily life sustains them. When Harris took my wife and my daughter outside to look at the Devons, she pointed out the different shades of the animals.

"Aren't they gorgeous? Sometimes," she said, "Mike and I just look at them and think how fortunate we are—that we get to share our lives with these beautiful creatures." ■

007's Masculine Mystique

James Bond is more than a glamorous womanizer.

by STEPHEN B. TIPPINS JR.

Fiction sometimes has a way of transcending its most ardent limitation, which is that it is fiction. Just ask Eric Holder, who probably never thought he'd be cast as the villain in a Vin Diesel flick.

Fiction's most successful transcending phenomenon, though, is probably Ian Fleming's James Bond 007, haberdasher's muse and the world's most famous secret agent (never mind the oxymoron). Ever *en vogue*, Bond this summer made a cameo during the opening ceremony of the London Olympics—an impressive feat for any actual man, let alone a made-up one. But then transforming from fictional character to Olympic ambassador is probably an easier task for Bond than his other real-life obligation: defending the West against itself.

Kingsley Amis's Bond

Two things struck me while recently re-watching "The Spy Who Loved Me," the tenth James Bond film and the one that the 12 year-old in me still remembers as having starred Caroline Munro. Roger Moore's turn as 007 may not have been as literary as Timothy Dalton's or Daniel Craig's, but he still interpreted the role as something far edgier than Beau Maverick in a tux, even if he doesn't get credit for it.

More importantly: even though I've always seen very little attenuation between Ian Fleming's novels and Cubby Broccoli's screen treatments, I could never explain why. Until now. I've finally realized that Fleming's Bond (often brooding, sometimes sadistic and occasionally cruel) and the cinematic incarna-

tion (often quick to quip and far more obsessed with sex) exist in the same world, one that shares very little with the world that you or I inhabit. But it's not the metal-jawed giants, volcanic lairs, and poisonous gardens that differentiate Bond's world from ours. It's the politics.

Bond doesn't have a political agenda in the usual sense. In fact, much has been written about the apolitical context within which Bond is usually framed. The Soviets were seldom the primary antagonists, often giving way to politically nonaffiliated madmen who hate East and West indiscriminately. Domestic issues are rarely evoked: there's some tangential racism in Fleming's *Live and Let Die* (attributable to the mores of the time and a Tom Wolfe-like attempt at recreating some urban dialect); there's a nondescript energy crisis that has everybody—even stiff-collared Tories—up in arms in Guy Hamilton's underrated "The Man with the Golden Gun;" "Quantum of Solace" portrays an ecologically savvy terrorist. But other than that, and some similar peripherals, the only extent to which Bond has ever been accused of being political has been the occasional complaint from the enlightened left that the world of espionage entails a far greater moral ambiguity than all the girls, gadgets and martinis suggest. (Which is fine. But Jason Bourne is still a whiny bore.)

This doesn't mean that there isn't any political appeal to James Bond. In fact, the more I revisit the world of Bond, the more I find that there is a consistently recurring political subtext to Fleming's novels

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Michael Hogue

and the soon-to-be 23 films. Kingsley Amis thought so, too. In his extended essay *The James Bond Dossier* he wrote:

The England for which Bond is prepared to die, like the reasons why he's prepared to die for it, is largely taken for granted. This differentiates it, to its advantage, from the England of most Englishmen. ... Negative virtues are even more important in escapist than in enlightening literature, and not the least of the blessings enjoyed by Mr. Fleming's reader is his absolute confidence that whatever any given new Bond may contain, it will not contain bitter protests or biting satire or even witty commentary about the state of the nation. We can get all of that at home.

... Politically, Bond's England is substantially right of center. As the title of the eleventh volume uninhibitedly proclaims, royalty is at the head of things. ... An unwontedly emotional passage near the end of *Doctor No* shows Bond ... conferring in the office of the Governor of Jamaica and thinking of home. ... 'His mind drifted into a world of tennis courts and lily pads and kings and queens, of London, of people being photographed with pigeons on their heads in Trafalgar Square...'

The films largely share this trait, portraying Bond as "Her Majesty's loyal terrier, defender of the so-called faith." But why is royalty at the head of all things? British institutions, after all, don't matter so much to real-life Britons. Consider the Queen's

Jubilee earlier this year. All pomp, but what of the circumstance? What the Queen timelessly stands for—empire, class, obligation, responsibility and even Britannia herself—are things today’s British, unlike Bond, reject.

This—and not the sex, sadism, and snobbery—is the allure for the Bond fantasist. 007’s Britain is antiquated. It’s not the Britain of Cameron and Clegg. It’s the one with a penchant for staying tyrants—of either the mustachioed or the vertically-challenged variety—and the one that gave us pocket calculators, steel warships, jet airplanes, and loads of other cool stuff. Bond’s Britain is relevant, wealthy, and influential, still a beacon of Western ingenuity. This as opposed to the more accurate depiction of the sterile, cynical, stymied Britain of, say, George Smiley or Harry Palmer. Amis preferred the Fleming mold:

I also find a belief, however unreflecting, in the rightness of one’s cause more sympathetic than the anguished cynicism and the torpid cynicism of Messrs le Carré and Deighton. More useful in an adventure story anyway, and more powerful—so powerful that when the frogman’s suit arrives for Bond in *Live and Let Die*, I can join with him in blessing the efficiency of M’s “Q” Branch, whereas I know full well that given postwar standards of British workmanship, the thing would either choke him or take him straight to the bottom.

The next time you roll your eyes at the implausibility of invisible Aston-Martins, consider this possibility: it’s not that Bond’s adventures are completely inauthentic, as opposed to the realistic yarns of le Carré—it’s just that in Fleming’s universe, Europeans didn’t stop being industrious once they were introduced to paid leave and exuberant pensions.

It’s been said that Bond’s Britain is okay with American superiority. This is preposterous. We “cousins” are well regarded in the Bond realm, but make no mistake, our purpose in a Bond adventure is to be told what’s what by our former colonial masters. Bond may well hold “individual Americans with the highest respect,” says Amis, but “in the plural they’re the neon lit, women-dominated, conspicuous consumers of popular sociology.” Of course, the movies are far more Americanized than the novels. But even there, Amis has a point: has Felix Leiter, Bond’s CIA ally, ever done anything other than take “orders from Bond, the Britisher [while] Bond is constantly doing better than he, showing himself not braver or more devoted, but smarter, wiler, tougher, more

resourceful—the incarnation of little old England with her quiet ways”? Answer: No.

A Sexist Dinosaur

Britain’s postwar doldrums remolded Englishmen into something less than their former selves. This was the real-world environment into which James Bond was born. Bond, Sean Connery told *Playboy* back in 1965, was a refreshing change of pace for the “predominately grey” Britain of the mid-20th century. 007 displayed characteristics that were then rare and appealing, chief among them: his “self-containment, his powers of decision, his ability to carry on through ‘til the end and to survive. There’s so much social welfare today that people have forgotten what it is to make their own decisions rather than to leave them to others. So Bond is a welcome change.”

Yet Bond wasn’t really a change so much as he represented an inherited idea of high-minded masculinity—inherited, I think, not from Ian nor from the commandos and officers the author knew from Naval Intelligence, but from Ian’s father.

Major Valentine Fleming was a Tory MP from Henley and an officer of the Oxfordshire Hussars during World War I. He died near Picardy, France, in the trenches, in May 1917, after which he was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Order. Incidentally, a fellow named Winston Churchill wrote the major’s obituary:

[Major Fleming] had that foundation of spontaneous and almost unconscious self-suppression in the discharge of what he conceived to be his duty without which happiness, however full ... is imperfect. That these qualities are not singular in this generation does not lessen the loss of those in whom they shine. As the war lengthens and intensifies ... it seems as if one watched at night a well-loved city whose lights, which burn so bright, which burn so true, are extinguished in the distance in the darkness one by one.

It’s no coincidence that James Bond, like his creator, is an orphan. And if you read carefully between the lines—or listen closely to the give-and-take on screen—you’ll notice that Bond’s relationship with his superior “M” always plays much like the relationship between a headstrong adolescent and a stern, hard-of-praise father, as if both Fleming and Bond are straining for fatherly guidance. (That give-and-take, by the way, is something that Bernard Lee and

Robert Brown always get right on-screen and that Judi Dench, by definition, cannot; in fact, the brilliance of “GoldenEye” lies in Pierce Brosnan’s discontent with having a female chief, while the shortcoming of subsequent entries lies in his acceptance of female superiority.)

Ian Fleming always denied that he shared character traits with his creation—he said that Bond was merely a composite of his war colleagues. But it’s hard to say that he shared no traits whatsoever: Bond’s penchant for scrambled eggs, short-sleeve Sea Island cotton shirts, and liquor, women, and gambling are reflections of Ian. And Bond’s operational prowess is definitely drawn from the commandos Fleming knew during World War II.

But Bond’s intangible virtues are Valentine’s—and, no, these virtues may not have been singular then, but they are quite un-plural now. Where Valentine’s contemporaries took to the trenches, the young men of today’s Britain riot in the streets. That’s what a half-century of self-entitlement does to a society: it takes the backbone out of people while simultaneously giving them notions of grandeur. This makes them malleable. Make enough people malleable and you can make them, en masse, believe in any fancy or whim. Want to know why gay marriage is inevitable? Because today’s man, coerced into believing in his own emasculation, would introduce himself to a lesbian named Pussy Galore by saying: “I respect your lifestyle choice.” When James Bond met a lesbian named Pussy Galore, he slept with her.

James Bond: the opposite of self-entitlement.

Pieties, Shaken and Stirred

The *New York Times*’s film review of “Live and Let Die” noted that the Bond movies hold a “certain insolence toward public pieties.” This certainly seems true. But why then are the films—like the books before them—so incredibly popular? The answer is that, like with any good spy, Bond has proven adept at creating a little misdirection here and there.

Raymond Chandler famously suggested that Bond was “what every man would like to be and what every woman would like to have between her sheets.” This is generally perceived to mean that men want to be Bond because he daringly saves the world from megalomaniacal madmen while bedding women who lust after him because he’s dangerous. But what

if all of this were just cover? What if men wanted to be Bond because secretly—or maybe not so secretly—they wanted to be less neutered, more decisive, more graceful under pressure, more accountable, and less postmodern?

Until now Bond’s been a consistent character. The films sometimes have bordered on self-parody, but he’s always been the same decisive, sometimes cruel, woman-dominating Briton, believing in duty, obligation, and the Crown. Daniel Craig’s incumbency guarantees us that this will continue (with much less of the self-parody), but I worry for how long. I detected a hint of Jason Bourne-like cynicism in the last entry, “Quantum of Solace,” where, in a first for a James Bond flick, the CIA gets into bed with nefarious types and Her Majesty’s government willingly complies. Craig, though, is not only a good Bond,

In Ian Fleming’s universe, Europeans didn’t stop being industrious once they were introduced to paid leave and exuberant pensions.

he’s a smart actor. He knows his character. I therefore wonder if he’s ever read Fleming’s original version of “Quantum,” which bore no relation to the movie. It was a short story, in the Somerset Maugham mold, in which Bond reflects that the dramas of ordinary people may be greater and more meaningful than his own. He’s right, of course. Men like James Bond are expendable for a reason. Take away that reason and you take away the nobility—and the purpose—in their expendability. If audiences thought of that, I wonder if they’d see past Bond’s sex and gadgets and superficiality, wonderful and fun though they may be, and realize what really makes James Bond appealing.

The reality for ordinary men and women is that we need to reassert some dignity in our ordinary lives. But that reality can’t overcome the pieties of modern discourse: we claim to like our men less assertive and less masculine and less accountable, and we claim to like our governments mired and enabling.

James Bond may be unflappable. He may bed women like Caroline Munro, and he may be MGM’s saving grace. And above all he is durable—come this fall his latest big-screen adventure, “Skyfall,” hits theaters almost 50 years to the day after Sean Connery debuted as the suave super spy in “Dr. No.” But the one thing 007 can’t do is save us from ourselves. ■

Return of the Kingsley

America gets reintroduced to the original Amis

by MATTHEW WALTHER

Prayers have been answered: Kingsley Amis's novels *Lucky Jim* and *The Old Devils* are being reissued in the United States. The New York Review of Books Press has printed the new editions with introductions by Keith Gessen (*n+1* editor and novelist) and John Banville (Irish novelist and critic). Eric Hanson has drawn splendid covers for both, but I especially like his Jim Dixon: head down, arms behind his back and hands reaching out from his elbow-patched tweed, his weary cigarette sending up a pathetic little smoke signal as he approaches the lecture hall's monstrous redbrick façade.

Why has Amis been out of print in the United States for so long? Taste enters into the equation: strict High Tories as a rule prefer the mandarin prose of Evelyn Waugh or Anthony Powell, just as the sanguine among us favor P.G. Wodehouse, who never left the sunny side of the street. Academic snobbery must also be inculcated: the Amis *oeuvre* tenaciously avoids subsumption into fashionable critical narratives, and *Girl, 20* will never appear on an American college syllabus. But finally there is that familiar specter haunting Amis *père*—his son Martin.

Wander into the literature section of any large Americans bookstore, and you will see amassed Martin's fleet of Vintage paperbacks, including his flagship Vintage Reader. His appearance in this series, which collects "the twentieth century's best prose," implies that to Americans, or at least to his American publisher, Martin is the equal of H.L. Mencken, Willa Cather, Vladimir Nabokov, and V.S. Naipaul.

British critics have been less indulgent. Thus Tibor Fischer, writing in the *Daily Telegraph* of Martin's *Yellow Dog*: "*Yellow Dog* isn't bad as in not very good or slightly disappointing. It's not-knowing-where-to-look bad. I was reading my copy on the Tube and I was terrified someone would look over my shoulder

(not only because of the embargo, but because someone might think I was enjoying what was on the page)."

Kingsley Amis himself rarely had a kind word to offer about his son's work. After encountering a character named Martin Amis in *Money*, he threw the manuscript across the room. (Here he was being a bit of a hypocrite: the narrator of his 1972 short story "Who or What Was It?" is Amis himself, more or less reliving the plot of *The Green Man*.) He accused Martin of "American cleverness," shorthand for facile experimentation, especially with prose style. "I think," Kingsley said, "you need more sentences like 'He put down his drink, got up and left the room.'"

Martin has tried to explain away his father's decidedly unflashy style by suggesting that, since he also wrote poetry, Kingsley had no reason to quest after the "terrible compulsive vividness"—another terse Kingsley formulation—characteristic of Martin's own work. I find this unconvincing: why then did so many of Kingsley's fellow novelist-poets—Nabokov, Anthony Burgess, John Updike—write prose that is alternately purple or eggplant?

The vagaries of literary taste and fashionable mania for Martin cannot by themselves account for America's neglect of Amis senior, however. Kingsley himself is to blame for being such a memorable public figure: these days Amis *l'homme* is probably more famous than any item in his bibliography, thanks to his reactionary quotient and numberless crotchets. A literary parlor game could be made of finding the most outrageously illiberal Amis quotation. He hated tolerance, diversity, foreign languages, airplanes, popular music, all female novelists—save perhaps Dame Agatha Christie—bebop and modal jazz, being alone, art cinema, purchasing gifts for his wives,

Matthew Walther writes from Marquette, Michigan.

the Arts Council of Great Britain, homosexuals, America, defenders of communism, gardens, and the dark.

Like Nabokov, Waugh, and Ray Bradbury, Kingsley Amis never learned to drive an automobile. Like Paul Ryan's financial guru Ayn Rand he never made a single investment, though by the 1970s he was spending thousands of pounds on drink every month. He bragged that he could not scramble an egg. He denounced *Portnoy's Complaint*, *Lolita*, *Ulysses*, and *Mansfield Park* and declared "Beverly Hills Cop" "a flawless masterpiece."

In his *Memoirs* he admits to using Martin as bait while trying to obtain some obscene limericks by W.H. Auden for *The New Oxford Book of Light Verse*. The Auden poems were in the possession of a peer of the realm "famous for the ferocious vigour and glaring conspicuousness of his homosexual activities." Amis got the poems—these turned out to be no good—and Martin, who had gone into a bedroom to call a taxi, was chased five times around Tom Driberg's bed before the gasping lord relented with a terse "Fair enough, youngster."

Amis's loyalty to the Crown was absolute. He even claimed to have had wet dreams about Queen Elizabeth II, all of which consisted of him throwing an eager hand upon Her Majesty's royal bosom and her responding, "No, Kingsley, we mustn't." He called Margaret Thatcher "one of the best looking women I had ever met" and compared seeing her in person to "looking at a science-fiction illustration of the beautiful girl who has become President of the Solar Federation in the year 2220."

Amusing stuff, but it tends to distract from the truth: namely, that Amis wrote some of the best fiction of the last century, including at least three classics (the two present reissues and *The Alteration*) and a handful of novels (*Take a Girl Like You*; *Girl, 20*; and *The Green Man*) that I would recommend to anyone. Anyway, it's likely that Amis cultivated his intransigent public persona in order to drum up publicity and get a laugh from friends like Robert Conquest. This becomes especially clear after reading his letters to Conquest and Philip Larkin, in which he seems almost obsessed with making chop steak out of as many progressive sacred cows as possible.

In *Lucky Jim*, Amis writes with unflagging, almost mechanical energy, like a literary combine harvester

reaping, threshing, and winnowing its way through fields of tedium and mawkishness. His debut novel is a dexterous middle finger (or bitten thumb) presented to snobs, puritans, sycophants, and fussy budgets—the literary equivalent of Clement Attlee ordering toast and jam at the Savoy.

Its eponymous hero, Jim Dixon, is a junior lecturer in history at an undistinguished Welsh college. Dixon's pleasures are simple: he smokes a carefully allotted number of cigarettes each day and drinks a rather less measured amount of beer most nights at

It's likely that Amis cultivated his intransigent public persona in order to drum up publicity and get a laugh from friends like Robert Conquest.

pubs. His single goal is to coast successfully through his two-year probation period and become a permanent faculty member in the history department.

Standing in his way is the departmental supervisor, Professor Welch. ("No other professor in Great Britain, Dixon thought, set such store by being called Professor.") Welch is a dedicated amateur flautist—or, as he insists, recorder player—and busybody who forces Dixon to attend chamber music recitals during impossibly dull weekend visits to the professor's home and perform quotidian tasks such as doing Welch's research for him and proofing his manuscripts.

In order to remain in good standing with his department, Dixon must also publish an article, "The Economic Influence of Shipbuilding Techniques, 1450 to 1485," in a scholarly journal. Dixon, despite his having little knowledge and even less interest in the period, is a medievalist. Amis's description of Dixon's article will ring true for anyone who has ever been forced into academic writing: "It was a perfect article, in that it crystallized the article's niggling mindlessness, its funereal parade of yawn-enforcing facts, the pseudo-light it threw upon non-problems. Dixon had read, or begun to read, dozens like it, but his own seemed worse than most in its air of being convinced of its own usefulness and significance."

Many first-time readers of *Lucky Jim* find them-

Literature

selves believing that the novel's title is simply one of Amis's larger, less subtle ironies. From his drunken burning of Mrs. Welch's bed sheets to his, well, drunken ribbing of Welch himself during a public lecture on "Merrie England," Jim's, it seems, is just another hard-luck story. But *Lucky Jim* is in fact, as a number of critics have suggested, nothing if not a kind of postwar English fairy tale in which an undistinguished but more or less decent youth gets the girl (Christine, ex-girlfriend of Welch's exasperating son Bertrand) and makes his fortune (a secretarial position with her uncle) through sheer fortuity.

Lucky Jim was an immediate popular and critical success, and Amis, a consummate literary professional who wrote at least 500 words nearly every morning of his adult life, followed it with a series of comic novels, all of which offer something of his debut's comedic charm without managing to equal it. The best of these is *Take a Girl Like You*, his 1960 tale of lost innocence that, among other things, shows us that Amis was no misogynist.

The Old Devils must have been like a glass of champagne after downing six or seven pints of bitter for Amis's longtime readers.

But by the mid-1960s Amis was sick to death of farce and melodrama. He began to experiment with genre—never with style—alternating bitter comedies like *I Want It Now*; *Girl, 20*; and *Ending Up* with, among other things, suspense and spy novels (*The Riverside Villas Murder*, *The Anti-Death League*, and the first non-Ian Fleming James Bond novel, *Colonel Son*) and horror and speculative fiction (*The Green Man* and *The Alteration*). During the period leading up to end of his second marriage, to novelist Elizabeth Jane Howard, who in 1983 offered him an ultimatum: her or booze, Amis's fiction entered its bleakest phase with *Jake's Thing* and *Stanley and the Women*. These barely found American publishers.

The Old Devils, which Martin Amis has called one of the best half-dozen novels of the 20th century, must have been like a glass of champagne after downing six or seven pints of bitter for Amis's longtime readers. Here at last we see Amis at rest: oldish,

sentimental, content, the expected skewerings and obloquies still present but no longer essential to the proceedings. The novel's plot, less well known than that of *Lucky Jim*, is too good for me to spoil, but it involves the return of Alun Weaver, an over-the-hill novelist, and his wife Rhiannon to their native Wales. The titular old devils are a group of married couples whose lives the Weavers' unanticipated—and almost literally short-lived—Welsh retirement disrupts.

Amis's comedy in *The Old Devils* does not depend not on the usual succession of set pieces and grotesques. For once, his characters are almost soft. Here, early in the novel, are the old devils at table:

Alun began to relax. He went on relaxing over the next drink, when they got on to politics and had a lovely time seeing who could say the most outrageous thing about the national Labour Party, the local Labour Party, the Labour-controlled county council, the trade unions, the education system, the penal system, the Health Service, the BBC, black people and youth. (Not homosexuals today.) They varied this with eulogies of President Reagan, Enoch Powell, the South African government, the Israeli hawks and whatever his name was who ran Singapore?

Notice the verb "relax," which never appears in the relentless *Lucky Jim*. See also the casual thoroughness of their political discussion. In a later scene, Malcolm (one of the devils) and Rhiannon enter an abandoned church. Here, instead of the riotous atheism of many earlier essays and public pronouncements, Amis shows himself capable, if not of piety, then certainly of respect and even awe when faced with its trappings. William H. Pritchard rightly compares this episode to Philip Larkin's poem "Church-Going."

The Old Devils is also, despite its dedication to Martin's sons Louis and Jacob, a kind of love letter to Amis's first wife, Hillary Bardwell, a typewritten apology note to a woman whom he seems suddenly to have realized he loved desperately despite his many infidelities during the nearly two decades of their marriage.

The reissue of these two novels may not guarantee an increase in Google Scholar citations of Kingsley Amis's fiction, but then, of literary reputations he once quipped: "Importance is not important; only good writing is." ■



Party Animus

In his memoir *If You Don't Weaken* (1940), Oscar Ameringer, witty and humane radical from the erstwhile hotbed of American socialism, Oklahoma (it really was!), professed a “rule of never voting for a presidential candidate who had the slightest chance of election. The ballot is too precious lightly to be thrown away on candidates selected and financed by the ‘angels’ and archangels of the two historic old parties which have managed my adopted country into the condition it is in today.”

Oscar’s statute remains sound. We are facing in 2012 the worst Democrat-Republican twosome since, uh, 2008? 2004? 2000? I detect a pattern.

A state’s electoral votes have never been decided by a single popular vote, so as history is our guide your vote for president *does not matter*.

Choose not between two evils: the candidate of crony capitalism and war with Iran or the candidate of crony socialism and smug anti-Catholicism. Groove instead to the old Prohibition Party hit: “I’d rather be right than president/I want my conscience clear.”

Strategic voting is for Board of Education or City Council elections in which you and your franchise actually matter. As a citizen, you can play a role, even an essential role, in the affairs of your place. But as a subject of the Empire, you count for nothing. You’re not even a brick in the wall in our quadrennial king-making charades.

So cast your ballot to satisfy your conscience. Obey the injunction of John Quincy Adams (whose son,

Charles Francis Adams, bolted the Whigs to serve as Martin Van Buren’s running mate on the 1848 Free Soil ticket): “Always vote for principle, though you may vote alone, and you may cherish the sweetest reflection that your vote is never lost.” That might serve as an epitaph to Ron Paul’s congressional career.

I was born and bred in the cradle of minor partyism, so I suppose the blood—the ichor? the fever?—of electoral rebellion washes through my veins. Besides McGovern in 1972 and Goldwater in 1964, the last major-party candidate I might have voted for would have been Al Smith in 1928.

The nation’s first third party, the Anti-Masons, arose in my backyard in 1826 after a footloose drunken apostate Mason, Captain William Morgan, spilled the secrets of the craft in his book *Illustrations of Freemasonry* and wound up missing in the Jimmy Hoffa sense. (Some local Masons long contended that the sot Morgan hightailed it to Canada and lived out a bibulous life. His ghost can be seen staggering about the stripjoints which stipple the Canadian side of the Niagara border.)

The first third party I’d have supported without reservation, the anarchist-tinged Liberty Party, was born 20 miles down the road in Warsaw, New York. (Reading a biography of John Greenleaf Whittier, who was forever whinging about his ailments as most poets do, I was amused to see him tell Gerrit Smith in 1840 that he planned to vote for Liberty Party candidate James Birney “if my life is spared” through November of that year. Like most hypochondriacs, Whittier lived forever,

finally taking his leave 52 years later and entering the valetudinarian Hall of Fame.)

Why are the men with integrity and honor and courage so often found at the fringes of American political life? I think of Burton K. Wheeler (Progressive Party VP candidate in 1924) refusing to hand down a single sedition indictment as U.S. attorney for Montana during the First World War. Or Eugene V. Debs, five-time Socialist Party candidate for President, going to prison in 1919 for telling an audience in Canton, Ohio, that “the working class who freely shed their blood and furnish the corpses, have never yet had a voice in either declaring war or making peace. It is the ruling class that invariably does both.”

Things sure have changed, huh?

Third parties have their share and more of frauds and kooks and backbiters (so unlike the Democrats and Republicans) but even at their meanest and most outré, a vote cast therefor serves as a gesture of protest, however ineffectual: an extended middle finger to the tank bearing down on you. Aaron Russo, the late Hollywood producer and manager of Bette Midler, tried and failed in the 1990s to launch a populist-libertarian party whose message to our overlords, in Russo’s words, was “F--- YOU! WE’RE NOT GOING TO TAKE THIS SHIT!”

Much better than “Hope and Change,” I’d say.

Me, I’m sticking with Oscar Ameringer. My default party in recent elections has been the Greens, but this time I’ll vote for Gary Johnson, the Libertarian. I want my conscience clear. ■

Arts&Letters

Who Was John Randolph?

by TIMOTHY STANLEY

John Randolph of Roanoke, David Johnson, LSU Press, 352 pages

John Randolph of Roanoke was everything the modern conservative might despise: aristocratic, sexually ambiguous, occasionally irreligious, anti-party, and the sworn enemy of military adventurism. His personality suggests he might have had more in common with the late Gore Vidal than Sarah Palin. Yet Randolph still stands out as one of the most important conservative thinkers of the generation after the Founding Fathers. David Johnson's fine new biography of the Virginia gentleman is a timely reminder that conservatives come in all shapes and sizes—and often disagree.

The contemporary American conservative tradition is a postwar invention. Until the 1960s, conservatism was largely dismissed by historians as a psychological defect—an unhealthy fetish for the certainties of the past. That consensus collapsed as brilliant men like William F. Buckley Jr. began to write intelligently about a “conservative tradition” that was part of the tapestry of American thought, while the political success of Ronald Reagan forced scholars to rewrite the official narrative of unstoppable liberal progress. The Buckleyite “tradition” and the electoral success of the GOP became conflated. At the dawn of the Millennium, histo-

rians were forced to confront the possibility that conservatism had flourished because its philosophy is actually older and more popular than liberalism's.

The danger of Buckley's effort to construct a tradition is that it slowly became a template. Anyone who doesn't match the specifications of “born again,” “tax-cutting,” and “foreign-policy hawk” can now officially be labeled “unconservative.” The result is that men like libertarian Ron Paul, paleoconservative Pat Buchanan, or cosmopolitan Rudy Giuliani—all of whom represented legitimate dimensions of conservatism—could no longer get an invite to the party. Republican presidential primaries have evolved from talent contests to the priest-selection ritual of some bizarre and parochial religion. “I swear by almighty God never to raise taxes...”

How fascinating it is, then, to read the life of John Randolph, a man who defied the official conservative tradition on several counts. What stands out is his humanity, both common and aristocratic. He was born the scion of rich tobacco planters in 1773. A genetic aberration—Johnson diagnoses it as Klinefelter's syndrome—left him beardless and deprived him of the pleasures and horrors of puberty. He was a squeaker, with a high-pitched voice that gave his famous epigrams great camp value. (Randolph said that one of his enemies was “a man of splendid abilities, but utterly corrupt. He shines and stinks like a rotten mackerel by moonlight.”)

A significant amount of the book is given over to Randolph's physical suffering. For example,

He was ‘racked with pain and never for two hours together free from some affliction’ of his stomach and bowels. He suffered from ‘rheumatism and erratic gout’ and a most distressing and obstinate complaint—chronic diarrhea. ... He treated himself with a variety of concoctions, including liberal doses of opium, but worried that there ‘is nothing left for the medicine to operate on.’

Randolph tried to distract himself by hunting. On one occasion, he poured gunpowder on a still burning charge and burned his hand. He observed, “What so many patriotic personages have, for years, been labouring to accomplish is at last effected, although not precisely in the way they aimed at ... I have been blown up.”

His behavior was more like that of a British Tory gentleman than a revolutionary republican. He wisely avoided formal education and excelled in drinking and socializing instead. In his late teens, Johnson reports, our hero lived “a life of restless aimlessness. ‘You inquire after my plans,’ he wrote a friend. ‘I have none. ... I exist in an obscurity from which I never shall emerge.’”

What drew him to the forefront of American society was the sweetest opiate of them all—politics. In the 1790s, the young republic was still fighting over what it stood for. The Federalist-controlled Congress passed the Alien and Sedition Acts in 1798, which were the authoritarian forerunner of today's PATRIOT Act. Jefferson's Democratic Republicans opposed the acts, and

Randolph was among their number. Sadly, we have no written record of his speeches on the subject, but they were sufficiently powerful to get him elected to Congress at the tender age of 26. When he approached the speaker's dais to take his oath, the speaker wondered aloud if Randolph was old enough to serve. "Ask my constituent," the freshman replied.

Jefferson was a cousin, so we might have expected the two to form a familial and philosophical alliance. But Randolph quickly proved to be a thorn in the side of Jefferson and almost every president who followed. He became, in Johnson's words, "a party unto himself, a republican purist who would sacrifice no principle for political success or collegial acceptance. He was the 'third something' of American politics—a *Tertium Quid*." Randolph opposed the purchase of Florida and the creation of a national bank because he saw these things as going beyond the limits of government as laid out in the Constitution.

Crucially, that didn't make him an anti-elitist republican of the Ron Paul variety. His politics were rooted in European-style snobbery. Randolph believed that, if left alone, a well-ordered society could govern itself. "I am an aristocrat," he said. "I love liberty, I hate equality." Liberty could not be traded for security or sold off to the highest bidder for short-term reward. It guaranteed the space within which men like Randolph could rule. A cynic might call him feudal.

And yet so radical was his politics, and so carefree his lifestyle, that he sometimes jumps off the page like a revolutionary. He lost his seat in Congress because he opposed the War of 1812 and the militaristic nationalism that motivated it. Randolph warned the House that it was a "war not of defense but of conquest, of aggrandizement, of ambition; a war foreign to the interests of this country, to the interests of humanity itself." The Constitution, remember, "was not calculated to wage offensive foreign

war—it was instituted for the common defense and the general welfare."

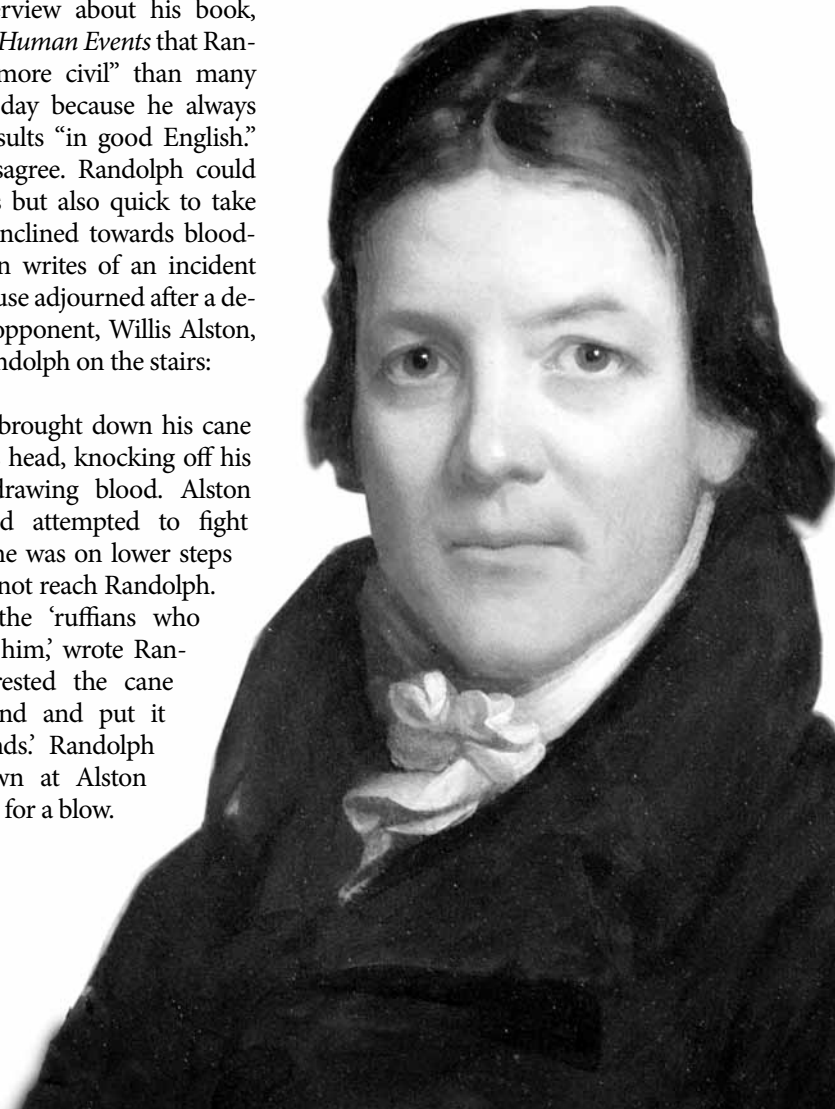
Randolph was no pacifist. He warned Congress that war could lead to a slave rebellion in the South, a nod to the fact that he himself was involved in one of the greatest, most vilest acts of violence ever perpetrated on a people. Johnson stresses that Randolph was opposed to slavery in the abstract and provided for the freedom of the men and women that he owned after his death. But there's no escaping that the liberty promised in the hallowed Constitution did not extend to everyone. In this matter, Randolph displayed some of the least charming characteristics of the Old South.

In an interview about his book, Johnson told *Human Events* that Randolph was "more civil" than many politicians today because he always issued his insults "in good English." I have to disagree. Randolph could be chivalrous but also quick to take offense and inclined towards bloodshed. Johnson writes of an incident when the House adjourned after a debate and an opponent, Willis Alston, slandered Randolph on the stairs:

Randolph brought down his cane on Alston's head, knocking off his hat and drawing blood. Alston turned and attempted to fight back, but he was on lower steps and could not reach Randolph. Some of the 'ruffians who were with him,' wrote Randolph, 'wrested the cane from behind and put it in his hands.' Randolph stared down at Alston and waited for a blow.

But Alston dared not return fire. The very next paragraph details Randolph receiving one duel challenge after another, equally violent debate. It's difficult not to get the impression that our hero was a bully, rhetorically and physically. Honor was frequently invoked as an excuse for a good fight.

Some have suggested that another reason for his constant displays of manly combat might have been his "ambiguous sexuality," in the words of historian Andrew Burstein. The conservative writer Bill Kauffman has described Randolph as "a bachelor who seems to have nurtured a crush

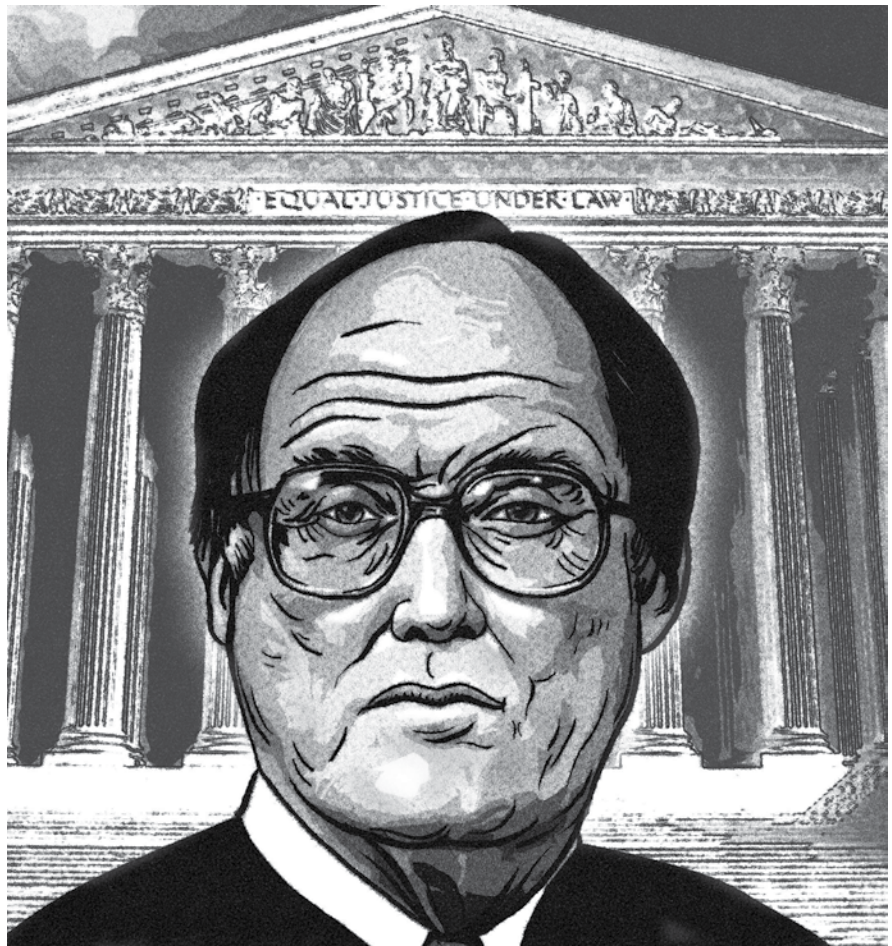


on Andrew Jackson.” In fact, Johnson reveals that medical evidence proves he was almost a eunuch: “Dr. Francis West conducted a post-mortem examination of Randolph and recorded that the ‘scrotum was scarcely at all developed,’ with only a right testicle ‘the size of a small bean.’” Johnson dismisses psychoanalyzing his subject further at this point, but it feels crucial. Walking around with generative organs so small is bound to have some impact upon a man’s human and political relations.

All this talk of scrotums and testicles emphasizes that the takeaway from this well-researched, judicious biography is the importance of personality to the history of conservatism. There is no straight line leading from the politics of John Randolph to that of Ron Paul, any more than there is a line from Jefferson to Romney. It’s a point that Johnson made in his *Human Events* interview. Far from trying to cash in on the tantalizing similarities between Randolph and Paul, when asked, “Are there any modern-day comparisons to John Randolph?” Johnson replied, “Absolutely not.”

But there are consistent attitudes—rather than policy prescriptions—spanning the centuries that suggest the existence of a historical conservative archetype: stubbornness, romanticism, a loyalty for the small and local that trumps the grand and national, an affection for custom, a suspicion that equality ends after birth, a resistance to modes of thought that elevate fine ideas above the freedom of the individual. Every new generation of conservatives has to turn those vague sentiments into an agenda—sometimes of resistance, sometimes of reform. The challenge is to be something more than just a privileged spoilsport. ■

Timothy Stanley is author of The Crusader: The Life and Tumultuous Times of Pat Buchanan and is a blogger for the Daily Telegraph.



Michael Hogue

Misjudging Rehnquist

by KEVIN R.C. GUTZMAN

The Partisan: The Life of William Rehnquist, John A. Jenkins, Public Affairs, 320 pages

William Rehnquist was the most Jeffersonian associate justice of the Supreme Court in history. Even before Ronald Reagan and Edwin Meese made originalism the touchstone of conservative constitutionalism, Rehnquist spent a decade toiling as an isolated dissenter in the vineyard of the actual Constitution rather than *stare decisis*. To Justice William Brennan’s infamous “Rule of Five”—as Brennan explained to one of his clerks, with five votes, he could do anything—Rehnquist op-

posed the idea that provisions of the Constitution had fixed meanings established at the time of their ratification. For that, he suffered the slings and arrows of outrageously partisan journalists.

Today, with five conservative justices on the Supreme Court and originalism as the starting point even for liberals’ discussion of the Constitution, it may be difficult to conjure the legal world at the time of Rehnquist’s appointment to the court by Richard Nixon in 1972. In fact, as recently as 1990 old-fashioned liberal constitutional nihilists still dominated the bench and bar—just as they still dominate academia. When I graduated from the University of Texas School of Law in May of that year, I did what aspiring lawyers do: I took a bar review course to prepare for the bar exam. Like most other states, Texas

then had both essay and multiple-choice sections on its exam. When the bar review course's instructor began to discuss the multiple-choice section, she said, "If you are offered 'The Tenth Amendment' as a potential answer, you know that's wrong. It's never right." She laughed and laughed.

Rehnquist was primarily responsible for the restoration of the Tenth Amendment to its position as, well, part of the Constitution. Rehnquist's achievement in this area was part of the greater endeavor of actually trying to restore the federal feature that had been central to the Federalists' argument for ratification of the Constitution in the first place.

At the time of Reagan's election in 1980, Rehnquist stood virtually alone on the Supreme Court in advocating the idea that the Constitution had a fixed meaning. Saying so had made him somewhat of a *bête noire* for legal scholars and journalists, when they didn't simply adjudge him goofy. How could anyone oppose the latest legal innovations of liberals who had abolished segregation, ordered forced busing, legalized pornography, extended new procedural rights to criminal defendants, abolished the means of apportioning legislative bodies that had been used in Anglophone countries for more than 700 years, found new sexual rights in "emanations of penumbrae" of the Bill of Rights, and in general remade constitutional law in their own image?

John A. Jenkins's book borrows the title of a *New York Times Magazine* cover story on Rehnquist he published a quarter-century ago. Pretty witty, he thinks. The Supreme Court that made the Warren Court revolution was down-the-middle moderate and principled. Rehnquist had an agenda. So, Jenkins tells us, his then-editor averred in assigning him the magazine story. And what kind of agenda? Repeatedly, Jenkins says that if a party before the Supreme Court was female, a criminal defendant, etc., Rehnquist was sure to vote against her. Jenkins casti-

gates Rehnquist for supposedly being results-oriented, but the author never gives his reader any ground for analysis of Rehnquist's performance as a justice other than results.

What do I mean? To my mind, the paradigmatic opinion by Associate Justice Rehnquist was his dissent in the 1985 case *Wallace v. Jaffree*. In that case, Rehnquist took on one of the landmark decisions of the court authored by his least-favorite 20th century justice, Hugo Black. In *Everson v. Board of Education of Ewing Township* (1947), Black had "discovered" that the Fourteenth Amendment made Thomas Jefferson's metaphor of "a wall of separation between church and state" enforceable by federal judges against state governments. Rehnquist's *Wallace* dissent proved that Black's opinion was completely unfounded.

Rehnquist's method was that of originalism—the otherwise unexceptionable notion that a legal document's meaning is to be found in the understanding of the people who adopted it. In the Constitution's case, that means the ratifiers. So Rehnquist pointed out that Jefferson was neither a ratifier nor an author of the First Amendment's Establishment Clause, that his formula had nothing to do with that provision's crafting or ratification, and that in fact it was coined in a letter written by President Jefferson a decade after the relevant clause's ratification. The opinion is a tour de force of actual constitutionalism and has appeared routinely in popular constitutional law casebooks and in accounts of the American solution to the problem of church-state relations

Jenkins does not mention *Wallace*. Rather, oddly, he tells us that Rehnquist crafted nary a memorable opinion. This claim is simply untrue.

Can we tell from Rehnquist's opinion whether Rehnquist thinks statutes such as the one at issue in *Wallace* are a good idea? No—although Jenkins certainly thinks we can. Quoting partisans of Warren-Burger Court judicial legislation such as Alan Dershowitz

and Linda Greenhouse—the latter of whom participated in pro-*Roe* public demonstrations even while serving as *New York Times*' Supreme Court correspondent—Jenkins consistently equates court decisions in favor of one party or another with sympathy for that party's evident moral claims. Here he ignores Rehnquist's point that due process means in the first place neutral application of a neutral statute duly enacted. Rehnquist, in the vanguard of originalists, believed that republican government meant first of all that the people were entitled to make constitutions of their own choosing and then legislate within the bounds of the constitutions they had made.

Jenkins tends to find great brilliance in anyone who agrees with him and to downplay even scintillating intelligence in those who do not. Thus, for example, Jenkins is the first author whom I have ever seen refer to Earl Warren as anything like "an intellectual lion of the Court." Far closer to the median account of Warren was a contemporary's characterization of him as a "dumb Swede." This discrepancy between reality and the author's take runs through the book: Jenkins repeatedly says that although Rehnquist graduated from Stanford Law School with the highest grade point average he was not first in his class; he repeatedly downplays Antonin Scalia's famous wit; and he often characterizes Rehnquist and other conservatives as rigid or unyielding. Yet Barry Goldwater, famed for his consistent devotion to principle, appears as "erratic." At one point, Rehnquist is a participant in a "jihad." For their part, Warren, William Brennan, William O. Douglas, and other liberals, although they are at least as predictable as Rehnquist, are never described with negative adjectives. Seemingly, one cannot be a rigid lefty, even when arguing that trees should have standing to sue.

Jenkins makes desirable legal outcomes into constitutional legal outcomes throughout his account. Since Rehnquist, as an originalist, rejected

this alchemy, Jenkins has a choice between explaining the grounds for Rehnquist's disagreement or painting Rehnquist as a villain. He chooses the latter. Thus, for example, in describing three memoranda written by then-clerk Rehnquist for Justice Robert Jackson in the 1950s, Jenkins assumes that Rehnquist's counsel to his boss not to vote to strike down segregation rested on an unexpressed support for segregation. Yet one of those memos included Rehnquist's reasoning that not only would such a ruling be contrary to the court's precedent, it likely would also violate "legislative history." This latter originalist concern rested not on fantasy, but on the research of Alexander Bickel, a clerk for Justice Felix Frankfurter who had returned from an

Rehnquist as chief justice led a court majority that moved a long way toward abolishing "benign" race discrimination.

attempt to demonstrate that the court could justify striking down segregation on the basis of the legislative record with the unhappy news that it could not. "Its own sociological views" were not adequate ground for such a ruling, Rehnquist told Jackson.

Of course, in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the court did strike down segregation. It did so on the basis of sociological claims, and along the way denied that original understanding could be binding. To someone like Rehnquist, the entire exercise was a violation of the justices' oath to uphold the Constitution, whatever their own policy preferences might be.

Determined to paint Rehnquist as a villain, Jenkins misses significant legal distinctions. For example, Rehnquist's statement in the 1950s that he opposed both segregation and integration—the former meaning assignment of children to schools based on race, and the latter meaning aboli-

tion of neighborhood schools in the name of statistical balance—is classified by Jenkins as "intolerant or even racist." As chief justice, Rehnquist in the 1990s and 2000s had the opportunity to write this distinction into constitutional law, precisely as the presidents who had put him on the court and moved him to the chief justice's middle chair had hoped he would do. As a result, the extremely unpopular forced-busing experiment that helped elect Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan president is now largely a thing of the past. One would not know this from reading *The Partisan*.

Rehnquist as chief justice also led a court majority that moved a long way toward abolishing "benign" race discrimination. In my view, this line of cases reflected a desirable development in policy terms but was inconsistent with originalism. But because the constitutional amendment that is *Brown v. Board of Education* is almost certainly a permanent part of constitutional law, it is perfectly reasonable—one might even say incumbent—to apply its principle in other cases. Again there is no explanation of this from Jenkins, who is simply critical of these developments.

Readers interested in learning of William Rehnquist's record as associate justice and chief justice will be better advised to start elsewhere. Those who hope to become acquainted with Rehnquist the man may find much of this book interesting, in a chatty way. I hope for an account of Rehnquist more respectful of his jurisprudence and less devoted to the box-score version of legal history than the average newspaper account. That account will have to come from an author less partisan than John A. Jenkins. ■

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Swimming in Rhetoric

by JOHN R. COYNE JR.

Words Like Loaded Pistols: Rhetoric From Aristotle To Obama, Sam Leith, Basic Books, 312 pages

Sam Leith, former literary editor of the *Daily Telegraph*, novelist, and contributor to the *Wall Street Journal* and other publications, is cheeky, talented, smart, and a fine and easy writer, intoxicated by words and the way we arrange them to sell, persuade, praise, explain, attack. In *Words Like Loaded Pistols*, he sets out to share his enthusiasm for rhetoric, and, with only an occasional misfire, he succeeds admirably, in large part because of his unflagging good nature and offbeat sense of humor.

"Explaining rhetoric to a human being," he writes, "is, or should be, like explaining water to a fish." In both cases, explanations aren't really necessary. We swim in rhetoric from the moment we turn on the news until we log off at night, and the whole time there's someone making a rhetorical pitch, trying to sell us something.

Rhetoric "isn't an academic discipline or the preserve of professional orators," Leith writes. "It's right here, right now, in your argument with the insurance company, your plea to the waitress for a table near the window, or your entreaties to your jam-faced kiddies to eat their damn veggies."

True enough, although in the U.S. it would probably be something other than jam. Nor, despite the comfortable way he eases us into his subject, is he really interested in discussing insurance, kids, or veggies. His intention is to analyze and instruct us in the way the world's movers and shakers—among them Milton's Satan, Cicero, Lincoln, Churchill, Hitler, Martin Luther King, Obama—have used rhetoric for achieving their ends. Each of these

figures is given a chapter-long section (for no good reason, all in italics) as a “Champion of Rhetoric,” within discussions of what he names as the five parts of rhetoric—Invention, Arrangement, Style, Memory, and Delivery.

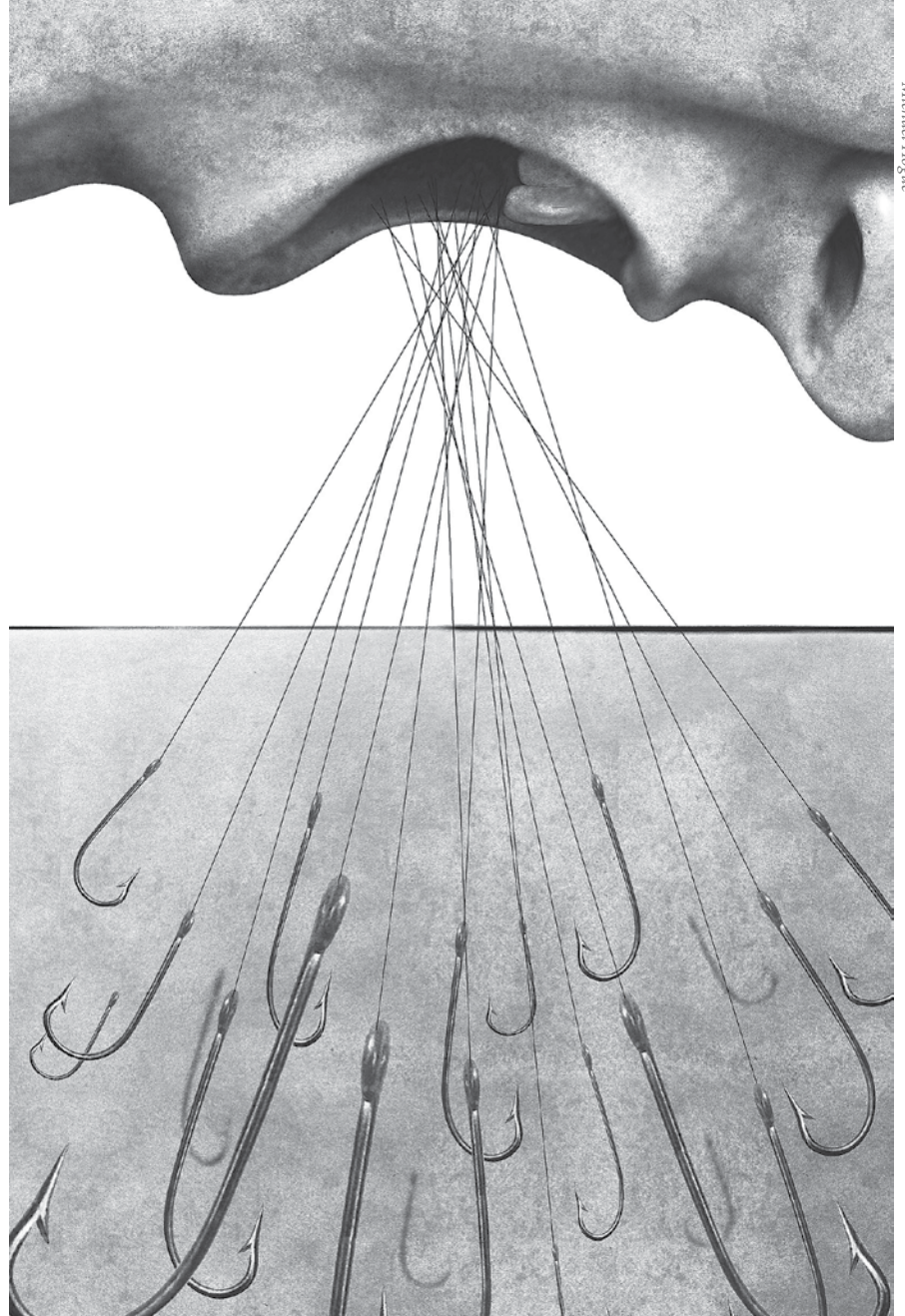
Aristotle, he tells us, divided Invention into three lines of argument. “Thanks in part to my constitutional childishness, they have always sounded to me like the names by which the Three Musketeers really should have been known: Ethos, Logos, and Pathos,” Leith writes. “These three fellows are the absolute bedrock of written and spoken persuasion.” Ethos establishes the speaker’s bona fides and connection with the audience. Logos is the attempt to influence them through reason. And Pathos is intended to stir them emotionally.

For an address that exemplifies these principles, Leith reaches back to 1952 and Richard Nixon’s “Checkers” speech, given in response to charges that he’d been accepting money and gifts, accusations that endangered his place on the Eisenhower ticket. “Long before President Nixon met his Waterloo over the Watergate burglary, he escaped from another tight spot with a magisterial speech, at the heart of which was a nakedly cheesy pathos appeal.”

The star of that appeal was a puppy—sent as a gift to Nixon’s daughters by a supporter in Texas—“a little cocker spaniel dog. ... black and white, spotted. And our little girl Tricia, the six-year-old, named it ‘Checkers.’ And you know, the kids, like all kids, love the dog, and I just want to say this, right now, that regardless of what they say about it, we’re gonna keep it.”

“No sooner had these words been uttered,” writes Leith, “than America as one melted into a puddle of love for Nixon, his wife, his adorable little daughters, and itty-bitty waggy-tailed Checkers.” The introduction of the puppy was “a stone cold stroke of brilliance.”

The Checkers speech shows how a masterful rhetorician, very much in tune with his times, can achieve his objectives with words. The pistol was



loaded and primed, the aim perfect, the bullets sent unerringly home. (That sentence, incidentally, is a *tricolon*, one of the author’s favorite rhetorical figures.)

But although Leith cites the speech as a rhetorical masterpiece, the reader might wonder why he’d intersperse his analysis with jarring words like “cheesy” or a rhetorically out-of-place reference to Nixon’s “creepy smile” or as “Tricky Dick.” *Ad hominem*? Not quite that. Constitutional childishness?

Perhaps. It might also be a matter of literary-world realism. Using words like “magisterial,” “masterful,” and “brilliance” when discussing Richard

Nixon will inevitably provoke a Pavlovian reaction among those—many of whom buy, discuss, and review books—whose Nixon-hatred is embedded in their DNA. In another place, Leith writes of “dog whistle boo words” that provoke such responses. “Richard Nixon” are two of those words.

So are “Satan,” “that silver tongued devil,” and “Adolf Hitler.” Leith’s is the Satan created by Milton, who “gave Satan the rhetorical chops he deserves,” and the Satan from a 1967 film, “Bedazzled.” Nothing here to give offense; no dog whistle boo words; something for moviegoers helping to lighten the rhetorical load; and much for those surviving lov-

ers of one of the signal achievements in literary history, an extraordinary melding of poetry with rhetoric.

And Hitler? “Applying the praise word ‘champion’ to Adolf Hitler feels a bit odd, and I don’t wish to be needlessly provocative.” But, Leith continues, we have a duty to understand what it was that allowed him to put “his evil intentions ... so horribly into effect.” Historians tell us that it was the right time, the right place, and luck. But it was also “his brilliance as an orator.”

Leith sums it up: “Strive though theorists have since ancient times to naturalize the connection between oratory and civic virtue, Hitler is a good instance of the extent to which they have failed. Rhetoric’s effectiveness is, in the final analysis, independent of its moral content or that of its users.”

Fortunately, Churchill was able to infuse his oratory with “moral content,” and its role in carrying England through World War II has been widely celebrated. Leith reminds us of the extraordinary effort he put into making that rhetoric work, although Leith, perhaps like many of his generation (he was born the year Richard Nixon resigned), is less than enamored of Churchill’s rhetorical “high style.” But the moral content of his work is something else.

Lincoln, Martin Luther King, and Obama are also treated as speakers of high moral purpose. Leith praises the Gettysburg address, calls the “I Have a Dream” speech “the pinnacle of twentieth-century American rhetoric,” and in his section on Obama, nicely titled “The Audacity of Trope,” he hears in Obama’s speeches an echo of both Lincoln and King.

Obama, he writes, derives much of his strength as orator from the Bible. “The language of the King James version of the Bible echoes behind the strophic structure and parallelisms of Obama’s speeches.” The Bible in American oratory comes down through the Founding Fathers. But it also comes down through “the rhetoric of the

civil rights movement. When Obama sounds like the Bible, he doesn’t just sound like the Bible. He sounds like the Bible channeled through Martin Luther King.”

Obama, Leith points out, was also heavily influenced by his pastor, Jeremiah Wright, from whose sermons he took the title of his book, *The Audacity of Hope*. But that’s an influence the White House doesn’t talk about these days.

Leith’s discussion of Obama’s oratory centers on his 2008 election-night speech in Chicago’s Grant Park and his inaugural address in Washington. But since then the big oratorical guns have gone silent. As Leith points out, the high rhetoric of politics can produce an anti-rhetoric opposition. And it may be Obama’s task this time around to square the rhetoric with the reality of his record, to prove that he’s something more than what Hillary Clinton once called him, a man who just “gives speeches.”

Leith’s interest in politics tends to overshadow some of the best features of his book, his discussion of the origins and formal development of rhetoric as a discipline, for instance, and the definitions of rhetorical figures, which he works into his text and includes in a glossary.

There’s chiasmus, as in the “Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country,” the Kennedy/Sorenson ABBA pattern. Or better, Dr. Johnson’s verdict to an aspiring author: “Your manuscript is both good and original; but the parts that are good are not original, and the parts that are original are not good.”

Then there’s zeugma, “a tricky figure in which several clauses are governed by a single word. ... Flanders and Swann, in their song ‘Have Some Madeira, M’Dear,’ really go to town on this figure: ‘He had slyly inveigled her up to his flat/ To view his collection of stamps/ And he said as he hastened to put out the cat/ The wine, his cigars and the lamps...’”

Leith also pays tribute to the person standing just behind the curtain—the

Unknown Speechwriter. Every politician has one, and a president can have a dozen or so. In *White House Ghosts*, the best book yet about White House speechwriters, Robert Schlesinger writes that LBJ’s speechwriters couldn’t write to his speaking strengths. On one occasion, LBJ said of their efforts: “The goddamn draft they’ve given me wouldn’t make chickens cackle if you waved it at ‘em in the dark.”

That’s the job of the speechwriter—to make the chickens cackle. That’s not to say, unless you’re working for a complete dolt, that you try to put words in the politician’s mouth. As Leith says, “the speechwriter aims to write what the speaker thinks, in the most eloquent terms in which the speaker might plausibly express it.”

Leith singles out several speechwriters who have accomplished just that—Ronald Millar for Margaret Thatcher, and Peggy Noonan, from whose memoir, *What I Saw at the Revolution*, he quotes at some length. Noonan knew how to make the chickens cackle, and when necessary, to make grown men cry. Her work with Ronald Reagan on the famous “Boys of Pointe du Hoc” speech, delivered at Normandy on the 40th anniversary of D-Day, has earned her a permanent spot in the speechwriters’ hall of fame.

To conclude this discussion of words, here are some of the author’s last ones, a fine ending for his book: “People have been talking each other in and out of fights and in and out of bed since the first syllable formed on the first ape-like prehistoric lip. The total corpus of everything they’ve ever said is the object of study: the patterns that obtain across centuries are testament to our commonality; the ceaseless variation testament to the power and elasticity of invention. Rhetoric is inexhaustible.” ■

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Obama's Nerds

by LLOYD GREEN

The Victory Lab: The Secret Science of Winning Campaigns, Sasha Issenberg, Crown, 357 pages

Like football, the 2012 election is a game of inches. Heading into the fall, the presidential election remains close nationally. Every vote will count.

Enter Sasha Issenberg's *The Victory Lab*, which posits that GOTV, or getting out the vote, is where elections are won or lost. According to Issenberg, "microtargeting" is now the byword of successful campaigns. He also observes that American politics is riven by ideological conflict, that policy preferences do matter (particularly among better-educated voters), and that it was not always that way. But *The Victory Lab's* subtitle overstates: none of these things are very secret.

For example, the last presidential election won by a landslide was three decades ago, when Ronald Reagan was re-elected with just under 59 percent of the vote. Since then, candidates have struggled to take an actual majority of the popular vote and to win by a margin that does not look like an accident. No candidate since Reagan has enjoyed a winning margin of 10 percent or more.

Putting things into perspective, Barack Obama was the first successful candidate since George H. W. Bush in 1988 to win an absolute majority of the popular vote and a comfortable cushion. Obama beat John McCain by 7.3 points. George H.W. Bush had bested Mike Dukakis 53.3 to 45.6.

In contrast, Bill Clinton never broke the 50 percent mark in his two presidential bids. Al Gore won the popular vote in 2000 with only 48.38 percent of all votes cast. In 2004, George W. Bush crossed the 50 percent threshold, with 50.7 percent of the vote, a meager 2.4 percent margin over Massachusetts

Democrat John Kerry.

Elections have clearly changed. The issueless politics of the 1950s, as Issenberg describes it, has given way to the politics of cleavage and confrontation. At the same time, the electorate's warring factions are now at numerical and demographic parity.

With these changes afoot, it is not surprising that a campaign's ability to identify supporters, persuade wavering voters, and then get both to the polls on Election Day has become ever more important. Issenberg stresses that in-person outreach, peer pressure, and direct mail have emerged as the preferred vehicles for reaching a targeted voter. Television no longer delivers the same bang for the buck.

For example, *The Victory Lab* recounts how on the last weekend before the 2004 election, the Bush campaign sent out a four-page targeted mailer to select mailboxes across the country that questioned Kerry's toughness, his ability to lead the country at a time of war, and his commitment to getting Osama bin Laden. The Bush campaign itself viewed the mailer as over-the-top. But Bush strategist Alex Gage saw the last-minute flyer as having just the right visceral pitch to woo potential Bush voters who had doubts about both candidates. To Team Bush, it was terror and war—and not social issues—that carried their man past the finish line first.

On the other hand, the Bush campaign also had its failures. It mailed leaflets highlighting the president's Clean Skies Initiative to upscale voters in Pennsylvania's Main Line suburbs. Other leaflets went to Minnesota farmers, seeking to assuage their concerns about sugar beets and free trade. Yet Bush lost both Pennsylvania and Minnesota. Even microtargeting has limits.

The ground game also looms large for both parties. According to Issenberg,

Election Day field operations were not a traditional GOP strength. Republican turnout strategy counted more on message and mechanics than on actual human contact. Phone banks and door-to-door volunteers armed with clipboards and smiles were more the stuff of unions, students, and Democratic operatives. By contrast, the Republican field operation was rich in congressional staffers and lobbyists.

The 2004 Bush campaign aimed to change things by putting boots on the ground early. During the summer of 2004, the Republican National Committee established a "Test Drive for W" operation to gear up for the fall campaign. Voters identified as Bush supporters received three rounds of contact in person and by phone from

Successful campaign tactics have a bipartisan life of their own.

September onward. In the end, George W. Bush eked out the re-election that had eluded his father.

In politics and in war, winning techniques do not stay secret for long. Mark Halperin and John Harris wrote in their 2007 book, *The Way to Win: Taking the White House in 2008*, of how the Bush 1988 campaign used opposition research to come roaring back after being down 17 points to Mike Dukakis and then how the 1992 Clinton campaign further refined opposition research with his War Room's rapid-response operation. Successful campaign tactics have a bipartisan life of their own.

Enter the Obama 2008 campaign, which took microtargeting to a whole new level, according to Issenberg. In addition to Obama's much-ballyhoed presence in social media, the Obama

campaign made a conscious decision to buy advertising on select bus routes in ten cities located in swing states, including buses in Philadelphia, Miami, Denver, Flint, and Akron. This way, Obama's demographic core would be continuously and silently reminded to vote for him.

Per Issenberg's telling, Team Obama was haunted by their rust-belt primary losses to Hillary Clinton. For the most part, she outperformed Obama in the swing states. The Obama campaign knew that Pennsylvania and Michigan would be fall battlegrounds and that Ohio had gone with the win-

Academic involvement in Democratic politics was a matter of personal conviction, talent, and culture.

ner of every presidential election since 1960. To help fix things, the Obama campaign opened a hundred field offices in Ohio, including five offices in Cuyahoga County. Enthusiastic Democratic voters with a history of reliable turnout were wooed to become volunteer leaders. Volunteer-leader metrics were continuously monitored.

The Ohio volunteer effort was augmented by phone banks, canvassing, and data coordination. On Election Day 2008, Ohio and the rest of the rust belt went for Obama. He even picked off traditionally Republican Indiana. Obama overcame his Midwest and rust-belt primary losses and won Ohio by four points.

The scale and success of Obama's ground game becomes apparent when compared to the efforts of Team McCain, a comparison Issenberg does not explicitly make. According to an analysis by Micah Cohen of the *New York Times's* FiveThirtyEight blog, Obama had more than 700 field offices, which were concentrated in the

swing states. McCain had fewer than 400 field offices nationwide. The results of the election tell it all. Local presence made a real difference.

Issenberg sheds light on the nexus between *academe* and the Democratic Party. The fact that university faculty and administrators swooned over Obama in 2008 is no secret. According to the Open Secrets campaign-contributions database, Columbia University employees donated more than \$460,000 to the 2008 Obama campaign. Harvard donated more than \$573,000 in the same cycle, including the \$4,600 given by Elena Kagan, who went on to serve as Obama's solicitor general and now sits on the Supreme Court. The story was pretty much the same out west. Stanford donated nearly \$450,000 to Obama.

But academic involvement in Democratic politics was more than a matter of money. It was a matter of personal conviction, talent, and culture. According to *The Victory Lab*, the Obama campaign came to rely on the Consortium of Behavioral Scientists—in Issenberg's words, a "Fight Club" of 29 psychologists, economists, and law professors dedicated to sending Democrats to Congress and electing a Democrat president. Consortium members dared not utter the group's name in front of strangers. Like the title of Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein's 2008 book, *Nudge*, the consortium's favored techniques involved peer pressure and behavioral modification. The candidate was a product and the electorate was a lab rat.

Thaler and Sunstein, then of the University of Chicago, were consortium members. Tellingly, Sunstein would be tapped by President Obama to serve as the head of the White House Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA); marry Sa-

mantha Power, now a special assistant to the president and a member of the National Security Council staff; and depart the White House for a post at Harvard. Other consortium members included Nobel laureate Daniel Kahneman of Princeton and Max Bazerman of Harvard's Kennedy School.

Issenberg wrongly attributes the political mobilization of these academics simply to their revulsion towards Bush 43. The fact is that America's universities have been moving Democratic since the New Deal. Eugene McCarthy's 1968 presidential campaign rested on college kids who went clean for Gene. In 1984, Columbia University President Michael Sovern played Ronald Reagan in Walter Mondale's debate prep. Since Bill Clinton's 1992 campaign, Americans with graduate degrees have consistently voted for the Democratic presidential candidate and academics have long had a soft spot for Democrats. The consortium was really emblematic of the New Class and reflected shifts in American politics and society that had been underway even during the supposedly sleepy 1950s.

Consortium members peppered Democratic leaders with memos that stressed what behavioral science could do for politics. Issenberg reports on a meeting between consortium leaders and Harry Reid and Hillary Clinton, among others, at which the senators were advised to stress voters' sense of loss and to avoid speaking to their aspirations. According to the consortium, gloom and resentment could be turned into a winning hand. The Obama campaign came to rely upon the consortium in shaping its message and getting out the vote.

The Victory Lab has its shortcomings. It does not give the reader a clear sense of what comes next. The book plunks down in the midst of the 2010 election cycle and immediately describes the battle for the U.S. Senate seat from Colorado. Issenberg narrates how a last-minute blitz

of nuanced emails and letters sent in white envelopes delivered a 15,000 vote victory to Democrat Michael Bennet. Then, the book jarringly reels backwards in time to 1919, the University of Chicago, political science, and the art of campaigning. All of this is informative. But the transition could have been smoother.

Issenberg does not give sufficient attention to why candidates lose. He appears to downplay the diagnosis of the late Republican pollster Robert Teeter and his colleague Fred Steeper that George McGovern lost in 1972 because he struck voters as being unable to “handle” the issues, rather than on account of his ideology.

One only has to look at the failed 2012 presidential candidacy of Rick Perry to be reminded that perception of ability still matters. During the Republican debates, Perry was unable to remember the names of the cabinet departments that he had vowed to abolish and came across as a loutish and charmless caricature of George W. Bush. Ironically, Perry’s campaign was run by Dave Carney, and both Perry and Carney are lauded in *The Victory Lab* for microtargeting Perry’s message during his campaigns for Texas governor. Competence still matters.

Issenberg concludes by conceding that the 2012 election will be less about persuading swing voters, who have grown disillusioned with Obama and the economy, and more about changing the demographics of the electorate with a particular emphasis on minorities and women. Issenberg is right. These days both Democrats and Republicans are actively engaged in voter suppression, according to Thomas Edsall of Columbia’s Journalism School. The culture wars remain ever with us. ■

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We Are Not All Westerners Now

by LEON HADAR

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No One’s World: The West, the Rising Rest, and the Coming Global Turn, Charles A. Kupchan, Oxford University Press, 272 pages

In *Blind Oracles*, his study of the role of intellectuals in formulating and implementing U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War, historian Bruce Kuklick equated these scholars with the “primitive shaman” who performs “feats of ventriloquy.”

We tend to celebrate foreign-policy intellectuals as thinkers who try to transform grand ideas into actual policies. In reality, their function has usually been to offer members of the foreign-policy establishment rationalizations—in the form of “grand strategies” and “doctrines,” or the occasional magazine article or op-ed—for doing what they were going to do anyway.

Not unlike marketing experts, successful foreign-policy intellectuals are quick to detect a new trend, attach a sexy label to it (“Red Menace,” “Islamofascism”), and propose to their clients a brand strategy that answers to the perceived need (“containment,” “détente,” “counterinsurgency”).

In *No One’s World*, foreign-policy intellectual Charles Kupchan—a professor of international affairs at Georgetown University and senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations—tackles the trend commonly referred to as “American decline” or “declinism,” against the backdrop of the Iraq War, the financial crisis, and the economic rise of China.

While I share Kuklick’s skepticism about the near zero influence that intellectuals have on creating foreign policy, I’ve enjoyed reading what thinkers like Charles Kupchan have to say, and I believe that if we don’t take them too seriously (this rule applies also to what

yours truly has written about these topics), they can help us put key questions in context. Such as: is the U.S. losing global military and economic dominance and heading towards decline as other powers are taking over?

The good news is that Kupchan’s book is just the right size—around 200 pages—with not too many endnotes and a short but valuable bibliography. Kupchan is readable without being too glib. He is clearly an “insider” (he is a former National Security Council staffer) but exhibits a healthy level of detachment. And Kupchan displays a commendable willingness to adjust his grand vision to changing realities.

In a book published ten years ago, *The End of the American Era: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Geopolitics of the Twenty-first Century*, Kupchan advanced the thesis that an integrating European Union was rising as a counterweight to the United States, with China secondary to the EU. That was his view then. The thesis has since been overtaken—let’s say, crushed to death—by the crisis in the eurozone and the failure of the EU to develop a unified, coherent foreign policy. But unlike neocons who spend much of their time trying to explain why, despite all the evidence to the contrary, they have always been right, Kupchan doesn’t even revisit his now defunct thesis.

While this suggests that we should treat his current book and its claims that the global balance of power is shifting from the United States and the “West” and towards the “Rest”—non-Western nations like China, India, Brazil, and Turkey—with many grains of salt, we should nevertheless give Kupchan credit for pursuing a non-dogmatic, pragmatic, and empiricist approach to international relations.

Kupchan may once have worked on implementing the liberal-internationalist agenda of the Clinton administration, but the views advanced in his latest book—in particular his pessimism about America’s ability to “manage” the international system and his emphasis

on the role that history and culture play in relationships between nation-states—place him in the intellectual camp of realist foreign-policy intellectuals like George Kennan and Henry Kissinger, at a time when not many of them are around in Washington.

Kupchan's thesis that America and its Western allies are losing their global military, financial, and economic power, and that the rising non-Western powers are not going to adopt Washington's strategic agenda, may not sound too revolutionary these days, when even the most non-contrarian strategists and economists working for the Pentagon and Wall Street recognize that the dominance of the West is on the wane.

But in a chapter titled "The Next Turn: The Rise of the Rest," Kupchan provides the reader with the "hard cold facts" as he skims through forecasts made by government agencies and financial institutions predicting that China's economy will pass America's within the current decade. And while America is still overwhelmingly the greatest military power on the planet, it is only a question of time, according to Kupchan, before China overtakes the United States in this arena as well and contests America's strategic position in East Asia. "The Chinese ship of state will not dock at the Western harbor, obediently taking the berth assigned to it," he concludes.

What lends Kupchan's overall theme a certain conservative and Kennan-like quality is the challenge he poses to the reigning ideological axiom shared by U.S. and Western elites since the end of the Cold War: the notion that the core ideas of the modern West—enlightenment, secularism, democracy, capitalism—will continue to spread to the rest of the world, including to China and the Middle East, and the Western order as it has evolved since 1945 will thus outlast the West's own primacy.

Even the most doctrinaire neocon assumes that American and West-

ern hegemony must come to an end at some point. But that won't matter since the Rest will end up being just like us—holding free elections, embracing the free markets, committed to a liberal form of nationalism and to the separation of religion of state. Such values and practices will guarantee that rising states like China and India bind themselves to a liberal international order based on functioning multilateral institutions, free international trade, and collective security.

Kupchan doesn't buy this vision. The "Western Way" is not being universalized, he argues, and the international system looks more and more like a mosaic of nations, each following its own path towards modernization, a path determined by unique historical circumstances and cultural traditions that may not result in anything like our own liberal and democratic principles.

Hence, China can embrace a form of "communal autocracy," Russia chooses a system of "paternal autocracy," while the Arab world follows the route of "religious and tribal autocracy." Iran remains a theocracy, and other non-liberal political orders may flourish in parts of Latin America and Africa.

In a way, Kupchan is doing here what foreign-policy intellectuals do best, inventing catchy labels to describe existing trends in China, Russia, and the Arab world that are familiar to anyone who follows current events. Kupchan argues, however, that these trends are quite enduring and that the United States and Europe should deal with this reality instead of pursuing policies based on wishful thinking—expecting, for example, that the Islamists ruling Egypt and the communist-fascists in Beijing will eventually be replaced by a bunch of liberal democrats. It ain't going to happen, Kupchan predicts. Free elections can in fact lead to the victory of anti-Western and anti-American leaders, while capitalism

is just a system that allows governments to harness wealth for aggressive nationalist policies.

As many conservatives would point out, the notion that we are all taking part in an inexorable march towards enlightenment, prosperity, and liberty that culminates in the embrace of liberal democracy, representative government, and free markets here, there, and everywhere is only one version of history, described sometimes as "Whig history."

What is basically the story of the emergence of constitutional democracy in Britain and America has been applied broadly to describe the political and economic development of Europe and West in general from around 1500 to 1800—and to explain why the West prospered and rose to global prominence while other parts of the world, like the Ottoman Empire and China, stagnated and declined.

Kupchan himself subscribes to a Whiggish narrative, in which decentralized feudal power structures and the rise of an enlightened middle class that challenged the monarchy, aristocracy, and the church led to Europe developing modern liberal states and capitalism, while the Reformation exposed religion to rational inquiry and unleashed bloodshed that ultimately caused European societies to accept religious diversity. The growing costs of the modern state forced monarchs to share power with ever larger classes of citizens, while the rising middle class provided the economic and intellectual foundations for the Industrial Revolution, which in turn improved education and science and established the military power that allowed the West to achieve superiority over the more rigid hierarchical orders of the Ottoman Empire, India, China, and elsewhere.

Francis Fukuyama in *The Origins of Political Order* has argued that this Whig version of history may help explain how Britain and America developed. But in other parts of Europe, such political

and economic changes as the rise of the modern state and notions of citizenship and political accountability were driven in large part by the villains of the Whig narrative, including monarchy and the Catholic Church.

There have always been different paths towards political and economic modernity, not only in contemporary China, India, Iran, and Brazil, but also in Europe and the West between 1500 and 1800—and later, with the rise of communism and fascism. Russia is an example of a nation whose road towards economic growth has been very different from that taken by the Anglo-Americans, or for that matter, the Germans, the French, or the Chinese.

Kupchan could have provided us with a more simplified set of arguments to support his thesis—that China and Iran are not “like us”—by recognizing that the political and economic transformation of different European states was not based on a standard model of development. We therefore shouldn’t be surprised that Egypt and Brazil are also choosing their own non-Whig paths of change and growth.

Contrary to Kupchan’s narrative, as the historian John Darwin argues in his masterpiece *After Tamerlane: The Global History of Empire*, Europe’s rise to pre-eminence was not a moment in the long-term ascent of the “West” and the triumph of its superior values. “We must set Europe’s age of expansion firmly in its Eurasian context,” Darwin writes, and recognize that there was nothing foreordained about Europe’s rise—or its current decline. Great powers like the Ottomans, the Safavids, the Mughals, the Manchus, the Russians and the Soviets, the Japanese and the Nazis have risen and fallen for reasons all their own. Today the Rest may be rising. But it has never been anyone’s world. ■

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The Spirit of Treason

by RICHARD M. REINSCH II

Alger Hiss: Why He Chose Treason, Christina Shelton, Threshold, 352 pages

In his piercing Harvard Commencement Address of 1978, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, the former prisoner of the Soviet Gulag who found freedom and truth within its strictures, offered a “measure of bitter truth” to his American audience. Solzhenitsyn referred to an “anthropocentric humanism” that had enveloped the West in the modern period and shaped the understanding many Americans had of science, technology, government, and what it means to be a human being. Such a “rationalistic humanism” can be seen, Solzhenitsyn announced, in the “practiced autonomy of man from any higher force above him.”

Solzhenitsyn strikingly proclaimed that the West had actually joined with its Communist foes in affirming a rationalistic and materialistic humanism, leaving the West incapable of understanding the true enemy. Both East and West saw man “as the center of all.” The West’s late-modern humanism was cut off from its Christian heritage, Solzhenitsyn argued, and had no principled objection to the more extreme forms of materialism and rationalism that promised the human will the ability to construct a perfected political, social, and technological existence. Thus liberalism loses to radicalism, radicalism becomes socialism, and socialism gives way to communism. Solzhenitsyn’s powerfully stated argument about the trajectory of modern rationalism supplies much of the answer Christina Shelton is reaching for in *Alger Hiss: Why He Chose Treason*.

Shelton’s book probes a question many observers of Alger Hiss have long wondered about: why did Hiss doggedly maintain his innocence of charges that

he was a spy for the Soviet Union, not only after he was accused by Whittaker Chambers in 1948, but after his federal conviction in 1950, even until his death in 1996? Shelton’s verdict on Hiss’s refusal to recant or apologize is that he believed as a matter of conscience in the rational constructive project of communism. For Hiss, the vindication of man rested in communist soulcraft.

There is no new factual information in Shelton’s book, or none that I could detect. Quite simply, the ground has been trod, plowed, and sifted by so many that a book on Hiss must, of necessity, investigate the existential questions surrounding his life and character if it is to have value. Shelton retells Hiss’s coming to Washington in 1933 as a concealed radical lawyer in the New Deal. He first worked for the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, later transferring to the Justice Department

Why did Alger Hiss doggedly maintain his innocence even until his death in 1996?

and then to State, where he occupied several different high-level positions. Hiss joined the Ware Group at some point in late 1933 while working at the AAA. The Ware Group consisted of prominent civil servants in New Deal agencies and was ultimately controlled by the GRU, Soviet military intelligence. Although initially something of a communist study group, Ware’s members were willing, as part of their commitment to Soviet communism, to engage in espionage on its behalf.

Whittaker Chambers assumed control of the Ware Group in 1934, his first covert assignment as a Soviet agent. Here began the ideological and personal friendship between Hiss and Chambers that would shatter when Chambers left communism and the Soviet underground in 1938. Most

of what Hiss clandestinely provided to Chambers were copies—typed by Hiss’s wife, Priscilla, on their infamous Woodstock typewriter—of documents and materials he procured from the State Department. Chambers then transferred these documents to other Soviet agents. Shelton provides these facts not to re-establish Hiss’s guilt but to frame the depth of his belief and his willingness to aid the Soviet Union.

While Shelton’s book is a philosophical and psychological investigation of Hiss, with sociological observations about progressive elites tossed in for good measure; her work stands on the shoulders of historical giants. Allen Weinstein’s *Perjury* and *The Haunted Wood*, the latter coauthored with Alexander Vassiliev, are of great significance. The latest historical addition to understanding Soviet espionage in America and one that provides further, painstaking confirmation of Hiss’s guilt, came in 2009 with John Earl Haynes, Harvey Klehr, and Alexander Vassiliev’s *Spies: The Rise and Fall of the KGB in America*. Based on information compiled by the ex-KGB agent Vassiliev during his three years of work in the KGB archives after the fall of the Soviet Union, the authors make these concluding remarks on Hiss’s guilt:

[Hiss] was identified in Soviet intelligence documents by his real name and three different cover names, each of which is clearly and demonstrably linked to him. KGB officers and CPUSA underground leaders knew him as a member of the Soviet apparatus. Several of his fellow agents ... identified him as an agent in confidential communications that made their way back to Moscow. And its own damage assessments confirm that Soviet intelligence knew that Alger Hiss belonged to it. Case closed.

Shelton builds on this consensus and explores “Hiss in the strategic context of American political philosophy and

Communist ideology.” Hiss, Shelton observes, has been a symbol in the “philosophical political struggle within the United States for more than two centuries ... between individuals ... who believed in statism ... and those who advocate individual liberty and limited, decentralized government.” She underscores the informative light cast on Hiss’s communist allegiance by his morally muted reactions to the Bolshevik Revolution, the Nazi-Soviet Pact of 1939, Stalin’s purges, and Chairman Mao’s inducement of famine, not to mention Hiss’s reaction to Chambers’s defection. Hiss doubted that millions had died in Mao’s engineered famines because “the problem of liquidation which Mao would have undertaken must have been minimized” given the vast numbers of supporters of Chiang Kai-Shek who fled the country or died in the internal war. Of this, Shelton asks, “Was Hiss really suggesting that Mao killed fewer people because there were less available to kill?”

Perhaps sensing that something more must be said about Hiss’s contribution to America’s foreign policy, Shelton focuses a chapter on Hiss’s role at the 1945 Yalta Conference. The arguments made here at times take us beyond the facts. This is not to say that what Shelton alleges is wrong, but that the evidence, at this moment, does not fully corroborate her analysis.

GRU, not the KGB, ran clandestine operations in the United States until late in the 1940s. The GRU’s influence ended with the titanic defections of Igor Gouzenko and Elizabeth Bentley in 1945, which compromised GRU’s underground networks in Canada and America. Incidentally, both Gouzenko and Bentley included Hiss among dozens of other names they provided to the federal government.

While KGB archives have been made at least partially available to researchers, the GRU archives have not been subject to similar review. Thus, Shelton’s claim that Hiss at the 1945 Yalta Conference met with Soviet general Mikhail

Milshtein, a deputy chief of the GRU’s first directorate during Yalta, and who was probably Hiss’s handler at one point in the late 1930s, is informed speculation. So too is a related contention that Hiss was likely holding papers beyond his pay grade at Yalta—on America’s position concerning the postwar status of Poland, managing the internal Chinese conflict vis-a-vis Japan, Nazi reparations, and other issues—and that he likely passed these materials to Milshtein. Shelton admits that these claims have never been corroborated by “documentary evidence.”

A far-too-short chapter on Whittaker Chambers presents the details of his underground connection and friendship with Hiss but omits Chambers’s more searing and introspective analyses of Hiss and of communist ideology. Shelton relies on Chambers’s striking discernment of why progressive New Dealers were unable to see traitorous communists in their midst: he argued that progressives’ ideals were largely fulfilled by communists and the former differed from the latter merely in the interpretation and implementation of those ideals within a democracy. The venom progressives directed at Chambers for charging their colleagues with betrayal resulted, in part, from the inability of these same well-heeled liberals to believe that people who shared their social and educational backgrounds and broad left-wing humanitarian views could be committed communists and Soviet spies.

Chambers’s deeper point, which anticipates Solzhenitsyn’s argument, is that progressives find it difficult to differentiate themselves from communists because both groups have a similar understanding of human action. Progressives and communists believe in man operating with an unbounded and liberating reason, if only he can break free of the historical shackles that have constrained him thus far. This is the basis for the oft-heard line “No enemies to the left.”

Shelton, unfortunately, misses the

opportunity to contrast Chambers and Hiss in the full extent of their commitments. To have made this contrast would have greatly illuminated why Hiss remained an inveterate defender of his innocence. This point was never lost on Whittaker Chambers. He stated that the connection both men shared, even in opposition, was the force of their existential allegiances, which, Chambers observed, a bourgeois America could not grasp. Paradoxically, Chambers' exit from communism provides the deepest source for understanding why Alger Hiss chose treason. Chambers described his own conversion by evoking language from Henri de Lubac's *The Drama of Atheistic Humanism*, a work he adored:

What I had been fell from me like dirty rags. The rags that fell from me were not only Communism. What fell was the whole web of the materialist modern mind—the luminous shroud which it has spun about the spirit of man, paralyzing in the name of rationalism the instinct of his soul for God, denying in the name of knowledge the reality of the soul and its birthright in that mystery on which mere knowledge falters and shatters at every step.

Chambers' conversion was to a world of man under God and of understanding that man's vocation was to live and suffer with his freedom and dignity upon a stage that man did not create. To choose communism was to engage in metaphysical revolt. Hiss refused such humility and wedded his spirit to bringing a new liberated world into existence at the cost of friendships, honesty, mercy, even loyalty to one's country. Chambers' self-immolation in testifying against Hiss, and Hiss's refusal to admit guilt, is best understood in this unforgiving spiritual light. ■

Richard M. Reinsch II is a fellow at Liberty Fund and is the author of Whittaker Chambers: The Spirit of a Counterrevolutionary.

A Stage Is the World

by NOAH MILLMAN

*Stratford Shakespeare Festival,
Stratford, Ontario*

Each summer for the past 15 years, my wife and I have trekked to the heart of southern Ontario pork country to attend the largest classical repertory theatre in North America, the Stratford Shakespeare Festival.

It's a strange place to put a major international theater, midway between Buffalo and Detroit—not the middle of nowhere, but a good distance from anywhere. That isolation is part of the point. Away from the distractions of home, body and mind can reorient around the theatrical experience. And that experience isn't confined to the stage. Most everybody else in town has some connection to the theatre, and has seen the same shows you have. You see the actors around town, behaving remarkably like normal people. Though you leave the theater at the end of each performance, the theater never really leaves you.

Continuity stretches through time as well as space. Over the years, a jejune Romeo matures into Hamlet, then ripens further into Prospero; a beloved Rosalind hardens into Lady Macbeth, then mellows into Mistress Quickly. You evolve alongside them. Shakespeare often analogized life to stage performance, but seeing familiar actors move through these roles and reflecting on how you yourself have progressed (or declined) through your own seven ages, it begins to seem less an analogy than a literal truth.

Stratford, celebrating its 60th anniversary season this year, is itself moving into a new age. The incom-

ing artistic director, Antoni Cimolino, announced the 2013 season with a promise to “put the actor and the text firmly at the centre of what we do. ... In a culture that has become so visually oriented, I think people crave the kind of storytelling that relies above all on the uniquely compelling power of the spoken word.” The comment was interpreted by some as a rebuke to his predecessor, Des McAnuff, who famously adorned a production of “Twelfth Night” with a flying refrigerator and interrupted a scene to have John Lennon deliver a pizza.

I enjoyed that production of “Twelfth Night”—as I have many of Mr. Cimolino's as well. From where I sit, what distinguishes our culture is not its visual emphasis but its restlessness and the mediated nature of our experience. We watch movies we can barely see on our iPads, but we are also assaulted by text from our RSS and Twitter feeds. What we experi-

*A jejune Romeo matures into Hamlet,
then ripens further into Prospero;
a beloved Rosalind hardens into
Lady Macbeth, then mellows
into Mistress Quickly.*

ence too infrequently is inescapable intimacy with another human being. Alone among the narrative arts, live theater can help us achieve that intimacy. And everything else in a production—striking images or perfect diction or Shakespeare's poetry itself—should properly serve to aid that achievement.

The current season, running through the end of October, provides ample opportunities for a theater-goer to achieve that intimacy, with some of the greatest characters portrayed by some of the most accomplished classical actors in North America, particularly in the three Shakespearean

David Hou/Stratford Shakespeare Festival



Aaron Krohn in the Stratford Shakespeare Festival's "Henry V"

offerings: "Henry V," directed by DesMcAnuff; "Cymbeline," directed by Antoni Cimolino, and "Much Ado About Nothing," directed by Christopher Newton.

Productions of "Henry V" tend either to present a patriotic pageant or a scathing critique of war. McAnuff aimed for something different. Before the play has properly begun, the cast makes its way onto the stage in rehearsal clothes. Finally, Tom Rooney comes out and declares, "O, for a muse of fire." Another actor picks up the chorus; the narrator role is passed from hand to hand across the cast. The message: this is the story of our community and how it came to be.

I was excited by this opening, the

promise that this tale of long-ago war would be brought home by actors dressed like us, speaking directly to us, asking us to imagine our own kinship with our distant ancestors. But what it turned out to portend was just another pageant, only without the usual airbrushing. So: a parade of sails rolls off the stage and down the aisles to signify the expeditionary crossing of the Channel; a parade of archers launches their arrows upstage to signify the triumph of the English longbow at Agincourt. But Henry also orders the French prisoners marched into the traps, to be burned alive.

The trouble with this approach is that pageants, by their nature, are not terribly dramatic. Showing us so

much undercuts the main point of the play's prologue—the call to awake our own imaginations, to come to really feel we are there, in Agincourt. And without the airbrushing, what we get is a parade we can't quite march to.

Almost lost in the spectacle, Aaron Krohn delivers a subtle and disconcerting portrait of the warlike king. I found myself thinking of our former president, Krohn's fellow Texan, who proclaimed himself "the decider" yet was assiduous about disclaiming responsibility for anything that happened as a consequence of his wars.

I noticed how Krohn's Henry never seemed to get a crease in his uniform, never seemed to get a spot of blood on him (at one point, he wipes his sword fastidiously), seems not so much to be hiding his emotions as never quite feeling them in the first place. Even in the famous "upon the

king" speech, where Henry is forced to confront the extent of his responsibility, Krohn seemed to evade that recognition. And I could easily imagine President Bush teasingly bullying an inferior the way Krohn's Henry did Williams, a soldier the disguised king encountered the night before battle and who expressed a lack of enthusiasm for fighting, perhaps dying, under Henry's banner.

Other excellent performances dotted the production, particularly among the Eastcheap set, Tom Rooney's passionate Pistol, Randy Hughson's peace-and-mischief-making Bardolph, and Lucy Peacock's underplayed, and hence more-moving, Hostess. (Falstaff even gets a last

laugh from inside his enormous coffin.) These marchers to their own drums naturally never manage to fall into step with the parade—that’s part of Shakespeare’s point. But McAnuff’s staging tries to press them into file, and rather than giving them proper representation, this only leaves them looking out of place. When the play ends, with the descent of the Canadian flag, the promise of that opening—that this play will tell us how we became who we are—remains unfulfilled.

“Cymbeline” is another story about a war between Britain and a continental power but set within an absurdly complex fairy tale. The play is like a smorgasbord of Shakespearean tropes—the cross-dressed heroine; the husband tricked into jealous rage; the father furious at his daughter’s choice of mate; we even cross the ancient Britain of “King Lear” with the ancient Rome of “Antony and Cleopatra” and, simultaneously, the Renaissance Italy of “The Merchant of Venice.”

The bewildering array of plots, all of which come together in the recognition scene to end all recognition scenes, can be quite a challenge to a director. Cimolino’s approach is to play it fairly straight. His ancient Britain looks Elizabethan, but he lets his Italians be first century or 16th as the scene demands, and his skin-clad rustics could be from any age. He doesn’t distract us with a “concept”; his goal is to let the story tell itself through the poetry, of which there is plenty—and a cast fully capable of making it sing.

But this hodgepodge of a story won’t tell itself, and Cimolino knows it. So, as with McAnuff’s “Henry V,” he’s created a frame to help us interpret what we see. His play opens on the king, Cymbeline (Geraint Wyn Davies), in bed, dreaming he is surrounded by the other characters, and crying out his daughter’s name—Innogen! The bed is whisked off, and the play proper begins. Then, at the end

of the production, Cymbeline stands spotlighted center stage, suddenly surrounded by a cast who look decidedly skeptical that this fairy tale has reached its apparently happy end.

What are we to make of this frame? Unfortunately for the production, I really don’t know. It appears to be an attempt to re-center the play on the titular character, whereas usually it revolves around his much-more-dominant daughter (played here by the finely vulnerable and strong Cara Ricketts). But though portrayed with more kingly vigor than usual, Cymbeline remains opaque, which makes it difficult for him to anchor the play.

This “Cymbeline” felt to me more like a collection of powerful moments—a superlatively tense seduction, a spectacular battle scene—than a fully persuasive play. The performance that stayed with me longest was Graham Abbey’s exceptionally powerful Posthumous Leonatus, a character who too often comes off as inferior to his royal mistress. And a play that on the surface sides overwhelmingly with the notion that blood will true winds up vindicating the only character not to the manor born.

My favorite Shakespeare production of the season was the third because it most successfully expanded my understanding of the play. In most productions of “Much Ado About Nothing,” the Claudio-Hero plot is something of a bore. We want to get back to Beatrice and Benedick’s badinage. But there’s a back story to their battle, and this is the first production I’ve seen that tied that back story to the plot that dominates the play.

Beatrice and Benedick were in love, once—or, as Beatrice says of Benedick’s heart, “he lent it me awhile; and I gave him use for it.” For some reason, Benedick broke things off. We don’t know why, but Benedick muses, when explaining why he remains a bachelor, about the inevitability of wearing horns—i.e., a fear of cuckoldry. Ben Carlson’s Benedick exhibits a

real bitterness in these lines, suggesting they are not merely a pro forma masculine complaint. He thinks he was the wronged party.

This makes his turn toward Beatrice, after the famous overhearing scene, more powerful, but more importantly it lends an edge to his relationship with Claudio, his reluctance to challenge him driven not so much by fellowship as identification. Claudio, after all, thinks he is the wronged party vis-à-vis Hero. And Tyrone Savage may be the first Claudio I’ve ever seen who made the infamous cad at least somewhat sympathetic, because sincere, if stupid. He plays him as the young Sean Penn might have, powerful emotions roiling a shallow pool.

Christopher Newton has set his “Much Ado About Nothing” in 19th-century Brazil, an appropriate locale for the persistent themes of honor, male and female. Others have complained about the giant staircase that dominates the stage (and blocks some sight lines) or have applauded the artful weaving of Latin music and dance through the production. What I valued most was how these two key performances enhanced my understanding of the relationships that drive the comedy.

The Stratford season ranges far beyond Shakespeare, including musicals like “42nd Street” and “The Pirates of Penzance.” For my money, the highlights of the non-Shakespearean portion of the program are Thornton Wilder’s warm and rueful comedy “The Matchmaker,” Sophocles’s astringent tragedy “Elektra,” and “Hirsch,” a one-man tour-de-force portrayal of a flawed giant of Canadian theatre history. But to truly appreciate this continental treasure, you have to go back, season after season, until you become a part of it and it of you. ■

A complete list of Noah Millman’s reviews of the 2012 Stratford season can be found at <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/shakesblog/the-stratford-2012-season/>.



Taki

Taki's Top Shelf

I stopped reading novels long ago. When those arch-phonies writing magic realism became household words, I dropped out quicker than you can say Raymond Chandler. Now that's what I call a novel—the stuff Chandler churned out about old El Lay, everyone gulping booze and puffing away like steam engines, the only exercise taken mostly between the sheets. Crime writers have always had an inferiority complex about their work, but they sure beat some of the clowns posing as novelists nowadays. Chandler was a master of style, a serious writer who applied his classical English education to the task of creating rich slang. He turned detective stories into art, labeling Los Angeles the city “with the personality of a paper cup.”

Chandler taught himself to write by churning out pastiches of Hemingway, the other writer I read when very young, a man who along with Fitzgerald formed my life. After reading *The Sun Also Rises* I had to go to Pamplona and run the bulls, chase hard-drinking women like Lady Brett Ashley, and get into drunken fights in Paris nightclubs. Fitzgerald was even worse for me. All Jay Gatsby did was party, as did Dick Diver and Tommy Barban in *Tender Is the Night*. All three had character, were inwardly sensitive and decent, and all three threw their lives away for women.

John O'Hara was another writer I adored when still a schoolboy. His *Appointment in Samarra* left me shaken and fascinated as to how quickly one's life can collapse. O'Hara was obsessed with the world of the rich, forgivable enough for someone who rose from

obscure poverty, and a fascinating subject to boot. His short stories were top of the line, as were his novels *10 North Frederick*, *From the Terrace*, and *The Lockwood Concern*.

And speaking of underrated writers, what about the master, W. Somerset Maugham? I wouldn't dare call him that to his face, but Willy was a great stylist, a wonderful short-story writer, and *The Razor's Edge* is one of the masterpieces of English prose. Larry Darrell's minimal subsistence—by choice—in order to cultivate the life of the spirit is a lesson some of our present masters of the universe would do well to ponder.

Norman Mailer's *An American Dream* was outrageously provocative in the existential angst of the hero, Stephen Rojack. Tom Wolfe's *Bonfire of the Vanities* is a modern classic, illustrating exactly what Larry Darrell had foreseen as capitalism's soul-wrenching weakness. Gore Vidal's *Washington D.C.* had me enthralled about the goings on inside the Beltway, a place I'd choose instead of jail, but only just.

Which brings me to Lawrence Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet*, *Justine*, *Balthazar*, *Mountolive*, and *Clea*. Each novel is meaningless on its own. The structure of the quartet works perfectly, but it is the exoticism of the setting which, as they say, blew my mind. The quartet was written between 1957 and 1960, the period I had been sent by my father to the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, as it was then called, as punishment for running up debts. He owned the biggest textile mills of the region. I spent every weekend in Alexandria and Cairo, back then magical places of easy

living, easier service, and very easy sex.

Durrell's Alexandria is a dream city, inhabited by pashas, sophisticated foreigners, mysterious women, rich merchants, ragamuffin street vendors, drug dealers, and spies of all colors and nationalities. As he writes, “the flesh coming alive, trying the bars of its prison.” I used to play tennis with the great Baron von Cramm in the Gezira club every morning, gamble in the Mohamed Ali club (only foreigners and Egyptian pashas permitted) in the afternoon, and do the outdoor nightclubs at night. I was in love with a Justine type who drove me crazy despite my youth and lust for life. Those were the days. And nights.

Durrell is hardly read nowadays. Some of the untalented and illiterate phonies who write unreadable prose and pose as writers and critics dismiss many of those I have mentioned as small fry. It's like insects calling lions weaklings.

No one of my generation can write about novels without mentioning *The Catcher in the Rye*, which I read when I was 14. The acute observations of a boy alone in a world of hypocrisy gave me confidence that the images I had of certain people weren't so far off. Salinger was the opposite of Waugh, whose *Vile Bodies* I adored however much I loathed the writer. Salinger wrote about love actually, Waugh, a not-so-closeted queen, about guilt.

Graham Greene and George Orwell complete this very incomplete list of my favorites. Greene is our greatest Catholic writer, and Orwell predicted what our free world would turn into. Hooray for all of the above. ■

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- Experience rigorous academics that teach you how to think and solve problems.
- Discover a Catholic formation that makes you a well-rounded and ethical person.

Become a Catholic leader...

- There is nothing employers want more.
- There is nothing the world needs more.

What some of our alumni do:

- John Curran '91 (Philosophy)
Supervisory Special Agent, FBI
- Michele Velasco '91 (Political Science)
Vice President, Finance, Sirius XM
- Frank O'Reilly '83 (History)
CEO, Petrine Construction
- Emily Minick '10 (Political Science)
Policy Assistant, US Senate Economic Committee
- Kathleen Gilbert '07 (Classics)
US Bureau Chief at LifeSiteNews.com
- Bryan Hadro '04 (Philosophy)
Web Developer, ESPN
- Jesse Batha '02 (Political Science)
Commercial Airline Pilot, SkyWest
- Adrienne Alessandro '05 (English)
Technical Writer, NASA
- Phil O'Herron '00 (Philosophy)
Neuroscientist
- Erin MacEgan '07 (Theology)
Registered Nurse
- Sean Kay '97 (English)
Partner, PricewaterhouseCoopers



"Christendom helps sharpen analytical skills, while immersing you in an amazing Catholic environment unlike that at most other schools in the country. The goal of Christendom's curriculum is the development of the entire person. My reasoning skills were honed. My ability to problem-solve and sift through dense material to get that important information had greatly increased. My understanding of the bigger picture deepened, and the need to continually prioritize and order things in my life developed. I left Christendom with a rich and abiding sense of moral and ethical issues."

Mark Rohlena '00
CEO, Catholic Charities, Colorado Springs



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